CHAPTER-I
CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE ON ETHNICITY

Introduction of Ethnicity

The word Ethnicity comes from the ancient Greek ‘ethnos’ which seems to have referred to a range of situations in which a collectivity of humans lived and acted together, and which is typically translated today as ‘people’ or nation’. Ethnicity is described as an association based on common racial or cultural traits. In the other words we can also define, ethnicity is a matter of ‘people hood’. Ethnicity is a matter of cultural differentiation and its identification and always involves a dialectical interplay between similarity and difference. The ethnicity is socially mobilized and territorially confined. It has numerically sufficient population and is a pool of symbols depicting distinctiveness. It has a reference group in relation to which /whom a sense of relative deprivation is aggregated. The definition of ethnicity remains one of the most contested issues in society. Due in part to the definitional problem, the relationship between ethnicity and other categories such as race, nation, and class remains poorly understood. In review of the literature, the best overview of the history and meaning of the concept of ethnicity and the related term race was found in Cornell and Hartmann's book Ethnicity and Race . The term ethnicity itself is relatively recent (Cornell and Hartmann: 1998:67). Prior to the 1970s there was little mention of it in anthropological literature and textbooks contained no definitions of the term. Before World War II, the term “tribe” was the term of choice for pre-modern societies and race for modern societies. Due to the close link between the term race and Nazi ideology, the term “ethnicity” gradually replaced race within both the Anglo-American tradition and the European tradition. Discussion of ethnicity is complicated by the variety of related terms used to designate similar phenomena, such as race, tribe, nation and minority group. Some scholars use these terms interchangeably while others treat them as unrelated concepts. The term ethnicity is used in many ways. Siniša Malešević comments on the “slippery nature of ethnic relations and the inherent ambiguity of the concept of ethnicity. Such a plasticity and ambiguity of the concept allows for deep misunderstandings as well as political...
misuses” (Sinisa Malesevic: 2004:2). Jack David Eller agrees, “Some of the most perplexing problems arise from the vagueness of the term and phenomenon called ethnicity and from its indefinite and ever-expanding domain” (Enoch Wan & Mark Vanderwerf: 2009:5). The relationship between ethnicity and race is complex. While there is much overlap they are distinct concepts. Pierre Van Den Berghe describes “race as a special marker of ethnicity”, that uses biological characteristics as an ethnic marker. While the relationship between the two concepts is more complex than that, his generalization points in the right direction. In this study, race is not an issue since there is little or no phenotypical difference between the main national or ethnic groups of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Most Americans, when they hear the term “ethnic” immediately think of “minority groups,” like African-Americans, Vietnamese, or Hispanics. It reminds them of “a people outside of, alien to, and different from the core population.” The term minority group refers to a sociological group, such as an ethnic group, that does not constitute a politically dominant plurality of the total population of a given society. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, each of the main national groups is a majority group in certain geographic regions of the country, and a minority group in others. British scholars, like their American counterparts, typically ascribe ethnicity only to minority groups in a society. Ethnic groups are defined as “a distinct collective group” of the population within the larger society whose culture is different from the mainstream culture. According to the Encyclopedia of Race and Ethnicity, an “ethnic group” as, the creative response of a people who feel somehow marginal to the mainstream of society or we can say that the definition of ethnic can be a member of an ethnic group; especially: a member of a minority group who retains the customs, language, or social views of the group” (Encyclopedia of Race & Ethnicity: 2000). In the European tradition, however, ethnicity is understood not as a synonym for minority groups, but as a synonym for “nationhood” or “peoplehood”. In this tradition, everyone, not just minorities, belong to an “ethnic group”. The classic definition is that of Glazer and Moynihan, “the condition of belonging to a particular ethnic group” (Glazer & Moynihan: 1970:363). Ethnicity is defined as a subjective perception of common origins, historical memories, ties, and aspirations. An ethnic group is defined as the
organized activities by people who are linked by a consciousness of special identity, who jointly seek to maximize their political, economic, and social interests. Ethnicity, or ethnic identity, refers to membership in a particular cultural group. It is defined by shared cultural practices, including but not limited to holidays, food, language, and customs. People can share the same nationality but have different ethnic groups. For example, citizens of the United States are of many different ethnic backgrounds. An ethnic group (or ethnicity) is a group of people whose members identify with each other, through a common heritage, often consisting of a common language, a common culture (often including a shared religion) and an ideology that stresses common ancestry or endogamy. According to Schermerhorn, “An ethnic group is defined as a collective within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, 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, language or dialect forms, tribal affiliation, nationality, phenotypical features, or any combination of these. Ethnicity may be as a named human population with myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of common culture, a link with a homeland and a sense of solidarity among at least some of its members (Jenkins Richard: 1997:45). Members of an ethnic group are conscious of belonging to an ethnic group; moreover ethnic identity is further marked by the recognition from others of a group's distinctiveness. The meaning of ethnicity depends on the definition of several other concepts, particularly those of “ethnic group” and “ethnic identity.” Ethnic group is the most basic notion and the one from which the others are derived. It refers to ethnicity as a collective phenomenon. Ethnic identity describes ethnicity as an individually experienced phenomenon, while ethnicity itself is an abstract concept that includes an implicit reference to both the collective and the individual aspects. There are several basic dimensions to ethnicity at either the collective or the individual level. It can be said to possess both an objective and a subjective dimension. The objective aspects are those that can be observed as facts in the existence of institutions, including that of kinship and descent, and in the overt behaviour patterns of individuals and groups. The subjective aspects comprise attitudes, values, and preconceptions whose meaning must be interpreted in the context of communication. It refers to sharing and
identifying with the unique historical experience of a group. Culture is in essence a system of encoding such experience into a set of symbolic patterns, and sharing a culture means identifying with these patterns, not necessarily following all of them in one’s overt behaviour. An ethnic group as a community-type group of people who share the same culture, or as the descendants of such people who may not share this culture but who identify themselves with the ancestral group. The objective dimensions of an ethnic group include the presence of at least some community institutions or organizations, ancestors and descendants who transmit the culture and contribute to the formation of identity, and a “script” for cultural behaviour, in the form of customs, rituals, and preconceptions, which provides the content to culture and which members of the group are expected to follow in their overt behaviour. The subjective aspect of an ethnic group refers to what, since Barth, have been known as “ethnic boundaries” (Barth Frederik: 1981:198). These are socio-psychological borders that determine group inclusion and exclusion. There are two types of ethnic boundaries, those formed from within the group (internal boundaries) and those established from outside (external ones). In many ways, the dynamics of interethnic relations depends on the interaction between these two kinds of boundaries. The internal ones function in the area of self-inclusion within the ethnic group; they overlap with the process of self-identity and articulate feelings of sympathy and loyalty towards other members of the group. The external boundaries determine the perimeter of exclusion, the space occupied by outsiders. In a multi-ethnic society in which members of different groups interact and compete with one another, the existence of internal boundaries will inevitably produce external ones. Individuals will be identified by others as belonging to one or another ethnic group, even if they no longer actively share any cultural patterns with that group, as long as a link to their ancestors can be made. Identification by others in turn usually stimulates self-identification and may condition new forms of social organization. Hence ethnicity is a matter of a double boundary: one from within, maintained by the socialization process, and one from without, established through intergroup relations. If the external boundary is rigid, such as when there is much discrimination against a group in employment, housing, education, and other areas of life, this fact may lead to self-organization on the part of the group in order to fight such treatment and thus increase
its self-awareness. Locating oneself in relation to a community and society is not only a psychological phenomenon, but also a social one in the sense that internal psychological states express themselves objectively in external patterns of behaviour that come to be shared by others. Thus individuals locate themselves in one or another community internally by states of mind and feelings, such as self-definitions or feelings of closeness, and externally by behaviour appropriate to these states of mind and feelings. Behaviour that is based on cultural patterns is therefore an expression of subjective identity and can be studied as an objective indicator of its character. Thus, we can distinguish external and internal aspects of ethnic identity. The external aspects refer to, first, observable behaviour, both cultural and social, such as speaking a particular language and practising ethnic traditions; second, participation in such ethnic personal networks as those of family and friends; third, involvement in ethnic institutions, including churches, schools, enterprises, and the media; fourth, participation in voluntary associations – clubs, societies, and youth organizations; and fifth, activity in functions sponsored by ethnic organizations, such as picnics, concerts, public lectures, rallies, and dances. The internal aspects of ethnic identity refer to images, ideas, attitudes, and feelings. These, of course, are interconnected with external behaviour, but it should not be assumed that, empirically, the two types are always dependent upon each other. Indeed, they may vary independent of one another; for example, a third-generation person may retain to a higher degree the internal, rather than the external, aspects of identity.

