

Democracy and Ethnic War¹

MICHAEL MANN
University of California, Los Angeles

ABSTRACT: Focussing on ethnic wars, this paper empirically challenges two common, linked assumptions: that democracies are inherently pacific, and that ethnic cleansing is launched by authoritarian rather than elected and quasi-democratic regimes. These false assumptions ultimately derive from liberalism's misperception of itself. "Liberal peace" prevailed only in unusual historic settings, mostly found in northwestern Europe, where the main lines of exploitation within each state were along class lines and where there was little international exploitation between the states. Contrary to the liberal view of liberalism, its peace depended less on individual interest or toleration than on the institutionalization of class and international conflict. Internal peace did not prevail where exploitation was less by class than by ethnicity entwined with international exploitation. In these latter cases, aspirations for "rule by the people" tend to generate an organic rather than a liberal conception of the people, an ethnocratic conception of the state and (in certain circumstances) ethnic wars. Thus, just as liberal peace depended upon the institutionalization of class and international conflict, so "ethnic/national peace" must depend on a corresponding form of institutionalization, of ethnic and national conflict through consociational or confederal means.

The 20th century's death-toll through ethnic wars was somewhere above 60 million. Those assembling the statistics suggest that the 20th century may have been worse than its predecessors and that violent "ethnopolitics" surged in the later decades of the century (Rummel, 1994; Bell-Fialkoff, 1996: 21; Gurr, 1993). Though such horrors are not new to human history, rather few earlier historical regimes seem to have intended to wipe out or expel whole civilian populations. Ancient rulers generally wanted people to rule over. Some scholars disagree. Jonassohn (1998: Chap 17; cf Freeman, 1995) instances a number of notorious historical incidents to

¹ A slightly different version of this paper will be published in Tarak Barkawi & Mark Laffey (eds.), *Democracy, Liberalism and War: Rethinking the Democratic Peace Debates*. Boulder, Col.: Lynne Rienner Press, 2001.

suggest that murderous cleansing is equally ancient and modern. I concede ground to Jonassohn in three realms. First, mass migrating settlers expropriating the land of natives have sometimes engaged in mass slaughter to get rid of them. Some Hun, Mongol and Viking incursions seem to have taken this form. I discuss better-documented modern cases of murderous settlers later. Second, imperial conquerors repeatedly used “exemplary repression”, killing or deporting entire troublesome elites or defiant cities or local populations. Putting a city to the sword could involve thousands of deaths. But this was an exemplary signal to other cities to surrender, not the beginning of something more systematic. Assyrian bas reliefs, for example, depict a linked triptych -- killing those who resist, selectively enslaving others, and accepting the submission of the rest. Third, ruthless warfare has ubiquitously killed many civilians. Depriving the enemy of food and supplies may involve laying waste to territory, burning crops and homes, killing animals. The outcome -- not the object of the exercise, but callously regarded as an acceptable cost -- is mass civilian deaths, mostly through starvation and disease. Since all the main historical cases remain poorly documented, these issues will remain contentious. Yet there does seem something distinctively modern about more systematic cleansing.

The overall reason is not hard to find. As Gellner (1983) and myself (1986) have noted, most large states of history were essentially the private possession of upper class elites, whose cultures were quite different from the cultures of the masses. Nations did not exist, class divisions did. These were asymmetric class structures: the upper classes were capable of extensive social organization, the lower classes were not (Giddens’ term is “class-divided societies”). Ethnic groups existed but rarely did they rule or legitimate rule. The imperial regimes of history often perpetrated exemplary repression in order to maintain their rule. But they did not try to wipe out their subjects. Some Empires did have a “core people” with shared ethnic or religious characteristics privileged by imperial institutions. Thus the Ottoman Empire privileged Muslims politically over Christians. Yet if Christians accepted political subordination, they enjoyed considerable rights (those commensurate with their class positions). In the Ottoman millet system, Christian minorities possessed collective political, judicial and cultural autonomies to an extent not found in more “modern” states of the 20th century. All historic Empires were systems of indirect rule. Rulers ruled localities through semi-autonomous worthies. If localities were dominated by distinctive ethnic or religious groups, then they had to be ruled by worthies drawn from that group, supervised by governors representing the imperial authority. Thus mass cleansing of one “people” by or in the name of another was unlikely. This is more of a hazard of societies where “whole peoples” share the same collective identities and political claims.

I have elsewhere (1999) written of why in modern times rule by “We, the People” (in the phrase contained in the Preamble to the American Constitution) contained a darkside. If “the whole people” is to rule, its collective identity - and differentiation from other “peoples” - becomes potentially relevant to politics. Wimmer (1997) has presented a slightly more materialist version of this argument in

relation to post-colonial states. He argues that the politicization of ethnicity is an essential part of modern state-building. Only when people and state are mutually related within the sphere of a legitimate political order does the question arise as to which “people” is the legitimate owner of the state, alone entitled to its “public goods”. But the dark side lay dormant for a while. This was for two reasons. One was that eligibility for inclusion in “the people” was limited in ethnic ways that liberals never talked about. The second reason was that representative democratic conceptions of “rule by the people” first emerged in European contexts where ethnic, religious etc. differences were subordinate to class differences. This bred a plural conception of the people. I deal with the second point first.

