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1

Introduction: easy questions and hard answers, what are they fighting about?

What are long-term ethnic conflicts about? How do they develop? Why are they so intense and hard to settle? Why do opposing sides view and describe what are ostensibly the same events so differently? How does identity shape why and how ethnic conflict is waged? What do good settlements look like?

Over the past thirty years, political analyses have offered very diverse answers to these apparently straightforward questions. In general, political scientists approaching ethnic conflict have focused on the interests motivating contending groups and the strategies by which these interests are pursued. Some answers from this perspective are interesting and non-obvious. On the whole, however, they are partial, and fail to address some important issues, thereby limiting our understanding of ethnic conflict and its management. For example, most existing work has little to say about how interests are developed and defined in different societies. In addition, there is little effort to deal with the puzzles that arise when what are apparently the same competing interests in two different settings result in intense conflict and violence in one but not the other. Often, interest-based accounts cannot explain why hypothesized preconditions for intense conflict, such as ethnic group inequalities, produce high conflict in some places but very little in others. Nor do they help us understand why some societies with relatively little intergroup inequality, such as Northern Ireland, have a great deal of conflict and violence, while others with high inequalities, such as post-apartheid South Africa, have far less intergroup conflict than many expected.

What is missing from many rationalist political analyses is attention to group identity and the role it plays in ethnic conflict. Group identity is a collective process that connects individuals to groups and defines shared

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worldviews and interests (Northrup 1989). It is tied to culture and cultural expressions that mark groups as distinct from each other. Identities are frequently articulated through, and contested around, collective memories and mundane, everyday cultural practices such as parades, flag displays, language, clothing, religious practices, and public monuments that symbolically connect the past and present and are visible in a region's symbolic landscape. Mundane practices that represent one group to its members become polarizing when their expression is felt as a threat by a second group, and/or when attempts to limit the practices are perceived as a threat by the group performing them.

Before I go further, a brief mention of how I am using a few key terms is in order. By culture I refer to the shared system of meaning that people use to make sense of the world (Geertz 1973a; Ross 1997; 2002). Culture is expressed in a wide variety of symbolic forms, some highly formalized (e.g., religious and national rituals), others less formal but widespread (e.g. language, clothing, food, games). Sometimes culture is expressed in physical forms that define the symbolic landscape such as monuments, murals, or banners or at sacred sites; some of these are natural like rivers or mountains; other forms are human constructions such as holy places or battleground memorials. Attention to symbols, rituals, and the narratives that members of a group use to make sense of the world is key to understanding how culture shapes their lives and their collective behaviors. I have sought a single phrase that encompasses the many different forms of cultural conflict of interest here and often the term "cultural expression" is appropriate but sometimes I use the terms "cultural performance" and "cultural enactment." What they share is that each refers to contextually significant activities, objects, and/or symbols that have strong emotional meaning and become focal points of intergroup conflict. Analyzing the dynamics of these conflicts and their settlement can provide us with useful insights about the roots of ethnic conflict and its mitigation.

To examine contestation over cultural expressions and performance, I extend my earlier work to develop and utilize the concepts of psychocultural narratives and dramas; those help offer a more complete understanding of ethnic conflict than an interest-base approach alone can provide. The analysis links collective psychological and social processes, placing identity issues and their cultural enactments at the center of ethnic conflict. It examines cultural expressions in ethnic conflict as markers of divisive identity and mutually exclusive positions. At the same

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time, the socially and contextually constructed nature of cultural expressions and identities, and the redefinition of, or changes in, the meaning of cultural narratives, offer opportunities for conflict mitigation between former opponents, and allow them to develop a greater sense of interdependence and mutually beneficial cooperative relations.

