



*the State
and Ethnic
Politics in
South-East
Asia*

DAVID BROWN



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The state and ethnic politics in Southeast Asia

Given the increasing number of ethnic disputes around the world, David Brown has written a timely work on the nature of ethnicity and the ways in which it is affected by the composition, structure and policies of the state.

The book provides discussions of ethnic politics in Burma, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia, and offers a coherent interpretation of the variations in the nature of ethnic consciousness and the causes of ethnic tensions in these countries.

This ethnic consciousness is defined in terms of a psychological and political ideology that is crucially influenced by the character of the state. The argument is developed through an examination of differing conceptualizations of the state relating to neo-patrimonialism, corporatism, ethnocracy, internal colonialism and class, so as to show how these different perspectives each generate distinct explanations of ethnic politics.

The State and Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia is aimed primarily at Southeast Asia specialists, but will also be of interest to students of comparative politics.

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Preface

Ethnicity is one of those subjects where explanation tends to become intertwined with moral evaluation. Enquiry tends to be permeated and inhibited by the preconception that it involves either a primitive and backward instinctual trait (tribalism), a moral sickness (racism, chauvinism), or a progressive virtue (the communitarian spirit, the 'people', for some, the nation). Faced with one or other of these assumptions or feelings, any attempt at extended explanation is likely to be criticized in so far as it fails to accord with, or provide ammunition for, the given evaluation. The best that one can hope for, and the purpose of this book, is that in outlining one partial perspective as regards some of the terrain, the discussion provokes critical reflection and offers occasional enlightenment.

My initial interest in ethnic politics developed out of research on local-level politics amongst the Ewe community of West Africa. From this research grew the perception that fluctuating political alignments within an allegedly 'tribal' community, and in relation to other such communities, could be explained only by rejecting any primordialist assumptions and examining the shifting situations engendered by successive state régimes. This in turn generated an interest in the comparative politics of ethnicity, from which developed a concern to make sense of the variations in its manifestation. My move to Southeast Asia in 1982 then implied the need to re-examine and re-evaluate my understanding as to how political science might contribute to illuminating the ethnic politics of this particular region.

The book developed out of an initial suggestion by Professor Chan Heng Chee for a set of edited readings on ethnic politics. The task of searching for coherence in the writings of others evolved gradually into the attempt to elaborate my own framework. Thus when Peter Sowden of what was then Croom Helm visited Singapore in 1988, I optimistically announced that the book had been conceived, was indeed already fully formed in miniature, and could be delivered within two years. But pregnancy has its drawbacks. Teaching and research are certainly compatible in that it is in the process of convincing the naive students of the validity of one's argument that one first glimpses its obvious fallaciousness. But they are also in tension with each other; quite simply, teaching takes away the vital time and energy needed for research—at least for those of us without sabbaticals. I suppose it was a natural birth, and the occasional relaxation exercise did help ease the pain, though the labour was certainly much more prolonged than had been anticipated. It is, by the way, crucial to have one's wife present at the birth, and I thank Diana sincerely for her support, and her help with the breathing. Finally, there is the brutal question which all parents ask themselves sooner or later. Was the resultant baby worth all the effort? That, however, is for others to judge, and this parent for one will irresponsibly abandon the child for others to play with or worry over as they wish; pausing only to acknowledge the paternity, and to plead guilty to any genetic deformities which become apparent.

My thanks go to Chan Heng Chee for facilitating my teaching and research in this area, and to Michael Leifer and Donna Pankhurst for their encouragement at various stages. My thanks also to the following colleagues for their helpful advice on specific chapters: David Martin Jones, Hussin Mutalib, Bilveer Singh, A.Mani, Leo Suryadinata, Ho Khai Leong and James Jesudason. I am also grateful to the following ex-students who helped me with bibliographical work and translations: Peggy Lim, Jean Ng, Noorlinah Mohamed and Siti Mariam.

David Brown
National University of Singapore
December 1992

Introduction

This book seeks to describe some aspects of ethnic politics in Southeast Asia. More importantly, however, it seeks to organize this material so as both to explain the events and to develop a distinctive explanation as to the general nature of ethnicity and the causes of ethnic politics.

The very proliferation of ethnic tensions in the contemporary world militates against systematic examination as to the causes. It sometimes seems as if ethnic loyalties and rivalries are universal and fundamentally unexplainable expressions of human nature. On the other hand, it also seems as if each ethnic conflict arises out of a unique interplay of specific historical, cultural, socio-economic and political circumstances, so that the best we can hope for by way of explanation is the careful documentation of the chain of events and the listing of all contributory factors.

The purpose here is to reject claims as to both the universality and the uniqueness of ethnic tensions, and to offer an explanation of the uniformities and the variations in ethnic politics in one region. Ethnic tensions are common to all the countries of Southeast Asia, but they take diverse forms, ranging from the sustained violence of Burma's ethnic rebellions to the polite expressions of ethnic concern in Singapore's press. Instead of trying to explain such variations in terms of differences in the cultural composition of each country, the focus will be on examining how the development and political manifestations of ethnic consciousness are related to differences in the character of each of these states. Such a focus on the character of the state offers a basis for exploring the underlying nature of ethnic consciousness in relation to the power structure in society, and also a focal point through which to explain variations in the impact of ethnic behaviour upon political stability and unity.

Ethnicity constitutes one of several forms of association through which individuals pursue their interests relating to economic and political advantage. But there is more to ethnicity than this, since it appears to offer intrinsic satisfaction as well as instrumental utility. Individuals seem to need to distinguish between 'us' and 'them' communities, and ethnic consciousness arises when such psychological constructs are attached to observable differences of language, religion, lifestyle or physiognomy. But ethnicity is not reducible to such objective distinctions. It involves the translation of sometimes minor linguistic gradations or physical variations into cultural boundary markers which are believed to be intrinsically significant and clearly demarcated, and which designate a particular cultural group as a distinctive 'people' with a unique history, homeland and way of life. On the basis of these perceived cultural affinities, the group claims a common destiny and thence the political rights necessary for the attainment of that destiny.

Such an initial formulation of ethnicity indicates that the term should be used to refer to a distinctive form of politics relating to culturally-based entitlement claims,

irrespective of whether those claims are based on a perceived similarity of race, or of language, or of religion. If this is so, then the tightness of the concept of ethnicity must be sought not by limiting the range of cultural attributes to which it attaches, but rather by explaining precisely the type of political consciousness and behaviour to which it refers. The attempts to find such precision have produced a continuing debate as to the relationship between ethnicity and the state, and the primary axis of this debate has stretched between the polar positions of primordialism and situationalism, so that a brief examination of these two approaches constitutes a necessary preliminary to the present discussion of state-ethnic relations.

