Timing is Everything: Changing Norms of Minority Rights and the Making of a Polish Nation-State

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Abstract

There is broad agreement that states seeking to nationalize their minority populations require both capacity and intent. We argue that political opportunity is also important through a focus on Poland’s policy toward its Ukrainian minority during the first half of the twentieth century. The shift from international norms protecting minority group rights in the interwar period to the defense of individual human rights during the immediate postwar era gave Polish state elites new and devastating tools with which to create a Polish nation-state. Through forced expulsions, internal deportation, and the cultural homogenization of the public sphere, all practices that had been unfeasible during the interwar group rights era, Polish state elites denied Ukrainians sufficient means to perpetuate their culture. The postwar process was relatively quick and almost always brutal.
As the articles to this special issue demonstrate, there is reason to qualify the allegedly negative relationship between ethnic diversity and public goods provision. Wimmer (2015) along with Darden and Mylonas (2015) challenge one of the fundamental identifying assumptions in the literature, namely, that ethnic diversity can be treated as exogenous. This assumption is crucial because without it there is no way of knowing whether the reported negative relationship refers to the effect of ethnic diversity on public goods provision or to another, unmodeled relationship. Darden and Mylonas, for example, argue that a country’s ethnic diversity is itself a function of past political efforts to homogenize nation-states. Their argument is consistent with the negative relationship between diversity and public goods provision, but with the causality reversed: states have intentionally deployed public goods to create an encompassing national identity that in turn weakened the political salience of ethnic diversity. Wimmer argues that both ethnic diversity and public goods provision are jointly determined by prior historical levels of state capacity, rendering spurious the observed contemporaneous negative relationship between ethnic diversity and public goods provision.

Our contribution also seeks to endogenize ethnic diversity. We share with both Wimmer and Darden and Mylonas the conviction that state elites may actively attempt to shape levels of ethnic heterogeneity within their countries, but focus on the crucial role of political opportunity in determining the means by which state elites realize their aims through specific policies. We argue that changing international notions of what constitutes legitimate state action towards minority groups can modify the set of available tools with which elites can alter levels of ethnic heterogeneity. Where the international environment is permissive, state elites may even pursue radical policies of ethnic homogenization without much fear of international repercussions. Where the prevailing zeitgeist is supportive of minority rights, however, elites will hesitate to pursue radical anti-minority policies even while they still might have both the intention and capacity to pursue them. We will show through a close analysis of Poland that a negative shift in global attitude toward the rights of minority groups provided an opportunity for Polish elites to rapidly and radically reduce ethnic heterogeneity through ethnic cleansing strategies.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. In the next section we review existing approaches and elaborate on our own explanation. We then justify our choice of Poland and describe our empirical strategy, which focuses in particular on the Ukrainian minority. To illustrate the importance of the shift in international legitimacy with regards to state policy we need to show that alternative explanations cannot account for the adoption of ethnic cleansing. We thus continue by showing that Polish elites’ desire for an ethnically homogeneous nation-state did not significantly change in the period under study. We then show that while Polish ethnic homogenization strategies differed in practice over time, the threat posed by minorities, and in particular the Ukrainian minority, remained constant and thus cannot account for this important change. Indeed, the threat which the Ukrainian minority posted to the Polish state remained static from the 1920s through the 1940s. The penultimate section of the paper discusses how the shift in international concern away from group minority rights toward individual human rights coincided with the legitimation of ethnic cleansing as a tool to resolve the tensions between majorities and minorities. We conclude with some observations on the longer-term consequences of the postwar neglect of minority group rights.
Explaining State Tools of Nation-Building

Research on the political determinants of ethnic diversity typically focuses on the reasons state elites opt to pursue homogenization strategies. Factors include the need for mobility, communication, and a common identity in modern society (Gellner, 1983; Weber, 1978), the creation of mass armies to more effectively prosecute war (Tilly, 1992), fear of internal insurrection (Alesina and Reich, 2013), as a byproduct of democratic competition among competing groups (Mann, 2005) and, especially in the case of newly independent former colonies, the goal of forging a common national identity across what otherwise are disparate and potentially mutually hostile ethnic groups (Darden, forthcoming).

We see these arguments not as alternatives to our own, but as accounting for a different part of the causal chain that culminates in an elite decision to pursue a particular homogenization strategy toward an ethnic minority group. The aforementioned research addresses the conditions under which elites opt for homogenization not. But once elites make that decision, they must then choose which specific strategies they will employ. Our argument comes in at this step, after the decision to pursue ethnic homogenization has been made. We take for granted that elites want to homogenize the polity, and ask what determines which specific strategy is chosen. We assume elites will choose whatever policy is the most efficient within the set of feasible policies. We argue that shifting notions of legitimacy alter the feasible set of policy options.

Two prominent arguments that more directly address the issue of homogenization policy choice are Brubaker (1996) and Mylonas (2012). Both acknowledge the role of domestic and international factors, but give different weight to each. For Brubaker the salient factor is the linguistic and cultural distance between the host state elite that implements homogenization and the minority target of the policy. Where the minority group is deemed to be close enough, then assimilation policies are implemented to create co-nationals from the minority. In the case of interwar Poland, which Brubaker discusses, this applied to the Slavic Ukrainian and Belarusian minorities, who were viewed as “lost Poles.” In other situations when elites envision the minority group as “too different” to assimilate, authorities instead attempt to “nationalize” minority-inhabited areas by colonizing them with the majority group and enacting policies to induce the minority to emigrate. Such emigration is especially likely when the minority has a neighboring kin state willing to accept it.

Mylonas argues that the choice of homogenization policy toward a target minority is conditioned less by “intrinsic” features of the target group relative to that of the nationalizing elite than by the perceived relationship between the target group and foreign states. Specifically, the greater the perceived threat the minority poses to host state elites, the more likely those elites will seek to ethnically cleanse the minority populations. That perceived threat appears highest where the minority has a foreign sponsor that might use the relationship to meddle in the domestic affairs of the host state. In this case the need for state action is urgent, leading to the minority group being expelled or internally displaced. Where a minority does not enjoy the support of another state, host state elites can pursue a less urgent strategy of assimilation that might not bear fruit for many years.

The Brubaker and Mylonas arguments have the virtue that homogenization strategies can vary across minority groups within a given country. But neither can account for the radically
increased assimilation policies or the frequent reliance on deportations and forced migrations that characterized the immediate post-World War II period across central and eastern Europe. Although World War II radically altered the numerical distribution of ethnic minorities within this region, host state elites still faced an array of minority groups in the immediate postwar era. Brubaker’s focus on the linguistic and cultural distance between dominant and subordinate groups adeptly explains cross-sectional variation at a given point in time but cannot necessarily account for abrupt changes in policies toward all minorities. Mylonas’s more supple explanation does offer an alternative story based on changing state perceptions of the threat posed by minority groups, but as we illustrate below, that channel was not operative in the case we investigate.

Research on social movements argues that the “political opportunity structure” provided by state institutions can facilitate or hinder the influence of non-state actors such as environmental and human rights movements (e.g., Tarrow, 1994; Kriesi, 1995). We apply this idea of an “opening of possibilities” to the international level (see van der Heijden, 2006) and to cases where the state is the actor. Although there is no global super-state to structure political opportunities for individual states, great powers and international organizations can raise the cost (or at least the perceived cost) to a state of pursuing a domestic policy strategy not in accord with prevailing standards of legitimacy, for example through the threat of sanctions or refusal of cooperation in other areas. By contrast, when the international community is more permissive, even radical policies such as genocide become possible (Krain, 1997). A more permissive international environment does not guarantee that more radical policies will be chosen or successful. There may be other reasons a state demurs or aborts the policy, including pressure from other states or a consideration of ancillary costs. However, a permissive international environment does ensure that the radical alternatives will be seriously considered as an option. We recognize that the more powerful the state, the less likely it may heed any international opprobrium or retaliation. The aforementioned logic works best with minor powers for whom defying prevailing standards of legitimate action appears costlier than any potential policy benefit.

