

Ethnic identity and rationality

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Ethnic identity is explained through the lens of collective action theory. Like other groups (Tribes, Feudal states, international organizations, nation states, etc.) ethnic groups are a result of an individual's cost-benefit analysis that maximizes wealth and security. External variables associated with social relations determine the individual's cost benefit analysis to choose ethnicity over other groups.

However, collective action will not necessarily result just because the group provides benefits for its members. Individuals have incentive to consume and not produce collective goods. To overcome this problem, at least some individuals must have the incentive to produce collective goods that support ethnic groups. This paper illustrates how a rigorous cost benefit analysis explains when an individual will have the incentive to provide collective goods.

Key words: RATIONAL CHOICE, ETHNIC IDENTITY, COLLECTIVE ACTION, GROUP SOLIDARITY, DECISION-MAKING PROCESS, COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

So natural seems ethnic identity: common language and religion, shared historical past -- that people rarely stop to think what alternative forms of self-identity exist. Ethnic identity is somehow primordial. However, ethnic groups, like all forms of organizing people, such as tribes, empires, city states and nation states, are pliable. Individuals mobilize around ethnic identity because it provides economic and security needs. Identities change according to individual perception of how they can maximize these needs. External variables determine how individuals choose their identity (mode of production, military technology, etc.).

The problem with ethnic identity in the former Yugoslavia is that all ethnic groups are a potential minority who at one time may face repression at the hands of the majority. The only way to ensure economic prosperity and security is to be in the ethnic majority. Ultimately, the state building aspirations of one ethnic group conflicts with others. Everybody wants to be in the majority ethnic group. Ethnic groups that win in the state making process establish and institutionalize barriers of authority that protect their privileged status and material benefits. The institutional process often includes laws that subject the minority to discrimination of economic opportunities, civil rights and physical well being.

The process is never ending. When ethnic minorities mobilize for political autonomy their mobilization endangers other minorities who live within the their geographic boundaries, thus creating new minorities. These new ethnic minorities will then try to become the majority by succeeding and forming their own political identity. New autonomous units will then again have minorities and the whole process repeats itself until specially carved out small ghettos of pure ethnic groups are political autonomous units. Eventually, this becomes infeasible. The size of these units makes them neither economically nor politically viable units. The small cost in governing bureaucratic structure alone is enough to drain the resources of even the wealthiest of nations.

If we can not guarantee the rights of ethnic minorities by allowing them the right to self-determination, then how can we protect them from abuse? The best solution is to protect the rights of minorities by defining citizenship and rights according to civic identity.

There are two ideal types of nationalism. Ethnic nationalism is an important political cleavage based on shared common ancestry, language, and religion. People mobilize around

their ethnic identity. Civic nationalism is territorially based identity. Rights of individuals are determined by residency or birth within the state.¹⁾

Ethnic nationalism will continue to lead to ethnic conflict because by its very nature ethnic nationalism excludes and represses those who are not in the majority ethnic group. In the former Yugoslavia some ethnic group will be excluded or repressed as long as ethnicity is the major political cleavage. What are the causes of ethnic nationalism?

In order to answer these questions I will first review the literature which argues that people's identities are pliable and determined by exogenous variables (e.g., the mode of production). The second part of this paper explains the general theoretical premises of collective action theory and why it might be fruitful for future research of the national Question. Since Hobbes, collective action theory has been used to explain group solidarity. Within a historical framework a rational choice approach allows us to systematically break down the individual decision making process and better understand how the structure effects the individual's preferences. That is the preference to mobilize around ethnic identity. In the third part, I will demonstrate how a rational choice approach can be used to explain ethnic nationalism by applying a wide variance of national cases to the model. The purpose of this section is not to draw out any final conclusions of any single case of nationalism. Any single case can only be explained within its full historical context and by looking closely at what exogenous variables contributed to the decision making process. The purpose of this section is to simply give an illustration of what future research might look at by using a rational choice approach. Ultimately deductive thinking will come from comparing exogenous variables and how they effect an individual's decision to identify with a political unit.

National Identity, Primordial or Rational?

