DEVELOPMENT STUDIES – PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

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Contents

The Evolution of Ethnicity Theory: Intersectionality, Geopolitics and Development

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Abstract Ethnicity has become prominent in popular and scholarly thinking over the last 50 years. In the late 1960s a few key works stimulated the growth of a complex body of literature, now defined by four main theoretical approaches. New insights are also emerging. Chief among these is the importance of integrating intersectionality into ethnicity theory. The Institute of Development Studies (IDS) has also made important contributions to this literature and its application to development studies.

This article identifies three new frontiers in the study of ethnicity. First, theoretical effort is required to unpack how ethnicity intersects with other forms of identity. Second, as demonstrated by IDS' contributions, further research is required on the impacts of ethnicity upon development and vice versa. And, finally, the geopolitical landscape emerging since 9/11 has stimulated major shifts in conceptions of ethnicity. These shifts and the resulting new framings of identity (ethnic and otherwise) beg investigation.

1 Introduction

Ethnicity is a hotly disputed concept. Since it emerged as an important form of collective identity in the 1960s, it has been appropriated by all kinds of people for all kinds of purposes. From political mobilisation that uses the necessity of ethnic homogeneity as the basis for expelling populations of different racial backgrounds, to the conflation of ethnicity with religion (as when people assume Muslims are an ethnic category), and the reduction of complex geostrategic and historic conflicts to 'ethnic strife'.

Thinking on ethnicity continues to be deeply shaped by and shape geopolitics. The events of 9/11 have ushered in new framings of identity and emergent patterns of sociopolitical organisation. Sectarian violence is witnessed in Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. The rise of the so-called Islamic State has furthered anti-Arab (and anti-Islamic) sentiment. The large-scale displacements of refugees across West

Asia, the Middle East and into Europe have brought large numbers of people with different ethnicities, religions and nationalities into close proximity. Right-wing political parties in Europe and North America are resurgent, organising around imagined common histories and ethnic identities that demonise the other.

Ethnicity is also hotly debated in academia. Two key works published in the late 1960s challenged conventional academic thought regarding ethnic identity. This triggered the growth of a large and complex body of theory marked by diverging opinion. Opposing theoretical standpoints frame the literature, numerous debates punctuate it, and critiques of ethnicity are abundant. New insights, emerging from postmodernist critiques, are set to define new frontiers of research on ethnicity. Chief among these insights is the growing importance of intersectionality.

Section 2 of this article summarises this scholarly thinking on ethnicity. Section 3 is more specific in its analysis and investigates the contributions that the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) has made to ethnicity theory and its application in the field of development studies. Drawing on the preceding analysis, the final section of the article suggests new frontiers of research.

2 The evolution of ethnicity theory:[1] ethnic identity and intersectionality

There are four main theoretical approaches that underpin the study of ethnicity. These are primordialism, instrumentalism, materialism and constructionism. The evolution of these approaches is closely linked to the development of theories underpinning thought in the social sciences: from cultural evolutionism, through structural functionalism, to conflict theories, and postmodernism (Wan and Vanderwerf 2009). A number of key debates run through these four areas of the literature. They include, among others, how to integrate the social and psychological dimensions of ethnicity, the importance attached to the cultural 'content' of ethnic identity, and the relationship between the state and ethnicity.

2.1 The primordialist approach to ethnicity

Up until the 1970s, and in some cases even later, primordialist accounts of ethnicity were common. Classic primordialist accounts generally view ethnic identity as innate, fixed and permanent. They claim each individual is born into an ethnic group or 'tribe' – the term commonly used up until the 1970s – perceived as a culturally defined unit. This led to tribes and later ethnic groups being classified by aspects of their material culture in addition to biological and territorial features. Primordialist accounts imply that ethnic identity serves a fundamental human need for belonging and meaning.

The primordial approach also suggests – in what is more commonly known as the 'ancient hatreds' argument – that the fundamental cultural differences and divergent values between ethnic groups inevitably results in a 'clash of cultures' and the emergence of ethnic violence.

