

Different explanations for identity formation



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Recognizing the various combinations of many identifications, self is an essential part of every individual becoming a mature person. Identities are much wider than self-identity fitting with a human being. Individuals are even willing to sacrifice their lives to protect their identity group. Many groups who fight together distinguish themselves as part of a common identity that has a common fate and interest. Consequently, people might be tempted to ignore important fundamental political and economic factors by incorrectly relating wars to primordial ethnic desires. Nevertheless, it is not the cultural differences that lead to conflict but the ethical, political, and economic objectives of states elites. Political actors may purposely revise historical events to reinforce this identity in order to achieve power.

Although a person's culture is somewhat inherited it is also constructed. In my view, ethnicity is not an unchanging primordial phenomenon. But rather ethnicity is socially constructed, with people selecting a history and common ancestry based on their interests in various times and circumstances. I consider identity to be mainly socially constructed even if some traits of identity are not easily modified by social processes. Primordialism school of thought fails to recognize variations in ethnic group formation since people have multiple identities that are different in relative importance based on circumstances. Instrumentalism is criticized due to the fact that it fails to recognize that identity is rooted in and controlled by the society as a whole and cannot be selected by individuals.

Out of the three explanations for identity formation, I believe that the social constructivism is more reasonable and explains better the conflicts. This school of thought focuses on the social nature of ethnic identity. In my view,

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ethnicity is neither open nor completely fixed, but it is subject to change if the social conditions change. Individuals and groups cannot avoid the fact that ethnic differences exist, but they determine for themselves what to make of those differences. Thus, ethnic conflict is caused mainly by social and political systems that lead to inequality and do not offer options for the peaceful expression of differences. Changes in social interactions, such as violent conflict or increased tensions, influence the socially constructed nature of ethnicity.

Ethnic disputes are considered common in multiethnic societies and arise in periods of substantial political, economic, and social change and lead to uncertainty, emerging opportunities for action, and particularistic interests. Grievances and polarizing leadership lead to mobilization, ranging from conventional politics, strikes, and demonstrations to violent acts such as terrorism and civil wars. Contemporary examples of these kinds of conflicts are Ukraine versus Russia, or ISIS generated violent conflicts.