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Ethnicity as a Political Tool in Britain
and the Netherlands
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Throughout many parts of Western Europe today, the presence of immigrant ethnic minority populations has become an indelible feature of national and local political systems. A short glance at urban politics in many of these countries reveals the extent to which issues of race and ethnicity have become entrenched in political debate and public policy-making. Far-right, anti-immigrant movements have emerged to varying degrees, often with an abrupt and sharp impact on the political process. Meanwhile, mainstream political parties have taken action to recruit ethnic minority membership and support, as well as to tackle questions of racial inequality and discrimination. Finally, immigrant ethnic minorities have begun to organize themselves in order to play a role in the political processes that surround them.

An important aspect of the new multi-ethnic politics of these countries has been the rise of ethnicity amongst immigrant ethnic groups, as well as in their patterns of political participation. While significant explanations based on either Black solidarity or class consciousness appear to be inadequate and simplistic (Castles and Kosack 1973). In particular, many of these immigrant groups have systematically organized themselves into well-bonded and sometimes traditional ethnic organizations. It is the purpose of this chapter to examine the comparative impact of these organizations on different aspects of British and Dutch politics and vice versa.¹ Additionally, we shall focus upon aspects of the role of the government in relation to these ethnic organizations. The reader ought to be alerted to a number of crucial differences that shape the role of ethnic minorities in the political process in these two European cases and the U.S. case. To begin with, it is noticeable that not all immigrants are considered ethnic minorities in the United States. This particular label is reserved for a handful of categories whose ethnic attributes and/or recent history have served to separate them in some way from mainstream American society. Blacks and Hispanics are prime examples. In the British and Dutch cases, in

contrast, ethnicity and ethnic minority status are closely intertwined with both countries' recent experiences of immigration.

Furthermore, the role of the state differs sharply an ocean apart. The development of ethnic organizations in the U.S. political process—particularly at the subnational level—has proceeded with only limited initiative from the center. The government has generally taken the lead in Britain and the Netherlands, inasmuch as it has set out a broad framework for the political participation of immigrant ethnic minorities. While such frameworks may have presented differing conceptualizations of ethnicity at different times and with different outcomes, the British and Dutch cases paint a picture of governmental activism. A more minimalist picture, in contrast, is observed in the United States.

Our choice of comparisons reflects a number of significant features of the niche occupied by ethnic minorities in British and Dutch society that are of interest to us. First, we cannot avoid the historical legacies of conflict in these countries. The politics of social class (Britain) and pillarization (the Netherlands) begs further questions regarding the different impact of immigrant ethnic minorities. Second, while both countries have experienced significant immigrant influxes during the past quarter century, the societal and political consequences have been markedly different. Country-specific variations in the experiences of ethnic minority political participation are of interest. Finally, despite the similarities involved in large-scale colonial immigration, certain sharp contrasts in the "integration" of ethnic minorities stand out between these countries. To be certain, the differential position of Afro-Caribbeans in British society and the Surinamese in Dutch society point to important clues about ethnicity as a political tool in these countries (Cross and Entzinger 1988).

We discuss the following questions—among others—in relation to the two cases. What has been the historical development of ethnic organizations in both countries? What have been the main ethnicity-related strategies of these organizations and how, if at all, have these strategies evolved? In considering this question, it is noticeable that there has been a gradual shift of emphasis away from homeland-oriented concerns and toward a maximization of political leverage in British and Dutch society. Nonetheless, attitudes and priorities differ, and many of these organizations retain a strong interest in issues that have little to do with British and Dutch politics. Equally, many of these organizations were originally established on the basis of shared ethnicity as defined by common ancestry, language, religion, belongingness, and self-identification, as well as a variety of situational factors (Koot and Rah 1987). Ethnicity is a complex phenomenon. Not surprisingly, therefore, immense difficulties of reshaping priorities and activities has dogged many of the ethnic elites who have attempted to reshape priorities and activities within ethnic minority communities. Lastly, how have these organizations deployed their

shared ethnicity as a political tool to mobilize their membership; moreover, what has been the role of other political actors such as parties, local authorities, and voluntary bodies? Here we observe that considerable activity has taken place in both countries for many years, sharply accelerating in recent times. Both British and Dutch ethnic organizations are well versed in attempting to secure support and legitimacy on the basis of their ethnically bonded membership. This has yielded different spoils at different times, but certainly the impression is left that a number of groups are convinced of the viability of this route.

It may be, however, that this is more a sign of these groups' relative powerlessness in both political systems. The dividends in terms of access, funding, resources, insider status, legitimacy in their memberships' eyes, and so forth may appear to be important, but ethnic organizations have not been universally successful in obtaining all that they have sought. Indeed, many writers continue to characterize the position of British and Dutch immigrant ethnic minorities as one of political weakness, widespread discrimination and relative poverty. Public agencies—ranging from the central government to local voluntary advisory bodies—have been only partially successful in their attempts to deal with the problems facing immigrant communities and in their attempts to secure increased participation. One of the channels used to this end has included the encouragement of ethnically based organizations. In this context, perhaps, we are better able to understand the use of ethnicity as a political tool and the motivations that lie behind it: it has offered unique and occasionally promising resources in a political environment with few convincing alternatives. This chapter is divided into four sections. We start by examining some historic and demographic features of immigrants in Britain and the Netherlands. Next, we discuss the British case and, subsequently, the Dutch case. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of similarities and differences between the two cases.

HISTORIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

It is clear to even the most casual observer that race and ethnicity have become important and far-reaching features of the British and Dutch political maps. In both countries this development is strongly related to recent immigration. It is true that Britain has known previous waves of mass immigration of peoples of different "race" such as the Irish in the nineteenth century and the Jews in this century, and the Netherlands has in the past likewise experienced heavy immigration of peoples such as the Portuguese Jews, the French Huguenots, and the German Westphalians. However, practically all these categories of immigrants have virtually assimilated into the larger society so that, until recently, the British and Dutch societies were essentially mono-racial or mono-ethnic.² Non-white, ethnic minority settlement has thus been a

relatively new phenomenon taking place during the postwar epoch. In Britain it took place over a short, concentrated spell dating from about the mid-1950s, accelerating sharply through the 1960s and early 1970s, and gradually tapering off thereafter. In the Netherlands a similar immigration process occurred about ten years behind.

The overwhelming bulk of Britain's ethnic minority population today is comprised of two broad ethnic groups: Asians and those with ethnic origins (however measured) in South Asian countries, and Afro-Caribbean originating from Black African and Caribbean countries. According to self-selection-based survey data from 1983, 1984, and 1985, the non-white ethnic minority population totals almost 2.3 million persons. Table 11.1 describes the sizes of the various ethnic minority populations in greater detail than do the descriptions "Asians" and "Afro-Caribbeans."

The debate on race has often been influenced by the debate over numbers. In all, however, something around 4 percent of the population are from an ethnic minority background of one form or another. Data sources tend to overlap and are commonly based on different conceptions of the ethnic minority population (Sagar 1987). In particular, New Commonwealth and Pakistani (NCWP) status has structured both measures and political debates because, for many, Britain's non-white communities are looked upon in terms of their ex-colonial background. As a consequence of this background, virtually all NCWP immigrants and their spouses have British citizenship.

An important feature has been geographical settlement patterns. Survey figures in 1985 suggest that more than two-thirds of non-white ethnic groups are to be found in metropolitan areas, compared with less than a third of whites (OPCS 1986, 5). Their age structure is also significantly different: 62 percent of non-whites compared to 42 percent of whites are below thirty years of age (OPCS 1986, 4). And so the list of distinctions goes on. Several important differences exist between the minority and majority populations, and indeed there are many contrasts within different ethnic minority groups. Furthermore, factors of religion and language all serve to further differentiate these communities, with the result that a number of aspects of British politics and policy-making are currently having to be revised to accommodate this new ethnic pluralism.

The situation in the Netherlands is relatively similar. Quite a few immigrants form more or less coherent groups manifesting themselves on the basis of their specific ethnicity, although there are many internal divisions creating subgroups. To be sure, more immigrants belonging to these categories identify themselves as members of groups that are different from the native white Dutch majority, and indeed that majority also identify and treat them as such. The overwhelming bulk of today's ethnic minority population have come

Table 11.1 Ethnic Population in Britain^a

Ethnic Group	Thousands	Percentage ^b
White	50,971	94.2
Non-White	2,347	4.3
West Indian/Guyanese	526	1.0
Indian	763	1.4
Pakistani	378	0.7
Bangladeshi	91	0.2
Chinese	112	0.2
African	101	0.2
Arab	64	0.1
Mixed	211	0.4
Other	101	0.2
Not stated	782	1.5
Total	54,100	

Source: OPCS 1986.

^aThe results of the Labour Force Survey are averaged over three years, 1983-1985, in order to reduce the distortions of sampling fluctuations from one survey to another.

^bPercentages are rounded to single decimal point and therefore column total does not equal 100.

from former colonial areas—Moluccans from the former Dutch East Indies, Antilleans and Arubans from the Caribbean, and Surinamese from the former South American colony of Surinam—or from Mediterranean countries, most of them initially as guest workers. The numbers of various ethnic minority groups are shown in detail in Table 11.2.

There are a few other categories of immigrants, for instance the Chinese and Pakistani, that anthropologically constitute non-white ethnic minority groups but have not been officially recognized as such for reasons that will be explained later. For now, it is important to understand that ethnic minority groups in the Netherlands, unlike similar groups in Britain, are subject to a selective definition process by the state. The British definition is principally based on racial aspects. This explains why the so-called Eurasians—people of mixed Dutch-Indonesian ancestry who came to the Netherlands in the 1950s, who are racially different from the majority but are practically fully absorbed into Dutch society—do not constitute a "racial" or ethnic minority group and are consequently not recognized as such (cf. Amersfoort 1982).

Table 11.2 Ethnic Population in the Netherlands

Ethnic group	Thousands	Percentage ^a
Dutch	13,769 ^b	94.2
Mediterraneans	346	2.4
Turks	161	1.1
Moroccans	123	0.8
Spaniards	18	0.1
Italians	17	0.1
Yugoslavs	12	0.1
Portuguese	8	0.1
Greeks	4	0.0
Tunestians	3	0.0
Cape Verdians	2	0.0
Surinamese	195 ^c	1.3
Antilleans and Arubans	55	0.4
Moluccans	40 ^d	0.3
Other	210 ^e	1.5
Total	14,615	

Source: Muns 1987.

^aPercentages are rounded to single decimal point and therefore column total does not equal 100.

^bEstimated number.

^cEstimated number. This number includes 11,638 Surinamese passport holders.

^dEstimated number. This number includes about 30 percent statuses Moluccans. This number includes among others about 40,000 Chinese and 9,000 Indonesians.