**Research Design**

We illustrate this argument with a focus on Polish nation-building in the aftermath of the two world wars. This is an ideal period to observe the effects of a change in the international legitimacy of minority policies because although it is not possible to pinpoint the exact point at which radical homogenization policies became acceptable, there is very clear evidence, which we discuss below, that the change occurred within a short period of time during World War II. Our choice of Poland is both theoretical and pragmatic. We list the justification briefly here before providing details further below. Although most multiethnic Eastern European states during these periods pursued minority assimilation policies to a greater or lesser degree, a comparison of Poland over time comes closest to a most similar cases design (see Przeworski and Teune, 1970) that isolates the effect of our explanatory variable of interest. Czechoslovak elites were not consistent in their pursuit of ethnic homogeneity: they sought to ethnically cleanse their German and Hungarian minorities after World War II, but pursued a policy based on accommodation before the war. Hungarian elites were equivocal on ethnic homogenization lest their neighbors in the Habsburg successor states respond in kind to their far more numerous Hungarian minorities. Romanian elites sought ethnic homogeneity, but for reasons that historians
do not yet fully understand did not complete the policy of ethnic cleansing that they initiated as World War II was coming to a close. As a result, the realization of our outcome of interest was less visible in the Romanian case. In Poland, by contrast, the comparison of the interwar and immediate postwar periods holds potential alternative explanatory variables constant while offering unambiguous variation in both how the Polish elite perceived the available tools for ethnic homogenization and the specific policy chosen.

Specifically, in both periods Poland was reconstructed as an ethnically heterogeneous state populated with elites who sought a more homogeneous nation-state. (See Table 1 for the distribution of minorities in each period.) In both periods there were efforts to settle ethnic Poles into areas inhabited primarily by minorities, and to assimilate minorities into the Polish linguistic and cultural sphere. Crucially, although in both periods the Polish state was reliant on the patronage of larger powers, it still retained sufficient state capacity to pursue radical homogenization policies. This is important because it is possible that interwar Polish elites might have opted for less radical interwar policies because they had no means to implement them. However, this view is inconsistent with the evidence, which shows that Warsaw had sufficient military capability. First, the Polish armed forces were strong enough to induce the Bolsheviks to request an armistice in the 1919-1921 Polish-Soviet war. If they could fight the Bolsheviks to a draw (albeit with the help of some anti-Bolshevik Ukrainians), surely they would have had more success against less formidable foes within Polish territory. Second, according to Snyder (2003: 198) just short of 20,000 men took part in Operation Vistula, a key ethnic cleansing campaign against an armed foe in the immediate postwar period that is considered highly successful. That force is less than one-tenth the size of Poland’s military during the interwar period.¹ In short, the coercive capacity of the Polish state is unlikely to have been a constraint on Warsaw’s homogenization policy choices.

Instead, what differed between the two periods were the tools available to achieve linguistic and cultural homogeneity. In the years after World War I, aspirations to create a Polish nation-state collided with the reality of Poland’s obligation to respect minority rights, which had been enshrined in the treaty that brought Poland into existence and was backed by the League of Nations. Warsaw still attempted to “polonize” Polish territory by relocating ethnic Poles into minority-dominated regions and asserting the dominance of Polish language and culture throughout the state. But these had mixed results at best.

Poland inhabited a very different international context after World War II. Rightly or wrongly, great and small powers alike lay the blame for the collapse of interwar democracy and collective security at the feet of minority groups (most specifically the Volksdeutschen) in ethnically heterogeneous states. In contrast with the period after World War I, the international community de-emphasized minority group rights to their linguistic and cultural heritage in favor of individual rights promising social and political equality as citizens, regardless of ethnic status (Preece, 1998; Ther, 2014). In practice this diminution of minority rights opened the door for far more radical homogenization policies. After World War II Polish elites did not just give pride of place to the Polish language and culture, but actively sought to diminish the presence of minority languages and cultures.² Unlike during the interwar period when elites sought to demographically overwhelm minority areas with ethnic Poles, after 1944/1945 the Polish state
leadership forcibly relocated minority groups either to their neighboring “homelands” or to ethnically Polish areas within the state where they could be more easily assimilated.

Brubaker’s argument cannot account for the shift in Poland’s attitude toward its minorities from internal colonization (in the case of both the Germans and Ukrainians) to strong cultural prohibitions and outright expulsion (in the case of the Germans) and internal displacement and deportation (in the case of the Ukrainians). Mylonas’s explanation can account for the change in Polish policy toward the German minority, which after World War II would clearly have been perceived by the Polish elite in a far different light than it had been before the war. But his theory fails to explain the radical change in Polish policy toward the Ukrainian minority, which, as we illustrate below, posed roughly the same level of threat to Poland after World War II as it did before. Therefore, we will focus mainly on the Ukrainian minority to test our theory regarding the impact international norm changes have on the homogenization tools available to state elites.

**Elite Intentionality: A Poland only for Poles**

Nationalist parties calling for the ethnic homogeneity of Poland gained adherents well before the modern Polish state emerged in the wake of World War I. The most popular and well-known of these Polish nationalist parties dedicated to building a so-called “Poland for the Poles” were the National Democrats, or Endeks. In the wake of elections for the constitutional assembly in January 1919, the Endeks emerged as the largest political party in Poland and ruled for several years thereafter. Its leader Roman Dmowski viewed the state’s strength in terms of internal homogenization, and believed the state should use whatever tools necessary, even violent tools, to assimilate and “polonize” those within its borders. Dmowski did not necessarily believe that every non-Polish inhabitant of a Polish state could or should be polonized—the ethnic Germans, he thought, were too attached to their own national identity, while the Jews were too alien to even be targeted for homogenization. But the Slavic minorities in Poland’s south and east were another matter. Though polonization might not be easy, particularly regarding Ukrainians, who adhered to a different religion, had undergone their own national awakening, and had briefly experienced their own independent state, it was nonetheless worth the attempt. In this way, the Polish nation “became a vehicle for the exertion of social control and the establishment of mutually antagonist identities” (Porter, 2000: 5). Once the intentionality towards a Poland for the Poles emerged it continued to infuse plans both imaginary and real within a large portion of Polish intellectual and political elites.

Though the Polish communists could not have been more different from the Polish nationalists, on the issue of an ethnically homogeneous Poland their interests strangely coincided during the mid-1940s. Stanislaw Grabski, one of the main architects of 1920s plan to polonize the Ukrainian minority, came together with Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin and Stalin’s chosen Polish “patriot” Wanda Wasilewska in 1944 as part of his duties within the World War II era Polish Government-in-Exile. Stalin, Grabski, and Wasilewska might seem like strange bedfellows until we realize that the communists themselves had, through their own bitter experience with minority politics, come to support the idea of an ethnically homogeneous Poland. As Timothy Snyder writes, “if there was indeed a synthesis in the postwar Polish communism (that Wanda) Wasilewska pioneered in 1944, it was that of traditional National Democratic ideas of nationality and traditional communist subservience to the Soviet Union”
In this trajectory of Polish nationalizing intentions, Marshal Józef Piłsudski, ruler of Poland from his 1926 coup until his death in 1935, stands out less for his beliefs concerning the rights of Poland’s minorities to their own national aspirations than for his broader conception of what it meant to be Polish. His plan to create a multi-ethnic state led by Poles spoke to his commitment to Polishness as a category of citizenship and not nationality. The political party he formed to spearhead the initiative, the Bezpartyjny Blok Współpracy z Rządem (BBWR or Nonpartisan Bloc for Cooperation with the government), actively attempted to build bridges between Poles and non-Poles, and emerged as the most popular party after the partially free elections of 1928. But even during Piłsudski’s rule Polish state elites didn’t recognize the legitimacy of minority nationalism. For example, Piłsudski implemented the 1930 “pacification” against Ukrainian nationalists, and conciliatory rhetoric notwithstanding, he never reinstated Ukrainian language schooling en masse.