Those approximating the primordialist position have taken as their point of departure the apparently common-sense view of ethnicity as a culturally embedded group loyalty.¹ Ethnic consciousness is thus seen as an ascriptive, communal allegiance which inheres in the particular linguistic, racial or religious attributes defining the parameters of the group. This view of ethnicity connects with the widespread assumptions that language carries with it cultural connotations, that religious values carry over into the values underlying wider social and political behaviour, and that the sharing of common genes engenders feelings of common identity.

The particular way in which the cultural attributes generate a sense of ethnic identity is variously formulated. The simplest position is to portray ethnicity as an instinctual bond which is 'Ineffable', 'unaccountable', and thereby inaccessible to reason or explanation.² Its power and origins are thus regarded as essentially 'shadowy and illusive',³ as indicated by the term 'primordial', which refers, in Jungian terms, to an 'archetype of the collective unconscious'.⁴ In sociobiology, attempts have been made to give more precision to the primordialist argument by positing the existence of an evolutionary mechanism directing behaviour towards the survival of the individuals' genes and those of their 'genetic relatives'.⁵ Alternatively, ethnic identity is sometimes portrayed as arising out of the primary and pervasive socialization into the linguistic, religious or 'way of life' community into which the individual is born, so that the defence of one's unit of culture comes to be perceived as fundamental to the survival of the core moral values and identity of oneself and one's children.⁶ But central to all versions of the primordialist approach is the proposition that the ethnic affiliation must be seen not only as 'fixed' in the sense that it is ascriptive, but also as 'fixed' in that it constitutes the conceptual given from which political analysis must begin. If the concept of ethnicity is to be linked to the concept of the state, then the primordialist perspective indicates that attention must necessarily focus on the ways in which the immutable ethnic identities impinge on the character and activities of the state.

The primordialist perspective asserts that people are naturally ethnocentric, exhibiting trust and preference for those of their own cultural group while feeling more distant from, and distrustful of, those of other cultural groups. It would follow that societies made up of markedly different cultural communities would have problems in managing their inter-group relations; and since most contemporary societies are multicultural, ethnic conflict of one sort or another is indicated as the norm.

The dominant image of politics generated by the primordial perspective has therefore been the 'plural society' argument, developed by J.S.Furnivall, and subsequently

modified by M.G. Smith, Rubushka and Shepsle, and others.⁷ The argument is essentially that if a society consists of discrete ethnic segments, each with dissimilar and antithetical cultural values and political goals, then attempts at responsive, democratic, or alliance-based government will tend to degenerate into political instability and disintegration. This approach recognizes that the composition and viability of a government will be affected by the cultural configuration of the social structure (multiple minorities, majority/minority, bipolar, etc.). Nevertheless, the prospects for governmental and social stability are enhanced to the extent that the state can so far distance itself from societal influences as to be unrepresentative of, and unresponsive to, the divergent values and interests of the disaggregated society. The political implication of the primordial perspective, as formulated in the plural society argument, is thus clear: the greater the tendency to cultural pluralism, the more likely it is that political instability can be avoided only by some form of authoritarian state.

This suggestion that the stability of the state might correlate with its unresponsiveness to societal ethnic influences serves to complement the primordialist stress on the unresponsiveness of ethnic identities to the influence of the state. While it is indeed recognized by the primordialist position that assertions of ethnic identity might remain latent until stimulated by the incursions of an interventionist state, it is nonetheless argued that the political situations engendered by the state merely provoke the articulation of the pre-existing identities already defined by the cultural givens; they do not serve to determine the boundaries, content and character of ethnicity. We are thus brought by the primordialist and plural society approaches to the conclusion that, just as the policies and preferences of the authoritarian state are largely independent of ethnic societal influences, so is the character of ethnicity largely independent of the state. While this perspective stresses that ethnicity is the dominant fact of the social structure, it implies that it is necessarily only marginal to the functioning of the unresponsive state.

This theoretical implication of the primordialist/plural society position has posed a problem for students of Southeast Asia. It has been evident that ethnicity is of particular political salience in each of the states of the region, and this has been reflected in the numerous country studies that have been done. But the incorporation of this into the theoretical work on state-society relationships has been inhibited by the dominant influence of the primordial and plural society approaches, arising in part from the fact that both Furnivall and Geertz did their seminal work in this region. The result has been twofold. Firstly, it has been noticeable that much of the work done on domestic politics in this region, including the ethnic dimension, has concentrated on asserting the uniqueness of each country's history, social structure, culture and politics, and has rejected, or only paid lip service to, the contributions of analytical and comparative political science. In the words of Richard Robison:

There is a fairly general suspicion of theory by many scholars of Southeast Asian politics based upon the proposition that theory is too rigid and deterministic to take account of the diversity and uniqueness of specific situations.⁸

The second implication has been that those studies which have adopted a specifically theoretical approach to the characterization of state-society relations in Southeast Asia have either employed characterizations of the state which do not relate it to the phenomenon of ethnicity, or have failed to explore any ethnic implications.⁹ There has therefore been a failure to systematically explore the relationship between ethnicity and the state in Southeast Asia; a failure which this book seeks to repair.

It would be misleading to give the impression, however, that those writers on ethnicity who approach it from a primordialist perspective have taken the political salience of ethnic loyalties entirely for granted and completely ignored the role of the state. Some primordialists, including Clifford Geertz, argued that the process of modernization would involve shifts from irrationality to rationality, from ascription to achievement, and from particularism to universalism, such that ethnic loyalties would be eroded by the process of national integration. The state could play a role in increasing social interactions between cultural communities so as to promote the progressive replacement of ethnic consciousness by state-national loyalty.¹⁰ Other primordialists have argued, however, that the modernization process might actually promote ethnic conflict.¹¹ They have stressed that such increasing social interactions might lead 'objective' cultural groups, whose ethnic consciousness had hitherto remained latent, to develop increased subjective ethnic consciousness as external rivalries and threats developed. Walker Connor in particular has focused attention on the expansion of the state as the dominant factor provoking the translation of latent' ethnic consciousness into manifest ethnic-nationalist assertions.¹² For such primordialists, the alternative to ethnic political conflict lies in the prescription of forms of political autonomy to each community possessing 'ethno-national' consciousness.¹³

In either case, whether the role of the state in political development is seen as implying the erosion or the strengthening of ethnic consciousness, the specific connection between the subjective and objective aspects of ethnicity still remains rather unclear; and since primordialism is defined precisely by its assertion of such a connection, it begins to lose its explanatory coherence. Why does a sense of community develop in some cases at the level of variations in dialect or sect, while in other cases it adheres to the encapsulating linguistic or religious collectivity? Why have some multicultural groups managed to come together in a 'melting pot' community while others indulge in mutual hostility? The primordialist approach seems to assume, rather than explain, the strength and political salience of ethnic consciousness, and seems unable to explain changes in the cultural attributes and cultural boundaries to which it refers. It is here that the opposite perspective, that of situationalism, makes its contribution.