The officially recognized ethnic minorities constitute 5-6 percent of the present population of the Netherlands. Most of them live in the densely populated western part of the country, particularly in big cities like Amsterdam, Rotterdam, the Hague, and Utrecht. In these cities the average concentration of immigrant ethnic minorities may amount to 13-20 percent, and in the older inner-city areas up to 40-50 percent--this proportion usually refers to an ethnically mixed population.

Practically every ex-colonial immigrant has Dutch nationality, except a tiny number of Surinamese citizens and a small number of Moluccans who have chosen to stay stateless for political reasons.³ Most of the Mediterranean and other foreigners have kept their own nationality and are treated according

to the Aliens Act. Neither the government nor the political agencies put them under pressure to naturalize. Rather, they remove the existing legal differences between Dutch and non-Dutch residents.

The ethnic minorities both in Britain and the Netherlands have a disadvantaged social position: their education is substandard, their unemployment is relatively high, their employment is concentrated in the lower sectors of the labor market, their housing is poor, they experience discrimination, and, moreover, they have limited political influence. In the Netherlands this is partly due to the fact that the non-Dutch citizens among the ethnic minorities have fewer political rights. In practice this means that they are not allowed to take part in elections for representative legislative bodies like the provincial councils and national parliament.

Let us now turn to consider aspects of ethnicity in the British and then the Dutch case. We will focus on the increasing importance of ethnic organizations in the policy process and on the role of the government.

THE BRITISH CASE

Ethnic organizations have occupied an awkward place in British race-related politics and public policy. During the 1960s their main role was as supporting appendages to the community relations movement. The prevailing philosophy of the period centered on local, ad hoc voluntarism, in which ethnic organizations were encouraged to assist in the process of reducing the impact of racial and ethnic issues in public policy debate. Ethnic organizations, in short, were all about the effective non-mobilization or selective mobilization of ethnicity. More recently, however, developments within local borough politics have served to give ethnic organizations a new and more dynamic role in local public policy making. Ethnic organizations have been elevated to an unprecedented position of importance, at least in part as a legitimization exercise for the pioneering race equality initiatives of certain local authorities. There has been a rediscovery of ethnicity and its mobilization.

Community Relations Councils and Ethnicity

The 1960s are often thought of as the liberal hour in British race relations. Barton (1985) notes the tremendous pace of activity during this period in which "laws were enacted, enforcement agencies created, and community relations councils established." During this short period a large part of the future framework for race relations and the role of ethnic organizations was established.

Emphasis was placed on two themes. First, discrimination was to be tackled in a piecemeal, non-compulsive manner; thus, legislation on this front was modest and dependent on conciliation to resolve conflicts. Second, racial harmony was nominated as a broad policy goal to which all responsible parties would subscribe. This was taken a step further through the backing given to local voluntary bodies to lead and coordinate the local promotion of race harmony. A number of these local bodies already existed at the time of the Race Relations Act and the White Paper *Immigration from the Commonwealth* (1965). By the mid-1980s, the number of Community Relations Councils (CRCs) in operation was well over one hundred (Commission for Racial Equality 1980).

Early studies rightly attached great importance to the ill-defined remit given to CRCs. Hill and Issacharoff's now dated study (1971) rounded on CRCs for failing to address—often by steering clear of—many basic issues pertaining to race equality. Katznelson (1973) characterized CRCs as performing the role of "buffer institutions" designed to remove some of the venom of race conflict from public debate. They may have been catapulted into the front line of local race relations, but, it was argued, their role remained ambiguous. The result was that different CRCs in the name of racial harmony varied enormously (Barker 1975). The environment of local race relations policy-making could not even be firmly anticipated between neighboring London boroughs (Fitzgerald 1984).

More recently Messina (1987) has described the role of CRCs as central to the two-party agreement to try to remove race from party politics in Britain. Race and race conflicts were therefore seen as political hot potatoes for which the major parties were unwilling to assume any greater responsibility than was necessary. Thus, a series of intermediary bodies were assigned this responsibility. Allied to this was the need to try to neuter strong independent Black political activity. As stated by Ben-Tovim and Gabriel, "Local community relations councils . . . have been regarded as *buffer institutions* heading off a direct assault on the Establishment by the Black community" (1982, 155).

With the repoliticization of significant aspects of race relations in recent years, the resultant pressure placed on CRCs has escalated massively. In the present climate, CRCs work alongside radical left Labour local authorities as well as color-blind Conservative authorities (not to mention areas where CRCs and Labour authorities are in conflict with one another). The contrast in the conceptualization and salience of race and ethnicity is noticeably sharper today than it was a decade ago.

While race harmony and conciliation were set out as guiding themes in the liberal settlement, little was defined in the way of the work of CRCs or how they should carry out their duties. In other words, considerable room for local ad hoc strategies existed. It is here that the relationship between CRCs and

ethnic minorities and ethnic organizations is of particular importance. What is the nature of this relationship, how have CRCs attempted to mobilize ethnic groups, and with what success?

First of all, it is important to mention that CRCs do not, of course, function in isolation from other policy actors. Foremost amongst these has been local authorities. A loosely defined relationship was envisaged between the two in the 1965 White Paper. At first CRCs' main reference point was the National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants (NCCI), a government-sponsored liaison and umbrella body.⁴ Throughout this period, CRCs were encouraged to develop closer links with their local authorities. A prime motivation behind this was to try to get local authorities to shoulder a greater part of the financial cost of CRCs. Not surprisingly, CRCs feared for their independence and autonomy in local politics.

