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## **Relative Deprivation Theory, Nationalism, Ethnicity and Identity Conflicts**

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### **Abstract**

Politicisation of identity is the operative and most pertinent term for the paper's central argument. The gravity of the people's identity problematic and state's security concerns correlates closely with the extent to which societal identity is politicised. The more politicised these identities become, the more they display a ferocity which makes them a force to be reckoned with. By applying 'Relative Deprivation Theory' embedded alongside an appreciation of societal security, this research offers unique insights into how this process of politicisation takes place. This paper examines how identity, legitimacy and dissent from the existing state order have come to define a new security dynamic that denies agency to a purely Realist understanding of security dilemmas. This study builds upon an array of secondary qualitative sources, both in order to construct the theoretical argument and to back this theory up with historical and social scientific data. By combining the concept of societal security and Relative this research fuses two interrelated theories that allow the paper to make an innovative and original contribution to understanding the complexity of the internal security dilemmas and the process of political identity.

**Keywords:** Relative Deprivation Theory, Nationalism, Ethnicity, Societal Security, Political Identity.

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## **1. Introduction**

In states wherein minorities experience economic discrimination, inequalities in standards of living as opposed to other ethnic groups, and asymmetrical access to such state resources as land and wealth, ethnic conflict is more likely. In states which exhibit social discrimination, where the aggressive dominant ethnic group imposes a nationalist dogma, where minority ethnic groups are prevented from expressing their customs and language, where the practice of religious freedom is inhibited, or where groups have antagonistic prejudices towards each other and/or regard themselves as victims, the prospects for conflict are correspondingly all the worse. Such a situation triggers ethnic politics, and serves to mobilise an ethnicity's members. This increases the potential of the conflict escalating from the existing ethnic tensions. In short, conflict occurs when the dominant ethnic community in the country exercises a prejudicial control over all economic opportunities, leaving members of other groups disadvantaged, this, however, increases the likelihood of political violence, particularly in the multi-ethnic states (Saleh, 2011: 234). This article looks at how nationalism and ethnicity two important variables in terms of security have been socially constructed, and by employing the theory of relative deprivation argues how such constructions impacts upon the state security. In doing so, the research critically approaches the both terms; nationalism and ethnicity and moves on to explore how identity conflicts can be politicised and, consequently, mobilised.

### **Nationalism: Invented Identity**

Definitions of the *concepts* and theoretical *debates surrounding* nationalism have long dominated political science. Studying the concept of nationalism contributes to the understanding of ethno-national conflicts and its causes. According to Benedict Anderson nations are a political project of identity creation, employed to create a nation and to achieve a coherent collective identity, and in the mobilisation of people within a certain territory. He contends that the nation 'is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is

conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings' (1991: 6-7) Charles Tilly also calls such nationalism 'state-led Nationalism' (1994: 133) or 'state-building nationalism'. According to Anthony Smith "the state is a territorial entity with a jurisdiction that, although sovereign, is also strictly bounded; and the sense of boundness, of inclusion and exclusion, is vital to the definition of the community of citizens" (2002: 135). He, identifies historic territory, legal-political community, equality among citizens, common culture, and common ideology as main component of the modern nation. (Smith, 1991:11) Similarly, Ernest Gellner states: Nationalism is a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones, and, in particular, that ethnic boundaries within a given state- a contingency already formally excluded by the principle in its general formulation- should not separate the power-holders from the rest(2006: 1).

Gellner adds that, 'nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist' (1964: 169). Elsewhere he maintains 'Nationalism is a political principle which maintains that similarity of culture is the basic social bond' (1997: 3). A nation, thus, is imaginary, invented by historical and political processes and socially constructed. Political identity is employed to merge people, based on the sense of common identity within a given territorial entity. Hans Cohn asserts that nationalism is 'a state of mind' 'an act of consciousness' and maintains that, 'nationalism is not a natural phenomenon, not a product of "eternal" or "natural" laws; it is a product of the growth of social and intellectual factors at a certain stage of history' (Kohn, 1944: 6-10). In so doing, the role of elites, the media, publications, law, regulations, and the education system in portraying other nations negatively and mistakenly glorifying the self is crucial(Anderson, 1991: 33-36).

