

The challenge of national identity

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Who are “The People”?

What are the boundaries of the community / zone ruled by the state?

What good is national identity and how to foster it?

Central questions

1. What are the potential benefits of strong national identity?
 - [Regardless of what it's based upon or how we got there]
2. Do linguistic, ethnic, religious, or racial homogeneity strengthen national identity?
3. [In countries with a large amount of immigration (USA, Canada, western Europe, Israel, countries near zones of conflict that intend to permanently resettle refugees, etc.), what policies should be adopted in response to immigration?]

Potential benefits of national identity?

Ibn Khaldun:
'asabiyyah
(social cohesion or solidarity)

Do we wish men to be virtuous? Then let us begin by making them love their country. But how can they love it, if their country is nothing more to them than to strangers...?

-- Jean Jacques Rousseau

Potential benefits of national identity

Economic benefits

- Solving coordination problems
 - Obligation to participate if others do
 - Default assumption of trust
 - Collective action problems, iterated

Social benefits

- Reduced potential for group conflict if society is not deeply divided
- Willingness to redistribute resources (thus avoiding internal conflict)

Political benefits

- Trust in government and voluntary compliance by citizens
- Greater effort or integrity from officials
- Sacrificing for common good
- “Expending their troops”

Problems of artificiality in post-colonial states

- Loyalty is to local community; state is a trough at which to feed

How cultural divisions may complicate public goods provision: Example of education in a bicultural society

Language	Teach in Purpelese	Teach in Greentongue
Pedagogy	“Classics” (by Purplish authors)	Green Peoples’ History (transnational)
Spending	3 R’s	Enrichment
Hiring	Based on experience in the classroom and test scores	Preference for Green teachers for purposes of role-modeling, etc.
Sports	Cricket	Soccer, and yet more soccer
Holidays	Early September	Mid-Spring
Cafeteria	Intolerance to gluten common	Abiding love of fresh baguettes
PTA	Often teetotalers	Relentless oenophiles

**School
symbol**



Central questions

1. What are the potential benefits of strong national identity?
2. Do does linguistic, racial, ethnic, and religious homogeneity strengthen national identity?
3. What policies should be adopted in response to immigration?

The notion that ethnic homogeneity creates stronger nation-states has a long tradition

Ancient world

- Ancient Greeks privileged lineal descent
- Very pronounced in Athens (descendants of Achaeans, heirs of Heroic Age)

Nation-state boundaries

- J.S. Mill: “[T]he boundaries of governments should coincide in the main with those of nationalities” because otherwise citizens are “artificially tied together”.
- Woodrow Wilson’s “14 Points” after WWI and national self-determination

Problematic nation-states in former colonies (sub-Saharan Africa, Fiji, Guyana and Trinidad & Tobago, etc.), where elections become an “ethnic census”

→ Rulers know this

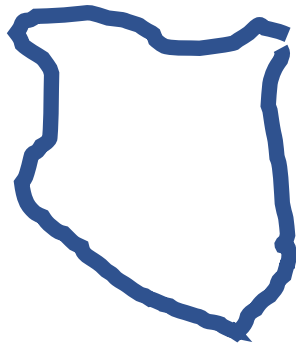
- Often try to homogenize their populations
 - Louis XIV and the Huguenots, post-revolution turning “peasants into Frenchmen”
 - Isabela of Spain, conversion and expulsion of the Jews, etc.
 - Franco and the Catalan language
- Often prime ethnic identity
 - German “blood and soil” nationalism

Conclusions from the scholarly literature regarding the role of “ethnic heterogeneity”

1. Diversity (ethnic, linguistic, religious) usually seems bad
 - Clean government (low corruption)
 - Economic growth
 - Interpersonal trust
 - Communal peace (i.e., absence of violence)
 - Democracy
 - Public goods provision (**especially for education**)
2. [Outcomes (democracy, peace, etc.) tend to be worse when ethnic cleavages are cumulative rather than cross-cutting, or when they overlap with wealth]

$$[\text{good thing}] = \alpha + \beta_1[\text{heterogeneity}] + \beta_{2-n}[\text{controls}] + \varepsilon$$

Linguistic heterogeneity could be a special challenge to governance: Example of East Africa



1. Colonial boundaries in Africa showed little regard for ethnolinguistic divisions
2. Even the most benevolent colonialist would have had a hard time creating states
3. Different language policies by post-independence governments → different results (e.g., Kenyan inconsistency and “Mother Tongue” versus Tanzanian promotion of Swahili over local languages)

...but many successful countries are polyglot

What is really going on here?