2.2 The instrumentalist approach to ethnicity

Two main contributions initiated the challenge to the classic primordialist approach. In his 1969 seminal essay, Barth (1998) challenged the primordialist belief that ethnic groups were distinct bounded units with innate cultural characteristics. Rather than focusing on the cultural 'content' of ethnic groups he adopted a subjectivist standpoint, suggesting that individuals selectively emphasise those forms of cultural differentiation that are important to them. He contends that the maintenance of ethnic boundaries occurs through interaction of 'us' and 'them' across a group boundary. Moreover, the cultural features that are drawn upon in this interaction are not fixed; they are situationally defined. In this way Barth emphasised the relational, interactional and situational nature of ethnicity.

The second group of contributors to challenge primordialist theories were members of the 'Manchester School'. These anthropologists analysed the relationship between black tribes and white colonialists in the African Copperbelt from the 1950s to the late 1970s. A key study from the Manchester School was Abner Cohen's (1969) thesis on the instrumentality of ethnic affiliation. Cohen's research on the Hausa and Yoruba tribes in Nigeria suggested that the principal function of ethnicity was informal political organisation. He argued that political elites in some cases create but also use and exploit 'primordial' symbols to gain the allegiance of potential followers.

Cohen's analysis also laid the foundation for instrumentalist contributions to the study of ethnic conflict. They posit that elites agitate ethnic tensions and, in some cases, intentionally provoke ethnic violence as a method to seize power, protect their existing authority, or defend against group threats (Fearon and Laitin 2000; Kaufmann 2005). These claims began a long running debate in the literature regarding the ways that the ethnic allegiance of the masses can be exploited, often for political ends, by elites.

The scholarly works of Barth and the Manchester School brought about a fundamental shift in the theoretical foundation of anthropology. Their research was central to critiques of structural functionalism, driving a shift in anthropology from the analysis of tribe as a unit of social *structure* to ethnicity as a process of social *organisation* (Jenkins 2008).

This was, however, not the only shift taking place in anthropology throughout the 1960s. Anthropology also passed through an intense phase of self-criticism following a growing awareness of its complicity in aiding and benefiting from colonialism (Davies 2008). Ethnographers had, for example, contributed to the reification of tribes in colonial states. This critique led to a preoccupation with reflexivity in anthropology, but also the emergence of a trend of critical reflection to avoid the reification of ethnic groups in the anthropological literature (*ibid.*).

Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan (1975) also made a significant contribution to the instrumentalist approach of ethnicity. They framed

their discussion of ethnicity in relation to the state. Crucially, Glazer and Moynihan argue that ethnicity has a 'strategic efficacy' in making claims upon the modern state. They claim that this is the result of state officials appeasing blocs of voters, who mobilise around constitutional commitments to 'collective rights'.

2.3 The materialist approach to ethnicity

Materialist approaches to ethnicity are relatively underdeveloped in the literature. 'Crude' Marxist theories, including the work of Michael Hechter (1978), view ethnicity as an epiphenomenon, or a result, of class relations. These crude Marxist theories also suggest that violence between ethnically aligned groups is the result of economic inequalities and elite exploitation.

The claims of crude Marxists received heavy empirical criticism from a wide range of scholars. It is now generally acknowledged that ethnicity is not a product of class relations and that there is no one-to-one relationship between the two categories (Eriksen 2002).

2.4 The constructionist approach to ethnicity

At the heart of the constructionist approach, as with its instrumentalist predecessor, is the belief that ethnicity is socially constructed. However, unlike the earlier instrumentalist conception, ethnicity is 'constructed', and done so continuously through social interaction, by both elites and ordinary people. The constructionist approach initiated a shift of focus in the literature, from what ethnicity is to how it is constructed.

Constructionist theory can largely be divided into three subsets of literature based upon the manner in which the construction of ethnicity is characterised.[2] They are differentiated based upon whether individuals, discursive formations or broad structural forces are the chief agent in the construction of ethnicity.

Individuals as agents of social construction: The first subset of constructionist literature is mainly based on an expansion of earlier theories regarding the instrumental approach to ethnicity. Yet this newer strand of theory recognises the agency of ordinary people in addition to that of elites. With regard to the role of ordinary people, this body of literature sees ethnicity created and recreated through the everyday actions of individuals, who perceiving themselves as associated with a certain ethnic identity act to confirm, contest or propagate that identity (Fearon and Laitin 2000).