Edward Said states that societies obtain their identities through mechanisms of opposition to others.He explains that an important element

of national identity is a technique of demarcation between us versus them (1978: 43). For Smith, nationalism is ‘An ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity for a population which some of its members deem to constitute an actual or potential “nation”’ (2001: 9). Nationalism, Sandra Joireman argues that, is politicised ethnicity. She maintains that ethno-national mobilisation occurs when ethnic groups are politically politicised ‘in the form of some sort of collective objective of recognition’ (2003: 12). In answering the question of; what types of nationalism are more likely to cause conflicts or war, Stephen Evera identifies four immediate causes:

1. The greater the proportion of state - seeking nationalities that are stateless, the greater the risk of war.
2. The more those nationalities pursue the recovery of national diasporas and the more they pursue annexationist strategies of recovery, the greater the risk of war.
3. The more hegemonic the goals that nationalities pursue toward one another, the greater the risk of war.
4. The more severely nationalities oppress minorities living in their states, the greater the risk of war(2001: 128-129).

According to Milton Esman, nationalism could be categorised to three different versions; ethnonationalism, civic nationalism and syncretic nationalism. He argues that ethnonationalism refers to nations that require political self-determination and independence based on ethnicity and its symbols. Popular sovereignty and regional autonomy, thus, are the key dimensions of ethnonationalism. Ethnicity and symbols are particularly important because they distinguish ‘us’ from ‘others’. For instance, in Malaysia ‘all the symbols of statehood reflect exclusively Malay culture’ othering those Chinese and Indian citizens. In such system, nationalist ideology may tolerate ethno-religious minorities and their rights. However, minorities are excluded from state’s official ideology and symbols. Civic nationalism is a territorially conceived concept that includes all those

individuals who recognise and comply with ‘the duties and responsibilities of citizenship’ regardless of their ethnic, racial or religion backgrounds, such as United States. Syncretic nationalism refers to ideological attempts to create discriminative ‘national sentiment’ that excludes and distinct ethnic groups within its boundaries. Ethno-national conflict is more likely to occur in such states, for example the former Yugoslavia and Soviet Union (Esman, 2004: 41-44).

Steve Fenton argues that, civic and ethnic elements of nationalism may coincide together yet both are significantly distinct. He adds that, ‘where a national self-image is strengthened it has a simultaneous effect of tacitly or actively excluding people defined as others.’ He further explains that ‘in the contemporary world nationalism and racism are frequently found side by side and are often perfectly fused in a single ideology’ (2003: 162-165). Elie Kedourie regards humanity as naturally divided into nations with different and specific characteristics. He maintains that, ‘the only legitimate government is national self-government’ (1960: 1). Smith agrees with this proposition and maintains that, nationalist doctrine is constructed by the following propositions:

1. Humanity is naturally divided into nations
2. Each nation has its peculiar character
3. The source of all political power is the nation, the whole collectivity
4. For freedom and self-realisation, men identify with a nation
5. Nations can only be fulfilled in their own states
6. Loyalty to the nation-state overrides other loyalties
7. The primary condition of global freedom and harmony is the strengthening of the nation-state (1983: 20-21).

Richard Cottam explains that nationalism requires ‘a definite territory, a common and distinctive historical and cultural tradition, a common language, a common religion, and belief in racial homogeneity. He adds that, nonetheless, some examples of nationalism may exist ‘without several of these factors’. The more of these factors present, the stronger sense of nationalism would be (1979: 6-7). For instance, Joel Migdal states that ‘the

failure of the state to have people in even the most remote villages behave as state leaders want ultimately affects the very coherence and character of the states themselves' (2001: 5). According to Walker Connor, the process of nation building often undermines and ignores 'the question of ethnic diversity' (1994: 29).