But first a word about democracy. Democracy in its original sense meant “rule by the people”, i.e. the (male) citizen body. Democracy asserts the right of all to collectively decide on general matters of concern. In small polities this might involve “direct democracy”, deliberation by the whole people. We glimpse examples of this later when discussing Native American “nations”. But in modern times, amid larger citizen bodies, an indirect, representative version of democracy has dominated. This means the election by all citizens of representatives through free, fair and frequent elections embodying a significant measure of choice between candidates for a parliament which is genuinely sovereign, plus the guarantee of civil and legal rights for all. The electoral system might produce a “majoritarian democracy”, though the civil-legal rights are universal. Since I will be suggesting that states that are broadly representative democracies have routinely launched ethnic wars, I must make one point clear. Obviously, once an ethnic war begins, any state launching it could not be considered universally democratic, since it would be grossly abrogating the civil and legal rights of some of the people. However, it might still be a majoritarian democracy. That is the contradiction on which I here focus.

Though ethnicity clearly mattered in 18th century countries like Britain or France, the franchise was based predominantly on property and rank. As the first liberal regimes crystallized, they focussed on property (held by males). In Britain the extension of the franchise went from the fifteen pound freeholder to all freeholders. Thus class continued to dominate the question of broadening the franchise. Liberal political theory has never quite perceived the significance of this. It has always misperceived the essential basis of a liberal regime by focussing overwhelmingly on the notion of individual rights and freedoms. Freedom is conceived of as of the individual from the state. Law guarantees those freedoms. Yet early liberal states did more than this. From the earliest days their practices entrenched the institutionalization of class conflict. They accepted that politics concerned the legitimate conflict of “interests”, which they defined in quasi-class terms - collective groups like merchants, manufacturers, artisans etc. (all with property, education and so a stake in the nation) should join gentlemen in the exercise of political rights. Their collective conflicts of interest would constitute the essential party politics of the state, and it was essentially for them that rights of assembly, petition etc. were protected constitutionally. And as the franchise was extended, so were the collective

rights of other classes. It should not be forgotten that the early reform movements did not merely concern an abstract method of government, but also economic redistribution. Their impetus came from the demand for fairer (and of course lower) taxes across the classes. If we insist on calling the ensuing political regime "liberal democracy" we should recognize that from the beginning it also contained "social" democratic aspects. Modern democracy was designed to reduce exploitation. That was its *raison-d'être*.

This became the dominant pattern across northwestern Europe. There were exceptions. Switzerland and later Belgium had far more salient ethnic/regional differences, and these were institutionalized, alongside and often usefully crosscut by class, into the emerging political parties. Ethnic relations were also institutionalized into the structure of the state itself, through confederal and consociational power-sharing arrangements. But Northwestern liberal democracy was also reinforced by the Westphalian geopolitical system between states. Its notions of the balance of power and protection for small states meant a general absence of imperialism or "exploitation" between states and regions of the Northwest. In recognizing the right of the prince to determine the religion of his country, Westphalia also damped down religious conflicts. Ireland was the regional exception, oppressed by religion-centered British imperialism. Yet in general in the region ethnicity was generally subordinate to class. Ethnic differences could be assuaged by assimilation of minorities into the relevant class status within the dominant group ("peasants into French peasants").

But the problem elsewhere was that in more backward systems of indirect rule, classes were less evenly-diffused across territories and imperialism had only half-swallowed up formerly distinct political units. Exploitation could be seen as being by one region/ethnicity/state. Rule by "we, the people" came to be seen partly in class terms, but increasingly in ethnic and imperial terms, first in the Austro-Hungarian, then the Ottoman, and finally the Russian Empire. And with it came the doctrine of organic nationalism, the notion that since "we, the people" share a distinctive culture, character and soul marking us off from other peoples, we should have "our own" state, free of imperial oppression. Poland for the Poles, Croatia for the Croats. Yiftachel (1999), writing of Israel, appropriately terms it an "ethnocratic" state - a state essentially belonging to one ethnicity and actually seeking to claim the land of other ethnic groups for itself.

The organic ideal was initially conceived of in democratic terms. Yet democracy then became limited in two ways: it tended toward an ethnocratic "majoritarian democracy", tyrannizing minorities, since minorities did not possess the character which the state was to express; and it tended further toward one-party rule, since if the people was singular it could be represented by one movement, perhaps even by one leader. Organic democracy, unlike liberal democracy, contained authoritarian strains, since it did not have a conception of diverse class or ethnic interest groups existing within the nation -- unlike both Britain and Switzerland.

The neglect of collective identities and conflicts -- whether of class or ethnicity or imperialism - restricts the capacity of liberal theory to deal with the reality of

ethnic wars. I outline this neglect in three main contexts, first in supposedly “liberal” colonies; second in European countries pervaded by organic conceptions of the nation and of democracy; and third (very briefly) in the more multi-ethnic contexts which dominate most of the rest of the world today.

Liberal Views of Ethnic Wars

The liberal view is that not democracies but authoritarian states launch mass killing. There are three relevant theories. First, a “civil society” school of social theory has argued that the best guarantee of both democracy and peace is the strength of non-state secondary institutions within a country. The emphasis is not on class but on institutions encouraging individual citizen action and civility. These form a “civil society”, which is seen as essentially virtuous. Where this is weak, states will perpetrate atrocities. I will not discuss this view here, but it is incorrect. Across most cases of murderous cleansing the perpetrating communities (e.g. Nazis or Krajina Serb nationalists) have had very strong secondary institutions. Indeed, such radical nationalists have often succeeded precisely because of the greater density and mobilizing power of their civil society networks when compared to their political rivals (for the Nazis the data are very good - see Hagtvet, 1980, and Koshar, 1986).