Ernest Gellner's contribution to the study of nationalism is fundamental. He was the first to realize the modernity of nationalism and to emphasize rationality. Gellner argues that nationalism is a result of industrialization. The mode of production determines societal organizations (Gellner, 1983).

Gellner argues that nationalism did not exist in Agrarian societies. Agrarian societies were stratified horizontally with a few elites at the top. These elites were military leaders, administrators and clerics. At the bottom, and by far the majority, were peasants and slaves. The lower strata needed only labor and no special skills. Stability in Agricultural societies would result from the excise of taxes and maintenance of peace. There was little if any communication between stratas. Language and literacy further institutionalized stratification.

Industrial society changed the needs of the labor force. Gellner borrows heavily from Adam Smith's explanation that high productivity requires a complex and mobile division of labor. Smith explained that standardized training is the mark of industrialized society. Skills required for the labor force were universal. These skills required a shared and thorough education in literacy, numeracy, basic work habits and social skills. Gellner theorizes in industrial society no special class can dominate the bureaucracy; recruitment is available from the population at large. Social barriers are removed. Modern society is egalitarian because it requires mobilization.

By providing universal education and language, the industrial process serves to construct a social identity. People have a shared medium of culture and atmosphere which the individual is dependent on for security. In Agrarian society there was little communication and

¹⁾ On the distinction between civic and ethnic nationalism, see Jack Snyder (1993a; 1993b), and Anthony D. Smith (1992).

the lower classes did not have much in common with each other. Universal education and language gives people a shared sense of common culture and identity.

Gellner refutes the primordialist argument by pointing out that there are roughly 8,000 languages spoken in the world and there is no possible way that each can have its own nation state. If having a language or a distinct pre-existing culture is the sole requirement for having a nation then we would expect many more states. The size of the nation state is ultimately determined by other variables than language and culture. Nation states sometimes use pre-existing culture, sometimes they invent culture and sometimes they obliterate culture.

E.J. Hobsbawm is important to the literature of nationalism for three reasons. First, he proposes that the state is a modern territorial entity that developed due to an advanced stage of technology (Hobsbawm, 1990a). Second, he has thoroughly traced the process of inventing tradition that is used to form social identity (Hobsbawm, 1983b). Third, while Gellner stresses that nationalism and self-identity are constructed from above, Hobsbawm looks at nationalism from both above and below. The view of nationalism from below involves what incentives the lower strata of society have in supporting national identity.

Hobsbawm argues that the most intense stage of nationalism occurred between 1870-1914. The extreme intensity of nationalism in this period resulted from massive political change brought by modernization, urbanization and mass migration. The middle class was stuck between the ruling class and the lower class. Their material status was upheld by their schooling and their having non-manual jobs. Threatened by groups who challenged their material well being, they made claims to superiority and uniqueness. Any threats from the lower class, foreign states, individuals, immigrants and capitalist financiers mobilized the middle class. By mobilizing around their national identity they were able to exclude those outside their group (Hobsbawm, 1990a:101-130).

The Flemish are an example of linguistic nationalism. The middle class supported bilingual policies in Belgium. There was no special enthusiasm for linguistic nationalism among the Flemish ruling elite or from the lower classes. The ruling elites were already bilingual and had secure status. The lower class only knew French because it was the most practical and they did not have the educational opportunities to learn Flemish. By learning the language the middle class could exclude those who did not know Flemish. The ardent supporters of official bilingualism were school teachers, minor bureaucrats and journalists. Their employment depended on their knowledge of the language. As Hobsbawm argues, "The crucial moment in the creation of a language as a potential asset is not as a medium of primary language but its admission of secondary education..." (Hobsbawm, 1990a:118). In sum, the middle class mobilized around their ethnic identity in order to exclude other and secure their own material benefits.

For Gellner and Hobsbawm nationalism is a function of exogenous variables, namely the economic mode of organization. The state and national identity are organizations that meet the individual's economic needs. However, organizations are only successful if they are able to overcome free riding.