Different conflicts in different countries

A major problem in...

Race / ethnicity

- Rwanda and Burundi
- Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana
- New Zealand

Language (and ethnicity)

- Canada
- Spain

Religion

- Former Yugoslavia, Bosnia
- Northern Ireland

Region

- South Korea, 1990
- Italy
- United States, 1861

Class

- Chile

...but not in

- Belize

- Within “Han” China
- Switzerland

- United States, 2000

- United States, 2000

- Most countries

What is really going on here?

Primordialism *versus* constructivism

Constructivism on an airplane

- “Indian” / Hindu → Marathi → English → Desi → Woman
- Tri Delta

Cultural differences at the national level can be created or reshaped

Are ethnic identities really “primary”?

Primordialism *versus* constructivism

Constructivism on an airplane

Cultural differences at the national level can be created

- Treatment by the state
- Colonialism
- Labor market competition
- Institutions
- Civil war (e.g., Greece and Ireland)
- War (as unifier)
- External lobby states
- Immigration

Even if differences are fixed and salient, they may be cumulative or cross-cutting

1. Diversity (ethnic, linguistic, religious) usually seems bad
2. Outcomes (democracy, peace, etc.) tend to be worse when ethnic cleavages are cumulative rather than cross-cutting, or when they overlap with wealth

Examples of cumulative

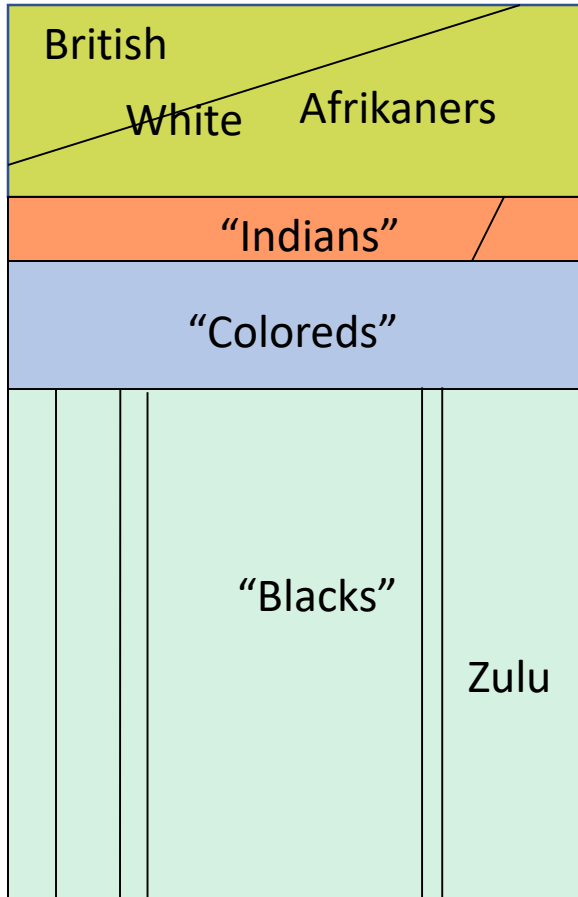
- Sudan (Arab-Muslim versus Black-Christian)
- Israeli versus 48-Arab/Palestinian (Jewish versus Arab-Muslim or Arab-Christian)
- South Africa
- Guatemala
- Zanzibar, 1959-61

