Book Review

H. Zeynep Bulutgil (2016) Roots of Ethnic Cleansing in Europe. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Despite an abundance of scholarship on extreme interethnic violence, gaps remain in our knowledge of what prevents ethnic cleansing and what explains the transition from peaceful relations to the horrors of ethnic cleansing. And while periods of interethnic peace far outnumber those of interethnic violence, understanding how and why this transition occurs is imperative to preventing future atrocities. In *The Roots of Ethnic Cleansing*, H. Zeynep Bulutgil fills this void with a compelling theory of the conditions that prevent ethnic cleansing and the factors that weaken these conditions to enable its occurrence. This theory rests on two pillars: ethnic cleavages are only one dimension of a multidimensional political space, and ethnicity involves unique social groups due to their non-repetitiveness. She tests these theoretical insights using cases from twentieth-century Europe where ethnic cleansing did and did not occur. After applying her theory to Europe successfully, Bulutgil expands its application to the African context. She concludes with her main contributions to the study of ethnicity and ethnic cleansing and their implications for policy makers.

The first pillar of Bulutgil's theory is that dominant ethnic groups are almost always divided along non-ethnic lines, such as social class and religion. She explains that these cleavages create factions of dominant group members advocating for different goals. The result is that while dominant group members focused on issues of ethnicity may advocate for ethnic cleansing, other dominant group members focused on non-ethnic issues, like class, may advocate for policies, such as the re-distribution of wealth. And while the former group is ethnically homogenous, factions advocating for non-ethnic issues often build coalitions with non-dominant group members who they see as valuable to their cause. These latter, ethnically mixed groups have a strong incentive to oppose ethnic cleansing, and in doing so, they help prevent advocates of ethnic cleansing from garnering enough political support to carry it out.

The shift from peacetimes to ethnic cleansing can only occur if there is a shift in political power and support toward dominant group factions advocating for ethnic cleansing. To understand how this shift occurs, Bulutgil introduces the second pillar of her theory: the non-repetitive nature of ethnic groups across territory. In one of the most novel contributions of her book, Bulutgil points out that while other social groups repeat across territory, ethnic groups tend not to repeat. She illustrates this by explaining that if you were to make your way in a straight line across Europe, the ethnic groups you would encounter would differ, whereas you would repeatedly come across the same categories from other social classes, such as wealthy and poor groups (pp. 30-31). This non-repetition has political implications because of the political nature of ethnicity. Ethnic groups (also referred to as ethno-linguistic groups) became politically relevant during the process of modern state formation in Europe. Seeking support from citizens to pay taxes and serve in the army, state leaders united

populations around a common ethno-linguistic identity. The common identity chosen tended to be that of the majority group and was often located in the geographical center of the state. The creation of a dominant linguistic group meant the creation of non-dominant groups and varying access to state goods, resulting in an ethnic hierarchy within each state (pp. 32-33). And because of the non-repetitive nature of ethnicity, the resulting dominant group and ethnic hierarchy tended to differ between states.

With dominant and non-dominant groups differing from state to state, any change in territory affects the established ethnic hierarchy and can result in ethnic cleansing in several ways. If the annexation of territory is successful, then the dominant group in the annexed territory, which was likely to have led the army fighting against the annexing state, may be targeted for ethnic cleansing in retribution. The non-dominant groups in newly acquired territory may also be targeted by proponents of ethnic cleansing in the annexing state because they do not have any alliances with members of the dominant group focusing on non-ethnic issues. If the annexation is unsuccessful, then non-dominant groups who experienced an increase in their societal position because of enemy state support or collusion with the enemy may be targeted for ethnic cleansing. Bulutgil successfully illustrates the above scenarios through cross-national comparisons across Europe.