In discussions of ethnic conflict, the majority of constructionist literature focuses on the role of individuals – primarily of elites but also of ordinary people – in instigating violence. Constructionist theories, building on instrumentalist thought, account for the way ordinary individuals contribute to ethnic conflict. It is suggested that marginalised members of ethnic groups contest existing ethnic identities, thereby constructing new ones. This, in turn, can result in retaliatory violence from those elites who benefited from the previous form of ethnic identity (*ibid*.). Alternatively, marginal ethnic group members may

employ violence aimed at other ethnic groups. This is carried out to gain increasing acceptance from established members of their own ethnic group (*ibid.*).

Discursive formations as agents of social construction: The second set of constructionist theory states that discursive formations, or cultural systems, intrinsically result in the construction of ethnic difference. Yet, such arguments have received criticism. They border on primordialism, as they portray culture as an unchanging force central to the construction of ethnicity (*ibid.*).

With regard to ethnic conflict, this body of constructionist literature focuses on the capacity of discourse to predispose members of one ethnic group to view members of another as natural targets of violence. While such theories of ethnicity are generally critiqued for adopting a primordialist approach, the construction-by-discourse view of ethnic conflict is widely critiqued for not being able to account for the wide variety in, and variance of, ethnic violence across the globe (*ibid.*).

Broad structural forces as agents of social construction: The final subgroup of constructionist theory, which is by far the largest, is preoccupied with the role of broad social, political and economic forces in the construction of ethnicity. Many of the major works linked to this subset of constructionist literature are preoccupied with processes of ethnogenesis, or the process leading to the emergence of ethnicity. Ethnogenesis is often linked to colonialism, globalisation, modernity, nationalism and the formation of the 'nation state' (Eriksen 2002).

When theorising ethnic conflict, this subgroup of constructionist literature argues that broad structural forces, for example, modernisation can lead to ethnic conflict. Although lacking a general explanation of how ethnic conflict breaks out, constructionist literature argues that modernisation leads to 'converging aspirations', thereby explaining why ethnic violence occurs.

2.5 Postmodern critiques of ethnicity

A number of critiques have been levelled at ethnicity theory since the rise of postmodernism in the 1980s. These critiques are of two main types. On the one hand, there are those scholars who call for a 'rethinking' of ethnicity (Jenkins 2008). Greater conceptual and analytical clarity is called for. On the other hand, some scholars argue for the outright abandonment of ethnicity (Carter and Fenton 2009). Critics point out how the tendency to use ethnicity as a catch-all concept for many varieties of group identity results in a loss of analytical depth. Ethnicity, it is argued, is therefore everything and nothing.

These critiques stem from the all-embracing usage of ethnicity in social analysis, which has led to what a number of scholars argue is an over-ethnicised interpretation of social reality (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992). In part, this critical perspective on ethnicity has emerged as postmodernist thought has complicated the conceptualisation of identity.

A decentring of identity has been witnessed in the social sciences, with the idea of identity being innate and persistent being systematically challenged. Contemporary studies of identity are increasingly pointing to its multi-faceted and fragmented nature (Wetherell 2010).

One body of scholarship that is being taken up to respond to this critique is the literature on intersectionality. Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) is credited with conceiving of the concept. Intersectionality emerged from critical race theory, drawn from the perspective of non-White feminist critiques framed by Afro-Americans in the United States dating back to the 1970s (Combahee River Collective 1977). At its core, intersectionality theory 'stresses that systems of power (e.g. race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, age, country of origin, citizenship status) cannot be understood in isolation from one another' (Collins and Chepp 2013: 61). Intersectionality, therefore, calls for a profound shift in the scope of analysis regarding ethnicity: a shift from the study of ethnic identity to the study of identities and their interrelationship.

3 IDS' contribution: ethnic identity and development

The preceding section provided a general overview of the large and complex literature on ethnicity theory. The following section is more specific. It locates the contributions made by IDS to research on ethnicity theory and its application to the field of development studies.

