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978-1-107-02045-0 - The Politics of Nation-Building: Making Co-Nationals, Refugees, and Minorities

Harris Mylonas

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The Politics of Nation-Building

Making Co-Nationals, Refugees, and Minorities

What drives a state's choice to assimilate, accommodate, or exclude ethnic groups within its territory? In this pathbreaking work on the international politics of nation-building, Harris Mylonas argues that a state's nation-building policies toward non-core groups – any aggregation of individuals perceived as an unassimilated ethnic group by the ruling elite of a state – are influenced by both its foreign policy goals and its relations with the external patrons of these groups. Through a detailed study of the Balkans, Mylonas shows that the way a state treats a non-core group within its own borders is determined largely by whether the state's foreign policy is revisionist or cleaves to the international status quo, and whether it is allied or in rivalry with that group's external patrons. Mylonas explores the effects of external involvement on the salience of cultural differences and the planning of nation-building policies. *The Politics of Nation-Building* injects international politics into the study of nation-building, building a bridge between international relations and the comparative politics of ethnicity and nationalism. This is the first book to explain systematically how the politics of ethnicity in the international arena determine which groups are assimilated, accommodated, or annihilated by their host states.

Harris Mylonas is an Assistant Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at George Washington University. He completed his PhD in Political Science at Yale University and is a Scholar at the Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies.

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George Washington University



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Caption: At present he works Bulgaria. A continuous performance since Peter, the Great. Summary: Illustration shows a puppeteer labeled “Russia” with marionettes labeled “Bulgaria” and “Macedonia” engaged in a sword fight; the Bulgarian puppet is about to cut the head off the Macedonian puppet, who has dropped his sword. Hanging on the side of the theater, to the left, are three puppets labeled “Roumelia, Servia, [and] Roumania.” Date created/published: New York: J. Ottmann Lith., 7 October 1903. *Source*: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C. Available at: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2010652307/>.

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To my parents Eleni and George, and my sister Sophia

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List of Abbreviations

AEV	Archive of Eleftherios Venizelos
APK	Arheion Pavlou Kalliga
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AYE	Archive of the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs
AU	African Union
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
ELIA	The Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive
EU	European Union
FO	British Foreign Office
GAK/Florinas	General State Archives of Florina
GAK/Kozanis	General State Archives of Kozani
GAK/Makedonias	General State Archives of Macedonia, Thessaloniki
G.L.	Gennadius Library
IMRO	Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization
KSCS	The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes
MP	Member of Parliament
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe
PRC	People's Republic of China
UN	United Nations
U.S.	United States of America
USIP	United States Institute for Peace
U.S.S.R.	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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Preface

My paternal grandfather arrived in Greece in the early 1920s from the Black Sea region. His last name was “Değirmenci,” which translates as “Miller” in Turkish; hence my name “Mylonas,” which means “Miller” in Greek. Themistocles Mylonas was fluent in both Turkish and Pontic Greek. His Orthodox Christian background made him a prime candidate for the obligatory population exchange of 1923 between Greece and Turkey. His wife, also a refugee, came from Novorossiysk in Russia and spoke only Russian when she first arrived in the harbor of Thessaloniki (Salonica) following the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. She was confused on her arrival by the presence of black soldiers along the shore. The Senegalese troops in the French Army of the Orient did not conform to her expectations about Greece.

My maternal grandfather was from Crete. During World War II, he fought as an officer of the Greek army against the Italians on the Albanian front. After the armistice of April 1941, he had no money to travel back to Crete and decided to stay in the north of the country. He settled in a rural area and married a refugee from Pontos.

The Ottoman Empire targeted the Pontic Greek population with exclusionary policies during World War I and the Turkish state continued these policies during the Greek-Turkish war (1919–1922). These policies led to the ultimate “repatriation” of my paternal grandfather and maternal grandmother to Greece. While my grandparents were targeted by the Turkish state with exclusionary policies, my parents were targeted by the Greek state with assimilationist policies. The two families settled in nearby villages in central Macedonia. In 1969, having already served in the Greek Army as a reserve officer, my father moved to my mother’s town and started an automotive dealership. Their respective backgrounds did not prevent them from getting married three years later. Their children – my sister and I – consider themselves Greek nationals; neither speaks the languages that their parents or grandparents spoke; and neither identifies strongly with any subnational ethnic identity. These policies facilitated my parents’ marriage, which would have otherwise been controversial, and the successful assimilation of my sister and myself into the Greek national identity.