**Difference between the Ethnicity, Race, Nationalism**

Ethnicity is defined as a group of people, who share a common cultural and historical identity, typically linked to a belief in common descent. Ethnicity is a sentiment of loyalty towards a distinctive population, cultural group or territorial area; bonds that are cultural rather than racial. On the other hand, Race refers to the social construction of difference on the basis of perceived physical or morphological differences, ethnicity is supposed to refer to cultural differences between people. Race refers to physical or genetic differences amongst humankind that supposedly distinguish one group of people from another on biological grounds such as skin and hair color,
physique, and facial features. A race is thus a group of people who share a common ancestry and one blood. The term is, however, controversial, both scientifically and politically. Scientific evidence suggests that there is no such thing as ‘race’ in the sense of a species-type difference between peoples. Politically, racial categorization is commonly based on cultural stereotypes, and is simplistic at best and pernicious at worst. The ethnicity is sometimes preferred because it refers to cultural and social differences that are not necessarily rooted in biology. An ethnic culture encompasses values, traditions and practices, but crucially it also gives a people a common identity and sense of distinctiveness, usually by focusing on their origins and descent. Some see nations simply as extended ethnic groups; others stress that, while ethnic groups are essentially cultural and exclusive, nations are more inclusive and are ultimately politically defined. Michael Banton have argued the need to distinguish between race and ethnicity (Banton Michael: 1967:66). In Banton’s view, race refers to the categorization of people, while ethnicity has to do with group identification. He argues that “ethnicity is generally more concerned with the identification of us, while racism is more oriented to the categorization of them” (Banton Michael: 1967:66). Whereas ethnic nationalism means a form of nationalism that is fuelled primarily by a keen seen of ethnic distinctiveness and the desire to preserve it. A nationalist holds that political boundaries should be coterminous with cultural boundaries, whereas many ethnic groups do not demand command over a state. When the political leaders of an ethnic movement place demands to this effect, the ethnic movement therefore by definition becomes a nationalist movement. Although nationalisms tend to be ethnic in character, this is not necessarily the case.

**Theoretical Approaches to Ethnicity**

Different approaches to understanding ethnicity have been used by different social scientists while trying to understand the nature of ethnicity as a factor in human life and society. The causes of ethnic conflicts are debated by political scientists and sociologist who generally fall into one of five schools of thoughts: Primordialist, Epiphenomenalist, Ascriptive, Instrumentalist and Constructivist.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspective</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Primordialist</strong></td>
<td>Ethnicity is fixed at birth. Ethnic identification is based on deep, primordial attachments to a group or culture.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Epiphenomenalist</strong></td>
<td>The Epiphenomenalist perspective emphatically asserts that it is the class structures and institutionalized patterns of power in society that are fundamental to explaining political events rather than any biologically or culturally based social formations like “ethnicity.”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ascriptive</strong></td>
<td>This Ascriptive Approach, which can be dubbed “Ascriptive” and derives from the work of Max Weber and scholars who followed him, is distinguished by a view of ethnicity that is best described as real, but constructed. According to Ascriptive approach the Politics creates ethnicity in that it forces individuals to discover common resources in their struggles for survival.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Instrumentalist</strong></td>
<td>Ethnicity, based on people's “historical” and “symbolic” memory, is something created and used and exploited by leaders and others in the pragmatic pursuit of their own interests.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Constructivist</strong></td>
<td>Ethnic identity is not something people “possess” but something they “construct” in specific social and historical contexts to further their own interests. It is therefore fluid and subjective.</td>
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**The Primordialist Approach**

The first approach to ethnicity is commonly termed the “primordialist” approach in that it centers on the assertion that certain primitive (or basic) sociological groupings exist in a society. Such primitive groupings exist a priori, meaning that they are natural units that derive their cohesion from some inherent biological, cultural, or racial traits which then become instruments of social differentiation. The Primordialist school asserts that human societies are in effect conglomerations of “tribes” (Isaacs
Harold: 1975:39). The regulating principles that define the distinctions between “tribes” may vary, but what is crucial is that they determine both the boundaries and the meaning of tribal membership in such a way that the “in-group” and “out-group” can always be clearly demarcated. Such a priori groupings then constitute the primitive units in society: they define for their members critical existential distinctions centered on the dichotomy of “us and them” and they perform the crucial task of forming an individual’s personal identity.” (Barth Frederik: 1981:227). This process, defining the way that “racial groups come to see each other and themselves,” relies on a constant redefinition and reinterpretation of historical events and social experiences vis-à-vis other such groups, and it eventually results in the “aligning and realigning of relations and the development and reformulation of prospective lines of action toward one another.” Thus, in the primordialist view, ethnic groups function as insular universes. Their membership is defined by accident of birth, and once constituted; they perpetuate their distinctiveness by a continuing process of socialization that accentuates their perceptions of uniqueness and their sense of separateness from other, similar, social formations. In the primordialist vision, according to Mckay, “Man is seen as a leopard who cannot change his ethnic spots” (John Hutchinson & Anthony Smith: 1996:3). In Geertz’s opinion ethnicity is not in itself primordial but human naturally perceive it as such because it is embedded in their experience of the world (John F.Stack Jr.:1986:2). The primordialist account relies on a concept of kinship between members of an ethnic group. Donald Horowitz argues that this kinship ‘makes it possible for ethnic groups to think in terms of family resemblances’. Primordialism hold the ethnicity has existed at all times of human history and that modern ethnic groups have historical continuity into the far past. For them, the idea of ethnicity is closely linked to the idea of nations and is rooted in the pre-weber understanding of humanity as being divided into primordially existing groups rooted by kinship and biological heritage (Weber Max: 1978:393). Kinship primordialism holds that ethnic communities are extensions of kinship units, basically being derived by kinship or clan ties where the choices of cultural signs (language, religion, tractions) are made exactly to show this biological affinity. In this way the myth of common biological ancestry that are a defining feature of ethnic communities are to be understood as representing actual biological history. In 1975, political
scientist Harold Isaacs published a book titled ‘Idols of the tribe’, in which ethnic identity as a form of what Isaacs called ‘basic group identity’. Isaacs went on to elaborate eight elements that directly contribute to a person’s basic group identity: the physical body (including size, shape, skin color, and so on); a person’s name (both individual and family); the history and origins of the group affiliation; the language one first learns to speak; the religion one is born into; the culture one is born into; and the geography and topography of the place of birth (Isaacs Harold: 1998:34). These elements carry a distinctive power by virtue of their primacy. Isaacs’s version of primordialism was the most elaborately worked out in the scholarly literature, but it is also representative in that it asserts the “givenness” of ethnic and racial identities and acknowledges a common understanding of how that givenness interpreted in many societies and within many ethnic and racial populations (Stephen Cornell & Douglas Hartmann: 1998:34).

**The Epiphenomenalist Approach**

The second epiphenomenalist perspective emphatically asserts that it is the class structures and institutionalized patterns of power in society that are fundamental to explaining political events rather than any biologically or culturally based social formations like “ethnicity.” According to Harper’s opinion, “Exploitation of one social class or ethnic group by another is an epiphenomenon of real differences in power between social groups”. The epiphenomenalist perspective uses class, for their political and economic motives to describe cause of ethnic conflict. A phenomenon that occurs with and seems to result from another but has no reciprocal effect or subsequent influence. The source of ethnic enmity is not in the cultural differences of groups but in the nature of capitalist modes of production and the inherent inequalities that it produces. For Marx class consciousness remains a real potent force of social change, while ethnic identities are no more than an epiphenomenon, a second order reality, which will be transcended once a genuine communist society is established. Drawing on some of the central propositions of Marx, Oliver Cox was one of the first sociologists who developed a coherent and will articulated Marxist account of ethnicity. His analysis is rooted in a classical Marxist argument that ‘race relations
can be studied as a form of class exploitation’. Ethnic conflict is no more than hidden class conflict. Cox’s theory of ethnicity is firmly embedded in classical Marxism which privileges class over ethnicity; gives primacy to the economic base over the cultural super-structure, and sees ‘racial’ and ethnic identity claims as something that hinders the development of proletarian consciousness in its long march forward to universal progress (Siniša Malešević : 2004).

