

In the Shadow of Genocide: Ethnocide, Ethnic Cleansing, and International Order

Jaakko Heiskanen
University of Cambridge
jwh48@cam.ac.uk

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ABSTRACT. There is a growing body of scholarship on the role of culture and identity in international relations, but relatively little has been said about the fact that political attempts to manage culture and identity have frequently entailed discrimination, oppression, deportation, and even mass murder in pursuit of homogeneity. This paper explores the homogenising logics that operate in the modern states-system by tracing the historical contours of two key concepts through which such homogenisation has been articulated and denounced in the last half-century: ‘ethnocide’ and ‘ethnic cleansing’. The concept of ethnocide has been developed on the margins of the states-system, disseminating through the work of the indigenous rights movement and serving to unmask the destructive effects of civilisation and development. In contrast, the concept of ethnic cleansing has been conceived at the core of the states-system, spreading rapidly through the writings of Western journalists, politicians, lawyers, and academics witnessing the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. Taken together, the development of these concepts points to two contrasting yet strangely complementary logics of homogenisation generated by the modern international order: an international logic of ethnocide, unfolding through the register of universality, and a domestic logic of ethnic cleansing, unfolding through the register of particularity.

The concept of genocide was coined by the Polish-Jewish lawyer Raphaël Lemkin in the winter of 1942 to describe ‘the destruction of a nation or of an ethnic group’ (Lemkin 1944, 79).¹ Since then, genocide has acquired the pre-eminent status of ‘the crime of crimes’ in international political and legal discourse (Schabas 2009). To label something as a genocide today is to designate it as ‘the very worst thing imaginable’ (Levene 2005a, 38). This paper argues that the fixation on genocide as the ultimate evil has not only obscured other forms of ethnic homogenisation generated by the international order, but also produced a conceptual

¹ The term ‘genocide’ made its first public appearance in Lemkin’s *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*. Lemkin finished writing the book in 1943, but a contract dispute delayed the book’s publication until 1944 (Irvin-Erickson 2017, 81).

dead-end that spurred the development of alternative concepts. While the vast majority of these alternative concepts have been confined to the ivory tower, two have escaped into the wild and established themselves in international political and legal debates: ‘ethnocide’ and ‘ethnic cleansing’. By tracing how the concepts of ethnocide and ethnic cleansing have developed in the shadow of genocide, the paper demonstrates the power of concepts in shaping our understanding of political reality. Despite their superficial similarity and shared reference to ethnic homogenisation, ethnocide and ethnic cleansing have been articulated by very different actors and attached to very different projects.

The paper is organised into four sections and a conclusion. The first section provides an overview of the conceptual blockages that have plagued the scholarship on genocide and locates the contribution of the paper within the existing literature. The second and third sections reconstruct the conceptual histories of ethnocide and ethnic cleansing respectively. These histories are based on a wide range of textual material, including United Nations documents, conference proceedings, and scholarly works. Whereas the concept of ethnic cleansing has already received substantial attention from scholars, the conceptual history of ethnocide is not nearly as well known. The section on ethnocide is thus a valuable contribution in its own right, bringing new historical material to the attention of IR scholars. The fourth section of the paper teases out the implications of the conceptual histories for thinking about the relationship between ethnocide, ethnic cleansing, and international order. In particular, I explain how the doubled structure of the modern international order generates two contrasting logics of homogenisation: an international logic of ethnocide, centred on universal ideals of modernity and development, and a domestic logic of ethnic cleansing, geared toward the construction of a homogeneous national territory. The conclusion wraps up the paper by summarising the main argument.