Cultural expressions are not just surface phenomena. They are *reflectors* of groups' worldviews and on-going conflict that can help us better comprehend what a group's deepest hopes and fears are, how it understands an opponent's actions and motives, and what a good enough agreement with an adversary would provide. Cultural expressions play a *causal* role in conflict, when they make certain action possibilities more plausible, and therefore more probable, than others as they direct collective understandings of the motives, interests, and behaviors of the ingroup and of opponents. In addition, cultural expressions serve as *exacerbaters* or *inhibiters* of conflict. Cultural expressions and the narratives associated with them communicate a worldview that ranges from highly exclusive to highly inclusive. The more that exclusivity and mutual incompatibility are expressed, the harder it is for opponents to alter their relationship; conversely, the more that cultural expressions are, or become, inclusive, the more likely it is that the parties can deal successfully with differences.

Cultural identities, from this perspective, are both barriers to, and opportunities for, the mitigation of ethnic conflict. The argument developed here is that movement toward constructive conflict management in long-term intergroup conflicts is facilitated through the development of inclusive narratives, symbols, rituals, and other cultural expressions in contexts where mutually exclusive claims previously predominated. Signed agreements between long-standing opponents, such as Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, are only one step in a peace process. A cultural perspective obliges us to go beyond formal agreements to recognize ritual and symbol as crucial to the implementation of agreements for peacemaking and peacebuilding. Before opposing parties can come to the table to renegotiate their incompatible interests and change their behaviors and relationship, there often needs to be bridging in the form of inclusive cultural expressions that link formerly opposing communities or redefine older rituals to be less threatening and exclusive.

Cultural expressions that become the focal points in ethnic conflicts take many forms; the chapters that follow offer extended cases that include contested issues of parades, festivals, language, archeology, and

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holy sites, flags, monuments, museums, and clothing from Northern Ireland, England, Catalonia, Québec, Jerusalem, India, the US, South Africa, and France. The cases range from ones such as the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in which violence has been high to those such as Québec or France where it is low; in addition, they vary in the extent to which the conflict is currently intense and bitter, such as Northern Ireland, to those in which it has moved in a more constructive direction, such as Catalonia.

The roots of this inquiry lie in an earlier study I conducted on cross-cultural differences in conflict and conflict management in 90 pre-industrial societies (Ross 1993a; 1993b). That analysis showed, first, how both structurally rooted interests and psychoculturally based identities independently explain a society's level and targets of conflict and violence, and second, that both also matter in conflict mitigation. Despite being a political scientist I became particularly interested in the psychocultural side of conflict and its management and argued in my conclusions that interpretations are central to conflict behavior because conflict evokes deep-seated emotions in situations that are highly ambiguous and often unstructured. The combination of emotion and ambiguity readily produces psychic threat, leading to regression with a return to earlier experiences, and shapes how participants react to a conflict. Such interpretations are cultural, not just personal, when they are nurtured and socially reinforced, linking individuals in a collective process (1993b: 192). I hypothesized that especially in long-term intractable conflicts a prerequisite to constructive conflict management is modifying competing psychocultural interpretations or narratives so that the parties in conflict come to believe that there are people on the other side with whom they can negotiate, and issues that are negotiable. After completing the cross-cultural study, I began asking myself why in so many ethnic conflicts expressive practices and sacred places produce intense disputes that outsiders quickly dismiss as irrational, and how a better understanding of this phenomenon could help us manage these conflicts more effectively. This volume brings together my answers to these questions, placing at center stage the competing accounts of participants in conflict. I ask little about whether or not they are "true" and a lot about how they shape beliefs and behaviors about one's own side, an opponent, and what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate action.

The goal of this book is to offer an alternative way to think about successful and unsuccessful ethnic conflict mitigation to enrich

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more well-known structural and interest-based approaches. It is intended to help people studying ethnic conflict make better sense of it and to aid participants and third parties seeking constructive outcomes. The key points I emphasize include: taking seriously participants' own accounts to identify emotionally significant elements that must be part of any settlement; making sense of why and how the narratives are emotionally powerful; examining how the narratives shape beliefs that facilitate the choice of some actions over others; analyzing the power of collective memories in linking individuals to larger social and political identities; emphasizing the widespread use of imaginative and politically effective culturally grounded expressions and enactments to make claims, build commitment, and mobilize action; considering the ways that political actions shape identity, culture, and interests; identifying psychocultural narratives about peoplehood; and recognizing how the constructed nature of narratives makes possible successful conflict mitigation. To begin, the next section of this chapter introduces two conflicts that are treated in greater length later: parade conflicts in Northern Ireland, and language conflict between Catalonia and Spain. The subsequent section outlines core questions in the psychocultural analysis of ethnic conflict and specification of some limits to the cultural analysis of conflict; and the final section explains my use of the concepts of culture, identity, and ethnic conflict in this book.

