

Theoretical and Conceptual Analysis of Ethnic Conflict and Multiculturalism

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ABSTRACT: *Ethnic conflict have caused massive human sufferings across space and time proving to be one of the most pernicious and devastating products of modern ethnic tensions. Theories of ethnic conflict rely on some combination which conceived ethnic conflict as a technology as it modifies the constraints and opportunities faced by individuals or putting it directly into certain preferences. For a proper understanding of the dynamics of different ethnic conflicts it is not enough simply to look at the degree of violence present, rather it is necessary to carefully analyse the different actors and factors that are at work in each conflict. Likewise multiculturalism has become an integral part of contemporary politics and even more, as resent contestation both in political theory and public discourse and multiculturalism has become the subject of divergent interpretations for very specific political and ideological battle ground with far reaching theoretical and political consequences. Ethnicity and multicultural competence can be identified and developed when human resource management functions on the behavior that has the most relevant successful performance by eliminating cultural difference.*

Keywords: Ethnicity, Multiculturalism, Diversity, Ethnic conflict, Violence

Introduction:

Ethnicity and ethnic identity are indices/indexes to phenomena in human society which are too complex to be comprehensively defined. The thought processes and activities with the help of intellectual parameters are found to be variously featured and open up possibilities for reader/observer centric, community centric and group centric negotiations. Hence, it is obvious that, depending on aspects like territory, society, and culture, the discourse about identity struggle are bound to be self-defining and context specific to a great extent, making it impossible to apply any pre-mediated approach. (Nath, 2008)

Ethnicity can be viewed both as a structural variable (composition of the village) and a behavioural variable (manifestation of ethnic identity and loyalty) and is most closely associated with the issue of boundaries and determines who is a member and who is not and designate which ethnic categories are available for individual's identification at a particular time and place. Two closely-related propositions enjoy near-universal consensus in the literature on ethnicity. The first proposition is that ethnicity's salience changes over time, both within the lifetime of individuals and in terms of wider societal perceptions. In other words, individuals and communities ascribe to ethnic identities more importance in certain periods than in others and sometimes no importance at all. Debates over the placement of ethnic boundaries and the social worth of ethnic groups are the central mechanisms in ethnic construction. (Joane, 1994)

Defining Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict:

Ethnicity is created and recreated as various groups and interests put forth competing visions of the ethnic composition of society and argue over which rewards or sanctions should be attached to which ethnicities. The second widely held view is that ethnic identity is a social construct, in the sense that it results from social discourses that ends up conditioning individuals to identify with particular groups. Ethnicity usually refers to the differentiation of social groups on the basis of five distinct criteria. Firstly, a notion of a 'homeland' or place of common origin is a key element, which is linked to the idea of a Diasporas, where an ethnic group has migrated from that place to form communities elsewhere to that identify with their place of origin. Secondly, a common language, either distinctive in itself or a distinctive dialect of a language shared with others, may be central to the construction of shared memories and affective belonging. Thirdly, identification with a distinct religion, or a religion shared with others can be a central feature of many ethnic groups. Fourthly, a common culture with distinctive social institutions and behaviour, diet and dress and, fifthly, a common tradition, or shared history of one's own 'people' or nation are other criteria used in specifying ethnic groups. (Law, Michael, Ondrej, Roza, 2009)

Ethnification is defined as a situation in which the social, psychological, and political importance of ethnic identities rise relative to other identities, and ethnic intolerance refers to a denial of access to resources and rights to other ethnic group. Ethnicity in the contemporary world has emerged

as a phenomenon with a capacity for social mobilization and has certain psychological properties which can contribute towards potential volatility in the society. Generally speaking, conflict refers to a condition in which one identifiable group of human beings (whether tribal, ethnic, linguistic cultural, religious). Socio-economic, political or other is engaged in conscious opposition to another identifiable group because this group is pursuing incompatible goals. (Ahmed, 2007) Ethnic conflicts have caused massive human suffering across space and time, proving to be one of the most pernicious, and devastating products of modern ethnic tensions. While the human cost involved with ethnic riots is in itself worthy of attention, this phenomenon can have even more distressing long-term consequences. For instance, even at relatively lower rates of casualties, the destructive capacity of ethnic conflict often results in massive population displacement. It is also an inalienable part of human condition, depending on how it is understood and handled. The sources and stakes in ethnic confrontation are often of highly symbolic significance, and this lends critical importance to the ideological dimension both for the purposes of understanding and resolving conflict.