The situationalist approach begins with the observation that individuals might be members of social and cultural groups without necessarily recognizing them as 'conscious aggregations' having ideological and political significance.¹⁴ In sociology and anthropology, ethnic attachment has frequently been explained as a response to situational threats from dominating others, so that individuals react by forming appropriate defensive groups. The perception of the 'them' is mirrored by the development of the sense of 'us'. The particular cultural grouping which comes to be the focus for ethnic attachment will thus vary depending upon the source of the perceived

situational threat. While it is recognized that ethnic attachments thus form as responses to situations of perceived insecurity, the focus of attention is not the nature and origin of any emotional need for security, but rather the depiction of ethnicity as an appropriate resource, rationally chosen in pursuit of individual and group interests, so that it is the instrumental and fluid aspects of ethnicity which are stressed.¹⁵

In social psychology, situationalism has implied a focus on the mechanisms whereby individuals adapt to social expectations and conform to social group norms. Thus, feelings of ethnic loyalty and attachment to particular cultural communities are explained as the result of an individual's continuing susceptibility to socialization and conditioning, and thence as the development of a rationalistic concern for the defence of the relevant groups.¹⁶ While ethnic attachment is thus explained in terms of responsiveness to environmental realities, any apparently irrational behaviour, such as ethnic prejudice, is attributed to faulty perception or faulty judgement.

The situationalist perspective on ethnicity has been explored by several writers on ethnic politics in Southeast Asia, such as Judith Nagata on Malaysia, William Liddle on Indonesia, Robert Taylor on Burma, and Charles Keyes on Burma and Thailand; and their works have helped to shift attention away from the cultural attributes of society and towards the situational factors which influence ethnic consciousness.¹⁷ The causes of ethnic conflict are located, for example, in the mobilization activities of manipulative élites or in the economic disparities between regions and communities. Ethnicity is thus seen as a consequence of change in the social, economic and political arenas.

The situationalist approach depicts ethnicity as one resource among many which individuals may employ in their efforts to respond, pragmatically and rationally, to the environment. The picture of ethnicity which emerges is one which stresses its derivative nature. The relative strength of the racial, linguistic or religious attachments, and the level of inclusiveness at which their boundaries are demarcated, will be determined by, and vary with, the situation. Ethnicity acts as a political resource, promoting group cohesion and thereby facilitating the political articulation of both group and individual interests. The resultant politics may either be those of competitive pluralistic bargaining, or of inter-group conflict; but there is no presumption, in the situationalist perspective, that ethnic politics need be any more problematical than any other type of politics.

A focus on the situational context as the crucial factor in determining ethnic consciousness is clearly useful in explaining variations in the boundaries and political salience of ethnic communities, but that very insight seems to make it vulnerable to the criticism of crudely overestimating the flexibility of ethnicity. Perhaps more importantly, it seems unable to explain the particularly powerful emotional appeal of ethnicity. Cultural affinities are certainly only one of several bases for political affiliation from which people may choose, but people rarely seem to perceive themselves as choosing their ethnic group; and compared for example to class, ethnicity often appears to offer a more all-embracing and emotionally satisfying way of defining an individual's identity. If individuals do indeed often rally around cultural attributes as a set of symbols which will generate and sustain their sense of identity, then what exactly is the appeal and power of such symbols?

The primordialist and situationalist approaches can thus both be seen to offer valuable

insights as to the nature of ethnicity and its role in politics, but the adoption of either approach on its own seems to be misleading. Ethnicity appears to exhibit both primordialist and situationalist attributes. It surely functions both as an interest resource and as an emotional loyalty. It is in part generated by the political and socio-economic structure of society, but is also in part a 'given' which plays a causal role; it is neither fully determined by the cultural structure of society, nor is it a totally elastic response to situational variations. It would thus be tempting to adopt a position in the middle of the axis, but that would simply combine antithetical perspectives so as to generate ambiguity. If a way of synthesizing the insights of both perspectives is to be sought, then it cannot be one which depicts ethnicity as somehow both a loyalty and a resource.¹⁸ It must offer a distinctive perspective. The proposal here is to seek such an analytically coherent perspective in the depiction of ethnicity as a form of ideological consciousness.

Several recent writers on ethnic politics have characterized ethnic groups as 'kinship communities', because it is the claim to common kinship which appears to get to the essence of how ethnic attachments are actually perceived by those involved.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the way in which this 'family resemblance' has been interpreted has varied greatly. For those of a primordialist tendency the ethnic group has been depicted as a real extension of the genealogical hierarchy, while for the situationalist-inclined the belief in common kinship has been viewed simply as a perceptive description, rather than an explanation of what constitutes ethnic consciousness. But the major significance of the view of ethnicity as a kinship community is as an analogy, which provides the key to understanding how the situationally fluid ethnic consciousness can nevertheless constitute an emotionally powerful and politically influential allegiance.

The view of ethnicity presented in the subsequent chapters recognizes, therefore, that ethnic consciousness may attach to groups claiming affinities of language, race, religion or territorial homeland; and that such groups may be designated as tribes, sects, nations, or just 'communal groups'. It is suggested that such situationally fluid ethnic consciousness derives emotional power from its characteristic as a specific psychological and political ideology which promises certainty to individuals experiencing insecurity, by 'mimicking' the family. In order to examine the circumstances influencing which particular cultural aggregation becomes the focus for the ethnic bond, attention is focused upon the role of the state in determining the structure of insecurities in a society. It is then argued that the way in which we perceive and portray ethnicity, and its relationship to the unity and stability of the nation-state, is dependent upon the way in which we portray the character of the state. The exploration of alternative conceptualizations of the state thus serves to generate differing portrayals as to the character and political salience of ethnicity. The differences in ethnic politics between neighbouring countries are thus explained, not in terms of their unique histories nor the variations in their cultural pluralism, but rather by means of a comparison as to the composition, capacity, ideology and strategy of the state.