Second, a “democratic peace” school of political science has declared that democracies are essentially pacific, rarely fighting wars, almost never against each other (e.g. Doyle, 1983). The argument behind this is that if the people’s will is freely expressed, it will tend to be pacific, since it is authoritarian elites who are the problem. Thus it is not at base an argument only about representative democracy, since it would apply equally to direct democracy. However, since its practitioners discuss only large states, they measure them in terms of their approximation to ideals of representative democracy. Yet the data-base conventionally brought forward to support this position bears unmistakable signs of massaging, in terms of either the electoral system or the size of the war. On the one hand, large wars between states whose institutions were among the more representative in the world at that time are excluded from the democratic camp. This seems a bit unfair on Britain, fighting the US in 1812, or on Germany, fighting the Entente in World War I. On the other hand, small wars of aggression fought by US troops against elected governments (as in the Dominican Republic in 1954) are not counted, nor is US destabilization of elected regimes in Chile or Nicaragua. The US has militarily intervened and destabilized many Third World regimes during the 20th century (as Barkawi, 2001, argues). Of course, the indirect enemy in these cases, the USSR, was not democratic. But their late 19th century imperial predecessors, Britain and the French Republic, were both substantially democratic, and they also fought indirect wars through intermediaries in areas where they could not establish direct colonies - as, for example, in the Middle East. Even starker were the practices of European colonial regimes during the first half of the 20th century. Almost all were representative democracies back in the mother country and the “white” settlers also possessed democratic institutions in the colonies. But they ruthlessly repressed political parties emerging from below,

including those formed according to impeccably democratic procedures, if these challenged their own rule. True, the colonial dissidents did not run their own democracy -- because that was precisely what the "democratic" colonizers were preventing.

The notion that the role of these imperial liberal democracies has been pacific would be laughable if it were not so dangerously ideological. But note that these cases are not counted because those excluded are not actually seen as eligible to be counted as a free individual. Collective ethnic labels were defining who was and was not an individual in the liberal sense.

Third, those studying genocide have mostly argued that it is a decidedly "statist" phenomenon. The main founder of genocide studies, Leo Kuper (1981), argued that the modern state's monopoly of power over a territory that was in reality culturally plural and economically stratified created both the political desire and power to commit genocide against outgroups. Helen Fein says flatly "The victims of twentieth century premeditated genocide ... were murdered in order to fulfill the state's design for a new order." (1984; cf Smith, 1987, and Horowitz, 1982). Human Rights organizations consistently blame states and political elites rather than more "popular" groups of perpetrators for murderous cleansing. Indeed they are blamed in **all** the many cases of ethnic cleansing figuring in a Human Rights Watch book (1995). There are also several Milosevic-centred accounts of recent Yugoslav atrocities stressing his authoritarian rule (e.g. Gagnon, 1997). These are "top-down", elitist and cohesive images of states. States appear as collective actors with premeditated goals.

This view can also color methodology. Harff and Gurr's very useful data-set of modern cases of genocide and politicide has become very widely used. It only includes cases where "one or more identifiable groups were the target of deliberate attempts by 'a ruling group' to 'bring about its physical destruction in whole or part'" (1988: 363). The inclusion of the term "ruling group" means that only state-led killing could be considered genocide or politicide. Thus their data-set does not include, for example, the communal Hindu-Muslim violence in India in 1947 which killed over half a million people but which was not state-led. And in cases which are included, it would seem to assume that the state rulers were the principal agents of the killings. This is rather problematic in cases where states were factionalized and where "popular" paramilitaries or other local or communal organizations, partly outside the control of the state, played a large role.

Rummel (1994: 12-27) takes these arguments further, claiming that the more authoritarian a state, the more likely it is to commit massive killings. Naturally, regimes which murder or deprive citizen rights of large numbers of inhabitants cannot possibly be considered as full democracies. But what Rummel is arguing is that perpetrating regimes were not in place by virtue of free elections. The examples of Hitler, Stalin and Mao immediately spring to mind, and their killings tend to dominate Rummel's statistics. I would not for one moment dispute the scale of death resulting from these regimes, or that it resulted from their authoritarian powers.

Hitler's regime also intended them, for this was genocide. Yet Stalin and Mao differed. Over 90% of the deaths inflicted under their regimes were not intentional, but the ghastly by-product of bizarre policies of wholesale social transformation, carried out by authoritarian means (the Khmer Rouge are the leftist regime under which most of the deaths seem to have been intended). True, Stalin seemed not to care that his anti-kulak and anti-Turkic policies of deportation and repression involved massive deaths. But this had not been the initial intention. We shall now see that this blend of genocide/ethnocide has actually also occurred under democratic regimes.

Colonial Ethnic Wars and Democracy

Rummel's statistics are made half-plausible only by leaving out the majority of cases of mass murder in the early modern and modern period. They were committed against small native peoples who usually possessed fairly developed direct democracies by 17th-early 20th century European settlers themselves living under mainly constitutional governments embodying a substantial degree of representative democracy. This involved the most brutal ethnic exploitation and repeated imperial wars. The colonies lacked both of the preconditions of liberal peace back in the mother country, relative ethnic homogeneity and a balance of geopolitical power. As in Israel, ethnocratic conceptions developed most among settler populations wishing to seize almost all the land and expand their state geographically. In parts of the Americas and in Australia, where the settlers took virtually all the fertile land, and where aborigines were not effective slave laborers, the settlers desired to remove them by whatever means worked. Thus forced deportations escalated well beyond bonded labor or slavery to ethnocide and genocide. This was not rare but the norm, and it continued over several centuries. The result was the most nearly-completed eliminations of populations ever recorded. In the Americas most regional estimates of population losses in colonized areas hover around the 95% level. They must have amounted to above 80% for the entire continent. Since recent estimates of the total pre-Columbian population of the continent have been around 100 million, both the proportion and the absolute number of the dead exceeds even the most notorious 20th century parallels (Stannard, 1992: 74-87, 118, 146, 266-8).