If ethnic nationalism is a way of organizing to meet economic and security needs then an effective organization must be able to overcome the collective action problem. In order to overcome the obstacle of collective action a successful organization will create institutions and ideologies that will motivate an individual to contribute to the group and to limit free riding. Ultimately, according to collective action theory, every organization relies on incentive. Thus, Collective action theory explains why certain groups have incentive for organizing the state on ethnicity identity. The strength of collective action theory is that it allows us to look at the structure's effect on the individual. Explaining ethnic nationalism then is a process of identifying when the structure gives incentive to individuals to organize the state on ethnicity.

The Collective Action Problem

According to collective action theory all states have a collective action problem. Collective goods must be provided and free riding stopped (Olson, 1965). Collective goods vary for ethnic organizations. Anything that supports organizations can be viewed as a collective good. Votes, financial resources, terrorist activities, are all forms of public goods. Collective goods then support organizations that provide benefits for all its members. Collective goods by their very nature are inexcludable, that is no one can be prevented from using them. In the case of ethnic identity a collective good is the establishment of a state that provides the security and economic needs of all its members (Hechter, 1982; 1987; Nielsen, 1985).

Collective goods are hard to produce. People will have the incentive to consume collective goods and not to produce them. The individual will not have the incentive to produce the public good when all people in the group will benefit. Individuals maximize their interest by consuming the public good and using all of their resources to produce goods that only they can consume.

Individuals will only contribute collective goods when they perceive private benefits will exceed private cost. So in order to explain when an individual will contribute to the collective good we must closely look at what goes into their individual calculations of when benefit will exceed cost. An individual cost-benefit analysis can be broken down in many ways.²⁾ I will use the following basic model:

$$P \cdot (B-C)$$

B is the benefit of supporting ethnic identity, C is the potential cost of support, and P is the probability of receiving the benefit.³⁾

Some Examples of Cost-Benefit Analysis

Benefits

Benefits are a crucial variable in determining ethnic solidarity. All organizations exist because they provide benefits. There are two important questions concerning benefits. First, there is the question of who benefits. Not everyone will benefit equally from ethnic solidarity. National movements are led by bureaucrats seeking advancement, economic sectors or potential government leaders. Though nationalism might often be led by narrow interest groups, a full explanation of nationalism must go beyond benefits of leaders. Nationalism is a dual phenomenon that must be studied from above and below. We can only understand ethnic nationalism if we also look at the benefits of who those who are the target of nationalistic propaganda. Not everyone will benefit from ethnic solidarity, but that certain coalitions or groups within the ethnic group need to benefit in addition to besides the leadership.

What are the benefits that explain why people choose ethnic identity? The key assumption concerning collective action theory is that people maximize their utility. If we say that everything can be a benefit, that is that ethnic identity maximizes everything, then the rational choice approach only becomes a methodology of breaking down the decision making process. If ethnic identities maximize everything then we have little or no predictive power. There is no single object or possession that people maximize when choosing ethnic identity. However, the history of organizational theory argues that states meet the needs of security and wealth. Therefore, I will hypothesize that people maximize their security and wealth through ethnic identity. If we can explain a large degree of the variance of ethnic identity with the assumption that people maximize wealth and security, then explaining an additional minimal

²⁾ For a more elaborate model of cost-benefit analysis see Hechter (1982).

³⁾ This is a very simple cost-benefit model used by Rogowski (1985:88-89).

amount with three or four additional variables that people maximize may give us richness. The richness we gain is at the expense of theoretical rigor that allows clear hypothesis.

Examples of Benefit Analysis

Ethnic Violence recently flared in India after Hindu nationalists tore down a mosque built in the sixteenth century. The ethnic violence followed three years of Hindu solidarity led by the Bharatiya Janata Party. Formerly, India's political cleavages were based on caste-lines. The upper caste was pitted against the lower caste and other disadvantage groups. As a result of ethnic mobilization around Hinduism, religion now divides Indian politics. Hindu political leaders were able to manipulate the identity of Hindus so that religion was now the major cleavage (Rudolph and Rudolph, 1993:24-29).⁴⁾

The upper caste would benefit if India's government were unable to carry out quota reform. India's government was an alliance between disadvantaged groups, namely the lower castes and Muslims. The lower caste had materially benefitted as a result of liberalization and modernization. They had demanded quotas in government jobs and education for decades. Thus their demands threaten the jobs and status of India's urban upper class. By mobilizing Hindu identity the upper caste would defeat the coalition that demanded increase in quotas for the lower castes and preserve the privileges of the upper caste (Rudolph and Rudolph, 1993).