Theoretical aspects of Ethnic Conflict:

Ethnic conflict is the most common type of internal armed conflict in the world and often involves systematic attacks on civilian populations. Theories of ethnic conflict rely on some combination of two broad categories of motives: instrumentalist (sometimes called rationalist) and primordialist (or consummatory). Instrumentalist explanations emphasize the fact that participants in conflict hope to derive some material benefit from the conflict, such as jobs, wealth or power. Primordial's views focus on the visceral dimension of conflict, which they interpret as an eruption of mutual antipathy. To some extent it is possible to think of these two views as, respectively, conceiving of ethnic conflict as a technology, as it modifies the constraints and opportunities faced by individuals, or putting it directly into the agents' preferences. (Caselli, Coleman, 2006) Ethnic relations are inherently conflictual (the model does not feature a peaceful outcome) and the composition of the groups is fixed and immutable. Specifically, a typology of ethnic conflicts is devised deductively, including a rank ordering of types of ethnic conflicts in terms of the impact they have on levels of violence. Ethnic conflicts are often considered as the expression of underlying social and political conflicts between classes, population segments, or interest groups within the wider society.

Ethnic conflict takes different forms with a nature substantially ranging from peaceful expression of grievances to outright use of physical force or violence. This means depending on the

prevailing circumstance, the parties involved in the conflict and the means preferred to settle the dispute, ethnic conflict varies from peaceful reflection of conflict of interests to a violent struggle and civil war. The politicization of ethnic conflict is simply one form of politics, but one which tends to increase and harden divisions and barriers through the symbols and myths that openly question the bases of the nation-state. In the political struggles, ethnicity and classism complicate the terms of social conflict and make institutional reforms more difficult. Ethnic conflict has complex causes and diverse effects, ranging from petty slights to murderous violence. Some light can be thrown on its causes by focusing on the two correlations commonly found in situations of ethnic contact and conflict. It occurs when a particular set of factors and conditions leads to a major structural crisis. On the one hand, there is the easily observed negative correlation that supports the familiar "contact hypothesis": the more personal contact, the less conflict (prejudice, discrimination, hostility, etc.). A Three-Variable Model of Ethnic Conflict can be studied whereby Ethnocentrism depends upon, and increases with, the amount of contact between any two groups and the magnitude of the cultural differences that distinguish them. These two factors interact to determine each group's level of ethnocentrism. A group will show no ethnocentrism with regard to another group if either (a) its members have no contacts with that other group, or (b) there are no differences in the customs and values of the two groups. Secondly, the amount of contact between any two groups depends upon their proximity and the incentives for contact between their members because of factors such as technology or the state of development of the forces of production and hence the possibilities that exist for profitable specialization and trade and upon the levels of ethnocentrism of the two groups. Higher levels of ethnocentrism, other things remaining the same, tend to reduce the contact between the groups or to slow down its increase. Thirdly, the cultural differences between any two groups will be influenced by the contact between them and the mutual repulsions resulting from this contact. An increase in contact, other things remaining the same, will speed up cultural assimilation or, equivalently, reduce the growth of cultural differences caused by other factors. Conversely, an increase in ethnocentrism will reduce the rate of assimilation or increase the rate at which cultural differences develop—again assuming that all other things remain unchanged.