Consider the present-day territories of the world's major democracy, the United States². Most scholars now put the total pre-Columbian Indian population somewhere between 6 and 12 million. By the time of the US Census of 1900, Indians were down to 237,000, a loss rate of more than 95% over 400 years. It happened last (and with the best records) in California, where we have a better baseline figure. The Spanish missions estimated the native population existing on their arrival in 1769 at 310,000. By 1848 when the gold-rush began, the population had halved. Thereafter it fell even faster as European settlement expanded. By 1860 Californian Indians were

²In what follows I have relied heavily for California on Almaguer (1994: 107-130) and for elsewhere on Churchill (1997: 129-288), Champagne (1992) and Stannard (1992).

only 31,000. This was an 80% loss-rate over only 12 years! Remember that the Nazi regime also lasted 12 years and that it killed 75% of European Jews! This was truly the Golden State Holocaust. Finally, however, things began to ease. By 1880 there were still over 20,000 Californian Indians and then their numbers stabilized, to grow slightly during the 20th century.

Assimilation played a very small role in this monstrous cleansing. Indians were considered incapable of learning civilization, and settlers despised “half-breeds” or “renegades”. Liberalism was based on the simple exclusion from the status of the free individual of most collective groups living in the country. Things only began to change in the 20th century when the forcible removal of Indian children to Christian boarding schools began, a policy known as “kill the Indian, spare the man”.

Most deaths did not result from deliberate murder but from disease. The usual California estimate is that disease killed around 60%, while another 30% were carried off by malnutrition and starvation. These were not entirely “accidental”. Diseases spread most rapidly where the native population was herded closely together, malnourished -- in the Spanish Missions of California and in reservations located on marginal lands. Indians fleeing these corrals were hunted down and murdered. The calorific and vitamin intakes of Indians in the Missions are known to have been grossly insufficient for people forced to do heavy agricultural labor, while Mission Indians’ bones are smaller than free Californian Indians’ (Stannard, 1992: 138-9). Nor were the settlers ignorant of the disease mechanisms. Yet they rarely took steps against epidemics to which they themselves were immune. They welcomed or were indifferent to deaths directly resulting from their own actions. The remaining native losses (about 10% overall in California, more after 1850) were deliberate killings. The whole amounts to a massive policy of social transformation involving a mixed genocide/ethnocide, comparable to that practiced by Stalin and Mao.

But with two great differences, this occurred not under an authoritarian, but a fairly representative state. Indeed, the main perpetrator was not the state but the people. Politically, all European settler groups enjoyed *de facto* local self-rule (whatever the colonial government formally declared), since the state lacked the resources to closely supervise them. For the period, these were distinctly democratic communities of settlers, in which generally over half of white men elected most of their officials. Yet their ethnic cleansing was usually worse than that committed by the less democratic imperial authorities. The Spanish, Portuguese and British Crowns, Viceroys and Governors, and the Catholic and some Protestant Churches, tended to be milder toward the natives than were the settlers themselves. In California the killings escalated as soon as rule passed from the Spanish Crown and the Missions to American settler statehood. Despite the dubious record of British North American colonial administrations, most Indians supported them, not the settler revolutionaries, in the American War of Independence. Deliberate genocidal bursts were probably also more common among settlers ruled by the more

democratic British and Dutch than among settlers ruled by the Spanish or Portuguese. In both cases we find that the greater the local democracy among the perpetrators, the more frequent the bursts of genocide.

Four Presidents who are revered as great democrats were also great ethnic cleansers. George Washington instructed his generals to attack the Iroquois and “lay waste all the settlements ...that the country may not be merely overrun but destroyed”, and not to “listen to any overture of peace before the total ruin of their settlements is effected”. He likened Indians to wolves “both being beasts of prey, tho’ they differ in shape”. And he declared that the Indians must be forced west of the Mississippi, and any remaining must be broken by force. Jefferson repeatedly said they should be “exterminated” or “extirpated from the earth”. Andrew Jackson extended the settler franchise but mainly got elected because of his renown as an Indian Fighter. He boasted “I have on all occasions preserved the scalps of my killed”, and he urged his soldiers to also kill women and children. Otherwise it would be like pursuing “a wolf in the hammocks without knowing first where her den and whelps were”. Once President, Jackson systematically broke Indian treaties and supervised forcible deportations, killings and mutilations of the Cherokees and Choctaws. Theodore Roosevelt declared that extermination of the Indians “was as ultimately beneficial as it was inevitable”. “I don’t go so far as to think that the only good Indians are dead Indians, but I believe nine out of ten are, and I shouldn’t like to inquire too closely into the case of the tenth”. (Quotes from Stannard, 1992: 119-22, 245-6).

The California Constitution of 1850 enshrined full white male suffrage, but also stated that Indians were to be segregated into reservations (with the worst land in the state). Any Indians who strayed could be forcibly picked up and placed in slavery for perpetuity. It also authorized the raising of murderous settler militias. In the Denver press of 1863, 10 of all 27 stories about Indians advocated “extermination” (Churchill, 1997: 172). Obviously, not all settlers favored such atrocities. But there can be no doubting the electoral popularity of the “removal” of the Indians. There was no protest movement comparable to the Abolitionists (of slavery).