The Hindu upper caste was also threatened by Muslim rising social status. Muslim prosperity was resented by Hindu professionals and businessmen who expected them to serve in Muslim traditional lower status occupations. Instead, Muslims challenged Hindus in seeking better jobs. Upper caste frustration, due to lowering economic opportunities, caused them to mobilize around Hindu identity.

Perceived benefits of ethnic solidarity varied among former Soviet nationalities. Charles Furtado and Michael Hechter explain varying levels of nationalism in Ukraine and Estonia according to the degree of autonomy that elites had from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Hechter and Furtado hypothesize that the more autonomy that national elites had from the CPSU, the more likely they were to mobilize around ethnic identity (Furtado and Hechter, 1992: 169-204).

Local level elites calculated the relative career chances that the CPSU offered. Local party leaders will be less likely to support ethnic identity if promotion to the all union-level is possible. Thus those who see their careers being attached to the all union-level will not support ethnic nationalism. However, if avenues for advancement are closed or limited, then there is a higher probability that the local elites will mobilize around ethnic identity. If elites are unable to gain power at the center they will try to build their power base at the republican or local level.

The cases of Ukraine and Estonia confirm this hypothesis. Ukrainian elites were well represented in the CPSU and at the all Union-level. For local elites the benefits of ethnic mobilization were minimal, because the CPSU offered career opportunities. For the Estonian elite the CPSU had always been Slav dominated. Blocked avenues to republic and all-Union positions gave them no incentive to support the CPSU. The results were a higher degree of Estonian elites supporting ethnic mobilization than Ukrainian.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century ethnic identity provided career opportunities for Spanish-American elites. Spanish American elite gained career opportuni-

⁴⁾ For a more general description see Ashutosh Varshney, (1993:227-262).

ties that escaped them with Spanish rule (Anderson, 1983:47-65). Elites born in the Americas, yet of European descent, were barred from leadership positions within their own colonies. Even if elites were born days after their parents' departure from Spain racial barriers denied them access to high positions within their own colonial government.

Not everyone agrees that nationalism is a function of modernization. Liah Greenfeld argues that intellectuals who articulate national beliefs and ideology are the crucial variable in explaining nationalism. Intellectuals identify with the nation because it preserves their status and prestige. For Greenfeld intellectuals maximize status and psychological gratification. Thus variances in nationalism will be explained by the ability of the nation to supply prestige. When nations are unable to provide prestige, intellectuals will turn to some other forms of identity. For example, Greenfeld argues that intellectuals in underdeveloped nations will not obtain status from identifying with their nation. Not being able to obtain status, intellectuals will then identify with some other form of organization. For many intellectuals who lived in non-western nations this has often been socialism (Greenfeld, 1993:47-62).

The argument is interesting, but not because of the role it attributes to intellectuals. Though intellectuals have played a role in nationalism, they are not the only group which benefits from national policies. They can not solely determine what social organizations exist. However, her argument is interesting because of the type of benefit the state provides intellectuals. By arguing that the nation provides social status, we are able to loosen our assumptions of what people maximize. One of her case studies is worth summarizing because it illustrates the problem of social status.⁵⁾

For Russian Jews, Socialism offered social prestige and dignity. Jews were always disproportionately represented in Marxist parties. Russia was a backwards nation that offered no prestige. Czarist Anti-semitism further alienated Jews from their nations. Russian Jews optimized prestige by identifying with international organizations and anti-Czarist ideology.

