
Book Review Essay

The Numbers Game: Ethnic Conflict in the Contemporary World

A Question of Numbers: High Migration, Low Fertility, and the Politics of National Identity. Michael S. Teitelbaum and Jay Winter. New York: Hill and Wang, 1998. 289 pages.

Population Dilemmas in the Middle East: Essays in Political Demography and Economy. Gad G. Gilbar. London and Portland, Oregon: Frank Cass, 1997. 141 pages.

The Demographic Struggle for Power: The Political Economy of Demographic Engineering in the Modern World. Milica Zarkovic Bookman. London and Portland, Oregon: Frank Cass, 1997. 273 pages.

Kevin MacDonald
California State University—Long Beach

These books all concentrate on the interface between population studies and ethnic conflict. The main political bone of contention is ethnic conflict over control of territory—a rather ancient human preoccupation—whose contours have been radically reshaped in the contemporary world by the relative ease of migration over long distances.

The issues raised by these books are of profound importance both for demography as a science and for the political landscape of the world. Teitelbaum and Winter point out that there has been a decline in the influence of professional demographers as issues related to population have become increasingly politicized, and politicization results from competition between ethnic groups. Unfortunately, none of these books provides any scientific understanding of group competition.

Teitelbaum and Winter focus primarily on conflicts surrounding high migration of predominantly non-European peoples into Western societies (Western Europe, the United States, and Canada) in the context of low native fertility. In each country there has been anxiety and hostility to this influx among some sections of the native population. In Germany, the mainly Muslim guest workers have built permanent

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communities clustered in major cities. Visas originally scheduled to expire after one year were extended as a result of pressure by the workers and their employers as well as liberal church groups. There have been scattered outbreaks of violence against these immigrants, but more interestingly there is a deeper hostility that remains unexpressed because of "the trauma of the recent German past" (p. 24), i.e., National Socialism and World War II. The consensus is in favor of immigration of ethnic Germans, as occurred on a large scale after World War II, while questions relating to the immigration of non-German refugees and economic immigrants "become entangled with the painful history of the Holocaust" (p. 25).

In France, the issue is framed in terms of the highly publicized conflict within the prestigious Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques (INED) fueled by charges by demographer Hervé Le Bras that INED's estimate of the French birth rate as well below replacement levels was politically motivated and had the effect of increasing fears of non-European immigration. He charged that INED preferred indigenous population growth to population growth brought about by immigration, and that several of its policies coincided with those advocated by the National Front, a nativist political party. Indeed, well before this controversy, Jean Marie Le Pen, leader of the National Front, stated, "There's nothing wrong with the birthrate, except that we're not the ones who are making the babies" (p. 47).

In Britain, immigration of non-Europeans has also created frictions. By the late 1980s ethnic minorities accounted for 4.5% of the British population, and they tended to be younger and to have larger families than natives. Moreover, among the immigrants were Muslim fundamentalists whose beliefs and behavior were often at odds with the norms of British civilization. As elsewhere in Western Europe (and North America and Australia), politicians have attempted to ignore the issue entirely.

Despite its generally academic tone, Teitelbaum and Winter often characterize the opponents of immigration as "racist," presumably a moral judgment intended to pathologize such attitudes. In the chapter on Britain, anti-immigrant attitudes are viewed as either based on "racism" or xenophobia (presumably a moral indictment) or else are viewed as based on a delusionary yearning for "a mythic time when Britain was a homogeneous, peaceful place. Immigration threatens this largely fanciful construction of British history" (p. 61). However neither of these indictments is elaborated in any kind of theoretical way. The moral indictment rests on a sort of received moral intuition not amenable to scientific treatment, while the assertion that opponents of immigration are engaging in delusions is completely unsupported. On the face of it, it seems odd to deny that a Britain with substantial populations of Asians and Africans, Muslims and Hindus would be considerably less homogeneous than traditional Britain with its northern European population and its Christian religion. Moreover, as is so often the case, there is no attempt to critically analyze the meaning of "racism." Racism apparently applies to anyone who resists demographic and cultural inroads of other peoples, while the equally ethnocentric interests of those who are colonizing new territories are implicitly assumed to be morally neutral if not morally commendable.

