

outil pertinent pour la compréhension de l'ampleur et de la nature de l'imminent choc démographique et fiscal. Il déçoit néanmoins au chapitre des solutions proposées, ce qui est d'autant plus navrant lorsqu'on considère son titre.

Note

- 1 Godbout, L. 2006. *Agir maintenant pour le Québec de demain: Des réflexions pour passer des manifestes aux actes*, Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval.

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Ethnicity and Electoral Politics

Jóhanna Kristín Birnir

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A new generation of scholarship on ethnic politics is breaking fresh ground. Prior studies focused overwhelmingly on ethnic conflicts in the developing world and, worse, ignored how ethnic groups coexisted in varying degrees of harmony and discord. Because conflicts attract attention and peaceful coexistence does not, we readily accepted ethnic conflicts as routine and ethnic diversity as the cause of violence. We now know that a) ethnic differences by themselves do not make a country more conflict prone, since ethnic identity is both constructed and fluid; and b) ethnic tensions do not necessarily translate into ethnic violence.

The new scholarship on ethnic politics—represented by books such as Jóhanna Birnir's *Ethnicity and Electoral Politics*—has taken an important corrective step in highlighting ethnic accommodation as more common than previously believed. The key question that the book addresses is under what conditions ethnic groups will choose the path of violence over that of accommodation and vice versa. Rejecting the conventional assumption that ethnic groups and their political demands are inherently intransigent so that violence is inevitable, Birnir argues that ethnic groups become intransigent and violent when they are denied access to government and influence in policy making.

Birnir builds her theoretical model around the idea of “ethnic attractors.” The basic argument of ethnic attractors is that ethnic identity serves as a stable but flexible information shortcut for the members of an ethnic group to make political choices. When a country becomes democratic, ethnic groups seek political power and policy influence through their votes. Their members throw their support behind an ethnic party because it best represents their interests and they have better information about it than other parties. However, over time, if the ethnic party is not successful, the ethnic vote goes in search of suitable non-ethnic parties. Ethnic voters have by then become more informed about other political parties and choose one that best represents their interests. However, once they find that issues which are relevant to them are not addressed either by ethnic parties—whose political prospects may be reined in by the country's institutional design or due to other factors—or by non-ethnic parties—which may or may not choose to take up ethnic issues—that other options, including violence, come into consideration. The behaviour of the major political parties toward the ethnic group is driven by a cold political logic. If the ethnic vote is significantly large and/or decisive in electoral contests, the demands of the ethnic group are likely to be incorporated by one or more of the other major parties. When the ethnic vote is not crucial, ethnic groups face political exclusion. In making the argument that inclusion or exclusion determines ethnic group behaviour, Birnir shifts

the blame for violence from ethnic groups to the major political parties and their leaders.

Using a tripartite methodological approach combining formal theory, quantitative analyses and case studies on Romania, Bulgaria and Spain, Birnir convincingly demonstrates the relevance of ethnic attractors in ethnic group behaviour. However, there are two general issues that merit attention. Based on her case studies, Birnir argues that the choices made by the major political parties—to include or exclude ethnic groups—depend on the size of the ethnic group and the weight it carries in electoral outcomes. The question is whether the preference for accommodation or violence on the part of ethnic groups is also determined by their size. For example, smaller ethnic groups appear more likely to become resigned to their exclusion and accommodate on terms dictated by the major parties. In addition, the cold political logic that is at play excludes the possible impact of norms and values on ethnic relations.

Do democratic transitions destroy existing patterns of interaction between ethnic groups so that the quest for political power trumps everything else? To her credit, Birnir considers the impact of previous violence on the present and finds that access to government moderates ethnic group behaviour. Does this imply that previously cordial relations between ethnic groups do not count for much if an ethnic group does not gain access to government?

Second, it is surprising that Birnir has little to say regarding the relationship between the nature of ethnic politics and the quality of democracy. Is the quality of democracy enhanced in countries where ethnic groups gain representation in government? Does the absence of violence lead to better democracies? The evidence suggests that while ethnic heterogeneity may not hinder democratic survival or consolidation, in both new and older democracies, even when ethnic groups are represented, it does have a negative impact on the quality of democracy.

Ethnicity and Electoral Politics is highly recommended for those interested in ethnic politics, political parties, and international relations. In the brave new world of ethnic politics scholarship, the book demolishes old ideas and suggests several new directions for future research.

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Crise d'identité professionnelle et professionnalisme

Georges A. Legault, dir.

Les Presses de l'Université Laval, Collection Éthique, 2003, 226 pages

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Cet ouvrage collectif est le fruit d'un vaste programme de recherche visant à diagnostiquer, modéliser et identifier les sources et les enjeux de la crise d'identité professionnelle qui semble sévir au Québec. Neuf auteures et auteurs, professeurs d'éthique professionnelle, contribuent à cet ouvrage en présentant les résultats de leurs études sur le sujet. C'est un livre qui vient à point, puisque les manifestations d'un certain malaise quant au sens que revêt le travail et l'engagement envers celui-ci, se font de plus en plus fréquentes et sérieuses parmi les travailleurs québécois. Tout au long de la lecture des huit chapitres, le lecteur viendra à mieux saisir comment se développe l'identité professionnelle et la crise d'identité professionnelle. Au-delà des facteurs individuels, cet ouvrage met entre autres l'accent sur le rôle du développement de l'économie du service et le rôle du système de régulation sociale en tant que déclencheurs de la crise. Cet ouvrage expose l'ampleur et les tenants de l'identité et de la crise d'identité professionnelle au sein de diverses professions et il présente certaines pistes de solution pour remédier à la situation.

Tout d'abord, le lecteur se familiarisera avec les diverses approches sociologiques de l'identité et des professions à la lecture du premier chapitre. On y présente les posi-