We also see the imprint of populism on the military means used, which were not particularly “statist”. True, regular armies assembled by the colonial state could kill more Indians than any other local force. Governments also often approved and financed killing. The federal army played a horrific role in forced deportations becoming death-marches. Yet the army tended to be called in at the urging of local settlers, when local militias could not cope with the Indian resistance which major cleansing drives provoked. Settler militias also provided the main genocidal thrust. “My intention is to kill all Indians I come across”, said Colonel Chivington an ex-Methodist minister and militia leader in Colorado. He exhorted his men to “kill and scalp all, little and big” -- including children since “Nits make lice”. These were normally part-time volunteer forces recruited from among the settlers, receiving a wage (sometimes a scalp bounty). In California the state legislature raised \$1.1 million to pay them by acts of 1850 and 1851, Governor Burnett declaring that “a

war of extermination will continue to be waged between the two races until the Indian becomes extinct". The vigilante posses, part-time militias and Ranger forces described themselves as "a free people in arms", volunteers bringing to murder their everyday settler skills as herders and hunters, knowing the terrain, used to handguns. Militia leaders would appeal for "experienced woodsmen" in Eastern militias, "Indian fighters" in Western ones. The Second Amendment to the Constitution ("the right to a duly constituted militia") is only now coming under attack. Yet its original main purpose was very far from being sacred. It was to kill Indians.

This was also ethnic war **between** democracies, since in North America (as in some parts of Central and South America and in all parts of Australia) most native political institutions were also rather democratic - indeed, more so than the settlers'. Political participation was direct rather than representative, but the rights of most ordinary males (sometimes also females) of the Indian nations were greater than those of the citizens of representative democracies. They could attend and speak up in tribal assemblies, and if they did not agree with their chiefs' final decisions (where there were non-elected chiefs), they could refuse to join the fighting. Indeed, they could even freely leave the nation. Let me add that these were not pacific Indian direct democracies either, since they fought many wars against each other. The "democratic peace" schools have excluded groups like Indian Nations from their calculations on the grounds that they did not have permanent, differentiated states of the "modern" type, embodying representative democracy. Though this is convenient for purposes of data massage, it is illegitimate even by such restrictive definitions. For Indian Nations did develop permanent constitutional states through the mid-19th century - for example, the Cherokee in 1827, the Choctaw, Chickasaw and Creeks in the period 1856-1867. The major cause of this was pressure from the U.S. government for "responsible" government with which it could negotiate (details on Indian government from Champagne, 1992). Predictably, the negotiations turned into their enforced deportation.

It is a terrible story, one that - unlike slavery - most Americans have forgotten. Unlike the descendants of slaves, the descendants of the murdered native Americans are few and politically marginalized. This genocide was a total "success", since it was forgotten. Hitler and Himmler would both refer to American genocide as part of their inspiration. Some of the world's greatest liberal democracies were repeatedly committing mixed ethnocide/genocide against other democracies. If we counted up separately the cases where "the people" of the United States, Canada and Australia committed mass murder on the individual Indian and aboriginal nations\communities, we could probably tip Rummel's statistical scales over to the conclusion that democratic regimes were more likely to commit genocide than were authoritarian ones. But I have no wish to reverse the statistical artifact, only to observe that in many such regimes whole collectivities of humans were being excluded from the collectivity of "the people".

Was this a **necessary** connection between the two sides of democracy, between fairly genuine democracy and genocide? Not in one sense. The emergence

of representative regimes in the Northwest European core did not depend on genocide in the colonial periphery. Representative government was caused indigenously from within Europe. We are dealing with two separate phenomena, one in the motherlands, the other in the colonies. Yet there was another connection. Since the imperial authorities, especially those of Spain or Portugal, were not committed to rule “by the people”, they were less likely to develop theories emphasizing the ethnic commonality of all settlers. These were still class-divided states. In contrast, settlers wished to legitimate rule by the “people”, yet sought to limit membership of the people to Europeans. Thus they were always likely to develop the theory of “the people” as ethnic (and eventually racial). This was not an accidental but a logical connection.

The process continued in North America, parts of South America, and Australia, until there were virtually no more natives to exterminate. The colonists could then forget their origins and delude themselves with their unique, pacific virtues. Cleansing remained strongest where white settler populations were still expanding, as in Australia, and in settler groups involved in the “scramble for Africa”, which was now involving latecomers to colonialism, like Germany and Italy. The last case of authoritarian colonial genocide was in Ethiopia ruled by Fascist Italy. But the last more democratic one was in a German colony, South West Africa, now called Namibia. Being recent, it is well-documented. Again, the colonial state and the missionary churches were relative moderates compared to many settlers, who wanted to go beyond the mixture of severe discrimination, harsh labor exploitation and conversion. They wanted to just get rid of the natives. Their language was more likely to dehumanize the natives by labeling them “baboons”. Some demanded “a clean sweep, hang them, shoot them to the last man, give no quarter” (Bridgman and Worley, 1997: 8). They provoked the Herero native rising of 1908 in order to secure this goal. The Governor and Berlin were thus pressured into authorizing the Imperial army to force the Herero into a waterless desert. Only 15,000 of 80,000 remained alive by 1915, a loss-rate of 80% in only a decade - virtually identical to California in the 1850s. As usual in the colonies, it was a Church organization (the Rhineland Missionary Society) which put pressure on a vacillating Imperial government to eventually stop the slaughter (Drechsler, 1980; Poewe, 1985).

Today, this type of murderous cleansing still continues in the back lands of Latin America and Asia in the form of attempts to seize the land and so eliminate small indigenous peoples living in marginal forests, swamps and mountains. Some of the perpetrating regimes are authoritarian, some are democratic. It now makes no difference, since the indigenous peoples are small and rarely vote. This is what “rule by the people” brought across much of the world in modern times. In colonial situations what was ostensibly liberal democracy, and in practice was delimited by ethnic and imperial exploitation, was responsible for ethnic wars, usually against even more democratic regimes. This is the reverse of liberal theory.