The CRC-local authority nexus, therefore, has been central to the development of community relations in Britain. In the face of a combination of ambiguous policy goals, poorly defined political roles, and the encroachment of local authorities, how have CRCs responded? The answer has to do with CRCs' selective utilization of one of their main yet untapped resources: the indirect participation of ethnic minority organizations.

The CRC framework for local race relations offered ethnic minorities what has been described as a participatory margin, which would assist their longer-term participation in more mainstream politics and public policy. This was clearly a firm indication to ethnic minorities that the group organization to which they belonged was the most valued of their various identities in British society. Value was not placed on Black coalition groups, nor was it necessarily placed on other non-ethnically based groups. The ethnicity of immigrant groups—defined as a coherent bonding force—was singled out as the basis on which they should and would participate in community relations.

This is, however, something of dated view, since in recent years CRCs' ability to perform the ethnic consultant role has been questioned. Ethnic groups are given more attention today as proxy participation agencies. Renewed emphasis has been placed on creating a consultative dialogue with ethnic minority communities on the basis of their ethnicity and ethnic organizations. CRCs' claims of close and unparalleled links with ethnic organizations suspect: "How does one consult with the ethnic minorities? I think there is no alternative to a series of dialogues with the communities as they present themselves rather than expecting them to merge themselves under one umbrella and present a coherent view" (Young 1984).

Where does the community relations movement go from here? After more than two decades of trying to forge a racial peace in many parts of urban Britain, CRCs in recent years have shown signs of having lost a sense of direction. Their work continues to be superficially valued by the central government. However, their level of support and funding from local authorities

on the ground tends to vary enormously. Quite simply, there is no obvious nor accessible niche into which community relations can be lodged in the picture of contemporary race initiatives in Britain. Having grown accustomed to such a role in which they were able to map out and deal with local race relations issues, many now find this role being overshadowed by the work of their local authorities. The major locomotive of change in grass-roots race relations has altered dramatically and, in all probability, irreversibly.

Local Government and the Rise of Ethnicity

Recent developments in British local government--ostensibly in the inner cities--have led to a renewed interest in ethnicity as a potential tool for mobilization of political support. As part of this wide-ranging process, certain local authorities have sought to involve the ethnic minority communities themselves. Sometimes this is at the level of ad hoc, informal consultation; elsewhere, more formal, direct representative input is sought from ethnic organizations; and, in a few cases, some groups have found themselves co-opted into key aspects of local policy-making. Arguably, many of these developments are of immense significance and are presently reshaping our understanding of ethnic minority participation in British politics and public policy-making.

Following the election to office of a number of Labour administrations in London and other major cities in the early 1980s--culminating in 1986 and 1987 polls--race policy initiatives in town halls have gathered considerable pace (Saggar 1987). It is probably too early to say whether these changes will undermine the role of CRCs altogether. However, a number of CRCs are only too conscious of such an outcome and some have already begun to resurrect their traditional liberal identity in response. Such an identity is largely centered on being seen to promote harmonious local race relations, especially in the eyes of potential critics. This serves as a reasonably sharp contrast to the bolder, more radical aims and activities of certain Labour-ruled local authorities.

Prashar and Nicholas's (1986) study of consultative processes in five London boroughs provides further evidence of the dislocation of CRCs. They pointed to the recent massive escalation in these administrations' use of consultative devices. However, it was noted that this was closely associated with other aspects of local authority policy development: their narrow race equality and broader community consultation initiatives often went hand in hand. This suggests that these local authorities are keen to formulate their own in-house strategies on race and that they see the consultative exercise as the other side of the same coin.

The role of central government in the growth and activities of ethnic organizations has been significant--in this case primarily because of its conspicuous absence. While central government has been active in other aspects

of race relations--for example, anti-discrimination legislation, community relations machinery and funding, and so forth--it has largely avoided close involvement in the affairs of ethnic organizations. These have been seen as autonomous bodies, best left to their own devices and, depending on local circumstances, open to enter into specific arrangements with their local authorities. There has been little central coordination or encouragement. The government's main national race relations watchdog body--the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE)--is organized without the need for subnational ethnic organizations to affiliate to it. Therefore, it neither seeks nor claims any role in relation to the numerous local and handful of national ethnic organizations.

In recognition of the slow pace of change, a variety of local political actors (such as ethnic leaders, local political parties, and Black sectional groups) have moved to encompass ethnic organizations into local political and policy-making processes. How has this been done, for what purpose, and with what outcome?

The first thing to note is that the relationship between local government and ethnic organizations is an embryonic one. Moreover, it is patchy in nature and therefore not universal to all, or even most, local authority areas. In the main, we are examining an interaction between groups and subnational government in localities run by progressive-left Labour administrations. In these selected areas the Labour urban left has gained ascendancy since the late 1970s (Boddy and Fudge 1984).

The factors behind this are partly internal developments within the party and partly a polarization of competitive two-party politics (Jacobs 1986; Saggar 1987). As Young (1985) notes, there has been a "rediscovery of race" in local government in recent years. This has involved radicals on the left set on building urban coalitions of support amongst a variety of minority groups; ethnic minorities constitute one among many groups in this mobilization process (Ouseley 1984).

However, issues of race equality are by no means on the policy agenda of all or even most labor local administrations. An inventory of developments in London boroughs, arguably a stronghold of the Labour left, in spring 1987 revealed that while most Labour authorities had adopted some form of committee and officer structure to tackle race issues, their achievements beyond that were very patchy indeed (Saggar 1987, 4-5). Among the remaining half of non-Labour-run boroughs, progress on "race issues" was more or less negligible (Saggar 1987, 6-7).

