

The Dark-Side of Democracy:

Explaining Ethnic Cleansing

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**Michael Mann: The Dark-Side of Democracy:
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Chapter 1: The Argument

74-year-old Batisha Hoxha was sitting in her kitchen with her 77-year-old husband, Izet, staying warm by the stove. They had heard explosions but did not realize that Serbian troops had already entered the town. The next thing she knew, five or six soldiers had burst through the front door and were demanding “Where are your children?”.

The soldiers began beating Izet, “so hard that he fell to the floor”, she said. While they were kicking him, the soldiers demanded money and information on the whereabouts of the couple’s sons. Then, while Izet was still on the floor looking up at them, they killed him. “They shot him three times in the chest”, recalled Batisha. With her husband dying before her, the soldiers pulled the wedding ring off her finger.

“I can still feel the pain”, she said. They fired shots ... and finally they kicked Batisha and a 10-year-old boy who was staying with them and told them to get out.

“I was not even outside the gate when they burned it”... Her husband’s body was in the flames. In that moment she was paralyzed. She was standing on the street in the rain with no house, no husband, no possessions but the clothes she was wearing. Finally, strangers passed in a tractor and bundled her into their wagon. Batisha’s daughter later found her in a refugee camp in northern Albania.

Looking tenderly at her one photograph of herself and Izet, Batisha murmurs: “Nobody understands what we have seen and what we have suffered. Only God knows.”¹

This is how murderous ethnic cleansing was wreaked on one household in the village of Belanica in Kosovo, formerly part of Yugoslavia, in the very last year of the 20th century. The perpetrators were Serbs, using murder and mayhem to terrify the local Albanians into fleeing the area. Then it could be occupied by Serbs, as was “their right”. For, said these Serbs, though the population of Kosovo is 90% Albanian, this was the Serb heartland, the home of their ancient battlefields and monasteries. Now, of course, the Kosovo boot is on the other foot. Since 1999 it has been Albanians who have been terrorizing and kicking out Serbs. Kosovo is now cleansed, not of Albanians, but of almost all its Serbs.

But change the names of the people involved and the incident could have occurred almost anywhere in the world over the last few centuries – in Australia, Indonesia, India, Russia, Germany, Ireland, the United States, Brazil. Ethnic cleansing is one of the main evils of modern times. We now know that the Holocaust of the Jews – though unique in important ways – is not unique as a case of genocide. The world’s genocides remain thankfully few, but they are flanked by numerous other cases of somewhat less severe but nonetheless murderous cleansing.

¹ We know too -- thanks to Los Angeles Times reporter John Daniszewski, whose extensive, graphic report on Belanica appeared in the paper on April 25, 1999.

Though the menace of such atrocities is generally recognized, our understanding of it remains as primitive as the behaviour itself is often said to be. Two rather simple opposed theories predominate: that it is perpetrated by entire primitive peoples or by evil, manipulative elites. Books purporting to explain the cases discussed in this book in such terms continue to pour out. These two explanations offer us comfort, since we can apparently blame human beings who are utterly unlike ourselves for such atrocities. But they are false: the perpetrators are much too like us for comfort.

In this book I advance a better, though more complex explanation. For the sake of clarity, I lay out my explanation up-front and beforehand, in the form of eight general theses. I hope to prove them in the course of the book by examining in detail the very worst cases of cleansing, those which have involved mass murder. So if you are initially sceptical of some of my theses, I urge you to suspend disbelief until you have looked at some of these cases.

(1) My first thesis concerns the broad historical era in which murderous cleansing became common. It is the depressing news broadcast in the title of this book. **Murderous cleansing is modern, because it is the dark-side of democracy.** This is my most provocative thesis, which many are bound to fiercely reject. We are accustomed to think of democracy as bringing nothing but good to the world. Let me make clear at the outset that I do not claim that it is democracies that routinely commit murderous cleansing – though some do. Nor do I reject democracy as an ideal – I endorse that ideal. Yet democracy has always carried with it the possibility that the majority might tyrannize minorities, and this possibility carries more ominous consequences in certain types of multi-ethnic environment.

This thesis has two parts, concerning modernity and democracy. Ethnic cleansing is essentially modern. Though not unknown in previous history, it became more frequent and deadly in modern times. Later chapters will support this with broad-ranging historical analysis. But a moment's reflection by any adult would also support it -- during our own lifetimes things got a lot worse! The 20th century death-toll through ethnic conflict amounted to somewhere over seventy million, dwarfing that of previous centuries. Even conventional warfare increasingly targeted entire "peoples" as "the enemy". Whereas civilians accounted for below 10% of deaths in World War I, they rocketed to over half in World War II, and to somewhere above 80% in wars fought in the 1990s. Ethnically-targeted wars boomed in mid-century and then again from the 1970s to the late 1990s². Ethnic tensions (including religious ones, which I treat as a specific type of ethnic conflict) continue to simmer as I write this, in the year 2001 – in Northern Ireland, the Basque Country, Cyprus, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Israel, Iraq, Chechnya, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, India, Kashmir, Burma, Tibet, Chinese Central Asia, Fiji, the Southern Philippines, various islands of Indonesia, the Sudan, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Nigeria, Congo, Rwanda and Burundi. Over half these cases involve substantial killing. As you read these words, one ethnic crisis will be probably exploding into violence on your television screens or

² It is impossible to give exact figures, but see Chesterman (2001: 2); Gurr (1993 & 2000) and Markusen & Kopf (1995: 27-34) for some rough estimates.

newspapers, while several other explosions will not be deemed newsworthy. The 20th century was bad enough. Perhaps the 21st will be even worse.

The above paragraph was written before September 11, 2001. The mayhem committed on that day, and “the war against terrorism” that it triggered, have imprinted the horror of murderous ethnic and religious strife on the consciousness of the entire world. It has especially struck home in the prosperous countries of the North, mostly shielded from such strife over the past half-century. Americans especially have been led to contemplate matters that they thought were long-gone from their world (in fact, since they exterminated almost all their own Indians in previous centuries). Neither the attack of September 11 nor the retaliatory attack on Afghanistan had as their intent ethnic cleansing. As my Table 1.1 (presented a little later in this Chapter) makes clear, there are many types of mass killing besides murderous ethnic cleansing. Yet it is clear that these attacks can only be understood in the light of a linked series of serious cases of ethnic cleansing in the world today. Especially relevant are those involving Jews and Muslims in Palestine, Sunni and Shi’ite Muslims in Iraq, Russians and Chechens, Kashmiri Muslims and Hindus, and “tribal” ethnic cleansings in Afghanistan. These have been raging for years – like other cases in the world. What makes these more dangerous is that small groups I shall label “combat fundamentalists” form one of the parties, and that some of the cases involve the global imperial Power, the United States. I shall deal with September 11 and its background in my concluding Chapter. For the moment, I use it only to reinforce part of my first general thesis. Ethnic cleansing is modern.