Charles Tilly argues that national identity during the process of nation-state building emphasises two key ideas: firstly, the idea that people are historically constructed, related and homogenised by the nation; and secondly, the idea that the relation between the state and its nation is an expression of the unity of the nation. He also argues that states may exclude and subordinate their ethnic groups in this process. (2002: 5-12)

In his book *Imagined communities* Anderson argues that the 'nation is an imagined political community'. He further explains that communities are socially constructed and adds that 'it is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion' (1991: 6). Historical and political processes invent a nation. Political identity is used in order to unify people, by laying the groundwork for a sense of common identity within a certain territorial entity.

The process of transition from an individual identity to a collective one, and then onto a political one, does have, inevitably, profound impacts on the security of society. Individual identity is about an expression of who I am, how I identify myself, and from whence I derive my sense of belonging (to a particular group). According to symbolic interactionists identity is 'a perception of who we are, through others: identity is a dynamic factor of a person's understanding of themselves and others. Identity is the result of agreements and disagreements' (Zahed, 2004: 6). J. H. Turner argues that individuals' identity is not fixed and is varied and manipulated in and through the processes of social interactions; identity, then, is changeable and malleable (1998: 375-382).

The combination of collective identity and a notion of a national interest

creates a basis for identity politics. From this point of view, Kedourie argues that the individual 'cannot be considered on his own. He forms part of, and derives meaning from, the whole' (1960: 39). According to Kedourie, 'humanity is naturally divided into nations and each nation has specific and certain characteristics, and furthermore the only legitimate government is national self-government' (1960: 1). These shared characteristics enable people to identify themselves as a distinct community and also legitimise a political power to govern them. Kedourie, in defining the state, asserts that the state is a collection of individuals who live together and their aim is to better their life and to secure their own welfare. Hume, at the liberal end of the scale, posits that: 'a nation is nothing but a collection of individuals'.

The ideas – both assumed and explicitly propounded –, which underpin this research, accord more with Anderson's notion of the nation as an imagined community, which serves to politically unify disparate and variegated peoples. Political identity underlines the factors, which distinguish people in order to differentiate between 'us' and 'them', and in order to create solidarity within imagined communities inside the given territories. As such, loyalty and solidarity to the state becomes crucial. The nation-state and collective identity, therefore, become the first and foremost factors in the process of national identity construction. Anderson goes on to clarify that the distinguishing factors are defined as being the images, which the group employs in order to perceive themselves and the images they assert in reproducing themselves in the next generation (as being distinct in relation to the 'other'). He moves on to state that the nation is 'an imagined political community' (1991: 6).

In regard to self-identification, Said suggests that all societies acquire their identities through mechanisms of opposition to others, to a rival or an enemy. He argues that an important component of political identity is a technique of differentiation between *us* and *them*. (1978: 43) According to this doctrine, political identity divides people/and nations according to their political tendencies, allegiances or opponents, and most importantly it divides people between *us* and *them*. The nation, in other words, is defined

as a group of people united on the basis of a shared hatred of the other. Since ethnicity and religion are a significant part of identity and are extremely emotive and resonant parts of identity, and they distinguish between *us* and *them*, they have a serious potential to demonise and dehumanise ‘enemy’ groups. (Haynes, 1996: 101) Therefore, the study of nationalism and political identity in seeking to understand the cause of wars and hatred among nations is essential.

### **Ethnicity: Constructed Conflict**

*Ethnicity* refers to the identical characteristics of a group, such as a common origin, historical memories, culture and connection to a certain geographical entity. (Esman, 2004: 30-40) These collective characteristics distinguish people and enable them to identify themselves with others belonging to the same ethnic group. According to Instrumentalists, collective identity is a fundamentally political phenomenon and is essentially changeable. Instrumentalists regard ethnicity as changeable and as ‘a fundamentally political phenomenon’ (Joireman, 2003: 38). As a result, any upheaval in political and national systems, such as revolution or democratisation, may cause a substantial change in national identity. However, identity scholars apply different approaches. The *Primordialist* approach defines ethnicity as a fixed characteristic that cannot be changed. The *constructivist* approach sees ethnicity as a concept that can change through social interactions over time; often indeed this change is easy. R. A. Schermerhorn defines the process of identity formation as follows:

A collectivity within a larger society having real or alleged common origin, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their people hood. Examples of such symbolic elements are: kinship patterns, physical contiguity (as in localism or sectionalism), religious affiliation, language or dialect forms, tribal affiliation, nationality, phenol-typical features, or any combination of these. A necessary accompaniment is some consciousness among members of the group(1970: 12).



