Nature of Ethnic Groups and Conflicts among them due to Growing Identity Awareness

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Abstract
The majority of nations have unique ethnic groupings, and ethnic conflicts influence these nations. An ethnic group is a collection of individuals who identify as belonging to a particular nation, language, culture, history, or lineage. The paper traces the basic nature of ethnic identities and the conflicts arising out of those ethnic identities. In light of contemporary issues and challenges in relation to ethnic conflict and violence, it is essential to examine the core properties involved in this problem. The paper takes up case studies of the Tamil-Sighalese conflict, ethnic conflict in Nicaragua, Basque Provinces in Spain, etc. to get a profound idea of these conflicts and ethnicity as a source of conflict. Some pattern regularities can be observed in these ethnic issues, and conflicts can be mapped on this line. The paper appraises Primordialist theory, Instrumentalism theory, and Constructivist theory to have a better understanding of the subject matter of this research. It also deals with the formation of types of ethnic conflicts in different parts of the world. The paper makes some sensible suggestions to resolve ethnic conflicts and reduce the impact of violence generated by these conflicts.
Keywords
Ethnic, Conflict, Violence, Identity, Constructivism, Instrumentalism
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I. Introduction

The vast majority of countries have distinct ethnic groups, and ethnic conflicts are prevalent in countries where such groups exist. A set of people who identify themselves as belonging to the same ethnic group do so on the basis of a presumed common ancestry, genealogy, languages, history, culture, or nation. It is possible to view it as a group that recognizes itself as a community due to the presence of a number of distinguishing characteristics. An ethnic conflict is essentially a conflict between different ethnic groups who are fighting for the position of their own ethnic group within the larger society. The origin of such conflicts could have its roots in politics, economics, religion, or society. Ethnic differences are also a contributing factor to the reasons why there is a conflict between different groups. (Garcia, 1994)

Such conflicts need not employ violent means but can be a non-violent struggle, whereby the ethnic groups fight for their social position in society. The conflict for their position in society is what distinguishes it from other forms of struggle like war. The only requirement for such a conflict is that it must concern something that is either directly or symbolically linked with the group that is engaging in such conflicts. Other than that, there are no other prerequisites. Conflicts of this kind can be peacefully resolved in democratic nations with more than one ethnic group by referring to them in parliaments or other institutions with representation from multiple groups, in bureaucracies, or through nonviolent strikes.[1] The use of such means will help a democratic nation achieve peace, and ethnic groups will be better able to articulate their concerns and demands, which will in turn reduce the likelihood of violent or other forms of conflict. The vast majority of the time, the ethnic groups that make up the minority may not be able to voice their complaints. When this occurs, the process must remain silent, which can ultimately result in an outbreak of violent behavior. (Song, 2003).

Primordialists, Instrumentalists, and Constructivists are the three schools of thought that have been linked with ethnic conflicts in order to provide an explanation for the causes of these conflicts. The top-down and bottom-up explanations for ethnic conflicts are the two that are most commonly discussed in these schools. Additionally, there are those who contend that these kinds of conflicts emerged in the decades following the

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[1] Varshney, Ashutosh, "Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict". Oxford E- handbook of comparative politics, http://ashutoshvarshney.net/wp-content/files_mf/varshneyethnicityandethnicconflict.pdf accessed on 26th October 2018.

Cold War in addition to Consociationalism and Federalization. This project places a particular emphasis on the conflicts that arise between various ethnic groups all over the world. (Turner, 1985).

History of Ethnic Conflicts

Conflicts between different ethnic groups have existed throughout history, even in the ancient times. For example, ethnic groups such as the Hebrews, Babylonians, and others existed during that time. Although only a very small percentage of ethnic groups face problems of this nature, the Soviet Union was home to approximately 120 ethnic conflicts. In the 20th century, they ushered in the two world wars, which were then followed by the cold war, which ultimately overshadowed them. The era following the end of the cold war was marked by a significant increase in the number of ethnic conflicts, particularly within communist states. A number of academics, including Samuel P. Huntington and Robert Kaplan, have speculated that civilisational clashes, tribal and ethnic groups, and overpopulation will be the root causes of future ethnic conflicts. There were ethnic conflicts even in countries that were not under communist rule, such as East Timor and Sri Lanka. Riots of a particular ethnic group have the potential to be deadly on a large scale and pose a threat to public safety. (Diaz, 2013).

As an illustration, during the time of India's independence, there were riots between Hindus and Muslims that resulted in the deaths of almost 2 lakh people and the displacement of 10 million others. Also, in 1977, Sinhalese mobs attacked Tamil civilians, which resulted in the deaths of nearly one hundred people and the displacement of approximately fifty thousand others.