Ethnic Homogenization Strategies in Practice: Interwar and Postwar Poland

Interwar

Much like imposing state-socialism on Poland in the 1940’s, fashioning a nation-state out of the lands and populations of interwar Poland was tantamount to “saddling a cow,” to use Stalin’s illustrative evaluation. Cobbled together from portions of the recently collapsed German, Habsburg, and Russian empires in the wake of World War I, Poland was surrounded by countries that coveted parts of its territory and that intervened on behalf of their co-nationals within Poland. It gathered into one polity populations that differed widely in language, religion, custom, and historical experiences. Ethnic Poles comprised just over two-thirds of the population, with the remainder comprising mostly Ukrainians, Jews, Germans, and Belarusians. On the whole Ukrainians and Germans were unhappy citizens, the former because they had hoped for a state of their own, and the latter because they had been the former ruling group. The Jews, especially those from Habsburg Galicia and those in urban settings, accepted the state, but many religious Jews were unassimilated. Nearly all the minority groups called for significant autonomy in language, education, and cultural policy, matters that were guaranteed in the Minorities Treaty that Poland had to sign as a condition of achieving statehood. The treaty was guaranteed by the League of Nations, and included provisions to bring potential violations before the League, which could in theory take punitive action.

How specifically did the Polish state attempt to fashion a nation-state out of these heterogeneous territories? The interwar plan involved three strategies: internal settlement of ethnic Poles, a Polish-dominated school system, and weakening minority nationalist organizations through police action, the courts and incarceration. As we shall see below, the manner in which these strategies were implemented was not in obvious violation of Poland’s obligations to minorities, though in the case of the weakening of minority nationalist groups, complaints were filed with the League of Nations. However, some of the evidence linking the choice of these policies (instead of more radical ones) to the then prevailing zeitgeist in favor of minority rights is indirect. Poland signed the Minorities Treaty unwillingly, but needed the cooperation of larger allies such as Britain, France, and the US to guarantee its borders against
the potential for both German and Soviet revanchism. Since these countries supported the Minorities Treaty, Poland had an incentive to abide by the letter if not the spirit of its minority obligations. Moreover, if the Minorities Treaty had been irrelevant to Polish elites, there would have been no reason for Warsaw in 1934 to formally renounce it, a decision that apparently was greeted with great fanfare in Poland (Rossolinski-Liebe, 2014, 62-63).

The first homogenization strategy involved populating the territories with trustworthy Poles, such as military veterans, border guards, and Roman Catholic priests. The military nature of the program stems from the fact that as a matter of administration these regions were largely unguarded and susceptible to nationalist activism from the semi-autonomous Belarusian and Ukrainian socialist republics beyond the border. In the early 1920’s the nascent Soviet Union was still supportive of its own minority languages and cultures. Poland feared both active destabilization from abroad as well as the example Soviet policy would show the minorities dwelling on the Polish side. But this settlement was intended not just to establish demographic “facts on the ground”, a practice that was also taking place in the German-inhabited western borderlands, but also to be a beachhead of Polish language and culture. The military settlements constituted “ethnic Polish islands, outposts of Polish rule in the east” (Rudling, 2010: 194). Significantly, such internal activity did not, at least directly, violate the rights of the minorities living there to their own languages and cultures.

A second strategy was the establishment of a Polish-dominated school system. Under the treaty Polish representatives signed as a condition of achieving statehood, Poland was obligated to provide minority language instruction in areas with significant minority populations. Accordingly, for the first few years of the republic there were no drastic changes in education policy or even the number of minority schools. But movement was afoot because the ruling National Democrats strongly supported polonization. Speaking on the national minorities in 1919, Endek leader Stanisław Grabski stated that “[w]e want to base our relationships on love, but there is one kind of love for countrymen and another for aliens. Their percentage among us is definitely too high…the foreign element will have to see if it will not be better off elsewhere. Polish land for the Poles!” (Grabski quoted in Rudling, 2010: 192). In the western borderlands this meant dispossessing Germans; in the east the point was to “recover” the “lost Poles” among the Slavic minorities who no longer identified as Poles.

The Lex Grabski, which took its name from the Minister of Religious Beliefs and Public Education Stanisław Grabski, was legislation introduced into the parliament in 1924 that effectively brought an end to state-funded Ukrainian and Belarusian language schools, and “introduced bilingual schools in which the Polish language was prioritized” (Ciancia, 2011: 149). This kept Poland within the letter of its obligation to educate minorities in their own language. There would be some instruction in the Ukrainian or Belarusian mother tongue alongside education in Polish history, literature and grammar. In practice, however, it led to the destruction of minority-only language schools. Speaking on this accomplishment at a 1925 meeting of eastern governors, Grabski maintained “that Poland’s eastern school policy was part of a national battle in which Polish culture would be ‘a magnetic influence’ for the national minorities, whose culture was necessarily weaker” (Grabski in Ciancia, 2011: 147).
A third strategy, and one we will analyze at length, was to utilize the rule of law to weaken minority nationalist organizations, particularly those of the Ukrainians, who had the strongest national identity of Poland’s Slavic minorities. In May 1926 Marshal Józef Piłsudski came to power in a coup d’etat. Piłsudski had spent a great deal of time in the part of partitioned Poland governed by Austria, where he became accustomed to cooperation with Jews, Ukrainians, and other minorities in the pursuit of common interests. He thus had very different ideas about how to create a stable and strong Polish nation-state, one that was much more in accord with prevailing practices regarding ethnic minorities than those of the National Democrats. Specifically, his government shifted policy away from creating national Poles towards fashioning loyal Polish citizens of varying ethnic backgrounds. The idea was that a “civic-state education (wychowanie obywatelsko-państwowe) would encourage cooperation between national groups and lead to collective defense against external and internal enemies” (Piłsudski in Ciancia, 2011: 158). A 1932 educational reform was designed to ensure that the country-wide curriculum reflected “‘Polishness’ not as a shared national community but in terms of a common responsibility for the Polish state and its fate” (Wojtas, 2003: 150).

It is true that Piłsudski’s government showed greater respect for minority languages and cultures, but the cost to the minorities was that they had to give up any national aspirations of their own, especially if those aspirations were accompanied by systematic violent acts against the Polish state. This became most evident in Piłsudski’s 1930 “pacification” campaign against a wave of Ukrainian nationalist violence that included assassinations and assaults on private and state property. By all accounts Polish attempts to root our extreme Ukrainian nationalism were brutal. Some Ukrainian writers assessing the six-week long pacification counted between 7 and 35 deaths (Budurowycz, 1983: 487). Despite this brutality, Gazeta Polska, the periodical of the ruling government, evidenced that the pacification unfolded under the rule of law. Its pages throughout the pacification campaign reified the process of arrest, detainment and trial leaving the impression that the entire process fell under the federal rule of law.

One particular trial, that of Ukrainian student Roman Bida and five other defendants, found space on the newspaper’s pages. On November 20, 1930 the Supreme Court in Warsaw heard complaints against Bida and his accomplices. A court in Lwów had recently convicted the men for an attack involving homemade bombs and other “acts of terrorism” directed towards the “Eastern Fair” (Gazeta Polska, November 21, 1930) The court in Lwów sentenced most of the defendants to five years of hard prison, but Bida received the death penalty. Upon hearing the case, the Supreme Court approved the use of the death penalty and dismissed the relevant appeals one day later on November 21, 1930. Death sentences were rare in interwar Poland, on 13 death sentences were issued in 1934, for example, and only 16 in 1937 (Mitera, et al., 1998). The steady coverage indicates how sensational the sentence was -- and also that the process of pacification unfolded judicially. University students, implicated priests, and even violent nationalists could count on an arrest and a trial. In Gazeta Polska’s telling, this pacification was the opposite of anarchy.5