In order to employ this approach to the study of ethnic politics in Southeast Asia, five countries have been selected—Burma, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand—so as to explore five different conceptualizations of the state. Since there is clearly no one objectively correct characterization of the state which would apply to all such countries,

or indeed to any one; the choice of which perspective to employ for the examination of each country is in part based on the subjective criterion of assessing which perspective appears to offer the most interesting and illuminating approach to understanding that country's ethnic politics. In practice, however, the choice of approach is made easier by the recognition that, although the politics of each country has been discussed by different writers from numerous perspectives, there has in each case developed a dominant or at least a popular approach which provides a literature whose coherence and implications can be examined. Thus, for example, while class analysis of the state has been employed for each of the countries, its influence on studies of the state and of ethnicity has probably been greatest in the case of Malaysia. Similarly, while the state élites of Thailand and Indonesia have both been portrayed in bureaucratic, technocratic or corporatist terms, it is the Singaporean state which has most consistently been examined from this perspective, and where its implications for ethnicity are clearest. In Chapters 2 to 6 therefore, the ethnic politics of each country is examined in turn, each from the perspective of the one characterization of the state which appears, from a review of the literature, to offer the most useful insights as to the causes and political impact of ethnicity.

The purpose of examining the relationships between the characterization of the state and the nature of ethnic politics is thus a dual one: to offer explanations for the variations in ethnic politics in each of the countries examined, and to explore the implications for ethnicity of each of the models of the state.

These discussions of the nature of the ethnic ideology and of ethnic-state relationships offer a basis for some conclusions as to the causes of ethnic tensions. While it is clear that there are potential problems as to the relationship between the assertion of ethnic claims and the claims of the nation-state, it is equally clear that there are several ways in which these problems might be managed, with each of the characterizations of the state examined here suggesting one possible strategy for ethnic management. The frequent incidence of ethnic conflict seems to indicate, however, that there are factors inhibiting successful management, and the concluding chapter examines two of these factors, relating to the ways in which the ideologies of state nationalism and of democracy are employed in ethnic politics.

Studies of politics which focus on a particular region frequently do so because they consider that common cultural, historical or geopolitical circumstances have produced a distinctive character which is shared by each of the states in the region. The present study is based on no such assumption that Southeast Asia is unique as regards the causes and character of its ethnic politics, or that all the countries of the region share any significant political features. Indeed, the intention is to explore the differences in their ethnic politics and to suggest that the characterizations of ethnicity and of the state which are explored here might, with equal validity, be employed as the starting point for examining ethnic politics elsewhere.

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Chapter 1

Ethnicity and the state

One of the most widespread features of the Third World since the Second World War has been the expansion of the state in both its spatial and policy realms. Régimes which hitherto had displayed only spasmodic and limited capacity outside their core regions and their capital cities, have sought increasingly systematic control over peripheral regions through the expansion of their administrative bureaucracies, their armies and their educational systems. At the same time, the range of governmental interference has expanded beyond a concern with raising revenue and maintaining order, as the need to direct, train and motivate labour has increased. The effectiveness of such state interventions has varied greatly, however. The expansion of the state has not implied its strengthening; and the various agents of the state have only rarely managed to bring about the intended structural or cultural changes. Nevertheless, they have frequently had sufficient impact to impinge on social groups, sometimes disruptively and unintentionally, so as to modify societal consciousness and behaviour. There has thus developed a close relationship between ethnic consciousness and relationships on the one hand, and the activities of the state on the other. The purpose here is to examine that relationship by explaining how ethnicity functions as an ideology whose cultural focus and political implications are crucially influenced by the character of the state.

Ethnicity is interpreted here as an ideology which individuals employ to resolve the insecurities arising from the power structure within which they are located. Accordingly, the explanation of ethnic politics must begin with the examination of the state's influence upon that power structure.¹ It is clear that the state plays a major role in influencing the distribution of power, status and wealth in society, and hence in the type of situational insecurities and threats with which individuals and groups are faced. This role involves not only the state's influence on socioeconomic disparities, but also its influence upon the advantages which accrue to those possessing a particular language, religioculture or racial identity. The state also provides legitimation for the power structure in the form of a more or less explicit nationalist ideology, and this state-promulgated national identity defines the ideological parameters within which ethnic consciousness develops and operates.² Since both cultural state nationalism and ethnic ideology employ the same type of cultural markers (race, language, religion and territory) in depicting the respective communities, then ethnic ideology must necessarily define itself as a reaction to, or a constituent of, the state-national ideology.

The concept of the state refers to the governmental and administrative institutions of a society, and to the ideological claim as to the sovereignty of those institutions. A 'statist' analysis of politics is thus one which assumes coherent organizing principles connecting the disparate administrative agencies in any particular state system, and assumes also that the state functions as an independent actor in politics, rather than simply as an arena for

societal contention. The danger of such a state-centred approach is that it ceases to be simply a heuristic device, and leads to an overestimation of the co-ordination between discrete governmental agencies and their boundedness from society—and an overestimation of the capacity of those agencies for controlling social change.³

It is clear, however, from the extent of state-ethnic conflict in the contemporary world, that no states are able to fully control the ethnic consciousness and behaviour of those they purport to govern. In developing a ‘statist’ explanation of ethnicity—one which focuses on the impact of the state upon ethnic politics—it is necessary, therefore, to recognize the limitations upon the state’s ability to control ethnicity; also to indicate the varying degrees of its resilience to ethnic pressures. The limitations on the state’s ability to control ethnicity relate in part to the intrinsic character of ethnic consciousness, which makes it inherently resilient to attempts by state élites to transform or control it, and in part to the relative weakness of the state, in terms of the varying degrees of its resilience to societal pressures.

States diverge greatly in terms of their legitimacy, autonomy, capacity, and organizing principles. The autonomous state would be one where the policies and preferences of state élites were determined by their professional interests as state officials, rather than by the demands of any societal segments. In terms of ethnicity then, the autonomous state would either be ethnically impartial, proclaiming ethnically colour-blind national values and depoliticizing ethnicity, or it would employ ethnicity as a resource for the promotion of a state-initiated formula for state development and national integration.⁴ This would contrast with the non-autonomous state, where the state élites act in response to societal ethnic pressures. Politics in such a state would revolve around assertions of, and questions of access to, the benefits of membership of the various ethnic communities.