A major element of the race strategies adopted by this handful of authorities has been to make overtures toward their local ethnic organizations in order to involve them in the local policy process. This has ranged from informal consultation to formal co-option onto resource allocating committees. These authorities have slowly found that their local CRCs are not the only nor the obvious body with whom to consult on matters of race. This realization, not

surprisingly, has been more readily accepted by certain authorities than by others. Moreover, the contrast has not always been explained by party labels, since many Labour authorities have turned to CRCs to off-load their own responsibilities just as readily as their Conservative counterparts (Prashar and Nicholas 1986; Saggat 1987).

Subtle, yet important, encouragement for local authorities to look upon their local ethnic minority communities as positive consultative resources has also occasionally come from other sources. In 1981 the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee's report, "Racial Disadvantage," stated: "We . . . encourage local authorities to make every effort to make as much direct contact as possible with [ethnic] minorities and to rid themselves of the notion that the local CRS is or should be their sole spokesman. . . . Each council will develop its own *modus vivendi*, but none can afford to neglect the interests and concerns of its ethnic minority citizens" (Home Affairs Committee 1981). In order to do this, authorities have been placed--indeed have placed themselves--in a position whereby they view non-white ethnic minority political participation as a leading function of ethnic organizations.

Inevitably, the problems with this rationale are immense. To begin with, a number of such organizations neither see themselves nor can easily be seen as performing such a function. Certainly, those concerned with the narrowly defined affairs of their own ethnic community--as based on religion and language--can only take up a wider participation role as a secondary function at the most. Furthermore, such an arrangement is likely to attract organizations which, although loosely based on some form of shared ethnicity, are in fact far more interested in performing a race pressure group role. Ethnicity and ethnic organizations, thus, come to mean different things, particularly in an environment that actively courts such organizations for consultative and other purposes.

Another drawback is that certain ethnic organizations can become easily and excessively labelled as proxy participatory bodies, thereby limiting the points of access available to ethnic minorities to the broader political process (Fitzgerald 1984; Prashar and Nicholas 1986). There is also an allied problem of raising expectations of ethnic organizations and their members. Often by implying an exaggerated status in local authority policy-making. Such a problem was highlighted by research on the relationship fostered by the now defunct Greater London Council (GLC) and the plethora of ethnic organizations it sought to champion and involve in its decision-making process between 1981 and 1986 (Fitzgerald 1984). Jacobs (1986) notes that the elaborate consultative mechanisms adopted by some authorities have given many ethnic organizations the impression that their presence has changed the nature of local authority policy-making. In fact, there is very little basis for such a collectively and widely held view. "Blacks in Britain have at times been able to modify public policy," he states, "but this has been . . . largely based upon adaptation of Black

organizations to prevailing administrative and political practices" (Jacobs 1986, 72).

Related to this is another danger. As Prashar and Nicholas (1986) point out, grand overtures on the part of local authorities to involve ethnic organizations may lead to greater difficulties in the longer term if such groups continue to feel they have too little say in policy decisions affecting them. They warn, "The illusion of consultation without any change will only feed cynicism. Consultation and liaison with [ethnic] minorities is part of local authority practice, and what is clear is that having opened the door for consultation, there is no going back" (Prashar and Nicholas 1986, 50). In other words, a particular notion of ethnicity has been captured in the way in which local authorities consult ethnic organizations and seek to mobilize support from them. To relinquish such a notion of ethnicity--either in favor of another or altogether--will be considerably harder to do. For this reason, a notion of ethnicity based on tapping the mobilization resources of ethnic organizations is likely to remain a crucial feature of British local politics and public policy.

Clearly, therefore, important alternative strategies for the management of local race relations are now being offered: the CRC approach and the Labour left approach. We can also add to this the approach taken by Conservative administrations based on non-race-specific, or color-blind, conceptualizations of race relations. The first two approaches are at least partially built on bringing ethnic minorities and ethnic organizations into a legitimate policy development role. The success of these respective strategies will therefore ultimately depend on which is more effective in mobilizing the support of ethnic organizations.

THE DUTCH CASE

As in Britain, the Netherlands has experienced the gradually increasing involvement of immigrant ethnic minorities in the political process. It took the Dutch a long time to get used to the idea that immigrants had become part of the society and the polity. However, once this fact was recognized, many efforts have been made at both stimulating their political participation and fostering their ethnicity.

The Dutch political ideology, which is still deeply rooted in the pillarization system of olden days, may have encouraged both the concern of the government and political agencies and use of ethnicity by minorities themselves. It is difficult to assess the true value of this ideology and the resulting political practices for ethnic minority participation, but these practices obviously do come into it and they tend to produce important differences with Britain (Rah 1988b). As Lipjart (1975) showed, Dutch society was divided up into social pillars based on religion. A pillar was the social and political organization of individuals belonging to the same religion or denomination. It thus united

individuals of different socioeconomic classes against individuals of other religions. Most pillars were rather centrally organized. Since no pillar was strong enough to dominate every other group around it, every leadership sought consociation with the leadership of other pillars, and thus took account of the sensitivities, religious and cultural traits, and resulting political demands of the others. Consequently, a sociopolitical system developed based on the pragmatic principle of giving and taking both material and non-material resources. The system of consociationalism as such does not fully exist anymore, although there are many surviving features: for example, there is still a rather pillarized educational system and, what is more important, an ideology of consensus and of respecting the particularistic needs of minorities. To be sure, this is not to say that racism and discrimination against the present ethnic minorities is absent in the Netherlands. For now, we only want to highlight an important difference with Britain, where polarization rather than pillarization seems to be the hallmark of politics. In Britain, political organization is basically along socioeconomic lines rather than along religious lines. Having said this, let us now examine how ethnic minorities have become involved in Dutch politics and how ethnicity has been used in that process.

