Abstract: The study of ethnicity and politics has generated a vast, informative literature over the past 30+ years, covering the globe and reaching into the past. Unfortunately, even a brief survey of that literature makes clear the striking absence of agreement on some of the most fundamental aspects of the phenomenon, including: the nature of ethnicity; the relevant historical timeframe for evaluation; the appropriate level(s) of analysis; and the character of ethnopolitical activism, among many others.

This paper applies the heuristic model of Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) to ethnopolitical mobilization to clarify the relationships between factors at the international, state, and group level to ethnic political activism. More specifically, conceptualizing ethnopolitical mobilization as a process occurring in qualitatively distinct phases, CAS focuses analysis on those instances of phase-transitions, hypothesizing that at such critical moments the relationships of various factors, including the mobilization itself, may change. Should this hypothesis hold, this may explain the failure of many statistical models to provide detailed understanding of ethnicity and politics, reflecting much of the excellent earlier literature while pointing towards a potentially fruitful focus of future study.

This paper represents the early stages of a manuscript. As such, the ideas presented here are preliminary explorations of reconceptualizing ethnopolitical mobilization with an eye towards retaining the richness of case-studies while moving towards meaningful explanatory models. Any comments you have are warmly appreciated. Do not cite without permission.
Introduction

Scholarly research exploring ethnicity and politics over more than forty years has generated large and rapidly increasing literature. An internet search of the World Political Science Abstracts generated over 13,000 hits, with an estimated 50% clearly applicable to ethnicity and nationalism. In addition, hundreds of books have been published on the topic, and numerous journals dedicated to ethnicity and politics are currently in publication. Table 1 breaks down the number of total hits from the WPSA database, divided in half, by year from 1980-2003:

Table 1: Hits by year for relevant articles (total search hits * 50%)

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Clearly, therefore, the topic of ethnicity and politics does not suffer from a lack of scholarly interest.

1 Search conducted 28 September, 2004 for journal articles with ethn* or nation* in the title (ti = (ethn* or nation*)) generated 13,557 records. The search criteria generated results for titles including "cross-national", "national", etc. not related to ethnicity, nationalism, or ethnopolitical mobilization. Of the first 100 records, I determine 52 article titles relevant to ethnicity and politics and, therefore, roughly estimate half of the hits to be relevant articles. No doubt other scholars would likely determine a different number of titles to be relevant to ethnicity and politics, but at least for purposes of illustration these data reveal a literature of considerable size.
However, equally clear is the absence of any appreciable consensus regarding most, if not all, aspects of ethnicity and politics: the nature of ethnicity; the universe of cases; conceptualizing ethnopolitical mobilization; the relevant factors involved in the process; and the appropriate timescale for analysis are just a few of the unresolved debates found in the literature. Indeed, the brief overview of the literature below, with reference to some of the more well-known studies, demonstrates the tremendous number of factors that play a role in at least some cases of ethnopolitical mobilization. Outlining how to exploit the large, detailed information in a manner leading towards explanatory models represents both the theme of this conference and the topic of this paper.

Economics

Economic factors enter into the analysis in a number of ways. The absolute level of economic development may directly generate resources exploited by ethnic entrepreneurs to generate political activism (Olzak 1992). Indirectly, the absolute level of economic development generates technologies that may impact the likelihood of ethnopolitical mobilization (Gellner 1983): mass media may allow for the cultivation of national or sub-national identities (Anderson 1991; Linz and Stepan 1996); transportation technologies bring isolated peoples into contact, increasing the salience of ethnicity; and, in a similar fashion, urbanization and industrialization bring together diverse peoples in cities and factories, both increasing the awareness of ethnic differences as well as providing rationales for states to pursue policies of homogenization (Deutsch 1966).

Other scholars emphasize the differences between the relative economic levels of the national core and ethnic peripheries. Some find that economically backward peripheries with ethnic identities mobilize around that identity, as opposed to class-based mobilization, to protest their maldevelopment (Hechter 1999). Other cases illustrate relatively advantaged ethnic groups increasing their activism to protect their relative advantage. Still other studies point to changes in relative status, as opposed to evaluations of static comparisons, as stimulating ethnopolitical mobilization.²

² For a general critique of models of economic incentives and the multiplicity of causal relationships, see Connor 2001.
Political Opportunity Structures

Political opportunity structures, broadly conceptualized, represent an additional set of factors contributing to ethnic identity formation and politicization. The legitimacy of sub-national identities and rights ethnic groups are entitled to represent normative constraints under which ethnic identities may emerge and mobilize (Grillo 1989; Oakes 2001). Democracy facilitates political activism and, perhaps, reinforces ethnic identity as a personal right (e.g. Cartrite 2004). And sub-national institutions represent aspirational or actualized structures protecting ethnic identity (e.g. Lapidoth 1996; Moreno 2000; Sambanis 2000; O'Leary et al, 2001; Lustick et al. 2004).