Ethnic conflict is largely conceptualized as a matter of cynical politicians "mobilizing fear and greed for personal advantage" (p. 74). For example, the ethnic cleansing that has occurred in Eastern Europe "is perhaps more a tool for political mobilization, a means whereby certain leaders create and re-create their justification for holding power, than a program with a predictable or intended outcome" (p.

75), although, again, no evidence is adduced to back up such claims. At the same time the authors quote a UN report indicating that the purpose of ethnic cleansing is "to instill terror in a civilian population, in order to cause them to flee and never return" (p. 78)—a rather clear rationale obviously in the perceived ethnic interests of the group doing the cleansing.

While ethnic cleansing is rejected in the strongest moral terms, the authors give their moral approval to competition by birth rate—a view shared also by the current governments of the United States and other NATO countries. Writing prior to the NATO military action in Kosovo, Teitelbaum and Winters state that the very large numbers of Albanians in the province were due to a conscious program of demographic competition which by 1996 had resulted in four out of five births in Kosovo being Albanians (p. 96).

However, Teitelbaum and Winters do not think of demographic competition as competition at all:

Ethnic conflict always entails counting the size of groups whose growth rates are low or negative and who are threatened by assimilation. These groups, feeling besieged, respond by cultivating a collective consciousness, and this frequently includes pro-natalist campaigns—non-violent conflicts fought over the long term. This kind of demographic ethnic conflict—a culture war about numbers—harms no one, but as soon as cynical politicians and their followers try to take a shortcut and redress the imbalance by forcible eviction of another ethnic group, demography becomes lethal. (p. 81)

Such a view ignores the reality of ethnic competition throughout the world over very long periods of human history as well as the importance of numbers in pursuing ethnic interests. A Kosovo with a very large Albanian majority will speak a different language and have an entirely different public culture than one with a Serbian majority, and given the centuries-old history of ethnic separatism and ethnic conflict in the region, it is difficult to suppose that this state of affairs would not impinge on the interests of both groups. Teitelbaum and Winters implicitly posit a sort of individualist fantasyland in which the ethnic and cultural groupings of others have no real life impact on individual success or failure. As Bookman notes, however, ethnic power is quite often translated into ethnic discrimination with effects on real-world issues like employment and access to higher education, not to mention a great many instances of civil war, expulsion and genocide.

Teitelbaum and Winter's discussion of the debate over immigration in the U.S. raises the interesting point that high levels of legal and illegal immigration continue despite solid majorities opposed to this state of affairs—that indeed the highly restrictive policy enacted in the 1920s favoring Northwestern European immigration would still be in place if public wishes were heeded by political elites. For example, in 1990, Congress dramatically increased the number of legal immigrants at a time when only 9% of the public believed that there were too few immigrants. (Similarly in England, politicians have attempted to "relegate immigration to the margins of politics" [p. 61].) Proposition 187 in California, which proposed to end services for illegal aliens, was supported by a large majority of the voters but was opposed by "nearly every elite entity" (p. 149) across the political spectrum. The general picture that emerges is that well-organized ethnic and business groups with

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a great deal of influence on elite institutions have determined U.S. immigration policy, while the majorities that oppose immigration have been poorly organized and without access to elite institutions like the media. The authors predict that the conflicts will be exacerbated in coming years—an odd prediction from writers who believe that ethnic conflict is based on delusionary premises.