Ethnic conflict occurs when a particular set of factors and conditions converge: a major structural crisis; presence of historical memories of inter-ethnic grievances; institutional factors that promote ethnic tolerance; manipulation of historical memories by political entrepreneurs to evoke emotions such as fear, resentment, and hate

towards the others and an inter-ethnic competition over resources and rights. Each ethnic conflict has its own unique characteristics and, in different contexts, some of these elements will be more prominent than the others, but all of them are the common factors necessary for ethnic conflict to occur. The primordial's approach helps explain the role of emotions and the conflict potential of ethnicity. The institutional, political entrepreneurs and competition over resources approaches explain how the interaction of institutional and political factors with ethnic emotions leads to ethnification, ethnic intolerance, competition, and eventually – violent conflict. Violence does not spontaneously erupt between otherwise peacefully coexisting ethnic groups. However, 'ethnicity is not the ultimate, irreducible source of violent conflict in such cases'. Power and material gain can be equally strong motivations, for leaders and followers alike, to choose conflict over cooperation, violence over negotiations. For a proper understanding of the dynamics of different ethnic conflicts it is, therefore, not enough simply to look at the degree of violence present. Thus, it would be mistaken to assume that ethno politics is only a matter of confrontation between different politically mobilized groups and states. On the contrary, there is a range of examples where ethno politics is pursued in a spirit of compromise and cooperation. This is a generally hopeful indication that the presence of different ethnic groups in the same country or region does not inevitably have to lead to violent conflict, and it is therefore useful to explore briefly the reasons for interethnic cooperation. The adjustment of cultural differences to changes in the levels of contact and ethnocentrism takes a relatively long time to work itself out. (Forbes, 1997) Contact may have an effect on the conflict variables (prejudice, discrimination, hostility, etc.) because of its effect on cultural differences, than on stereotyping, and it may be a cause of antagonistic relationships more often than a cure for them, because, given cultural differences between groups, contact sets up conflicts of interest regarding how exactly the groups are to converge on a common culture or common norms in their dealings with each other. The psychology of ethnic and cultural conflict term benefits of change are contingent only upon increasing mutual intelligibility and do not depend on how this is achieved. Thus it makes a great deal of difference to each individual in the situation of contact whether he (or she) or someone else is required to learn a new language. While the process of homogenization is taking place, the net advantage to any group of greater mutual intelligibility will partly depend upon whether they are making the necessary adaptations or whether the other group is bearing these costs. Because of the costs of change, each of the groups will benefit if it can somehow induce members of their group to adopt its language while at the same time preventing its own members from learning the alien language.

Conversely, the stiffer the group's resistance, the better the chances that it will succeed in making the other group bears the costs of assimilation. Political mobilization of ethnic identities results in ethnic intolerance and competition over resources and rights – which, if unresolved, can lead to a violent conflict. When resources are scarce, it is easier for political entrepreneurs to capitalize on the conflict potential of ethnicity. Ethnic conflict has become a shorthand way to discuss almost all violent confrontation between communities living in the same nation-state. But such an uncritical view misrepresents the reality of the shared past of these communities, evolving cooperative and sustainable community living strategies, and conjure up images of ancient tribal hatreds. While some of the current conflicts may have overt ethnic or cultural dimensions, the core issues are about gaining more power, land and other resources. From Hegel through Weber and Parsons, theorists have analyzed socio-political units as coherent and stable systems which, when subjected to various technological, social and/or ideological forces respond and develop in characteristic patterns. Another equally respectable intellectual tradition is based on an opposing vision of society. From Hobbes through Durkheim, Dahrendorf and Samuel Huntington, societies have been analyzed as agglomerations of individuals and/or groups whose interests and desires conflict (Lustick, 1975) The cause of ethnic conflict varies from time to time with the changing scenario and the majority-minority issues have also led loose the problem of the identity problems. Each ethnic conflict has its own unique characteristics and, in different contexts, some of these elements will be more prominent than the others, but all of them are the common factors necessary for ethnic conflict to occur. The primordial's approach helps explain the role of emotions and the conflict potential of ethnicity. The institutional, political entrepreneurs and competition over resources approaches explain how the interaction of institutional and political factors with ethnic emotions leads to ethnification, ethnic intolerance, competition, and eventually – violent conflict.

