Chapter Two

THE PROCESS MODEL FOR ANTICIPATING ETHNIC CONFLICT

Ashley J. Tellis, Thomas S. Szayna, and James A. Winnefeld

APPROACHES TO ETHNICITY

The definition of ethnicity remains one of the most contested issues in social science. Due in part to the definitional problem, the relationship between ethnicity and other classificatory categories such as race, nation, and class remains poorly understood. In fact, the pioneer of modern sociology, Max Weber, even while producing one of the most sophisticated social scientific frameworks that could be applied to analyze ethnicity, concluded that “the notion of ‘ethnically’ determined social action subsumes phenomena that a rigorous sociological analysis . . . would have to distinguish carefully . . . [and] . . . it is certain that in this process the collective term ‘ethnic’ would be abandoned, for it is unsuitable for a really rigorous analysis.”¹ Considerable scholarly attention to the phenomenon over the past three decades seemingly has been intent on proving Weber wrong. The more recent analyses of ethnicity have taken a variety of approaches and produced some sophisticated new insights. But when these disparate approaches are analyzed systematically, they usually fall into one of three main “ideal types” relating to ethnicity as a social phenomenon, each with a distinctive perspective on what ethnicity is and how it relates to social conflict.

These three approaches are discussed below. First, each approach’s principal insights are systematically described, along with its particu-

lar explanation of the linkages between ethnicity and group conflict. The strengths and weaknesses of each approach are then analyzed with respect to group solidarity and collective action. “Group solidarity” refers to the existence of deep bonds between members of a particular social grouping. “Collective action” refers to the basic problem facing any group action, namely, the fact that contributing to collective action may not be rational for an individual and, as such, may result in the failure of group efforts.

The Primordialist Approach

The first approach to ethnicity is commonly termed the “primordialist” approach in that it centers on the assertion that certain primitive (or basic) sociological groupings exist in a society. Such primitive groupings exist a priori, meaning that they are natural units that derive their cohesion from some inherent biological, cultural, or racial traits which then become instruments of social differentiation. The primordialist school asserts that human societies are in effect conglomerations of “tribes.” The regulating principles that define the distinctions between “tribes” may vary, but what is crucial is that they determine both the boundaries and the meaning of tribal membership in such a way that the “in-group” and “out-group” can always be clearly demarcated. Such a priori groupings then constitute the primitive units in society: they define for their members critical existential distinctions centered on the dichotomy of “us and them” and they perform the crucial task of forming an individual’s personal identity through a process of “collective definition.” This process, defining the way that “racial groups come to see each other and themselves,” relies on a constant redefinition and reinterpretation of historical events and social experiences vis-à-vis other such groups, and it eventually results in the “aligning and realigning of relations and the development and reformulation of prospective

---


lines of action toward one another."5 Thus, in the primordialist view, ethnic groups function as insular universes. Their membership is defined by accident of birth, and once constituted, they perpetuate their distinctiveness by a continuing process of socialization that accentuates their perceptions of uniqueness and their sense of separateness from other, similar, social formations.

**Primordialists and conflict.** It is important to recognize that in the primordialist approach, ethnicity is not a problematic social category. It is, in fact, almost self-evident, and as a result its theory of conflict is also relatively simple and easy to discern. Although there are as many theories of conflict among the primordialists as there are primordialists themselves, the general logic of conflict generation runs somewhat along the following lines: Ethnic groups are located in pluralist societies that contain several other similar competing social formations. Although relations within the ethnic group may be either personal or impersonal in nature, social relations between ethnic groups in large societies are invariably impersonal and usually take place through market structures or the political process. These institutions, concerned as they are with the production and distribution of wealth and power, invariably create both winners and losers. To the degree that the winners and losers are congregated disproportionately within some ethnic group, opportunities arise for inter-aggregational conflict leading to violence. Even if a given ethnic group does not host a disproportionately large number of objectively disadvantaged individuals, inter-aggregational conflict could still occur if, through the process of collective definition, the group internalizes a “myth” of deprivation, thereby channeling individual resentments toward other groups rather than diffusing them within itself. Conflicts as a result of competition over resources certainly could occur even within an ethnic group, but the primordialist assumption—that ethnic groups are characterized by strong forms of organic solidarity flowing from self-evident ties of biology, culture, or race—implies that such competition either would not be significant or would not result in large-scale violence directed at one’s ethnic cohorts. Such significant, large-scale violence would almost by definition be directed primarily at other ethnic groups, justifiably or

---

5Ibid., p. 222.
Primordialists: strengths and weaknesses. The primordialist approach to ethnicity has one important strength, but it suffers from many weaknesses. Its singular strength stems from its focus on factors that easily explain social solidarity. There is little doubt that in many societies, superficial human similarities like pigmentation, shape of hair, and other such physical characteristics often serve as elementary justification for simple forms of social solidarity. This solidarity is dependent on a popular belief in a common ancestry based on the notion of “they look like us” and may in fact be reinforced by a common language, common history, and common enemies. Such variables often serve to define a group’s identity, but in the primordialist account, they suffice to explain both the nature of group solidarity and how collective-action problems are resolved. While primordialist explanations of the former are easier to swallow (especially when group solidarity takes on superficial manifestations and does not involve either high or asymmetrically distributed individual costs), they are harder to accept with respect to resolving the collective-action problem, except perhaps foreties, or when the “ethnic” groups concerned are extremely small or are in fact simply a form of kinship grouping (such as clans).

In all other cases, where a modicum of egoist motivation is combined with the presence of instrumental rationality, the collective-action problems inherent in any coordinated group action become more difficult to resolve and cannot be waved away by the simple unproblematic assertion of organic solidarity. This is all the more true because of a glaring empirical problem that contradicts primordialist beliefs, namely, that group identities historically have never been fixed, they are constantly changing, and new identities arise all the time. Moreover, even existing “ethnic” groups contain individuals of varying degrees of common ancestry, they change in composition over time (as in, for example, the creation of the “Anglo-Saxons”), and most important, all ethnic groups have to confront the problem of in-group struggles for power that affect the kind of social solidarity they can amass for purposes of effecting successful collective action. All these factors taken together suggest that the nature of ethnic solidarity is itself highly problematic and cannot be produced as effortlessly on the basis of merely superficial human characteris-
tics, myths of common ancestry, or even a shared history, as the primordialist account tends to suggest.

**The Epiphenomenalist Approach**

In sharp contrast to the primordialist account, which provides an "essentialist" description of the meaning of ethnicity, the second approach, which might be termed the "epiphenomenalist" perspective, denies that "ethnicity" as a social phenomenon has any inherent biological basis whatsoever. This approach to ethnicity, evident especially in the Marxist tradition, does not by any means deny the raw existence of physical or social differences ultimately derived from biology and perhaps finally manifested in some specific cultural forms. However, it denies the claim that such biological or cultural formations have an *independent effect, unmediated by class formations or institutional relationships, on politics*. In fact, the epiphenomenalist perspective emphatically asserts that it is the class structures and institutionalized patterns of power in society that are fundamental to explaining political events rather than any biologically or culturally based social formations like "ethnicity." To the degree that "ethnicity" in the primordialist sense plays a role, it functions merely as a "mask" that obscures the identity of some class formations struggling for political or economic power. Ethnicity *per se* is, therefore, merely an incidental appearance (i.e., "epiphenomenal"): it is not the true, generative cause of any social phenomenon, even though it often may appear to be.

To the degree that ethnicity appears at all, scholars who accept the epiphenomenalist approach treat it either as a strategy for mobilization on the part of class elites forced to latch on to such means of group identity by pressures of necessity or, especially in Marxist sociology, as a transient form of false consciousness that will be

---


superseded in due time by true class consciousness.\textsuperscript{9} In any event, ethnicity in the primordial sense is denied altogether the status of an “efficient cause.” It matters primarily as a “label” that identifies different groups placed in relations of cooperation, symbiosis, and conflict based on their location amid the relations of production in a given society.

**Epiphenomenalists and conflict.** The epiphenomenalist approach to “ethnicity” witnessed in Marxist thought was conditioned in part by the fact that Marxism developed within the more or less culturally homogenous capitalist societies of Western Europe, where class relations rather than ethnic formations become a natural focus for theory. However, when Marxist ideas spread to more ethnically heterogeneous societies beyond Europe, the issue of ethnicity as a factor in social action had to be addressed anew. It was only then that theorists provided the definitive reading that integrated ethnicity, as understood by the primordialists, within the larger Marxist theme of generalized class struggle. Such integration in effect denied that ethnicity could ever be an independent element disturbing the normal, conflictual dynamics in capitalist society, but it did point to three critical features as part of its theory of conflict that any model seeking to assess the prospects for ethnic violence must confront. The Marxist theory of social conflict is too comprehensive and too well known to merit being summarized here. However, three insights with respect to ethnicity are worth reiterating.

First, any scrutiny of ethnicity with respect to political mobilization would do well to examine the prevailing means and relations of production existing in any society. Such an examination would identify differential, and perhaps exploitative, patterns of distribution of wealth and power and thus suggest potential “class” groupings that might manifest themselves under certain conditions through “ethnic” terms.

Second, the role of the state in “reproducing” ethnicity is crucial.\textsuperscript{10} This implies that the state apparatus may simply preserve what


appears to be certain “ethnically” structured patterns of exploitation. Such patterns may be obvious and may even be defined “ethnically” (as in the case of apartheid in South Africa), but they are more accurately part of a larger effort at maintaining the economic power of a certain class rather than merely “ideological” conflicts between certain biologically grouped social formations. Under certain conditions, the state may create “ethnicity” as a vehicle of political mobilization. The state may even embark on such efforts in order to assert its own autonomy against certain dominant classes or with an eye to bolstering its prospects for survival against incipiently rising challengers.

Third, “ethnic” violence is invariably (or, at least, often enough) a product of class antagonisms or of class-state antagonism. This implies that ethnic violence is often more than it appears to be. Very rarely, is it—as journalistic descriptions are apt to portray—an accidental or irrational outcome caused either by passions getting out of hand, or the “madness of crowds,” or differences in outlooks rooted in religion, weltanshauung, or other cultural differences. While such ingredients may constitute the proximate cause of violence in any given situation, the roots of the violence lie in fissures deep beneath the surface—fissures that more often than not are strongly connected with serious and consequential contentions about the distribution of wealth and resources.

Epiphenomenalists: strengths and weaknesses. The “epiphenomenal” approach to ethnicity has many strengths, but one important weakness. Its principal strength lies in the fact that it draws attention to politics as a struggle for wealth and profit. Consequently, it provides a fairly coherent account as to why certain empirical groupings can coalesce politically and how they can act collectively with respect to the ongoing competition for resources. Instead of a priori claims of biological or cultural affinity as explanations for such solidarity, the epiphenomenalist perspective accounts for it as a product of individual self-interest combined with differential access to the means of production. The epiphenomenalist view thus paves the way for viewing “ethnicity” not as a permanent characteristic of individuals, but as an incidental coloration that may or may not acquire salience depending on the circumstances confronting the process of mobilization. If “ethnicity” becomes salient, however, it can be understood as part of a larger structural competition that engages
both interclass and class-state relations. By focusing on these critical arenas of social action, the epiphenomenal view reminds the analyst about the constant struggle for resources in any society and, accordingly, provides a means of contextualizing “ethnic” struggles within the larger realm of social competition.