Two methodological problems result when we assume that ethnic identities maximize social prestige. First, what is prestige? Psychological gratification can be measured numerous ways. There are no objective criteria for social status. Material wealth, titles, and different forms of recognition can all be considered psychological gratification. Status not only changes from society to society, but from person to person. In the U.S. new wealth carries more status than in European states. Some people may think highly of scientists, while others may think highly of artists or religious leaders. The effect of material wealth and security, on the other hand, can easily be traced. We can accurately trace if someone has materially benefited or gained security from their ethnic identity. The second methodological problem is that social prestige is highly correlated with wealth. People might not be maximizing social prestige, but wealth. The two variables are correlated; consequently her theory is unfalsifiable.

Probability

Probability is determined by the power (size, resources, etc.) of the group in relationship to those the group is in conflict with. Power is a relational concept and can not be adequately measured by solely looking at a group's resources. A power relationship is based on the ability of person A to make B do something he would not otherwise have done.

Power resources are fungible and situationally determined. However, two of the more standard variables that explain a group's power are its size and resources. The size of a

⁵⁾ Greenfeld also mentions the case of Benito Mussolini. Before world war I, Mussolini was an ardent socialist who advocated kicking out all the party moderates. Italy was backwards and less developed than other western states. After World War I Italy showed promise of developing into a respectful nation. Now Italy and nationalism offered Mussolini social status.

group has a positive effect on a group's power. In a representative system numbers transfer into votes. In a potentially violent situation, large numbers transfer into physical force. Material and human resources also transfer into political and physical power.

The individual will consider the probability of success based on the nationalist group's power in relationship to its opponents. Opposition to ethnic solidarity will come from domestic or international groups. Secessionists will be opposed by the majority. Irredentism will be opposed by whomever they seek to exclude. External groups also determine the probability of successful ethnic solidarity. For example, when ethnic minorities either seek secession or attempt to stop irredentism neighboring states may intervene, especially when the neighboring state's major ethnic group is the one being victimized (Weiner, 1971:665-683). International organizations have many methods to affect the probability of success for national groups. Secessionist groups benefit from international recognition, while economic embargoes, diplomatic isolation and military intervention discourage irredentism.

The case of India demonstrates the probability variable. The Bharatiya Janata party's rise to power in the early 90's was a consequence of frustrated upper caste Hindus who tried to victimize Muslims and break up a governing coalition that sought to raise government quotas for India's disadvantaged. The probability of success was high. The Muslims only represented 11 percent of the population. Polarizing the Indian community on ethnic lines instead of traditional class lines increased the probability of success. It was not necessary for the upper caste to target the entire coalition of disadvantaged classes, just one fifth of the coalition or 11 percent of population (Rudolph and Rudolph, 1993:27-28).

Mikhail Gorbachev's political reforms increased the probability of political and economic autonomy. Prior to the Gorbachev's reforms the CPSU and the authoritarian structure had prohibited any mobilization or autonomous political activity. Gorbachev's commitment to economic decentralization and democratic reforms greatly increased the probability of successful ethnic identity at the republican level (Furtado and Hechter, 1992).⁶⁾

Cost Analysis

Besides benefits and probability, cost analysis plays a crucial role in determining the individual's participation in collective action. Cost is measured by the amount of resources that the individual will lose by participating in collective action. Cost can range from loss of life to a commitment of a brief period of time or any amount of material resources. The theory predicts that the lower the cost, the higher the probability of collective action. Legal demonstrations, voting, etc., are less likely to cause individual injury and are more likely to attract collective action, than violent protest that may result in severe punishment (Hechter, 1982:424-431).

External and internal groups impose cost on ethnic solidarity. For irredentist ethnic groups this can mean reprisal not only from domestic groups but from the international community. Often ethnic minorities who are being subjugated to repression by irredentist groups have members in neighboring states who are willing to come to their aid. This aid increases the cost of repressing ethnic minorities. Various international organizations also can inflict cost on ethnic groups who repress minorities. For Secessionist ethnic groups there is almost always conflict from central groups. Conflict may range from open warfare to negotiations over material and legal relations. The international community can incur cost on secessionist ethnic groups by not recognizing legitimacy of autonomy or by not supplying military or economic aid.