Ukrainian organizations operating in exile disagreed. On November 8, 1930, near the end of the pacification campaign, the United National Ukrainian Association sent a protest to the League of Nations declaring that “thousands of Ukrainians were credibly reported to be dying lingering deaths or suffering from lashings inflicted by Polish soldiers.” Moreover, within only a
few weeks, Polish authorities had razed homes in “700 villages” and consequently roadsides had swelled with “homeless peasants” (“Admits Poland Jailed…” in *The New York Times*, 1931). When pressed about the pacification in January 1931, General Felican Slawoj-Skladowski, the Minister of the Interior, reported that more than “1,100 were being held in jail in connection with alleged revolution disorders in eastern Galicia last fall, that much to the government’s “regret” “severer methods” were utilized “after the usual measures to regain order had failed” (Ibid). Specifically, he admitted that “police and soldiers” were sent into villages and did destroy thatched roofs and floors in their searches for illegal weapons that would be used for terrorist activities in the countryside. Over thirty years later when he wrote his memoirs, Slawoj-Skladowski remembered the pacification as a bloodless operation (Ibid). Voices in the League of Nations indicated otherwise. Throughout the spring of 1931 Polish authorities were summoned to subcommittee meetings to account for claims that the pacification was indeed quite bloody.6

In January 1932, after months of surveying Ukrainian exilic voices and calling Polish officials to account for the event in international committees, the League of Nations responded to the “barrage of Ukrainian Nationalist protests” regarding the pacification. While the League did not agree with the methods of the Polish authorities, they “recognized that it was the Ukrainian Nationalists themselves who were to blame for consciously inviting this response through their ‘revolutionary action’” (Piotrowski, 1998: 194). Even though Poland was eventually exonerated by League, it was clear that the pacification had gone too far. Such a wide-scale response to Ukrainian violence was not replicated, not even after a Ukrainian nationalist assassinated the sitting Minister of the Interior Bronislaw Pieracki in his car on a Warsaw street in broad daylight.7

Sending troops and policemen into a region dominated by militant Ukrainian nationalists and relying on the rule of law to detain and punish proven saboteurs constituted two viable methods that the Polish state could “legally” utilize according to international law and acceptable norms. Other potential options like revising Poland’s borders or forcibly moving large numbers of Ukrainians away from Polish soil were simply not viable.8 Coverage in *Gazeta Polska* hints at this. When the German Foreign Minister Julius Curtius proposed that Poland’s western border could be revised and thus ethnic demographics could be reshuffled without moving hundreds of thousands of people across borders, Minister of Foreign Affairs August Zaleski spoke out against this plan (“The League of Nations and Minority Problems,” *Gazeta Polska*, October 1, 1930). Faced with hostile states on all sides, many of which had minorities within Polish borders, Zaleski and his government was hesitant to surrender any territory lest a revision of Poland’s western border would lead to revisions of other political demarcations. While questions of immigration and colonization elsewhere animated coverage in *Gazeta Polska* during the period of the pacification, at no point did the government-linked newspaper recommend that large swathes of Ukrainians be relocated to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic or elsewhere.

Instead, implicit in *Gazeta Polska*’s coverage of the pacification remains a message of acceptance. Ukrainian nationalists, and even former Ukrainian deputies to the Sejm, would be arrested, imprisoned and therefore extricated from the broader, pacifist-leaning Ukrainian population (Budurowycz, 1983: 487). The Ukrainian problem might not be solvable, but it could be isolated legally. In the throes of the pacification campaign, *Gazeta Polska* published an
interview with Mykola A. Liwicki, the president of the Ukrainian Republic–in-Exile and liaison offer to the League of Nations who declared that the Ukrainian terrorism which prompted the pacification stemmed from the “work of deranged individuals,” was “condemned” by three most influential Ukrainian political parties and had, unfortunately, “brought great moral and material harm to the Ukrainian population” (“A Ukrainian authoritative voice…,” Gazeta Polska, October 23, 1930). A key precondition to economic, cultural and political development within both nations was, in Liwicki’s opinion, “the concerted efforts of the Ukrainian and Polish population” (Ibid). For the foreseeable future, the Ukrainian minority would remain Poland’s largest minority group.9

Postwar
As Poland emerged from World War II it was hardly in better shape to become a homogenous nation-state than it had been after World War I. Although the war, the Shoah, and the shift in Poland’s borders westward reduced the number of Jews and Ukrainians, it dramatically increased the number of Germans, who were a majority in the so-called Recovered Territories Poland gained from Germany.10 Table 1 shows the distributions of ethnic minorities in the two periods. Europe as whole felt little sympathy for ethnic Germans especially those who had been citizens of Nazi Germany, as most of the Germans were in the Recovered Territories. They were blamed for German aggression, were viewed everywhere as a potential fifth column, and were to be expelled back to Germany. For roughly half a million Ukrainians, Polish homogenization plans meant ethnic cleansing through a combination of expulsion, internal displacement, and a severe assimilation campaign over a three-year period.

The postwar shift in borders reduced the number of Ukrainians in Poland from over 5 million to at most several hundred thousand. This leads to the question of whether it was changed demographics rather than shifting notions of legitimacy that lay behind the postwar ethnic cleansing. The demographic argument implies that before the war only gradual methods of assimilation could be implemented because such a large number of Ukrainians lived within Poland’s borders, whereas the postwar remnant could be more easily dispensed using radical means. In other words, it suggests that ethnic cleansing is pursued when the target minority is small, and more gradual assimilation policies are pursued when the target minority is large. Aside from the fact that there is no evidence for this in the Polish case, the demographic argument makes little sense. Assimilation through education and internal settlement policies is most likely to be successful not where the minority is relatively large and thus has the demographic reserves to resist these incursions (as in interwar Poland), but where it is relatively small and thus more vulnerable to being demographically overwhelmed (as in postwar Poland). Ethnic cleansing, by contrast, is the only feasible option for creating ethnic homogeneity in the short term when the minority is relatively large. It follows that, absent external constraints, the “rational” policy for Warsaw would have been to pursue ethnic cleansing in the interwar period and assimilation in the postwar period. That the reverse of this “rational” policy is what actually took place testifies, in our view, to the international importance of minority group rights.

Two military operations named Rzeszów and Vistula (Wisła in Polish) constituted the centerpiece of the postwar ethnic cleansing plan in the eastern territories. Beginning in April 1946, Warsaw organized military and security forces in Operational Group ‘Rzeszów’, whose task was to forcibly transfer Ukrainians from Poland to the Soviet Union. Villages that had
resisted expulsion under the earlier repatriation programs categorized as “population transfers” were now violently pacified in a “search and destroy” initiative. This involved the mass burning of “villages close to the woods to cut the supplies of food and other support that (ethnically Ukrainian) civilians” were thought to be giving the UPA, a violent Ukrainian nationalist organization (Mac, 2012: 94). Hurried to make a quota, the operational subgroups moved across the region forcing inhabitants into convoys bound for Soviet Ukraine; 252,000 Ukrainians were deported between April and June 1946. During the entire period of ‘repatriations,’ between October 1944 and June 1946, 482,000 Ukrainians departed for the Soviet Union. In rough terms, 300,000 were forced to do so, 100,000 were effectively coerced by nearby violence or homelessness, and the rest chose to leave” (Snyder, 1999). This military action proved effective, but due to waning Soviet interest in supporting repatriation and individual refusals to leave territory deemed part of a greater Ukraine, upwards of 200,000 Ukrainians remained in eastern Poland. On August 14, 1946, the “head of the Polish border control” ordered border patrol units and infantry divisions to “prepare lists of individuals living within thirty kilometers of the state border whose presence was considered a threat to the security of the frontier” (Jasiak in Ther, 2001: 184). These lists were complete by October 1946 and would prove useful for those implementing Operation Vistula.