Culture

Many scholars emphasize the significance of cultural differences between the dominant identity and subordinate groups as significant factors in ethnopolitical mobilization (Smith 1991). Among these, religion, language, and phenotype distinctions appear most relevant. However it may be the relative distinctiveness of an ethnic group, along whatever dimensions of differentiation it has or can generate, rather than any necessary or sufficient aspect of ethnicity that best explains the likelihood of ethnopolitical mobilization (Cartrite 2003). Furthermore, the relative homogeneity of an ethnic identity may impact the likelihood for political activism.

Demographics

In absolute terms, some groups may simply be too small to effectively mobilize. Or it may be the size of a minority relative to the dominant group that represents the causal factor, as even relatively small polities may experience ethnic conflict. Still others argue that changing demographics drive political mobilization, as groups seek to politically shore up an eroding demographic position or exploit an increasingly favorable environment.

Geography

More recently, some scholars have begun to focus on the role geography plays in ethnopolitical mobilization. Geographic isolation, due to spatial remoteness or difficult intervening landforms (mountains, oceans, deserts, etc.) may insulate an ethnic group from outgroup in-migration and the ability of the state to penetrate the remote region with policies and
institutions. While studies including geography as causal or, perhaps more appropriately intervening, variables are as yet few, this represents an increasingly addressed set of factors.

Contagion

Secessionist, autonomist, and decolonization movements, grounded in the rhetoric of self-determination, may provide a normative justification for ethnopolitical mobilization. But it may be the example of the relative success of some ethnic groups in realizing their demands that stimulates ethnic activism. Interestingly, the example of ethnic groups in the same state may be a more powerful factor than the mobilization of ethnic kin in other states in generating imitation.³

International factors

Some scholars point to international institutions outlining and protecting ethnic group rights as a vital component in understanding ethnic activism. The apparent expansion of ethnic rights (Kymlicka 1995) embedded in these institutions lead some to argue that, in fact, they represent the institutional manifestation of an emergent and expanding norm of ethnic rights (Jackson Preece 1998; Alcock 2000). While that connection remains debatable,⁴ including the evolution of international conditions in assessments of ethnic mobilization appears an important dimension in evaluating the process of politicizing ethnicity.

Time

Occasionally, some scholars point to the importance of the timing of ethnopolitical mobilization relative to changing opportunity structures; mistimed mobilizations may truncate what would have been a successful mobilization trajectory. Others point to the relatively long historical processes underpinning ethnic activism, highlighting the successful realization of

³ For example, while French Basques clearly are impacted by Spanish Basque activism, their mobilization pattern more clearly follows Breton activism (Jacob 1994; Cartrite 2003).
⁴ Both the texts of many of the hallmark treaties (i.e. Utrecht, Vienna, Berlin) and supporting documents, particularly personal correspondence, fail to provide evidence for an emergent norm of ethnic minority rights. Rather, most of the treaties and discussions reflect a concern among signatories for removing potential causes of international conflict and, even with the League of Nations Minority Treaties system, temporary protections for minorities with an eye towards assimilation. However, ethnic activists have long pointed to these treaties as reflecting an implicit norm. Given that recent instruments do explicitly refer to group rights, an appropriate explanatory model may be that hallmark treaties may have been misunderstood by ethnic activists, but that as human rights more broadly evolved, that misinterpretation became increasingly adopted as the appropriate understanding of group rights.
preconditions prior to political activism (Hroch 2000). And, in terms of scholarly research, taking into account changes over time represents a considerable increase in required information for purposes of analysis.

*Ethnic mobilization as both independent and dependent variable*

Finally, some scholarship, and common-sense, tells us that ethnopolitical mobilization is both the result of and changes the context in which it unfolds. Clearly most scholarship focuses on what factors impact the process of politicization. Yet states, international actors, and even other ethnic groups clearly respond to the ethnopolitical mobilization of some groups, thereby affecting the so-called independent variables. This bi-directionality, while obvious to many, necessarily obfuscates tidy linear analyses.