The epiphenomenal perspective represents a useful corrective to the “essentialist” approach favored by the primordialists, but it has one important weakness, namely, the reliance on a single explanatory variable, such as class in the Marxist approach. This focus on a single variable precludes it from analyzing ethnicity as a phenomenon in its own right. While the importance of ethnicity as an independent causal factor may in fact be small (and Marxism has done more than perhaps any other system of analysis to establish this conclusion), the extent of its contribution and the nature of its appearance in any given case can only be discerned empirically. As such, it still merits independent examination, if for no other reason than the multitude of sins attributed to it. Marxism, however, has few tools to conduct such an examination, since it simply subsumes “ethnicity” under a wider set of social relations or merely treats it as a superstructural phenomenon hiding the “true” base.11

The Ascriptive Approach

The third approach to ethnicity overcomes the limitations of both the primordial and the Marxist perspectives while retaining the best elements of both traditions. This approach, which can be dubbed “ascriptive” and derives from the work of Max Weber and scholars who have followed him, is distinguished by a view of ethnicity that is best described as real, but constructed. Weber’s discontent with the “multiple social origins and theoretical ambiguities”12 of ethnicity as a concept have been alluded to earlier, but despite his arguments about the “disutility of the notion of the ‘ethnic group,’”13 he defined the latter carefully enough to make productive analysis possible. Ethnic groups, according to Weber, are

---

11Solomos, op. cit.
13Ibid., p. 393.
those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration. This belief must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists.\footnote{14}{Ibid., p. 389.}

The key distinguishing mark of ethnicity in this reading is the notion of "subjective belief," that is, the animating conviction held by members of a group that they do enjoy a common ancestry and hence are bound together by some ineffable tie that in truth may be wholly fictitious. Thanks to this belief, "ethnic membership differs from the kinship group precisely by being a \textit{presumed identity} . . . ."\footnote{15}{Ibid., p. 389.} This insistence on presumed identity as the structuring principle of ethnic unity does \textit{not} imply, however, any particular consequences for social and political action. In fact, Weber insistently argues that "ethnic membership does \textit{not} constitute a group; it only facilitates group formation of any kind, particularly in the political sphere."\footnote{16}{Ibid., p. 389.}

Weber’s general approach thus consists of the affirmation that ethnic groupings can exist as a result of certain mythical intersubjective beliefs held by a collectivity, but their mere existence does not have any \textit{necessary} consequences for social action. To the degree that the latter phenomenon needs to be explained, the explanations must be found elsewhere. Through such a "constructivist" approach Weber manages to solve the vexing problem afflicting both the primordialist and epiphenomenalist traditions, in that he suggests how "ethnicity" can be treated as a causative variable without allowing it to dominate the explanatory space. As described earlier, the primordialist asks for too much, while the epiphenomenalist gives away too little. The former treats ethnicity as a self-evident fact that automatically explains all manner of collective action; the latter, in contrast, treats ethnicity as merely an incidental appearance that can be readily and completely discarded in favor of more consequential, though hidden, social forces.
Weber carves an artful middle ground. He allows for the possibility that ethnicity can be created (“ascribed”), even if only through the collective imagination of apparently similar individuals. In so doing, he could be said to accept an insight that has roots in the primordialist tradition. But he does not make the fact of ethnic groups arising determinative for any social acts. Thus he allows for the possibility that precisely those kinds of forces identified by the epiphenomenalists might be among the real drivers beneath what are otherwise taken to be “ethnic” phenomena. In fact, he broadens the epiphenomenalist insight still further. Instead of restricting himself merely to the class dynamics seen to operate in capitalist societies (which Marxists would assert represent the real movers beneath “ethnic” action), Weber would suggest that the compulsions of politics—understood as the struggle for power writ large—explain the origins and persistence of groups and cause them to discover a variety of solidarity-producing myths like ethnicity. Thus, he notes that “it is primarily the political community, no matter how artificially organized, that inspires the belief in common ethnicity. This belief tends to persist even after the disintegration of the political community, unless drastic differences in the custom, physical type, or, above all, language exist among its members.”

The above passage makes clear the ascriptive approach to ethnicity: Politics creates ethnicity in that it forces individuals to discover common resources in their struggles for survival. The fundamental role of politics implies that ethnicity as a phenomenon becomes real only because of the subjective constructions of individuals under certain circumstances and not because it exists a priori as some intrinsically permanent solidarity binding a set of individuals across time and space. Such a perspective, then, provokes a set of questions that demand further investigation by any model seeking to anticipate the incidence of ethnic strife. First, what factors precipitate the generation of these intersubjective beliefs relating to ethnicity? Second, how do these intersubjective
beliefs, once generated, come to precipitate group mobilization and possibly collective action? And, third, how do state actions—which, as the Marxists correctly point out, are critical to reproducing ethnicity—contribute to group definition, mobilization, and possibly violent social action? Weber’s sociology and the scholars working in his tradition provide pointers that direct the search for answers to these questions. Three key insights stand out.

First, Weber draws attention to the centrality of power and domination as the fundamental features of politics, the latter understood as that activity relating to the production of order in social life. Domination, in fact, “constitutes a special case of power” and in a general sense describes all the mechanisms concerned with “imposing one’s own will upon the behavior of other persons.” When viewed in such terms, domination becomes “one of the most important elements of social action” and although “not every form of social action reveals a structure of dominancy,” it plays a considerable role in all varieties of social action, including the economic, “even where it is not obvious at first sight.” The key insight residing here, accordingly, consists of the claim that politics is central to the regulation of social life. Politics subsumes economics and, as such, the quest for domination that drives all political life appears in the economic realm as well: “Economic power . . . is a frequent, often purposefully willed, consequence of domination as well as one of its most important instruments.” Because domination is so central to political, economic, and even social structures, any theoretical model that seeks to understand the generation of ethnicity must focus on how individuals attempt to structure patterns of domination in political communities, and such structuring of domination must be investigated both with respect to the in-group and the political community at large.

---

20Ibid., p. 942.
21Ibid., p. 941.
22Ibid., p. 942.
23For a pioneering theoretical analysis of how such patterns of domination are manifested at multiple levels, see Frank Parkin, Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique, New York: Columbia University Press, 1979.
Second, since the struggle for domination lies at the heart of all community life, it brings in its trail efforts to monopolize power. These efforts occur both within groups and in society at large in an interactive and often mutually reinforcing fashion. Weber described these dynamics by the phrase “monopolistic closure,”24 which refers to all efforts made to prevent “others” from sharing in the political, economic, and social bounties enjoyed by a few. These efforts can occur in different ways, depending on historical and social circumstances. They may begin as small confederate efforts mounted by a few individuals to capture power, wealth, or social status. Such efforts would be designed to keep “others” out merely to maximize the distributed share of acquired gains. If these strategies are successful and in fact come to be institutionalized in ethnic terms polity-wide, they would represent forms of “outside pressures” which in turn could impel disadvantaged individuals to search for other ideational devices to use to generate responding forms of resistance. The way these patterns of closure originate is less interesting than the fact that they do exist pervasively in all societies: dominant groups use them to keep others out; successful but still relatively disadvantaged groups use them to prevent a dilution of their gains; and utterly disadvantaged individuals tend to use them to recover a modicum of solidarity, which makes resistance and the pursuit of revanchist strategies possible.25

Third, the criteria for justifying individual or group efforts at monopolizing power do not have to be objectively defensible. What is important to recognize when exclusion is attempted by any groups in ethnic terms is that “any cultural trait, no matter how superficial, can serve as a starting point for the familiar tendency to monopolistic closure.”26 Often, it does not matter which characteristic is chosen in the individual case: whatever suggests itself most easily is seized upon. Consequently, any theoretical model seeking to understand the generation of ethnicity must go beyond proximate ideational labels to scrutinize the underlying structures of domination and

25This notion of “dual closure” is examined in some detail in Parkin, op. cit., pp. 89–116.
deprivation in the political, economic, and social realms that make recourse to such labels relevant.

**Ascriptivists: strengths and weaknesses.** The ascriptive approach is attractive because of its multiple strengths. Its primary strength is that it is an open-ended approach: it provides a means of viewing ethnicity that allows for the integration of “primordialist” and “epiphenomenalist” insights, but it does not force the analysis into any single predetermined hypothesis. It identifies core issues that must be engaged—like the instrumental nature of ethnic phenomena, the pervasiveness of domination, and the ubiquity of overt and covert forms of social closure—but it leaves the analyst free to incorporate these factors into any causal hypothesis of his own choosing. Thus, it opens the door for the incorporation of insights deriving from resource competition, rational choice, and symbolic interactionist approaches to ethnicity. Further, it assumes the premise of methodological individualism. It makes rational individuals the theoretical primates for purposes of social explanation, even as it can accommodate macroscopic entities like “ethnic groups” for analytical purposes. Being centered on individuals with specifically attributed preferences and capabilities, it avoids the problems of reification that arise from the use of ungenerated macroscopic wholes. Because of its flexibility, the approach lacks the easily identifiable flaws of the other two approaches.

**Rationale for Using the Ascriptive Approach**

For all the reasons examined above, the ascriptive approach to ethnicity is the most defensible approach to developing a model for anticipating ethnic violence. This approach may in fact be vehemently repudiated by ethnic activists, since such individuals often have a deep stake in primordialist conceptions of ethnicity. Similarly, those with a stake in doctrinaire ideological explanations of social relations may also deny the validity of an ascriptive approach. But most social theorists today would admit that an ascriptive approach incorporating both Marxist and Weberian insights is the

---

27Several of these approaches with respect to ethnicity are detailed in Rex and Mason, op. cit.
most fruitful avenue to understanding the larger problem of exclusion and domination in society.\textsuperscript{28}

In light of the above discussion of various competing approaches, it is worthwhile to restate the concept of ethnicity. The concept entails three crucial components: distinguishing characteristics (any and/or all of the following: phenotype, faith, language, origin, or population concentration in a given region), a sense of group solidarity, and contact with another group so as to establish a point of reference and the idea of “otherness.” Ethnicity is defined as the idea of shared group affinity, and belonging is based on the \textit{myth} of common ancestry and a notion of distinctiveness. The group in question must be larger than a kinship group, but the sense of belonging—based on myth—stems from created bonds that have close similarities to kinship. The basis for these created bonds may stem from any number of distinguishing characteristics. These are, at any rate, incidental and case-specific, though they may lead, under certain situations, to deep personal attachments.\textsuperscript{29}

\textbf{INTRODUCING THE MODEL}

In this section we describe our conceptual model for anticipating ethnic violence. The model focuses on how the grievances stemming from existing patterns of domination and deprivation in any society could be translated into imperatives for group mobilization, which in turn interact with various state actions to produce a variety of political outcomes ranging from political reconciliation to state breakdown. This approach attempts to understand the dynamics of group definition, ethnic mobilization, strategic bargaining, and political action as part of a single continuous process.