Nowhere is the reality of ethnic conflicts of interest more apparent than in the Middle East, the topic of Gad Gilbar's *Population Dilemmas in the Middle East*. Rates of natural increase for the Muslim Arab population in Israel exceeded the rates of surrounding Arab societies, particularly during the 1960s. Palestinian population trends became a volatile issue within Israel with the publication of a government report that the Arab population was projected to increase to 21.5% of the population and that the Palestinians would constitute 50% of the total population of Israel and the occupied territories by 2015. This resulted in great consternation within Israel, with one faction concluding that the Palestinians in the occupied territories should be given autonomy, while others proposed a form of ethnic cleansing in which the Palestinians would be relocated outside the occupied territories. For their part, the Palestinians viewed the situation

not only as a welcome development but also as an important tool in the Palestinian struggle against Israel. As such, demography was an effective weapon even in the short term, in that it threatened Israel and fomented serious disagreement within it. According to this view, the threat of Palestinian demographic growth was likely to bring about an Israeli recognition that there was no escape from the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. In the long term, the Palestinian demographic advantage would see Israel reduced to the point where it would disappear as a Zionist state. When [Palestinian Liberation Organization leader Yasser] Arafat voiced this approach in a statement in November 1987, it quickly became a Palestinian slogan in the territories: "The Palestinian woman, who bears yet another Palestinian every ten months . . . is a biological bomb that threatens to blow up Israel from within." (pp. 31–32)

This Palestinian strategy was tempered by the fear that Palestinian demographic expansionism would be met by expulsion, especially during the late 1980s when the idea of "transfer" was discussed openly in Israel. Palestinians also feared that relying on demography was a poor strategy because it might lead to political inaction. The result was that Palestinian leaders "adopted a more restrained position on the issue" (p. 32).

In any case, Palestinian birth rates in the occupied territories remain among the highest in the world and considerably higher than the Arab population within Israel proper, suggesting that consciously or unconsciously the Palestinian response to Israeli hegemony has been to increase their numbers. In the Gaza the crude birth rate fluctuated between 46.7 per 1000 in 1950–1955 to a high of 52.9 in 1990–1995, while the total fertility rate fluctuated between 7.4 at the beginning of this period to 8.8 at the end. Gilbar argues that the rapid population increase combined with an economic downturn at the end of the 1980s was instrumental in the genesis of the Intifada.

Bookman's *The Demographic Struggle for Power* is a very important book. I

suppose we are all aware that deep rooted ethnic conflict is endemic to many parts of the world, but for those of us living in the United States where the virtues of multi-cultural societies are far more often extolled than analyzed, it is easy to lose sight of just how common these conflicts really are and how deadly they often become. Bookman shows this in exhausting detail, beginning with a chapter on the importance of group size. Group size is important because size translates into greater political power within a multi-ethnic state, and group size can give legitimacy to demands for political autonomy and ultimately the creation of secessionist ethno-states. Greater group size also facilitates resource competition within multi-ethnic states, at least partly because of increased ability to manipulate the political process. Multi-ethnic states tend to become arrayed as competing groups battling over scarce resources, and it is rare for different ethnic groups to have the same size and control of resources at any given time.

Although there is a correlation between group size and economic and political power, there are glaring exceptions to the rule, the most common being exploitation of larger groups by smaller groups with greater access to the forces of social control. Certain groups, such as Jewish groups and overseas Chinese living in Southeast Asia, have often been exceptions to the general pattern, at times showing disparities between economic and political power, and often obtaining high levels of economic or political power despite a small group size.

Modernization brings with it increased ethnic conflict as different groups begin competing in larger economic and political systems in which, at any given point in time, groups differ in their numbers and their control of resources. People are forced into new social relationships, and "the most logical place to begin to look for such relationships is to identify oneself as a member of a larger something, based upon those attributes that one carries around with oneself, namely one's language, historical place, race, religion" (p. 31). This tendency may be exacerbated by elites who utilize these tendencies to satisfy their own individual interests which may or may not coincide with the interests of the group as a whole. The remainder of the book describes the means by which ethnic groups have pursued their interests. Separate chapters are devoted to the following strategies: manipulating the census, engaging in pro-natalist policies, assimilation, population transfers, boundary changes, and economic pressures.