It is shown that the fall of communism and other reasons lead to a decrease in the number of ethnic wars. Many people denied that this did not solely lead to the increase in ethnic wars because there were other struggles that were ongoing during the Cold War stage. It is shown that the fall of communism leads to a decrease in ethnic wars. In spite of all of this research, the primary argument that is made is that the Cold War was the primary cause of the rise in the number of ethnic conflicts and the root cause of such conflicts within multiethnic groups that were fighting for a better position in society. Before the beginning of the cold war, the general consensus among students was that different ethnic groups acted irrationally. On the other hand, if they were considered to be relevant, it would have been impossible to provide a general explanation for such an ethnic conflict. On the other hand, the current point of view holds that ethnic groups with such beliefs are rational.

Contemporary understanding of Ethnic Conflicts

The majority of countries on the planet are home to a diverse collection of peoples, each of whom belongs to a unique ethnic group. The differences that exist among these groups are the root cause of all of the wars that break out between nations on the planet. Minorities are put under a great deal of pressure to assimilate with the dominant culture groups that are prevalent as a result of the ethnic conflicts that have arisen as a result of these conflicts. Today, the relationship between such ethnic groups and their relationship has become very crucial, and it has become very difficult to maintain peace as the number of ethnic conflicts has increased vividly and dramatically. (Brown, 2001). These kinds of conflicts are most common in certain regions of Sri Lanka. Africa, China, and other places. (Blaff, 2020)

Theories on Ethnic Conflict

In general, academics have developed three hypotheses in relation to the various schools of thought in order to explain the factors that lead to ethnic conflicts. These hypotheses are as follows:

Primordial Theory

The primary proponent of this school of thought and one of the original academics who laid the groundwork for it is Donald L. Horowitz. This theory proposes that the existence of ethnic conflicts can be attributed to people's beliefs and actions regarding primordial objects such as biological characteristics and other exponents such as territorial location.[2] The strength of a student's family connection is the only factor considered at this school. Clifford Geertz is an advocate of this school of thought, and he asserts that every individual possesses a natural connection with a perceived kinsman. The most prominent proponent of this school of thought argues that kinship "makes it possible for the ethnic groups to think in terms of family resemblances."

Many people contend that the causes of ethnic conflict include social, political, or institutional factors; however, it can be argued that ethnicity itself is the primary driver of ethnic conflicts. These organizations persistently pose a danger to the continued existence of civil governments. Therefore, the existence of ethnic conflict in countries or societies that have a diverse collection of different ethnic groups. This school of thought maintains that if "ancient hatred" is dominating the day-to-day mental processes of large groups of people, then

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[2] Grosby, Steven. "The verdict of history: The inexpungable tie of primordiality – a response to Eller and Coughlan" (1994 edn.)

the concept in question must be abandoned. On the other hand, if it is conceived of as something that has been historically formed, then it needs to be taken in a more stringent and serious manner.

Instrumental Theory

This school of thought mainly talks about the heads of communities "who used their ethnic groups as sites of mass mobilisation and as constituencies in their competition for power and resources, because they found them more effective than social classes." The heads of such communities use ethnic groups to achieve their goals. The chief exponent of this theory is Anthony Smith, and he states that this school of thought came into existence in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States.

This group of people does not dispute the fact that ethnic differences play an important part in the genesis of ethnic conflicts; however, they do acknowledge that this alone is not enough to explain the emergence of such conflicts. Another proponent of Hardin's theory explains that the leader of the community serves as a focal point around which the people who belong to the ethnic group exist. The head contributes to the process of clarifying beliefs regarding the practices and beliefs held by such ethnic groups.

Constructivist Theory

The idea of imagined community, which was developed by Benedict Anderson, is at the center of this theory. Those who believe in this theory assert that the reasons for racial and ethnic tensions can be traced back to regional or local differences in the community. For instance, as Varshney explains in his book, "racial violence in the United States was heavily concentrated in northern cities; southern cities, though intensely politically engaged, did not have riots."[3] These kinds of ethnic conflicts can be seen on the level of an entire country. As a result, this theory was developed in order to draw insights from various thoughts all over the world with regard to the ongoing ethnic conflicts that are taking place all over the world.