Michael E. Brown defines ethnic conflict as follows: 'ethnic conflict is a dispute about important political, economic, social, cultural, or territorial issues between two or more ethnic communities' (2003: 82). Ethnic conflict occurs when people perceive their identity to be targeted or/and when people view the repressive state as an obstacle to their achieving their ends. (McPhail&McCarthy, 2005: 3) This conflict can manifest in different ways, such as in a dispute over territories or over resources. Ethnic elites, to mobilise their groups, aim at creating a collective sense of unity and solidarity amongst their members. (Snyder &Ballentine, 2001: 66-67) Hostility and hatred are often used by ethnic elites so as to justify the use of violence against the rival 'others'. In short, ethnic elites *politicise* the collective identity in order to enable themselves to achieve their ethnic group's end. Ted Gurr claims that ethnic conflict occurs when an ethnic group perceives itself to be disadvantaged and aims to gain collective interests from the state. (1994: 348-352) In his words, 'the primary causal sequence in political violence is first the development of discontent, second the politicisation of that discontent, and finally its actualization in violent action against potential objects and actors'.

The *internationalisation* of ethnic conflict implies ethnic conflict, which engages regional or international actors. An internationalisation of ethnic conflict occurs when transnational ethnic groups are involved in the conflict. Internationalisation may arise when an oppressive state suppresses its ethnic communities and/or when such domestic conflict threatens the security of the neighbouring countries, the region and/or the international community. (Walt, 1992: 321-368) Intrastate ethnic instability has a direct impact on regional and international security. Foreign powers may become involved due to the fear of ethnic groups resisting violently, and the potential of mass migration of refugees to neighbouring countries may affect the politics of the region. At times ethnic groups may seek foreign powers' protection.

The term *identity* refers to that which defines an individual or a community. Charles Taylor argues that identity allows individuals or

collectivities to seek authenticity and validity in relation to others. (1994: 38) Furthermore, identity defines the rights and expectations of an individual or a group within a certain society. Ethnic and national issues, therefore, cannot be excluded from the state's polity, and the linking of ethnic identity to national security remains a major priority in terms of ensuring the security of the state.

Moreover, states with discriminative policies towards their minority groups are more likely to face ethnic conflict. These state's ethnic policies may include social oppression, purposive measures designed to create economic inequality, political marginalisation, and discrimination in terms of employment opportunities. In other words, when ethnic minorities are denied legitimate access to the state's resources, and are not capable of achieving their expectations, conflict inevitably becomes the only option for the deprived group to act against the regime and acquire political agency.

### **Relative Deprivation theory: Creating Societal Insecurity**

Ted Robert Gurr refers to Relative Deprivation (RD) as 'the tension that develops from a discrepancy between the 'ought' and the 'is' of collective value satisfaction, and this disposes men to violence' (1971: 23). According to the definition provided by Gurr, Relative Deprivation is the discrepancies between what people want, their value expectations, and what they actually gain, their value accruing capabilities. Gurr states that: 'the intensity of relative deprivation varies strongly in terms of the average degree of perceived discrepancy between value expectation and value capabilities'. He contends that people are more likely to revolt when they lose hope of attaining their societal values, and the intensity of discontent/frustration '[varies] with the severity of depression and inflation' (1971: 87). Ethnicity, Gurr asserts, 'is the obvious basis for mobilizing oppositions' against the state. Gurr states that, the higher the degree of frustration, the greater the political instability. In short, the intensification of RD with regard to political participation, prosperity, collective/communal values and societal status can lead to a 'decline in ideational coherence' which consequently