Ethnic wrangling over the census has become a chronic political issue in the United States coinciding with increasing ethnic fragmentation, but these battles pale in comparison with those found elsewhere. Minorities in many parts of the world typically worry about being undercounted by majority-run government agencies in an effort to minimize their importance. Majorities sometimes attempt to define minorities out of existence by refusing to recognize them as a category, as in Turkey where the government refuses to acknowledge the existence of Kurds as a group. Minority groups are sometimes distinguished in order to minimize the importance of any one group, as in the Ottoman Empire where the government distinguished among a variety of Muslim groups and classified them as non-Muslim "in order to promote the preferred group to numerical majority" (p. 57) and thus legitimize its political hegemony. Censuses also provide information on which groups are growing more rapidly, and this can be political dynamite. For example, in Lebanon the politically and numerically dominant Maronite Christian group ceased to be a majority because of the higher rate of increase of the Muslims. The Muslims claimed that Christian numbers had been inflated and demanded a new census. The manip-

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ulation of the census was a cause of the civil war that eventually engulfed the country.

There are obviously limits on the census as a means of ethnic warfare. The adoption of a pro-natalist policy is a much more direct mechanism of competition, since it has the potential to actually change political and economic power within the society. Bookman quotes Paul Kennedy to the effect that, "there is a resentment against other peoples who reproduce at a much faster pace—the assumption being that, as in a Darwinian struggle, the faster-growing species will encroach upon, and eventually overwhelm, a population with static or declining numbers" (p. 82). The term "Darwinian struggle" is particularly appropriate because differential rates of reproduction imply changes in gene frequency in the population at large assuming, as is typically the case, that there is some genetic distance between the populations. Like Teitelbaum and Winters, Bookman gives a variety of examples of fear of Muslim birth rates in Europe, but she also documents fear of Muslim birth rates in India and fears of minority group birth rates in Kenya and Fiji. Similar fears may also be found in the United States because of the high birth rates and high levels of immigration by Latinos (Abernethy, 1998). Abernethy shows that some Latino activists have a clearly articulated policy of "reconquering" parts of the United States via immigration and high birth rates.

Ethnic activists respond to the perceived need to increase numbers in several ways, including exhorting co-ethnics to reproduce early and often, banning birth control and abortions, curtailing female employment in order to free women for the task of reproducing, and providing financial incentives. Among Muslims, pro-natalist programs are frequently combined with anti-Western rhetoric motivated by the perception that the Western advocacy of population reduction is "demographic colonialism" aimed at lessening the strength of Muslim countries and ensuring Western political hegemony. Jewish activists both within Israel and in the Diaspora have been strong advocates of increasing Jewish fertility, motivated by the threat of intermarriage in the Diaspora, the threat of wars with Israel's neighbors, and as a reaction to Jewish population losses stemming from the Holocaust (see also MacDonald, 1998). As Bookman notes, pro-natalism has deep religious significance for Jews as a religious commandment. Within Israel, there is "a nationwide obsession with fertility" (p. 89), as indicated by the highest rate of in-vitro fertilization clinics in the world—one for every 28,000 citizens.

Involuntary assimilation is another tactic by which dominant ethnic and religious groups increase their size and power by absorbing other groups. For example, in the 1980s Bulgaria prohibited the Turkish language and forced ethnic Turks to Bulgarize their names. Those who resisted were pressured to emigrate, resulting in the expulsion of 300,000 ethnic Turks. Forced conversions have long been a staple of both Christianity and Islam—a phenomenon that, in the case of Judaism, has resulted in cryptic strategies in which Jews have led double lives for centuries in Christian and Muslim lands (MacDonald, 1998). In the Balkans, there are several examples of forced conversions, as during World War II when the policy of the Croatian government was "One-third of the Serbs we shall kill, another we shall deport, and the last we shall force to embrace the Roman Catholic religion and thus meld them into Croats" (p. 114). Bookman notes that assimilation is easiest "among people who are culturally similar to the dominant group," but when different races are involved, "assimilation efforts become irrelevant" (p. 117).