*Moving beyond case-studies*

The range of factors surveyed here is not exhaustive, but hopefully captures the majority of variables emphasized in the literature as a whole; furthermore, the sources cited are intended as examples rather than definitive works. As one would likely expect, most studies do not address each of these factors; selecting on the dependent variable, case-studies focus on those variables that appear most relevant to the case in question, setting aside consideration of factors which may play significant roles in other cases. Unfortunately, attempts to generalize through combining information from different cases are made more difficult, as each case may address a different set of factors.

Ideally, it would be possible to have an agreed-upon set of factors to be addressed for each case across an agreed-upon range of time. Quantified, such a collection of information could potentially be represented as a huge three-dimensional dataset: the columns would contain the full set of factors of interest, the rows representing the years, and a panel of data for each case. Applying exotic statistical techniques to such a complex dataset might generate some compelling generalized statement.

This vast dataset is, of course, practically impossible. Instead, large-N solutions have been to reduce the number of data points by restricting the rows (years), columns (variables) and cases to those for which data can be collected or coded; from these truncated (at least in comparison to the ideal) datasets such studies then propose general models. Small-N researchers
reduce the data points by, especially, limiting the number of cases to a very small set and, to a widely varying degree, limiting the columns and/or rows to those that appear most relevant to the case. Not surprisingly, perhaps, proponents of large-N approaches criticize case-studies as too particularistic, limiting the quest for generalizable models. Conversely, small-N advocates posit that the very process of creating comparable measures across groups and the necessary limit on time and measured factors overly simplifies intricate processes; as a result, the general models produced may not faithfully represent any existing case.

This paper suggests that the heuristic framework of Complex Adaptive Systems represents a path towards models of explanation that retains much of the richness of case-studies while also allowing for cross-case comparisons with an eye towards explanatory model-building. In particular, CAS narrows the focus of analysis to critical moments of adaptation, evaluating the dynamics involved; returning to the problem of the unobtainable ideal data set, CAS would limit the data not by reducing columns, rows, or panels, but emphasize the need for information only at transition phases, assuming as unnecessary the large numbers of data points reflecting periods of equilibrium.

**Complex Adaptive Systems – An Overview**

The heuristic framework of Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) emerged from the broader analysis of complexity and non-linear dynamics, first in the natural sciences and, much more recently, tentatively applied to social science (Eidelson 1997; Lansing 2003). Physicists, geneticists, and evolutionary biologists, among others, increasingly determined that simple models of causation failed to provide predictive power at very basic levels of analysis; rather, probabilistic models appeared a better fit to understanding the location of electrons around a nucleus, the relationship between genes and physical traits, or the unfolding of evolutionary trajectories (Dennett 1995). Indeed, philosopher of science Karl Popper, in his last book and in stark contrast to his long-held positions on empirical analysis, argued that the shift towards conceptualizations of propensities represented a profound transformation: "The world is no longer a causal machine… It now can be seen as a world of propensities, as an unfolding process of realizing possibilities and of unfolding new possibilities (1990, pp. 18-9)." Interestingly, while some social scientists have attempted to follow the earlier paths of causal modeling, and are diagnosed by their critics as suffering from "physics envy", qualitative scholars have long
held that studying human behavior must necessarily be more difficult than work done in natural sciences precisely because the huge number of interactions of potentially relevant factors. Indeed, the range of potential factors, from individual cognition to climactic forces, is so great this seems to suggest simple causal models can not work: Imagine if electrons could think! This turn away from causal models in the natural sciences could, therefore, bring natural and social sciences closer together. Gell-Mann was among the first to see the potential application to social phenomena: "Even more exciting is the possibility of useful contributions to the life sciences, the social and behavioral sciences, and even matters of policy for human society (1995: 322)."

From the general analysis of complexity and studies of the "edge of chaos" (the tendency of systems to move towards dynamic yet persistent patterns; Kauffman1969; Langton 1990; Wolfram 2002) emerged CAS. Complex, often used as a synonym for complicated, is understood from this perspective in very specific terms: repeated interactions between units generate higher-level phenomena not determined by the nature of the units themselves (Kauffman 1990; Holland 1995). Adaptative is the potentially unforeseen movement towards more optimal forms of organization; Kaufmann (1965) suggested the concept of a "fitness landscape" of peaks and valleys with adaptation representing movement up a local peak. And systems suggests internal logics of organization. Central to CAS is the notion of linked systems which co-evolve: 'Coevolution is a story of coupled deforming 'fitness landscapes'. The outcome depends jointly on how much my landscape is deformed when you make an adaptive move, and how rapidly I can respond by changing 'phenotype' (Kaufmann 1990: 303)."