IDS' contributions can be categorised under six broad areas of inquiry,[3] including: (1) ethnic identity and development policy; (2) citizenship and ethnicity; (3) ethnicity and violence; (4) health and sexuality issues of indigenous and minority groups; (5) ethnicity and volunteering; and (6) ethnicity, development and interethnic relations.

3.1 Ethnicity and development policy

The work of Bob Baulch, Hung Pham and Barry Reilly (2012) links ethnic identity to development policy. They investigate the gap in per capita expenditures between majority and minority ethnic groups in rural Vietnam. The period under research fell within the Doi Moi, or economic renovation, which resulted in large-scale poverty reduction. Yet, their findings indicate that during this period the real expenditure gap between rural Kinh and Chinese-headed households and those headed by ethnic minorities grew by 14.6 per cent.

The authors attributed this increase to differences in household endowments and, importantly, differences in returns to these endowments. In essence, the article argues that ethnic minorities in Vietnam have not benefited from the Doi Moi economic reform as greatly as the Kinh-Hoa majority, and that these reforms failed to address this growing inequality.

3.2 Citizenship and ethnicity

Three main articles constitute IDS' contributions regarding ethnicity and citizenship. These include an article on the meanings of citizenship in Latin America by Evelina Dagnino (2005), and two articles regarding citizenship in Nigeria by Oga Steve Abah and Jenks Zakari Okwori (2002, 2005).

Dagnino (2005) presents a sweeping analysis that tackles the emergence of citizenship across Latin America. In doing so, she discusses how citizenship has been heavily influenced by identity politics. Black and indigenous movements linked their own identities with the redefinition of citizenship. Dagnino explains that this contributed to the recognition of collective rights relevant to Latin American indigenous groups. The debate this triggered not only affected a redefinition of citizenship but also stimulated important legal changes. The constitutions of Ecuador and Colombia, for example, now recognise their multi-ethnic nature. Likewise, in Brazil constitutional provisions include recognition of indigenous rights.

Abah and Okwori (2002, 2005), on the other hand, analyse the incompatibility between citizenship and ethnic identity in Nigeria. They explain how the notion of citizenship, constitutionally defined by ancestry and place of birth, is often rejected on the grounds that ancestry is traditionally the sole determinant of entitlement. In both articles the authors argue that the legacy of colonialism in Nigeria created a nation with an inherent power imbalance between its Northern and Southern states. They contend that access to resources continues to be based upon ethnic allegiance. As such, ethnic identities tend to be exclusionary and competing, which only further promotes incongruence between citizenship and ethnic identity.

The research of Dagnino (2005) and Abah and Okwori (2002, 2005) talk to the instrumentalist and constructionist nature of ethnicity. They build upon the work of Glazer and Moynihan (1975) and others to highlight the relationship between not only ethnicity and the state, but also citizenship.

3.3 Ethnicity and violence

The range of research produced by IDS on ethnic violence varies widely in its focus. The first piece, from Jean-Pierre Tranchant (2010), uses econometrics to investigate the relationship between fiscal decentralisation, institutions and ethnic violence. Assessing the association between institutions and ethnic conflict, he finds that poor bureaucratic competence directly contributes to ethnic violence. Yet, he also suggests that high bureaucratic competence correlates with ethnic mobilisation.

Arguing, therefore, that steps must be taken to protect ethnic minorities Tranchant then examines the impact of fiscal decentralisation – as such a step – on levels of violence. He finds that fiscal decentralisation is associated with less ethnic violence and reduces ethnic mobilisation among groups that are highly distinct from the majority or economically disadvantaged. While these results would suggest that fiscal decentralisation helps to reduce ethnic violence, the author calls for caution. Decentralisation has varying impacts on majority and minority groups. Tranchant's work speaks to the literature on ethnicity and the state. He not only advances debate on a niche topic, but also furthers understandings of the differential role of the state upon ethnic groups.