**The Ascriptive Approach**

According to ascriptive approach, people are placed in positions of stratification because of qualities like race, sex, age, class at birth, religion, ethnicity, and residence. In many societies ascriptive approach of ethnicity plays an important role in stratification processes. The stratification structure of society is indicative of the differentiation of social power that is distributed, equally or not, between individuals. Class is one such form of stratification. In the Weberian tradition, class position is indicative of the differentiation of life chances attitudes and behaviour of groups of individuals. Class, however, is not the only axis of stratification in many modern societies. The Ascriptive approach to ethnicity is the most defensible approach to developing a model for anticipating ethnic violence. This approach may in fact be vehemently repudiated by ethnic activists, since such individuals often have a deep stake in primordialist conceptions of ethnicity. Similarly, those with a stake in doctrinaire ideological explanations of social relations may also deny the validity of an ascriptive approach. But most social theorists today would admit that an ascriptive approach incorporating both Marxist and Weberian insights is the most fruitful avenue to understanding the larger problem of exclusion and domination in society. In light of the above discussion of various competing approaches, it is worthwhile to restate the concept of ethnicity. The concept entails three crucial components: distinguishing characteristics (any and/or all of the following: phenotype, faith, language, origin, or population concentration in a given region), a sense of group solidarity, and contact with another group so as to establish a point of reference and the idea of “otherness.” Ethnicity is defined as the idea of shared group affinity, and belonging is based on the myth of common ancestry and a notion of distinctiveness.
The group in question must be larger than a kinship group, but the sense of belonging—based on myth—stems from created bonds that have close similarities to kinship. The basis for these created bonds may stem from any number of distinguishing characteristics. These are, at any rate, incidental and case specific, though they may lead, under certain situations, to deep personal attachments.

**The Instrumentalist Approach**

Instrumentalists argue that ethnicity is a tool used by elites, groups or individuals to gain larger, mostly material ends. They claim that ethnicity is dependent on the political process, where politicians seek collective ends and that it has little independent standing outside this political arena. The instrumentalist theory emphasizes the role of the elite in that ethnic elite is the constructor and manipulator of the ethnic identity for their own benefits. Ethnicity is mainly seen as a label or set of symbolic ties used by politicians to their advantage. Additionally, ethnicity is seen as a party affiliation, instead as a social construct or natural bond (David Lake & Donald Rothschild: 1985:5). An example of an Instrumentalist interpretation of ethnicity is also of the one used by Fedrick Barth, who sees ethnicity as ever changing boundaries between groups of people established through ongoing social negotiation and interaction (Fredrick Barth: 1981:198). One of the central ideas of instrumentalist is the socially constructed nature of ethnicity, and the ability of individuals to cut and intermingle from a variety of ethnic heritage and cultures to forge their own individual or group identities. Under the concept of the utilitarian logic of ethnicity and race, in 1963, Nathan glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan published, “Beyond the melting pot”, in that book they said, “ethnic groups are continually recreated by new experiences in America” (Nathan glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan: 1963:3) At the same time, anthropologist Abner Cohen was making a similar argument about ethnic groups in Africa. Cohen studied urban ethnic groups in Nigeria. “Ethnicity he wrote, is fundamentally a political phenomenon….it is a type of informal interest grouping” (Abner Cohen: 2004) interaction between ethnic groups & not likely to lead to the disappearances of ethnicity. On the contrary, ethnicity in the modern world “is the result of intensive struggle between groups over new strategic positions of power…..
places of employment, taxation, funds for development, education, political position and so on” (Mahmood Mamdani:2001:44). Ethnicity was the medium through which various groups organized to pursue their collective interests in competition with one another, interests that were product of the circumstances in which those groups found themselves.

Paul Brass sees ethnicity as a powerful political resource for generating popular support in competition between political elites. For Brass cultural difference becomes an object of inter-group dispute only when it represents a particular political conflict of interests. Ted Gurr is more interested in the violent forms of ethnic group competition, that is, in the study of ethnic conflict, wars and genocide. More specifically, he focuses on issues such as the reasons for ethnic group mobilization, the rationale behind violent outbursts between ethnic groups as well as between particular ethnic collectives. Unlike other elite approaches, Gurr is especially interested in the strategies employed by elites to mobilize popular support. For example, in his work on genocide he differentiates between elites with a history of using violence to repress dissent and to hold onto power, and elite that uses their power for granting differential group rewards in exchange for loyalty (Paul Brass:1991) Thus, Gurr’s view is that although ethnic conflicts are complex and multifaceted phenomenon, in the last instance responsibility for wars lies with dominant ethnic elites: “ethnic identity and interest per se do not risk unforeseen ethnic wars; rather the danger is hegemonic elites who use the state to promote their own people’s interests at the expense of others’(Ibid). Proponents of instrumentalist theories view ethnicity as something that can be changed, constructed or even manipulated to gain specific political and/or economic ends. Elite theory, which argues that the leaders in a modern state (the elite) use and manipulate perceptions of ethnic identity to further their own ends and stay in power is an approach, advocated by scholars Abner Cohen, Paul Brass and Ted Gurr. In the nutshell, in the words of Ted Gurr, “Ethnicity is created in the dynamics of elite competition within the boundaries determined by political and economic realities” and ethnic groups are to be seen as a product of political myths, created and manipulated by culture elites in their pursuit of advantages and power.”
The Constructivist Approach

Constructivists argue that an ethnic group is an imagined, constructed community, created through social action and interaction. They claim that ethnic groups are categories of ascription and identification and that these can change. Benedict Anderson takes the constructivist approach in his work, Imagined Communities in 1991, Constructivism assumes that identities vary across space and times, due to societal condition and change the circumstances that groups encounter, as well as the group's own “active involvement in the construction and reconstruction of identities, negotiating boundaries, asserting meanings, interpreting their own pasts, resisting the impositions of the present, and claiming the future.” The constructionist approach focuses on the ways in which ethnic and racial identities are built, rebuilt and sometimes dismantled over time. It places interactions between circumstances and groups at the heart of these processes. Circumstantialism focus on social change, on group’s economic, political, and social positions; and on the interests derivative of these positions tell us a lot about how the comprehensiveness of ethnic and racial identities changes. Anti-foundation lists, following Derrida, aim rather to deconstruct ethnicity itself. By deconstruction it is meant that there is no master key to unlock the secrets of social relations, including ethnic relations. The aim of anti-foundational analysis is not to explain but rather to deconstruct, that is, to pinpoint discrepancies, arbitrariness and hegemonic practices that are integral to any process of discourse construction. Focusing in particular on language and textual analysis, anti-foundation lists aim to recreate meanings from that which is left out, ignored or suppressed within and by a particular discourse. Baumann (1999) claims that ethnicity is “a pliable social creation” (Baumann 1999:67), which can often be seen as something beyond change. However, according to the constructivists, individuals can change their ethnic identities and cross ethnic boundaries. Lake & Rothschild also argue that constructivists claim that ethnicity is created through social interaction (David Lake& Donald Rothschild: 1998). In addition, the writers state that “ethnicity is not immutable nor completely open” and that it is “constructed from dense webs of social interaction”. Furthermore, they claim that the constructivist approach sees ethnicity as not being “an individual attribute but a social phenomenon” and that the ethnic
identity of a person is beyond the choice or control of that individual (David Lake & Donald Rothchild: 1998). Nevertheless, constructivists argue that conceptions of ethnicity can change through social interaction.

Fredrik Barth, with his colleagues, in a seminal collection Ethnic Groups and Boundaries, treated ethnicity as a continuing ascription which classifies a person in terms of their most general and inclusive identity, presumptively determined by origin and background as well as a form of social organization maintained by inter-group boundary mechanisms, based not on possession of a cultural inventory but on manipulation of identities and their situational character. This conceptualization has enabled anthropologists to concentrate upon the situational and contextual character of ethnicity. Horowitz elaborates on the importance of social groups and changing boundaries within the constructivist school of thought. He states: “Intergroup boundaries are constructed in social life just as they are constructed in the laboratory. The scope of group boundaries is not foreordained and boundary change is common” (Donald Horowitz: 1998:18).

**Rwandan Ethnicity**

Rwanda is an ethnically-fragmented socio-political unit that continues to have drawn the global attention presumably because of the long-drawn ethnic strife that has surely crippled efforts at development. This is a former German and Belgian colony that hardly rose above ethnic skirmishes due probably to their well-entrenched socio-economic roots. The three major communities seem to be nurturing emotionally-charged socio-political agenda at the exclusion of the other. Rwanda had its own history of tribal societies. They were convergent catastrophes, independent in origin, even as they were interdependent in their evolution. In Rwandan ethnicity, it is useful to see how historical discourse in one crisis is used politically by those involved in another and how history and politics intertwine. The polarization of the population along ethnic lines does not seem to have occurred extensively before the late nineteenth century. Instead, population of primarily agriculturalist base (but some of whom were also substantial cattle-owners) which would later come to be known as Hutu-identified primarily along lineage lines for political purposes. In Rwanda, the
dividing line between the have and have-nots was regional and social, not ethnic. Popular discontent was therefore largely an intra-Hutu, regional matters. However, the affirmation of Hutu (anti-Tutsi) ethnicity and its institutionalization and control over the state was there before the colonial influence. Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa came to be portrayed as racially distinct, corporate social units, each internally homogeneous and with a markedly different history. Furthermore, each population segment portrayed itself as having been opposed by the other.