Case Study 1. Protestants vs Catholics

Major religious wars broke out in Northern Ireland between Catholics and Protestants in the 16th century. The Protestants were on the losing side. The majority of the population, who identified as Protestant, desired union with the United Kingdom, while the Catholic minority sect desired union with the Republic of Ireland. There is a widespread perception among Catholics that they have been discriminated against by Protestants. The partition of Ireland in 1920 did not resolve any of these conflicts, but in 1969 they became increasingly heated and violent. Even the establishment of direct rule by London did not assist in finding a solution to the problem.

In the later part of 1985, an agreement was reached that would later be known as the "Anglo Irish Agreement." This agreement contributed to the recognition of the identities of such communities as can be found in Northern Ireland, despite the fact that republicans and other unionists are opposed to it.

Case Study 2. Sinhalese vs Tamils

There have been many different phases of conflict between the Sinhalese and the Tamils over the course of this island's history. The Buddhist Sinhalese were the majority population of Sri Lanka. They were primarily settled in the northeastern part of the island and had been there for over 2,000 years. The Tamil people were a minority and could be distinguished from the Sinhalese by their language. During the 19th century, the British brought a group of Tamils over to work as labourers on the tea estates. These Tamils were brought over by the British. After the country gained its independence, the Sinhalese community had the impression that the Tamils had occupied a forth for ethnic mobilisation. This ethnic mobilisation included the Tamils' defence of their lands against the settlement of Sinhalese as well as their demands for political autonomy and federation.

Later on, the Tamil people made their demand for a separate state known as Tamil Eelam and began an armed struggle to achieve their goals of independence. After the riots, a large number of Tamil people were killed, made homeless, and forced to flee their homes, leading to a rise in the number of both domestic and international refugees. This led to a rebellion, which then escalated into a civil war. This Tamil movement garnered a significant amount of support from Tamils residing in southern India, prompting the Sinhalese government to settle on a strategy centred on achieving military victory in the name of protecting national sovereignty. As time went on, an increasing number of people were killed in the conflict. In addition, India and Sri Lanka came to an agreement in 1987 that provided for the intervention of the Indian military in order to guarantee an end to hostilities and recognition of the demands of the Tamil people. This agreement was signed by both countries. On the other hand, in 1990 India pulled out its troops in response to a request from the

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[3] Varshney, Ashutosh, "Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict". Oxford E- handbook of comparative politics, http://ashutoshvarshney.net/wp-content/files_mf/varshneyethnicityandethnicconflict.pdf accessed on 26th October 2021.

government of Sri Lanka. The Tamil insurgent movement came to the conclusion that they should negotiate with the central government. During this time, an extreme Buddhist Sinhalese movement emerged and immediately began carrying out violent attacks against the central government, prompting the government to respond in kind by carrying out equally violent retaliatory measures. As a direct consequence of it, hundreds of people became victims.[4]

privileges granted by the British that were disproportionate. As a consequence of this, they refused to grant citizenship to Tamil labourers, after which they declared Sinhala to be the only official language of the state, reorganised university entrance policies and requirements so that they favoured Sinhalese youth, and declared Buddhism to be the official religion of the country. In this manner, they degraded youth and the Tamils, who consequently experienced discrimination as a result. The repercussions of this for the Tamils.

Case Study 3. Nicaragua

After several years of guerrilla warfare, the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua in 1979 resulted in the overthrowing of a bloody 30-year dictatorship and the establishment of a proper government. Because of the government's tendency toward Marxism, it was soon the target of low-intensity warfare, a high-intensity economic boycott, and attempts to topple it by the Reagan administration. The Sandinistas, in their fight against imperialism and to defend both the revolution and their imperilled national sovereignty, were eager to establish their effective control over the country. As a result, they found themselves in conflict with the Miskito and other people who lived along the Atlantic Coast. The Sandinistas, for their part, didn't have much sympathy for the ethnic demands that the Indians were making, and they came to believe that their resistance to revolutionary policies was the same as engaging in counter revolutionary activity pretty quickly. 1981 has seen some incidents of violent crime.

By 1985, the Sandinista regime had admitted that it had made errors in its policies and had begun to make corrections. By the beginning of 1990, the Sandinista government had been voted out of office, and a coalition representing the opposition had taken its place. The vast majority of Miskito individuals cast their ballots in opposition to the revolutionary government.