Thus, unfortunately for us, murderous ethnic cleansing is not “primitive”. It belongs not to “backward” or “alien” peoples – despite the gross stereotypes of Muslims or Afghans recently circulating. It belongs to our own civilization and to us. This is because of the second part of this thesis: it is the perversion of our modern aspirations to democracy in the nation-state. Democracy means rule by the people. But in modern times “the people” has come to mean two things. The first is what the Greeks meant when they invented the term: their word *demos* meant the ordinary people, the mass of the population. So democracy is rule by the ordinary people, the masses. But in modern times “the people” has conveyed a second sense, as a “nation” or as the Greek term *ethnos*, an ethnic group – a people which shares a common culture and sense of heritage, distinct from other peoples. But if “the people” is to rule in “its own” nation-state, and the people is defined in ethnic terms, what is to happen to those of different ethnicity? Answers have often been unpleasant – especially when one ethnic group forms a majority, for then it can rule “democratically” but also tyrannically. We will see that in some contexts authoritarian regimes did better at handling ethnic conflicts than did democratic ones. Of course, the ideal is still a democratic one. But democracies in certain multi-ethnic contexts need particular institutions to restrain the tendencies of rule by the people.

We find that murderous cleansing is moving across the world as the world modernizes and democratizes. This is why its past lay mainly among Europeans, who invented the democratic nation-state. The countries inhabited by Europeans – in Europe and elsewhere – are now safely democratic, but most have also been ethnically cleansed. Now the epicentre of murderous cleansing has moved into the South of the world. Unless humanity takes evasive action, it will

continue to spread until democracies – hopefully, not ethnically-cleansed ones – rule the world. Then it will ease. But if we wish to ease it quicker from the world, we have to face squarely up to the problems of modernity and democracy. It is our problem and so we must understand it better.

(2) Ethnic hostility rises where ethnicity trumps class as the main form of social stratification, in the process “capturing” and “channelling” class-like sentiments toward ethno-nationalism. Cleansing was rare in the past because most big historic societies were “class-divided”. Aristocracies or other small oligarchies dominated them and they rarely shared a common culture or shared sense of ethnic identity with the common people. In fact they despised the people, often considering them barely human. “The people” did not really exist across class lines – class trumped ethnicity. Even in the Roman Republic, with its representative institutions, the state motto was SPQR, *Senatus Populusque Romanus*, “The Senate **and** the People of Rome”, two different entities.

Even the first modern societies were dominated by the politics of class. Liberal representative states first emerged as a way of compromising class conflict, giving them a plural sense of “people” and “nation”, and so they also tolerated some ethnic diversity. But where the modern struggle for democracy involved “a whole people” struggling against rulers defined as “foreign”, an ethnic sense of “the people” arose. Here ethnicity often “captured” class resentments, leading to a sense of “the people” as a “proletarian nation” asserting fundamental democratic rights against an upper-class “imperial nation”. Imperial nations responded that they were bringing “civilization” to their backward peoples. Both somewhat class-like attitudes continue today. The Palestinian cause is decidedly proletarian in its tone, seeing its oppressor as an exploiting and colonial Israel – backed up by American imperialism; while Israelis (and then Americans) claim they are defending civilization against primitive terrorists. In the particular circumstances explained in the rest of my theses, such sentiments might generate murderous ethnic cleansing.

Thus ethnic differences cannot be understood in isolation from other social differences – especially of class, region and gender. In fact ethno-nationalism is strongest where it can “capture” class, regional and gender sentiments. The most serious defect of recent writing on ethnic nationalism has been its almost complete neglect of class relations.³ This simply inverts the defect of a previous era in which class conflict was believed to dominate while ethnicity was ignored. Now the reverse is true, and not only among scholars. Our televisions are nowadays alive to the sight and sound of ethnic/ religious strife, but not to the clashes between workers, peasants, capitalists and landlords across the world (though these are probably more frequent

³ In Anthony Smith’s (2001) recent review of theories of nationalism, class (and region and gender) are largely absent from his pages (cf also Hutchinson, 1994; Brubaker, 1992, 1996). Marxian analyzes of particular classes being the bearers of nationalism form an exception to this neglect, though Marxists seem not to have discussed ethnic cleansing, preferring to expose class forms of exploitation! Some writers view class and ethnicity as polar opposites, claiming that class is “materialistic”, ethnicity is “emotional” (Horowitz, 1985: 105-35; Connor, 1994: 144-64). This is incorrect: class conflict can be highly emotional and ethnic conflict very material.

than ethnic clashes). But the bigger point is that these two types of conflict infuse each other. Palestinians believe they are being materially exploited. To neglect either ethnicity or class is mistaken. They are partly opposed, but partly entwined, principles of stratification. In most societies both are important but their tensions are processed quite peacefully. In a few societies one or the other may come to dominate. But such domination always involves the “capturing” and “channeling” of the other – and the process is never merely one-way. The same can be said of gender and regional sentiments.

Thus we **never** find murderous cleansing among rival ethnic groups who are “separate but equal”. Mere difference is not enough to generate much conflict. It is not “Christians against Muslims” which causes problems, but contexts in which Muslims feel oppressed by Christians (or vice-versa). After all, if South African apartheid had actually lived up to its own ideology of involving “separate but equal” development between the races, Africans would never have revolted. They revolted against the fact that apartheid was a sham, actually involving racial exploitation of Africans by whites. For serious ethnic conflict to develop, one ethnic group must exploit or threaten to exploit the other – or at least, this notion must have substantial plausibility to the “exploited”. And in turn the imperial “oppressor” will react in righteous outrage against the “threat” of having its “civilization” overwhelmed by “primitivism” – just as upper classes do when threatened with revolution. My case studies are extreme examples of ethnic “success”, where class and other stratification axes are largely “captured” and “channelled” by ethno-nationalism. But this is unusual and must be carefully explained, and contrasted with cases where this does not happen.

We will see three main ways in which class sentiments are “captured” and “channelled” by ethnicity. These involve in turn ideological, economic and military power relations.

(2a) A **shared religion** may partially transcend class. This produces the shared ideology that all possess the same soul, and entire communities can be integrated through the intimate family rituals provided by religions. In certain circumstances Muslims become mobilized against Hindus in India, Irish Protestants become mobilized against Irish Catholics. We will see this happening historically in Europe, and in Chapter 16 across the “fault-lines” between today’s world religions. But on its own this is the weakest of the four types of capture. Class, region etc. may be temporarily muted by religion, but they are very rarely transcended. Hindu politics remain dominated by class and caste issues, even under the rule of supposedly Hindu Nationalist Party. And “combat fundamentalists” within Islam are as much motivated by class resentments against their own Muslim rulers as by resentments against other ethnicities. A religious collective identity only becomes truly dangerous, where political struggles are also involved – where a religious group attempts to capture the state, enforcing their religious conceptions on others. This involves the more political theses listed below.

(2b) Three distinct types of economy may channel material interests and class sentiments into ethnicity. In an **ethnic niche economy**, one ethnic group may dominate certain occupations (Jews may be traders, money-lenders etc), displacing class resentments onto ethnicity. This is the weakest of the three types of economy. On its own, this might produce some riots, even

pogroms, but not worse. This is not the way to explain the “Holocaust”, for example. Worse is a **statist economy**, one ethnic group may “possess” the state and its economic patronage, making an ethnic out-group feel like an exploited proletariat. This is a problem in developing countries today. It played a particularly escalating role in the Rwandan genocide. Worst of all is where one ethnic group claims a **land monopoly**, seeking to dispossess the ethnic out-group and threatening its very livelihood. This is the colonial settler pattern, leading to terrible ethnic cleansing. This is easily the worst of the three economic scenarios.