As it is obvious, the demographically preponderant community appears to have gained advantaged pushing the other two groups to the margin. A fight for more space in a strife-torn Rwanda, this becomes a zero-sum game in which none of the communities despite being at an advantage at any point of time is going to flourish. It is difficult to predict the future because of the mistrust that has seeped into the mindsets of those who matter in the political decision making. There are efforts at bringing the warring communities for meaningful dialogues which so far did not make headway in regard to peace building in the strife-torn Rwanda. Notwithstanding the endeavors by various global agencies, peace process seems to be a serious casualty for reasons which are connected with the age-old communal schism the root of which can also be traced back to the mistrust that can meaningfully be addressed by reworking on the terms and conditions of the dialogue among the fighting war-lords and their followers. Can ethnic division be completely glossed-over? Undoubtedly, this is simply a perception that cannot be executed in any circumstances. As the available literature amply shows, the ethnic-division does not necessary lead to antagonism provided ethnically-divided groups do not regard ‘the others’ as ‘hated others’ and not merely ‘different others’ on the basis of the historically-ordained circumstances separating ‘the privileged others’ from ‘the non-privileged others’. The solution is not an easy-one especially when the memory is being carried as a baggage when the strife recurs. Nonetheless, as the studies of ethnic strife especially in Africa demonstrates, the values of equity not only in terms of economic wealth, but also in terms of sharing political power as equal partners regardless of social chasm will undoubtedly contribute to a peace-process subverting the endeavors contrary to what is conducive to the distinct ethnic communities who are ‘living together separately’.
Given the contextual peculiarities, it may not be possible to capture the ethnicity-related problems in Rwanda. Unlike other African politics, the situation in Rwanda has become further complicated due to the presence of foreign interests presumably because of its mineral wealth and strategic location. The political scene is no longer as simple as it was in the past for reasons connected with the importance of civil society activists in the making of public policy. Equally important is the role of international and domestic media. Hence one cannot comprehend the reality by simply focusing on the ethnic situation in Rwanda; one has to take account a whole range of factors which may not appear to be relevant at the first instance while seeking to grasp perhaps the most volatile African polity. In other words, since Rwanda has become probably the most complex African territory, it is incumbent on the analysts not to lose sight of both domestic circumstances and the exogenous influences that seem to have further complicated ethnic equations for obvious reasons. One has to be extremely careful while striving to analyze the complex ethnicity in Rwanda because a simplistic reading of the situation will surely lead to a truncated understanding and ambiguous interpretation of socio-economic circumstances which are partly inherited, but largely created for reasons connected with the consolidation of a globalizing world. Ethnic division, differentiation and rivalry have been the dominant features of Rwandan society since independence in 1962. In Rwanda and Burundi the Tutsis have maintained their dominance over the centuries, even though they are in the minority. Though the language and culture of the Hutus and Tutsis merged into one, the Tutsis continued to maintain their separate autocratic identity. The ancestors of the Tutsi and the Hutu populations gradually intermarried more and more in the territories we now know as Rwanda and Burundi.

The Rwandan genocide was not the inevitable outcome of long standing tribal hatreds. Rather, the presence of a civil war, the reach of the Rwandan state into local areas and the cynical use of ethnicity by the hardliners made genocide a reality. There were many Hutus in the government and especially in the population that did think of all Tutsis as “the enemy.” “Tutsi are the enemy” became the idea around which local power was contested. Because of the climate of fear and insecurity at the local level, the persons and groups that supported the hardliners' position were marked as the
leaders. In other words, people were afraid and confused and were not sure who was in charge. Not everyone at the local level immediately sought to kill Tutsi. Indeed, there are numerous accounts of local authorities attempting to protect Tutsis. But, the word from the leadership in Kigali was that the Tutsi (all Tutsi) were the enemy. So, local groups that supported the genocidal policy aligned themselves with national leadership. Even if individuals who were not violently anti-Tutsi were not in power at a local level before, then aligning themselves with the policy of the hardliners who now controlled the government gave them the leadership. The logic turned on the assumptions that all Tutsis are alike and that all Tutsis are the enemy. What happened was that ordinary Hutus, who lived and cooperated with their Tutsi neighbors and even intermarried with them, suddenly accepted the claim that all Tutsis were enemies. In summary we can say that ethnicity in Rwanda was unique of its own kind and characterized by few features like, hierarchal based structure(based on property like number of cattle and land), ethnic division was present since the beginning, German and Belgium colonial influenced based ethnicity, minority (Tutsi) vs. majority (Hutu), elitistic domination (earlier aristocratic Hutu &later colonial influenced Tutsi), colonial domination and interference of outside actors which has given the real shape to Rwandan ethnicity. The fundamental point that the chapter seeks to make draws on the foundational texts on ethnicity and ethnic strife in transitional societies that had invariable a long colonial past.

On the basis of the available works on the socio-economic circumstances leading to ethnic division, strife and finally riots, one can identify two distinct positions that are useful to plausibly comprehend what accounts for unbridgeable contradictions leading to ‘bloodbath’. First, ethnic divisions are naturally linked with the historical evolution of various communities in circumstances which are not always ‘given’, but ‘constructed’. Secondly, the fact that some ethnic groups are ‘privileged’ and other as ‘in the margins’ adds new meaning to mere ethnic division among those communities which are socio-economically deprived due to specific political engineering based on the partisan design privileging one group as against another. Taken these two clearly-articulated positions, one can meaningfully explain the outbreak of ethnic riots and its absence in different socio-economic circumstances. Rwanda in particular is perhaps
Illustrative of a historical trend in human civilization showing that ethnic separation may not always be a triggering factor; what is most critical is the circumstances in which ‘the natural differences’ among various ethnic groups occupying same socio-political geographical space are politically nurtured to fulfill the agenda-specific goals of exclusion. In other words, mere separation does not lead to bloodbath though it creates circumstances in which there remain, of course, the possibilities for utilizing the gulf among the communities for divisive design. The division seems to have permeated at all levels and ethnic division, instead of being creative resources in, at least, cultural terms, continues to sharpen the boundaries among the communities by placing them as antagonistic partners within the same socio-economic and political space. The roots of such well-nurtured division are plenty and one can endlessly debate on this. Besides economic disparities of the ethnic–skirmishes being ‘agency-centric’.

In order to grasp the historical processes leading to ethnic-antagonism in Rwanda, this chapter is a modest attempt to provide a contextual interpretation of the peculiar socio-economic and political circumstances responsible (or otherwise) for strife in an African polity by drawing on the major theoretical inputs relating to ethnicity.

**The Colonial Influence on Ethnicity**

Europeans began exploring the great lakes region in the late nineteenth contrary; they were impressed with Rwanda’s comparatively hierarchical, orderly and sophisticated system of rule. In the Rwandan Tutsis, the European explorers and missionaries believed that they had found a “superior” race of “natural –born rulers”. Europeans wrote that Tutsi had migrated with their cattle from northern Africa at some earlier time and had come to dominate the more lowly Hutu, which the Europeans considered an inferior “race” of Bantu “Negroids”. This conception of Rwandan society reflected the anthropological ideas of the day, in particular the so-called “hamitic hypothesis” which saw civilization in Africa as the product of “Caucasoid” (white- like) hamitic peoples (Scott, Straus: 2006:18). Colonial era documents consistently describe Hutus as short, stocky, dark-skinned, and wide-nosed. By contrast, the Tutsis are presented
as tall, elegant, light-skinned, and thin–nosed. In the 1930s Belgian colonial officers introduced identity cards that labeled Rwandans according to their ethnicity. Europeans race thinking also became the basis for allocating power in the colonial system. The European practiced indirect rule, in so doing reinforcing Tutsi dominance and increasing the arbitrariness and repression of local rule. In short, under colonial rule, “race” became the central determinant of power; as a consequence “race” became a symbol of oppression (Ibid). Division came with colonialism. For the purposes of divide and rule the colonists deformed history and decided who were Hutu and Tutsi. Colonialisation crystallized, structured and heightened ethnic hatred. The Belgians constructed distinction upon existing ethnic identities, exploited them, exacerbating social differences. The Belgians handed out identity cards on which were written the ‘tribe’ of each Rwandese. Because the Belgians couldn’t find objective criteria they just said, ‘the one with more than ten cows is a Tutsi’, and Hutu are those with less than ten cows’, or you’re short; therefore you’re a Hutu. You’re tall; therefore you’re a Tutsi. They even used people’s features; the shape of your nose, whether your face was straight (Nigal Eltringham: 2004). The Belgians showed favoritism, reinforcing what they chose to call ‘Tutsi’. They established a school in Butare only for children of Tutsi administrators. Meanwhile, the Tutsi aristocratic class— the chiefs and the king— maintained their privileges. Furthermore, it was the Belgians who helped the Tutsi elite to conquer the smaller Hutu kingdoms (Nigal Eltringham: 2004). This way, the Tutsi elite benefited from the presence of the Germans and then the Belgians by increasing their power and centralizing their kingdom. Colonialism stratified and polarized society. In reality the majority were not ‘Hutu’ and ‘Tutsi’ just neighbours, who shared day to day life in peaceful co-existence. There were intermarriage; they helped each other build houses and so on. In reality, there was no hatred, no conflict between two groups. But the Belgians and missionaries came and divided people (Nigal Eltringham: 2004).

