The roots of ethnic cleansing in Europe, by H. Zeynep Bulutgil, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2016, 234 pp., 8 b/w illus. 12 tables, $99.99 (cloth), ISBN 9781107135864

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In *Imagined Communities*, the late Benedict Anderson pointed to "the fatal diversity" of spoken language as the underlying condition on account of which the vernacularization of formal writing in the era of print capitalism was such a powerful catalyst in the rise of modern European nationalism. The foundational insight of Zeynep Bulutgil's impressively wide-ranging and analytically rigorous comparative study can be read as a corollary to Anderson's thesis: it is the *fatal territoriality* of ethno-national identities that underlies the proclivity to ethnic cleansing during and immediately after periods of inter-state warfare. Simply put, the relative incidence of any given ethnic identity tends to vary geographically to a much greater extent than that of most other social categories, such as class or gender. Hence, states – in their capacities as territorially defined entities that claim and seek to harness their populations' allegiance – may be tempted to violently target individuals and communities identified with the dominant ethnicities of hostile neighboring countries in times of war, especially if those wars involve contestations over ethnically mixed lands. Ethnic cleansing seeks to realize the "ideal" of ethnically homogeneous nation-states by eliminating the gradients and overlaps that have historically typified the territorial distribution of ethno-cultural groups.

Bulutgil's thesis leads her to a conundrum which forms the central issue of her study: given the tension between twentieth century European states' preoccupation with ethnic identity as determinative of the loyalty or disloyalty of their populations and the uncomfortable reality they confronted of ethnic heterogeneity (particularly in potentially disputed borderland regions), why did ethnic cleansing not happen even more often that it did? Why is it that when it did happen it tended to be under conditions of warfare rather than in peacetime? In other words, what factors impeded ethnic cleansing?

The hypothesis the author proceeds to test, and for which she finds evidence, is that inter-ethnic political coalitions based on shared class interests constitute an essential bulwark against ethnic cleansing. These coalitions are particularly effective in peacetime, when preoccupations with territorial disputes tend to be overshadowed by domestic ideological and socio-economic issues; hence, the ability to form class-based political alliances that can trump inter-ethnic differences. In time of war between neighboring states, territorial issues by definition come to the fore; hence the potential for ethnic tensions to tear apart class-based coalitions and, in some cases, to lead to all-out ethnic cleansing on the part of states determined to consolidate control over – and pre-empt potential or suspected ethnic "fifth columns" – in contested lands.

To her credit, Bulutgil explores and freely acknowledges the limits of the explanatory power of her hypothesis. Most notably, she recognizes that Nazi Germany's genocide against the Jews does not lend itself to this form of explanation, given that Jews were a diaspora group that did not claim a political homeland in Europe and were not identified with one state more than another (leaving aside delusional anti-Semitic claims about "Judeo-Communism.") On the other hand, she contends that the relatively lower incidence of ethnic cleansings in post-colonial Africa – despite that continent's ethnic diversity and

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the frequency with which its ethnic groups straddle inter-state borders – is not inconsistent with her argument, given that civil wars within states have been more common than inter-state wars over territorial disputes on that continent.

Of course, recent years' events in Rwanda, western Sudan, and South Sudan can be pointed to as cases where ethnic cleansing and genocidal campaigns have taken place in the context of civil wars. I also wonder whether it is not precisely the very high degree of ethno-cultural heterogeneity typical of most sub-Saharan African states that makes ethnic cleansing (as distinct from various other forms of mass violence) less frequent in that part of the world than it has been in modern Europe. For most of these states, any attempt to identify the state with one dominant ethnic group would be a recipe for disintegration rather than consolidation. The Habsburg Empire's avoidance of ethnic cleansing campaigns during World War I despite the state's perception of ethnic Italians and Serbs in military frontier zones as likely to be disloyal, which Bulutgil attributes to the strength of class-based political coalitions, also strikes me as more readily explicable by the fact that one of the Dual Monarchy's key claims to political legitimacy rested on its ability to arbitrate relations among its constituent nationalities rather than on its capacity to embody the identity of any given subset among them.

Among the rich array of important debates to which this stimulating book will give rise, there are two interlinked issues I would like to raise, having to do with the inhibitions against mass violence on the one hand and the role of historical experience and memory in motivating, catalyzing, or legitimizing it on the other. The author's approach appears, perhaps unintentionally, to assume that ethnic cleansing would be normative even in peacetime were it not for class-based coalitions that stand in its way. Yet I wonder how clearly we can distinguish cause and effect here. After all, in the absence of widespread inter-ethnic violence or state-orchestrated targeting of ethnic groups, it is presumably easier to create working political coalitions that bridge ethnic divisions. And I would suggest that there is a wide array of moral, psychological, and political obstacles to the unleashing of such violence under peacetime circumstances. The upheaval of ethnic cleansing can, after all, have very high costs as well as benefits even for states that define themselves in ethno-national terms. The collateral damage, so to speak, to the rule of law, the security of property rights, and to the government's international standing (and indeed to the stability of its relations with neighboring states with an interest in "co-ethnics" across the border) may well outweigh the perceived political advantages of ethnic cleansing. For that matter, from a deeply cynical perspective, there may be certain political advantages to be reaped by keeping a minority around in order to bait, victimize, and/or demonize it. In brief, it seems likely that many factors beyond the vagaries of political-coalition building may play fundamental roles in preventing ethnic cleansing.