(2c) It is well-known that the worst ethnic cleansing occurs in wartime. **War mobilization** allows the state to penetrate deeply into the national society and the local community. National solidarity tends to envelop and mute class, regional and gender differences. However, the distinction between the “front” and the “rear” mean this remains incomplete. Other identities beside ethnicity are maintained in the rear. World War II will be my main example. But explicitly **ethnic civil wars** are obviously much worse. They pit one ethnic group against another, producing massive mobilization of ethnic identities. Front and rear dissolve into one. Everyone is forced into a single ethnic identity transcending class and other axes of stratification. This happened in Yugoslavia and Rwanda in the early 1990s, and in Afghanistan in the late 1990s as civil war rivals became increasingly ethnic, involving mass murder of the rival ethnic tribes. But here we must explain how wars come to entangle ethnicity – which I take further in my fifth thesis.

In the countries on which I focus in this book, several of these forces typically operate simultaneously or sequentially. They may culminate in murderous cleansing, or they may erupt only to then fade away. This depends on the forces identified in my remaining theses.

(3) **The “danger zone” of murderous cleansing is reached when (a) large movements claiming to represent two fairly “old” ethnic groups have both persistently laid claim to “their own” state over all or part of the same territory; and (b) this claim seems to them to have substantial legitimacy and some plausible chance of being implemented.** Dangerous cases involve the overlaying of rival claims to political sovereignty on top of quite “old” senses of ethnic difference – though not on what are generally called “ancient hatreds”. Ethnic differences are worsened to serious hatreds, and to “dangerous” levels of cleansing, by persistent rival claims to political sovereignty. If we distinguish four major sources of power in societies, then murderous ethnic conflict concerns primarily **political power relations**, though as it develops it also involves ideological, economic and finally military power relations too. Mine is essentially a political explanation of ethnic cleansing.

(4) **The “brink” of murderous cleansing is reached when one of two alternative scenarios plays out. (4a): the less powerful side is bolstered to fight rather than to submit (for submission would normally reduce the deadliness of the conflict) by believing that aid will be forthcoming from outside** – usually from a neighbouring state, perhaps its “ethnic homeland”. In this scenario both sides are laying political claim to the same territory, and both believe they have the resources to achieve it. This was so in the Yugoslav, Rwandan, Kashmiri and Chechen

cases, for example. In the second scenario, **(4b), the stronger side believes it has such overwhelming military power and ideological legitimacy that it can achieve its own cleansed state violently at little physical or moral risk to itself.** (4b) approximates to the most serious “colonial settler” cases, as in the North American, Australian and Circassian cases considered later. The Armenian and Jewish cases mixed these two scenarios together, since the dominant Turkish and German sides believed they had to strike first in order to prevent the weaker Armenian and Jewish sides from allying with far more threatening outsiders. Right now a few Israeli extremists are being tempted toward a similar solution to the Palestinian issue. All these terrible eventualities were produced by interaction between the two sides. We cannot explain such escalation in terms merely of the actions or beliefs of the perpetrators. We need to examine the interactions between the “perpetrator” and “victim” groups -- and usually with other groups as well.

(5) “Going over the brink” into the perpetration of murderous cleansing occurs where the state exercising sovereignty over the contested territory has been factionalized and radicalized amid an unstable geopolitical environment leading into war. Out of such political and geopolitical crises “radicals” emerge calling for “tougher” treatment of perceived ethnic enemies. In fact, where ethnic conflict between rival groups is quite “old”, it is usually somewhat ritualized, cyclical and manageable. Truly murderous cleansing, in contrast, is unexpected, originally unintended. It emerges out of crises concerning other matters. War is the most serious crisis, one that effects a temporary transcendence of class. The converse of this thesis is that in cases where states and their geopolitics remain stable, even severe ethnic tensions and violence tend to be cyclical and manageable at moderate levels of violence below that of massive murderous cleansing. As we see in Chapter 16, present-day India has long remained in the “danger zone” by virtue of rival political claims expressed by Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and others. Yet since 1950 almost never has this toppled over into massively murderous cleansing, because India offers a basic level of political and geopolitical stability in which the politics of class and caste help undercut ethnic solidarity. But where political institutions are unstable and affected by war, violence may lead over the precipice into mass murder.

The forms of political instability vary, however. Some states were fragmenting and factionalizing (like the Hutu state of Rwanda), others had been seized and being newly consolidated, determinedly repressing dissidents and factionalism (like the Nazi state). In some brand-new states, consolidation was occurring in contradictory ways in different parts of the state (as in the new Bosnian and Croatian states). But the essential point is that these were not stable and cohesive states, of either democratic or authoritarian types. Nor were they the “failed” states that political science researchers have shown are most likely to generate civil wars. Ethnic cleansings are in their most murderous phases directed by states, and this requires some state coherence and capacity.

(6) Murderous cleansing is rarely the initial intent of perpetrators. This is also quite surprising. It is very rare to find evil geniuses plotting mass murder from the very beginning. Not even Hitler did so. Murderous cleansing typically emerges as a kind of “Plan C”, developed only after the first two responses to a perceived ethnic threat fail. Plan A typically envisages a

carefully planned solution in terms of either compromise or straightforward repression. Plan B is a more radically repressive adaptation to the failure of Plan A, more hastily conceived amidst rising violence and some political destabilization. When these both fail, some of the planners radicalize further. To understand the outcome, we must analyze the unintended consequences of a series of interactions yielding escalation. These successive Plans may contain both “logical” and more contingent escalations. The perpetrators may be ideologically determined from quite early on to rid themselves of the ethnic out-group, and when milder methods are frustrated, they almost logically seem to escalate with resolute determination to overcome all obstacles by more and more radical means. This was true of Hitler and his Myrmidons: “The Final Solution of the Jewish Question” seems much less of an accident than the logical escalation of an ideology ruthlessly overcoming all obstacles in its path. For the Young Turks, however, the “final solution” to the Armenian problem seems much more contingent, flowing out of what they saw as their suddenly desperate situation in 1915. For Rwandan Hutus we find elements of both: an inner core of north-western Hutu Power radicals exploiting crisis in pursuit of their radical ideological goal, and far more Hutus brought more contingently into genocide by the crisis of 1994.

To downplay intentionality like this is morally uncomfortable. It usually involves me in arguing against many who speak in the name of the victims. Some may claim that my position is akin to “denialism”. It is not. Genocide of the Jews, the Armenians, the Tutsis, of some colonized native peoples and of others was deliberately attempted and mostly accomplished. The evidence is overwhelming. But many who speak for the Jews, Armenians, Tutsis etc like to emphasize the premeditation of their oppressors. This probably derives less from the understandable hatred they bear them, than from their need to find “meaning” in the sufferings of their people. What could be worse than to regard such extreme suffering among our loved ones as merely an accident? In King Lear, Edgar says of his sufferings “Like flies to wanton boys are we to the gods”. I find that a tempting theory of human society, but I doubt many victims do. I am not actually arguing that murderous cleansing is accidental, only that it is far more complex and contingent than blame-centred theories allow. It is eventually perpetrated deliberately, but the route to deliberation is usually a circuitous one.