Ethnic cleansing has been much in the news of late, but Bookman notes that

ethnic cleansing "has been in operation across the globe since time immemorial" (p. 129). She provides a great many examples where groups have been forced to migrate. This phenomenon has been common throughout the 20th century, but it has increased in the 1990s, so that by 1992 there were over 20 million refugees from internal conflicts. At times this goes hand in hand with military conquest, as in the policy of settlement of occupied territory on the West Bank, the Golan Heights and the Gaza strip in Israel after the 1967 war or the dilution of Western Poland by Germans after conquest by the Nazis during World War II. In other cases, a target population is expelled. Bookman mentions a variety of expulsions from around the world, including the expulsion of Jews from a number of European societies beginning in the Middle Ages and the many expulsions that have occurred in the recent history of the Balkans. Bookman points out that the Croats, the Serbs, and the Muslims have all engaged in ethnic cleansing. "The Yugoslav war is a dirty civil war, in which neighbor has turned against neighbor, and each group is trying to be the first to cleanse undesirables lest they cleanse him instead" (p. 131).

Bookman discusses several methods of ethnic cleansing, including coerced departure, harassment to induce departure, cultural cleansing (i.e., eradicating the symbols of an outgroup's culture), payment for expulsion (e.g., Germany paying Romania \$20,000,000 to repatriate 50,000 Roma [Gypsies]), and genocide. In the last category, Bookman includes the Turkish genocide of Armenians, the Nazi genocide of the Jews, and the conflict between the Hutu and the Tutsis in Rwanda. Bookman notes that while some expulsions may lead to intense desires to return that only increase with time (e.g., among the Palestinians who were expelled from Israel), in other cases expulsions have led to peace in newly constituted ethnically homogeneous regions. In the latter category Bookman includes the expulsion of Germans from Eastern Europe after World War II, the expulsion of Serbs from Croatia, and the expulsion of Muslims from Eastern Bosnia.

Finally, Bookman provides a chapter that describes less flagrant forms of ethnic competition, such as discrimination in employment and education, harassment, selective tax policies, different wage rates, different ability to own property, and so on. An interesting example is in Bosnia where those who converted to Islam after the Ottoman conquest were given a variety of economic and political benefits. Muslims continued to have the upper hand in Bosnia and by the 1990s non-Muslims were virtually eliminated from positions of power and employment in the public sector.

There are important theoretical and empirical implications of this material. Bookman and Gilbar show clearly that competition between ethnic groups is real and that the success or failure of the group has vital real-world implications for the individuals that comprise these groups. To take a rather obvious example, the fact that the Serbians lost the war in Kosovo is having a dramatic impact on the fortunes of both the Kosovar Albanians and the Kosovar Serbs. This should be obvious but the point bears documenting because there continues to be strong current among a great many Western intellectuals denying the reality of ethnicity or supposing, as Teitelbaum and Winters would have it, that ethnic interests are simply delusions imposed by exploitative ethnic leaders.

Teitelbaum and Winter note that the Holocaust hangs over debate about immigration and ethnicity in Germany, and the same could be said about Western Europe and other Western societies. The large majorities in these countries who would prefer to live in societies that are relatively homogeneous and not characterized by

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deep ethnic divisions are termed "racist," but if these books prove anything it is that the emergence of competing ethnic groups is a deadly game. However, the Holocaust cannot be understood as simply a set of historical facts but must be seen as an active historical reconstruction fashioned to achieve very real ethnic interests in the contemporary world.

Peter Novick's *The Holocaust in American Life* notes that the Holocaust has assumed a preeminent status as a symbol of the consequences of ethnic conflict in contemporary American life. (The same could be said for Germany—as Teitelbaum and Winter note—and other Western countries as well.) Because the ethnic politics of the Balkans looms so large in two of the three books reviewed here, it is worth noting that the Clinton administration repeatedly drew comparisons between the Holocaust the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, and it sent Elie Wiesel—perhaps the most visible spokesperson for the Holocaust as a moral imperative—to the refugee camps in Macedonia during conflict over Kosovo because of his value in establishing the morality of intervention. Jewish organizations also actively campaigned in favor of intervention in Kosovo; e. g., an advertisement placed in major newspapers by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith asked people to "respond as you wish the world had responded last time."