Genocide and Its Discontents

The immense moral and emotional weight that has been invested in the concept of genocide casts a dark shadow that makes the analytical terrain difficult to navigate. For a long time, the paradigmatic role assigned to the Holocaust obscured other genocidal processes in modern history, such as the mass death of indigenous peoples resulting from European colonialism (W. Churchill 1997). However, any attempt to displace the Holocaust-centric definition of genocide with an alternative definition modelled on colonialism runs the risk of merely replacing one exemplary case with another. The upshot has been a definitional impasse, as different historical experiences are pitted against one another in a competition to define the

‘proper’ meaning of genocide (Moshman 2001; Moses 2002). The criminalisation of genocide has generated major definitional issues in international political and legal practice. Given that the crime of genocide today entails both a moral and legal responsibility for the international community to intervene, the identification of genocides has become an incredibly politicised affair (Smith 2010). Commenting on the conflict in Darfur, for instance, Mahmood Mamdani (2010, 53) notes that the debate ‘has focused less on the dynamics driving the violence than on how to name it: should it be termed genocide or not?’ Yet another issue is the limitation of the legal definition of genocide to the physical or biological destruction of a group, which allows the social or cultural destruction of group life to go unnoticed and unpunished (Novic 2016). All in all, the concept of genocide is not only a neutral analytical tool or legal category, but also a productive political agent in its own right, moulding the discursive terrain where political disputes unfold. Towering over the twentieth century, the concept of genocide may obscure as much as it reveals.

Faced with these conceptual dilemmas, scholars have generally gone in one of two directions. On the one hand, there has been a series of attempts to *expand* the meaning of genocide by shifting the focus from singular genocidal events to broader genocidal processes. Exemplary of this approach are Dirk Moses’s (2002; 2004; 2008) examination of genocide through the lens of colonialism, Mark Levene’s (2000; 2005a; 2005b) emphasis on the uneven development of the international system as the key driver of genocide in the modern period, and Martin Shaw’s (2007; 2011; 2013) historical-sociological approach that aims to dissolve the domestic/international boundary in favour of larger complexes of relations. Instead of isolating individual genocides in separate boxes and studying them in comparative terms, these scholars have adopted a more holistic and relational perspective on the phenomenon. From this new vantage point, Levene (2005a, 41) argues, the phenomenon of genocide ‘is actually a relatively common – as opposed to entirely exceptional – feature of the modern world’. The problem with this approach is that the expanded understanding of genocide espoused by the aforementioned scholars is at odds with the much narrower definition of genocide that has been enshrined into international law. The holistic and relational perspective on genocide thus to turn a blind eye to the terminological politicking that have surrounded the concept of genocide since its inception.

On the other hand, there have been attempts to *narrow* the meaning of genocide by restricting its use to a few relatively clear-cut cases such as the Holocaust. The word ‘genocide’ thus comes to designate merely the tip of the iceberg – the most extreme form of a wider phenomenon. This narrowing of the meaning of genocide has gone hand-in-hand with

the proliferation of neighbouring terms intended to capture other forms of violence that fall outside the restrictive remit of genocide. As a result, the concept of genocide is fragmented into a larger cluster of closely related but supposedly discrete analytical concepts. The long list of neologisms include ‘democide’ (Rummel 1994), ‘domicide’ (Porteous and Smith 2001), ‘gendercide’ (Warren 1985), ‘identicide’ (Meharg 2001), ‘indigenocide’ (Evans 2008), ‘libricide’ (Knuth 2003), ‘memoricide’ (Rashed, Short, and Docker 2014), ‘politicide’ (Harff and Gurr 1988), and ‘urbicide’ (Coward 2009). A major problem with this approach is that the fragmentation and pluralisation of the genocide concept seems to have come at the cost of terminological insipidity – hardly any of the above terms have made it beyond specialised academic texts. In addition, those who favour an expanded definition of genocide have argued that the proliferation of neighbouring terms has merely clouded the issue and precluded a holistic understanding of the phenomenon (e.g. Shaw 2007). Here, one might recall Lemkin’s (1944, 80) critique of nationality-specific terms such as ‘Germanization’ and ‘Italianization’ along similar lines: ‘these terms are also inadequate because they do not convey the common elements of one generic notion’.