A second contribution is that of Lind, Mutahi and Oosterom (2015) in their analysis of Al-Shabaab[4] and political volatility in Kenya. The authors investigate 'external' and 'internal' stresses contributing to violence; the former driven by Somalia's state collapse and conflict spillovers and the latter related to regional and ethnic divisions and heavy-handed security responses targeting Somalis and Muslims. Finding it is, in fact, the interaction of these stresses that is driving violence, Lind *et al.* demonstrate how the authorities have misidentified Kenya's security threat. They explain that while Al-Shabaab does indeed pose a continuing physical threat, they have more importantly exploited regional and ethnic tensions. The continuing externalisation of the threat by the Kenyan security forces has further politicised and deepened these ethnic and regional divisions, which in turn is feeding further violence.

Another critical contribution is provided by Jaideep Gupte (2012), who investigates 'ethnic riots' in India. He argues that studying such riots through an 'intercommunity' or 'interethnic' framing is inadequate, as the analysis does not fully capture the dynamics or impacts of such violence. He identifies five areas in which analysis adopting 'communal' or 'ethnic' frames is lacking and instead posits that analysis of riots should recognise the agency of individuals. This, he contends, would provide a more meaningful frame for the analysis of so-called 'communal' violence in India. Gupte's article is noteworthy for contributing to critiques regarding the over-ethnicised interpretation of social reality.

Lyndsay McLean Hilker's essay (Bagayoko and McLean Hilker 2009) addresses the importance and implications of identity politics with regard to security. She contends that viewing identity politics through either a primordialist or instrumentalist lens fails to capture the complexity of identity-based violence. Both approaches, she argues, negate the value of studying identity politics. Primordialist approaches view ethnic conflict as unavoidable, thereby shifting emphasis toward conflict mitigation. Instrumentalist approaches view ethnic violence as being about competition over resources or power, leading to the assumption that tackling grievances and mediating competing interests is the best course of action. However, McLean Hilker believes that identity politics matter for three main reasons. First, identity provides a powerful vehicle for collective mobilisation (positive or negative). Second, perceptions of inequality influence action. Third, the content of ethnic narratives and symbols are important to understand.

3.4 Health and sexuality issues of indigenous and minority groups

Three main contributions define IDS' research pertaining to health and sexuality issues of indigenous and minority groups. The first is that of Linda Waldman (2005), in which she analyses citizen mobilisation in relation to asbestos disease and litigation. Waldman explores the divergent interpretations surrounding a litigation case. The resolution of the case against Cape plc, a company mining asbestos in South Africa, was commonly seen as a success. The ruling was made in favour of the claimants. However, the claimants from Griquatown did not consider the outcome as positive.

Waldman argues that this difference in perspective cannot be captured by theories of social mobilisation or millenarian movements alone. Instead, a linkage between these theories based on an interpretation of ethnic identity is required. In this regard, Waldman explains that the Griqua identity – with its ambiguous nature and its emphasis on religious retribution and restrictive notions of private property – ultimately shaped the negative interpretation of the case.

The second set of contributions includes two special issue journals edited by Pauline Oosterhoff and colleagues (Oosterhoff *et al.* 2011, 2013). Oosterhoff *et al.* (2011) draw together a selection of articles investigating sexual and reproductive norms and behaviours in minority ethnic groups in Southeast Asia and Bhutan. Two main findings are drawn from the collected articles. The first relates to the side effects of modernisation policies in the region. The editors find that following the implementation of family planning, health and education programmes, large health inequalities between majority and minority ethnic groups have emerged. Moreover, in a number of countries these modernisation programmes promote the spread of dominant cultural practices among minority ethnic groups. Minority cultures are often misunderstood and viewed – drawing on colonial and contemporary stereotypes – as 'backward' and 'uncivilised'.

The second key finding includes the impacts of migration on expanding sexual networks. The editors explain that, in countries such as Vietnam and Indonesia, governments supported the resettlement of minority ethnic groups to remote areas. This resulted in the expansion of sexual networks, resulting in changing patterns of sexual behaviour and increasing vulnerability to HIV and other diseases for minority ethnic groups.

The second special issue journal by Oosterhoff *et al.* (2013), focuses on sexual and reproductive health challenges among indigenous and minority peoples in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The editors, again, note two main themes emerging from the collected articles. First, is the need to transform monocultural health systems. Such systems typically exacerbate misunderstandings and hostility with indigenous and minority groups and are often unable to address cultural sensitivities regarding sexuality. Second, is the impact of normative nationalist policies upon ethnic minority groups. New public health programmes promote gender norms held by the dominant ethnic majority. These programmes have unintended impacts upon ethnic minority groups that do not share such norms. Examples include the internalisation of new patriarchal attitudes and the reinforcing of gender inequalities.