Organic Democracy and Ethnic Wars in Europe: From the Balkans to the

Balkans

I will not here chronicle the rise of organic democracy in Europe (see Mann, 1999, 2000). I will just instance its most murderous incidents, at the beginning and the end of the 20th century, in the Balkans. In its last years the Ottoman Empire was attacked by liberal movements in the mid to late 19th century. They initially demanded more universal democratic rights. Some Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians, Albanians, Armenians, Turks, Kurds and Arabs began to demand that *millets* and other forms of local government should be democratized and subject to a parliament, not to imperial despotism. Resistance by the imperial authorities led European dissidents to demand their own “national” states. As conflict intensified, Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and Albania broke away from the Empire. Their democratic aspirations became organic, they excluded Muslims and Turks, and they finally in total murdered and deported millions of them. The Young Turks, aspiring to create a Turkish democracy, retaliated against the remaining Christian minorities of the Empire - and in 1915 their deportations of Armenians escalated into genocide. These had all begun as liberal reform movements espousing democratic ideals. The pressure of local struggles and the availability of nation-state ideals then turned them towards organic nationalism and the perpetration of atrocities aimed at the achievement of an ethnocratic state.

The Great Powers had learned near the end of this dreadful process that these collective tensions required constitutions containing not only individual rights but also entrenchments of collective communal rights. Yet they sought to impose these only on the Turks, and they showed exceptionally bad timing. Just when their International Inspectors were travelling across Turkey toward their tasks, World War I (the final destroyer of the Ottoman Empire) sent them scurrying home again (McCarthy, 1995, details the Christian escalations, Dadrian, 1997, the Turkish ones). In the post-1918 peace treaties the victorious Powers established nation-states with a 70% ethnic majority everywhere in central and Eastern Europe and its periphery (except for Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia). The Constitutions protected the rights of all individuals and some added some limited local autonomies for minorities. But they entrenched neither confederal nor consociational rights for minorities into the state. Post World War II settlements furthered the process, sometimes moving borders, sometimes peoples, in the pursuit of mono-ethnic states.

The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia became the main exception to the rule of the mono-ethnic state across Greater Europe. With the terrible exception of Stalin’s murderous deportations, their regimes consciously damped down ethnic tensions with authoritarian versions of confederal/consociational means. Major ethnicities were given “their own” subordinate-level republics and republican and statewide central committees were carefully ethnically-balanced. It seemed to work, but unfortunately, the people wanted democracy. When both regimes collapsed, ethnic tensions rose again in contexts where rule by “we, the people” could take plausible ethnic coloration. Though these contexts are too complex and diverse to summarize here, they do not reveal a simple positive correlation between ethnic war and

authoritarian regime. Some of the most murderous clashes (e.g. in the Armenian/Azerbaijani conflict and in the Russian devastation of Chechnya) were initiated by regimes which were in power because they had won fairly free elections. They had been supported by the majority people, which subsequently supported ethnic combat in the name of its own collective "defense". Conversely, at least two semi-authoritarian regimes, in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, have continued Soviet-era policies of ethnic tension suppression (see various essays in Dawisha and Parrott, 1997).

The Yugoslav collapse has happened amid the full glare of international publicity, and so is easily the best-documented case of the process of descent into ethnic war (see Woodward, 1997, and Udovicki and Ridgeway, 1997, for good synthetic accounts). It can be divided into three phases. The first phase involved the collapse of the Yugoslav Federation and the emergence of putative nation-states with organicist tendencies. This occurred primarily through democratic electoral processes during 1990 and early 1991. Civil society played a substantial role. The densest networks of voluntary associations were possessed by communist and nationalist parties. They could most easily mobilize these to secure a high vote. But communism was substantially discredited. Most people wanted democracy, not authoritarianism. This left the nationalist parties as the best organized, and so triumphant.

Nationalist parties won parliamentary majorities in the substantially free elections of Slovenia and Croatia. When these new regimes could not get the Serbian regime to agree to an "asymmetric Federation" (giving distinctive autonomies to each republic), they broke away, soon carrying the more cautious Macedonia with them, where nationalists had also won an electoral majority. Bosnia was the only predominantly multi-ethnic republic. But 90% of its electorate had voted for the three rival nationalist parties, not for multi-ethnic parties - again in a substantially free election. Serbia was a little different, since Milosevic and his SPS (a nationalist but also the former communist party) was the only movement which could add some authoritarian manipulation into the elections. Nonetheless, half the Serb opposition was more nationalist than he was, and all the main parties supported his bargaining position - strengthening of Federation to ensure Serb predominance and rejecting asymmetric federalism. Moreover, the Serb parties all favored the same default position: if negotiations failed, then unite and protect Serbs by territorial expansion of Serbia - i.e. establish a Greater Serbia.

Some kind of collision followed inevitably from these predominantly democratic processes. Slovenia broke away with little bloodshed (as did Macedonia). Croatia's breakaway started ethnic war. I have not the space to attempt a proper explanation of this. But a major clue is to be found in the Constitution of the new independent and democratic state of Croatia. It proclaimed:

the Republic of Croatia is comprised as the national state of the Croatian people and all minorities who are citizens of Croatia, including Serbs, Muslims, Slovaks, Czechs, Jews [etc etc] for whom equality with those citizens of Croatian nationality is guaranteed.

