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**Territorial Conflict and Ethnic Cleansing
Abstract**

Introduction

What is ethnic cleansing? This chapter provides a critical overview of the existing literature, defines the concept of ethnic cleansing, and justifies the particular definition used throughout the study. The definition of ethnic cleansing used in the thesis is “a state policy that exterminates or forcefully and permanently deports a substantial part of an ethnic group from their current location to another one.”

Chapter 1: A Spatial Theory of Ethnicity and Ethnic Cleansing

This chapter presents the main theory in two parts: the first argues that there is a generally applicable geographical or territorial basis to ethnicity; the second argues that, because of the structural relationship between ethnicity and territory, conflicts over territory lead to ethnic cleansing.

The structural argument proceeds in three steps. First, I show that the groups that we label “ethnic” are most commonly defined by language—an instrument that varies with distance. Second, I argue that, because of this characteristic, ethnicity is inherently more territorial than other potentially prominent political cleavages such as class or religion. Third, I make the case that, due to this relationship between ethnicity and territory, actors that want to capture territory from existing states tend to form alliances with ethnic groups rather than with social classes or religious groups.

The second part of the argument identifies two causal paths that link this structural basis to ethnic cleansing. The first, “reactionary ethnic cleansing,” is applicable to situations in which the territory-seeking actor occupies part or whole of the contested territory and uses one ethnic group against the other. This type of ethnic cleansing is most likely right after the occupier withdraws from the contested territory. The second, “anticipatory ethnic cleansing,” applies to contexts in which the territory-seeking actor forms an alliance with an ethnic group prior to any fighting. This type of ethnic cleansing is most likely right before or right after the fighting starts between the contestants. Analytically, both these paths lead to ethnic cleansing by increasing the relative salience of ethnic cleavages vis-à-vis other political differences and by deteriorating the relations between ethnic groups as well as between their leaders.

Finally, this chapter also addresses two important theoretical questions. First is the issue of how ethnic groups come to form alliances with territory-seeking actors. In this section, I specify the processes of alliance formation that are consistent with the broader theoretical framework. The second issue is whether motivations inspired by ethnicity are the cause rather than the outcome of territorial conflicts. I tackle this issue by critically assessing the theoretical and empirical aspects of the relevant literature.

Chapter 2: States and Minority Ethnic Groups: Quantitative Evidence

This chapter tests my theory with a dataset of minority-state dyads from Europe 1900-1950 that I have generated. The data include indicators for whether or not a given ethnic group was located in a region of dispute between two states, whether or not territory-seeking actors formed war-time alliances with minority ethnic groups, the depth of ethnic differences, and the existence of a neighboring homeland for the minority groups.

I chose to focus on this context for three reasons. First, the availability of material and my own knowledge of this region made it possible to collect information on a variety of variables. Second, the theory I offer is in principle applicable to regions like Europe, in which there is a general overlap between language and ethnicity. Third, existing scholarly works as well as popular understandings of mass ethnic violence take their intuitions from this particular region and period.

The empirical analyses test two main hypotheses: (i) The ethnic groups that are located in regions of territorial conflict should be more likely to be victims of ethnic cleansing compared to others; (ii) The ethnic groups with which territory-seeking actors form war-time alliances should be more likely to be victims of ethnic cleansing than others. The results support the expectations of my theory. I find that minorities that are located in regions of interstate territorial conflict are more likely to be ethnically cleansed than other minority groups. I also find that the minority groups with which territory-seeking states form war-time alliances are much more likely to face ethnic cleansing compared to others. Finally, my findings largely go against the argument that ethnic differences are a major cause of ethnic cleansing.

Chapter 3: States and Minority Ethnic Groups: Qualitative Evidence

This chapter tests the implications of the theory by tracing the relationship between minority ethnic groups and governments in three contexts: 1. The Germans in interwar Czechoslovakia. 2. The Germans and Ukrainians in Poland. 3. The Greeks in the Ottoman Empire. These cases are appropriate choices for three reasons. First, they constitute contexts in which ethnic cleavages were quite salient. Hence, these are precisely the type of contexts that should favor theories that stress the role of ethnicity. Second, these cases cover different historical backgrounds and so the conclusions do not depend on a specific historical experience. Third, within each case, there are substantial temporal variations in the treatment of minority groups.