According to Snyder (1999), by early 1947 the Polish military realized that too many Ukrainians had escaped the earlier deportations and asked the government for permission to get rid of those that remained. Aware that the Soviet Union was refusing to take any more Ukrainians into Soviet territory, in February 1947 Polish Deputy Chief of Staff General Stefan Mossor “recommended ‘resettling these people by individual family in dispersion throughout the entire area of the Recovered Territories’ of northern and western Poland” (Kersten, 1996: 149). Aware of the magnitude of such a suggestion, Mossor’s colleague General Ignacy Blum justified plans for resettlement with the following words: “‘in the history of every nation there are events which cannot be entirely justified if the criteria of abstract absolute humanitarians are applied, but which fully deserve understanding and positive evaluation of history and of the future generations...the resettlement of the Ukrainian population in Poland constitutes one of such event’” (Blum in Buchsbajew, 1984: 307). Plans for a complete ethnic cleansing of the region did not fully materialize, however, until April 17, 1947 when the Polish National Committee on State Security issued the plans for Operation Vistula, three weeks after a high-ranking member of the Polish military General Karol Świerczewski was assassinated by insurgents linked to the UPA (Kersten, 1996 and Misiło, 1993: 53). Unlike the September 9, 1944 agreement between the Soviet Union and Poland that coordinated the semi-voluntary movement between two states, the plan concluded in the wake of Świerczewski’s assassination called for the internal movement of a designated people within a state to unoccupied homes and fields in lands newly attached to that state.

Between April 24 and August 1947 Operation Vistula moved more than 140,000 Ukrainians from eastern Poland to the Recovered Territories in the west that had recently been emptied of millions of ethnic German inhabitants (Szcześniak, et al., 1973: 327). This internal operation was “in terms of the number of people repressed, imprisoned, sentenced to death and actually killed,” the “most massive exercise of terror by the Polish communist regime during the entirety of its existence” (Snyder, 2004: 200). In more neutral terms, Operation Vistula constituted the “largest postwar military operation in Poland” (Jasiak in Ther, 2001: 173). As
one can expect the entire process of evacuation and resettlement was quite traumatic and often targeted those erroneously designated as Ukrainians, like the Lemkos, who had little to no contact with the fighting units of Ukrainian nationalist organizations (Magosci, 1990: 205). Indeed, it seemed that no one could escape resettlement to the Recovered Territories. Mixed families, “even loyal party members trained in the Soviet Union, even communists who had helped ‘repatriate’ Ukrainians in the previous wave, were forcibly resettled” (Jaworsky, 1988). Once at the destination the deportees were “dispersed so that the minority did not constitute more than 10% of the population in any one area” (Ibid). Operation Vistula fulfilled a promise made by Soviet Pole and chairman of the National Home Council (KRN) Boleslaw Bierut in his 1946 New Year’s Speech. Namely, “as a result of the war and territorial changes, Poland is changing from a multinational state into a one-nation state” (Glos Ludu, January 1, 1946, cited in Kersten, 1996: 139). In other words borrowed from General Mossar, “the point of Operation Vistula was to ‘resolve the Ukrainian problem in Poland once and for all’” (Snyder, 2004: 197).

The Ukrainian Threat

The logic of Mylonas’s argument and the conventional wisdom among Poland specialists would suggest that Poland’s far more inhumane postwar tools of ethnic homogenization were the inevitable consequence of a much more serious Ukrainian threat. It is true of course that there was a contingent of Ukrainian nationalists (often affiliated with the OUN-UPA) who had collaborated with Nazi administrators in the hopes of securing German support for their own nationalist ambitions (see, for example, Statiev, 2010). These Ukrainian nationalists also waged their own violent campaigns against ethnic Poles in the latter stages of the war and continuing after the end of official hostilities. In fact, throughout 1947 the UPA waged a “campaign of terror against the Polish (then communist) government and people” which included attacking Polish military installations, destroying bridges, railways and communications networks and burning “evacuated Ukrainian villages to prevent them from falling into Polish hands” (Piotrowski, 1998: 220 and 230, respectively; see also Buchsbajew, 1984: 303).

However, this view seriously underestimates the nature of the interwar Ukrainian nationalist threat. We briefly mentioned this threat in the context of Warsaw’s 1930 campaign of pacification against radical Ukrainian nationalist organizations. In fact, in both breadth and duration it is equivalent to if not more severe than the postwar threat. The UVO (Ukrainian Military Organization, founded in 1919) and the OUN (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, founded in 1929) merged in 1932. Like the postwar UPA, both as separate organizations and after their 1932 merger the OUN and UVO rejected any Polish rule over Ukrainian territory and promised violence to achieve that end.12

Radical Ukrainian nationalists perpetrated high-profile assassinations and wide-scale assaults on private and state property throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Besides unsuccessful assassination attempts on Marshal Piłsudski in 1921 and on President Stanislaw Wojciechowski in 1924, they arguably killed statesmen Tadeusz Holosko (who took a moderate stance on the Ukrainian issue) in 1931, murdered police investigator Emilian Czechowski in 1932, Jerzy Ciesielszuk in 1933 and, perhaps most importantly, in 1934 assassinated Minister of the Interior and provocateur of the 1930 pacification Bronislaw Pieracki.13 Aside from these high profile victims, Andrew Motyl accounts for many actual and attempted killings between 1921 and 1939, including 52 Ukrainians thought to be collaborators, 25 Poles, 1 Russian and 1 Jew. Motyl
admits that “the real figure is probably higher, since unreported killings in backwater regions must have taken place” (Motyl, 1985: 50). The UVO and OUN successfully targeted the highest ranking domestic officials throughout the interwar period, managed to kill some and, because of their efforts, guaranteed that few Polish statesmen visited public places in cities like Lwów and Tarnopol (“Minorities in Poland…“ in The Chicago Tribune, 1930). These murders were not indiscriminate, but designed to upset the highest echelons of power in Polish government circles and to prevent reconciliation at the state level between Ukrainian nationalists and their Polish leaders.

Besides assassinations and murders, the Ukrainian nationalists set fire to the property, haystacks, granaries of Polish colonizers and others, stole mail vans purported to be transporting money, cut telegraph wires and coordinated with Czechoslovak, Lithuanian and German sympathizers to destabilize Poland from inside and out (Motyl, 1985: 48). These foreign governments also became outlets for financial support. Not all this violence was random. Motyl (1985: 50) identifies two concerted “sabotage campaigns or ‘actions’ (aktsii)”, one in 1922 and the other in 1930. According to Ryszard Torzecki, 2300 acts of sabotage unfolded in eastern Galicia in 1922 alone (Torzecki, 1972: 62).

Describing the 1930 aktsii, the Special Correspondent for the Times (London) noted that this campaign was “immediately distinguishable from the sporadic outrages of former years” and “radiated from well-defined centres where there were Ukrainian secondary schools” (“Special Correspondent,” 1930). The sabotage “consisted in the burning of barns, cornstacks and cottages belonging to Polish landlords and peasants,” “subsidiary attention was given to the cutting of telegraph and telephones wires and a successful raid was made on a mail-van carrying a large sum of bank notes” (Ibid). According to witnesses, “there were nights when parts of the worst-stricken district, Rohatyn were lighted by the glare in the sky” and “early in September 57 Polish cottage were destroyed for a single fire at Kozowa, together with the entire crops of their owners” (Ibid).

According to an article published in Chicago’s Ukraina paper in 1930, which (according to an editorial note) came from the inner circle of the UVO, this second concerted act of sabotage promoted “disquiet in the country and panic among the Polish population” while also encouraging “a state of mind extremely hostile to the Polish State and nation among the Ukrainian masses” (Felinski, 1931: 160-161). In sum, the systematic violence committed in the summer of 1930 unleashed “psychological effects upon the Ukrainian peasants as a whole” and made “Polish colonists afraid of settling on Ukrainian lands” (Ibid). The systematic violence in mid-1930 unleashed by Ukrainian nationalists became, in Motyl’s words, “a watershed in the deteriorating Polish-Ukrainian relations by provoking the savage ‘pacification’ of the Galician countryside by Polish troops” (Motyl, 1985: 48). In speaking about Polish and Ukrainian relations in Galicia in 1931, the New York Times labeled southeastern Poland as “one of the most conspicuous ‘danger spots’ in Europe” (“Ukrainian Problem…” in The New York Times, 1931).