There are many evil people striding across the pages of this book. Yet to understand the perpetrators, we must refine our conceptions of “evil”. We will find very few people who are in some original sense “evil” in character. Instead they are “radicalized” into evil by varying combinations of ideology and unanticipated power interactions in crises. These differences show up in the spirit in which they finally commit evil. Where driven mainly by contingencies, they become panicky and desperate. The culminating violence offers “success” in ridding them of the perceived threat, giving a sense of release, freedom and elated triumph which emotionally shields the perpetrator from recognition of evil. This seems to have been true of many Young Turks in 1915. Where driven more by ideology, perpetrators are different, exhibiting a more ruthless rigour, grim acceptance that evil must be endured for the sake of a greater goal and “good”. This is how most of the leading Nazis thought. As ghastly as are their deeds, we must try to understand their psychology. But understanding does not mean excusing.

(7) **There are three main levels of perpetrator: (a) the radical elites running “party-states”; (b) bands of militants forming violent “paramilitaries”; and (c) “core constituencies” providing mass though not majority popular support.** Elites, militants and “core constituencies” are all normally necessary for murderous cleansing to ensue. We cannot simply blame malevolent leaders or ethnic groups en masse. That would be to credit leaders with truly magical powers of manipulation, or whole peoples with truly remarkable single-mindedness. Both assumptions are at odds with everything sociologists know about the nature of human societies. In all my cases particular elites, militants and core constituencies are linked together in quite complex ways, forming social movements which (like other social movements) embodies mundane power relations. Power is exercised in three distinct ways: “top-down” by elites, “bottom-up” by popular pressures, and “coercively sideways” by paramilitaries. These pressures interact and so generate mundane relations found in all social movements – especially of hierarchy, comradeship and career. This has a big impact on perpetrator motives, as we see in a moment.

The notion of “core constituencies” makes explicit what should be an obvious point: in situations of ethnic conflict. Murderous cleansing resonates as a possible solution to tensions more in some social environments than others. I will show that it resonates more within constituencies favouring some combination of extreme nationalism, extreme “statism” and violence. This means that the principal core constituencies of murderous ethnic cleansing identified in this book are:

- (a) ethnic refugees and people from “threatened” border districts;
- (b) those more dependent on the state for their subsistence and values;
- (c) those living and working outside of the main sectors of the economy which generate class conflict (who are more likely to favour class over ethno-nationalist models of conflict);
- (d) those socialized into acceptance of physical violence as a way of solving social problems or achieving personal advancement – like soldiers, policemen, criminals, hooligans and athletes;
- (e) those attracted to machismo ideology – young males striving to assert themselves in the world, often led by older males who were socialized as youths in an earlier phase of violence.

This means that the main axes of stratification involved in cleansing movements are region, economic sector, gender and age. Class is not usually directly involved, for it has been trumped. (though it is indirectly involved through the rechanneling of class resentments onto ethnicity). Thus radical ethno-nationalist movements – unlike nationalism in general – tend to contain a “normal” class structure: leaders come from the upper and middle classes, the rank-and-file from lower down – with the real dirty work often performed by the lumpen proletariat. I explore all these groups’ motivations, careers and interactions. Core constituencies give to core perpetrators distinctive value-driven motives, involving ideology and sub-cultural norms.

(8) However, when we consider the total body of perpetrators, we find them driven by much more varied motives, indeed by the range of motives to which we “ordinary people” are subject when we participate in social life. Thus **“ordinary people” are brought by “normal” social structures into committing murderous ethnic cleansing** . To understand ethnic cleansing, we

need a sociology of power more than a special psychology of perpetrators as disturbed or psychotic people – though some may be such. The psychologist Charny (1986: 144) correctly observes “the mass killers of humankind are largely everyday human beings -- what we have called normal people according to currently accepted definitions by the mental health profession.”

If I have learned one thing from my research, it is that, placed in comparable situations and similar social constituencies, you or I might also commit murderous ethnic cleansing. No people is invulnerable. Many Americans and Australians used to commit murderous cleansing; some Jews and Armenians – the most victimized peoples of the 20th century – have perpetrated recent atrocities against Palestinians and Azeris (and in turn these “victims” are also perpetrators). There are no virtuous peoples. There is a powerful religious view which stresses the presence in all humans of “original sin”, the human capacity for evil. Indeed, placed in the “right” circumstances and core constituencies, we are almost all capable of such evil -- perhaps even of “enjoying” it. But “original sin” would be an insufficient explanation for this, since our capacity for evil only becomes realized in the circumstances explored in this book. In the case of cleansing, these circumstances are less primitive or ancient than modern. There is something in modernity releasing this particular evil on a mass scale. This book explores exactly what this is.

These eight theses are not entirely my own creation. In developing them I have drawn much from previous writers. But stated so baldly, all at once, they may seem contentious and overly schematic. Given the messiness and uniqueness of societies, they cannot be scientific laws. They do not even fit perfectly all my case-studies. For example, the Nazi genocide of the Jews does not fit neatly into thesis (3) above, since Jews were not claiming sovereignty over any part of Germany. In Chapter 7 I offer a modified, “indirect” version of thesis (3) in which Jews seemed to German radical nationalists to be implicated as conspirators in other groups’ claims to political sovereignty (especially as so-called “Judeo-Bolsheviks”). In the case of the US genocide of the Indians, the state does not fit very well into my thesis (5), since the US government was fairly cohesive and stably democratic (for whites) – though things were more fluid on the frontier zones where the mayhem was actually committed. In each case I will investigate the extent to which these theses apply, pointing out differences and modifications necessary. My theses provide a broad explanatory framework, not a covering law. They can certainly help us look for more danger zones in the world today – as I hope to show in Chapter 17.

I explain and document my theses at length through the book. Chapter 2 will give a critical discussion of previous theories of ethnic conflict and cleansing, noting their strengths and weaknesses. If you are more comfortable with narrative than analysis, skip it and go to my history of cleansing. Chapters 3 and 4 outline a brief history of cleansing from ancient to modern times, showing how ethnic cleansing was originally quite rare in history (as stated in theses (1) and (2)) but then became endemic in the world of the Europeans, at first in rather mild ways which remained subordinate to class conflict. Mass murder has been ubiquitous through most of human history, a general if uncommon part of the human social condition. But murder in order to **remove** (“cleanse”) a people was rare in earlier centuries. Ancient Empires might extend the

“exemplary repression” of a particularly troublesome people into murdering many men of fighting age or deporting in order to disperse part of a troublesome people (as the Assyrians did). But conquerors had no interest in wiping out ethnic identities, because they wanted to use the labour of conquered peoples and they themselves usually lacked much of an ethnic identity – or at least one that transcended class. The main exceptions were therefore settler-conquerors like the Huns or the Anglo-Saxons, relatively classless peoples moving in to occupy and graze or work the land themselves, without need of native labour. Their cleansing may have resembled that inflicted by European settler-colonists on the indigenous peoples of the New World in the early modern period (discussed in Chapter 5). These were the main and rather rare occasions in which ethnicity might trump class in earlier times.

Yet the rise of mass salvation religions open to all the classes – like Judaism, Christianity or Islam – brought some class levelling, of the ideological soul though not of economic or political power. The first serious European cleansing was religious, of heretics, Jews and Muslims. Later it appeared between Catholics and Protestants. By modern standards, however, this cleansing was fairly mild. Death-rates turn out to be much lower than is often popularly supposed in historical memories of such events as the Albigensian Crusade, the expulsion of the Jews and Moors from Spain, or Cromwell’s campaigns in Ireland. When confronted with the most extreme choice of the period, convert or die, most chose conversion – and lived. The religious wars settled, Europe then underwent a long process of rather mild cleansing of minority language cultures. This did not transcend class, since it proceeded class by class. First the Welsh gentry were part-persuaded, part-compelled to adopt English, then the Welsh middle class, then the Welsh peasantry and working class.