**Defining Characteristics of CAS**

"If the only tool you have is a hammer, you will see every problem as a nail (Abraham Maslow)"; In an effort to avoid positing this, or any, heuristic framework as a one-size-fits-all approach to researching ethnopolitical phenomena, this paper defines CAS more narrowly than some of its adherents. First is the hierarchical arrangement of relatively autonomous systems (Simon 1995): Like matryoshka, lower-level systems are embedded within higher ones; unlike

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5 Note that a "peak" may only be locally optimal: There may be other, higher (and therefore more optimal) peaks elsewhere in the landscape the realization of which would require "descending" the local peak as part of the process of moving towards global optimality. Because disadaption does not appear as a viable dynamic, systems can become stuck on sub-optimal peaks.

6 I also am using a relatively narrow sense of "adaptation" as representing a change in the internal logic of a system rather than, for example, merely choosing an alternative choice from a range of possibilities.
Russian nested dolls, however, CAS posits that higher level systems are understood as the aggregation of lower level systems (Holland 1995). Between CAS components are interconnections that are the mechanism for interaction and, therefore, aggregation; further, intrasystem connections are stronger than intersystem connection, and the number of connections plays a vital role. Finally, CAS display flexibility, redundancy, and error management: Part of the process of adaptation lies in trial-and-error as a system tries to move towards optimality in a constantly changing fitness landscape; "mistakes" are not usually catastrophic, in that they can be contained (the error only pertains to one of the nested dolls) or if one component fails, similar components continue to work.

Self-organization and stable systems

Emerging from the configuration of components in CAS is a number of important dynamics that describe how a system behaves over time. Primary among these is self-organization: the emergence of relative overall stability within a system absent any guiding higher power. Self-organization occurs in part as a result of positive feedback, in which components generate a (perhaps only slightly) more favorable environment in response to a change in one component. However, for systems at the edge of chaos, organization across the system as a whole does not equate to static behavior on the part of system components; rather, the interactions between components are thought to be continually in flux; thus, for example, although prices of a good may stabilize, this does not mean that producers and consumers have stopped trying to maximize their utility and simply agreed on a stable price.

Phase-transitions

Relative equilibrium in a CAS does not imply that dramatic changes do not occasionally appear. However, unlike punctuated equilibrium models, which posit an exogenous shock causing dramatic changes to relatively stable systems (Gould 1989), CAS explores the apparent

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7 Kauffmann (1993) discovered, however, that too many connections between components may be as likely as too few to generate paralyzed systems; a system at the "edge of chaos" may therefore be in part due to having neither too many nor too few components and interconnections.
8 This relates, in some respects, to the narrow conceptualization of complexity used here.
9 Positive feedback can be seen in market systems as increasing returns, in which a slight consumer preference for an item leads to its increased production, which then reinforces demand for the product through the decrease in available alternatives. Negative feedback may also occur, although it is less clear that such a dynamic may generate stable systems.
dramatic change in systems that result from internal, seemingly stabilizing dynamics. Consider, for example, a system of gradually increasing heat and frozen water. The slow increase in temperature appears to have no effect until it reaches the melting point, when "suddenly" the water goes from a solid to a liquid state. An apparent stable equilibrium is realized once the ice has melted, and the temperature may continue to rise with no evident external effect until, suddenly, the liquid begins to turn to vapor. While the temperature of the water can be increasing at a gradual, constant rate, its physical state experiences two dramatic phase-transitions.\(^{10}\)

Phase-transition involves the directionality, or \textit{hysteresis}, of the transition. For example, a horse experiences a phase-transition between walking and trotting, hysteresis posits that these transitions may occur at different speeds: a horse accelerating its gate may transition from walking to trotting at (hypothetically) 7 miles per hour, but when slowing it may make the trot-walk transition at 5 miles per hour. If this indeed holds, the question of the gait of the horse at 6 miles per hour can only be answered if the directionality of the phase transition is known. The significance of hysteresis represents one dimension requiring exploration in any CAS model.