Taking its cues from the ascriptive tradition, the model described below approaches ethnicity primarily as a “marker,” that is, as a real but constructed instrument for defining group identity as a prelude


\textsuperscript{29}This usage of the term “ethnicity” is based on Donald L. Horowitz, \textit{Ethnic Groups in Conflict}, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985, who derives his conception from the larger ascriptive tradition associated with Weber.
to collective mobilization and social action. Thus, the approach seeks to accommodate insights from both the primordial and epiphenomenal schools: It accepts that ethnicity can be used to identify certain social formations, and that ethnicity in this sense can derive from *any* perceived commonalities such as race, language, religion, geographic origins, or culture, in addition to more direct affinities derived from kinship. However, it presumes that such ethnic markers arise principally against a backdrop of ongoing social struggles, which may have conspicuous economic components but are not necessarily restricted to them.

The resulting model, graphically illustrated in Figure 1, focuses on the dynamics of mobilization for the purposes of highlighting the three basic issues critical to the outbreak of ethnically based violence. First, what is the structural potential for strife? Second, what are the requirements for potential strife to be transformed into likely strife? Third, how does likely strife degenerate into actual strife? In

![Figure 1—Anticipating Ethnic Conflict]
attempting to address these three issues, the model identifies three bilateral interactions. Each successive interaction builds on the foregoing one in an effort to typify the generative process describing the dynamics of ethnic violence.

STAGE I: INVESTIGATING THE POTENTIAL FOR STRIFE

Closure

The first issue the model seeks to address is the structural potential for strife. Consistent with the ascriptive tradition, it seeks to determine this potential for strife through an investigation of the patterns of closure existing in a given society. The Weberian concept of closure, which is central here, refers to the “process of subordination whereby one group monopolizes advantages by closing off opportunities to another group.”30 Closure theorists distinguish between two main reciprocal modes of closure: exclusionary and usurpationary. Exclusionary closure involves the exercise of power in a downward direction, when one group attempts to secure its advantages by closing off the opportunities available to another group beneath it by treating the latter as inferior or ineligible. Usurpationary closure involves the exercise of power in an upward direction, as for example when subordinate groups attempt to erode the advantages of higher groups.31 Both modes represent means for mobilizing power to enhance or defend a group’s share of rewards or resources. Because the struggle for power is constant in any society, the justification for exclusion as embodied in various forms of closure is always open to challenge, and the public arena constantly witnesses efforts to make the boundaries between dominator and dominated either obscure or transparent, legitimate or illegitimate.32 And since the state ultimately rationalizes the legal terms of closure and domination, it becomes the central arena where the processes of exclusion and usurpation unfold.

31Ibid., pp. 8–10; The concepts of “exclusionary” and “usurpationary” closure were originally developed by Parkin, op. cit.
32Murphy, op. cit., p. 48.
The Process Model for Anticipating Ethnic Conflict 33

The three realms of closure. The three arenas of critical importance for the purposes of examining closure are the political, the economic, and the social. The political arena relates to all matters of governance, administrative control, and command over the means of coercion. The economic arena relates to all matters connected with the production of wealth and the distribution of resources. The social arena relates to all matters connected with the effective claims on social esteem, including the distribution of status and social privileges.

Each of these arenas demarcates a particular dimension of the public order and each is related in multiple ways to the others, but constrictions in the political realm are perhaps the most important form of closure for purposes of establishing the potential for strife. The political realm has such primacy because the issue of who rules and how directly affects all kinds of outcomes within the polity.33

To begin with, political authority literally holds the power of life and death over its citizenry as a result of its monopolistic claim over the means of coercion and the legitimacy normally accorded to its right to employ force. This power is usually exercised through myriad tools of domestic law enforcement, direct political action against individuals and groups, and through organized state efforts at staving off political disorder. Consequently, the nature of political authority and state structure affects the primary interests of individuals—survival—in a very direct, and often unmediated, way. The political realm also has primacy because it embodies the “rules of the game.” It represents the differential and regulated access to power afforded to different groups as well as control over the ability to amend these rules of access.

Finally, the political realm enjoys primacy because it can control—through force if necessary—both rules and outcomes in the economic and social realms. To be sure, economic power often provides the buttress for political power, but it is usually indirect in its effects and invisible as far as its immediacy is concerned. At any rate, holders of economic power cannot survive direct competition with political authority, except by recourse to political means. For this reason,

economic power holders generally seek to operate in arenas relatively autonomous from state action or attempt to ally with holders of political power for survival and domination.

The social realm is perhaps the least salient of the three arenas, except perhaps in traditional societies. Because status monopolies usually derive from vocational origins, hereditary charisma, or hierarchical claims, the social realm in nontraditional societies usually acquires importance only when the status groups within it are linked to larger loci of economic or political power. Indeed, the derivative nature of the social realm is often evident from the fact that politically or economically advantaged groups tend to have a high social status.

Despite the centrality of the political realm, assessing the potential for strife requires identifying patterns of asymmetrical relative power and domination in all three realms. This is done not only to develop a particular profile of a given country or region, but also to identify in advance which sets of individuals might coalesce, form alliances of convenience, or become pointed antagonists as the process of ethnic mobilization evolves over time. Which of these behaviors will actually occur cannot be predicted a priori, in the absence of additional information about the preferences and capabilities of each of these groups, but the very fact of identifying the relevant actors and their location vis-à-vis each other already provides some means of anticipating how different intergroup interactions may evolve over time.

**Identifying Closure**

Keeping in mind that the principal objective of the first stage of the model is to identify the prevailing structures of closure in the political, economic, and social realms, there are two important variables in each of these arenas: (1) the existing patterns of distribution with respect to power, wealth, and status respectively, and (2) the relative ease with which individuals can secure access to power, wealth, and status through peaceful means. Each of these variables is important in different ways. The first variable depicts a static picture of existing pattern of dominance and deprivation, whereas the second variable speaks to a more dynamic issue, namely the possibilities for peaceful change.
The political realm. At the level of the political system, scrutinizing the existing distribution of power requires assessing the composition of the principal political authorities in the country with respect to their subnational categories like race, language, religion, region, or culture. Such an assessment requires sensitivity to the nature of the political regime and to the question of unitary (one-branch) or divided (multibranch) government. If the government is unitary, attention should be focused primarily on the executive and bureaucratic arms of the state. This requires scrutinizing the composition of the executive decisionmaking elite (whether civilian or military) as well as the upper echelons of the bureaucracy. The former consists mainly of ministerial-equivalent positions and above, whereas the latter relates to director-level positions and above in the civilian bureaucracy and to colonel-equivalents and their superiors in the military and internal security-police bureaucracies.

To the degree that state structure is characterized by divided rather than unitary government, the width of relevant focus groups would have to be expanded. The composition of legislative and judicial bodies might also have to be scrutinized in the context of understanding both the nature of, and the constraints imposed on, the exercise of power in such divided governments. A special circumstance arises in federal states. Because of the devolution of central power implied by a federal setup, in such cases an examination of the type suggested above is warranted at both the state and regional (provincial) levels.

Assembling raw compositional data on how the institutions singled out above are manned in any form of government provides a valuable sociological profile of a state (or province). But such information by itself does not confirm the extent of political closure within the polity. To derive such an assessment, it is important to relate the compositional data about the leadership population to its relative size within the population as a whole. In other words, the actual proportion of political elites measured by subnational categories like race, language, religion, region, or culture should be compared with the size of such demographic categories within the population as a whole. Such a comparison of actual representation vis-à-vis some notionally appropriate number derived from proportional representation may provide some clues about the level of political closure.
An understanding of the possible extent of political closure should be complemented by an assessment of whether the state in question pursues a formal agenda of closure aimed at restricting the participation of some groups in political life. This is important because institutional designs and structures have a fundamental bearing on whether patterns of closure derived from numerical comparisons are in fact significant, spurious, or merely accidental. Accordingly, there is a need for additional information about the second variable identified earlier, namely, the relative ease with which individuals can secure access to power through peaceful means. This implies examining a number of factors: whether there are formal or informal restrictions on political participation; whether there is universal access to a system for peacefully redressing grievances; whether ruling institutions and groups subject themselves to periodic, peaceful tests of legitimacy; and whether there is a viable civil society. Information about such dynamic elements of access to power is crucial if one is to judge the nature and extent of political closure. Often such information may not be quantifiable, although there are several examples of attempts to quantify the degree of responsiveness within a political system. Nonetheless, such information is necessary and must be related to other numeric data on representation if a better and clearer understanding of the patterns of political closure within a given society is to be derived. The patterns derived from the first examination might serve as a tip-off for an examination of the formal rules of closure and exclusion that may exist in the society.

The economic realm. A similar scrutiny is necessary in the economic realm. Here too, the focus rests on identifying first the general patterns of how wealth is distributed as well as the relative institutional freedom of access to resources existing within the polity. The overall pattern of distributed wealth and income provides an important clue with respect to the issue of economic closure. The objective again is first to assemble data that identify how income and property are distributed at the elite and general population levels, with the data...
categorized by reference to certain substate categories like race, language, religion, region, or culture within a given country. The data then must be related proportionally to the relevant demographic categories in the population as a whole (just as in the political data, misrepresentation of demographic categories is likely in many societies). The rationale for advocating analysis at the economic realm at both the elite and the general population levels is to cross-check for the accuracy of the patterns.

The information then must be complemented by perhaps more important qualitative information about institutional structures and about individuals’ relative access to economic resources. For example, are there any formal or informal restrictions on investment, trade, business, and employment directed at particular groups categorized by the substate categories described earlier? Such restrictions, coupled with quantitative data on the distribution of wealth and income, would provide powerful evidence of serious economic closure with consequent implications for the potential for strife.

If the state’s economy is not predominantly market oriented but has command features in varying degrees, the second issue of relative freedom of access to resources intersects more clearly with political mechanisms of closure and becomes all the more important. A command economy concentrates wealth in the hands of state managers who can embark on exclusionary distribution schemes in a much more explicit and organized fashion than market mechanisms can. If the principles of exclusion in such arrangements are defined either explicitly or implicitly by certain substate categories like race, language, religion, region, or culture, the problems of economic closure may be much more intractable, with more serious implications for potential strife.

**The social realm.** The analysis carried out with respect to the political and economic realms must be extended to the social realm as well, but by necessity, the terms of reference vary in this arena. The key issue to be examined with respect to the social realm is the extent of the effective claims made on social esteem and the forms in which these claims translate into differentially distributed but tangible economic and political benefits. Specifically, the examination must focus on whether the given country has status groups based on vocation (i.e., differential standing based on occupation), hereditary
charisma (i.e., differential standing based on successful claims of higher-ranking descent), or some version of hierocratic or historical claims (i.e., differential standing based either on religious vocation or specific universally recognized historical actions, or on secular claims associated with national embodiment groups). In the last category, a common example is the status differential accorded to some groups on the basis of a claim to the national idea, contrasted with groups that may be seen as foreign and having arrived through immigration. Irrespective of their origins, the size of the status groups needs to be established and the nature and extent of their social claims assessed. The task provides an understanding of the social profile of the state, including a preliminary judgment about the relative power of various dominant and pariah groups within the country.