The first words contain a typical organicist formula (the Croatian State is for the Croats, not for other peoples). But it then qualifies this with a typical liberal guarantee of the individual rights of non-Croats. Yet for the many Serbs and Bosnians living in Croatia this represented a **reduction** in their political rights. They had been defined as an "equal nation" within federal Yugoslavia, and various federal and consociational institutions had entrenched their national rights collectively, wherever they lived. Now they were promised the lesser status of a minority like Czechs or Jews who in federal Yugoslavia had enjoyed only individual civil rights under the law. Individual rights were insufficient, collective confederal or consociational rights were necessary, so particularly argued Serbs. Croat nationalists argued identically when they were in a minority. The Bosnian Croat leader Mate Boban told British journalist Ed Vulliamy that he could not accept the constitution of Bosnia-Herzegovina, since "although it defended individual rights, it did not defend the rights of the ... Narod" (evidence to International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia, Blaskic trial, 24.4.98).

Unfortunately, the major Powers had formally liberal constitutions, and so they believed a guarantee of individual rights was sufficient protection for minorities. This was probably not correct. Serbs argued that areas with local Serb or other ethnic majorities should have political autonomies (federalism), or that ethnic minorities should have their representatives "entrenched" within the central state (consociationalism). But the great Powers were wedded to a liberal version of the nation-state ideal and simply failed to understand arguments couched in terms of collective rather than individual rights. Thus they applied no outside pressure on Croatia - nor had they on Slovenia. That was a mistake - though the main responsibility for what was to follow lay with indigenous groups, not foreign Powers.

Murderous ethnic cleansing did not follow from this alone (it did not do so in Slovenia or Macedonia). The second phase of descent into violence involved struggles within the minority Serb and Croatian communities in Croatia and Bosnia, ranging moderate and radical nationalists against each other. The radicals proved to have two advantages. One remained electoral. Referenda were held to ask each ethnic group whether it wanted its own state. This proved to be an ethnic loyalty test and so the radicals won overwhelming majorities, which considerably legitimated their rule. But the radicals were also better-organized for violence, and their supposedly "popular" paramilitaries suppressed the moderates at the same time as they began provocations against the ethnic outgroup. Thus phase two contained a mixture of relatively democratic and relatively authoritarian politics. The third phase began when Milosevic took his disastrous gamble on force, and Croatian President Tudjman responded with "no surrender". Using the power of the Serb-dominated

Federal army, flanked by “popular” paramilitary and security police units, covertly organized within his own state apparatus, he launched full-scale ethnic war. This was met with determined armed resistance, and then murderous retaliation from some Croats, Bosniaks and Albanians. During the wars, the authoritarian yet legitimate power of all these regimes increased (as happens in most wars). Tudjman and Milosevic partly manipulated later elections, and in 1997 Milosevic may have only been able to stay in power by using force. Yet they did retain their electoral majorities (Milosevic in alliance with extreme nationalist parties) because each electorate (with some help from regime manipulation of the media) believed that atrocities were being perpetrated by the ethnic enemy, not by its own side. The result, of course, was almost total ethnic cleansing. All the states and statelets of the former Yugoslavia (if we decompose the ostensibly confederal Bosnia-Herzegovina into its real political entities) are now over 70% mono-ethnic. Those areas that were fought over are more than 90% mono-ethnic. These are ethnocratic states. Perhaps a few minorities will return, though in Kosovo it is more likely that cleansing (of Serbs) will continue for a while yet.

The Yugoslav case is more complex than the colonial cases. No ethnic group in Europe has possessed the enduring ethnic solidarity and ferocity of the colonial settlers. In consequence the descent into ethnic war has been more contingent and not so consensual or “democratic”. The Yugoslav descent did start democratically. Aspirations toward democracy turned toward organic democracy and then toward the ethnocratic state - partly because multi-ethnic ideals were tainted by authoritarian communism. Yet this only lurched toward and into full-scale ethnic war amid a very mixed process of electorally-partly-legitimated-authoritarianism-in-the-name-of-the-people. This is a much more double-edged process than that described in liberal theories.

Ethnic Wars Across the Globe

Indeed, the Yugoslav pattern may be quite general across the world. Modern ethnic conflict seems to be usually initiated by broadly popular and democratic processes inside ethnic groups in tension. Indeed, authoritarian regimes fearing “popular” forces often seek to restrain this. But out of the conflict emerged much greater authoritarian political and military powers, if this escalates to mass murder. The majority of the German electorate voted for revisionist radical nationalist parties; but Hitler’s seizure of power and the top-down radicalization of the Nazi movement took it to mass murder which neither ordinary Germans nor ordinary Nazis had envisaged (Broszat, 1981). A late process of top-down “radicalization” among many perpetrating groups is perceptible just before outbreaks of actual genocide (from Young Turks to Hutu advocates of “majoritarian democracy”). Moderates among each aggressor ethnic group are then violently suppressed and the out group is murderously cleansed.

Yet very few cases of ethnic tension escalate anywhere near this level. The best studies of “ordinary” ethnic rioting are of the Indian sub-continent. Brass

(1997) and Tambiah (1996) have shown that inter-communal murderous violence between Hindus and Muslims or Sikhs, and between Sri Lankans and Tamils, has risen in periods of vigorous competitive electoral politics and declined in periods of authoritarian national government wielding martial law (another nail in the democratic peace coffin). They also argue that the key in riots themselves is whether the local and regional police authorities intervene with ruthless force.

Horowitz's (1985: Part 4) extensive survey of the recent history of Southern countries shows that almost all of them are riven by the politicization of ethnic more than class identities. Class parties were common before and immediately after independence but then mostly decayed or transformed into ethnic ones. Almost all democratic parties explicitly or implicitly represent one ethnicity or a coalition of ethnicities. These show a persistent (though not quite universal) tendency to unravel into ethnic rioting and suppressions. In the worst cases, however, they regress to repressive military dictatorships exhibiting a "natural history of ethnic attrition". They first violently repress their main ethnic rival, then suppress in turn almost all the factions which had provided their own original ethnic coalition, until their power rests only on an army and police force recruited from their own local kin and neighbourhood base plus foreign or marginal mercenaries. He instances as the worst cases Sierra Leone after 1968, Uganda between 1966 and 1979, Syria since 1963 and Saddam Hussein's Iraq. None of these regimes has legitimated itself in ethnic terms but all launched what were in effect "ethnic wars" on their own citizens.