As Novick points out, the importance of the Holocaust in American life is not a spontaneous phenomenon but stems from highly focused, well-funded efforts of Jewish organizations and individual Jews with access to the major media. The Holocaust was originally promoted to rally support for Israel following the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars. As the threat to Israel subsided, the Holocaust was promoted as the main source of Jewish identity and in the effort to combat assimilation and intermarriage among Jews. During this period, the Holocaust was also promoted among gentiles as an antidote to anti-Semitism. In recent years this has involved a large scale educational effort (including mandated courses in the public schools of several states) spearheaded by Jewish organizations and manned by thousands of Holocaust professionals aimed at conveying the lesson that "tolerance and diversity [are] good; hate [is] bad, the overall rubric [is] 'man's inhumanity to man' " (pp. 258–259). The Holocaust has thus become an instrument of Jewish ethnic interests not only as a symbol intended to create moral revulsion at violence directed at minority ethnic groups—prototypically the Jews, but also as an instrument to silence opponents of high levels of multi-ethnic immigration into Western societies (MacDonald, 1998).

The construction of the Holocaust in the contemporary Western mind is thus intended as an antidote to the oftentimes violent ethnic conflict that Bookman records as endemic to human history in all parts of the world. The effectiveness of the Holocaust as a weapon against violent ethnic conflict depends on inculcating a sense of moral revulsion, but, although this tactic appears to have had considerable success in Western societies, it is not clear that these educational efforts will be effective in the long run in Western societies or in many parts of the world where violent ethnic conflict has been the norm for centuries. Moreover, the moral framework based on opposition to violent forms of ethnic competition fails to address non-violent forms of ethnic competition, including demographic competition and competition for political and economic power that Bookman records as ubiquitous in multiethnic societies. Indeed, the implicit if not entirely explicit rationale underlying the intervention in Kosovo was that competition by birth rate is morally neutral so that Serbians were morally obligated to allow Kosovo to become Albanian

and Muslim. As noted, Teitelbaum and Winter adopt a similarly moralistic stance regarding ethnic competition via immigration. In doing so they are entirely within the current mainstream among Western intellectuals, but it is at least doubtful that an ideology of moral revulsion will remain a viable weapon against ethnic violence in the long run in a context in which non-violent forms of ethnic competition via immigration and differences in reproductive rate continue to escalate.

This last assertion requires the support of a viable theory of ethnic group conflict. The authors reviewed here are little help in this endeavor. When not making moral pronouncements, Teitelbaum and Winter seem to think ethnic conflict is based on delusions and manipulations. Bookman's advice is to disassociate ethnic divisions from civil administrative boundaries, but the creation of such a policy requires disinterested administrative elites which seems unlikely in most cases. Moreover, she notes numerous examples of ethnic conflict even when ethnic boundaries have been disassociated from administrative boundaries.

Perhaps surprisingly, there is no consensus on evolutionary theories of ethnicity and ethnic conflict. However, several strands are visible and all suggest that ethnic conflict has deep biological roots. One influential theory, stemming from Pierre van den Berghe's (1981) seminal *The Ethnic Phenomenon*, analyses ethnic group affiliation as resulting from a system designed to promote cooperation within close family groups proposed to be the prototypical social organization of our evolutionary past. Ethnic groups are much larger and have much lower degrees of genetic relatedness than family groups, but ethnic group leaders are able to manipulate this system so that people perceive the wider ethnic group as a family of closely related individuals even when they are not. Such a theory is compatible with Teitelbaum and Winter's emphasis on ethnic conflict as resulting from manipulation by elites for selfish gain, although of course it is also compatible with the possibility that elites are acting also in the interests of the group as a whole (and the individuals that comprise the group) as well. However, as Goetze (1998) notes, it seems implausible that a system designed to promote cooperation among family members would be so indiscriminate that it would be able to be easily manipulated to apply to non-family members. (See also Gil-White [1999] for a critique of van den Berghe.)