Just as in the political and economic realms, a static measure of the size and capabilities of the status group is insufficient to discern the extent and robustness of social closure. To gauge such dimensions qualitatively, other questions have to be addressed: How rigid are the extant forms of status stratification? How controversial are the existing norms of stratification? What kinds of social mobility are possible, and what is the extent of such mobility? Are the tangible benefits accruing to members claiming different kinds of social status merely symbolic, or are they substantive and disproportionate relative to the tangible social contributions perceived to be made by the status groups in question? Focusing on such questions would provide a better sense of how status groups in the social realm intersect with the political and economic structures of power, thereby laying the basis for a clearer idea of the potential for strife.

**Summarizing the notion of closure.** The overall purpose of the scrutiny of the political, economic, and social system is designed to do three things: (1) to provide a general profile of which sets of individuals either benefit most or are deprived most by the prevailing social structures when classified by certain substate categories like race, language, religion, region, or culture; (2) to identify the level of disproportion in the dominance or deprivation of the given group relative to its size or standing in the population as a whole; and (3) to assess the opportunities for peaceful transformation in the system as a whole by means of a careful scrutiny of the existing institutional structures, the ruling norms of behavior, and the general expecta-
tions about appropriate political actions. Taken together, such an examination, conducted skillfully, might suggest whether significant forms of closure exist in any given country.

If significant forms of closure are discovered, it still would be premature to claim that “ethnic” strife is probable. For such a claim to be sustained, the burdens of closure must be shown to fall disproportionately on individuals with certain potential affinities. That is, individuals who share possible solidarity deriving from race, language, religion, regional origin, or culture must be either objectively disadvantaged as a result of such closure—whether they know it or not—or they must be capable of being “conscientized” on the basis of some such affinity in the presence of specific perceptions of deprivation. In such circumstances, it does not matter if the basis for affinity is entirely spurious, for so long as the fact of deprivation (or the appearance thereof) can be shown to fall on individuals potentially linked by “some externally identifiable characteristic,” the potential for usurpation and strife by disadvantaged individuals can be said to exist. Therefore, the first stage of the model illustrated above is completed by a systematic effort to map the identified patterns of closure onto potential affinities centered either on kinship groups or on other forms of presumed identity based on race, language, religion, geographic origin, or culture.

STAGE II: UNDERSTANDING THE TRANSFORMATION FROM POTENTIAL TO LIKELY STRIFE

Potential Versus Likely Strife

Establishing the potential for strife is not the same as establishing the likelihood of strife. If objective patterns of closure exist within a given state and if they burden certain sets of individuals with identifiable affinities, the potential for strife certainly exists. Transforming the potential for strife into likely strife, however, requires certain catalytic elements. The necessity of a catalyst is particularly salient because large-scale social violence, especially when it involves coordinated actions by numerous individuals, rarely (if ever) occurs as a result of spontaneous social combustion. The claim that violent

action often arises from the perceived “feeling that prevailing conditions limit or hinder” the political prospects of individuals is often rooted in the classical imagery of Jacobin revolutions, which depicted social uprisings as deriving from simultaneous, unconnected, and spontaneous actions by large numbers of discontented individuals. Such a vision received its most sophisticated treatment in the early work of revolution theorists like James Davies and Ted Robert Gurr, who argued that the prospects for large-scale violence are linked primarily to conditions of unbearable immiserization. As Gurr succinctly described the thesis, “the more widespread and intense deprivation is among members of the population, the greater is the magnitude of strife in one or another form.” However, neither Gurr nor Davies argues in favor of a simple relationship between deprivation and strife. Both analysts employ intervening variables that center mostly on the capacity of the system to satisfy individual or group expectations. For example, Davies argues that although immiserization sets the stage for revolutionary events, they are most likely to occur “when a prolonged period of objective economic and social development is followed by a short period of sharp reversal.” By Davies’s logic, such a pattern arises because individual expectations do not decrease in proportion to the state’s decrease in institutional capacity; large-scale social violence is a result of rising expectations amidst declining satisfactions. Despite such sophisticated hypothesizing, the core argument still remains fairly simple: relative deprivation, though mediated, constitutes the principal cause of likely strife.

The main problem with such an argument is that it need not be true. To begin with, the deprivation experienced by a given population may not lead to strife or even to opposition if the bonds of solidarity among the affected groups are merely latent or fractured. The latter possibility is particularly relevant because modern societies invariably place individuals in multiple roles. Individuals may acquire multiple identities defined both by the various activities they engage

---

in and by the different levels and kinds of meaning bequeathed by their membership in diverse social formations. There may also be cross-cutting cleavages in society that keep groups from coalescing along certain specific lines despite the existence of otherwise widespread deprivation. The existence of multiple identities and cross-cutting cleavages can, therefore, conspire to keep relative deprivation from raising the propensity for strife.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that deprivational approaches contain an important kernel of truth: the existence of deprivation is, as Gurr puts it, "the basic condition for civil strife of any kind." Thus the deprivational approaches are not false, but simply incomplete. They tell only a part of the story. Their core concerns about inequality, disinheritance, and alienation need to be integrated with other elements that can transform these dispositions into "joint action in pursuit of common ends." This implies connecting the "diffuse strains and discontents within the population" with a "central political process" so that ethnic-based collective action can be seen for what it actually is: a species of political action in which "specific claims and counter-claims [are] made on the existing [regime] by various mobilized groups" in order to secure "established places within the [extant] structure of power." Or, to put it in terms favored by closure theorists, political guidance and organization are needed to transform diffuse dissatisfaction into effective usurpationary action.

The ethnic ingredient by itself never obliterates the basic fact that all such collective actions simply amount to forms of political mobilization designed to capture power or increase existing power. Consequently, any violence that may accompany mobilization is always political violence, which in turn is "essentially a by-product of [the] omnipresent process of political conflict among mobilized—that is, organized and resource controlling—groups and governments."43

40 Gurr, op. cit., p. 1105.
This argument highlights the complementary dimensions—organized mobilization and reactive state action—necessary to complete the deprivationist narrative and transform it into a coherent theory about ethnic violence because, as Aya remarked, “for all the violent passion and passionate violence they entail, revolutions, rebellion, and lesser forms of coercive civilian conflict are best understood as (to adopt Clausewitz’s venerable definition of war) ‘a mere continuation of politics by other means.’”

Mobilization for Political Action

Understanding how individuals who are potentially motivated as a result of deprivation become mobilized in the form of “ethnic” groups constitutes the core of Stage II of the model. Five factors are critical to this process.

**Incipient changes in the balance of power.** The first factor consists simply of any significant—incipient—changes in the prevailing patterns of closure or the existing balance of power within a state and sometimes outside it. Since all polities are constantly in flux, thanks to the myriad changes taking place in the political, economic, and social dimensions of public life, social change is clearly as inevitable as it often is mundane. These changes, usually arising out of the normal processes of politics and economics, tend to occur constantly but in incremental form. As such, they rarely garner concentrated attention. Every so often, however, a set of dramatic social changes appear poised to materialize: these changes almost take the form of “step functions” as opposed to the merely accretional modifications constantly witnessed in public life. Changes of this kind can be deliberate, as for example when certain political or constitutional alterations threaten to transform the prevailing patterns of power and privilege; or they can be merely a consequence of an evolutionary process, as for example when certain economic groups finally begin to realize supernormal profits from previously marginally successful ventures; or they can be simply accidental, as for example when the discovery of new resources suddenly increases the wealth of formerly peripheral property owners.

---

No matter how such changes occur, the critical issue from the point of view of anticipating mobilization is that such changes must be, first, significant in absolute terms and, more important, capable of causing significant alterations in the prevailing internal balances of power. In other words, the changes worthy of attention are not the mundane changes that constantly occur in social life but the ones that threaten to immediately alter the extant patterns of closure in a given society. The prospect of immediate change is critical from the point of view of mobilization, because social changes that threaten to alter the prevailing patterns of power over the long run—no matter how significant they are and how clearly they are foreseen by the perspicacious—usually do not result in collective action, for two main reasons. First, individuals tend to discount the future and as such are less motivated to respond to contingencies that do not threaten their immediate interests. Second, the very length of time required to make long-run changes effective usually implies that many other alternative outcomes could obtain and hence serve to retard pressures for social mobilization and collective action.

Prospects for significant and immediate changes in the prevailing patterns of social closure, however, are perfect precipitants for collective action, and they can work in one of two ways. To begin with, they can catalyze expectations of quick success and thereby motivate individuals who are dissatisfied with the prevailing balances of power to increase their individual efforts toward group mobilization based on potential solidarities like race, language, regional origin, or culture. The prospect of incipient change in existing forms of social closure can also work in the opposite direction, in that it can result in collective action by individuals threatened by imminent loss of power or privilege. While there is no reason—in terms of the principles of standard utility theory—why individuals threatened by loss should behave any differently from individuals in pursuit of gains, there is some experimental evidence to suggest that individuals faced with the prospect of significant, immediate losses tend to be more risk acceptant and, by implication, might be willing to bear greater burdens—if necessary, in the form of enhanced contributions to collective action—in the hope of avoiding such losses. This evidence,
captured in conceptual terms by “prospect theory,” would suggest that fear of immediate loss among the privileged might result in more effective collective action—perhaps expressed in ethnic idioms—if such an outcome promises to avert the anticipated losses. The direction in which the pressures toward mobilization run is less important than the factors that cause the pressures. A prospective and consequential change in the prevailing balance of power, even if it comes about purely accidentally, will upset the status quo, creating a disequilibrium that invites collective efforts to either exploit it or ward off its worst consequences.

**Tipping events.** The second factor consists of specific “tipping events” that can galvanize a group into political action. Tipping events are simply any conspicuous public events that arouse group sensibilities, reinforce beliefs in their insular identity, and set off escalating spirals of shared expectations about collective resistance to the established order. By their occurrence, they “confirm or justify the [latent] fears or hatreds in[to] a [more] generalized belief; they may initiate or exaggerate a condition of strain; or they may redefine sharply the conditions of conduciveness [leading to future mobilization and violence].” Tipping events can take various forms. They could include large-scale public violence directed at members of a particular group, the destruction of important properties valued by a community, the forcible relocation, banishment, exile, or execution of important or numerous individuals in a community, or any other such conspicuous event that induces or reinforces a differential perception of vulnerability. When viewed in retrospect, tipping events often turn out to be important elements of the historical memory, deepening group identity and accentuating the processes of group formation. They come to serve as the manifest symbols of alienation and become “salience indicators” toward which individual fears, resentment, and anger all converge—ready to be molded either by

---


interested elites or exploited by interested factions both within the state and outside it.

**Leadership.** While “tipping events” can intensify the background conditions for political mobilization and are helpful for that purpose, they are not as essential for ethnic mobilization as the third factor—identity entrepreneurs—usually is. “Identity entrepreneurs” are simply individuals who, for self-interested reasons, find it profitable to contribute to creating group identities and bear the costs of mobilizing such groups for political action. Identity entrepreneurs usually rise from within the ranks of a given subcultural affinity, but such attachments are not critical, though probably likely when the mobilization is an ethnic one. These entrepreneurs are generally indispensable for group mobilization because of the problems associated with collective action. Such problems usually derive from the fact that any collective action, whether it be engaging in street protests, mobilizing community action, or orchestrating mass resistance against “outsiders” or the state, is invariably characterized by what has been called “the de facto impossibility of exclusion.” This means that it is impossible to prevent the entire set of relevant people from consuming the fruits of a particular collective action, even though only a few may have contributed to their production. For example, a protest action against discrimination mounted by a few individuals may create a political windfall that can be enjoyed by other dominated individuals who did not participate in the original protest. Ethnically driven collective actions are, thus, one more example of such collective goods.