My family's story is far from unique, but it gives rise to several questions of broader interest about the making of co-nationals, refugees, and minorities. How do states attempt to attain social order in multicultural environments? In particular, under what conditions does a state target a non-core group¹ with assimilationist policies rather than granting it minority rights, or eliminating it through deportation or mass killing? What is the underlying logic of political elites in pursuing these different "nation-building" policies? These questions are at the center of this book.

Many journalists, academics, and policy commentators have recently used the term "nation-building" in place of what the U.S. Department of Defense calls "stability operations."² In other words, by "nation-building" they mean "third-party state-building." They use the term to describe efforts to build roads and railways, enforce the rule of law, and improve the infrastructure of a state.³ I part ways with this recent usage and I use the term "nation-building" as it has been used in the political science literature for the past five decades.⁴ Nation-building, sometimes used interchangeably with national integration, is the process through which governing elites make the boundaries of the state and the nation coincide.⁵ In my framework, state elites employ three nation-building policies: accommodation, assimilation, and exclusion.⁶

Accommodation refers to the ruling elites' option to retain the non-core group in the state, but grant the group special minority rights. Under accommodation, the governing elites respect and even reproduce certain "differences" of the non-core group through a legal structure and relevant institutions. Alternatively, governing elites can pursue educational, cultural, occupational, matrimonial, demographic, political, and other policies aimed at getting the non-core group to adopt the core group's culture and way of life. This is assimilation. Finally, the ruling elites can physically remove the non-core group through population exchange, deportation, or even mass killing. This is exclusion.⁷ These processes have produced "minorities," "co-nationals," and "refugees."

¹ In this book, instead of "ethnic group" or "minority," I will use the term "non-core group" to refer to any aggregation of individuals that is perceived as an unassimilated ethnic group (on a linguistic, religious, physical, or ideological basis) by the ruling political elite of a country. I reserve the term "minority" only for groups that have been granted *minority rights* by their host state. For a more elaborate justification of the use of this term over the alternatives, see the relevant section in Chapter 2.

² Dobbins et al. 2003, 2005, and 2007: v; Donohoe 2004; Fukuyama 2004 and 2006.

³ Darden and Mylonas 2012.

⁴ Bendix 1969; Connor 1972; Deutsch and Foltz 1963; Eisenstadt and Rokkan 1973. For a discussion of the two definitions, see Hippler 2005; Stephenson 2005.

⁵ Gellner 1983.

⁶ Private efforts that contribute to the nation-building process are important but are outside the scope of this book. For an important example of this kind, see Glazier 1998.

⁷ Listing both "mass killing" and "population exchange" under the term "exclusion" is controversial; however, my definition wants to capture all policies aiming at the physical removal of a population from a state's territory. It is only in this sense that such different policies (practically and ethically) are listed together.

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Exclusionary policies, such as ethnic deportations and mass killings, remain a part of the repertoire of state elites around the world. Consider the recent events in Sudan, Iraq, Somalia, Congo, Rwanda, and Bosnia. At the same time, in western democratic states such as Canada and the United States, policies accommodating difference are well established; such policies of accommodation also exist in less stable states such as Lebanon. Today, assimilationist policies are more controversial than policies of accommodation. Scholars and policy makers alike tend to discuss assimilationist policies less openly since the end of the Cold War. They often resort to the term “integration” instead of “assimilation.” Human rights activists tend to equate assimilationist policies with “cultural genocide” and often ask governments to apologize for past instances of assimilation. The most recent example is the public apology by Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper “to tens of thousands of indigenous people who as children were ripped from their families and sent to boarding schools.”⁸ Still, the ranks of the assimilated are many. All policy choices are with us today, although exclusion appears to be improbable in the developed world.