**Shift in International Legitimacy of Ethnic Cleansing**

In both the interwar and immediate postwar periods, Polish elites dreamed of a homogeneous Polish nation-state in which there were no competitor groups stealing state resources and attention from Polish language and culture. During both periods radical Ukrainian
nationalists in Poland engaged in widespread violence to oppose that vision and achieve national autonomy, targeting both state infrastructure and ethnic Polish political and military elites. Yet the Polish state response could not have been more different during these two periods. Although violence manifested in state responses across time, during the interwar period the ringleaders were dealt with primarily through police action and the judicial system, and although some ordinary Ukrainians certainly suffered, the vast majority continued their lives on their ancestral lands (“Ukrainian Problem…” in The New York Times, 1931). By contrast, the postwar “pacification” was a military operation, and involved not just the violent suppression of radical nationalist elites, but the wholesale uprooting of the Ukrainian population, expelled either to Soviet Ukraine or scattered amongst masses of Poles who were resettling western territories gained from Germany.

When the Polish government pacified the Ukrainian population in its eastern borderlands in 1930, English-speaking news outlets, especially The Manchester Guardian, which had a special correspondent embedded in eastern Poland, covered the story relentlessly. The coverage of the Guardian, the Times and The New York Times brought attention to the process by which the League of Nations rebuked Poland publicly and the state had to make overtures to Ukrainian parties under the surveillance of the League members. Operation Vistula, however, elicited no such international outcry or United Nations rebuke. On July 22, 1947 the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America asked the American delegate to the security council Warren Austen to investigate reports that the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Poland had entered into a “definite international understanding to liquidate the Ukrainian people.” These governments, the report continued, were interested in “denying to the Ukrainian people these human rights to which they are entitled” (U.N. Asked to study… in The New York Times, 1947). This grievance never found an interested international audience, but the language deserves pause. Stephen Shumeyko, president of this committee, chose his words carefully to reflect the prevailing zeitgeist. The Ukrainians in Europe deserved attention and protection because their human rights as citizens of these states were at risk. He no longer invoked the language of minority rights.

How and when did the resolution of minority problems through ethnic cleansing rather than minority rights become taken for granted? This shift was manifestly not confined to Stalin and his communist allies (Schechtman, 1946 and Rubin, 2012). In fact, population movements constituted a tool used by Adolf Hitler in the late 1930s (Lumans, 1996). Beyond the systematic, government-organized movement of Volksdeutschen “home” to the Reich, Drew (2006: 10) notes that the idea of minority transfers---ethnic cleansing---had already been circulating in mainstream academic and political circles, and was “best exemplified by the inter-war conversion of that ‘great liberal statesman’ of the early twentieth century, Eduard Beneš.” As late as 1925 the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister (and later President), who knew that linguistically homogeneous nation-states could not be created in the region without population transfers, nonetheless supported the minority rights system adjoined with the League of Nations (Drew, 2006; Douglass, 2012). By 1941, however, multiethnic Czechoslovakia had been dismembered and invaded and Europe was aflame from ethno-centric nationalism. Beneš reversed his position, writing that “the problem of national minorities will have to be considered far more systematically and radically than it was after the last war. I accept the principle of the transfer of populations” (Beneš, 1941: 150).
Benes accepted more, in fact. In a secret decree dating from November 1946, the Czechoslovak government decided that ethnic Hungarians in southern Slovakia who had avoided resettlement as part of the 1946 exchange agreement between Prague and Budapest could be forcibly relocated to the emptied Sudetenland. And so, across a four-month span, until February 1947, 11,568 families or 43,546 persons (Mevius, 2005: 157) were transferred to Bohemia in a scheme that Karel Kaplan called one of “internal colonization” (Kusá, 2005: 140). The aim of this Czechoslovak plan was twofold: to destroy the Hungarian minority as a “compact territorial unit” and provide “depopulated areas with a new workforce” (Ibid). Dariusz Stola is correct to describe the operation displacing 44,400 Hungarians from Slovakia to emptied areas of Bohemia as “similar” to Operation Vistula (Stola, 1992: 337).

The two schemes differed with regard to the threat (ethnic Hungarian nationalists were not killing Slovaks en masse), international coverage (English-language newspapers covered the Czechoslovak treatment of the Hungarians extensively), and scope (the movement of Ukrainians was three times larger than the movement of the Hungarians). Otherwise, both operations stemmed from shared beliefs: that internal displacement would weaken group identity, that these resettlement schemes could help to populate a recently depopulated region that needed a supply of labor and, finally, that this form of ethnic cleansing was possible in the postwar world.

Beneš and the other Czechoslovaks within his cabinet who endorsed this event alongside the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans are emblematic of a palpable and broader shift among many that had favored minority rights protection in the interwar period. Ther (2014: 102-103) describes how the British, while condemning Nazi population transfer policy, were also investigating how useful it might be in fashioning a new postwar order. They referred in particular to the precedent of the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, a freely negotiated agreement which endorsed a compulsory population exchange between Greece and Turkey. Characterized as a “watershed in the twentieth-century history of population transfer,” this agreement, sanctioned by the League of Nations, legitimized the forced expulsion (rather than voluntary repatriation) of over one million Eastern Orthodox Turkish citizens from Anatolia and over a quarter of a million Muslim citizens of Greece (Drew 2006: 96). Years later, this solution to an isolated problem became, in the mind of Beneš and his allies, a solution to the minorities problems plaguing east central European states. Though US wartime opinion was divided, important leading figures also came to endorse population transfers. Even before the 1943 Tehran conference that fixed postwar Poland’s borders, no less than former President Herbert Hoover referenced Lausanne in advocating Europe’s ethnic reorganization (Ther, 2014: 103). By the same period high-ranking representatives from the United Kingdom (Churchill), the USA (FDR) and the Soviet Union (Maisky) had agreed with Edvard Beneš’ plans to remove the Sudeten Germans from a reconstituted Czechoslovakia after the war (Douglass, 2012). At the 1943 Tehran Conference, Churchill spoke with Stalin about population transfers in general as a way to solve minority issues in Europe (See Rothwell, 2009: 767).

What distinguishes the postwar transfers is not that they occurred, that states instigated them, or even that they could be quite brutal in implementation. Europe is no stranger to forced population expulsions. Rieber (2000: 4-10), for example, catalogs a series of expulsions over the centuries, many of which were state-orchestrated and most of which were cruel, beginning with
that of the Jews from England in the late thirteenth century. What sets the post-World War II transfers apart is that they had the imprimatur of the victorious Allied powers and, unlike in the case of the Treaty of Lausanne, which was a one-time resolution to a specific issue, legitimized ethnic cleansing as a general tool for rectifying the “problem” of minorities in Europe. The first link in this chain was created with the Allies’ 1945 Potsdam Agreement, which sanctioned the transfer of ethnic Germans from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland back to Germany. This was followed, over the course of several years across east central Europe, with a series of bilateral agreements or unilateral actions to expel non-German minorities. Though in some instances there were Allied objections to the framework under which the expulsions would occur, the principle of expulsions was no longer in question (Drew, 2006: 143-146).

The international legitimacy of ongoing population transfers and ethnic homogenization more broadly was strengthened by the almost complete absence of provisions for minority protection in what Preece (1998) refers to as the “Cold War human rights regime.” The 1947 multilateral Paris Peace Treaties that formally concluded hostilities between the Allies and non-German combatant countries provided for limited population transfers between Italy and Yugoslavia (Ibid: 104). These agreements, however, included explicit provisions forbidding all signatories from discriminating against individuals based on characteristics such as race, language, and religion. The latter inclusion constitutes an addendum which was not assiduously observed in postwar east central Europe (Kertesz, 1949: 632). In marked contrast with the peace treaties signed after World War I, these agreements lacked even minimal protections guaranteeing the rights of minority groups to maintain their own culture and educational institutions or to interact with the state in their own language. This was not an oversight but a feature that was intended to hasten the reconfiguration of the region along homogeneous ethnic lines. Preece documents how neither the 1945 UN Charter nor the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights concerns itself with the national minority rights, and what limited attempt there were to put such rights on the UN agenda never gained much traction (Preece, 1998: 106-118). State sovereignty largely trumped national minority rights during most of the Cold War.