Of course, this is not the typical outcome. What is distinct about most of the South is multi-ethnicity within states. Tanzania lies at one extreme, supposedly with 120 distinct ethnicities. Yet many states have five or more distinct "macro-ethnicities". In most countries tensions have grown involving some political and communal violence between ethnic groups. At the extreme it could result in local, regional or even national disintegration, accompanied by massive repression. Yet large-scale ethnic wars have been rare. This is because it is very difficult to achieve stable government without cross-ethnic coalitions of parties and military elites. Fifty ethnic groups, none dominant, may cause instability. Five loosely aggregated macro-ethnicities may generate considerable violence, even occasional civil war, but not usually intentional mass ethnic cleansing. No ethnicity is strong enough to accomplish this on its own on more than a local scale. Even if one does, it is not very likely to make explicit appeals to ethnic solidarity or organic nationalism, since it has to find allies from other groups. These contrary tendencies seem to produce far more regime fluctuations, oscillating from democratic to authoritarian regimes, and perhaps with somewhat mixed and unstable regimes predominating.

Conclusion

My account of the modern rise of ethnic wars has differed very greatly from liberal theory. Overall, mine has been more of a bottom-up than a top-down account, for ethnic wars are part of the dark side of democracy. The entry of “the sovereign people” created the potentiality for an upsurge in ethnic killing as the masses demanded democracy. This was initially masked by the fact that class overwhelmed ethnicity within most of the first liberal regimes in Europe, while imperialism was restrained by the Westphalian system of geopolitics. Yet it was very starkly revealed when ostensibly liberal regimes were exported into colonial situations. There the greater the degree of democracy among the settlers, the more likely ethnic war - which was predominantly launched against native direct democracies. The dark side was also revealed in most of the rest of Europe where class exploitation was subordinated to ethnic and imperial exploitation. In the South of the world ethnicity and imperialism have also predominated over class, though the most common situation is multiple ethnicities contesting the politics of a single state. These lend themselves less to ethnic cleansing than initially to confederal/consociational power-sharing arrangements, often stretched to breaking point and prone to repression and/or disintegration.

Elsewhere (Mann, 2000) I argue that the greatest danger of murderous ethnic cleansing is where we find two cross-border ethnic groups plausibly claiming rival political sovereignties over the same cross-border area, and where nationalism is fuelled by imperialism. One nationalist group plausibly claims to be a “proletarian nation”, the other exhibits embittered “imperial revisionism”. The proletariat claims “justice” against “exploitation”; the threatened imperial nation claims that its hereditary political property rights, “honor”, sometimes its very “survival”, is threatened. Moral outrage grows to justify what others see as aggression as self-defense or retaliation.

I have argued that processes of organic democracy may lead (in cases such as these) to the brink of ethnic cleansing and war. Yet it is conjoined democratic and authoritarian forces that lead over the edge, with the latter increasingly predominating as conflict gets truly murderous. Outside of colonial situations we glimpsed much more double-edged political processes than those posited by liberal theory.

These widespread modern tendencies are not easy to reverse. However, liberal theories do not help much. They breed hypocrisy about the past failures of our own societies and they mis-specify the nature of our past successes. Political and geopolitical peace has not come from an unmediated relationship between free individuals -- or between individuals freely associated together in a civil society -- and a state. When liberal regimes worked well they also institutionalized class relations. They did not transcend them, of course, for class conflict still endures. Successful liberal regimes continue to generate political parties and social movements with something of a class base. The few countries like Switzerland managed to also institutionalize ethnic conflict. Since most subsequent societies have

entwined class and ethnicity, or subordinated class to ethnic or imperial divisions, they require forms of collective institutionalization which are very different to those of Britain or the US, but which come closer to those of Switzerland, supplemented by some form of international security system which can have similar effects to those of the Westphalian system - which today would probably require far more direct international intervention.

Thanks to writers like Lijphart (1997), we know roughly what these look like. They are either confederal and consociational or they offer electoral incentives to parties which manage to attract votes from more than one ethnic community. But we also know how difficult these are to securely institutionalize (see several essays in Montville, 1997, and Horowitz, forthcoming). Across the South they persistently break down into communal violence and state repression. For example, Uganda was widely lauded as an example of consociational stability in the late 1980s. It is now widely condemned in the year 2000 as a repressive “no-party” regime. But the secular trend of the whole modern period which I have identified in this paper suggests that today much of the ethnically-divided world may have three main choices:

- (a) African-style more-or-less permanent instability, leading to erratic outbursts of violence but rarely to all-out ethnic war;
- (b) European-cum-colonial-style ethnic wars and cleansing producing nation-states to the 70% level of mono-ethnicity which seems to allow the majority to relax and the minority to put up with second-class citizenship -- as the German chief quoted by Tacitus said of the Romans “they make a desert and call it peace”;
- (c) Constitutional and international security guarantees of confederal/consociational/electoral incentive regimes which do not formally resemble the constitutions and international autonomies of most of the “liberal” and “advanced” countries but which resemble, if in a different ethnic form, their real domestic and geopolitical histories of the institutionalization of collective conflicts.

But merely by recognizing this, we are a little nearer a solution.

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