Ethnically, diverse societies carry various degrees of conflict potential and ethnic emotions, rooted in historical memories of grievances, are at the core of conflict potential. There is no exhaustive list of ethnic conflict theories, nor are all the theories that we have referred to are perfect but to underscore the fact that although various scholars with different backgrounds address the issue of ethnic conflicts from various perspectives, group has been the key thrust of their theories. Ethnic conflicts are group phenomenon and no individualist approach bypassing this group focus can effectively respond to such concerns. Therefore, in sharply divided societies, pragmatism inspired political actors to develop group-focused

mechanisms like ethnic federalism or consociationalism to handle ethnic tensions.

Defining Multiculturalism:

Multiculturalism is a system of beliefs and behaviors that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context which empowers all within the organization or society. Multiculturalism implies a multiplicity of contesting cultural voices that are allowed to express the imagined community of the nation on their own terms. Multiculturalism has two implications. First, it presents culture as a site of contestation and competition, in which the mainstream is engaged in conflict with the centre, setting off the free play of various elements. Second, there is historical multiculturalism, which aims at recovering lost historical, cultural voices. Multiculturalism also entails the validity of the cultural expressions and contributions of the various groups. This is not to imply that all cultural contributions are of equal value and social worth, or that all should be tolerated. Multiculturalism thus means valuing what people have to offer, and not rejecting or criticising it simply because it differs from what the majority, or those in power, regard as important of value. Multiculturalism also encourages and enables the contribution of the various groups to society or to an organization.

Theoretical aspects of Multiculturalism:

Multiculturalism or cultural pluralism is fundamental to the belief that all citizens are equal. It ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, and can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging. Multiculturalism is best understood neither as a political doctrine with a programmatic content nor a philosophical school but as a perspective on or a way of viewing human life. A multicultural society cannot be stable and last long without developing a common sense of belonging among its citizens. Although equal citizenship is essential to fostering a common sense of belonging, it is not enough. Citizenship is about status and rights; belonging is about acceptance, feeling welcome, a sense of identification and the two do not necessarily coincide. One may enjoy all the rights of citizenship but feel that one does not quite belong to the community and is a relative outsider. This feeling of being fully a citizen and yet an outsider is difficult to analyse and explain, but it can be deep and real and can also seriously damage the quality of one's citizenship as well as one's sense of commitment to the political community. It is caused by, among other things, the manner in which the wider society defines itself, the demeaning ways in which the rest of its members talk about these groups, and the dismissive or patronizing ways in which they treat them.

Although members of these groups are in principle free to participate in its public life, they often stay away for fear of rejection and ridicule or out of a deep sense of alienation. For all their differences, there are also similarities: indigenous-immigrant tension and clash, son-of-soil movements, demands for affirmative action for the backward majority indigenous population, primacy of the indigenous language, culture and public symbols, deep-rooted identity issues intertwined with perceptions of socioeconomic domination and discrimination, nevertheless is instructive. For instance, it can create an awareness of strategies that have been done elsewhere and help tease out symbolic, institutional and structural arrangements and flows of resources that may induce the conflicting parties to co-exist on civilized terms. (Milton, 2000) Multiculturalism has become an integral part of contemporary politics and even more, as resent contestation both in political theory and public discourse demonstrate, multiculturalism has become the subject of divergent interpretations, very specific political and ideological battleground with far reaching theoretical and political consequences. Comparative multiculturalism, as the name indicates, is first of all and quite simply the idea of comparing different multicultural situations. Underlying this comparative approach are three different types of reason. First is the simple fact that there are many different forms and types of multiculturalism. When we discuss of multiculturalism we often do as if multiculturalism was always and everywhere one and the same thing, that is to say, we act as if different multicultural situations where all, in some interesting and relevant way, similar. This supposition is in a sense implicit in the word itself. For what is the point of using the same word to describe or identify different objects if we do not believe that in some way these objects are sufficiently similar or alike. The very success of the term multiculturalism, as a word to describe forms of policies, sociological situations, or political problems, suggests the extent to which we take it for granted that there is such a thing as multiculturalism and that the word identifies a well defined class of objects.