Case Study 4. Basque Provinces in Spain

The 19th century saw the rise of regional nationalism in the Basque Provinces of Spain, also known as the country of Euzkadi. During this same time period, there was a beginning phase of industrialization, which was accompanied by an increase in the number of ethnic conflicts. During the time that Franco was in power, many ethnic groups and ways of expressing themselves were criminalised and suppressed, including the Basque language. Not only do the Basques maintain their traditional institutions, but they also speak their native language. Additionally, the Basques believe that they are racially distinct from other Spaniards. The local effects of economic crises have fueled sympathy, despite the guarantee of regional autonomy provided for in the new constitution of Spain and the Regional Autonomy Statute of 1978. Both of these documents were enacted in 1978. (Arcan, 2014)

At this point in time, the conditions for a peaceful solution to the problem within the democratic process appear to be possible; however, tensions and violent confrontations between extremist Basque nationalists and the repressive forces of the central government are still at an extremely high level.

The case studies that were mentioned earlier show an ethnic conflict that takes place between a minority ethnic group and a dominant ethnic group that controls the power of the state. When this kind of conflict arises, it is common for people to question the concept of a nation as well as the nature of the state itself. The stability of the country's institutions is put in jeopardy by these kinds of conflicts, which also bring to light the shortcomings of the political structures that are already in place. In each of the situations described above, all of the factors that are typically associated with ethnic conflicts can be found, albeit to varying degrees, in either one of the two situations.

Solution for Ethnic Tensions

It is considered a serious challenge to find a solution to the problem of ethnic tensions. It is possible to assert that the majority of violent conflicts that occur in today's world are of an internal nature; however, the resolution of these conflicts is typically carried out by either international peacekeeping bodies or other dominant powerful states, an action carried out by a special task force of a group of states, or the states that are in close proximity to one another, giving the conflict an international dimension. The majority of the violent conflicts that occur in today's world can be traced back to the divisions that are present in pluralist societies. If the differences are what cause the conflicts, then the solutions have to involve power sharing among the various

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[4] Kumar Rupesinghe (ed), The Tamil Sinhalese Conflict in Sri Lanka (Part V)

ethnic and other groups. This is how, over the course of the recent years, one finds that the rights and demands of minorities have taken on an increasingly significant role.

Given the prevalence of multiethnic and multireligious societies all over the world in today's society, the management of ethnic conflicts and the formulation of solutions is not an easy task. Intervening from the outside is yet another strategy for finding a peaceful resolution to these disagreements, which can be used to bring about peace. The manner in which states that are parties to conflicts react to intervention from outside parties varies from one state to the next. The South Asian community generally does not support the concept of state intervention. Bangladesh, Burma, Bhutan, India, or Pakistan have not permitted foreign organisations or countries to find a solution to resolve their internal conflicts, such as those involving the Chakma tribals in Bangladesh, Bhutanese separatists of Nepalese origin in Bhutan, Kashmiris and Assamese in India, or Sindhi nationalists in Pakistan. Bangladesh, Burma, Bhutan, India, or Pakistan all have a large number of ethnic minorities, and many of these groups have been involved. (Yoon, 2011).

A solution that involves the division of states will not be successful in resolving these conflicts. The Wilsonian principle of "self-determination" has been used as the foundation for the establishment of a great number of new states in this century. The division of territories has been the most important part of this strategy, and as a result, the ethnic principle has been used to determine how territories should be distributed fairly. Altering the boundaries of existing states so that every community could have its own state would not, however, resolve the majority of the national and ethnic tensions that exist in the world today.

II.   Conclusion

It is impossible to ignore the significance of racial and ethnic tensions in the modern world. As the major wars of the 20th century recede into the background, the conflicts of values, also known as prolonged ethnic conflicts, will undoubtedly become more prominent and virulent. It is necessary to develop innovative strategies for managing conflicts and finding solutions to racial and ethnic tensions. Non-state actors, as defined ethnographically, are new players on the international stage who are taking on the traditional functions of the state, which are undergoing transformation. The involvement of third parties, such as non-governmental organizations, is also becoming increasingly common in ethnic conflicts.

Due to the fact that cultural affiliations and identities are particularly powerful factors in shaping group relations, these conflicts have resulted in extreme human suffering and pose a significant threat to the security of the international community. Instability, refugee flows, effects that spill over into other areas, and other international consequences ensure that ethnic conflict will continue to be a topic of discussion on the international political agenda. However, the political, ideological, and economic goals of international actors, regardless of whether these actors are states or ethnic groups, are what lead to conflicts in the first place. Cultural differences in and of themselves are not the cause of any conflict. Because of the complexity of racial, ethnic, and cultural tensions, there is no simple answer to the problem of how to deal with them. As a result, international organizations, particularly those operating on the regional and multilateral fronts, have a responsibility to step up and address the challenges posed by ethnic groups. Email :gaurbhupsingh@yahoo.com

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