Despite pulling in opposite directions, what both of the above approaches have in common is that they are interested in the actual practice of genocide – its causes, mechanisms, and consequences – rather than the conceptual struggles that have surrounded the legal and political uses of the term. To borrow Benjamin Meiches’s (2019, 9) helpful distinction, both of these approaches have been interested in *genocide as politics* rather than the *politics of genocide*. Genocide as politics can be defined as ‘a mode of political practice or activity that employs a variety of forms of mass violence to target and destroy groups.’ By contrast, the politics of genocide captures ‘the multiplicity of discourses, contestations, language games, ruminations, affective and rhetorical strategies, maneuvers, and dissimulations surrounding the concept of genocide.’ The politics of genocide, as Meiches (2019, 16) points out, has been a somewhat surprising blind spot in the scholarship on genocide. Even as the fuzziness of the genocide concept has been widely noted, it has been rarely subjected to detailed theoretical or empirical scrutiny. By constructing the genealogy of ‘genocide’ in relation to broader transformations in international politics, Meiches has provided an important first step in uncovering the neglected politics of genocide.

This paper builds on Meiches’s seminal work by tracing the genealogies of two neighbouring concepts that have developed in the shadow of genocide: ‘ethnocide’ and ‘ethnic cleansing’. In contrast to the other neologisms cited above, ethnocide and ethnic cleansing are not just academic constructs. Both concepts are saturated with political

significance and have gained substantial traction in international institutions, including the corridors of the United Nations. Ethnocide was initially proposed as a synonym of genocide by Lemkin himself, but the term remained forgotten until the late 1960s when it was reinvented by activist anthropologists and indigenous leaders. Since then, ethnocide has been a key concept in the vocabulary of the indigenous rights movement, serving to dismantle the universalistic pretences of the international system and to reveal the destructive undersides of modernity and development. Ethnic cleansing is a more recent coinage, emerging from the moral outrage of Western journalists, politicians, lawyers, and academics witnessing the atrocities of the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s. If the concept of ethnocide has been a tool of resistance deployed by the weak, then the concept of ethnic cleansing has been a euphemism invoked by the powerful. The contrasting trajectories of the two concepts is also manifest in the relative frequency with which they are used, with ethnic cleansing having gained more traction than ethnocide despite the latter being around for several decades longer.

By foregrounding the conceptual politics that have unfolded in the shadow of genocide, the paper responds to recent calls by IR scholars for ‘ontological theorizing’ (Guzzini 2013) or ‘concept analysis’ (Berenskoetter 2017). This form of theorising is crucial because it is only through the act of conceptualisation that social and political phenomena become intelligible to actors and analysts. A historical approach to concepts is especially useful, as it can reveal important shifts in political practices and normative preferences (e.g. Jordheim and Neumann 2011; Roshchin 2017; Leira 2019). Following Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, a concept can be understood as a ‘multiplicity’ or ‘assemblage’ constituted by its relations to other concepts and phenomena. Hence, even if a concept is always a contingent human invention, its range of possible meanings has already been in a way predetermined by the broader discursive web within which it is embedded. The emergence of a new concept therefore never takes place *ex nihilo*, but is always in response to a specific set of existing problems: ‘All concepts are connected to problems without which they would have no meaning and which can themselves only be isolated or understood as their solution emerges’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 16). In this vein, the conceptual emergence of ethnocide and ethnic cleansing is best understood as a problematisation of existing conceptual frameworks, especially the concept of genocide, which failed to adequately capture patterns of homogenisation. Taken together, the conceptual emergence of ethnocide and ethnic cleansing represents a profound critique of the prevailing discourses and norms that defined the post-war international order. That said, the differences in the historical development of the two concepts are as important as the similarities. Whereas the conceptual development of

ethnocide has been characterised by a slow and laboured movement from the margins of international political discourse toward the centre, the concept of ethnic cleansing burst onto the scene with stunning rapidity. Unpacking the distinct trajectories of the two concepts reveals that they have been elaborated by very different sets of actors, with very different political priorities, and with very different degrees of international influence.