⁶⁾ A further example is the decline of the Spanish empire which increased the probability of Southern American nationalism. Spain's ability to monitor and control its empire was declining. Its resources were drained from colonies and continental wars. Thus the decline in Spanish power in relationship to its South American Colonies increased the probability of nationalist success.

Cost of Irredentism

Since 1967, Israelis have occupied the West Bank and the Gaza strip. Palestinians who lived outside for work or study at the time of occupation were denied reentry. The result was that many families became separated. Family renunciation requests are denied and residents who marry non-residents are subject to harassment or removal. Palestinians are subjected to death, deportation, abolished housing, strict curfews, and detainment without trial. Citizenship in Israel is defined by religion and those who are not Jews are repressed (Gurr, 1993:219-226).

What is the domestic cost to Israel of defining ethnicity as the criteria of citizenship? The Palestinians have violently protested. Terrorist attacks have led to deaths and property damage. Terrorist violence has also hurt the tourist industry. Israel has also used a great deal of resources on military expenditures

The cost for Israel's irredentism has been even higher internationally. There are nearly three million Palestinian refugees. These refugees have supported the PLO morally and financially. Before the Gulf War Palestinians had political leverage in the Arabian Peninsula states. They still have significant leverage in Jordan and have been supported by numerous Islamic and Arab organizations (Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Arab League and the Organization of Petroleum-Exporting Countries). The Palestinians have been also been given support in the U.N. by numerous African and Asian states.

International pressure on Israeli policies in the occupied territories has forced it to lesson its repression and to negotiate a possible settlement. Proof of this pressure is the U.S. effort to bring Israel to the negotiating table concerning a comprehensive peace settlement in the Middle East. Cost of continued ethnic repression would be restricted U.S. military and economic aid.

Iran has little cost for victimizing some ethnic minorities. The Baha'is in Iran are considered religious heretics and between 1978-85 were subjected to economic persecution, torture, and the killing of more than two hundred people. Though the Iranian Government curbed abuses, the Baha'is will most likely be denied equal rights as long as the Iranian Government list them as Heretics (Gurr, 1993:242-244).

Around 300,000 Baha'is live in Iran and three million world wide. Even with severe repression the Baha'is in Iran have failed to mobilize for political support. Domestically, there has been little if any cost of participating in ethnic national policies that persecute Baha'is. They have remained politically passive. International support has been mild for the Baha'is. Amnesty International, the U.N. Commission on Human Rights and Germany (which has a large Iranian Baha'is community) have been applying the most outside pressure on Iran.

The total cost of participating in ethnic national policies in Iran, however, is not as low as one might expect. Currently, Iran is trying to rebuild its economy after its war with Iraq. The government is seeking western support and trying to create a new image of moderation. Severe prosecution is too costly for Iran. However, until there is domestic cost or increased international cost it is likely that the Baha'is will continue being persecuted.

Cost to Secessionists Groups

There are those who support separatist tendencies because they will personally benefit from the new political unit, i.e., Jobs, property, status, etc. For these people the cost represents a reparation or sacrifices for their future. In the end, they perceive a net gain from separatist policies. The largest exogenous variable that will determine the cost to individuals

who favor separatist policies will be what kind of government they are in opposition to. The individual's cost is usually lower domestically in contemporary democracies.⁷⁾

Western democracies often have a constitution that permits legal and peaceful succession. For example, the Quebec nationalistic movement has experienced comparatively little opposition from Canada.⁸⁾ When Quebec made French the official language and restricted the use of English in schools Canada gave little resistance. As clearly indicated by Ottawa and as stated in the Canadian constitution, Quebec is free to leave (Gurr, 1993:159-162). However, not all of Quebec's cost is low. The possible disruption of commerce or of subsidies is a cost of nationalism. In 1980 the potential of economic losses defeated Quebec's sovereignty referendum (Hechter, 1987:418).

The Palestinians are another example of the high cost of ethnic solidarity. As stated earlier, the Palestinians are subjugated to every form of repression.