An attractive extension of the family bonding hypothesis is genetic similarity theory (Rushton, 1989). Genetic similarity theory extends beyond kin recognition by proposing mechanisms that assess phenotypic similarity as a marker for genetic similarity. These proposed mechanisms would then promote positive attitudes, greater cooperation, and a lower threshold for altruism toward similar others. There is indeed considerable evidence, summarized in Rushton (1989) and Segal (1999), that phenotypic and genetic similarity are important factors in human assortment, helping behavior, and liking others. Mechanisms based on recognizing genetic similarity in others may have an important role in ethnic conflict, since there is typically more genetic and phenotypic similarity among ethnic group members. At the phenotypic level, ethnic groups typically differ in physical features, religion, and, not uncommonly, clothing or other obvious markers of group membership.

Besides genetic similarity theory, another evolved system relevant to ethnic conflict is revealed by research on social identity theory. Social identity research shows that people are highly prone to identifying themselves with groups (Hogg & Abrams, 1987). The result of these categorization processes is behavior that involves discrimination against the outgroup and in favor of the ingroup; beliefs in the superiority of the ingroup and inferiority of the outgroup; and positive affective

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preference for the ingroup and negative affect directed toward the outgroup. These tendencies toward ingroup cohesiveness and devaluations of the outgroup are exacerbated by real conflicts of interest between groups (see also Triandis 1990, 96). There is good evidence from a variety of sources that social identity processes are an evolved psychological adaptation designed for between-group competition (MacDonald, 1998).

Recently Francisco Gil-White (1999; in press) has argued that humans also have an evolved cognitive module specific to ethnic groups—that humans are biologically predisposed to conceptualize themselves as a member of a biological descent group. This “primordialist” position is highly compatible with the overwhelming importance of ethnicity rather than class-based groups around the world, as summarized by Bookman.

Finally, humans possess rational choice mechanisms able to make cost/benefit calculations. In psychological terminology, these are domain-general mechanisms, such as the *g*-factor of intelligence tests, that enable humans to make rational, adaptive choices in novel, complex, and relatively unpredictable environments (MacDonald, 1991). Applied to the issue of group membership, such mechanisms imply that humans are able to opportunistically join or leave groups depending on immediate cost/benefit calculations (see Goetze, 1998). For example, the promise of financial rewards might make one abandon one group for another (e.g., those who converted to Islam during the Turkish occupation), whereas disincentives such as social opprobrium and economic discrimination directed at ethnic group members might be expected to decrease ethnic identification.

In summary, I suggest the relevance of four systems for thinking about ethnic conflict: genetic similarity mechanisms, social identity mechanisms, primordial ethnic categorization mechanisms, and rational choice mechanisms. What do these mechanisms imply for thinking about the likely consequences of the trends noted in the books reviewed here? I have stated that it is unlikely that an ideology of moral revulsion will remain a viable weapon against ethnic violence in the long run in a context in which non-violent forms of ethnic competition via immigration and differences in reproductive rate are escalating.

As a result of our evolutionary history, people seem predisposed to locating themselves within biological descent groups and to seek out similar others, favor similar others as friends, mates, and recipients of helping behavior. Moreover, attraction to similar others is exacerbated in heterogeneous environments where people are confronted by strangers and other relatively dissimilar people (Horowitz, 1985; Nagata, 1981; Sherif & Hovland, 1961). In other words, we seek out similarity more in an environment of difference. This suggests that increasing numbers of dissimilar others resulting from immigration will lead to seeking greater similarity within one's ethnic group. Indeed, there is evidence that this is exactly what is happening in the United States in schools, housing, and informal, voluntary groupings of all kinds despite a great deal of political and legal effort to promote integration.¹ For example, Wright, Ellis, & Reibel (1997) show that residential segregation of whites, Asians, Hispanics and Blacks is far more robust and resistant to change than residential patterns among European immigrant groups earlier in the century. Blacks are especially likely to be residentially segregated at all income levels. Similarity seeking is also indicated by findings that immigrants tend to cluster together among co-ethnics (Wright, Ellis, & Reibel, 1997). Similarly, Gimpel (1999) shows that newer immigrants in the United States tend to live in areas of co-ethnic settle-

ment, while domestic, native-born migrants—predominantly Caucasian—typically move to communities where immigrants are not welcome or cannot afford to live.