Since the ascriptive tradition of viewing ethnicity regards all ethnic groups as composed ultimately of self-interested, or egoistic, individuals, collective goods—like ethnically based social action—either will not be produced in normal circumstances or at best will be produced only in suboptimal “quantities.” The deficit in the production of such goods does not arise because collective ethnic mobilization is

---

48The term “identity entrepreneur” has been borrowed from Barbara Ballis Lal, “Identity Entrepreneurs: Do We Want Them/Do We Need Them?” unpublished manuscript.


judged to be *unnecessary* in the face of some palpable deprivation, but only because each individual ethnic agent has great incentives to be a “free rider.” Knowing that he cannot be excluded from eventually enjoying the fruits of successful ethnic action, he has few incentives to make an individual contribution to its success. This is because he judges his own personal contribution to be either insignificant to the success of the final outcome or not worth the costs he will bear in the process of bringing that outcome about. Consequently, every individual ethnic agent is—in the language of game theory—tempted to “defect” when he has to make good on his individual contribution to collective social action.\(^{51}\) The effect of every individual agent reasoning this way soon leads to the demise of any possible ethnic action, *even though such action may be both universally recognized as necessary and desired by all individuals sharing certain substatal affinities.*

While it is certainly true that this paradox of “missing” action arises primarily because of a particular view of individual rationality, it is also true that this conception of rationality is sufficiently accurate to describe the motivational structure of most individuals in modern, if not all, societies. Corroborating evidence for this assertion can be seen in the fact that several important collective goods like clean air and public safety cannot be produced except through the intervention of *command* mechanisms like the state. In the case of ethnic mobilization, the state is unavailable as a catalyst and may in fact be an adversary. An alternative mechanism of mobilization is therefore required, and identity entrepreneurs usually fit the bill neatly. Identity entrepreneurs help to resolve the collective-action problems in several ways.\(^{52}\)

To begin with, they can help to “create” the ethnic group—if the group is merely a latent formation up to that point—by “conscientizing” individuals to support certain collective goals as defined by the entrepreneur. This attempt to define goals for the purpose of mobilizing a given populace is clearly rational and self-


interested behavior by the entrepreneur because its goal is to entice individuals to commit themselves and their resources to political actions that advance the entrepreneur’s current and future political interests. However, if individuals are as rational and self-regarding as the ascriptive tradition assumes, they would not advance the entrepreneur’s interest by participating in such collective action because, other things being equal, they could gamble on being able to enjoy these goods for free after they have been created. Since the costs accruing to each person would certainly be greater than the individual benefits, a person’s nonparticipation in the face of exhortations by identity entrepreneurs is just as rational as nonparticipation in the context of other calls for community mobilization—precisely the problem that gave rise to a need for identity entrepreneurs in the first place.

This problem can be solved in several ways. One solution would rely on positing that the identity entrepreneur is a very effective purveyor of “false consciousness.” In effect, the political entrepreneur is seen in this instance as exercising great “charismatic leadership” in the Weberian sense. As such, he is credited with the capacity to mobilize sentiments and provide a coherence to the life and actions of individuals in a way that the prevailing social order and the raw fact of latent affinity cannot. The charisma of such leaders serves to suspend the normal calculative rationality of individuals who, putting aside conventional considerations of costs and benefits, tap into their reservoir of extrarational motivations to participate in collective actions despite their potentially high personal cost. While identity entrepreneurs can certainly mobilize collective action in this way by sheer dint of personality, it must be recognized that this process is explicitly extrarational from the ascriptive perspective. It can account for how collective actions originate—activated emotions that almost imply “a fit of absence of mind”—but it is a relatively precarious explanation for why collective actions sustain themselves over time, because charismatic authority is unstable, often transient, and eventually of limited duration simply because of the mortality of individuals.\footnote{The limitations of charisma as an explanatory concept have been explored in William Spinrod, “Charisma: A Blighted Concept and an Alternative Formula,” \textit{Political Science Quarterly}, Vol. 106, No. 2, 1991, pp. 295–311.}
An alternative solution to the problem also centers on identity entrepreneurs but runs a more rationalist course. This variant posits that the identity entrepreneur belongs to a “privileged group,” that is, a subgroup with a vested interest in seeing the collective action succeed and willing for purely self-interested reasons to bear the costs of ensuring such success. The self-interested reasons may be political, as is the case when certain individuals perceive that organizing a latent group would advance their own claims to wider political power, or it may be economic, as is the case when certain individuals perceive that empowering a latent group would increase their own markets, wealth, or profits. Whatever the reasons, the identity entrepreneur solves the collective-action problem in this case not by activating the emotions of individuals and gambling on suspended rationality, but by exploiting individual rationality. This is done through the offering of “selective incentives.” These may be “positive”—when one or more individuals are compensated (in the form of promises of future political power or simply monetary payments) for their role in orchestrating or participating in collective actions—or they may be “negative”—when one or more individuals are simply coerced into participating in collective actions by threats to their life, liberty, or property. Which sort of selective incentive (or combination thereof) is offered in any given case depends on the character and objectives of the identity entrepreneur in question. What is important, however, is that the mechanism of selective incentives can solve the collective-action problem in a direct and rational way by introducing excludability (“those who don’t participate, don’t get compensated” or “those who don’t participate, better watch out”) and by equalizing the asymmetry between individual costs and gains (“there are direct benefits for individual participants, not simply diffused gains from future group victories” or “there is special pain for each individual nonparticipant, not simply general discomfort from being quietly worse off”).

Because of the solutions they embody, identity entrepreneurs become very important for transforming individuals sharing certain affinities into mobilized political groups pursuing certain power-

---

54 The phrase “privileged group” comes from Olson, op. cit., pp. 49–52.
55 Ibid., p. 133.
political goals.\textsuperscript{56} Given the kinds of techniques they can utilize for this purpose, identity entrepreneurs in particular and ethnic political leadership in general can be seen to arise in one or more of three ways. They may arise from “patrimonial” structures, in which leadership is derived from traditional forms of status and power, both economic and political, as held by certain privileged families; they may arise out of “bureaucratic” institutions, in which leadership is based on special occupational competency and derived from certain training in civil or religious administration or military affairs; or they may arise out of the dynamic personality characteristics and proclivities of an individual.

\textbf{Resources and organization.} Political leadership in the form of identity entrepreneurs is a necessary catalyst but needs to be supplemented by additional components for effective group mobilization. These additional components are summarized by the fourth factor—resources and organization\textsuperscript{57}—in the graphic depicted earlier. Both elements are critical. A group’s access to resources is in many ways the lifeblood of the mobilization process. It determines the depth of conscientization that can be undertaken, the level of propaganda and public-relations efforts that must be mounted, the kinds of selective incentives that can be offered to bystanders, and, overall, the kind of strategy that the mobilized group can pursue vis-à-vis other competing social formations and the state. For all these reasons, identity entrepreneurs arising out of patrimonial structures will invest their own resources in the movement, while those arising out of bureaucratic institutions and personality dispositions will have to rely on the resources of others for sustaining the groups they seek to mobilize.

Access to resources can come in many forms: besides personal wealth and family connections, which are usually associated with patrimonial structures, identity entrepreneurs can direct their persuasive or coercive efforts at internal community resources, seeking contributions from wealthy ethnic cohorts and appealing to ethnic


\textsuperscript{57}These factors are most clearly emphasized in the “resource mobilization” perspective in Charles Tilly, \textit{From Mobilization to Revolution}, Reading, PA: Addison-Wesley, 1978.
émigrés abroad or to foreign states. Success in mobilizing these resources will be determined by the levels of wealth within the group; the confidence individuals have in the existing leadership or the effectiveness of the entrepreneur’s coercive threats; the entrepreneur’s skill in creating domestic and external coalitions; and the extent and intensity of the deprivation felt by the group at large.

In addition to resources, which provide the lifeblood for effective mobilization, competent organization provides the arteries that channel the lifeblood into effective action. Competent organization is necessary in the presence of every kind of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship deriving from patrimonial structures usually brings along some form of nascent organizational structure in the form of patrimonial bureaucracies, but even this organization has to acquire new powers and capabilities if it is to be responsive to the new demands of large-scale political action. Entrepreneurship based on personality disposition or special vocational competency must create organizational structures from scratch or “annex” existing organizational structures which are then oriented to the new goals of ethnic mobilization. These organizational structures are generally needed because communities that possess no hierarchical structure and no functional role differentiation are generally ineffective as agents of large-scale social mobilization. For such purposes, a formal organizational structure is required. The structure must be capable of carrying out a variety of actions designed to advance the cause of the mobilized groups and, as such, would have the following three characteristics.

First, it will have a set of closed relationships at the core, meaning that admission to “outsiders” would be proscribed at least at the level of executive authority. The organization may support open structures like a political party, pressure groups, research and educational institutions, and a legal defense arm, but at its core policymaking level, an ethnically mobilized political group is characterized by a closed organization. Second, the organization also will be autonomous and autocephalous, meaning that it frames its own regulations and takes its orders from its own leaders on their personal (or bureaucratically mediated) authority and not from outsiders, no matter how well intentioned; further, it regulates issues of leadership, functional roles, and succession through internal means alone. Third, it will focus special attention on ensuring the security of its
leadership and the cadres as well as on preserving the sanctity of the channels of communication linking these entities.

Because political mobilization is oriented to altering the relations of power, the ethnic organization must be attentive to the balance of power among various groups (and the state) as well as to the general perceptions of that balance. Toward that end, it must be able to counter those forces that would oppose continued mobilization and entice those elements that adopt a position of neutrality. Achieving such objectives requires a variety of tactics, the most important of which are successful differential mobilization of resources, intelligence collection on opponent groups, and information warfare. The success of each of these operations is crucially dependent on preserving the security of the leadership-cadre link and the inviolability of the group’s means of intelligence gathering, data fusion, and transmission of orders.

**The foreign element.** The final catalyst for effective mobilization of ethnic groups is the possibility of foreign assistance. In a strict sense, foreign aid to a mobilizing ethnic group is simply another facet of the group’s effort to muster resources. Because it pushes domestic power struggles into the interstices of interstate competition, however, the role of foreign agencies and states requires separate categorization. The possibility of external assistance to incipiently mobilizing ethnic groups becomes relevant for two reasons. First, state boundaries often do not coincide with the location of ethnic populations. As a result, members of a certain group mobilizing for power within a given country are often tempted to look for assistance from their cohorts located in other states. Such cohorts may occasionally seek to provide tangible support even if it has not been requested by the mobilizing group. Ethnic émigrés abroad are one special case of such possibilities. Second, because interstate competition continues unabated even as domestic struggles for power proceed within states, states may often find it convenient to support domestic challengers abroad simply for purposes of wearing down their competitors. Such support can come in the form of sanc-
tuary for ethnic elites, financial assistance, diplomatic support, provision of organizational expertise, and even covert arms transfers and military training. Because of the serious and extended nature of such interactions, domestic ethnic mobilization may become swiftly enmeshed in the vicissitudes of international politics. The bottom line, therefore, is that foreign support may be critical for the success of ethnic mobilization, and fears of such support often become critical precipitants of intrastate violence as state authorities are tempted to attempt “preemptive strikes” at an ethnic leadership if consequential foreign support appears imminent or likely. A whole set of issues arises in such situations, as the state authorities then can portray the mobilized ethnic group as a foreign agent and, in turn, claim support from their own allies abroad.