leads to a breakdown in the social order and to violence. Migdal asserts that 'the state's centrality in people's lives, its relationship to ongoing conflicts in society, people's expressive relationship to it, all depend on its cohesion' (2001: 150). Katzenstein, speaking of how people perceive themselves, states that: 'the answer lies in the issue of identity, in variations in the degree of expansiveness and restrictiveness, with which people and organizations relate to one another' (1996: 15). Gurr, speaking of societal security dilemmas, maintains that in such cases 'the benefit of one group is an automatic loss for all the others. Life is an inelastic pie' (1971: 125).

The failure of the state to meet people's value expectations which they believe they are rightfully entitled to can eventually lead to disorientation amongst the citizenry and discontentment on the part of the people towards the state. (Saleh, 2011: 236) Gurr holds that: 'Societal conditions that increase the average level or intensity of expectations without increasing capabilities increase the intensity of discontent' (1971: 125).

Identity is dynamic and changeable over the course of time; 'People change and adapt' (Roy, 2004: 9). Buzan points out that societal security as a concept is concerned with states when they are 'undermined or destabilized by "their" societies, becoming threatened or weakened in terms of social cohesion and identity' (1993: 24). Societal insecurity occurs when people within a certain geographically defined state assume that their identity is threatened. This perceived threat could be triggered and bolstered by a collective feeling of relative deprivation, be it social, economic, political or cultural. The result manifests itself in societal insecurity. Moaddel, for instance, points out that intensive economic and political insufficiency leads to insecurity within the state. (1993: 5) Buzan, in an effort to define different *types* of societal threats, says that:

Societal threats come in a wide variety of forms, but there are four obvious basic types: physical threats (pain, injury, death), economic threats (seizure, or destruction of property, denial of access to work or resources), threats to rights (imprisonment, denial of normal civil liberties), and threats to position or status (demotion, public humiliation) (1991: 37).

The discrepancy between people's expectations and what they can actually attain consequently leads to frustration. Gurr suggests that, 'the existence of frustration always leads to some form of violence' (1971: 33). He adds that 'the intensity of relative deprivation varies strongly with the average degree of perceived discrepancy between value expectations and value capabilities' (1971: 60). The greater the gap is, the greater the intensity of the violence and belligerence. Relative Deprivation theory refers to any perceived discrepancy between people's expectations and their capabilities to fulfil those expectations. This creates a gap between the deprived group and the state. Hence, Gurr suggests that 'the greater the intensity of deprivation, the greater the magnitude of violence' (1971: 9).

#### **Politicisation and Mobilisation of Collective Identity**

According to instrumentalists, ethnic identity is an ideology which elites construct for instrumental reasons so as to gain greater political power and achieve their goals. In doing so, elites *politicise* ethnic identity such that they can mobilise their members to support their politico-cultural project. Creating a cohesive sense of nationalism in a multi-ethnic country is 'exceptionally difficult' to achieve. An insufficient sense of common purpose between the state and its multi-ethnic society poses threats to the internality of the state. The insecure society itself becomes 'the enemy within'. It also invites suspicion in terms of external insecurity - 'the foreign enemy' (Benhabib, Shapiro, Petranovic, 2007: 2-3).

Ethnic identity is not fixed. Ethnic identity is mobilised 'through the dynamic of conflicts'. In other words, ethnic identity is *socially constructed*, and collective identity formation 'becomes part of the conflict itself' (Stavenhagen, 1996: 66). Esman argues that:

The concept of relative deprivation refers to the gap between a group's current status and prospects and what appear to be reasonable and legitimate expectations, or to a gap between what comparable groups are believed to enjoy and what is available in material, cultural, and political satisfactions to the collectivity and its members (1994: 29-30).