Dutch Welfare Foundations

In the 1960s and 1970s, many—including the government, political parties, and newcomers themselves—assumed that the immigrants were only temporarily resident in the country and that they would return to their home countries sooner or later. In consequence, nobody but a few self-proclaimed advocates and private organizations such as churches were concerned with the integration of immigrants into the Dutch society; few bothered about their participation in the political process. Government policy toward immigrants aimed mainly at alleviating their worst problems during their sojourn. A series of welfare agencies—the so-called *welzijnsinstellingen* (welfare foundations)—were founded for Moluccans, Surinamese, and Mediterranean workers; since the mid-1970s, they have been fully sponsored by the government. These welfare foundations and a variety of action committees, chiefly consisting of Dutch individuals, emerged as the main advocates of immigrants' interests.

In this period, particularly during the 1960s, immigrants themselves virtually abstained from participation in Dutch politics; political activities—if any—were principally homeland oriented. There was a tiny number of immigrant organizations that functioned as sort of outposts for some homeland political movements. Amersfoort, for instance, described Surinamese organizations in Amsterdam in 1970 as breeding grounds for politicians-to-be in Surinam. Insofar as Mediterranean guest workers took interest in Dutch

politics, they mainly lobbied Dutch politicians about homeland affairs (Pennis 1979).

The Rise of Ethnic Organizations

During the 1970s, the number of immigrant organizations grew rapidly. This was partly due to the fact that the central and local governments started subsidizing immigrant organizations—sometimes through the welfare foundations—provided they did not maintain any tie of whatever kind with fascist political movements such as the Moroccan Amicales and the Turkish Grey Wolves or with religious movements. Initially, these organizations were not necessarily seen as advocates of immigrants' interests. Most only fulfilled socio-cultural functions. Nevertheless, a few organizations or, rather, a few individual immigrants, often with help of native Dutch, slowly began taking more interest in Dutch politics.

Many immigrant organizations were dissatisfied with the advocacy of welfare foundations. These foundations were chiefly manned by native white Dutch; few immigrants—if any—were employed, while other immigrants put them down for being "Uncle Toms" or political extremists. The fact that immigrants played a minor role in the promotion of their own interests stirred up bad feelings and provoked political action. Some immigrants demanded ethnicization of the foundations and, sure enough, succeeded in getting positions in the staffs or committees of these foundations (Koot and Unken Venema 1985). Others converted their dissatisfaction into founding ethnic counterinstitutions.

Meanwhile, various immigrants became aware of their inferior social position and became involved in the political process. Although housing and education were incidental on the political agenda, probably the most salient issue then concerned their position on the labor market. In the mid-1970s, the government introduced a plan to combat the presence and employment of undocumented workers and to protect the interests of native Dutch workers on the labor market against newly arrived immigrant workers (Groenendaal 1986). Immigrant activists perceived the plan as a threat to their position, and they resisted them by, among other activities, lobbying politicians, trade unionists, and the media, and holding mass demonstrations. Through ethnic networks thousands of immigrants were mobilized. These manifestations of both political awareness and ethnic loyalty were unprecedented in the Netherlands and encouraged new political action.

There was another series of events that made quite an impression. Groups of Moluccan youth hijacked trains and occupied a number of buildings, thereby taking dozens of people hostage. Although these events had, above all, an international political dimension—the Moluccans had striven to found their

own independent republic--the Moluccans' marginal position in Dutch society interfered with it (Barris 1986). In particular, these violent actions opened the eyes of many Dutch political leaders. While condemning the violence and rejecting the political motives behind it, many felt that one, and probably the best, way of avoiding future violent actions would be to improve the treatment of ethnic minorities. In short, this laid the foundation of a dramatic change in policy on immigrants (Köbben 1979).

A New Policy

In 1980, the government adopted the basic assumption that the immigrants had come to stay and that an integration policy had to be outlined (Entzinger 1985; Penninx 1981). From then on, various categories of immigrants have been referred to as "ethnic minorities." A background to this change was obviously the fear that conflicts and violent disturbances of social peace would occur without such a policy. In 1983, the government presented its White Paper on Minorities (*Minderhedennota* 1983). The major aim of that policy was to further the chances of social mobility of the ethnic minorities. The policy aimed, *inter alia*, at strengthening the political influences of the immigrant ethnic minorities (Rath 1983, 1988b). Thus, the government financially supported ethnic organizations that were involved in the political decision-making process. It further set up a series of local and national advisory councils for the interests of ethnic minorities. And finally, it granted non-Netherlands citizens the right to vote and to run for office at the local level. Incidentally, this suggests that the Dutch definition of ethnic minorities and the subsequent minorities policy partially reflects social policy.

As said earlier, the Dutch had a characteristic way of incorporating religious minorities into the political process, namely through consociationalism. Aspects of this can be observed with the ethnic minorities as well. The government clearly attempted to avoid the situation in which it would no longer communicate with certain categories, *casu quo*, would lose control. From 1980, the government deliberately sought the cooperation of immigrants when outlining and implementing the minorities policy.