**The Revolution / Genocide of 1959**

In 1959 the Hutu realized their legitimate aspirations for change and put an end to a long period of social injustice of which they had been victims before and during colonization influenced by western culture in the seminaries, Hutu saw that the Tutsi
elite and colonial administrations were unjust. They published the Bahutu manifesto that spoke of rights for Hutu and Tutsi. The people aspired to democracy and the end of social injustice. The Hutu asked to share power but were pushed away. The king and his encourage wanted to maintain the status quo and resorted to repressive means, killing Hutu leaders. The 1959 revolution would have been peaceful had the traditional power not introduced violence into the inevitable process of change. In the 1950s, the whole of Africa was moving towards independence and the Tutsi elite were part of that movement, but the Belgian did not want to leave. So, they introduced democracy and encouraged the revolution-‘you are like the Tutsi, but you need a revolution’. First they were pro-hierarchy and then pro-democracy. The Belgians assassinated the king in Bujumbura on 29, July 1959. The Belgians wanted to remain in Rwanda because they were losing Congo and in Burundi UPRONA (partied I’ unit et du progress national) were wining. They needed Rwanda to control Congo, so they mobilized Hutu against Tutsi and created Parmehutu party. They thought ‘if we ride with the Hutu elite this will guarantee a place in Rwanda for Belgians’. This was an assisted revolution by the Roman Catholic Church and the Belgians and they killed influential Tutsi to clear the way ( Nigal Eltringham:2004). For the regimes of the first and second republics, 1959 was a revolution, but for the RPF it is genocide. But, they forget the other elements of that revolution. The revolution took place in the context of independence and only those in power were targeted, and even they were not killed. For example, kigaliV, the Mwami was well treated, and now lives in US. Both Hutu and Tutsi were massacred. The attacks on Tutsi followed the killing of Hutu leaders. The events and one cannot compare 1959 with 1994, because the violence affected only Tutsi in power. Furthermore, the fighting stopped quickly and the Tutsi who-remained was no longer maltreated. This was a social revolution- a demand for democracy, social justice, equality and access to property. The RPF say we’re a threatened minority; we were killed in 1959, 1960, 1973. This is excellent propaganda, but dangerous, because Hutu will not accept they did not liberate themselves in 1959. The 1959 was an end to the dual oppression (double colonialism) of the colonist and the Tutsi, elite, a result of the “consciousness raising” of the Hutu and the legitimate aspiration of social justice for all Rwandese (Nigal Eltringham: 2004).
European Perception in Rwandan Ethnicity (1959-1990)

In 1959, those born to power with huge pastoral lands targeted and suffered heavily. But ordinary Tutsi remained and even took part in the revolution. The ordinary Tutsi stayed while the aristocracy went into exile. When those outside saw that the others were not following, there was a rift among Tutsi. They denounced those who stayed as collaborators of kayibanda. (Nigal Eltringham: 2004). During the early years of independence there was a multiparty system. There were UNAR members of parliament and until 1963 two UNAR ministers. But this ended with the attacks of the inyenzi. When the inyenzi attacked, Hutu extremists wrongly reacted against Tutsi who stayed, believing there was an alliance with those Tutsi in exile. They used to unify Hutu (Nigal Eltringham: 2004). During the second republic (1973-94) Hutu shared power with the Tutsi, proportional to the number of Tutsi in Rwanda. In a letter in 1964, president kayibanda asked the Tutsi refugees to return to Rwanda. He warned the exiles that when they attack, the Tutsi inside are in trouble. He invited them to come back as ordinary people, not as nobles, but to work as ordinary people. Kayibanda never took money and was convinced he had a mission to protect the weak people. But he was also weak and manipulated the constitution so he could remain in power. Before the 1994 genocide there were many mixed marriages, the ethnic question had completely disappeared. There was only the regional question of north vs. south. The conflict of north vs. south was a major problem that was overstepped by the Hutu vs. Tutsi conflict in 1991. In fact, the Abakiga (Hutu) from the north were more violent against the Tutsi than ordinary Hutu. The Abakiga had always been excluded from power, so they violently took power in 1973. In 1973 there was a problem between north vs south. Hutu in the army and politicians from Gisenyi and parts of Ruhengeri were claiming the regime wanted to marginalize and eliminate them. Following Habyarimana’s military coup in 1973 about 50 Hutu politicians from the south disappeared. So, when mulit-partism was introduced (in March 1991) some Hutu took the opportunity to oppose Habyarimana’s regime. After 1991 the problem was more and more ethnic rather than regional (Nigal Eltringham: 2004).
Rwandan Perception on Ethnicity (1959-90)

After independence, genocide continued in 1963, 1967 and the last one in 1994. Parmehutu took the teachings of the missionaries and inverted them; saying that Hutu suffered under Tutsi colonizers. It was taught in schools that Tutsi are bad people; don’t let them come back. Tutsi were second-class citizens- no Tutsi was a prefect or a bourgmestre, no Tutsi held a job in the government or army, and they could no more than 10 per cent in schools. The top government civil servants and high-ranking military officers were not allowed to marry Tutsi (not a law, but told to people in groups). Rather than addressing the problems of the past, the post-independence governments exacerbated them. From 1962 the government took ‘ethnic’ differences seriously and preached an ethnic vision based on minor issues such as height, complexion and other aspects of physical appearances. They knew the only way they could stay in power was through these politics of exclusion- Tutsi were scapegoats. In 1959, 1960 and 1964 there were attacks by Tutsi exiles. This was an opportunity to kill who lived in Rwanda because they were Tutsi. The idea of exterminating the Tutsi was not a real project, but it was something considered possible. It was just like European anti-Semitism, not always a question of extermination, but the basis for extermination had existed for a long time. After 1973, if there were economic problems they would blame the Tutsi (Nigel Eltringham: 2004).

Even in the mid 1980s the poor economy was blamed on Tutsi, because some Tutsi were strong in business. Habyarimana wanted to continue the values of the ‘social revolution’; but the only value of that revolution was that Tutsi were not citizens. After 1973, Tutsi were not much of an issue. There was internal division in Rwanda. Among the Hutu, there are the ‘Bakiga’ from the north. The northern Hutu consider the Hutu from the south to be just as bad as Tutsi. There was a single party, the MRND, but in the early 1990s (following the attack of the RPF in October 1999) there was pressure for multi partism. When Habyarimana saw there was an external threat, he tried to unite Hutu against the RPF by attacking Tutsi. Before then, Tutsi were downtrodden, but not considered a threat. But Habyarimana looked for supremacy and made a ‘common cause against an external enemy’. While 1959 was genocide it is was an ongoing operation, with further massacres in 1963 and 1973.
(Nigal Eltringham: 2004). What happened in 1994 came as no surprise – there has been a philosophy for 35 years, the 1994 genocide was planned since 1959. The Rwanda narrative suggests that the Tutsi elite were double victims of the colonial authorities. They were used as an instrument of indirect rule, forced to oppress Rwandese on behalf of the colonist. When these elite tried to break free from their own subjugation (and the subjugation of Rwanda) the Belgians authorities destroyed them. Hutu elite were accomplices in this destruction, and it was a pattern of destruction that would be perpetuated up to 1994 (Nigal Eltringham: 2004).