The mere existence of relative deprivation, however, is not sufficient to pose a great enough threat to the state's security. Transforming such deprivations and grievances into collective action against the regime, however, requires a *politicisation* of ethnic identity in order to mobilise the

people. In Mohammed Hafez's words 'To be able to wage a fight, individuals will have to mobilize resources, recruit committed members, and establish organizational structures that can withstand repression' (2004: 17). Gurr argues that 'politicized discontent is a necessary condition for the resort to violence in politics' (1971: 14). The key reason for ethnic rebellion is always of a societal nature. Ethnic groups may find themselves disadvantaged in many facets of life - economic, socio-cultural, political and ideological.

Ethnic elites, through the use of communication facilities such as television satellite channels and the internet, have been enabled to *politicise* such sentiments, to publicise their goals and views, to mobilise ethnic activists both in peaceful and violent ways, and to direct people's anger towards the regime in Tehran. According to Esman, [M]obilization is the process by which an ethnic community becomes politicized on behalf of its collective interests and aspirations. This process requires awareness, usually promoted by ethnic entrepreneurs, that political action is necessary to promote or defend the community's vital collective interests. This awareness results in the recruitment of individuals into the movement or into organizations that purport to speak for the movement(1998: 28).

In short, any change in the balance of power between the state and its people triggers ethnic grievances and mobilises them against the regime. According to Gurr's theory of Relative Deprivation, states can survive for a long time despite intense discontentment, 'because a regime monopolizes coercive control and institutional support'. In other words, the absence of social insurgency is often 'because of repression or rational calculations based on the imbalance of power' between the deprived groups and the oppressive state. Therefore, the occurrence of ethnic collective rebellion depends on 'rational calculation' in terms of the balance (or imbalance) of political, military and economic power. In sum, the potential rebels need to look at what they are to gain from the conflict. Sense of deprivation alone cannot lead to the mobilization of societal groups under oppression. This sense of deprivation, in other word, need to be politicized. Societal groups often move to the violent stage only when they see the potential to win and when they expect to gain from the outcome of conflict. Saddam's regime in Iraq, for instance, survived for over three decades because the balance of power was utterly on his side rather than that of the deprived ethno-religious minorities. Esman argues that:

Advocates of the relative deprivation school regard as simply naive the notion that economic growth is likely to mitigate ethnic or any form of societal conflicts. Even if there were enough growth to go around, to make a significant difference, its distribution would be problematical and probably conflictual... Thus, in ethnically divided societies, economic growth is more likely to exacerbate than to mitigate group conflict. (1994: 237)

Gurr states, however, that if this control becomes weaker or the deprived groups successfully mobilise their members then 'massive violence' can be expected. The coincidence of a weak state and a strong society has historically led to the collapse and disintegration of the former Soviet Union, former Yugoslavia, Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and many other countries in the aftermath of the Cold War. The people need to be *extremely* disenchanted, according to the socio-political particularities of the country, in order to take the step of exercising collective violent action against the regime.

Threats to the state can be identified as being the awakening of ethnic awareness, the prevalence of student freedom movements, the presence of women's rights activists, the fervent existence of youth demands, and the persistence of liberal and secular factions and oppositional groups. Gurr describes some of the necessary conditions for mass mobilisation as being: Widespread dissatisfaction over economic conditions, especially among urban peoples, frustration about the lack of opportunities for real political participation, especially among students and the middle class; widespread anger about foreign intervention and official corruption; and rural hostility toward the predatory and repressive policies of the urban based regime(1991: 334).

Ethnic conflict occurs wherein an ethnic group identifies itself as being marginalised, oppressed and weakened by the dominant group in power. Ethnic groups tend to react against a state's monopoly over political power and wealth. Such conflicts occur, then, 'when the dominant group benefits from development, while others do not to the same degree' (Haynes, 1996: 102). A political ethnic activity is therefore shaped by its political circumstances, as well as by the threats and the opportunities that the ethnic groups perceive to be the case (Saleh, 2011: 240).