While the contributions of Oosterhoff *et al.* (2011, 2013) contribute to debates on the varying impacts of the state upon ethnicity, they also highlight the intersection between gender and ethnic identity.

The final IDS contribution, by Alex Shankland (2010), discusses the representation of indigenous groups in deliberative spaces within the Brazilian health sector. His research makes the case for understanding

three dimensions of representation: representation of issues for debate, representation of social groups to the state, and representation of the democratic process. With regard to the second of these dimensions – representing social groups – Shankland discusses the manner in which the authenticity of representation is bound up with the performance of indigenous identity. This is manifest in the use of language and visual imagery, including dress, adornment and posture. He also highlights the tensions between the ethnic and racial identities relating to 'indigenousness', and the manner in which they are deployed to confirm and contest the legitimacy of representatives. Shankland's work highlights the intersection of ethnic and racial identities.

3.5 Ethnicity and volunteering
Alexandrea Picken and Simon Lewis (2015) make a distinctive contribution to the literature in their article on the impact of ethnicity on volunteering. Conducting research in both Mozambique and Kenya, the authors note that ethnic divisions are mirrored in the volunteer landscape, thereby reducing the effectiveness of volunteering. Yet, the authors also note that international volunteers and neutral national volunteers have a role to play in establishing trust between groups and in negotiating more representative relationships and structures. Concluding their article, Picken and Lewis suggest that volunteer organisations should think more strategically about how they can best utilise the 'neutral outsider' role of volunteers to reduce entrenched ethnic biases.

3.6 Ethnicity, development and interethnic relations
The final IDS contribution to ethnicity theory is the research of Naysan Adlparvar (2015). He examines the differential impacts of post-2001 political reconstruction and socioeconomic development upon ethnicity in Afghanistan's Bamyan Valley. Adlparvar argues that the acquisition of productive resources by Hazarahs and their increasing status is linked to growing tensions with Tajiks and Saadat, respectively. With regard to the former, the increasing salience of sectarian identity has contributed to growing tensions between Hazarahs and Tajiks. With regard to the latter, ethnicity has been used to legitimise, contest and violently enforce unequal marriage arrangements between Saadat and Hazarahs.

Finally, through his analysis, Adlparvar contends that ethnic identity in Afghanistan should be viewed in an intersectional manner – alongside racial, sectarian and gendered identities. He goes on to argue that the interrelationship between these forms of identity is constantly in flux. They assume greater or lesser salience, relevant to one another, depending upon time and context.

4 New frontiers of research: intersectionality, geopolitics and development
Three new frontiers of research are identified based on the previous discussion. These include the integration of intersectionality into ethnicity theory, the importance of expanding research linking ethnicity and development, and investigation of new framings of identity and social organisation driven by changing global geopolitics.

The overview of ethnicity theory, presented earlier in this article, highlighted the insights emerging from postmodern critiques in the ethnicity literature. Chief among these is the growing importance of integrating intersectionality into thinking regarding ethnicity. Such integration could have a number of implications.

First, a widening of the scope of analysis would be required when examining intergroup dynamics. This might be achieved by investigating not only the manner in which different axes of identity intersect with one another, but also the different ways individuals are positioned in relation to existing power hierarchies. Second, intersectionality could broaden inquiry of group-based inequalities. For example, Kabeer (2010) identifies four types of inequalities – cultural, spatial, economic and political – that are mutual and intersecting, and which reinforce patterns of social exclusion. Third, is the potential for intersectionality to challenge the reification of forms of identity, otherwise viewed as static and unchanging.

There is also, however, a potential risk that research on intersectionality becomes appropriated in such a manner so as to perpetuate reified identities such as the 'Asian lesbian feminist' leading, in turn, to assumptions that individuals will necessarily always act according to those identifiers. Another potential concern is that it may be assumed that all forms of identity can be examined in the same manner. Or assumptions are made about how these identities work together, which unintentionally 'freezes' them in time. This may result in a failure to capture the manner in which the relationship between intersecting identities constantly changes.