**Historical and Political Reasons for Emergence of Ethnicity in Rwanda**

In Rwanda, the death in mysterious circumstances of Mwami Mutare Rudahigua in July 1959 became the spark of the violent conflict that eventually ended the Tutsi monarchy in what is known as the “Rwandan revolution” or more correctly the “Hutu revolution”. As Gregoire Kayibanda, the onetime private secretary to Monsignor André Perraudin, the Swiss vicar apostolic of Rwanda, and one of the authors of the Hutu manifesto of 1957 began to consolidate Hutu power, thousands of Tutsi fled Rwanda to seek refuge in Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi and the Congo. And it is out of the Tutsi Diaspora in Uganda that the current leadership was a peculiar revolution, in that it took place under colonial rule but left the basic colonial power structure intact. The Belgian colonialists were present and stood by as massacres were taking place. Kayibanda became president at independence in 1962, and ruled the country until he was overthrown in a military coup on 5 July 1973 led by army Chief Juvenal Habyarimana (UN Security Council Report: 2002).

Under president Habyarimana, who ruled as a dictator until his death in a plane crash on the eve of the genocide on 6 April 1994, a new factor was added to ethnic identity construction and mobilization as second root cause of the genocide. This was the backlash of authoritarian rulers against the democracy movement, or violence against democracy. In the early 1990s, as the people of Africa were rising against one-party or military rule to demand the restoration of the democratic rights and institutions they had gained at independence. In Rwanda, the power behind the throne was in the hands of a small group of people known as the Akazu, which was made up of
Madame Agathe Habyarimana, the president’s wife, her three brothers, several colonels, and leaders of the northwestern business mafia. As strong advocates of Hutu power, they were opposed to the Arusha process and determined to undermined the peace accords between the regime and the pre dominantly Tutsi Rwandese patriotic front RPF. The third root cause of the genocide is the lessons that the Hutu of Rwanda drew from the political situation in neighbouriong Burundi, where Tutsi minority rule had already resulted in genocide of the Hutu in 1972. Faced with the possibility of the RPF and its military organization becoming part of the government, they could not be reassured by what took place in october1993 in Bujumbura. There, Melchior Ndadaye, the first democratically elected president of Burundi and a Hutu, was killed after 100 days in office. He was assassinated by Tutsi military officers, who controlled the Burundian army. Moreover, since the perpetrators of this crime were never brought to justice and punished, Ndadaye’s assassination reinforced the reality of impunity in the entire region, as it sent yet another clear signal to mischief-makers that they can get away with murder. This was a double stimulant for the Akazu. On the one hand, they were reinforced in their faith in the self-fulfilling prophecy that you cannot trust the Tutsi. On the other, they were comforted in their belief in impunity. Since both Rwanda and Burundi have a similar ethnic make-up major developments in one country are likely to have an impact on the other (UN Security Council Report: 2002).

The fourth and last major root cause of the genocide was the deteriorating social and economic conditions. With falling world prices for coffee, the country’s main export commodity, and growing demographic pressure on the land, the economic situation in Rwanda could no longer sustain population of 7 million on a total surface of 26,000 sq km. More importantly, it had created a great deal of discontent and unrest among young men, who in their majority, could no longer hope of fulfilling their educational aspirations, nor find the steady jobs or farming land they needed to establish themselves and thus qualify for matrimony ( UN Security Council Report:2002). Unemployed school leavers without much hope for the future, these young men constituted a fertile recruiting ground for ethnic mobilization into the politico-military movements, the Tutsi into the Rwandese patriotic army RPA of the RPF, and more numerous Hutu into the interahamwe militia. Regional and international contexts for
understanding ethnic conflict—led—genocide—further-led displacement—its repercussions and long-term effects in the great lake region. With respect to regional context, first, there is the support that president Mobutu sere seko of Zaire gave to Habyarimana, including sending his elite troops to help the Rwandan president resist the RPF invasion of the country in 1990. Belgium and France had also intervened on this occasion on Habyarimana’s side, but it was France as the regional power in central Africa that went all the way to prop up the Hutu power regime, including training members of its extremist militia. It was therefore not surprising that France should once again decide to intervene in June 1994 through the UN-approved operation turquoise, not to end the genocide, as the regime of president francois mitterrand wanted the world to think., but to rescue its erstwhile allies, who were allowed to move into the Zaire/Congo with all the weapon at their disposal. Thus, officers and soldiers of the former forces armies Rwandese (FAR) and the interahamwe could regroup on Congolese soil to stage raids into Rwanda against the newly establish RPF regime.

Today under the common grouping of the forces democratiques pour la liberation du Rwanda (FDLR), these two groups continue to threaten state security in Rwanda from their bases in the Congo. This situation has given rise to Rwanda’s claim of legitimate defense in invading the Congo to destroy the “negative forces” of the ex-FAR and interahamwe, a claim that has also been used to cover up the more sinister intents of partition and plunder (UN Security Council Report: 2002). With respect to the international context, the most relevant factor in terms of the repercussions of the genocide in the region since 1994 is the failure of the international community in general, and the united nations in particular, to prevent the genocide or to stop it once it had begun. By now everyone certainly knows about the famous fax from general Romeo Dallaire, the UN force commander in Rwanda, in which he sought permission from his superiors at UN headquarters in New York to destroy the arms caches of the Hutu extremists before the genocide. The permission was denied on the ground that this was not part of the mandate of the United Nations assistance mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR). When the genocide started, the United States government did its best to prevent the UN Security Council from declaring the killings a genocide, as this would
have legally required the international community to act. Instead of increasing the UN military presence in Rwanda and use it to stop the genocide, UN secretary general Boutros Boutros-Ghali was actually compelled to reduce the number of troops in the already small force of 2,800 blue helmets. Years later, President William Clinton would atone for this sin in Kigali. His mea culpa exemplifier the guilt feeling of the entire international community vis-à-vis the Tutsi-dominated regime in Rwanda, the major implications for the region being that the RPF regime is allowed to get away with murder because of the world’s failure to stop the 1994 genocide. The RPF slaughtered tens of thousands of civilians in the course of defeating the FAR and interahamwe in Rwanda, and went on to kill many more old men, women and children, both Rwandan and Congolese, in its pursuit of Hutu refugees across the vast expanse of the equatorial forest in the Congo basin (UN Security Council Report:2002).

**Different Theoretical Interpretation of Ethnicity in Rwandan Context**

**Interpretation of Primordialist Approach of Ethnicity in Rwandan Context**

Primordialists believe that ethnicity is a bond given by nature. The human need for communities of interaction and meaning based on something other than rational and utilitarian interests. The first approach to ethnicity is commonly termed the “primordialist” approach in that it centers on the assertion that certain primitive (or basic) sociological groupings exist in a society. Such primitive groupings exist a priori, meaning that they are natural units that derive their cohesion from some inherent biological, cultural, or racial traits which then become instruments of social differentiation (Siniša Malešević. 2004). The Primordialist school asserts that human societies are in effect conglomerations of “tribes” (Harold Isaacs: 1975:39). When Europeans first explored the region around the Great Lakes of Chad that has since becomes Rwanda, they found three tribes living in the region, coexisting in a complex social order: the Tutsi, Hutu and Twa.

In pre-colonial Rwanda has three commonly recognized ethnic groups- Hutu, Tutsi and Twa. Hutu comprised 84-90 percent of Rwanda’s population before the genocide,
Tutsis were 9-15 percent, and Twa were 1 percent. Hutu were farmers of low social status, while Tutsi were pastoralist of higher social status. The Hutu majority of about 85% of the population were stocky, strong farmers of Bantu origin. The Hutu are a mostly Roman Catholic and Protestant, French-and-Bantu-dialect-speaking people numbering more than 11 million and populating Rwanda, Burundi, and portions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Siniša Malešević. 2004). The Hutu arrived in the region before the Tutsis in the 11th century from Chad. While Hutu share much in common with the Tutsis, they are each distinct from the third major ethnic group in the region and the longest inhabitants of the area, the Twa pygmies. The shorter Hutu people were earlier inhabitants of the area now known as Rwanda and Burundi. They spoke a Bantu language, related to the others still known as Bantu, spoken over about two thirds of Africa south of the Sahara and by about two-thirds of the people groups. The Bantu people were farmers and fishers, though they also kept the Zebu cattle popular all over Africa, and common among the Bantu peoples. The Twa were a marginalized minority of 1% of the population: a tribe of pygmies, dwelling in the forests as hunters and gatherers. Twa pygmies, possibly descendants of Khoisan peoples who originally spoke a "click language" related to the Bushman languages of Southern Africa. They are thought to be even earlier inhabitants of the area, before even the Bantu settled in the lakes region. The Twa all now speak a form of the same Bantu language. The indigenous people of Rwanda are the diminutive Twa, forest based hunter-gatherers, one of a group of African peoples collectively known under the term pygmy. The Twa were forced to retreat deeper into the forests as the Hutu developed small-scale, clan-based agricultural communities. The Tutsis (14%) are traditionally a pastoral people who by some accounts arrived in the area in the 15th century. Until 1959, they formed the dominant caste under a feudal system based on cattle holding. Tutsi cattle breeders began arriving in the area from the Horn of Africa in the 15th century and gradually subjugated the Hutu inhabitants. The Tutsis established a monarchy headed by a mwami (king) and a feudal hierarchy of Tutsi nobles. A Tutsi monarch ruled, distributing land and political authority through hereditary chiefs whose power was manifest in their land and cattle ownership (Siniša Malešević: 2004). Most of these chiefs were Tutsis. The land was farmed under an imposed system of patronage under which Tutsi chiefs demanded manual labor in
return for the rights of Hutus to occupy their land. This system left Hutus with the status of serfs. Additionally, when Rwanda conquered the peoples on its borders, their ethnic identities were cast aside and they were simply labeled “Hutu”. Therefore, “Hutu” became an identity that was not necessarily ethnic, but rather just associated with subjugation (Siniša Malešević: 2004).