Thus, a draft version of the White Paper on Minorities and also summaries in different languages were sent to ethnic organizations, welfare foundations, and other agencies working for the interests of immigrants and ethnic minorities, explicitly inviting comment. Special mass meetings were organized to involve rank-and-file immigrants in the policy process. Interestingly, a great many of the comments by the ethnic minority leadership concerned their ethnic identity and the proposed policy on that topic. They suggested that strengthening their ethnicity was not only a right of ethnic minorities but also a prerequisite for their emancipation process. They rejected

any government interference with their cultures but, paradoxically, at the same time demanded government support for cultural activity. In fact, the ethnic minority leadership agreed with the policy to further the social mobility of immigrant ethnic minorities and showed every willingness to co-operate with the government in that respect, but they laid down an important condition: no cooperation without facilities to maintain or strengthen their ethnicity.

The ethnic leadership further demanded a special position in the political process. They argued that a more pluralistic political system would enable them to be politically active in their own, ethnically related ways and would consequently enhance their political role and influence. Sure enough, the government concentrated its sponsoring of those ethnic organizations that, apart from fostering ethnicity, also advocated ethnic minority interests and contributed to participation of ethnic minorities in Dutch society. In practice, however, things turned out differently. Graaf Penninx, and Stoové (1988) contend that most rank-and-file members considered the organizations as mere meeting places of compatriots and as agencies that gave shelter rather than as advocacy groups. A few organizations, or rather a couple of individual leaders, nevertheless penetrated the Dutch political arena by, for instance, playing a role in advisory bodies, in political parties, or sometimes in both.

Advisory Bodies

In the late 1970s, a few municipalities founded advisory bodies for immigrants, usually on the initiative of native Dutch. These special institutions were to advise the mayor and the local council on all affairs concerning immigrants. Immigrants living in these municipalities were entitled to elect their own representatives onto these bodies. For various reasons, the advisory bodies failed. The main reasons for this included the dominance of native Dutch officials, the lack of support by rank-and-file immigrants, inter- and intrachurch quarrels and, last but not least, the lack of real power.

In spite of this, the government continued to favor the founding of more advisory bodies. It felt obligated to meet ethnic minority demands for a more pluralistic model of participation and, moreover, considered such bodies as an appropriate means of consociating with the ethnic minority leadership. While showing its democratic credentials, the government hoped to win the support and cooperation of the ethnic minority leadership for the minorities policy. That leadership, on their side, often considered their involvement in such bodies as a recognition of the legitimacy of their ethnic-specific demands. The central government made some arrangements in the minorities policy to ensure that every municipality would create such a provision. As a result, in virtually every municipality with ethnic minorities some form of participation was set up. In

many cases the largest or (politically) most important ethnic organizations had delegates in the advisory bodies.

Although the local advisory bodies were still at the fringes of the power centers, many ethnic leaders dedicated themselves to the founding of a series of national advisory councils. In 1983, the central government proposed the founding of one national advisory council, the so-called *mindelheterraad* (Minorities Council). The major ethnic organizations would be represented in this multi-ethnic council. Though anxious for it to take place, they opposed the proposal and demanded separate institutions for each ethnic minority group. Contrary to the conventional viewpoint that divide and rule should be avoided and that intergroup solidarity and close cooperation are means to increase power, the ethnic minority leadership claimed that one council for all ethnic minority groups would considerably diminish their power. The government might seize the opportunity to manipulate interethnic differences and the minorities themselves might need to compromise. Remarkably, the leadership argued that their ethnic identity would be suppressed when under the obligation to cooperate in one council. Eventually, the political parties endorsed the counterproposal. The parties clearly did not want to get into the ethnic leaders' bad books, especially not during this period when the racist *Centrumpartij* (Center Party) had one seat in parliament (1982-1986). More than ever, most parties felt the need to demonstrate their opposition to racism and their respect for the needs of ethnic minorities. Besides, the parties took the opportunity to compensate for a little of their own failure to integrate ethnic minorities in their own ranks.

Electoral Politics

It was not until recently that both immigrant ethnic minorities and political parties took serious notice of each other. As for the minorities, or rather the activists among them, they spent most of their time and efforts in other institutions like ethnic organizations and advisory bodies. Their integration in the Dutch electoral system had been particularly accelerated by the enfranchisement of non-Netherlands residents in 1985. Not that immigrants campaigned for voting rights; quite the contrary. But the first immigrant elections in 1986 gave many ethnic minority activists cause to put pressure on the political parties to be more considerate of ethnic minorities. This resulted in a considerable increase in ethnic minority party membership. Furthermore, the 1986 local elections gave political parties cause to pay more attention than ever to the ethnic minorities both in their programs and in their campaigns.

The ethnic voters turned out en masse, except for Moroccans who followed the summons of the Moroccan King Hassan II to abstain from voting; he considered the elections as an undesirable step towards assimilation. (Buijs and

Rath 1986). The overwhelming majority of the ethnic minorities voted for the social-democratic *PvdA* (Labour party). Many ethnic voters considered the Labour party as the party for the working man--which most of them actually were--and above all as the party with most concern for ethnic minorities. The support for Labour was also related to the relatively high number of social-democratic ethnic candidates.