The word "multiculturalism" as it is used denotes many different kinds of things and comparative multiculturalism primarily constitutes an attempt to take this fact into account. The plurality of meanings and uses of the term multiculturalism is related to two different questions. The first one concerns our language and the other concerns reality. First then is the fact that we use the terms "multicultural" and "multiculturalism" to denote or to refer to very different types of things. For example, "multicultural" or "multiculturalism" can be used to refer either to some social or historical situations or they can be used to identify a certain type of policies. Thus, when the American sociologist of

Korean origin John Lie talks of multiculturalism in Japan in his book *Multiethnic Japan*, he refers to a sociological phenomenon, the presence of different cultural groups within Japanese society. He however also deplores the absence of multiculturalism in Japan, and when he does he understand the term this time as referring to a policy designed to address this social phenomenon. (Lie, 2004). Furthermore, multiculturalism can also be used to describe or to name a certain political ideal or norm of justice. Mention be made that multiculturalism in India ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging. Recognition gives each Indian citizen a feeling of security and self-confidence, making them more open to, diverse cultures. Contrary to national multiculturalism, democratic multiculturalism does not reduce culture to a private affair. To the opposite it constructed around institutions whose specific goal is to protect the cultural differences between the various cultural groups that make up the polity and to promote cultural equality. It is interesting that in democratic multiculturalism some cultural groups, especially minority groups, are often subject to the feeling that the evolution towards political autonomy is not yet complete and that national independence remains the final objective.

Liberal multiculturalism tends to exoticise others in a confinement retreat that locates difference in a primitive past of cultural authenticity. This type of multiculturalism, often referred to as cultural tourism, is evident in many social works including the strategies of work with a particular ethnic minority group. Liberal multiculturalism, while well intended correct people of colour into tightly bound imaginative identities that reproduce notions of inherent, durable, and unbridgeable differences between people. While there have been significant contributions made by liberal multiculturalism, honouring differences in this essential way does not necessarily undermine racial discrimination or other social inequalities and may reproduce stereotyping. Mention may be made of India which embraced diversity, or cultural pluralism in both policy and practice. The Indian Constitution which is the source of many state policies can be said to be a basic multicultural document, in the sense of providing for political and institutional measures for the recognition and accommodation of the country's diversity. Cultural diversity is viewed as one of India's most important attributes, socially and economically. Through multiculturalism, India recognizes the potential of all citizens, encouraging them to integrate into their society and take an active part in its social, cultural, economic and political affairs. Our advantage lies in having been a multicultural society from our earliest days. Our diversity is a national asset. India contains the entire globe within its borders. Multiculturalism is

a relationship between the state and the Indian people. Our citizenship gives us equal rights and equal responsibilities. By taking an active part in our civic affairs, we affirm these rights and strengthen India's democracy. A multicultural society cannot be stable and last long without developing a common sense of belonging among its citizens. Although equal citizenship is essential to fostering a common sense of belonging, it is not enough. Citizenship is about status and rights; belonging is about acceptance, feeling welcome, a sense of identification. The two do not necessarily coincide. One might enjoy all the rights of citizenship but feel that one does not quite belong to the community and is a relative outsider. This feeling of being fully a citizen and yet an outsider is difficult to analyse and explain, but it can be deep and real and can seriously damage the quality of one's citizenship as well as one's sense of commitment to the political community. Politics plays a two-way role in ethnicity and rise of sub-nationalism. Firstly, politics of recognition and representation has encouraged the growth of the ethnic groups' demand for a distinct set up which results in the formation of sub-nationalism or a nation within a nation. At this stage, it is important to recognize the distinctness of these groups. However, when it is perceived as a favour granted or a right acquired through a political struggle, the state policy of recognition of traditional institutions and representation of the ethnic groups in the decision-making bodies can nourish stronger sentiments and emotions of ethnicity among other groups. Its outcome can be noticed at various levels. In such circumstances, Benedict Anderson's phrase 'imagined community' seems to become a reality. Ethnic sentiments, emotions related to their culture, language, symbols etc. and politics of recognition and representation come together to give birth to an image of their communion or nationhood which can also be described as sub-nationalism. In fact, there is a need to "imagine" a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-linguistic integrated society, but politicisation has turned this imagination into a conflict and crisis. Secondly, the presence of political interference is again felt when this sub-nationalism grows to its full capacity causing a threat to the state.