**Interpretation of Epiphenomenalist Approach of Ethnicity in Rwandan Context**

Ethnic conflict is no more than hidden class conflict. The Marx and Neo-Marxist explanation would focus on the colonial strategy of divide and rule pursued by both German and Belgian colonizers, to amplify and articulate class differences masked as ethnic differences between the ‘proletarian’ Hutu and ‘bourgeois’ Tutsi. The roots of the conflict would also found in the downfall of the Rwandan economy during the 1980s as a reflection of world-wide capitalist recession. It would also focus on the class dimension of recruiting Hutu militia (interahamwe) among the lumpenproletariat Hutu who were to become the main perpetuators of genocide over Tutsi and moderate Hutu (Siniša Malešević: 2004).

**Interpretation of Ascriptive Approach of Ethnicity in Rwandan Context**

In Rwanda and Burundi the Tutsis have maintained their dominance over the centuries, even though they are in the minority. Though the language and culture of the Hutus and Tutsis merged into one, the Tutsis continued to maintain their separate autocratic identity, much like the Anglo-Norman nobility in Britain. It was with the arrival of Europeans that ethnicity became paramount. Looking to control the region, first the Germans (following the Berlin Conference) and then the Belgians (who took control as a League of Nations mandate) imposed control through surrogates from the African community. Identifying the Tutsi as the effective elite of the region, administrative positions were allocated accordingly. The Hutu majorities were in servant positions, but there were also Hutu in the ruling class. A person’s position depended on the social class of an individual, not ethnicity. More cattle meant more
power, and Tutsi had more, Hutu had less. From the seventeenth to the twentieth century Hutu suffered. The history of Rwanda in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was characterized by an inter-ethnic conflict as Tutsi sought to capture power from the Hutu kings. History reports that the Hutu kingdoms were conquered. So, there was an ethnic conflict before the Belgians arrived (Prunier, Gerard: 1995:22). A whole mythos developed, partially based on oral tradition, and partially on political expediency. The Tutsi were considered to be a noble people, brought to the region by their founder Gihanga, and who quickly dominated the Hutu farmers. Status was aligned with the ownership of cattle: to work the land was of lesser status. The hunter-gatherer Twa continued to be marginalized. By the time Rwanda achieved independence, the distinction between Tutsi, as ruling elite, and Hutu, as agrarian workers, was deeply ingrained in the population, and was a cause of great unrest amongst the Hutu majority.

In Neo-Weberian theory, Randall Colloins talks about the secret of ethnicity lies in the nature of the state and the geo-political relations among states. Collins focuses on ethnic group mobilization which is, in his view, moulded for the most part by the policies as well as the reputation of the state in the wider geo-political environment. An ethnic group is not merely, or even primarily, a community that shares a common culture and identity. Its identity is constituted by dividing lines, by contrast with others (Rex, J.:1986). The neo-Weberian approach would look at the role of geo-political factors in a macro-historical context. The sheer discrepancy of status position between Hutu and Tutsis has its roots in feudal arrangements between a Tutsi aristocracy and Hutu farmers, whereby Tutsi nobility would loan their cattle and land to Hutus in exchange for their unconditional services (a contract known as ubuhake), and this sets the historical terrain for inter-ethnic status struggle (Siniša Malešević:2004).

The subjugation of Tutsi under the post-colonial regime of Habyarimana, when half a million were exiled, together with the geo-political prestige of Hutu in those period intensified inter-group animosities. These enmities were to culminate in the development of the Tutsi-controlled Rwandan patriotic front (RPF) in Uganda, which
organized exiles into a powerful military force that was able to invade parts of Rwanda in 1992 and humiliate Habyarimina’s forces. With this de facto military defeat and hence the loss of geo-political prestige of the Hutu, Habyarimana’s regime lost its support base, and Hutu anger at status degradation was channeled by an extremist leadership into the mobilization of the masses for genocide against the Tutsis. (Prunier: 1995:22). By referring to dominant patterns of monopolistic social closure of Tutsi over Hutu during the pre-colonial and most of the colonial period, as well as a reversal of the situation in the post-colonial period when Hutu used this mechanism to establish their control. This pattern is again evident after the genocide, when the RPF captured Kigali and the rest of the country in July 1994 and re-established hegemony of Tutsis over Hutus (Siniša Malešević :2004)

Interpretation of Instrumentalist Approach of Ethnicity in Rwandan Context

Ethnicity, based on people's "historical" and "symbolic" memory, is something created and used and exploited by leaders and others in the pragmatic pursuit of their own interests. This theory would point to divergent perceptions of inter-group reality between the two groups. The changing nature of the group position of Tutsi vis-a-vis Hutu, and especially the in-group and out-group perception of this change, affects their mutual relations. That fact that Belgian colonizers initially privileged the Tutsi aristocracy and later, when Tutsi became the leaders of the anti-colonial struggle for independence, they switched support to Hutu (which was reflected in the Hutu subordination of Tutsi at the national level), indicates the source of changing perceptions. The (historically) frequent changes of collective definitions of the group situation accelerated group animosities, which eventually led to genocide. The assassination of Rwandan president Habyarimana in April 1994 was a symbolic and spectacular event that delegitimized alternative definitions of the situation among Hutu (i.e., moderate and conciliatory views). Many Hutu came to perceive Tutsis as ‘dangerous and bloodthirsty cockroaches’; a view that become crystallized as genocidal gestalt (Prunier, Gerard: 1995:22). Elite theory would concentrate more on
the motives and behaviour of Hutu power holders. Rwanda was one of the most centralized states in the world and the orders for systematic killings came directly from the very top of government, in particular the minister of defence Theoneste Bagosora and the wife of assassinated president Habyarimana, Agathe Habyarimana, pointing to a decisive role played by elites. The elite theorists would stress that the entire process of ethnic group mobilization was conceived, initiated and organized at the top of the social pyramid, providing the means such as weapons, transport and technical support as well as the ideological support by broadcasting extreme propaganda messages of hatred through the government-controlled radio station. this radio station, which was the only media able to reach a majority of the population, was also decisive in encouraging Tutsi civilians to gather at stadiums, churches and schools, supposedly safe havens, were they were systematically exterminated with machine-guns and bombs. The notion of manipulation is an inherent component of the instrumentalist school of thought.