Finally, while intersectionality offers new insights into understanding identity, it bears limited explanatory power in clarifying why particular aspects of identity assume more weight than others in influencing individual and collective behaviour. There is still much research needed on what intersectionality means for agency, mobilisation and social change.

The review of IDS' contributions to the literature on ethnicity indicates a second potential area of future research. Although not a *new* area of inquiry *per se*, there is still a need to expand research investigating the link between ethnicity and development. Further research of the impact of development policy and programming upon ethnicity – such as the work of Baulch *et al.* (2012), Tranchant (2010) or Oosterhoff *et al.* (2011, 2013) – would do much to inform understandings of inequality, violence, and sociocultural change. On the other hand, continued investigation of the role ethnicity plays in shaping developmental processes – similar to research by Dagnino (2005), Waldman (2005) or Picken and Lewis (2015) – could contribute to thinking on social mobilisation, conflict sensitivity or the formulation of improved development policy.

The topics of inquiry indicated above are not the only new frontiers of research on ethnicity. As mentioned in the opening paragraphs of this article, it is not just within academia that ethnicity remains salient. It continues to be relevant in the social and political life of people across

the globe. The changing geopolitical landscape witnessed largely since the events of 9/11 has stimulated major shifts in popular conceptions of ethnicity (and other forms of identity) and in associated patterns of social and political organisation. In addition to new areas of research generated from debates in the academic literature, the nature of identities emerging from these new geopolitical arrangements also requires investigation.

The events of 9/11 have placed Islam at the centre of global politics. They resulted in the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. Both of which, plus the unfolding crisis in Syria, have resulted in the manipulation and growing polarisation of ethnic and sectarian identities. Questions remain as to how these framings of identity intersect and how they further violence? The collapse of boundaries in two Middle Eastern countries (Syria and Iraq) also challenges notions of the 'nation state' and national identity. The corresponding rise of the so-called Islamic State – and their common identity used to recruit from across the globe – questions the relationship between identity, geography and 'groups' in fundamental ways. The resulting spread of refugees across West Asia, the Middle East and into Europe is likely to have a major impact on intergroup relations, potentially altering conceptions of the 'we' and undermining the idea of the ethnic 'other' residing in the global South. The resurgence of right-wing political parties and their mobilisation around ethnicised forms of identification, against perceived enemies but also in celebration of imagined histories, has been witnessed worldwide – not only in the global South but also in countries like France, Germany and the United States. How does this inform understandings of the way culture is deployed for political gain?

Future research will also likely have to uncover the appropriation of ethnicity within the literature itself. With the sense of pending threat posed by the so-called Islamic State and other Islamist groups to the West, a 'securitisation' of research on ethnicity may emerge. Studies in counter-terrorism may influence research on ethnicity and culture, possibly infusing it with conceptions of which cultures represent 'threats', and how certain cultural forms allow for the development of social networks and mobilisation for violence.

Unpacking the politics surrounding the usage of ethnicity in academia, policy and everyday life is as important today as it was half a century ago, when it emerged as a scholarly field. This is particularly timely given the new appropriations and framings of ethnicity – and indeed other forms of identity – that new global geopolitics have shaped. Undertaking such inquiry requires expanded analytical frameworks, which both question the positionality of those who research ethnicity and accommodate the intersectional nature of identity.

These are new frontiers that IDS is well positioned to contribute to. This is not only because of the Institute's historic engagement with research on ethnicity and development, but also because the study of ethnicity is synonymous with the study of power, inequality and social change.

Notes

1 For a well-informed overview of the ethnicity literature see Banks (1996) and Kaufmann (2005). See also Wan and Vanderwerf (2009).
2 This tri-partite division is borrowed from Fearon and Laitin (2000).
3 A number of other contributions by IDS scholars refer to ethnic or indigenous groups, but do so largely in an incidental manner and, therefore, have not been included in this article. Examples include Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004) and Lister (2004).
4 Al-Shabaab is a Somalia-based jihadi organisation.

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