Territorial sovereignty does not benefit everyone. Certain groups measure the cost of separatist mobilization as a loss of current benefits (jobs, property, status, etc.) For these people their current welfare depends on maintaining the status quo. Their best perceived interest lies with the current political unit. Many elites might hold positions that are dependent on interregional ties. This was true in the case of Ukraine, where local elites had many advancement opportunities.

Organizations

Political parties and ethnic organizations play a major role in determining an individual's participation in ethnic nationalism. Organizations institutionalize ethnic nationalism by reducing transaction cost, providing information about opportunities for mutual cooperation, and provide the capability to monitor and sanction free riders.⁹⁾

Organizations affect all parts of the cost-benefit equation. An individual's expected benefits from ethnic mobilization will increase if the ethnic organization has a large supply of resources. A well-financed national party can offer direct payment, future employment or many other benefits. Organizations can determine individual's estimate of probability of success by monopolizing information. Ethnic organizations who control the media and communication sources can manipulate individual's perception of the probability of success.

The individual's cost of free riding will rise if the organization has extensive monitoring capabilities. Organizations often design strategies to monitor would-be free riders and promote collective action. All states receive funds by taxes. Political mobilization can be monitored by networks of informers. Authoritarian governments have often used such networks that include a hierarchy of professional monitors who overview voluntary or forced monitors. Furthermore, monitoring free riding is simplified when public goods (political support) are in the open for everyone to see. For example, non-attendance at rallies, meetings, or celebrations can easily be monitored. National symbols, showing political support for the regime, can easily be monitored. A flag outside someone's home or business, or a picture of a political leader in a restaurant can easily be monitored.

Another widely held strategy used by ethnic organizations to mobilize military support would be to violently attack an opposing ethnic member or institution. The attack would

⁷⁾ Theoretical logic in Hechter (1982:424-431); empirical examples in Gurr (1993:159-162).

⁸⁾ Canada has not threatened armed resistance if Quebec secedes. This is compared to other states that have ended in civil war.

⁹⁾ For a specific discussion of how organizations foster ethnic solidarity see Hechter (1982:412-431). For a more general discussion on the role of formal institutions in overcoming collective action problems see Williamson (1975); Keohane (1984).

have a spiral effect. The victimized ethnic group would mobilize for revenge: The member of other ethnic group would mobilize for defense in anticipation of retaliation. The more ethnic members who participate or even passively witness these attacks will undoubtedly increase the need for mobilizing defenses. If an individual believes that the attack appears to be universal, then the individual will believe that they will be punished regardless if they participated or not. Any chance of the individual's free riding is greatly diminished, because if he fails to mobilize he will be at greater risk of injury or death. This kind of strategy is especially effective where ethnic groups are heavily mixed. Thus military mobilization would then ensure that the individuals incentives coincided with the organizations (Snyder, 1993b:23-24).

Conclusion: The Identity Continuum

Self-identity is a continuum. Near one end is ethnic identity; toward the other end is civic identity. We may always perceive ourselves as a part of an ethnic group, but when will our main political cleavages be Ethnic?

This paper has argued that collective action theory can be fruitful in explaining group solidarity. The strength of the rational choice approach is that it allows us to systematically break down the individual incentives for group solidarity. Understanding group cohesion then becomes a process of correctly evaluating the individual's incentives.

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ETNIČKI IDENTITET I RACIONALNOST

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U radu se fenomen etničkog identiteta promatra kroz optiku teorije kolektivne akcije. Poput ostalih društvenih skupina (plemena, feudalnih država, međunarodnih organizacija i sl.) i etničke su grupe rezultat individualne analize troškova-i-koristi, čija je svrha maksimiziranje materijalnih sredstava i sigurnosti. Eksterne varijable, određene društvenim odnosima, determiniraju individualnu sklonost etnicitetu, to jest nekom drugom principu združivanja.

Kolektivna akcija nije neizbježna posljedica koristi koju grupe pribavljaju svojim članovima; pojedinci su motivirani da konzumiraju zajedničko dobro, ali ne i da ga ostvaruju. Rigorozna analiza troškova-i-koristi, prema autoru, pomaže u objašnjavanju individualnog doprinošenja zajedničkom dobru.