This class-by-class process then interacted with the rise of rule by “we, the people”, that is with representative democracy of the liberal kind. But “the people” was also initially class- (and gender-) bound – it only meant “men of property”. Liberal democracy did not transcend class, it institutionalized class differences politically. As its conception of “the people” was plural, tolerating class differences, it also tolerated ethnic differences. The liberal regimes of northwestern Europe have not practiced murderous ethnic cleansing. But things were different in eastern and southeastern Europe. Their struggle for rule by “we, the people” came later, and by the late 19th century it really did mean “all the [male] people”, not just the propertied classes. Their struggle was directed against the three great multi-ethnic Empires, Romanov, Habsburg and Ottoman. The *demos* was also the *ethnos*, in opposition to their foreign imperial oppressors. In this struggle for democracy, where peoples could be defined ethnically, the threat of murderous cleansing arose. Democracy and the nation were seen as “organic”, possessing a singular identity and soul. Croatia, Serbia, Poland, Romania etc were viewed as the state of the Croats, Serbs, Poles and Romanians – and not of others. Now ethnicity was potentially trumping class and my remaining ethnic theses might come into play.

The empirical core of the book then consists of a series of studies of the worst outbursts of modern murderous cleansing. In all of them I go from the most general causes of “danger zones” to the events which precipitated “going over the brink” to the actual processes and perpetrators of murderous cleansing. I begin in Chapter 5 with some colonial cases, the murderous cleansing

of native peoples from Central and North America, Australia and South West Africa by European settler colonists. I stress their ferocity and argue that relatively egalitarian and relatively democratic groups of settlers were the most ferocious. This was the most direct dark-side of democracy we shall find in this book, where impeccably democratic regimes (for whites) committed ethnic mayhem, and where politicians had to support it to get democratically re-elected.

Chapters 6 and 7 then deal with the first 20th century genocide, launched in 1915 against the Armenian population of the Ottoman Turkish Empire. This has to be seen in the context of the prior murderous cleansing by Christians of Muslims in the Balkans and the Caucasus. Chapters 8 to 11 form the lengthiest case. They deal with the worst case of all, the genocides attempted by Nazis and allies during World War II. Chapters 9 and 10 report on a substantial piece of primary research done for this book, an analysis of the biographies of 1581 Nazi war criminals undertaken to show who they were and why they committed their evil deeds. Chapter 12 then examines a rather contrasting set of cases, the rather different cleansings committed by communist regimes, which have targeted classes more than ethnic groups as victims. Chapters 13 and 14 discuss murderous cleansing begun in the 1990s in the republics of the former Yugoslavia, and still continuing. Chapters 15 and 16 treat the most recent genocide, committed in the Central African Republics of Rwanda and Burundi, exploding during the 1990s. There the murders also continue today.

My analysis must also confront two difficulties of method. First, small numbers. Mass murderous cleansing is fortunately rare. How can we generalize about such few cases? Might not the causes of murderous cleansing be unique to each case? To some extent this is true. Nazis and their hatred for Jews were unique. So is the situation of Tutsis and Hutus in Rwanda, living right amongst each other across the whole country, unable to withdraw to their own core territories. All my cases have peculiarities which I must respect. That is why I deal with them at some length. Second, to consider only these cases would be to consider only cases which do escalate to mass murder, ignoring the more numerous cases where ethnic tensions get successfully defused (this would carry the defect of “sampling on the dependent variable”, as sociologists say). So my Chapter 17 examines contemporary India and Indonesia which both contain ethnic rivalries which lead on to varying degrees of violence. What accounts for the differences between these cases? Finally Chapter 18 surveys broader trends in the world today. It sees a broadly pacified “North” of the world as a large zone in which ethnic cleansing, sometimes murderous, more often not, is largely a thing of the past, creating the various nation-states into which it is now divided. It sees the “South” as containing far more ethnically diverse states. Among them are two main zones of concern. The first is a number of scattered “black holes” of desperate conflict, mostly located in rather impoverished countries, some on the fringes of larger “imperial” Southern states. The second are broader “fault-lines” where religiously based conflict surfaces, with “combat fundamentalism” becoming the most violent. These all concern conflict between local groups, but some of them become much broader because they also express conflicts between Northern “imperialism” and an “exploited” South. The Chapter concludes by asking how we might avert murderous cleansing in the future. I will argue that success in this venture is the **only** way to prevent re-occurrences of atrocities like those of September 11, since mere

military or security measures will generate more Southern “proletarian” resentment, and more, not fewer, terrorists.

But obviously I need to first define some terms. What exactly is an “ethnic group”? What is “ethnic cleansing”? How does cleansing relate to violence and murder?

Concepts: Ethnicity, Nation, Ethnic Cleansing

Ethnicity is not “objective”. Ethnic groups are normally defined as groups sharing a common culture and common descent. Yet neither criterion is entirely clear. Culture is vague and descent usually fictitious. A common culture may refer to a relatively precise characteristic, like a shared religion or language. But it may merely refer to the group’s claim that it shares a “way of life” -- which cannot be precisely defined. As for common descent, it is mythical for any group larger than a clan or a lineage inhabiting a fairly small area (what I shall call a “micro-ethnicity”). The future use of DNA analysis will probably reveal that relatively immobile populations share substantial common heredity, but this will not be so of most large groups claiming ethnic commonality. People who define themselves as Serbs or Germans or Scots actually descend from many smaller descent groups who have moved around and intermarried with their neighbours. Thus claims to commonality among large groups actually aggregate together numerous descent groups (“micro-ethnicities”). This book is concerned with these “macro-ethnicities”, formed by social relations other than biology or kinship. None of the ethnic conflicts considered here are truly “natural” or “primordial”. Ethnic groups and their conflicts are socially created.

They are created in diverse ways. A common language is important in uniting Germans, but not Serbs (for their language is shared with Croats and others). Religion is important for Serbs (their orthodox Christianity distinguishes them from Croats, Bosniaks and Albanians), but not Germans (divided into Catholics and Protestants). Ideological theories of “civilization” and “race” also helped give Europeans a common sense of being “civilized” and “white”. Economic exploitation is often important, as noted above. Military power is important in creating macro-identities, especially among the defeated. Imperial conquerors often create macro-ethnicities by allocating particular economic, political or military roles to persons they define as belonging to a single “people” or “tribe”. Finally, political power relations in the sense of a shared political history (as independent state or distinct province) is of ubiquitous importance – as it is for Scots, not distinct in language or religion from the English but with a distinct political history. Given this diversity, it is safer to define ethnicities subjectively, in terms they themselves and/or their neighbours use.

An **ethnicity** is a group which defines itself or is defined by others as sharing common descent and culture.

Ethnic cleansing is the removal by members of a self-identifying ethnic group of those they consider an ethnic out-group from a community they define as their own.

The **nation** adds more political power content to ethnicity. A nation is a self-defined ethnic

group which also has political consciousness. That is, a nation defines itself as sharing a common culture and history (a weaker version of “descent”) which claims collective political rights in a given territory.

