

# Explaining Antagonism & Violence

- Ethnic identities, even when competitive, don't necessitate mutual antagonism and/or violence
- Structural factors (macro-historical factors), and cultural "discourses" can at best explain a disposition for violence (i.e. a necessary cause)
  - Cannot fully explain why intergroup violence occurs
  - Cannot explain timing of violence
  - Also, it is doubtful that discourses are so inherently antagonistic as believed (primordialism)
    - They are complex, and must be interpreted as antagonistic
- What explains ethnic antagonism and violence?

# Strategic Antagonism

- Antagonism & violence are not always the goals, but the means... they are used *strategically*
- But make widespread violence more likely

Agent	Desired Outcome	Strategic Actions
Ordinary Masses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Segregation, cultural purity</li><li>-Prove group loyalty, social acceptance</li><li>-Raise status (in group)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Elevate antagonistic rhetoric or behavior</li></ul>
Extremists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Justification</li><li>-Power / status</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Ridicule or attack moderates in your group</li></ul>
Moderate Elites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Gain or maintain power, in competition with faction that has different ideology, is more extremist on ethnic dimension, etc.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Provoke violence with other group</li></ul>

# Why do people go along?

- Of course, if ethnic violence occurs, it is likely to breed ethnic antagonism, exacerbating the problem
- But before widespread violence, masses follow along because:

Reason	Solution?
Don't have proper information to judge otherwise (asymmetric info, manipulation)	Education, news, information
Discourses becloud alternative explanations	
Psychological bias in favor of their own group (e.g., Social Identity Theory)	Domestic and/or international policies to increase inter-group trust & security
Excessive trust in own group	
Defense/security concerns are more powerful than optimism	

# Why do people go along?

- **OR, people don't go along**, but pursue local / personal agendas and social/economic rewards: *honor, promotion, social inclusion*
  - To what extent is violence “ethnic”?
  - More likely to attract “thugs, desperates, poor, & socially excluded” because they:
    - Like violence of any sort (not necessarily “ethnic”), or
    - More seeking of these social rewards
- Q: To what extent might social welfare policies mitigate these tendencies?

# Beyond Theory

- **HOW OFTEN and HOW MUCH is ethnic violence actually the result of strategic antagonism?**
- Difficult to answer because causes are always multiple, motives evolve over time, what sparks a process may not characterize what sustains it, etc
- Fearon & Laitin's review: *"large-scale ethnic violence is provoked by elites seeking to gain, maintain, or increase their hold on political power"*
  - Internal conflicts between extremists and moderates spur leaders or dissidents to provoke violence with another group. Elites "let thugs loose", provoke other side, raise rhetoric, etc
  - *Publics most often follow (at beginning) because they are pursuing their own agendas*

# Constructivism

- To explain ethnic violence, it is not always relevant that ethnic identities are constructed
- But if the *process* of constructing identities is itself antagonistic, then the construction is important to the explanation
  - Ethnic antagonism is *constructed by politics* and actions by strategic elites and masses
- Constructivism also draws attention...
  - Away from structuralist explanations that do not explain episodes, timing, etc.
  - Towards political & social behavior, laws, actions, etc.