### **The Role of Modernisation on Ethnic Identity Awareness**

The main cause that provokes the politicisation of ethnic identity is a situation in which a state does not respond to ethnic demands. The more the

state ignores ethnic expectations, the more frustrated the deprived groups become. While democratic and prosperous societies are less likely to face ethnic violence, the lack of free speech, the censorship of the press and the prevalence of poverty create greater opportunities to politicise societal identity against authoritarian, poorer regimes, particularly when a regime is unable to meet its societal demands. In fact, ‘propaganda and political manipulation of the media often play central roles in causing nationalistic and ethnic conflicts’ (Brown, 2001: xii).

Communications technology now facilitates a faster and broader link between people, and it transforms information into a ‘greater sense of ethnic consciousness and politicized ethnic identity’ (Romano, 2002: 128). Hafez argues that groups who lack such communication facilities ‘will encounter difficulties and are likely to mobilise few people’ (2004: 20). Satellite television programmes transmitted in the common language of transnational ethnic groups enhanced ethnic identity awareness among ethnic groups and led to greater ethnic division. This is particularly important when such programmes provide the chance to compare socio-political awareness that exist across the border. Transnational broadcasting increasingly enhances the perception of relative deprivation among ethnic groups because it enables them to compare their expectations and capabilities not only with neighbouring co-ethnic nations but also with other modern and democratic societies.

Education and communication revolutions have increased the size of the ethnic elites and have meanwhile enabled them to influence their ethnic kin more than ever. In short, communication technologies and increase in the level of education have been used to benefit the ethnic minorities in their efforts to break the state’s information monopoly. Some scholars believe that modernisation and education undermines ethno-religious sentiments within societies. Esman argues that:

Students of modernization confidently predicted that with industrialization, urbanization, bureaucratization and secularization, local, parochial, ethnic, and other “traditional” identities would become

increasingly irrelevant and would be succeeded by more “rational” loyalties and associations, such as state nationalism, economic class, and cultural and recreational interests. They were stunned when in the 1960s in some of the most modernized countries such as Great Britain, Canada, the United States, and Belgium ethnic grievances and demands became important political issues (2004: 18).

Eriksen states that modernisation and the emergence of the modern nation-state created ethnic minorities, and, as a result, they have been coerced into becoming citizens ‘whether they like it or not’ (1993: 121). In the contemporary, globalised and internet-saturated consciousness ‘the world is a single place’, notwithstanding the fact that ‘it is locally constructed’.

Globalization has the effect of strengthening separatist sentiments among homeland peoples. By reducing barriers to the transnational flows of trade and investment, globalization reduces the dependence of regions on national markets and sources of capital in favor of much larger international markets and more diversified sources of investment (Esman, 2004: 25).

In sum, modernisation and globalisation have intensified the prevalence of ethnicity in the people’s collective and individual consciousnesses. The profound deprivation experienced by ethnic minorities, increasingly framed in ethnic terms, has been furthered and bolstered by the communications revolution and the increased quality of education and levels of literacy all around the world.

### **Conclusion**

Ethnic conflict can result from ethnic diversity when ethnic groups inhabit the same political space but receive differential political treatment. Such tensions can lead to ethnic violence, terrorism and civil war, which in turn endanger national unity, poses a question of legitimacy and undermines the state’s territorial integrity. In short, the existence of ethnically distinct groups under a single state represents a potential to societal insecurity and ethnic conflicts.



Conflict may occur when different ethnic groups attempt to maximise their share of wealth distribution and when a dominant group denies them such a share. Ethnic conflicts may be brought on by socioeconomic modernisation transformations, which may intensify an ethnicity's sense of deprivation. Modernisation brings inflation, unemployment and urbanisation. Those who do not benefit from the socio-economic transformations that occur alongside modernisation processes may rebel in order to acquire better access to the resources of modernity. As a result, conflict is inevitable. This is particularly important when modernisation increases the quality of education and the level of social awareness amongst deprived people. This can provoke them into demanding greater ethnic rights. Ethnic conflict may also occur as a result of dramatic political structural change, such as with lawless foreign invasion, where the state is weakened. Ethnic conflicts may also occur when political elites within the governmental system struggle with one another in order to maintain power.

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