These processes are also likely to trigger social identity mechanisms. European-derived peoples in the United States and other countries experiencing high levels of ethnic diversity are expected to begin to perceive themselves as living in ethnic enclaves surrounded by dissimilar others viewed now in ingroup/outgroup terms. In accordance with the findings of social identity theory, we would then expect higher levels of discrimination against the outgroup, the proliferation of racist ideologies of ingroup superiority and outgroup inferiority. As the society becomes structured around competing ethnic groups, between-group resource competition would be expected to escalate, especially during periods of economic difficulty, and this would be expected to further exacerbate social identity processes. It is at this point that all of the rather grim phenomena described by Bookman are expected to intensify.

I have noted that people tend to seek out similarity more in an environment of difference. It is noteworthy that minority groups, especially African-American and Latino groups, have already developed strong ethnic identities in the U.S. These movements often have militant, racist overtones. For example, Afrocentrism is often associated with racist ideologies, such as those of Molefi Asante (1987), in which ethnicity is viewed as the morally proper basis of self-identity and self-esteem and in which a close connection exists between ethnicity and culture. Latino ethnic activists have a clearly articulated policy of “reconquering” parts of the United States via immigration and high birth rates.²

Of course there are countervailing influences in the United States acting to keep overt ethnic conflict within bounds. The Holocaust as a symbol of moral revulsion for ethnic violence has been cited as an influence in Germany and other Western countries. In addition to this and other media-based efforts to develop positive attitudes on ethnic diversity and pathologize indications of ethnic identification among European-derived peoples, there are also mechanisms of social control, such as hate crime legislation, which make expressions of ethnic hostility very costly. There are also likely to be large individual differences in the extent to which people perceive themselves to benefit economically and socially from identifying strongly with an ethnic group. For example, as noted above, Teitelbaum and Winter show that elites are much more likely than the lower orders to favor high levels of immigration; this is so at least partly because elites often benefit economically from immigration as a source of low-cost labor (Borjas, 1999). Elites would thus benefit less from participating in anti-immigration movements with a high level of ingroup ethnic identification. In terms of the three mechanisms discussed here, such calculations stem from rational choice mechanisms.

Because of these countervailing tendencies, it is not possible to predict the future in any detail. Recall the comment of Paul Kennedy, cited above: “There is a resentment against other peoples who reproduce at a much faster pace—the assumption being that, as in a Darwinian struggle, the faster-growing species will encroach upon, and eventually overwhelm, a population with static or declining numbers” (p. 82). If indeed European peoples increasingly see themselves losing demographic and political influence and if resource and reproductive competition continue apace, one can predict that containing ethnic violence will require ever greater levels of social control (increasing media pressures, powerful police controls on ethnic violence) and greater incentive structures designed to appeal to rational

choice mechanisms and which discourage ethnic identification, at least among the ethnic majority. This is because an important part of our evolved psychology consists of genetic similarity mechanisms and social identity mechanisms, and there can be little doubt that these mechanisms will respond to this context by seeking out similar others and intensifying perceptions of ingroup/outgroup conflict.

ENDNOTES

1. Patterson (1999) also comments on the trend toward resegregation of U.S. schools and intensifying patterns of residential segregation at all economic levels. DePalma (1991) and Applebome note a pattern of ethnic separation at universities—a pattern that is amply confirmed at my university, and Armor notes a ethnic segregation in elementary schools and high schools.
2. See Abernethy (1999) and *Reconquista!: The Takeover of America* (Los Angeles: California Coalition for Immigration Reform, 1997).

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