Getting started: Northern Ireland and Catalonia

Northern Ireland

After generations of violent conflict, both Catholic and Protestant paramilitary groups have since 1994 (mostly) observed a ceasefire in Northern Ireland. In 1998 the major political parties, along with the British and Irish governments, reached a negotiated agreement, variously called the Good Friday Agreement (by most Catholics) or the Belfast Agreement (by most Protestants). It called for a return to self-rule, and was ratified through a referendum by a majority of citizens in each group. However, implementation of the agreement has been slow and incomplete. Conflict did not disappear overnight, although it has taken new, less violent forms with particular focus on cultural expressions such as parades and official insignias. Listening to the parties describe what is at stake in these conflicts quickly reveals the deepest fears and insecurities that still divide the

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people of the region, and the divergent narratives about Protestant Loyal Order[1] parades and other cultural expressions.[2]

Following time-honored traditions, throughout the "marching season" in Northern Ireland Protestant men in dark suits and bowler hats assemble at local lodges, attend church services, and hold parades to mark various sacred days, with a particular emphasis on two dates in the first half of July: July 1, the anniversary of the Battle of the Somme in 1916, in which many soldiers from Northern Ireland died; and July 12, the day when, in 1690, William of Orange's Protestant forces defeated Catholic King James' troops at the Battle of the Boyne. Protestant accounts of the parades stress their solemn, religious nature and the occasions they mark (Lucy and McClure 1997). Banners celebrate key events in Protestant history and highlight important religious themes, symbols, and persons. Bands accompany the marchers playing familiar music, and at significant parades important politicians address the crowd (Bryan 1997; Fraser 2000a; Jarman 1997).

Catholic narratives about the parades emphasize their celebration of the Protestant triumphalism and the oppression that marked centuries of British rule and Protestant domination in the region. The aggressive music of the "blood and thunder" bands made up of young men often clad in paramilitary symbols, and the viciously anti-Catholic lyrics of some of their songs are further evidence to Catholics that the parades are acts of aggression. Catholics in many parts of Northern Ireland have organized and demanded changes in the parades, and especially in parade routes passing through Catholic neighborhoods.

Parading identity in Northern Ireland has a long history and often raises sectarian tensions (Fraser 2000a). As a result, any parade in Northern Ireland can easily become an emotionally charged, exclusive political expression. The Loyal Order parades have been going on for generations, with periods of greater and lesser vigor, and more and less strife. In 1997, the British government took steps which led to the creation of a Parades Commission, charged with developing procedures for overseeing parades generally and especially for contentious ones.

[1] The term Loyal Order indicates the parades' expression of support for the continuing link between Northern Ireland and Britain and their ongoing allegiance to the British crown.

[2] A brief note on terms: Protestants are generally referred to as either Unionists because they favor the continued union of Northern Ireland and Great Britain or Loyalists because they are loyal to the crown. Catholics are variously called Nationalists or Republicans and favor reuniting the island into one political unit.

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Even though there are only a little over 1.5 million people in the region, the Parades Commission reported that in 2003 there were over 3100 parades of which about 7 percent to 8 percent are "contentious," i.e. that they were brought before the Parades Commission, which holds a hearing before deciding whether they can proceed as planned or require modification.[3] The vast majority of parades are exclusively Protestant (70%) or Catholic (4%) affairs that mark, celebrate, or commemorate events of significance to each community,[4] are typically celebrations of in-group solidarity, and are widely perceived as statements of domination or resistance (Bryan 1997; Jarman 1997). While Catholics living on or near the Loyal Order parade routes strongly resent the parades, and the often-aggressive behavior of the participants, Protestants contend that restrictions on parading along "traditional" routes are an infringement of their religious and political rights. In recent years there have been confrontations with police, and violence and death associated with parades, especially those in South Belfast and Portadown.