Conclusion

We argue that evolving ideas about what constitutes legitimate state action can change the incentives state elites face when choosing a strategy to achieve even a purely domestic policy goal. Strategies that in one period may be “beyond the pale” and therefore potentially very costly to implement can, for reasons outside that state’s control, become legitimate means to achieve policy ends. In these instances, when the international context is permissive or even encouraging of formerly illegitimate acts, timing is everything when it comes to policy success.

We show that the diminution in the legitimacy of minority group rights from the interwar to the postwar period gave state elites in Poland new and devastating tools with which to finally create a Polish nation-state. Through forced expulsions, internal deportations, and ultimately the uniform polonization of the public sphere, all practices that had been unfeasible during the interwar group rights era, ethnic minorities were uprooted from their ancestral lands and provided insufficient means to perpetuate their own cultures. In contrast with older and more gradual means of ethnic homogenization, ethnic cleansing was relatively quick and almost always brutal. Although we focused largely on Ukrainians, no ethnic minority group was spared,
regardless of its cultural distance from Polishness, ties to outside powers, demographic weight, or level of modernization. Ironically, these postwar policies were implemented by Polish communists, who in the interwar period stood in strongest opposition to the assimilationist aims of the nationalist right. It seems that the availability of radical new tools proved tempting even for the communists, who enacted a political version of “Saye’s Law,” in which the availability of ethnic cleansing as an option created a demand for its use.

Although our argument was illustrated through a focus on Poland in the aftermath of the two world wars, it is applicable to other countries and also to different shifts in standards of legitimate action. Most obviously, Poland’s Eastern European neighbors experienced the same external constraints and opportunities as Poland. Not all those countries had the same homogenizing intentions as Poland, making it difficult to isolate the specific influence of the international factor. But among those countries that did pursue homogenization strategies in the immediate wake of World War II, such as Romania, we ought to observe the same ratcheting up of efforts to ethnically cleanse ethnic Germans and Hungarians. Though as elsewhere in Eastern Europe the German deportations proceeded, that of the Hungarians, though initiated by Romanian authorities in the latter stages of the war, was ultimately halted, most likely due to Soviet opposition (Michelbacher 2012, 51-54). By the same token, if we consider the more recent revival of interest in protecting minority group rights, which is supported not just by international law but also by an array of human rights organizations, then we should observe a corresponding contraction in the wiggle room of states, including those outside of Europe, to pursue their homogenization strategies.

The importance of political opportunity for the choice of state homogenization strategies suggests two broader takeaways for studies of the relationship between ethnic diversity and public goods provision. First, as we have shown, levels of state capacity, understood here narrowly as the capacity to coerce, can directly and rapidly affect levels of ethnic heterogeneity if undertaken at the right time. Like Darden and Mylonas (2015), this challenges the core identifying assumption underlying claims about the effect of ethnic diversity on public goods provision. Second, to the extent that nation-building strategies vary over time in relation to their global legitimacy, our findings identify a potentially unobserved and unmodeled heterogeneity in large-N time series datasets. Such data will contain measurements obtained during periods of both international permissibility and international constraint. Unless these different temporal contexts are controlled for, our estimates of the relationship between ethnic diversity and public goods provision, regardless of which of the two arrows between them we are focusing on, are likely to be incorrect.
Table 1: The nationalization of space in Poland, 1931---1950

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group (&quot;mother tongue&quot;):</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1939</th>
<th>1946**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poles</td>
<td>21,993,444</td>
<td>23,236,300</td>
<td>17,800,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainians</td>
<td>3,221,975</td>
<td>5,554,100</td>
<td>700,000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruthenians</td>
<td>1,219,647</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belarussians</td>
<td>989,852</td>
<td>2,144,600</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russians</td>
<td>138,713</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czechs</td>
<td>38,097</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuanians</td>
<td>83,116</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germans</td>
<td>740,992</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews (Yiddish Speaking)</td>
<td>2,489,034</td>
<td>3,250,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews (Hebrew Speaking)</td>
<td>243,539</td>
<td>Included above</td>
<td>Included above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local (tutaj)</td>
<td>707,088</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11,110</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Declared</td>
<td>39,163</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td><strong>31,915,779</strong></td>
<td><strong>35,339,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>22,200,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Group:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>20,670,000</td>
<td>64.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Orthodox</td>
<td>3,762,000</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical</td>
<td>835,000</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek Catholic</td>
<td>3,336,000</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christian</td>
<td>145,000</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>3,113,900</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td><strong>31,861,900</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* We use this data to represent the population before the expulsion of Germans and before the return of Polish Christians and Polish Jews from Soviet Exile.

** Indicates "others" but we assume the majority of these "others" are Ukrainians.

For the 1931 numbers see: *Drugi Powszechny Spis Ludności z dnia 9.12.1931 (The Second Population Census of 9 December 1931)* (Warszawa: GUS, 1934)

For the 1939 numbers see *Polska w Liczbach: Poland in Numbers* (London: Polish Lawyers Association in the United Kingdom, 1941): 32.

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**Articles in Newspapers**


“Minorities in Poland Heading for Open Revolt.” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 25, 1930.

“Mr. Henderson ‘misinformed.’” *The Manchester Guardian*, June 29, 1931.


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1 In 1922: 255,00; 1937: 265,000. See The Statesmen's Yearbook 1922 and 1937, respectively. (London: Macmillan, 1922 and 1938).

2 The sole exception to this policy being state support of Yiddish language schools and cultural institutions as evidenced in resettled Jewish communities throughout the Recovered Territories.

3 Perhaps Roman Dmowski enunciated this sentiment best in July 1905 when he wrote that “the state, if it is healthy and based on a strong foundation, will always assimilate foreign tribes politically and culturally, whether through violence or not…the state will always and everywhere, more or less conspicuously, aspire to create cultural unity.” In other words, Dmowski viewed the state’s strength in terms of internal homogenization. Writing nearly a century after the third partition from his perch in the western most part of the Russian Empire, Dmowski dreamed of the ideal Polish state and exactly who would constitute that state’s ideal constituency. See “Podstawy polityki polskiej” (The Foundations of Polish Politics) Prezglad Wszechpolski, 11 (July 1905) cited in Porter, 2000: 5.

4 Especially in the last two or three decades, studies investigating the Polish treatment of the Jewish minority have overshadowed scholarship regarding Polish-Ukrainian relations and violence between the Polish state and Ukrainian nationalists in the 1920s and 1930s. In truth, the so-called “Ukrainian problem” proved more vexing for the Polish state than the so-called “Jewish problem” as Ukrainian nationalists committed systematic terrorist actions against Polish state and society. Studies of the Ukrainian issue in both interwar and postwar Poland have also been stymied by the inaccessibility of archives during the Cold War era and often colored by the personal attitude of individual authors concerning the rights of the Ukrainian people to a state within the region.

5 Other news outlets and observers were not so generous and a series of articles in the Manchester Guardian contradicted the narrative preserved in Gazeta Polska. According to the Guardian correspondent reporting after the event, “last autumn the civilized world was horrified by atrocities committed by soldiers and policemen in the Western Ukraine” which had “rapidly acquired the character of a Polish colony” in the early 1920s. According to this anonymous correspondent, “all politically active Ukrainians are under the permanent surveillance of the ‘Defensive’ as the Polish ‘Cheka’ or political police is called” (“Poles & Ukrainians…,” The Manchester Guardian, April 14, 1931). Reportedly, several peasant leaders were shot during the pacification. According to local sources, “18,000 people had voting rights compromised in Lwow” (“The Ukrainians in Poland,” The Manchester Guardian, Dec 17, 1930). More than seven months after the pacification ended, the Manchester Guardian submitted that “the only satisfactory solution is autonomy for the territories concerned that were annexed to Poland against the will of the great majority of their inhabitants, for the Ukrainians although technically a national minority are a majority in Polish Ukraine” (“Mr. Henderson ‘misinformed,’” The Manchester Guardian, June 29, 1931).