Such variations in state autonomy in relation to ethnic interests are not necessarily connected with the capacity of the state to dominate and control society.⁵ Variations in state capacity may be indicated by the broad distinction between reactive, responsive and manipulative patterns of state impact upon ethnicity. The more radical the social restructuring attempted by the state, and the less effective its administrative capabilities, the more likely it becomes that its interventions in society fail to produce the intended effects, with the state having sufficient capacity to influence and perhaps to disrupt the social structure, but insufficient capacity to control the impact of its interventions. In such a case, attempts to modify ethnic consciousness would have the effect merely of disrupting the cohesion of target communities, thence promoting the possibility of a defensive assertion of ethnic solidarity directed specifically against state interventions. The classic example of such a reactive impact would be the incidence of ethnic separatist rebellion amongst ethnic minorities faced with assimilationist state policies.

In some cases, however, the state may indeed be in a position to achieve a responsive impact, so as to implement its policies on ethnicity effectively and to promote the type of changes in consciousness and behaviour intended. The intermediate situation is that where state interventions on ethnicity generate a manipulative politics. Target communities cannot escape the interventions of the state, but they might be able to treat such interventions as resources to be employed for their own advantage, so that the outcome differs significantly from that intended by the state. In the case of the Indonesian

Chinese for example, it appears likely that assimilationist state policies have been utilized in such a way as to generate a modified *peranakan* Chinese ethnic consciousness, rather than to achieve an assimilationist outcome.⁶

These distinctions concerning state autonomy and capacity are important for two reasons. Firstly, they mean that an explanation of ethnicity in terms of the character of the state does not imply that it is the state which *determines* ethnicity. The state may impact in a variety of ways upon ethnicity, not necessarily or solely in ways intended by the state élites. Secondly, the state may function as a causal agent in politics irrespective of whether it is autonomous of societal groupings. Thus a state which is the agency of one particular ethnic segment in the society, or of a class, is one which lacks autonomy; but it may at the same time be a strong state with a high capacity to influence the consciousness and behaviour of its citizens.

The tendency towards the weakness of the state has been particularly well documented in the case of developing countries.⁷ Some Southeast Asian states have indeed displayed the symptoms of the 'weak state', but, with the exception of Burma, it is noticeable that they have not been overwhelmed by the forces of ethnic disintegration, as has been the case in several African, and more recently Eastern European, countries. While they have not managed to exert full control over ethnic consciousness and ethnic politics in their countries, neither have they failed completely in their efforts to influence, manipulate, and contain ethnicity. Ethnic politics has indeed been problematic, but the Southeast Asian states have displayed a resilience in the face of ethnic disintegration tendencies.

We need therefore to explain the extent of the Southeast Asian states' successes in managing ethnicity, while also showing the limitations of such management efforts. The discussion must therefore be in two sections. The first task is to examine the relative resilience of ethnicity in the face of state control. This is explained here as arising from its character as a psychological and political ideology. Secondly, the relative resilience of the state in Southeast Asia is examined. This is explained here as arising in part out of the 'soft authoritarian' features of several of the states, and in part also out of the type of ethnic strategies which have been adopted. Thereafter, the extent and limitations of each state's ethnic management strategies will be examined by exploring several distinct characterizations of the state.

THE RELATIVE RESILIENCE OF ETHNICITY

Ethnicity is not simply a response to external stimuli such that it is fully determined and shaped by situational factors. Individuals are indeed influenced, in terms of their communal affiliations and relationships, by the external societal and political agencies which exert power over them, but they do not adopt a new ethnic consciousness in response to every new 'them' which they encounter. Such situational influences serve rather to modify the boundaries or strength or political salience of a prior communal consciousness, rather than creating it anew.

The simplest way of asserting this resilience of ethnicity would be to explain it as a primordial given, providing the individual with a primary and permanent sense of

identity. But such a position would overstate the immutability of ethnicity and understate the influence of situational factors such as the state. The alternative position adopted here, therefore, is one which seeks to explain both the situational malleability of ethnicity and also its resilience. Such a perspective is offered by the depiction of ethnicity as an ideology.

The general argument which will be developed is that the resilience of the ethnic attachment derives from its ability to provide, for the individual, a simple psychological formula which resolves the ambiguities and uncertainties as to the relationship with society and with the state.⁸ The psychological formula employed is that of the kinship myth: the endowment of the 'imagined' cultural community with the attributes of the real family. This myth may attach to any cultural community available to the individual, depending upon situational factors, but thereafter it functions both as a psychological ideology and as a political ideology in the form of the ethnic nationalist claim. The power and resilience of this kinship myth is explained here in psychoanalytic terms.

The notion of ethnicity as ideology is not completely absent from either the situationalist or the primordialist perspectives. For the primordialist, the ethnic community employs ideology in the form of the rights claim which the nationalist argument embodies. In the situationalist position the ethnic community is depicted as a particular type of interest group which employs ideology as a resource whereby élites can mobilize the communal group solidarity necessary for political action. But while both the justification of entitlement claims and the mobilization of group cohesion are important functions of ideology, they do not form the core of the concept.

The term 'ideology' is contested in the sense that there is disagreement as to its relationship to objective truth; whether it refers to a rational distillation of reality, a distorted, irrational view of the world, or a hermeneutic interpretation. But common to each of these approaches is the view of ideology as a mental construct offering an apparently coherent formula which makes sense of that of which the individual is least certain. Ideology provides certainty in that it defines the location of the individual in the wider society and in that it provides a diagnosis of contemporary ills and a prescription for their remedy. Ideology then, refers both to a psychological belief system, and also to the articulation of that belief system in the form of a programme for political action. Thus, the ethnic ideology will be depicted here as offering certainty to the individual by locating him or her within a defined ethnic community and then further locating that community within the nation-state system. Political problems are then diagnosed in terms of a dislocated relationship between the 'kinship' community and the nation-state.

The ethnic ideology is made concrete for the individual in the form of the specific myths and symbols which are attached to a particular cultural group. The myth of kinship thus grants the individual his own specific name, history and destiny. It is:

a device men adopt in order to come to grips with reality.... A political myth is always the myth of a particular group.... It renders their experience more coherent; it helps them understand the world in which they live. And it does so by enabling them to see their present condition as an episode in an ongoing drama. A political myth may explain how the group came into existence and

what its objectives are; it may explain what constitutes membership of the group and why the group finds itself in its present predicament; and, as often as not, it identifies the enemy of the group and promises eventual victory.⁹

The kinship myth, then, is a foundation myth of common ancestry, origin, migration or history, which gives specific and dramatic meaning to the ethnic ideology.