Finally, a **nation-state** results where such collective political rights are possessed by “its own” sovereign state. Not all self-conscious nations possess or desire nation-states. Some “nations” claim only local autonomy or entrenched rights within a broader multi-ethnic state. We will see that ethnic cleansing emerged when modern nations and nation-states were overlaid on top of macro-ethnic groups.

Yet ethnic groups treat each other in many varied ways, most of which do not involve murder. Since the advent of global news media, the few cases involving mass murder are imprinted upon our consciousness. But thankfully they are rare. In the continent of Africa the outbreaks of mass killings between Hutus and Tutsis made it into the world’s media. We may believe this to be typical of Africa, which figures mostly in the Western media only for really bad news. But the Hutu/Tutsi conflict is one of only a handful of African cases of murderous ethnic cleansing -- in a continent in which all states are multi-ethnic. Fearon & Laitin (1996) estimate all the cases of serious ethnic violence as well under 1% of all the multi-ethnic environments found in Africa. So murderous cleansing is only one of many types of ethnic relationships.

Table 1.1 copes with this variety by identifying degrees of both violence and cleansing in ethnic relations, enabling us to distinguish murderous ethnic cleansing from non-murderous “cleansing”, as well as from outbreaks of mass violence and killing whose purpose is not to ethnically cleanse.

TABLE 1.1

This Table contains two dimensions: the extent to which a group is eliminated (“cleansed”) from a community and the extent to which violence is used to achieve it. Remember that since ethnic groups are culturally defined, they can be eliminated if their culture disappears, even if there is no physical removal of persons. People can change their cultural identity. But I shall not fly in the face of normal understandings of the term ethnic cleansing to include mere cultural elimination in the category, except by placing inverted commas around the word cleansing in such cases -- as I do in this Table. But I must discuss non-violent ethnic “cleansing” alongside violent and murderous ethnic cleansing, since I wish to see in what circumstances murder is chosen.

The terms I now introduce from this table will be used throughout this book. The first Row of Table 1 begins with the nicest policies, those which contain no significant violence. Row 1 Column 1 involves the ideal way to solve relations between ethnic groups, through equal treatment and respect shown to all ethnic groups. This is **Multi-Culturalism**. Some multi-cultural states simply ignore ethnicity, treating all persons as equal regardless of their ethnicity. Their constitutions do not mention the rights of ethnic groups, while political parties and social movements (apart from cultural ones) do not organize around ethnicities. This is a common ideal

in countries of ethnically plural immigration, like the US or Australia. Since such immigrant groups cannot plausibly claim their own state, they present no threat to the existing state, and the constitution can safely ignore their ethnicity. Thus many people in the United States and Australia aspire to a culture which is multi-cultural but to a polity which is ethnically-blind. Their politics would then concern class, region, gender etc more than ethnicity.

Things differ in the more potentially dangerous situation in which ethnic groups dominate distinct territories or can otherwise aspire to create their own states or regional autonomies. Multi-cultural ideals here have difficulty in remaining ethnically-blind in the political arena. They do not ignore ethnicity but explicitly build it into constitutions through collective guarantees for different ethnicities. This might be through **Confederal** methods (ethnicities have a degree of regional control, as in contemporary Nigeria) or **Consociational** methods (they are guaranteed power-sharing at the centre, as in Belgium). Such entrenchments are aimed at binding all major groups into the state. Here politics will concern ethnicity as well as class etc., but hopefully they will be the politics of ethnic compromise. "Affirmative action" programmes are a much milder, liberal version of this which only guarantee protections at the individual level for out-groups. **Toleration** is a weaker and more common version of recognizing the reality of multi-culturalism. "Toleration" implies that we have feelings of hostility toward the out-group but are trying hard to suppress them.

This group of ethnic policies contain those to which most of us across the world aspire. Unfortunately, they are mostly ideal, not real-world polities. Communities and their states are usually less tolerant than this.

The next two columns of Row 1 include cases where ethnic groups weaken or disappear without violence. They are partially or totally "cleansed" -- but by consent. This happened in the later phase of ethnic homogenization in Western Europe. By the mid-19th century in France or Britain, their states needed apply little coercion to eliminate minority languages. Minorities accepted that their own regional language – say Breton or Welsh – was "backward", depriving their children of success in modern society. Most immigrants to the US or Australia similarly acquire English voluntarily, do not teach their children their own original language and abandon many other ethnic cultural practices. Their descendants may retain only a sentimental sense of being "Germans", "Slovaks" or "Welsh". The Welsh Congregational Church in Los Angeles erupts in cheering at the minister's news that Wales have just beaten England at rugby -- even though virtually none of these Americans have seen, let alone played, the Welsh national game. Of course, some more significant ethnic practices exist in the US, like Irish or Italian political machines, or Catholic Irish-American financing NORAI, a front organization raising arms for the IRA. So **Voluntary Assimilation** produces a "cleansed" society, not from hostile acts by the dominant group but by positive inducements. White immigrant groups in the U.S. or Australia have lost most of their earlier ethnic identity as they pursued economic and status success and social conformity and became Americans or Australians. This is a pretty harmless and marginal form of "cleansing", lamented only by those who value the preservation of traditional cultures. Indeed, you may find the word "cleansing" (even inside its inverted commas) to be inappropriate here. The result of assimilation if that class and other axes of stratification dominate politics, not

ethnicity.

Row 2 contains the first escalation of violence, to types of **Institutional Coercion**. Column 1 contains **Discrimination**, probably the most common inter-ethnic policy of all. It limits the rights of the out-group but permits its members to live amongst us and retain their ethnic identity. Discrimination typically involves preferential hiring, “red-lining” residential districts for different housing policies, negative cultural stereotyping, offensive inter-personal behaviour and police harassment. Most countries discriminate against some minorities. African Americans still suffer discrimination, one hundred and fifty years after the abolition of slavery, fifty years after the Civil Rights Movement. The criminal offence sardonically described in the US as “Driving While Black”, where the cop pulls over a black man because he is driving “too good” a car, is a good example of current harassment. All such discrimination is to be deplored and fought against, but it is a lot better than what follows in the rest of this table.

At its worst, though, discrimination can be quite severe, restricting rights to acquire education, the vote, public office or property ownership. Alternatively, the dominant group may institutionally compel out-groups to use its language as the official one of education and the public sphere. This normally involves partial cultural “cleansing”, since out-groups retain their own languages for the private sphere. **Segregation** is the geographical version of partial “cleansing”: The out-group is permitted to live in society, but in ghettoized, apartheid or enslaved conditions. Here not the society as a whole but some part of it is cleansed. This may be far more oppressive than the milder forms of total “cleansing”. After all, many slaves would like to run away from their oppression (which would produce a more “cleansed” society) but are prevented by force from doing so. Here ethnic and class politics continue alongside each other. Apartheid South Africa had almost “normal” class politics within its white community, and some traces of them within its African and coloured communities, but race dominated politics as a whole.