The nomination of ethnic candidates was at least partly due to their ethnic background. Quite a few succeeded in getting nominated by implicitly or explicitly referring to their ethnic background (Rath 1983a). Some ethnic party members claimed that minorities should be given a fair deal, by which they meant preferential treatment, and that any other treatment would be an expression of Dutch supremacy. Others, if not most, did not need to articulate such a position, because many Dutch party members already supported them of their own accord. The Dutch considered their support a means to show their solidarity with ethnic minorities and their anti-racist credentials. Of course, they also hoped that the ethnic candidates would yield many ethnic votes.

The Dutch electoral system is based on the principle of proportional representation and opens up the possibility of preference vote-centered campaigns. Although such a campaign is unusual, many ethnic candidates conducted one either on their own initiative or on the initiative of Dutch fellow party members (Buijs and Rath 1986; Rath 1983a). In doing so they manipulated formal and informal ethnic networks and used the ethnic organizations of which they were commonly the leaders, too. In other words, they mobilized ethnicity and took advantage of the solidarity among the members of their ethnic communities. The resulting large number of preference votes helped their election and the party winning votes, and also served to strengthen their position within the party. This is another indication that ethnicity has become a salient feature of Dutch politics.

CONCLUSION

Through the developments reviewed above, it is apparent that immigrant ethnic minorities have become aware of the need to participate in the British and Dutch political systems. Although some ethnic minorities have unhesitatingly adopted the route of party-centered involvement, for many, local ethnic community organizations remain the first--and in some cases sole--vehicle of participation. This has not always been the case. For some time, the newcomers were only marginally involved in host country politics. If politically active, most attention was paid to home country politics. In the course of time, though, things have changed and immigrants have become involved in the political process of the country in which they were living. Historically, in Britain this change took place beginning in the 1960s, and in Holland, a decade

or so later. This difference is probably due to the fact that mass immigration to Britain reached its height earlier than in the Netherlands, but probably also to the fact that the British central government has set up various institutions for the interests of immigrant ethnic minorities at a rather early stage. The Dutch central government needed more time for that. Presently we witness ethnic minorities' political activity in both countries at all levels. In this chapter we sought to describe a few aspects of these activities, in particular the role of ethnic organizations and their use of ethnicity.

Of course, this is not an exhaustive description, not least because this subject is an understudied aspect both in the British and Dutch cases. Evidently, there are many differences, since we are dealing with two different countries with different histories, different political systems, and different immigration patterns. The response of the government, political parties, and other political actors are not always similar. In Britain, for instance, the government definition of ethnic minorities is predominantly based on racial features. In the Netherlands the definition is not as racialized as in Britain. It is selective and based on ethnic rather than on racial features and it reflects social policy. Furthermore, it does seem to make a difference in Britain when dealing with left-wing authorities or with right-wing authorities, in particular at the local level. The former have recently adopted a more cooperative and supportive attitude toward ethnic minorities. Although there are differences in the Netherlands between left-wing and right-wing authorities, virtually all pursue a similar policy. This may be explained by the fact that local authorities follow the central governments' minorities policy, which is, moreover, endorsed by all major political parties. This may also be explained by the prevailing political ideology. Historically, Dutch politicians have been concerned about minorities and there has been a tendency toward consensus on this issue. It is thus relatively natural to give religious or ethnic minorities their own niche in the political system, even when this implies the use of ethnicity. The British class-ridden political system seems to lack such casualness over the use of ethnicity in mainstream political discourse.

Another difference is the relation between ethnic organizations and local participation bodies such as the British CRCs or the Dutch advisory councils. The CRCs exist next to the ethnic organizations; initially the government exclusively focused on these CRCs and it took the government some time to focus on the organizations as well. In the Netherlands, the first few advisory bodies were founded apart from ethnic organizations, but the organizations have quickly become involved in the bodies. The organizations are considered an important vehicle for ethnic minority political action, which should not be excluded from the policy process. The same assumption underlies the enfranchisement of non-Dutch residents.

Interestingly enough, there are also many parallels. The growing importance of ethnic organizations in the political process is related in both

countries to threats to the position of immigrant ethnic minorities. The rise of far-right political parties like the National Front or the Center party are the most visible ones, but the restriction of immigration and the failure of governments to considerably improve the disadvantaged position of ethnic minorities have been perceived as other threats. Ethnic organizations have gained momentum by these factors. Their demands for a better position is strengthened by mobilizing members of their ethnic group using ethnic loyalties. This is not to say that all ethnic organizations are anxious to be involved in the policy process. Many serve mainly as a sort of shelter for the members of the ethnic minority groups.

It is remarkable that most attempts to form umbrella organizations, in which all ethnic minorities take part, have failed so far. It is equally remarkable that there are no large radical Black power movements in Britain or in Holland as there have been in the United States. Some authors argue that this failure results from the ethos of the two governments to somehow involve immigrant ethnic minorities in the policy process. There is certainly some truth in this argument, particularly in the Dutch case. Certainly, it is the case that the governments' attempts to involve minorities in the policy process are consequences of unrest or fear for unrest in the society. Both governments strive for racial harmony—however defined—and want to exclude every violent dissidence. At the same time, they need the cooperation of ethnic minorities themselves for legitimating and implementing their policy. Ethnic organizations have thus come to occupy a key position in central and local government policy initiatives. This much may be true, but what of the consequences for ethnic minorities in the political process? If we are to accept that ethnic organizations are to play this unique role, how is this likely to shape their future involvement in British and Dutch politics and policy-making? It is not entirely certain that current approaches will yield the long-term dividends for which many politicians, policy-makers, and ethnic minorities hope.