A subset of phase-transitions is labeled \textit{cusp catastrophes}, which involve the interaction effect between the transitioning system and an "asymmetry parameter" (Guastello 1995). Consider, for example, state resistance to internal pressures for political activism by ethnic groups: If state resistance to politicization is low, ethnopolitical mobilization may be a relatively gradual, smooth transition; if, however, the state resists politicization, it may succeed in preventing it, but if ethnic pressures are great, the shift from non-political to political activism will be dramatic. Some phase transitions may be purely a function of internal dynamics; however, CAS suggests considering the effects of external factors on inhibiting or facilitating transitions with a special focus on the potential generation of sudden, dramatic transitions they may cause.

\textbf{Summary}

Advocates of CAS see adapting systems everywhere, following Popper in the evaluation of complexity as a total paradigm shift in science. In this paper, however, such ambitions are restrained: Rather than suggesting that ethnicity and politics will never be understood the same

\(^{10}\) For an example of the evaluation of phase transitions drawn from political science, see Lustick 1993.
once viewed through the CAS lens, I propose that CAS may facilitate building on the richness of case-studies while avoiding some of the pitfalls of large-N projects. Thus the remainder of the paper represents one possible conceptualization of ethnopolitical mobilization through the CAS heuristic framework, concluding with a discussion of what may be gained by the approach as well as some of the weaknesses.\textsuperscript{11}

**Ethnopolitical Mobilization seen through CAS**

*The Systems*

As described above, CAS posits a framework of "systems within systems", with aggregation at one level representing interacting systems at another. However, Holland (1998) argues that attempting to model more than three "levels" requires moving across scientific disciplines. Thus although ethnopolitical mobilization is a phenomenon resulting from the interaction of neurons (and atoms within neurons, and particles within atoms, and so on) in an individual brain to responses to environmental shifts and, ultimately, cosmological changes (such as the eventual explosion and collapse of the sun), this paper restricts itself to fairly standard political science in modeling ethnic groups, states, and the inter-state system as a CAS, beginning with a description of the internal logics of each type of system.

- **Ethnic groups**

Ethnic groups entail a logic of differentiation: ethnic identity salience appears driven by encounters with, and potential threats from, other ethnic identities.\textsuperscript{12} Aside from physical safety of individuals, which need not be understood as the driving logic for ethnic groups, protecting and perhaps extending the "differential fact" of an ethnic group represents a, perhaps simplified, driving internal logic (Cartrite 2003). Indeed, disagreements in the literature on particular aspects of ethnic identity as necessary or sufficient for eventual mobilization may benefit by hypothesizing that it is relative distinctiveness, rather than a particular type of social cleavage, that best captures ethnic differentiation; such relative distinctiveness, while potentially arising

\textsuperscript{11} It should be noted that the methodological approach most closely associated with complexity broadly is computational, or agent-based, modeling. However, while such techniques are certainly compatible with CAS, there is no necessary or inevitable coupling of the technique to the framework. I suggest that, in fact, a CAS model would be best developed through a mix of methodological approaches. For similar arguments, see Laitin

\textsuperscript{12} Cognitive psychology suggests that sorting and categorization represent emergent properties of cognitive structures; however, categorization along ethnic lines necessarily requires some differentiation. In this sense, therefore, an isolated cultural group cannot understand itself as an ethnic community, as all the individuals are of the same type. See, for example, Kiel 1989; Hirschfeld 1996; and Gil-White 2001.
from "primordial" elements of religious, linguistic, or other cleavages, may be enhanced through the construction of such artifacts as a literature, a flag, anthem, or holiday. Theoretically, therefore, an ethnic group aware of its distinctiveness will, if left to its own devices, seek to protect and enhance its distinctiveness.

Given that ethnopolitical mobilization is the phenomenon under exploration here, the question of what represents a phase-transition in the political mobilization trajectory of an ethnic group, ostensibly the focus of the analysis, becomes of paramount interest. If there are no phase-transitions, it is less certain that CAS addresses the problem of how to reduce the necessary data for generalization. And, perhaps reasonably, scholars tend to represent an ethnic group as a relatively stable category.\(^\text{13}\)

However, some scholars suggest that ethnic groups, along the trajectory of political mobilization, pass through qualitatively distinct phases. Building on Hroch (2000) I demonstrate elsewhere (Cartrite 2003) that there are four qualitatively distinct phases of ethnopolitical mobilization in democracies: cultural activation; political advocacy; ethnic parties passoires; and competitive ethnic political parties. Movement through these phases is driven by the persistent logic of ethnic identity differentiation. However, each phase entails organizational and activist logics particular to itself; furthermore, a distinct array of external factors come into play for each phase; for example, political entrepreneurs may take little notice of cultural associations but become much more interested when an ethnic group forms an interest group to seek advocacy on its behalf.