6 According to the New York Times, the 62nd session of the Council of the League of Nations, ended “after a meeting marked by the strongest rebuke to Poland it has made in years.” The Council adopted a report on the “Polish maltreatment of German minorities which demanded that the government curb the activities of organizations which have been conducting a campaign of terrorism against the Germans…in Upper Silesia.” Poland accepted this rebuke without a murmur after “strong private pressure from Mr. Henderson and Mr. Briand, who pointed out that if she did not (accept the rebuke) the Ukrainian petitions were liable to put her in a worse position” (“Poland is rebuked by League Council,” New York Times, January 25, 1931).

7 On June 15, 1934, a Ukrainian nationalist named Hryhorij Maciejko killed the standing Minister of the Interior in his car on a Warsaw street. After Pieracki’s assassination, a sensational trial captivated Warsaw over a seven-week period, death sentences were handed down to some of the defendants, most famously to OUN leader Stefan Bandera.
and the accused were incarcerated in a new prison Bereza Katushka. From November 18, 1935 to January 13, 1936 a dozen UON stood before the law in the capital city.

8 In his research pertaining to the “legal basis” utilized for deporting large numbers of Ukrainians within Polish territory in 1947, Marek Jasiak uses Misioł to cite a handful of interwar laws. None of these laws authorize the mass moving of groups of people, including women and children, outright. Jasiak notes that one particular law, the “Executive Order of the President of Poland on the State Borders” dating from December 23, 1927 and amended on July 9, 1936 authorized provincial governors and village leaders to forbid people from living within or entering within two kilometers of a border area. Other laws allowed for officials to prevent those guilty of misdemeanors from living in counties near the border. (Jasiak in Ther, 2001 184).

9 It does not follow, however, that the questions of emigration and migration did not find an audience on the pages of Gazeta Polska and in Polish Government circles. Usually, though, emigration provided an answer to the so-called “Jewish Question” not the “Ukrainian question.” One such article published in October outlined the position of the Labour Party towards the Palestinian issue. The end of the lengthy article links this interest in British colonial affairs to domestic interests. Poland, the article claims “is interested in the fate of Palestine not only as an international issue.” This potential wave of migration would involve a “million” Polish Jew who have been “indifferent to the Polish government and society” and could be recruited for “settlement in Palestine.” It follows that “the idea of a Jewish national home in Palestine” lies in the interest of both internal and foreign policy” (“The Labour Party Government and the Palestinian Issue,” Gazeta Polska, October 24, 1930). These words echo a more familiar story, one involving Polish Foreign Minister Jozef Beck a few years later in October 1936 when he met with French Prime Minister Leon Blum to discuss the possibility of settling Polish Jews in colonial Madagascar. See Emmanuel Melzer (1997). Melzer maintains on page 132 that “over all, the Polish government maintained that Palestine was the most realistic place for resettlement of masses of Polish Jews.” For Beck’s account see: Jozef Beck (1936). But Beck was not the first Polish leader to consider emigration to Madagascar as a solution to Poland’s internal problems. In fact, the “idea of settling Madagascar with Polish citizens was first raised in 1926” and “at that time the idea was the migration of Polish peasants from the overpopulated countryside” (Snyder, 2015: 60). To speak of moving one million “indifferent” Polish Jews proves easy, to execute such a preposterous scheme seems more difficult. Consider: the Polish State could not afford subsidize such a migration, the Palestinian Mandate could not economically absorb such a sizeable human mass, the British continually conscribed migration towards Palestine throughout the 1920s and 1930s until legal migration was barely negligible and, finally, the League of Nation’s built on a foundation of palpable international norms steeped in minority rights language would find such an extreme plan unconscionable.

10 In the parlance of the postwar Polish People’s Republic, the formerly German lands that were attached to Poland carried the official name ziemia odzyskane (the regained lands) in the 1940s. These lands up to the Oder-Neisse line compensated for a territorial shift in the east that granted lands east of the Bug River to the Soviet Union. On the immediate postwar history of the Recovered Territories and the process by which they were polonized see Gregor Thum (2011).

11 In their telling of Operation Vistula, both Kersten (1993) and Szczęśniak, et al. (1973) offer a corollary to their respective explanations for why the ethnic cleansing unfolded: Polish public opinion endorsed it. Szczęśniak et al privilege an explanation linking Operation Vistula to the complete liquidation of the UPA. Kersten recognizes that government leaders of Soviet and non-Soviet orientation want the UPA liquidated and the Ukrainian minority problem neutralized in perpetuity. Specifically, Szczęśniak isolates the assassination of Świerczewski as the moment that the Polish people “uncovered their true desires” (odyrka swoje oblicze). (Szczęśniak, et al., 1973: 309). Now, they wanted “revenge” and, more specifically “the expulsion of terrorists to the USSR” (Ibid). The majority of the population grew hostile to the Ukrainian population, “enjoyed the deportations” and spoke about them in a way that indicated they had become used to it” (Ibid). And so in Szczęśniak’s assessment, the death of Świerczewski “shocked Polish public opinion and sent echoes through the wider world” and, most interestingly, the population was acclimated to the usage of population transfers to solve existing and potential problems (Ibid: 424). Kersten gestures towards a similar argument in her article written in 1996, over twenty years and a revolution after Szczęśniak’s invocation of public opinion. In Kersten’s words, “as a result of the experiences of the Second World War, mass transfers of national minorities, rejected when the Versailles order was being shaped, were sanctioned even by democratic governments and a large part of public opinion” (Kersten, 1993: 140). Those in Poland listening to the mayor of Nowy Targ when he called for the relocation of the Ukrainian minority and those reading Bierut’s New Year’s words in 1946 calling for ethnic homogeneity must have, in part, agreed with these plans for ethnic cleansing. The state could solve the problem of the Ukrainian problem definitively and the public offered implicit agreement. If Snyder (1999 and 2004) pivots towards conversations between Soviet leaders, Soviet Poles and
postwar bureaucrats in eastern Europe to explain Operation Vistula, with this statement Kersten casts her gaze a bit farther afield: towards an international community filled with committed “democrats” who deem the mass transfers of populations viable solutions to minority problems.

12 “The mission of the UVO,” UVO leader Osyp Dumyn explained in a 1926 report, “was to conduct an incessant and uncompromising war with Poland.” Polish rule in “Ukrainian spheres” would be destroyed, Polish national influence would be undermined, “Polish national organs of authority” would be annihilated to facilitate the “attainment and institutionalization of it’s own independent Ukrainian nation” and the creation of a secret army which could “at the appropriate moment initiate an open war against the Polish occupant.” See Osip Dumin, “Die Warheit uber die ukrainische Organisation [The Truth About the Ukrainian [UVO] Organization],” dated May 1926, Zeszyty Historyczny (Paris) 30 (1974): 104; quoted in Piotrowski, 1998: 194.

13 Timothy Snyder notes that “there is, however, good reason to doubt that the leaders of the OUN meant to kill Holowko. The émigré leadership was surprised by the news of his death, even surmising that the action was inspired by the Soviets….and investigation by the Second Department concluded that the most likely perpetrators were the Soviets.” See Sketches from a Secret War: A Polish Artist’s Mission to Liberate Soviet Ukraine (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005): 76-77.


15 In his telling of the deportations in Czechoslovakia, Kalman Janics indicates that the deportation of the Hungarians to Bohemia came to a “sudden end” on February 25, 1947. He writes “the decision to stop the deportations had come, most likely as a result of the unfavorable publicity in the West and under pressure of the Great Powers, the United States in particular” (Janics, 1982: 171). Janics does not cite any particular publicity nor a declaration from the Great Powers to reinforce this argument.

16 Notably Lausanne served as a precedent for another agreement between Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini concerning the German minority in South Tyrol in the late 1930s. The agreement signed on June 23, 1939 marked an important milestone in the larger Nazi movement to return ethnic Germans to the Reich (Yıldırım, 2006: 12).