The annual parade in Portadown in County Armagh, long a site of sectarian violence, has been especially contentious for quite some time. In the 1980s, the police rerouted it away from a Catholic area near the start of the route after several years of severe violence (Bryan 1997). From 1995 through 1997, following the IRA and other paramilitary ceasefires, the police announced a ban on the last part of the parade down the Garvaghy Road through another Catholic neighborhood; and each year they then reversed their position and allowed the parade to proceed. Angry Catholics attacked the police. In 1998, the first year of its existence, the new Parades Commission addressed the Portadown situation, insisting on dialogue between the Orange Order and the Catholic Residents' Association; when the Orange Order refused to negotiate, the Commission prohibited the marchers from returning to their Lodge along the Garvaghy Road. Protestant violence in Portadown and deaths in other parts of the province followed. Though the violence has since decreased,

[3] http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/parade/pc/pc231204ar.pdf. The Parades Commission also reported that in 2002 they rerouted forty-six loyalist parades and imposed various restrictions on others. In addition, there were twenty-six disorderly incidents involving Loyalist parades, most typically involving clashes between marchers and their supporters and nationalist protesters. Jarman (1997: 118–19) and Fraser (2000:4) report data from the mid 1990s on the number of parades in Northern Ireland that are quite similar.

[4] The remaining 407 parades are not classified as either Loyalist (Protestant) or Nationalist (Catholic) and include such events as May Day parades held by trade unions and Salvation Army parades. More details on parades in Northern Ireland are provided in Chapter 4.

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the annual confrontation has produced a yet unresolved stalemate and seven years later each July in Portadown there are still large numbers of security forces, including army units who flood the fields beneath Drumcree church and string barbed wire to prohibit the marchers from completing their circuit.

The Portadown District Orange Order Lodge insists the issue is a matter of free speech and the "right to walk the King's highway." For years, their "civil rights website" has proclaimed support for equality, justice, tolerance, and respect; it prominently displays the words of Martin Luther King, "Somewhere I read of the freedom of assembly. Somewhere I read of the freedom of the press. Somewhere I read that the greatness of America is the right to protest for right. And so just as I say, we aren't going to let any injunction turn us around. We are going on."[5] To dramatize their position, in 1998 a small group of Orangemen camped out in the field next to Drumcree church vowing not to leave until they were allowed to walk down the Garvaghy Road to return to their lodge. "Here we stand. We can do no other," proclaims the sign next to the church where they have since been camped symbolically.

Catholic opposition to the present parade route emphasizes their experiences of long-term victimization, and their right to be free from intimidation, and asks why the parade route isn't simply changed as many have been in other towns and cities, including some in the early 1980s in Portadown (Bryan 1997). Catholic residents' associations in Portadown and elsewhere (which Protestants often dismiss as Sinn Féin fronts)[6] have demanded that parade organizers negotiate contentious questions surrounding parades with them and have declared, "No consent, no parade." For Catholics (and for the Parades Commission), dialogue and negotiations are the proper mechanism for managing differences over parades; they point to other places in Northern Ireland where negotiations have produced agreements around parades that have allowed them to proceed in ways that each side has accepted. (An important example of this conflict mitigation process, found in Londonderry/Derry, is discussed in Chapter 4.) In contrast, many Orangemen, such as those in Portadown, reject the idea that their basic, traditional right to parade needs to be negotiated, let alone with Sinn Féin and former IRA members.

[5] http://www.orangenet.org/civilrights/
[6] Sinn Féin, currently the largest Catholic political party in the region, is the political wing of the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

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The Parades Commission has pushed the Orange Order to enter into negotiations and asserts that it considers the essence of engagement to be attempts at genuine communication between protagonists to a particular parading dispute.