Conceptualizing phases of qualitatively distinct ethnopolitical mobilization, while compatible with CAS, does not by itself require such an epistemological shift. Indeed, one can conceptualize, as some statistical models do, a different linear regression for each phase. What CAS suggests, however, is that as a system approaches a phase transition, factors may become much more important, while after a successful or failed transition, things return to a more normal state. Thus the "sudden" formation of an ethnic political party may lead to immediate state responses. After a period of time, however, the ethnic party may become an accepted part of the political context, and state responses, while perhaps distinct from the pre-ethnic party period,

\(^{13}\) There are, of course, ongoing debates as to the difference between an ethnic group and a nation (see Worsley 1984; Smith 1991; Connor 1994). Indeed, Oommen (1997) highlights the slipperiness of these categories as a major problem in the field. It may be the case, however, that a rigorous understanding of the differences between an ethnic group and nation raises the possibility of a phase-transition; a CAS framework would then seek to evaluate the mechanisms around such shifts.
become less intense. Alternatively, successful state policies that lead to the collapse of an emergent ethnic party may persist at high levels for some time despite the ethnic group having returned to a lower phase of mobilization. The CAS framework expects such dramatic variation around moments of transition, unlike more traditional approaches.

- **States**

  As with ethnic groups, a simple driving logic may be said to be internal to the state system: the search for security, stability, and control. For most states ethnopolitical mobilization represents only one of many concerns to be addressed. Except where ethnic activism is understood to be a salient and relatively imminent threat to the state itself, the state and its ethnic groups may operate relatively autonomously, each playing out its own internal logic. However, the CAS framework suggests that as ethnic groups approach phase transitions, different factors come into play. The state may temporarily turn its attention to this new phenomenon, seeking directly or indirectly to prevent a qualitatively distinct escalation in activism. The state system is expected to adapt to this (attempted) change in the fitness landscape, illustrating co-evolution; interestingly, a successful transition by an ethnic group is understood from this perspective to have changed the state system, perhaps facilitating the transitioning of other groups. Conversely, a successful prevention of a transition may also represent state adaptation, making such transitions difficult for other groups. Most important from this perspective is the conceptualization of co-evolution: States cannot change without generating adaptive changes in ethnic groups, and any phase-transition by an ethnic group must generate some adaptive response.\(^{14}\)

- **Interstate system**

  The interstate system may be the CAS most familiar to political scientists, as few yet posit the system as an entity in its own right. Rather, international relations scholars conceptualize the international system as the product of interactions between states, particularly powerful ones. Even international institutions, such as the League of Nations or the United Nations, are understood to practically be merely representations of the intensions of powerful

\(^{14}\) However, one weakness with the CAS approach may lie in its understanding of a system as an emergent property of systems at lower levels. In this sense, the state is nothing more than the collective interactions of ethnic groups and their equivalents; to therefore speak of state adaptation is misleading, in that the actual mechanism would presumably be a co-evolutionary adaptation by other socio-political actors that creates the appearance of state adaptation. Should this assumption hold, a comprehensive explanation would necessarily illuminate the linkages with other types of socio-political actors and how they respond to phase-transitions of ethnic groups.
states. When states interact and co-evolve, these changing dynamics can be reflected as international norms or more formalized political institutions.

One simple articulation of the internal logic of the international system is the drive towards stability; the number of major powers may change, and they may engage in attempts to eliminate each other, but the network of interactions appears to adapt to these changes and persist over time. With regards to ethnopolitical mobilization, institutions appearing to promote group rights may in fact represent arrangements intended to promote stability. Yet recent institutions clearly reflect a normative understanding of ethnic rights. Clearly changing over time in response to component interactions, the interstate system is perhaps best understood through the CAS lens.

**Intra-system linkages**

Clearly the articulation of the intrinsic logics of different systems represents only part of the picture. What remains to be articulated and, indeed, is often assumed rather than defined in many models, are the linkages between systems. A fully defined CAS will also stipulate the number and strength of linkages between components, but based on Kaufmann we may at least assume the linkages to be varied and limited, correlating with our likely common-sense understanding.