Multiculturalism implies a multiplicity of contesting cultural voices that are allowed to articulate the imagined community of the nation on their own terms. As such, it should be seen as a contestation of mono-culturalism, the impulse to impose one cultural order on all sections of society. Multicultural India thus cannot be reduced to a single ideological concept; instead, when the sharply contrasting cultural constructs of the national imaginary are set in dialogic relation there occurs an infinitely complicated situation that cannot be resolved in the name of ideological consistency or logical unity. (Jacques, James, 1982) It must be accepted that Indian identity is a

ceaseless play, a coming together and moving apart, of different cultures. Multiculturalism inhabits a plane space, not a hierarchical space and can be explained in the light of postmodern theory. Postmodern theory, in theorizing plane space, attacks foundational theory, or essentialist philosophy, that supports mono-culturalism. It presents culture as a site of contestation and competition, in which the mainstream is engaged in conflict with the centre, setting off the free play of various elements. The continuous deployment of the force of transformation will resist the structure of domination and marginalization, foreground little narratives, and recover the lost historical cultural voices; it thus can serve the purposes of multiculturalism. Though multiculturalism conceives cultures as autonomous, it opens up a space for constant negotiation between them and even facilitates the process of combination. Between cultural forms there is the clearing in which interpenetration takes place. Ethnicity is politicized into the ethnic factor when an ethnic group is in conflict with the political elite over such issues as the use of limited resources or the allocation of benefits.

Kymlicka's liberal culturalist position is a pertinent example. His argument, in short, is that modern states invariably develop and consolidate a societal culture which requires the standardization and diffusion of a common language, and the creation and diffusion of common educational, political, and legal institutions. To ensure freedom and equality for all citizens involves, *inter alia*, ensuring that they have equal membership in, and access to the opportunities made available by the societal culture. But in the case of national minorities, the case is quite different. These groups already possessed a societal culture and they have

fought to maintain these institutions. (Kymlicka, 1989) Freedom for them involves the ability to live and work in their own societal culture. In short, the aim of a liberal theory of minority rights is to define fair terms of integration for immigrants, and to enable national minorities to maintain themselves as distinct societies. However, Kymlicka's 'liberal' position has been dismantled by other liberal. Another eminent liberal philosopher – Brian Barry – strikes at the very root of Kymlicka's 'liberal' understanding. He is critical of Kymlicka's emphasis on 'diversity' and 'autonomy', for they refer to policies that would systematically enfeeble precisely those rights of individuals to protection against groups that liberal States should guarantee. That the State does not lend any special weight to the norms of illiberal – or liberal – groups, is, according to him, the essence of what it means to say that a society is a liberal society. (Barry, 2001)

Conclusion:

Therefore, multiculturalism is the first and foremost aspects about developing new models of democratic citizenship, grounded in human-rights ideals, to replace earlier uncivil and undemocratic relations of hierarchy and exclusion. Multiculturalism is precisely about constructing new civic and political relations to overcome the deeply entrenched inequalities that have persisted after the abolition of formal discrimination. Out of constant interactions, cultures influenced each other and developed commonalities. On the contrary we can say that ethnicity and multicultural competence can be identified and developed when human resource management functions on the behaviour that has the most relevant successful performance by eliminating cultural differences

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