Summarizing the logic of mobilization. We examine the factors that can aid or hinder mobilization in order to identify the variables responsible for catalyzing existing latent dissatisfaction into visible political action. When existing differential deprivation is married to the appearance of five factors—the approach of incipient changes, the existence of tipping events, the rise of identity entrepreneurs, the availability of resources and the development of competent organization, and the potential for foreign assistance—the potential for strife moves toward likelihood. Whether strife actually occurs, however, does not depend just on the capabilities of the mobilized group. The capabilities and actions of the prevailing stakeholders, namely the state, are crucial as well, and it is to these variables that attention must now turn.

STAGE III: FROM LIKELY TO ACTUAL STRIFE: UNDERSTANDING STATE CAPABILITIES AND THE PROCESS OF STRATEGIC BARGAINING

State Capacity

The possibility of actual strife is always determined by the results of the interaction between the preferences, capabilities, and actions of both the mobilized group and the prevailing stakeholders, namely, the state. The state, it is generally assumed, tends to be more powerful (in an absolute sense) than any single challenger. This perception usually derives from the fact that the state is supposed to claim, in
popular conceptions, “a monopoly on the means of violence.” If this were true in the literal sense of the phrase, the challenge of ethnic strife would be both trivial and uninteresting: trivial because the state would employ its “monopoly” on force to readily crush any incipient challenge by a substantial group, and uninteresting because all assessments of possible ethnic strife would be little more than a narrative of abortive and failed challenges.

The empirical record, however, suggests that this is not the case. Communal challenges, including ethnic groups, do sometimes succeed, and this is due to the fact that the state—both in theory and in practice—never enjoys a real monopoly on the use of force. Weber understood this well enough, and for that reason he described the state as an institution that merely lays claim to the monopoly of legitimate violence within a territory. Mobilizing groups, therefore, stand a chance when contending with state power because the state, just like other social formations, is constantly struggling to dominate various nodes that generate power within a given society, even as it constantly seeks to increase the levels of coercive power it has available but by no means monopolizes. The mobilized group, then, has certain advantages in that it is never confronted by a “state” that is a single unitary actor with a monopoly on social resources, including the capacity for violence, and therein lie precisely the possibilities for successfully pressing certain political claims.59

Understanding how this process can unfold requires an understanding of the nature of the state. The state, simply put, is first and foremost a security-producing institution. As such, it involves a territorially defined set of political relationships. These relationships, which take the form of a hierarchy based on coercion and sustained by some concentration of force, are intended primarily for the protection of the dominant elites at the apex but provide, as an unintended consequence, relative safety for the subordinated subjects further down the coercive chain.60


This implies that the state, far from being a simple unitary organism, has many “parts.” These include the dominant elites at the apex of the institutional structure who “rule” the polity. Below them are several bureaucracies consisting of the army, police, intelligence agencies, tax collectors, and propagandists. The task of such bureaucracies is to maintain security and order with a view to preserving the prevailing structure of power and to effectively collect the revenues required from civil society with a view to both sustaining the structures for power and undertaking redistributional and welfare functions more generally. Finally, there is civil society itself, which consists of ordinary citizens existing atomistically as well as in the form of other large-scale economic organizations like industrial enterprises, agricultural combines, universities, and the like.61

Since these formal arrangements mask more invisible patterns of distributed power and wealth, the task of the state essentially boils down to either preserving the existing exclusionary patterns of closure in the polity or preventing the usurpationary attempts at changing existing power relations from manifesting themselves through violence. In effect, therefore, the dominant elites who “rule” the state seek to use the multiple bureaucracies either to preserve their own power or, in more accommodative political systems, to prevent the incipient changes in power relations from taking place through violent means.

Since the ascriptive tradition, however, assumes that all individuals in the system are rational and egoistic, it is evident that the state too faces multiple kinds of collective-action problems as elites attempt to maneuver their underlings to confront the mobilized communal or ethnic groups seeking political change. In the strictest sense, the collective-action problem facing these ruling elites is identical to that facing identity entrepreneurs at the opposite end: to mobilize a group of individuals to undertake a certain task that imposes higher individual costs on each of them in comparison to their individually realized benefits. At the state’s end, however, the issue may not be getting individuals to rally behind calls for redistributing certain

61For a useful survey of the current state of research on the state as a political structure and on the nature of rule, see Theda Skocpol, “Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research,” in Peter B. Evans et al. (eds.), Bringing the State Back In, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 3–37.
resources—which, for example, is the problem confronting the identity entrepreneur—but rather to find a way to induce numerous citizens to do a variety of individually burdensome tasks, as represented by the challenges facing policemen confronting unruly mobs, armies tasked with hunting down armed resisters, and tax collectors responsible for levying assessments on a recalcitrant populace. In every such instance, the problem remains the same: for the agents undertaking these tasks, the individual burdens are greater than the individual benefits, so each is inclined to avoid contributing in the expectation that he could enjoy all the benefits as long as someone else contributed in his stead.

Precisely to avoid such collective-action problems, state managers do not rely on a collection of atomistic agents but rather structure these agents into a hierarchically ordered organization. Such an organization enables both systematic monitoring of individual action and the efficient coupling of such actions to a structured system of rewards and penalties, thus enabling state managers to extract the desired behavior from what is otherwise merely a large mass of individual actors. The system of rewards and penalties serves to help equalize the disparity between individual costs and benefits facing each agent, though it can never quite equalize these values entirely. For this reason, embedded rules, norms, and expectations of good behavior are developed as part of an organizational “ethos.” This organizational ethos serves to provide psychic benefits which, in turn, help to reduce the costs of individual action still further, thus bringing them closer to the level of individually realized benefits.

As an ultima ratio, however, action on the part of an individual agent is ensured simply by means of sanctions, which in the extreme may involve the taking of life. This enforcement of sanctions, too, is embodied in a transitive system in which each individual complies with his duties because there is another to punish him, and still another to punish the punisher, and so on. In a simple sense, then, the state is effective (in the sense of being able to compel agents to perform their duties) because the monarch or the ruling elite serve as the “ultimate punishers,” as used to be the case in traditional kingdoms ruled by free, physically strong, rulers. As modern political

---

theory has demonstrated, however, even if such an asymmetrically powerful "omega point" does not exist, agents can still be made to carry out extremely (individually) hazardous orders. Such compliance ensues not because of fear of some omnipotent sovereign (who may not exist), but because each agent, fearing that another (or some others) may obey the existing authority, rushes to obey first. The net result of this logic, in which each agent obeys because of fear that some other(s) might obey, allows state elites to secure the compliance of subordinate agents, despite the fact that these elites may actually be weaker than any given subset of the subordinate population imaginable.63

The state, therefore, can solve its collective-action problem, though not assuredly or in every instance. In that sense, it only mirrors the problems faced by an incipiently mobilizing group, which may be successful on some occasions but not others. In any event, however, the capacity of the state will be determined by its ability to successfully undertake not one but two kinds of countermobilization in the face of an emerging ethnic opposition group. First, it has to be able to mobilize its own bureaucracies to undertake a range of direct—immediate—actions against the group, if necessary. Second, and only a trifle less urgently, it must be able to mobilize important sections of civil society, especially critical co-ethnic groups or class formations whose support is essential for the preservation of the existing systems of closure. Here, the state could use its bureaucracies to coerce civil society into providing it with the resources and support necessary for its confrontation with the newly mobilized ethnic group, but such actions do not augur well for the possibility of effectively containing the larger problem.64

In any event, a state’s capacity to cope with its new “demands groups” is a function of its strength along three dimensions, and each of these must be briefly described as the first step toward understanding how likely strife may be transformed into actual strife. This preliminary step, which consists simply of investigating the

63 For formal proof of this proposition, see Tellis, op. cit., pp. 288–309.
64 See the discussion in Jeff Goodwin and Theda Skocpol, “Explaining Revolutions in the Contemporary Third World,” in Theda Skocpol, Social Revolutions in the Modern World, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 28–31.
nature, extent, and depth of state capabilities, is analogous to the previous step of establishing the requirements for successful ethnic mobilization: it completes the story about the required capabilities of the antagonists. Once these state capabilities are explored, it is possible to understand the nature of feasible state responses because this latter set is bounded critically by both the nature of the state’s abstract preferences and its existing capabilities.

The first step—understanding state capabilities—therefore requires an examination of the three constitutive facets of state power, namely its accommodative capacity as defined by its political structure, its fiscal capability as measured by the health of its treasury, and its coercive capability, which refers to its ability and willingness to use effective force.

The accommodative capability of the state is probably the most important variable for the purposes of anticipating ethnic violence, since, as argued earlier, ethnic movements are simply special forms of political movements struggling for power. Given this fact, the most important issue for the state is its institutional structure or, in other words, its structured capacity for responsiveness to the demands of its constituents. This variable is, in turn, a function of two specific dimensions: the level of inclusion as expressed by the character of the regime and the nature of organizational design that enables or retards the possibility of peaceful change. The nature of the established political structure, then, combines with the prevailing norms of governance and the cohesion of the ruling elites to determine the accommodative capacity of a given state. This varies as well, and democratic, oligarchic, and authoritarian states will exhibit a variety of different capacities in this regard.

The fiscal capacity of the state is the next important variable for purposes of anticipating ethnic violence because it relates, among other things, to the issue of how a state can ameliorate the demands of mobilized groups short of using force. Clearly, the use of this capacity depends on the character of the political regime to begin with, but it warrants independent analysis because it identifies the margins of maneuver that a state has irrespective of its political structure. Three components are relevant in this regard: (1) the overall condition of the state treasury, meaning the extent of existing surpluses and deficits and the prevailing and prospective composition of budgetary
expenditures; (2) the state’s potential extractive capacity, meaning its ability to extract additional revenues without fear of accentuating political resistance; and (3) the extent and durability of its social base, meaning the size and wealth of the class base supporting the existing ruling elites.

The coercive capacity of the state is the final variable for the purposes of anticipating ethnic violence because it relates, in the final analysis, to the state’s ability to conclusively attempt suppression of political mobilization by force. This variable is ranked third not because of its lesser importance but because coercion is generally understood to be the ultimate arbitrator of rule, though many regimes use coercion quite effectively as the means of first and last resort. In any event, the relevant components in this connection are (1) the structural relationship between the ruling elites and the bureaucracies of violence; (2) the social composition of the external and internal security organs; (3) the state’s reputation for the use of force, which incorporates historical tradition, attitudes, and experience with respect to the use of force; and (4) the technical capability of the external and internal security forces for purposes of suppressing unrest.