Ideological consciousness is frequently contrasted with 'pragmatism', so as to distinguish between the adaptability and responsiveness of the latter way of thinking as compared to the relative inflexibility of the former. The argument is that once an individual employs an ideological formula as a means of comprehending the world, there develops a concern to retain the integrity of that formula such that new information is filtered, perhaps distorted, so as to accord with the formula, rather than being responded to 'realistically'. Thus, once a particular cultural aggregate has come to be perceived as a 'kinship myth' community, the resultant ethnic consciousness will continue for some time after the situation which generated it has ceased to exist. Even when new situations generate a new pattern of ethnic identity, it will probably be internalized as an ethnic consciousness which modifies rather than replaces the earlier ethnic identities; employing the same historical myths but for amended purposes. For example, while the boundaries of the Hmong of Northern Thailand have shifted over time, and the term Hmong clearly does not refer to one 'consistent geneticlinguistic grouping', it is nevertheless the case that the Hmong kinship myth, originally generated to distinguish the Hmong from the Chinese, is retained and employed in markedly different situations, to distinguish them both from the Lao and the Thai.¹⁰ Hmong consciousness displays situational fluidity, but also historical resilience; it has developed as a response to external pressures, but also as an independent political factor to which the Thai state has had to respond.

Ethnicity as a psychological ideology

Although the history of psychoanalysis lies in the study of repression and alienation in the bourgeois capitalist societies of the West, it claims also to offer insights as to the psychic mechanisms by which individuals relate to other social conditions: to the strains of the decolonized Third World experiencing early capitalism and westernization in its various forms, just as much as to those of the bourgeois environment of the developed states.¹¹ Nevertheless, any explanation which rests on psychoanalysis must contend with the doubts as to its scientific status, and the inconsistencies in its formulation. There is certainly no consensus within the various strands of psychoanalysis as to the basis for ethnic affiliation, but there is a significant convergence of the contending formulations in that they each illuminate how the relationship between the adult individual and the group affiliation is explainable in terms of, and derived from, the relationship between the infant and the family. The theme is that 'the individual and the group perform functions for each other that replicate the early life functions of child and parents'.¹²

The appeal of the psychoanalytic explanation of ethnicity is that it allows us to go beyond the oft-stated but unspecified assertion that ethnicity satisfies the 'natural' individual needs for identity or security. Psychoanalysis has been directly concerned with

explaining how the unconscious mind develops out of the interweaving of the instincts with the social environment, so that: 'what appears to be natural and inescapable is in fact socially constructed'.¹³

The central propositions may be initially summarized. The conscious, rational individual (the ego) is depicted as inherently fragile and in danger of being overwhelmed by the demands of the complex external world on the one hand, and by the demands of the unconscious instinctual drives (the id) and the conscience (approximating the super-ego) on the other. The fragile ego seeks support and reinforcement, therefore, in the attempt to gain a strong sense of individual identity, emotional security, and moral authority. Communal affiliation provides one possible avenue for reinforcement, and this occurs at three 'levels'. First, at the ego level: the sense of individual identity is strengthened when we seek a sense of our individual uniqueness by the belief that we belong to a unique and real sub-category of humanity. Second, at the level of the id: our sense of emotional security is strengthened by the belief that we belong to a community offering us unconditional protective love, similar to that offered by the mother and the womb. Third, at the level of the super-ego: the individual's fragile sense of moral certainty is strengthened by erecting a mythical ethnic stereotype embodying the norms and values to which the individual can submit. In these various ways then, the individual affiliates to the cultural community by perceiving it as a mythical family. This explanation as to the psychological power of the ethnic attachment provides the basis for explaining the widespread appeal of the political ideology of ethnic nationalism, which translates each of the psychological mechanisms of the kinship myth into legitimacy symbols.

The ego: the individual's need for a sense of unique identity

Several psychoanalysts have focused attention on the ways in which the individual develops a sense of ego; a sense of individual identity as a unique and rational actor distinct from others. It is ironic that probably the most interesting explanations of the individual's search for an integrated ego come from divergent ends of the psychoanalytical spectrum—from the ego psychology of Erik Erikson; the object-relations psychoanalysis associated with Melanie Klein, which stresses the fragility of the ego; and the Lacanians, to whom the ego is a fiction.

Melanie Klein argued that the infant experiences an overwhelming anxiety in the face of the innate destructive impulses and the ambiguities inherent in personal relationships. She depicted the main defensive response of the fragile ego as that of 'splitting'. Instead of experiencing the external world directly, we experience it through the filter screen of internal phantasies, and we create a phantasy duality, between the idealism projected onto the good objects and destructiveness projected onto the bad objects. In this way, we perceive our relationships with others in schizoid terms, as split into the good and the bad. Through this splitting, ambiguities are denied, in that the negative attributes of the good object can be projected onto the bad object, and the admired qualities of the bad object can be distorted so that admiration manifests itself in its destructive form as envy.

Although the ego of healthy adults gradually becomes more integrated, so that splitting

declines and they can recognize and deal with ambiguities in the environment, 'splitting...remains an important defence which is always available'.¹⁴ The implication for ethnicity is clear: that individuals who feel threatened by the complexity and contradictions of their environment might retreat into this schizoid mechanism of splitting the social world up into the 'good us' and the 'bad them'. The 'bad them' then becomes the repository upon which feelings of aggression can be projected, so that even qualities in the 'them' which might otherwise be admired now become perceived in negative terms. For Melanie Klein, therefore, ethnocentrism and racism represent widespread but fundamentally regressive strategies for promoting a sense of ego identity.¹⁵

Some recent object relations theorists have denied this regressive implication of the ethnic attachment, and have tended to stress rather that ethnic affiliation constitutes a normal aspect of development. In a recent work which reviews this literature, the American 'Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry' has argued that the mental process of splitting has its origins in the neurological developments of early life, and that the sense of self-esteem provided by ethnicity is both central to ego development and functional to individual and group survival:

At the moment of birth man is thrust from intrauterine union into a world of dichotomy, self and other.... Parents then naturally divide and redirect their children's ambivalence, finding good within the family and bad outside. This precedent sets the stage for society to do the same not only with its individuals, but also on the group level. The faculty of individuals to reunite and fuse with the group appears to be deeply embedded behavior that assures the survival of the individual, the group, and therefore the species.¹⁶

A contrasting depiction of the ego, and how it might be strengthened by the ethnic attachment, is that offered by Jacques Lacan. He depicts the ego not as the emergence of a realistic and rational sense of autonomy, but as the erection of a fragile linguistic fiction. For Lacan, the self does not exist apart from or prior to society, so that the ego is simply the inherently fragile fiction of a coherent self which is determined by the pre-given structures of the culture, and specifically of language, into which the individual is inserted.¹⁷ Faced with the disintegrative chaos of desires and of the external world, the individual seeks fictions of certainty.¹⁸ The first crucial stage in the creation of the imaginary selfhood is the so-called 'mirror phase', where interactions with others lead to the false perception of a unified self. The imaginary self is constituted by reference to the imaginary other; and it is the structures of language which define the relationship of the ego to 'The Other'. The main linguistic categories by which the sense of self is defined and located are those of kinship and gender, and this distinction between the self and The Other has been employed, for example by Franz Fanon, in explaining racism.¹⁹

As Stephen Frosh has noted, Lacan's formulation signifies that the racist is one who maintains his own fiction of wholeness and coherence by perceiving the cultural attributes of The Other, in this case the physiognomy, as embodying the threat of fragmentation and disorder.

