

Joseph Rothschild. *Ethnopolitics, A Conceptual Framework*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981) 290 pp., \$22.50.

Whether ethnicity stems from certain intrinsic group characteristics or whether it is a definition conferred upon various groups because of their political, social, and economic environment has been a fundamental debate within the field of ethnic studies. Most students of ethnic studies would agree that ethnicity today embraces both factors, and more, that it is the result of the interactions between both sets of influences. How these factors interact in the political sphere is the core of Rothschild's ambitious new book.

Several of his basic contentions are not fully convincing. However, his treatment of differing perspectives and the qualifications and refinements of his own views reflect a comprehensive and conceptually deep understanding of these issues. He illustrates his position that ethnically based political activity is on the rise with several examples, a number of which are Euro-centered in the late 1970s. What is needed is a fuller comparison with other locales and historical periods in order to assert convincingly that such activity is actually greater now. For example, while Basque separatism and Quebecois separatism are strong currents at present, are various tribal divisions in Africa, or ethnic divisions in Asia significantly more potent as political forces today than twenty or fifty years ago? Further, Rothschild's assertion that ethnic political competition will be around for a long time is similarly open to question.

The strength of the book is not so much in its specific predictions. Rather, it delivers what its title promises— a conceptual framework, and it does so in a very thorough manner. At many points in the text questions are raised in the reader's mind by Rothschild's sweeping statements. Then, upon further reading, one sees that he has anticipated those objections and attempts to answer them. His reasoning and method of examining the interrelationship of many factors result in a skillful analysis that avoids either mystifying ethnicity or denying ethnicity. Several particularly interesting applications of that analysis can be seen in his approach to three prevalent views of ethnic relations: (1) ethnic conflict is a psychological problem and must be dealt with as such in order to assure fair treatment for all; (2) modern society will create abundance that eventually, by itself, will eliminate the basis for ethnic conflict; and (3), "We are all ethnics." While each of these views is held by sincere, anti-racist people, Rothschild correctly points out that all of them can be and have been used to mask persistent institutional discrimination against minority ethnic groups. His contention that the rise of ethnicity may be partly caused by the break-up of power of the once-solid dominant core is also provocative. The book is well written, but it is written on a level

that is probably too difficult for the average undergraduate. Overall, Rothschild's attempt to describe the combination of factors that make up ethnic politics helps to challenge many commonly held assumptions and forces the reader to examine more closely not only these but the whole range of notions about race and ethnic relations as well. Although there are no maps or charts, the book has an extensive and current bibliography.

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