This on-going conflict around parades is so polarized and so stuck because conflicts about parades in Northern Ireland are not fundamentally about freedom of speech or religion or protection from intimidation, but about the threatened identities of people in the region. "Put simply, the parades issue goes to the heart of the deeply fractured society that, sadly, Northern Ireland represents" (North 1997: 41). The importance of social identity and its expression in ethnic conflicts, how it is symbolized and communicated, and how it affects political behavior and beliefs is central to the analysis that follows (Ross 1997). Focusing on identity is especially useful in explaining ethnic conflict's intensity, and how the content and salience of identity variously resists and yields to change (Ross 1993a; 1997; 2001a). Understanding identity directs our attention to the deepest fears that drive ethnic conflict, as for example when an Orange Order website proclaims, "If Orange parades continue to be stopped, then over the years, Protestant culture will be slowly strangled."[7]

Catalonia

Catalonia is a region of 6 million people in northeast Spain that includes Barcelona. There is a long history of tension between the Spanish state and the region which was once independent politically and linguistically. Today Catalans are bilingual, speaking Catalan, a romance language closely related to Provençal, and Castilian (Spanish). Catalonia was incorporated into the Spanish state over several centuries[8] and Castilian came to be spoken more and more, especially among the region's elites (Laitin 1989). Industrialization, in-migration, and a Catalan linguistic and cultural revival marked the nineteenth century as Catalans pressed for regional autonomy. However, in the 1920s Spanish dictator Primo de Rivera restricted Catalan cultural expression and political liberty, both of which were revived briefly during the Republic in the early 1930s. The region was a site of intense fighting and brutal violence during Spain's

[7] http://ulsterloyal.freeservers.com/parades_culture_tradition.html
[8] Catalans solemnly mark September 11 as the day when they finally lost their autonomy through their defeat in the Battle of Malplaquet in which they were on the losing side in one of the many wars of Spanish Succession.

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civil war (1936–39) and under Francisco Franco (1939–75) Catalan autonomy and cultural expressions were severely curtailed. His regime banned the use of the language in education and government, prohibited publication in Catalan, and burned books written in the language.[9]

There was a slow, unofficial revival of Catalan as a spoken language in the later years of Franco's rule, and when he died in 1975 Catalans were poised to demand political and linguistic autonomy for the region, and the return to the use of Catalan in schools. At the time, many observers expected that the strong emotions surrounding these issues would spark conflict and violence between the Spanish state and hard-line Catalan nationalists. Although there was a good deal of tension and tough talk exchanged between the parties, there was no significant violence on either side. Catalan cultural expression is often strident and even aggressive but never violent. There have been repeated requests for direct representation in European Community organizations, for example, that annoy, and even exasperate, the Madrid government, but the dueling visions of Spain have not clashed violently.

Two competing narratives have long existed here, but since 1975 the opposing sides have found ways to bridge them to avoid stalemate. Since a good theory of ethnic conflict needs to account for the absence of violence and conflict as well as its presence, we have as much of an obligation to explain the success of the Spanish government and Catalan nationalists in developing a mutually acceptable solution without resort to violence as we have to explain the failure to do so in Northern Ireland.

There is a long history of tension between the Spanish state and the demands for linguistic and cultural autonomy from the historical nationalities in Spain,[10] and there have been periodic violence and wars pitting the regions against the center, which is located, geographically and politically, in Madrid. At various times, including during Franco's rule, the center's wishes dominated. However, following Franco's death, the new Spanish government, including many who had served under Franco, realized that change was needed both within the country and in Spain's relationship with its Common Market neighbors. Democratization and

[9] The regime moved quickly against those expressing Catalan nationalist sentiments. For example, in 1960 the future Catalan leader Jordi Pujol was sentenced to seven years in prison and served two and a half for having led a Catalan nationalist campaign that included singing the Catalan anthem in Barcelona's Opera House at a time when Franco was visiting Barcelona.

[10] The term refers to the Catalans, Basques, and Galicians.

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