It is the visual image of The Other that makes it possible for it to become a container for the racist's internal otherness, for the fragmentation that is central to the experience of infancy and, indeed, to the experience of modernity itself. The immense terror around which the psychology of the racist centres derives... from the threat to the precarious sense of ego-integrity that proceeds from an encounter with the black other: the *visibility* of difference undermines the abstract sense of homogeneity which so shakily supports the ego... Racism becomes a fortress for the fragments of the self.²⁰

The third psychoanalyst who offers an explanation of how ethnicity serves to strengthen the ego, is Erik Erikson. He argues, in contrast to Lacan, that the ego is potentially strong and effective.²¹ Ego development is seen as dominated by the search for a sense of uniqueness as a person, and crucial to this is the need for a clearly defined role and place in society. As individuals who are born alone and helpless, we have a need 'to know where we come from, and where we stand, where we are going, and who is going with us'.²² The search for identity thus necessarily involves the search for a category of society to which the individual can affiliate. Such a collective identity involves the stereotyping of self and the stereotyping of others.

The positive identity must ever fortify itself by drawing the line against undesirables.... Man always seeks somebody who is below him, who will be kept in place, and on whom can be projected all that is felt to be weak, low and dangerous in oneself.²³

The sense of individual identity thus involves the location of oneself at the centre and the drawing of boundary lines between such a centre and the periphery. This psychic development of the ego has directly political implications, since it emerges in the individual's capacity to imagine communities of affiliation and of exclusion.²⁴ The psychological development of the individual ego thus involves the formation of an ideological vision which defines these 'mythological' communal entities. This process of ideologizing the individuals' sense of their positive identity, by imagining an 'us and them' distinction, is referred to by Erikson as 'pseudospeciation'. For Erikson, the developing child finds the first 'pseudospecies' in the family, but further development leads to the perception that the family is itself located within a larger community of the race or the nation.

The human being has a built-in tendency to think of the 'subspecies' to which he or she belongs—family, class, tribe, nation—as '*the* human species'.... A sense of irreversible difference between one's own and other 'kinds' can attach itself not only to evolved major differences among human populations, but to small differences that have come to loom large.... In the form of ingroup loyalties, pseudospeciation can contribute to human being's highest achievements; in the form of outgroup enmities, it can express itself in clannishness, fearful avoidance, and even mortal hatred.²⁵

The explanation of ethnic categorization as one aspect of our search for a sense of our own unique ego identity thus refers partly to a cognitive process—a search for a way of comprehending a complex world by erecting simplifying myths—but it also reflects the search for significance and importance; an awareness of oneself as a coherent and purposeful actor in the world. Ethnic affiliation and categorization promote such a sense by linking the individual ego to the perceived authenticity of one demarcated community.

This brief outline of competing formulations as to the relationship between the search for ego identity and the ethnic affiliation is sufficient to indicate how they concur in showing that the potentiality for ethnic affiliation arises, not from instinct, but rather from the influence of the environment upon the development of the unconscious, and thence upon the ego. They therefore offer a first step towards explaining the psychological resilience of ethnicity.

The id: the individual's need for emotional security

The simplest explanation for the emotional power of ethnicity is that version of sociobiology which suggests that there exists an instinct leading us to give prior affection to those who appear to be genetically similar to us. Psychoanalysis does recognize that individuals have instinctual needs for emotional oneness with others, but one of its major messages is that while the healthy individual might channel these needs into equal, loving relationships with other individuals, it is the less mature or more neurotic individual who might retreat from the responsibility and freedom of equal affiliations and seek instead to satisfy his or her instinctual needs by relations of emotional dependency on 'similar' others. In such unequal dependency relationships emotional security is attained by infantile, submissive love; and ethnic affiliation is frequently depicted, in psychoanalysis, as a neurotic distortion of the child's love for the family.

Erich Fromm is the psychoanalyst who most directly discusses the relationship between the individual's need for love and the communal affiliation. Fromm was concerned primarily with the need of the individual to confront and find resolutions to the 'existential dichotomies' which arise from the fact that he is both a part of nature, and alone, apart from nature. Faced with these dichotomies, the individual exhibits an anxiety about his aloneness which emerges in a 'fear of freedom'.²⁶ He tries to escape from intolerable feelings of helplessness and aloneness by seeking for a return to 'natural roots', and the 'most elementary of the natural ties is the tie of the child to the mother'. The individual exhibits 'a deep longing for the security and rootedness which the relationship to [the] mother once gave him', and he locates such security in the idea of the communal group. 'The family and the clan, and later on the state, nation or church, assume the same function which the individual mother had originally for the child.'²⁷

The fixation on the mother is thus manifested as a desire for the protection and security which comes with the abandonment of individuality and submersion in the group. Various psychic mechanisms are involved in this escape from freedom through group affiliation. They include elements of moral masochism, in which the individual exhibits a neurotic need for affection; and also elements of what Fromm calls 'automaton conformity', i.e. the attempt to wipe out the separateness of individual existence by

extreme submissive conformity, so that the group-self is substituted for the real self. Narcissism, instead of being directed to the self as self-love, becomes focused upon the group, so that the group is seen as more important than the self.

For Fromm, the attachment to the ethnic group is one of several neurotic responses which individuals have had to the sense of aloneness engendered by modernization and capitalism:

Man—freed from traditional bonds of the medieval community, afraid of the new freedom which transformed him into an isolated atom—escaped into a new idolatry of blood and soil, of which nationalism and racism are the two most evident expressions.... Those who are not ‘familiar’ by bonds of blood and soil (expressed by common language, customs, food, songs, etc.) are looked upon with suspicion, and paranoid delusions about them can spring up at the slightest provocation. This incestuous fixation not only poisons the relationship of the individual to the stranger, but to the members of his own clan and to himself. The person who has not freed himself from the ties to blood and soil is not yet fully born as a human being; his capacity for love and reason are crippled; he does not experience himself nor his fellow man in their—and his own—human reality. Nationalism is our form of incest, is our idolatry, is our insanity.²⁸

Fromm is not denying that individuals need to develop bonds of love for others. Indeed, his concern is precisely to stress that individuals have fundamental human needs for what he terms ‘relatedness’, ‘rootedness’, a ‘sense of identity’ and a ‘frame of orientation and devotion’. But for Fromm, the healthy individual is one who satisfies these needs by a love of all humanity, by a love and respect for oneself, and by equal loving relationships with other individuals. The tie to the ethnic group constitutes for Fromm a retreat from humanity, in that it is based instead on neurotic ties of narcissism, incest and herd conformity.