Naturally, the social science literature has focused primarily on the decision calculus behind the most violent state policies, such as genocide and ethnic cleansing. As a result, scholars often end up overaggregating the different “peaceful” outcomes under the residual category of “non-violent.” Yet the conditions under which states pursue less violent policies such as assimilation or accommodation remain undertheorized. This book develops a theory of nation-building that focuses equally on violent and non-violent policies. Moreover, while extensive work exists on the success or failure of the various nation-building policies, there is relatively little analysis of how governments decide to pursue such policies in the first place. Scholars focus on policy outcomes not policy outputs. My theory makes predictions about policy outputs, the *selection* of policies, and specific plans for assimilation, accommodation, or exclusion.

Modernization theories, constructivist arguments, and primordialist notions are valuable but incomplete since they cannot account for important shifts in nation-building policies across space and over time. In my framework, the emergence of nationalism is the result of an interaction between strategic choices made under the structural conditions of international competition within the Westphalian system of states, technological innovations, and intellectual currents that emerged during the Enlightenment. This interaction produced what Michael Hechter has called “state-building nationalism.” In my view, nationalism is more a contingent outcome of a strategic response by statesmen to modern conditions of geopolitical competition than the product of industrialization or print capitalism per se.

⁸ Brown 2008. For a comparison of these policies in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, see Armitage 1995.

The Politics of Nation-Building moves beyond explanations that emphasize ethnic hatred between groups, the importance of different understandings of nationhood, the focus on kin states, or various versions of the modernization theories to identify the geostrategic conditions under which certain policies become more likely with respect to different types of non-core groups. Ethnic group relations vary widely over time, countries with the same understandings of nationhood do treat similar groups differently, a homeland may or may not act as a homeland toward its ethnic kin, and a great or regional power may decide to act as an external backer for a group it shares no attributes with. In my account, it is the politics of ethnicity in the international arena, rather than ethnic attributes per se, that structures nation-building choices.

This book asks the reader to make a conceptual leap from the misused term “minority” to that of “non-core group,” from focusing on “homelands” as the only external actor to the more inclusive concept of “external power,” and from the dichotomous – and narrow – conceptualizations of nation-building policies such as “inclusion/exclusion” or “violent/non-violent” to that of “assimilation, accommodation, and exclusion.” I focus on a novel dependent variable – the selection of nation-building policies – and in my effort to explain the observed variation I straddle the divide between not only history and political science, but also between comparative politics and international relations. The empirical sections of the book rely, as much as was feasible, on archival material and sources that allow me to get as close as possible to elite perceptions of and intentions toward non-core groups. This focus on elite perceptions and intentions is a conscious attempt to incorporate constructivist principles about ethnicity into my data collection process and to bring *intentions* back to political science. To be sure, the realities on the ground are messy and nonlinear; moreover, information on state policies toward non-core groups is often twisted and ambiguous. But what is at stake is an important choice: infer the intentions from the observation of behavior *or* attempt to get as close as possible to an understanding of the intentions themselves. Whenever I could I chose the latter path.

In writing this book I have three goals: first, to explore the effects of external involvement on the politicization of cultural differences; second, to broaden and deepen our understanding of the logic of state-planned nation-building policies toward non-core groups and generate a conversation that spans disciplines and geography; and third, to develop a set of policy recommendations to prevent the occurrence of ethnic cleansing while highlighting the trade-offs between policies of accommodation and assimilation. A rethinking of the process of nation-building is much needed today: continuous migration flows, increasingly protectionist tendencies in global markets, and inefficient international institutions can potentially undermine the accommodationist consensus that exists – at least among academic circles – in the developed world and unleash exclusionary policies in many developing countries. If these sorts of possibilities are to be avoided, we need to rethink the incentive structure of ruling political elites with homogenizing tendencies governing over

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multiethnic states. The accommodation consensus may have blinded our eyes to the unintended consequences and the hazards involved in uncritically pursuing certain norms by supporting non-core groups against governments that do not share the West's understanding of human rights.

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