While strong in its ability to explain the cases she presents, Bulutgil's theory raises some key questions. For example, in the last scenario described above, non-dominant groups who experience elevation in society due to their collusion with an enemy state are at a greater risk of ethnic cleansing. This may be because the non-dominant group directly participated in violence against their own state's dominant group. But in cases where the non-dominant group did not participate in the violence, why is the fear of a reversed ethnic hierarchy so powerful? Bulutgil cites their loss of power as one reason. Yet, according to Ashutosh Varshney's theory of value-rationality (2003), the turn to ethnic cleansing may be driven by other values. Varshney argues that the position that someone is born into in an ethnic hierarchy affects not only their access to political goods, but also their sense of dignity, an idea borrowed from Charles Taylor's scholarship on the Politics of Recognition (1994). Thus, a dominant group's fear of moving down the ethnic ladder is also linked to their sense of self-respect. As Varshney goes on to explain, the pursuit of dignity can lead individuals to make value-rational cost-benefit analyses that motivate them to participate in extreme acts, including killing others and self-sacrifice.

Varshney's theory of value-rationality also has implications for if and how non-dominant groups actively participate in collaboration with the enemy state. To avoid endogeneity, Bulutgil notes that this collaboration must result from territorial conflict, not from a non-dominant group's fear of ethnic cleansing before the territorial conflict even takes place (pp. 40). This leads her to focus heavily on the role of the annexing state's dominant groups in initiating the collaboration. For example, in Czechoslovakia she argues that it was Germany's intervention, not the actions of Czech Germans, which led to the latter group's targeting for ethnic cleansing (pp. 80). But even when non-dominant groups are not initiating collaboration because of a fear of ethnic cleansing, their desire to rise in the ethnic ranks may make them more open or susceptible to colluding with an enemy state as a means of achieving this elevation.

Furthermore, how open a non-dominant group is to collaboration with the enemy state may shape the nature of the collaboration and affect the degree of the elevation they experience, which in turn may affect the probability of ethnic cleansing.

Bulutgil's theory also raises the question of how elites mobilize ordinary citizens to actually carry out ethnic cleansing – a factor necessary for its occurrence. For the purposes of her study, Bulutgil focuses only on state-sponsored ethnic cleansing. Yet, even in such cases, mass ethnic cleansing requires mass participation. In some cases, the state may directly train militant groups, like Germany's militarization of a large group of young Ukrainian men who later 'cleansed' Volhynia and Eastern Galicia of Poles (pp. 106). But in cases like Bosnia-Herzegovina, civilians played a major role in the ethnic cleansing. Stathis N. Kalyvas (2003) offers a compelling theory on the 'joint production' of action in civil war. He explains that actors within the state have distinct identities and interests, so while citizens may take up the public goals of state elites, such as ethnic cleansing, they may do so for private reasons, such as the desire for vengeance. According to Henry Hale (2008), elites can also use ethnic identity itself to mobilize citizens. Like Bulutgil, he notes the uniqueness of ethnic identity. He explains that it is a powerful tool for helping individuals make sense of the unpredictable actions of others, thereby allowing them to reduce the uncertainty innate in a complex social world. This is due to ethnicity's strong ability to connote common fate, lower barriers to communication (through common language and culture, for example), provide fairly permanent and visible physical indicators, and because of its strong correlations to other traits. By framing uncertain times, like the aftermath of territorial conflict, in ethnic terms (like a security threat), elites can mobilize citizens into participating in violent acts.

Overall, Bulutgil's theory makes important contributions to explaining the conditions that maintain peaceful relations and why ethnic cleansing tends to occur within the context of interstate war. She successfully demonstrates how domestic factors, including factions within the dominant party and ethnic hierarchies, interact with international factors, including shifting territory through war and collusion between enemy states and domestic ethnic groups, to result in ethnic cleansing. In doing so, she makes important steps forward in merging the silos of domestic and international theory. She also challenges pre-conceived notions that ancient ethnic hatreds are at the heart of ethnic cleansing in Eastern and Central Europe. Instead, by illuminating the importance of non-ethnic cleavages amongst dominant groups in preventing ethnic cleansing, she shows why democracies have lower rates of ethnic cleansing than post-communist states that often adopt secularization and re-distribution of land policies. The new insight generated by her theory is essential to producing preventative policies. It lends support to existing calls to promote cross-cutting cleavages amongst dominant ethnic groups, advocated for by scholars like Horowitz (2001), and it raises new questions about what the equalizing nature of the welfare state might mean for interethnic relations in states adopting this model.

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