Ethnic groups clearly interact with each other, either passively through media or more directly through meetings of activists and leaders. Interestingly, there are few examples of coordinated "ethnic fronts" in democratic systems, suggesting that coordination may require stronger linkages than are normally found. In addition, as the French Basque example above outlines, intra-system linkages appear stronger than inter-system linkages, even among kin groups separated only by a state border; this is as one would expect in a CAS.

What of the ethnic group – state linkages? As stated above, it may not be reasonable to conceive of such ties, as the state from this perspective is merely the aggregation of sub-state interactions. As such, we must look for connections between ethnic and other social groups, evaluating their strength and density. While not completely at odds with institutional approaches to politics, which envision the state as routines and patterns of interactions, some political scientists, myself included, may hesitate at having no clearly definable state interacting with
ethnic groups. However, this may be more a reflection of a reluctance to abandon out-dated conceptualizations than a defendable epistemological position.

The international system most clearly represents the aggregation of state interconnections, and those processes of linkages are well developed in the international relations literature. Media, international fora, and diplomatic exchanges are only some of the ways states interact. And although states across the globe can now come face-to-face, spatially proximate states are far more likely to interact, for good or ill, than remote ones.

Less clear, however, would be connections between ethnic groups and the interstate system. However, ethnic entrepreneurs clearly are aware of international treaties and, indeed, one account of the apparent emergence of a norm of ethnic groups rights is the misinterpretation of treaties between states as reflecting an emergent norm, only to have that misinterpretation be adopted by states. A clearer example would be the Breton delegation that attempted to speak directly to Woodrow Wilson to argue that they were the same as the ethnic groups being offered self-determination.15 This linkage, which would seem to "skip" a level, represents a difficult, but not necessarily fatal, problem for CAS.

The picture that emerges, therefore, is one of layers of webs of interconnections, with the possibility of connections between and even skipping layers. A change, or even an impending phase-transition, generates responses in linked systems, although where linkages are weak or few one would expect very limited adaptive responses. Furthermore, given the complexity of the interactions, it may be no surprise that there has been little consensus regarding explanatory patterns and, indeed, it suggests that we think in probabilistic, rather than causal, terms. CAS, with its understanding of constantly changing interactions across levels of systems, may represent a suitable mental map for incorporating the range of variables highlighted in the literature without resorting to truncating our information in a quest for causal models.

Conclusion

CAS is merely a heuristic framework, albeit a potentially powerful reconceptualization of social phenomena. As with any analytic paradigm, it must be evaluated in terms of what it helps reveal as well as what it obscures. Hopefully this paper demonstrates that, on balance, CAS represents a perspective that facilitates moving from description to explanation, retaining the

15 Unfortunately for Breton activists, Wilson refused to meet with them to consider their demands.
richness of case-studies while pointing in the direction of meaningful comparative analysis and theory-building.

More specifically, CAS suggests that numerous factors across multiple levels play a role in shaping the probability and nature of ethnopolitical mobilization; however, this approach also asserts that not all factors matter all the time and that the relative importance of individual factors likely varies not only as a result of co-evolution of systems but particularly as systems approach phase-transitions. As argued here, the focus on moments of phase-transition, whether based on a multi-phase conceptualization or a more conventional ethnic group / nation transition, in particular may represent the most value-added of a CAS model: focusing on critical moments permits the relaxation of analyses of periods of relative stability and facilitates cross-case comparisons of comparable moments in trajectories of ethnic activism.

There are, of course, trade-offs with the adoption of any analytic framework, and that is true of CAS as well. Foremost may be the utility of a phase-transition trajectory of ethnopolitical mobilization; in fact, such a non-traditional understanding may serve to confuse rather than clarify. Furthermore, the assumption that phase-transitions are comparable across cases or even across time may not hold: each transition may be a relatively unique event in terms of the constellation of factors and their relative importance. While fitness landscapes suggest there may be multiple paths to optimal strategies, in terms of ethnopolitical mobilization, CAS may not be the best framework to illustrate those separate but convergent paths.

Furthermore, the focus on phase-transition may shift attention away from significant variations within a given phase. For example, the numerous studies explaining voter support for ethnic parties may generate significant findings with practical policy implications; the CAS model outlined here would conceptualize such studies as describing variation within a phase of mobilization.
References