This theoretical approach asserts that ethnic identities are defined within the political process and are manipulated by political and ethnic elites. As a means to collective ends, it is used “defensively to thwart the ambitions of others or offensively to achieve an end of one’s own… ethnicity is primarily a label or set of symbolic ties that is used for political advantage – much like interest group membership or political party affiliation.” Placed within a larger process of conflict escalation the instrumentalist approach makes it possible to draw parallels between conflicts with similar societal cleavages. The instrumentalist school focuses on elite manipulation of ethnic identities: to “create greater internal cohesion and to press more effectively ethnic demands against rival groups, ethnic and nationalist elites increasingly stress the variety of ways in which the members of the group are similar to each other and collectively different from others.” Others address the importance of fear, identifying a “fear of the future” syndrome that is the stimulus for ethnic mobilization and almost inevitably, conflict. This approach argues that such fears of the future tend to arise in weak or failed states where there is a fear of assimilation or annihilation. Both ethnic groups had within them an elite ethnic leadership that became militarised and politicised. The RPF’s leadership in ending the genocide and its post-genocide
governance has instilled in the minds of the Tutsis in and outside of Rwanda that their survival is only possible with strong, ethnocentric leadership. Conversely, the political elite of the Hutu radicals, known as the “Akazu”, was essential to the planning of the genocide, creating the Hutu Interahamwe militia, and distributing hate propaganda via the radio (Siniša Malešević :2004)

**Interpretation of Constructivist Approach of Ethnicity in Rwandan Context**

Ethnic identity is not something people "possess" but something they "construct" in specific social and historical contexts to further their own interests. It is therefore fluid and subjective. In the middle of the 19th century, Hutu and Tutsi identities had relatively little influence social lives and self concepts of Hutu and Tutsis. Kinship and residential bonds were much more significant. By time, late in the 20th century, certain changes, the centralization of Rwandan society under Rwabugiri, the rigidification of ethnic boundaries under the German and Belgian colonizers, and the more recent history of inter-group conflict- had made these identities very relevant indeed. They had become matters of life and death for huge portions of the Rwandan population. Proponent of this account points to Rwanda as an example since the Hutu/Tutsi distinction was codified by the Belgian colonial power in the 1930’s on the basis of cattle ownership, physical measurements and church records. Identity cards were issued on this basis and these documents played a key role in the genocide of 1994 in Rwanda. Anti-foundationalist would focus on ambiguities in Hutu/ Tutsi identities and how the meta-narratives of modernity and enlightenment induced by European colonizers have created a situation where differences is structured, codified and institutionalized. It was European colonialism, with its discourses of progress and civilization that introduced and articulated group diversities as ontological differences. As the historical record demonstrates, there was always ambiguity between Hutu /Tutsi identities. Not only do they all speak the same language of kinyarwanda and share many customs, but there were also never clear cut and definite identities, as poorer Tutsis would often become Hutus and vice versa. The European narratives of modernity often responsible for a rationalistic urge to transcend ambiguity, to center, institutionalize and codify identities. Hence the Rwandan
genocide has its roots in an attempt to impose order on difference (conceptualized as chaos). Just as in the case of the Nazi-driven holocaust, this genocide was planned and executed from the centre of the modern state; it relied on the means of modernity such as mass media, weapons, delegation of tasks and so on. As a result 800,000 people were systematically exterminated in less than three months. The gender and psychoanalytical dimensions are also clearly visible, with patriarchal targeting of women for rape and men for extermination, as well as the projection of one's pain onto the other. The anger with oneself and low self-esteem on the other hand, and lack of jouissance attributed to Tutsis on the other, on the part of the Hutu militia lead them to torture, humiliate and eventually annihilate the other. The history of colonialism in Rwanda also reveals that, although the constructivist framework is useful, because German and Belgian colonists played important roles in socially constructing the Hutu and Tutsi identities; this theory does not explain how the identities were used as a catalyst for genocide as the theory of instrumentalism is able to explain. The instrumentalist framework is best able to account for the role of ethnic identification in the Rwanda genocide, as it includes the best explanation of ethnic mobilization. In the case of Rwanda, genocide was a means to material, political, and social gains, and ethnic identities were manipulated and exploited to create a conflict situation. The Rwanda genocide was, to a large degree, the result of elite manipulation; however, it was also a popular movement and intimate affair involving an incredibly large portion of the population. Identifying ethnicity as a social phenomenon and characterising the pre-genocide conditions as a “pathological social system” has great explanatory power in the case of Rwanda. For ethnic elites to be successful in “constructing” opposing ethnic identities they required tools to do so. Such tools were apparent in the discourse of the genocide that played upon primordial references of ancient hatreds, colonial domination and the assumptions on both sides that the mere existence of each group threatened the other. The media was an outlet for this discourse that permeated all levels of society and all regions of the country. The elites had a complex web of social cleavages in Rwandan society to manipulate: these predominantly included regions, gender, socio-economic and political status. The socio-economic differences between Hutus and Tutsis were partly based on status and material issues (Siniša Malešević: 2004).
However, it had profound social implications in terms of lifestyle and political status. The genocide can be contextualized as a conflict originated by new Hutu elites motivated by the fearful collective memory of a dominating Tutsi class from the pre-colonial and colonial era. On the one hand, it was the “politicalized intellectuals who are at the origin of the massacres, and not the peasant masses.” On the other hand, the deepest levels of socio-economic cleavages pitted landless individuals against their neighbours, making the genocide extremely “intimate” and personal (Siniša Malešević: 2004).

The Hutus elites were adept at identifying their desired targets. The “authorities redirected the hatred and potential violence of the poor – especially of angry desperate young Hutu men – away from the rich and onto the Tutsi, the latter wrongly portrayed as invariably aristocratic and privileged.” The genocide initially targeted the elite – Tutsi politicians, lawyers, judges, clergy, etc – then spread to the general masses including moderate Hutus. Regional differences are often ignored as a source of cleavage and north-south differences among Hutus characterised differences in the extent of violence. The colonial administration allowed the Tutsis to expand their rule into the northern parts of Rwanda. The northern Hutus separated themselves from the Hutus of the south and despised them for sharing a common culture and even kinship with the Tutsi. Prior to the genocide, President Habyarimana who was from the northeast, reversed the southern favoured policies of his predecessor. An increase in aid from France meant that finances were being spent disproportionately in the northeast. Everything from political status, to economic development to parts of the university were transferred north in the decades prior to the genocide. A more radical clique grew around Habyarimana and they reacted against his more moderate policies to the Tutsis in the late 1980s and 1990s. The radical central elite (Akazu) and its Interahamwe paramilitary group sought to target moderate Hutus in the southern districts. The distribution in genocidal violence demonstrates a remarkable divide between northern and southern Hutu (Siniša Malešević: 2004).

Many attempt to attribute the scale of participation in the violence to material-based interests and rational calculations. Indeed many Hutu participants were swayed into
killing based on the promise of greater status and material wealth from looting, political standing and seizure of land. However, to attribute the genocide to a “resource crunch” or simple criminal behaviour ignores the intricacy of what constructivists identify as a pathological social system. As Mamdani argues, the violence was clearly political and not criminal or class oriented: “the violence did not pit the poor against the rich. If anything, it divided the poor – and the rich – into antagonist groups: Hutu against Tutsi.”

The post-genocide social system in Rwanda is experiencing of a government led policy of ethnic de-construction. The aforementioned policy of “Rwandaness” suggests that many, at least in the Tutsi dominated government, believe that the fundamental social differences are based on ethnic identity. A quick and easy denunciation of these identities at the level of national policy does seem to be filtering to the communal level. In post-genocide Rwandan society, religion is now a component of the social system that can be used as a force for change instead of an imposition of tradition and violence. Religion can change and redefine ethnic group boundaries. Both in context of the genocide and post-genocide society, is exclusive of Rwandans but inclusive of both Hutus and Tutsis (Siniša Malešević: 2004).

**Concluding Observations**

This chapter successfully focuses on the applicability of different approaches for Primordialist approach, Epiphenomenalist approach, Ascriptive approach, Instrumentalist approach and Constructivist approach in Rwandan context. An ethnic culture encompasses values, traditions and practices, but crucially it also gives a people a common identity and sense of distinctiveness, usually by focusing on their origins and descent, but sometimes other factors also plays an important role. Hence one cannot comprehend the reality by simply focusing on the ethnic situation in Rwanda; one has to take account of whole range of factors which may not appear to be relevant at the first instance while seeking to grasp perhaps the most volatile African polity. In other words, since Rwanda has become probably the most complex African territory, it is incumbent on the analysts not to lose sight of both domestic circumstances and the exogenous influences that seem to have further complicated
ethnic equations for obvious reasons. One has to be extremely careful while striving to analyze the complex ethnicity in Rwanda because a simplistic reading of the situation will surely lead to a truncated understanding and ambiguous interpretation of socio-economic circumstances which are partly inherited, but largely created for reasons connected with the consolidation of a globalizing world. Ethnic division, differentiation and rivalry have been the dominant features of Rwandan society since independence in 1962. Rwanda in particular is perhaps illustrative of a historical trend in human civilization showing that ethnic separation may not always be a triggering factor; what is most critical is the circumstances in which ‘the natural differences’ among various ethnic groups occupying same socio-political geographical space are politically nurtured to fulfill the agenda-specific goals of exclusion. In order to grasp the historical processes leading to ethnic-antagonism in Rwanda, this chapter is a modest attempt to provide a contextual interpretation of the peculiar socio-economic and political circumstances responsible (or otherwise) for strife in an African polity by drawing on the major theoretical inputs relating to ethnicity.
References


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