These state capabilities writ large describe in effect its latent capacity to offset popular mobilization by a group challenging the ruling elites currently in power. As such, they represent the state’s “assets” (or liabilities, as the case may be) in the interaction with various challenging groups. In contrast to the levels of deprivation and possibilities of mobilization, which represent the “demand” side of the equation relating to probable ethnic violence, the state’s capabilities in the accommodative, fiscal, and coercive dimensions then represent the “supply” side.

**Strategic Bargaining**

Having completed this examination of state capacity, it is now possible to embark on the second step of Stage III, which consists of

---

investigating the nature of the strategic bargaining that ensues between the mobilized group and the state. This requires systematically matching up the feasible preferences, alternative capabilities, and potential actions of both the mobilized ethnic group and the state to discover the range of social possibilities that could arise as a consequence of such bargaining. Because this model attempts to assist the analyst tasked with intelligence and warning, and is for that reason fundamentally a conceptual effort at understanding the prospect for ethnic violence long before it materializes, the objective of the following section is not so much to provide accurate “point predictions” of when ethnic violence will occur but rather to structure thought about how alternative combinations of group and state preferences and capabilities interact to produce a variety of political consequences, ranging from political reconciliation to state breakdown. Because some of these consequences embody strife in varying forms and intensity, they provide a means of “backward deduction,” that is, they allow the analyst to discover which combinations of group/state preferences and capabilities are particularly volatile. If such preferences and capabilities are then seen to materialize empirically in any given case of communal action, the intelligence analysts can “flag” such cases as potentially troublesome. These cases warrant closer scrutiny by other crisis assessment or “watch” teams, and may even justify preemptive political intervention if these strife-prone areas are of importance to the United States.

Before this process of strategic bargaining is modeled, it is worth mentioning that such a straightforward dyadic interaction between group and state represents only one, and is in fact the simplest, kind of encounter that can be envisaged. A more complex situation, and perhaps one that has greater empirical fidelity to the real world, would involve not simply one ethnic group facing the state but rather one ethnic group facing perhaps several others in addition to the state. The origins of such situations are themselves very interesting. The successful mobilization of one ethnic group may in fact give rise to successful competitive mobilization by other groups, and ethnic competition in such instances may arise not only because the less advantaged group embarks on “usurpationary” closure but also because the more advantaged group feels compelled to preemptively reinforce existing “exclusionary” patterns of closure in order to stave off a challenge to their privileges. Irrespective of what the immediate
causes of ethnic competition may be (or, for that matter, their more remote origins), the fact remains that modeling the processes of strategic bargaining in situations where there are more than two entities remains a very challenging task.

This difficulty is only compounded by the fact that the number of entities in play increases when the state is factored in as a relevant actor. In fact, in situations where multiple ethnic groups exist in some relationship of super- and subordination among themselves, the relationship of the state to the various mobilized groups becomes a critical factor conditioning the extent of their success. The degree of autonomy enjoyed by the state from its social bases of power, in conjunction with its own inherent capabilities, will determine whether the state plays the role of an umpire between various contending groups or whether it turns out to be an abettor, if not a direct precipitant, of exclusionary political action. Modeling the state in each of these roles would be desirable if a complete or “intensive” understanding of the processes of strategic bargaining is required. Such modeling, however, would require formal analysis, including the use of mathematical tools, and lies beyond the scope of this preliminary effort.

Finally, a complete analysis of strategic bargaining would require explicitly incorporating the international system as a causal variable. The international environment not only provides possibilities of external support for mobilized social groups within a state, it also affects the extent and character of internal state action through the resources it diverts for external power-political purposes. In fact, as much modern research has shown, events pertaining to the external environment like victory or defeat in war often act as a precipitant for the mobilization of various social groups within a country, sometimes on ethnic lines. Consequently, the effect of the external environment—either as efficient or permissive cause—must be incorporated explicitly into an analysis of strategic bargaining for reasons of completeness.

This chapter, however, avoids all the aforementioned complications not because of their lack of importance but because of the need for simplicity. Since it aims to establish simply “proof of concept” for the intelligence community and other interested observers, it settles for explicating the simplest case: a dyadic encounter between a sin-
gle mobilized group and the state. If the ensuing analysis provides a useful tool for conceptualizing the process of strategic bargaining, it will have served its purpose, while also opening the door to future work (perhaps carried out by others) aimed at “intensively” expanding the model through a formal incorporation of more variables, such as many mobilized groups, the state in multiple roles, and differing opportunities and constraints imposed by the international system.

Given this intention of demarcating the range of outcomes in a simple dyadic encounter between group and state, the process of strategic bargaining is modeled as a three-step process through the means of several tables and matrices. The steps are linked in such a way that the outcomes of a preceding table or matrix become the dimensions on the axis of the following matrix.

The first step involves “measuring” the capacities of both the mobilized group and the state. The capacity of the mobilized group is measured with a view to assessing the following: its ability to be accommodative vis-à-vis other competing social formations, including the state; its ability to sustain the political campaign for redress of its grievances; and its ability to maintain the cohesiveness of its emerging group identity. Based on the earlier discussion of group formation, the group’s capacity to be accommodative, to sustain its political aims, and to maintain its cohesion is measured against binary variations (strong-weak) in (1) leadership, (2) access to resources and organization, and (3) levels of popular support, respectively.

The full extent of the variations in group capacity are depicted in binary terms (high-low) in Table 2.1.

The protocols through which variations in the three categories (leadership, resources, and popular support) lead to specific rankings in the three capacities (accommodative, sustainment, and cohesiveness) are given below.
Table 2.1
Capacity of a Mobilized Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF MOBILIZED GROUP</th>
<th>CAPACITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Descriptors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| A   | Strong leadership  
     Good resource support  
     Broad popular support | High | High | High |
| B   | Weak leadership  
     Good resource support  
     Broad popular support | Low | High | Low |
| C   | Strong leadership  
     Weak resource support  
     Broad popular support | High | Low | High |
| D   | Strong leadership  
     Good resource support  
     Weak popular support | Low | High | High |
| E   | Weak leadership  
     Weak resource support  
     Broad popular support | Low | Low | Low |
| F   | Weak leadership  
     Weak resource support  
     Weak popular support | High | Low | Low |
| G   | Strong leadership  
     Weak resource support  
     Weak popular support | Low | Low | Low |
| H   | Weak leadership  
     Good resource support  
     Weak popular support | Low | High | Low |

Protocol 1. Leadership and accommodative capacity linked directly, subject to modification according to popular support values.

1a. Strong leadership = high accommodative capacity, unless it has weak popular support (in such a case, low accommodative capacity).
1b. Weak leadership = low accommodative capacity, unless it has weak popular support (in such a case, high accommodative capacity).

Protocol 2. Resource support and sustainment linked directly, subject to modification according to popular support values.

2a. Good resource support = high sustainment capacity, unless it has weak popular support (in such a case, low sustainment capacity).

2b. Weak resource support = low sustainment capacity.

Protocol 3. Popular support and cohesiveness capacity linked directly, subject to modification according to leadership values.

3a. Broad popular support = high cohesiveness capacity, unless it has weak leadership (in such a case, low cohesiveness capacity).

3b. Weak popular support = low cohesiveness capacity.

The capacity of the state is measured in similar (though not identical) areas. Based on previous discussion, again, the process seeks to assess—specifically—the state’s capacity to accommodate the group’s demands; its ability to sustain its own political preferences vis-à-vis the mobilized group; and finally, its ability to coerce its opponents in the first or last resort depending on the nature of the state in question. To assess these capacities, three variables are interrogated in binary terms: these include the strength of the ruling elites (strong-weak); the vitality of the fiscal base (strong-weak); and the overall character of the political structure (exclusionary-inclusionary).

The full extent of the variations in state capacity are depicted in binary terms (high-low) in Table 2.2.

The protocols through which variations in the three categories (leadership, fiscal position, and type of regime) lead to specific rankings in the three capacities (accommodative, sustainment, and coercive) are given below.
Table 2.2
Capacity of the State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF STATE</th>
<th>CAPACITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Descriptors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| A | Strong leadership  
Strong fiscal position  
Inclusive regime | High | High | Low |
| B | Weak leadership  
Strong fiscal position  
Inclusive regime | Low | Low | High |
| C | Strong leadership  
Weak fiscal position  
Inclusive regime | High | Low | Low |
| D | Strong leadership  
Strong fiscal position  
Exclusive regime | Low | Low | High |
| E | Weak leadership  
Weak fiscal position  
Inclusive regime | High | Low | Low |
| F | Weak leadership  
Weak fiscal position  
Exclusive regime | Low | Low | Low |
| G | Strong leadership  
Weak fiscal position  
Exclusive regime | Low | Low | High |
| H | Weak leadership  
Strong fiscal position  
Exclusive regime | Low | High | High |

Protocol 1. Leadership and accommodative capacity linked directly, subject to modification according to type of regime and fiscal position values.

1a. Strong leadership = high accommodative capacity, unless it is an exclusive regime (in such a case, low accommodative capacity).
1b. Weak leadership = low accommodative capacity, unless it is an inclusive regime and a weak fiscal position (in such a case, high accommodative capacity).

Protocol 2. Fiscal position and sustainment linked directly.

2a. Strong fiscal position = high sustainment capacity.
2b. Weak fiscal position = low sustainment capacity.

Protocol 3. Type of regime and coercive capacity linked directly, subject to modification according to leadership values.

3a. Inclusive regime = low coercive capacity.
3b. Exclusive regime = high coercive capacity, unless it has weak leadership (in such a case, low coercive capacity).

The preferences of both group and state are measured, thereafter, on the implicit premise that the nature of an entity’s effective capacity would determine its revealed preference. To be sure, the causal logic may run in the opposite direction in some instances, but such anomalies are not considered because they would be difficult to model (thanks to their inherent indeterminacy) and, more important, because such anomalies would not survive very long if there were a radical disjunction between the preferred objectives/strategies and the underlying capacity to secure/sustain these ends. On the premise that capacity therefore drives preferences, each entity is allowed a choice of four options: The mobilized group can choose between negotiation, exploitation, intimidation, or surrender, and the first three choices in every given situation are rank ordered. The state, in turn, can choose between negotiation, exploitation, repression, or surrender.

Since these strategic choices cannot be identified in the abstract but only in the context of specifically profiled groups facing specifically profiled states, the logical (and probable) choices of both group and state are arranged in matrix form. That is, the preferences of every conceivable type of group—created as a result of comprehensive variation in the kind of leadership, levels of resources, and extent of popular support (sketched in Table 2.1)—are rank ordered (down to three levels) on the basis of their respective capacities (sketched in
Table 2.1) in the context of hypothetical confrontations with every conceivable type of state.

The protocols governing the preference focus on the leadership capacity as the dynamic driving force behind group actions, though they are subject to modification based on the other two factors. The protocols governing the mobilized group preferences are as follows:

1. A strong group leadership faced with a strong state leadership will have a preference for negotiation with an inclusive regime.

2. A strong group leadership faced with a weak state leadership usually will have a preference to exploit or intimidate the latter, depending on other factors (coercive/cohesive values).

3. A weak group leadership faced with a strong state leadership usually will have a preference for exploitation, but it will opt for intimidation or negotiation, depending on other factors (resources).