It is certainly incontrovertible that, in wartime, as Bulutgil argues, peacetime cost–benefit perceptions – whatever combination of factors may shape them – are likely to shift radically amidst the proliferation of psychological and political opportunities for unleashing mass violence against ethnic minorities. That said, a question that strikes me as worthy of further exploration is why many of East Central Europe's most notorious ethnic-cleansing and genocidal campaigns did not happen until the 1940s. After all, most of the region's states were either formed or radically reshaped during the bloody, chaotic, war-ridden period straddling the formal end of the World War I. Why were there not more ethnic cleansings during 1917–1923, as would be nation-states fought over rival territorial claims in regions marked by a bewildering intermixture of languages, religions, and perceived or actual ethno-political loyalties and affinities?

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I certainly do not wish to minimize the impact that the horrific and massive violence of these years had on ethnic and national identities, political cultures, and the re-drawing of boundaries among the included, the excluded, and the marginalized. There clearly was a widespread tendency to fall back upon narrowly ethno-cultural bonds amidst the catastrophic collapse of overarching structures of political community, and this tendency both sustained, and was reinforced by, the accompanying waves of killing, rape, and dispossession. That said, it strikes me as unusual, in retrospect, that *ethnic cleansing* – as distinct from extremely widespread ethnic violence – was a relatively uncommon phenomenon during this period, as compared with World War II and its immediate aftermath. There are some notorious counterexamples, to be sure: notably, the Armenian genocide during World War I and the mass transfer of Orthodox and Muslim populations between Turkey and Greece in 1923. There were similar exchanges between Bulgaria and Greece. Yet outside of the Ottoman/Turkish/Balkan context, one does not find as much of it as one might expect – at least from a jaundiced, twenty-first century perspective. Why was this? Why did countries like Poland and Czechoslovakia end up incorporating such sizable non-eponymous ethnic groups rather than simply expelling them, as became the norm in the 1940s?

Perhaps part of the answer lies in the fact that political elites' conceptions of national identity had not quite caught up with the reductionist logic of the very ethnic violence they helped unleash. Michael Mann has suggested that pre-modern wars were waged to subordinate rather than eliminate the inhabitants of conquered territories (Mann 2005, 34). By this standard, the conflicts of 1917–1923 fall into a transitional category. The territorial boundaries suggested by the memory of newly fashioned nation-states' historical antecedents (such as the early modern Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the case of the post-1918 Polish republic or the Kingdom of Bohemia for the Czechs) encompassed sizable groups of people who could not readily be classified as members of the latter-day nation-states' eponymous ethnic groups. For that matter, territorial claims based on the distribution of the eponymous ethnic group also necessarily incorporated sizable minorities. And yet, massive expulsions of prospective minorities were not undertaken outside of the Turko-Balkan theater at this juncture. In Poland's case, there were those, such as the right-wing nationalist Roman Dmowski, who advocated for a curtailment of the most extravagant territorial ambitions in the interests of ending up with a manageable – and potentially assimilable – minority of non-Polish Slavs in the new Polish republic. Others, such as Dmowski's political rival Joseph Piłsudski, embraced vague schemes for ethno-national federation as the formula that would allow the region's nations to have their maximalist territorial cakes and realize their national self-determination too. Thomas Masaryk pinned his hopes on the promise of Czech-Slovak inter-ethnic fraternization that would fence in the new country's sizable German and Magyar minorities. The Bolsheviks ended up cultivating the outer façade of multiple ethnic particularisms on the premise that ethno-cultural identity was a neutral medium through which one could diffuse any set of political values, including Marxism-Leninism – just as the Christian Gospel had been spread through translation into a diversity of languages. The crystallization of discrete, standardized linguistic-territorial identities among the constituent nationalities of the former Russian empire would, it was believed, facilitate the dissemination of socialist values and proletarian consciousness among their masses, helping pave the way to their ideological transformation and economic modernization. Through the miracle of dialectical trans-substantiation, shared class consciousness and common commitment to socialist transformation would transcend the very ethno-national particularism that Moscow was institutionalizing, leading to the emergence of a supra-national Soviet man and Soviet woman. Even Atatürk imagined that

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minorities of Muslim background such as the Kurds could be assimilated into the Turkish nation once the non-Muslim groups had been expelled.

In brief, the initially prevalent conceptions of national self-determination among many of the emergent or renascent polities of 1917–1923 was not necessarily ethnically reductionist. Yet the very means employed to create these states tended to undermine realistic prospects of peaceful and stable coexistence among the diverse groups that comprised their populations. By the end of the internecine warfare that marked the founding or refounding of sovereign entities during these years, there was little basis (if indeed there ever had been) for the sort of complex consociationalist practices and toleration of regional autonomy that would have been vital elements in any lasting *modus vivendi* between majority and minority groups.