Examples of cross-cutting

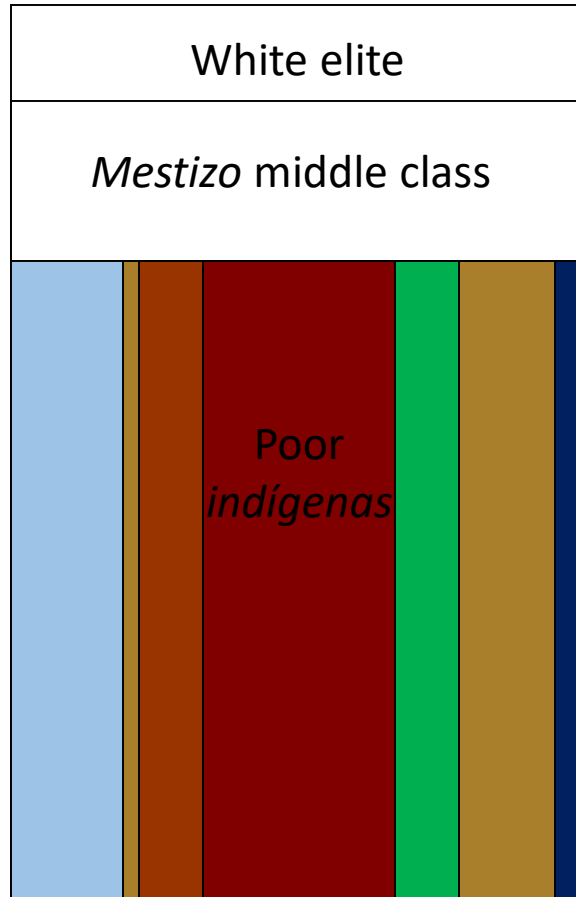
- James Madison's United States of America (versus individual states like PA)

Social divisions can be “cumulative”

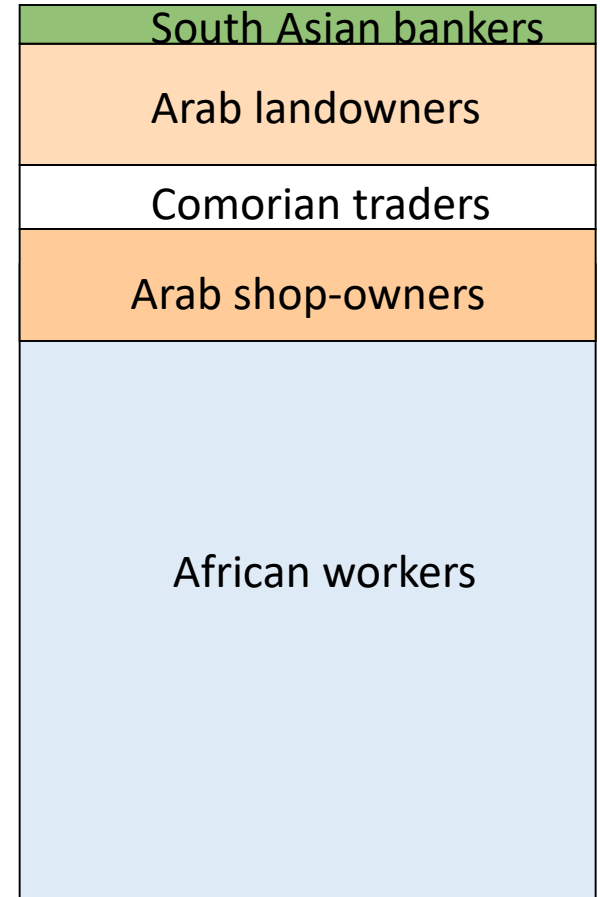
South Africa, 1990



Guatemala, 1970



Zanzibar, 1961



Social divisions can be cross-cutting

“Those who hold property”	e.g., Southern planters, NY manor lords	e.g., merchants, captains	e.g., “bourgeoisie”, guildmasters	e.g., investors
“Those without property”	e.g., indebted farmers, sharecroppers, agricultural laborers	e.g., sailors, shopkeepers	e.g., proletarians, apprentices	e.g., clerks, office workers, etc.
	“Landed interest”	“Mercantile interest”	“Manufacturing interest”	“Moneyed interest”

Implications?

Do you believe in the value of national identity enough that you should try to:

- Foster it in some way (history textbooks, monuments, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, etc.)?
- Foster it by attempting to homogenize the population linguistically (e.g., in school)?
- Foster it by attempting to homogenize the population in some other way (e.g., military draft, social service requirement, or moving people around)?
- Sustain it through restrictive or assimilationist immigration policies?

Will Carnival alone do it?



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17.50 Introduction to Comparative Politics
Fall 2022

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