The next column, **Cultural Suppression**, involves total cleansing, though only through institutional coercion. Public institutions suppress the culture of the out-group whose identity is thus forcibly assimilated into the dominant group. The group’s language may be banned from schools or offices, its religion banned, its distinctive family names changed by law. Though this is coercive, it usually “legal” and involves little physical force, except to put down scattered resistance to the policy (which the next Row covers). Such suppression is not often viewed as “ethnic cleansing”, especially if it is successfully imposed. Then, after the passage of some time, it may not be generally remembered by either group as cleansing -- as, for example, with the assimilation of Welsh people into a British identity largely defined by the English. Welsh people are generally proud of what Welshness they believe they have retained, not the probably larger cultural traits they have lost. Another example is the virtual total assimilation of Provençals or Acquitainians into French identity. Many of the out-group may react to all these ill-treatments by emigrating, as the Irish did in such large numbers. This is also a part-coerced, part-voluntary form of “cleansing”.

Physical violence begins in Row 3, containing **Selective Policed Repression**. “Selective” means

it is targeted at dissidents, usually protesters against Row 2 policies. “Policed” means repression remains rather orderly, enforcing laws through routinized “legitimate” means -- though this will typically also include some limited physical violence. The first column contains repression aimed specifically at protesters, the second escalates to an attempt to repress part of out-group identity. The latter also contains policed implantation of settlers from the dominant group, displacing the indigenous out group from their homes, though not from the society as a whole. An example would be the settlement of Protestant Scots onto Ulster farms from the 17th century onward, forcibly displacing thousands of Irish Catholic farmers. The third column moves us to **Policed Total Cultural Suppression, Population Exchanges, and Policed Deportations and Emigrations**, a wide variety of state-run cleansings, coercive but not usually very violent. The policies discussed so far normally involve a fairly stable state believing only that it is enforcing the rule of law.

Row 4 introduces serious physical violence. In the first column this remains routinized and orderly, under state control. **General Policed Repression** is aimed at groups harbouring protesters, rioters, rebels or terrorists, inflicting sanguinary official punishment, in order to cow the main part of the group to submit. If this is routine, states will employ specialized paramilitaries whose names become notorious to out-groups -- like the Cossacks or the Black-and-Tans. The next two columns involve less controlled violence. Escalation to violent partial cleansing involves settlement/ displacement, as in most European colonizations, and “**Pogroms**” and communal riots, varied short-lived forms of violence, including rioting, looting, plus some murder and rape, with mixed motives -- state agencies seek to displace political tensions onto out-groups, locals enjoy the looting, violence and rape, ethnic cleansers try to induce terrorized flight. Pogroms typically induce some emigration. Common victims have been the Jewish, Armenian and Chinese diasporas. The next escalation is to “**Wild**” **Deportations and Emigrations**, involving enough brutality to persuade members of the out-group to flee -- as in the former Yugoslavia in recent years. Cleansing of a more “racial” form may involve distinctively **Biological** policies. Here the out-group is denied reproduction by restrictive marriage or sexual policies, escalating perhaps to forcible sterilization or to rape where the intent is to make the woman unlikely to bear children carrying the identity of the out-group. Biological cleansing tends to centre on females, for obvious reasons -- maternity is certain, paternity only presumed.

Row 5 escalates to the violence of mass deaths which were the unintended consequence of the dominant group’s policies. The first column involves policy “**Mistakes**”, often through submitting ethnic groups to labour conditions to which they were ill-adapted, or by revolutionaries seeking to achieve major social transformations with foolish policies -- for example, the “Great Leap Forward” in China, which unintentionally killed millions. The implication is that once the mistake is realized, the policy will be abandoned, and so the out-group will not be wiped out. I do not wish to “exonerate” the perpetrators of such mass killings, for the numbers of the dead may be enormous. Most big “mistakes” border on the next category, labelled as **Callous** policies. These are not directly intended to kill the out-group but the dominant group has such negative views of the out-group that it does not particularly care that this ensues. This is not quite true of the leadership of the Great Leap Forward, but their slowness

in reacting to disaster obviously did reveal a relative lack of concern for the lives of the victims. Wars and civil wars loom large in the callous category, especially in the devastation inflicted on civilian populations through “laying waste to the country” or bombing cities. Stalin’s famine-inducing policies among peasants and Ukrainians or the “Highland Clearances” of Scotland are other examples. The limiting case is the very first colonization of Caribbean islands by the Spanish. By the time the colonialists collectively realized what their impact on the natives was, virtually all the natives were dead, which makes this strictly “ethnocide”.

Ethnocide refers to a wiping out of a group and its culture which is not wholly intended by the dominant group. This is the exponential escalation of callous practices by the dominant group, which may even welcome the elimination of the out-group when this occurs. Ethnocide characterized the main thrust of many terrible encounters between colonial settlers and indigenous peoples, in which most deaths resulted from diseases carried from the dominant to the out-group, worsened by “reservations” and terrible labour conditions which were not intended to kill, but which did wear down the natives to near death. Much more of this in Chapter 5.

Finally, Row 6 contains premeditated mass killing. I have excluded killings normally legitimated by the rules of war (ie of defined combatants only) and isolated serial killing committed by a single individual covered by the ordinary criminal code.⁴ **Exemplary Repression** is how I style most of the more atrocious imperial conquest policies of history -- for example, putting an entire city to the sword in order to cow other cities into submission. 20th century military campaigns have escalated this type in the form of indiscriminate bombing of civilians, as in Dresden, Tokyo and Hiroshima. This is claimed as being likely to induce surrender, though Dresden and Tokyo also embodied motives of revenge. Modern campaigns also have variants of the Roman practice of decimation (killing every tenth person of a rebellious population). In the Balkans in the 1940s the German army killed fifty local civilians for every German killed by guerillas. These atrocities tend to be officially sanctioned, though more local massacres, like those of some Waffen-SS units or the American soldiers at My Lai, were not. Rebels and terrorists are usually capable of only smaller atrocities of this type, though September 11 was a very large one. This was presumably the first atrocity in a series aimed at American civilians to force American withdrawal from contested parts of the world. Today, all exemplary repression could be theoretically prosecuted under international law as “war crimes” or “crimes against humanity” -- though killers who win wars are rarely prosecuted (only the losers were after 1945). Civil wars also often involve substantial slaughter of the civilian population, with motives of anger, revenge, sadism etc. which usually fall short of systematic

⁴ Of course, since the rules of war are often vague, and since modern war does kill more civilians, there are many borderline cases. Was the sudden Japanese onslaught on Pearl Harbor, before war has been declared, in this category? Is the US justified in launching missiles and bombs with a known “circular error probability” (ie some will go off-course) against a country harboring its enemy (rather than attempting negotiation for his handover)? Most American say yes, many from other countries say no.

cleansing intent -- e.g. various episodes in the Biafran or Sudanese civil wars.

Then come mass murders whose intent is partial cleansing. **Forced Conversion** is a religious sub-type where there is simple and stark choice: “convert or die”. Serbs were told by Croat Ustasha forces during World War II: become Catholic or die. In pogroms, Jews were often given such a choice. Some of the out-group are killed, either because they resist or because perpetrators wish to show that the choice is for real. But most will live, cleansed partially -- of their religion but not their entire culture.

Politicide is a recently-coined term. It is killing where the intended target is the entire leadership and potential leadership class of a more generally victimized and feared group (as defined by Harff and Gurr, 1988: 360). This may overlap with exemplary repression, though politicicide has a more cleansing intent. Wiping out leaders and intellectuals is intended to undermine the out-group’s cultural identity, whereas cities cowed into submission through exemplary repression may retain their identities. By killing all educated Poles, the Nazis intended to wipe out Polish cultural identity, just as Burundian Tutsis intended to wipe out Hutu cultural identity in killing educated Hutus.