Ethnocide

In a speech broadcast in 1941, Winston Churchill described Nazi atrocities in Eastern Europe as ‘a crime without a name’ (W. S. Churchill 2013, 249). Three years later, the term ‘genocide’ was coined by the Polish-Jewish lawyer Raphaël Lemkin in *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*. At the beginning of Chapter IX, Lemkin describes genocide as ‘an old practice in its modern development’ that entails ‘the destruction of a nation or of an ethnic group’ (Lemkin 1944, 79). In a footnote to this passage, Lemkin writes that the term ‘ethnocide’ ‘could be used for the same idea’ (Lemkin 1944, 79n1). This is the first known appearance of the word ‘ethnocide’ and it also seems to be the only time that Lemkin used it in print, preferring as he did the term ‘genocide’ instead. But given that Lemkin considered ethnocide and genocide to be synonymous, it is worth unpacking his understanding of the latter in further detail.

Lemkin’s conceptualisation of genocide was multidimensional and included political, social, cultural, economic, biological, physical, religious, and moral dimensions (Lemkin 1944, 82–90). Genocide was therefore not reducible to the physical or biological destruction of a group, but also encompassed the ‘disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups’ (Lemkin 1944, 79). If social or cultural methods of oppression failed, ‘the machine gun can always be utilized as a last resort’ (Lemkin 1945, 39). However, Lemkin also rejected a purely social or cultural definition of genocide and considered terms like ‘denationalization’ and ‘Germanization’ to be inadequate to describe genocidal acts precisely because they did not capture ‘the destruction of the biological and physical structure of the oppressed group’ (Lemkin 1945, 39). As Dirk Moses observes, the puzzling relationship between the social/cultural and physical/biological dimensions of genocide in Lemkin’s writings is best understood with reference to his communitarian understanding of group life. Growing up in the multi-ethnic world of Eastern Europe, Lemkin was deeply influenced by the philosophy of Johann Gottfried Herder, who emphasised the unique contribution of every *Volk* in the makeup of human culture as a whole. Lemkin also found inspiration in the work of the anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski, a fellow Pole, who saw culture as the glue that bound

society together into a coherent totality. The upshot was that Lemkin considered the social/cultural and physical/biological aspects of group life to be inextricably interwoven. By the same token, the social/cultural and physical/biological aspects of genocide were also inseparable (Moses 2010, 22–25, 33–34). Locating Lemkin’s thought within this communitarian tradition also helps to explain his reluctance to include the destruction of political groups within the remit of genocide, as he considered political groups to have neither the permanency nor the cultural specificity of racial, national, or religious groups (Cooper 2008, 89–90).

Although *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* was written against the backdrop of the Second World War and the Holocaust, Lemkin’s understanding of genocide was heavily influenced by other developments such as the Armenian genocide and the violent history of European colonialism. As early as 1933, driven by the failure of the international community to bring the perpetrators of the Armenian genocide to justice, Lemkin argued for the recognition of two new crimes in international law: ‘vandalism’ and ‘barbarity’. The former he defined as the destruction of art and culture, while the latter referred to acts of violence committed against defenceless racial, religious, or social groups (Schabas 2009, 30; Moses 2010, 30–32; see also Balakian 2013). These ideas formed the basis for the concept of genocide that he would articulate in the 1940s. A survey of Lemkin’s unpublished writings also shows that he was acutely aware of the genocidal tendencies of European colonial rule and well versed in Western anticolonial thought (McDonnell and Moses 2005). All in all, Lemkin saw genocide as a recurring feature of world history, with the Holocaust representing merely the most recent and most brutal example.