4. A weak group leadership faced with a weak state leadership will almost always opt for exploitation or intimidation, particularly if the former has weak popular support or if the latter is an exclusive regime.

Based on the choices arrived at through such rules, the range of group preferences is demarcated in Matrix 1.

A similar exercise is undertaken for the state. The preferences of every conceivable kind of state—created as a result of comprehensive variation in the kind of leadership, vitality of resource base, and level of inclusiveness in political structure (sketched in Table 2.2)—are rank ordered (down to three levels) on the basis of their respective capacities (sketched in Table 2.2) in the context of hypothetical confrontations with every conceivable type of group.66

---

66The decision rules for rank ordering derive from an assessment of the relative strength in various dimensions of state capacity—accommodation, sustainment, and coercion—informed by a judgment of state behavior drawn from public choice theory. Since the process of strategic bargaining is part and parcel of the larger processes of political competition, it is logical to assume that securing, holding on to, and eventually augmenting one’s political power is the ultimate “prize” of the competition. Consequently, it is reasonable to assume decision rules of the following kind: all state leaders will divest economic power before they divest themselves of political power.
Just as in the case of the group, the protocols governing the preferences focus on leadership capacity as the dynamic driving force behind state actions, though they are subject to modification based on the other two factors.

The protocols governing the state preferences are as follows:

1. A strong state leadership faced with a strong group leadership usually will have a preference for negotiation unless it is an exclusive regime or the group has weak popular or resource support, in which case it will repress.

2. A strong state leadership faced with a weak group leadership usually will have a preference to exploit its advantage but may try to repress if the group has weak popular support or to negotiate if it has broad popular support.

3. A weak state leadership faced with a strong group leadership usually will have a preference for negotiation or exploitation, particularly if the state is inclusive. If the state is exclusive, it will attempt to exploit or repress before negotiating.

4. A weak state leadership faced with a weak group leadership will usually try to exploit or repress, unless it is inclusive, in which case it will try to negotiate first.

Based on the choices arrived at through such rules, the range of state preferences is demarcated in Matrix 2.

That is, access to wealth is relatively less important than determining and enforcing "the rules of the game." Whether state elites will attempt to coerce first or open the level of access to political rule-making and enforcement will be determined by the nature of the political structures in question. That is, exclusionary political systems (defined as such both by ethos and institutional design) will attempt to coerce political opponents before they give up extant power, whereas more inclusionary political systems will divest control of rule-making and enforcement before they attempt to coerce political opponents. There is, however, a crucial caveat: in all cases, existing state elites will attempt to coerce political opponents before they give up extant power, if the mobilized groups are seen to be beneficiaries of effective foreign assistance, since in all these cases the struggle over internal stratification intersects uncomfortably with the demands of interstate competition. This latter rule is not reflected in the matrices, but should be kept in mind.
## Matrix 1
### Mobilized Group Preferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mobilized Group Type (Table 2.1)</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1. neg</td>
<td>2. exp</td>
<td>3. int</td>
<td>1. int</td>
<td>2. exp</td>
<td>3. neg</td>
<td>1. exp</td>
<td>2. int</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1. exp</td>
<td>2. int</td>
<td>3. neg</td>
<td>1. int</td>
<td>2. exp</td>
<td>3. int</td>
<td>1. exp</td>
<td>2. int</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>1. neg</td>
<td>2. exp</td>
<td>3. int</td>
<td>1. int</td>
<td>2. exp</td>
<td>3. neg</td>
<td>1. exp</td>
<td>2. int</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1. exp</td>
<td>2. neg</td>
<td>3. int</td>
<td>1. int</td>
<td>2. exp</td>
<td>3. int</td>
<td>1. exp</td>
<td>2. int</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>1. neg</td>
<td>2. exp</td>
<td>3. sur</td>
<td>1. int</td>
<td>2. exp</td>
<td>3. sur</td>
<td>1. exp</td>
<td>2. int</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>1. exp</td>
<td>2. neg</td>
<td>3. sur</td>
<td>1. int</td>
<td>2. exp</td>
<td>3. sur</td>
<td>1. exp</td>
<td>2. int</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>1. exp</td>
<td>2. neg</td>
<td>3. int</td>
<td>1. int</td>
<td>2. exp</td>
<td>3. int</td>
<td>1. exp</td>
<td>2. neg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>1. exp</td>
<td>2. neg</td>
<td>3. sur</td>
<td>1. int</td>
<td>2. exp</td>
<td>3. sur</td>
<td>1. exp</td>
<td>2. neg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

neg = negotiation; exp = exploitation; int = intimidation; sur = surrender
These two matrices, when viewed synoptically, yield a picture that identifies a wide variety of outcomes, according to a specific group or state type.

The three preferences comprise the likely strategies to be followed by the state and the group against a specific opponent. The choices stem from the specific arrangement of strengths and weaknesses against a specific opponent. The first preference is the primary strat-
ategy that either the group or the state is likely to follow. The second preference is the alternative strategy that the group or state may follow. The third choice provides another option that the state or group may consider. The three choices presented here are analytical constructs; in practice the real strategies are likely to be a mixture of the top two or even all three choices, though the top choice generally will be the dominant strategy. For example, if the choices for a state come up as “Negotiate, Repress, Exploit” (in that order), in practice, the strategy of such a state might consist of a sincere negotiating attempt, simultaneously keeping ready a strong capability to crack down on the group (and a readiness to use force, if necessary), and occasional attempts to embarrass or reduce the standing of the group through selective economic or media actions.

Although the preferences do not necessarily imply a temporal dimension, the second strategic preference should be considered by the analyst as having the potential of being followed if the primary strategy is not adopted or is not bearing the desired result. The third preference is included to complete the theoretical picture, but it is likely to be a hedging strategy at best.

Because the final result is always an interaction of the two preferences, a first preference for violence by either the state or the group should be flagged by the analyst as an indication that strife is likely. In cases where both first preferences are for a violent outcome, the potential for violence (perhaps even a very severe type of violence) is high. In cases where neither of the first preferences are for violence, the analyst should look at the second preferences. If one of them is for violence, the case may require monitoring. A word of caution is in order on using the matrices. The results on violent outcomes that are obtained through the use of the matrices should not be taken as empirical, for they are not. Instead, the results are theoretically justified likely outcomes based on the structure presented above. That is why it is not advisable for the analyst to limit her judgment only to first preferences.

The suggested format for the analyst is to treat any first preference that includes violence as a “red marker” (violence is likely), any second preference for violence as a “yellow marker” (violence is possible but could be averted), and any third preference for violence as a “green marker” (violence unlikely). The final assessment stems from
steps that link evidence to specific group and state types, and which in turn lead to a variety of outcomes.

Since the propensity for violence, however, is the specific issue of interest here, the state and group types that yield violent preferences most often should be a special concern for the intelligence analyst. An examination of the results (first and second preferences matched together) point to some insights (see Table 2.3).

Other than the linkage to preference for violence among states that have exclusionary political structures, there is no clear pattern in the rankings.

Table 2.3
Characteristics of States and Groups, Ranked According to Their Propensity Toward Violence (First + second preference; total set $n + n$ is $8 + 8$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State types</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D = 6+1</td>
<td>Strong leadership, strong fiscal position, exclusive regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G = 6+0</td>
<td>Strong leadership, weak fiscal position, exclusive regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F = 5+3</td>
<td>Weak leadership, weak fiscal position, exclusive regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H = 4+4</td>
<td>Weak leadership, strong fiscal position, exclusive regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A = 4+0</td>
<td>Strong leadership, strong fiscal position, inclusive regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C = 4+0</td>
<td>Strong leadership, weak fiscal position, inclusive regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E = 0+1</td>
<td>Weak leadership, weak fiscal position, inclusive regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B = 0+1</td>
<td>Weak leadership, strong fiscal position, inclusive regime</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group types</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G = 5+1</td>
<td>Strong leadership, weak resources, weak popular support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B = 4+2</td>
<td>Weak leadership, good resources, broad popular support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F = 3+3</td>
<td>Weak leadership, weak resources, weak popular support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C = 3+2</td>
<td>Strong leadership, weak resources, broad popular support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D = 3+0</td>
<td>Strong leadership, good resources, weak popular support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H = 2+4</td>
<td>Weak leadership, good resources, weak popular support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A = 2+3</td>
<td>Strong leadership, good resources, broad popular support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E = 1+3</td>
<td>Weak leadership, weak resources, broad popular support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Another way of portraying the propensity of group and state types for violent outcomes is to show the correlation of the first preference for a violent outcome that each group and state type has in a matchup with all other state and group types, respectively, and regardless of whether it is a preference of the state or the group. In other words, the calculation includes (1) taking, for example, state type A and checking its first preferences against all group types; (2) taking all group types and checking their preferences versus state type A. Table 2.4 shows how the various states and groups come out on such a scale.

Comparison of the two tables shows some shifts in position but only one major shift, as group D moves to near the top of propensity for violence among all groups. The different position of group D on the two tables indicates that even though the group-D type itself is not prone toward violence, states tend to prefer violence in dealing with it.

Table 2.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State types</th>
<th>Total set (n) for each is 16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F = 69</td>
<td>Weak leadership, weak fiscal position, exclusive regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D = 69</td>
<td>Strong leadership, strong fiscal position, exclusive regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G = 50</td>
<td>Strong leadership, weak fiscal position, exclusive regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H = 31</td>
<td>Weak leadership, strong fiscal position, exclusive regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E = 25</td>
<td>Weak leadership, weak fiscal position, inclusive regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A = 25</td>
<td>Strong leadership, strong fiscal position, inclusive regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C = 25</td>
<td>Strong leadership, weak fiscal position, inclusive regime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B = 13</td>
<td>Weak leadership, strong fiscal position, inclusive regime</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group types</th>
<th>Total set (n) for each is 16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G = 63</td>
<td>Strong leadership, weak resources, weak popular support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D = 56</td>
<td>Strong leadership, good resources, weak popular support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F = 50</td>
<td>Weak leadership, weak resources, weak popular support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C = 44</td>
<td>Strong leadership, weak resources, broad popular support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H = 38</td>
<td>Weak leadership, good resources, weak popular support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A = 31</td>
<td>Strong leadership, good resources, broad popular support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B = 25</td>
<td>Weak leadership, good resources, broad popular support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E = 19</td>
<td>Weak leadership, weak resources, broad popular support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This research effort has made no attempt to identify all possible outcomes that can be derived by varying the decision rules or integrating ambiguity in the form of nonbinary choices like “neither strong nor weak” or “medium.” Incorporating such choices makes the outcomes themselves more ambiguous. This may in fact be a more accurate reflection of what social events look like in practice, but such an effort is not justified by the intentions underlying this theoretical effort. After all, the objective here is not to provide a “ready reckoner” that can render irrelevant the knowledge or judgment of regional analysts, but rather to provide a heuristic device that frames both the understanding of communal mobilization and identifies the kinds of variables that may have a bearing on the choice for violence by the mobilized group or the state. To that degree, this theoretical model must be viewed as a “first cut,” an invitation to further research both conceptual and empirical as well as a template that can be further elaborated and embellished.