Fromm’s view of ethnicity is thus much more negative than is Erikson’s. Whereas for Erikson the individual gains his sense of unique identity by ethnic affiliation, for Fromm, the appeal of ethnicity is precisely that the individual can lose himself in the ‘herd’. He gains a sense of security precisely by losing his sense of individual identity. The incompatibility between these two formulations raises the possibility of a distinction between two types of ethnic affiliation—the ‘healthy’ attachment which offers identity with security, and the ‘neurotic’ attachment in which security is attained at the cost of identity.

The super-ego: the individual’s need of authority

It is already clear that the classification of people into one or other ethnic category involves their moral grading, so that the us group is characteristically defined as morally superior to the them group. But the identification of the us group with moral virtue goes even deeper than this. When the individual affiliates to an ethnic community he suspends his own moral judgement in favour of the moral authority provided by the group

stereotype. The ethnic community is perceived as embodying a set of authoritative moral norms, inherent in the group's language, culture and religion, which define 'correct' behaviour. It is this function of communal affiliation, as an 'expression...of man's irrational longing for the return of authority'²⁹ which Sigmund Freud himself stressed. For Freud, the submission of the child to the authority of the father becomes the model for the adult individual's subsequent submission to social authority. This submission to authority is internalized (introjected) to form the unconscious moral super-ego within the individual, in which the aggressive impulses towards authority are turned inwards to generate guilt feelings directed against the self. The superego impels obedience to internal moral ideals in the same way that the infant was compelled to obey external authority. Subsequently, when adults submit themselves to the communal group, they enter into a relationship of dependence in which they each identify with the leader or the authority principle of the group. This ideal authority principle is then internalized into the super-ego, thus repeating the submissive response of the child to the parents. In the extreme case of the 'authoritarian personality' it was argued that the emotional need for unconditional submission to authority predisposed the individual both to ethnocentrism and to fascism.³⁰

This portrayal of the relationship between leader and follower in the group, in which submissive love and identification with moral authority intertwine, has essential similarities with the Weberian notion of charisma. Freud saw authority as always being personified in the individual leader, but he did this, as Rieff notes, because he 'profoundly overestimated the community of groups' by thinking of politics as if it were 'a permanent mass meeting.'³¹ However, it is clear that in large non-face-to-face groups authority is not always personified. In an 'imagined community' like the ethnic group, it is the myth of the stereotype group character which replaces and performs the role of the individual, charismatic father-leader in embodying moral authority. This stereotype group character is in fact the totality of the imagined community. Instead of consisting of real individuals with whom one has actual, affective ties, the imagined community consists of strangers on whom are projected the idealized stereotype. Thus, identification with the group is identical to submission to the authority of the moral ideal embodied in the group stereotype. The individual perceives the ethnic community with which he identifies as embodying the moral authority for which he yearns.

Ethnic prejudice

The explanations of identification with an 'in-group' have immediate implications for our understanding of attitudes and evaluations towards 'out-groups'.³² The phenomenon of ethnic prejudice becomes understandable, therefore, in terms of three processes corresponding to the three bases for ethnic affiliation. First, if the individual seeks ego identity through affiliation with an 'us' community which is defined as that which is both central and significant; then the 'them' communities necessarily come to be perceived as peripheral, marginal and of inferior status. Second, if the individual finds id satisfaction within the communal group in the form of submissive, affective bonding; then the aggression and hostility which is repressed is then projected onto the 'out-group' (who

are thence depicted as aggressive); or, if the aggression is not repressed, it is displaced away from expression within the in-group and takes the form of hatred redirected towards the scapegoated out-group.³³ The third process, which arises from the stereotyping of the in-group as a moral authority ideal, involves the projection onto the outgroup of negative values, and the displacement onto them of guilt feelings. The moral virtue of the in-group is thus counterposed by the moral degeneracy of the out-group; the fiction of the one being maintained by the fiction of the other.

Thus, while the identity of the in-group may be defined in a variety of cultural terms depending upon the situational insecurities engendered, prejudice against cultural out-groups of one type or another is seen to be endemic. It involves much more than simply faulty evaluations which arise from cognitive ignorance of other cultures. Rather it is the corollary of in-group attachment, and involves both a hostility towards the other and also the erection of a moral justification for that hostility.

The kinship myth

If it is sensible to argue that ethnic affiliation is powerful because it offers one means of channelling fundamental psychological drives, there nevertheless remains a crucial question as to why the individual should seek in-group satisfaction within specifically *cultural* groups, perceived in terms of language, religion or race; rather than within any other form of communal grouping.

The perception of a cultural group as an ethnic community involves the belief on the part of the individual that his affiliation to that group is ascriptive, that the group possesses historical permanence in that it claims a common history and constitutes a common descent group, and that the distinctive cultural attributes of the group are such as to define clear boundaries from other such groups. These perceptions do not, however, derive from the accurate observation of social realities, which would show rather the malleability and porousness of linguistic, religious or racial variations. They derive, as we have noted, from the needs of the fragmented psyche for myths of certainty and coherence. The primary image of certainty for the individual is that offered to the infant by the family; embodying the promised source, if not the actuality, of individual identity, security and authority. The adult, in contrast, is exposed to the complexity and uncertainty of the modern world, and the search for certainty through the formation of attachments to the ethnic community is, in essence, an attempt by the adult to return to and replicate the security of the family. If such an attempt is, as psychoanalysis sometimes implies, a neurotic one, then it is a particularly widespread neurosis. If this insight of psychoanalysis is valid—that the adult in politics seeks an image of security which accords to the image of the family—then it becomes clear why it is the cultural group which so often becomes the focus for such an attachment. It is the ease with which the cultural group can mimic the family, can portray itself as a ‘family writ large’, which explains its appeal.

The family consists of individuals who look similar and who share similar values because they have a common genetic ancestry and shared experiences. When cultural groups claim common attributes, common history and common ancestry they are