I think it remains noteworthy that, outside of the Turkish arena, the disjunctures between the new nation-states' multi-ethnic compositions and their increasingly exclusivist ethnic nationalisms did not lead to *total* transfers or murders of populations until World War II and its aftermath. Perhaps a certain brewing time is required before the most drastic resolutions to ethnic conflict are resorted to on a systematic basis. In the Ottoman Empire, the mass murder and transfer of Armenians and the Greco-Turkish population exchanges were the culmination of years of divergence between inclusive Ottomanist rhetorical ideals and the violent un-mixings of peoples (to borrow Rogers Brubaker's phrase) around the geographical fringes of the empire (Brubaker 1996). By the time Ottoman entry into the Great War created the opportunity, the Young Turk leadership was already primed, as it were, for adopting radically violent measures as the most efficient path toward a resolution of the perceived impasse between the ideal of a cohesively patriotic society and the reality of multi-ethnic diversity. It is true that Galician Poles had clashed with Ukrainians, and Czechs with Bohemian Germans, for decades before World War I, but those confrontations had been largely political and mostly contained by overarching imperial structures; any violence did not even begin to approach the scale of the massacres and atrocities typical of pre-1914 inter-state conflicts like the Balkan Wars, or of the internal slaughter of tens of thousands of Ottoman Armenians in the 1890s.

If the Polish state's conquest of eastern Galicia was not accompanied by a systematic expulsion of the region's ethnic Ukrainian population, it was perhaps because Polish leaders had not yet had the opportunity to convince themselves that Ukrainians could never be integrated or assimilated into a Polish nation-state. It took the years of insurgency, terror, counter-insurgency, and counter-terror of the interwar period – plus the descent into renewed Hobbesian violence in Galicia and Volhynia during the final phase of World War II – to lead most of the parties concerned to the grim conclusion that strict congruence of territory with ethnicity was the only foundation for the long-term control of disputed lands (Snyder 2003). The same conclusion was, of course, reached with regard to the ethnic Germans of Poland and Czechoslovakia, but only in the wake of the nightmare of Nazi occupation.

It is in the long run that the violence of 1917–1923 may have had its greatest impact on political cultures and nationalist agendas, as some of the veterans of the worst forms of violence in the earlier years rose to prominence as members of dominant new elites in the lead-up to World War II (Gerwarth and Horne 2012). But note also how Stalin drew on the legacy of war Communism to institutionalize a sort of one-sided civil war against his own society in the 1930s, following the relative respite of the New Economic Policy. As that case (as well as Germany's example) makes clear, the trajectory from the quasi-Hobbesian forms of violence in 1917–1923 to the institutionalized mass violence of the 1930s and 1940s is not one of incremental growth. It is characterized by more of a punctuated rhythm, with an interim period of half-baked compromises followed (in some, but not all, cases) by the eventual

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rise to power of a cohort of men steeped in the experience of paramilitary and civil-war violence who draw on that experience when they seize the reins of leadership.

To return to Bulutgil's argument, what this suggests is that the threshold to ethnic cleansing is actually rather higher than her approach seems to suppose. Even amidst conditions of warfare and territorial contestation, ethnic cleansing and genocide in twentieth century Europe tended not to be resorted to in the first instance – which is not to say that the scale of violence against civilians generally and targeted ethnic groups specifically was not horrific enough. It was only in the course of a second or third round of warfare and violence, during World War II and its aftermath, that the logic of ethnic cleansing and genocide reached its apotheosis.

This leads me to my final point, which concerns Bulutgil's interesting and provocative treatment of the descent toward ethnic warfare and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia of the 1990s. This is one of this book's most compelling case studies: the author undertook an exhaustive statistical survey and analysis designed to establish whether or not there is any meaningful correlation between the incidence of ethnically targeted violence in this region during World War II and the propensity to vote for nationalist Muslim, Croat, and Serb political parties amidst the breakup of Yugoslavia half-a-century later. She finds that there is no such correlation and concludes that memories of World War II-era massacres cannot be pointed to as causes of ethnic cleavages and cleansings in the 1990s (she proposes, instead, that it was a surfeit – so to speak – of Communist-induced socio-economic equality that undercut the potential for a class-based politics of inter-ethnic coalitions to gain traction following Communism's collapse). Yet I wonder whether personal/familial/local memory and historical memory are not being conflated here. After all, the selective invocation of World War II precedents constituted some of the most effective political mobilizing techniques in the post-Yugoslav states. The legacy of ethnic massacres of the 1940s constituted an all too usable historical past that was actively leveraged by rival political forces and that seems to have taken on a lively reality in the minds of many voters and militiamen, regardless of whether their specific towns and villages had or had not been the sites of major massacres 50 years earlier.

That said, the apparent lack of correlation between latter-day electoral choices among Bosnians and the World War II-era experiences of individual towns and communities remains highly intriguing and cries out for further investigation. And this is just one illustration of how, both methodologically and conceptually, *The Roots of Ethnic Cleansing in Europe* opens important new pathways for research and issues for debate in the field of nationality studies.

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