On the relations between minority and majority groups, I expect to make two observations. First, during peacetime, ethnic groups have significant internal divisions and, hence, they cooperate with the members of other ethnic groups against their co-ethnics. Second, ethnic cleavages trump other political divisions and relations between ethnic groups deteriorate as a result of alliances with territory-seeking states. On the formation of alliances between territory-seeking states and minority groups, I expect to observe that territory-seeking states initiate and sustain the formation of alliances by strengthening the factions within the minority ethnic groups who are open to alliance formation.

The process tracing of the cases supports these expectations. In all cases, both the minority and majority groups were divided into several political factions and/or parties. More importantly, these parties formed formal coalitions or cooperated with each other in other ways. Also in all these contexts the relations changed as a result of a territorial conflict with a neighboring state, which formed a war-time alliance with the ethnic group in question. Finally,

the financial, military, and organizations intervention from the territory seeking actors (Germany in the case of Poland and Czechoslovakia, and Greece in the case of the Ottoman Empire) played a major role in the formation of the war-time alliances.

Chapter 4: Non-State Actors and Ethnic Groups: Quantitative and Qualitative Evidence

This chapter tests whether my theory explains the behavior of non-state actors towards ethnic groups. Since it is difficult to acquire information on the territories held by non-state actors on a cross-national basis, the chapter uses a different strategy. It focuses on the intensity of ethnic cleansing across sub-national units in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Bosnia-Herzegovina is an appropriate case because it is possible to find relatively high quality sub-national level data relating to patterns of violence as well as to potential independent variables.

The chapter uses two levels of analysis: municipalities and villages within a single municipality. At the municipal level I use statistical tests to see whether or not patterns of territorial conflict account for the intensity of violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The analysis at the village-level focuses on a single municipality (Prijeđor) that was intensely contested between two actors and observes whether alliance patterns at the village-level explain the distribution of violence across Prijeđor. This part of the analysis uses the field research that I conducted in Prijeđor, which involved conducting interviews in villages and gathering information from local newspaper archives, NGOs, and government institutions.

My findings suggest that municipalities that were contested between two or more actors witnessed substantially higher levels of violence compared to municipalities that were not. In addition, I failed to find a relationship between indicators for the depth of ethnic cleavages—such as experience of past violence and the number of people who considered themselves Yugoslavs—and patterns of violence. At the village level, I found that alliance patterns at the level of villages played a major role in distribution of violence in Prijeđor and qualitative comparison shows that this is mainly because of the way these alliances reshaped the relations between different ethnic groups on the ground.

Chapter 5: Macro-Regional Comparison and Out-of-Sample Testing

This chapter evaluates the extent to which my argument travels to contexts outside of Europe. I argue that the fundamental cause of ethnic cleansing is territorial conflicts between states or state-like actors. Since territorial conflict is a regional as well as a national level phenomenon, the theory also has testable implications for the distribution of ethnic cleansing cases across different regions of the world. The expectation is that in regions where territorial conflict is relatively common, the likelihood of ethnic cleansing for any given group should also be higher.

The chapter compares the probability of ethnic cleansing in regions where interstate territorial conflicts were rare (such as cold-war Europe, Africa, North/South America) with those where such conflicts were ubiquitous (Central and Eastern Europe up to mid-20th century). Since this chapter focuses on a highly aggregate level of analysis its findings are more suggestive than conclusive. But the chapter is significant so far as it empirically questions widely spread notions such as the idea that Africa is particularly prone to ethnic cleansing and suggests a plausible reason why this might not be the case using the theory suggested in this study.

Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the theory and reiterates its empirical and analytical contributions. The chapter also offers a discussion of the cases of ethnic cleansing, such as the Holocaust, which most obviously fall outside the explanatory logic of the theory. In this discussion, I propose a potentially fruitful way of reconceptualizing and studying these cases. Lastly, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the future risk of ethnic cleansing in different regions of the world and the policy implications that might or might not work in these contexts.