Since this book compares cleansing of ethnic with other groups, I add my own coined term, **Classicide**, referring to the intended mass killing of entire social classes by modern leftists. Since this may be more murderous than forced conversion or politicicide, I have arrowed it in the table towards, but not in, the genocide category. The Khmer Rouge were the worst perpetrators; Stalinists and Maoists perpetrated short bursts. The victim classes were thought irredeemable enemies. It seems to be distinctive to leftists, since only they are tempted to believe they can do without opposed (“exploiting”) classes. Rightist regimes of capitalists and landlords always recognize that they need workers and peasants to do the work for them. Thus the mass slaughter by the Indonesian army and Islamic paramilitaries of at least 500,000 Indonesian communist sympathizers in 1965-66, though it disproportionately killed poor peasants was targeted at a political rather than a class enemy – at communists. not peasants or workers. It was politicicide, not classicide. I discuss classicide in Chapter 12. In revolutionary leftist regimes it has co-existed with “mistakes” and “callousness” amid the Khmer Rouge, Stalinism and Maoism. All three types can be prosecuted as “war crimes” or “crimes against humanity”.

Finally comes **Genocide**, a term invented in 1944 by the Polish lawyer Raphael Lemkin. I begin with the United Nations' definition, which slightly modifies Lemkin’s and is now the international legal definition. The UN says that genocide is a criminal act intended to destroy an ethnic, national or religious group, which is targeted for destruction as such. The U.N. definition can be criticized because it includes both too much and too little. It sometimes may include too much because it adds a sub-clause, allowing either total or “partial” destruction to count as genocide. I have difficulty with the concept of "partial genocide", unless this has a particular geographic connotation. Settlers in California in 1851 attempting to wipe out all the Indians from the Owens Valley were embarked upon partial, in the sense of a local, genocide.

The International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia decided General Krstic had committed a

“partial genocide” in 1995 because his Bosnian Serb troops murdered 7-800 Muslim men in Srebrenica (all those managed to capture). The court decided that, though Muslim women, small children and the elderly were not killed, the massacre of the men meant that the city’s Muslim community could not reconstitute itself as a viable community. This was partial genocide of Srebrenica, declared the court (ICTY, Krstic Case, Judgement 2.8.01). I would prefer to term this a local genocidal outburst, set amidst a broader murderous cleansing of Muslims which was too erratic and regionally varied to be termed genocide. On the other hand, I would enlarge the concept of genocide beyond merely ethnic groups -- though not to politically-defined groups, who would be covered by other of my categories (various forms of repression, politicide and classicide).⁵ Genocide is also fully intentional, aiming to wipe out an entire group -- though this goal is almost never completely attained. Genocide usually involves not only killings but also the attempt to eradicate cultural memory of the group (destroying its churches, libraries, museums, street names etc.). If only cultural cleansing occurs, I would not call this genocide – in my terms it is cultural suppression -- though UN sources sometimes do. Genocide is committed by majorities against minorities, whereas politicide is the reverse.

This book focuses on the worst ethnic cleansing, the darkly shaded area of the table, collectively labeled “murderous ethnic cleansing”.⁶ My category excludes all the categories contained in Column 1, even though its lower cells might involve many deaths. I have also coloured three cells adjacent to this dark-shaded area in a lighter hue to acknowledge that these “borderline” zones may also contain some murderous cleansing. I prefer to resist the temptation to call many of these types “genocide” as some do (eg Roger Smith, 1997; Jonassohn, 1998). Genocides are very few -- but they do number more than just “the Holocaust” launched against the Jews (as Bauer, 1997, also notes).

All these categories are what sociologists call “ideal-types”, exaggerations of real-world phenomena. Real-world countries typically mix them up together, while the most serious cases tend to escalate rapidly through several of them. There is often debate whether this or that case might count as genocide, so that international law can be invoked. But social behaviour does not

⁵ Many criticize the U.N. definition for omitting non-ethnic victims, targeted for their political, mental, physical or sexual characteristics (Andreopoulos, 1994: Part I). The Nazis murdered many communists, disabled people and homosexuals. Critics of the U.N. definition are often seeking to get the worst cases of mass murder covered by international law. At the moment, “war crimes” (ie committed in wartime against enemy combatants and civilians) and “genocide” are the most serious offences under international law, whereas “crimes against humanity”, which could cover the rest of the more murderous field, remain less clearly defined and are considered “less serious” than genocide by international courts (see Neier, 1998: 12-20, for a brief discussion). My concerns here are neither legal nor political, but analytical – what is the least ambiguous use of terms.

⁶ This is roughly the ethnic part of what Rummel in his studies of all large killings calls “democide”, killings of the masses.

fall into neat conceptual boxes, whether mine or those of the law. Most cleansing is very mixed. The 95% elimination of North American Indians involved lesser segregations and deportations, escalating to outbursts of exemplary repression, amounting overall to a mostly unintended ethnocide, yet containing repeated genocidal outbursts. South African apartheid mainly combined various types of repression, segregation and coerced deportations (involving 3.5 million people!). The worst cleansings all have earlier less serious phases -- that is how radicals get emboldened and inured. Cleansings typically proceeds in erratic bursts, most of which either die away or produce backlashes. And even genocidal intent by some leaders may get subverted by reluctance or resistance from below -- or vice versa. Most cases of local inter-communal violence do not escalate to mass murder -- as in India, Northern Ireland and most areas of Indonesia.

Making these distinctions reveals two broad but paradoxical features of ethnic cleansing. On the one hand, most has been quite mild. Murderous cleansing is uncommon. Assimilation, backed up by milder institutional coercion, has dominated. On the other hand, most advanced countries today are ethnically “cleansed” since they are substantially mono-ethnic (ie at least 70% of the population considers itself to be of one ethnicity) whereas in the past they were far more multi-ethnic. So we have two main problems. Why did such “cleansing” occur? And why in only a few cases did it turn really nasty? These are the main historical questions which my book must answer.

Table 1.1: Types of Violence and Cleansing in Inter-Group Relations

Types of Violence	Types of Cleansing		
	None	Partial	Total
1. None	1. Multi-culturalism/ toleration 2. Consociational/ Confederalism	Partial abandoning of identity eg thru voluntary official language adoption	Voluntary assimilation
2. Institutional Coercion	Discrimination	1. Official language restrictions 2. Segregation	Cultural suppression

3. Policed Repression	Selective policed repression	1. Policed partial repression of out group language & culture 2. Policed out group settlement/ displacement	1. Policed total suppression of language & culture 2. Population exchanges 3. Policed deportations & pressured emigration
4. Violent Repression	Generalized Policed repression	1. “Pogroms”, communal riots, some forms of rape 2. Violent settlement/ displacement	1. “Wild” deportation & emigration 2. Biological: sterilization, forced marriage, some forms of rape
5. Unpremeditated Mass Deaths	“Mistaken” war, civil war & revolutionary projects, fratricide	“Callous” war, civil war & class war & revolutionary projects	Ethnocide
6. Premeditated Mass Killing	Exemplary & civil war repression, systematic reprisals	1. Forced conversion 2. Politicide 3. Classicide →	Genocide

NB: Darker shading indicates the core of the zone of murderous cleansing discussed in this essay; lighter shading indicates a borderline zone in which it may occasionally occur.