In December 1946, largely due to Lemkin’s persistent lobbying, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution condemning genocide as a crime under international law and requesting the Economic and Social Council to pursue a draft convention on genocide (Cooper 2008, 76–87; Schabas 2009, 52–58).² In March 1947, the Economic and Social Council in turn directed the Secretary-General to prepare a draft convention on genocide with the assistance of three experts, one of whom was Lemkin (Schabas 2009, 60–64). On Lemkin’s insistence, the Secretary-General’s draft identified three forms of genocide: ‘physical’ genocide or the destruction of a group by either killing individuals or depriving them of basic needs; ‘biological’ genocide or the prevention of births within a group; and ‘cultural’ genocide or the systematic destruction of the cultural, religious, or linguistic life of

² UN Doc. A/RES/96(I).

a group.³ In April 1948, an Ad Hoc Committee on genocide was set up to pursue further the drafting of the convention. The Ad Hoc Committee initially resolved to include cultural genocide in the draft convention, but when the text of the convention was discussed in the General Assembly, numerous member states protested this point. Conscious of their own objectionable record on the treatment of minority groups, especially indigenous groups, these states were concerned that the inclusion of cultural genocide might be leveraged against their own policies of religious conversion and assimilation. As a result, the provisions for cultural genocide were omitted from the final text of the convention, which defined genocide as the intentional physical/biological destruction, in whole or in part, of a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group (Schabas 2009, 69–90, 207–14).⁴ It was thus a relatively narrow and restrictive concept of genocide that triumphed in post-war international law.

The term ‘ethnocide’ is nowhere to be found in the post-war discussions on genocide. In fact, following its coinage by Lemkin in 1944, the term ‘ethnocide’ does not make another written appearance for more than two decades. The term first resurfaces at the 38th International Congress of Americanists, held in Stuttgart in August 1968, which featured a roundtable entitled ‘Política de asuntos indígenas: Etnocidios y genocidios’.⁵ In the English language, ‘ethnocide’ appears a few months later in a Calendar of Meetings published by the *Latin American Research Review*, which translated the name of the roundtable as ‘The Politics of Indigenous Affairs: Ethnocide and Genocide’.⁶ During the proceedings in Stuttgart, a number of Scandinavian anthropologists teamed up with other anthropologists specialising in Latin America to pass a resolution criticising the persecution of indigenous groups in the Americas. In addition, the French anthropologist Robert Jaulin was to head a committee of eight men – including the Peruvian anthropologist Stephano Varese and the Swedish anthropologist Lars Persson – tasked with preparing a symposium on ethnocide in the Americas.⁷ In the aftermath of the Stuttgart congress, the Scandinavian contingent also spearheaded the creation of the Copenhagen-based International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, a non-governmental organisation dedicated to the promotion of indigenous rights, with Lars Persson as its first president (Morin and Saladin d’Anglure 1997, 161–62).

³ UN Doc. E/447, pp. 25–28.

⁴ UN Doc. A/RES/3/260.

⁵ *Verhandlungen des XXXVIII. Internationalen Amerikanistenkongresses: Stuttgart-München, 12. bis 18. August 1968, Band I* (München: Kommissionsverlag Klaus Renner, 1969), p. 50.

⁶ Calendar of Meetings, *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Autumn, 1968), pp. 83-112, at p. 97.

⁷ *Verhandlungen des XXXVIII. Internationalen Amerikanistenkongresses: Stuttgart-München, 12. bis 18. August 1968, Band I* (München: Kommissionsverlag Klaus Renner, 1969), pp. 43-45.

The symposium on ethnocide, proposed by Robert Jaulin during the Stuttgart congress, took place in February 1970 in Paris (Bataille 1969; Jaulin 1972, 3). The same year also saw the publication of Jaulin's ground-breaking *La paix blanche: introduction à l'ethnocide*, a vociferous attack against the homogenising tendencies of Western global hegemony that launched the concept of ethnocide on a global scale. For Jaulin, the concept of ethnocide encapsulated the tendency of Western conceptions of progress and development to destroy the cultural diversity of the world, entailing the replacement of civilisations in the plural with Civilisation in the singular (Jaulin 1970; see also Pitt-Rivers and Jaulin 1974; Jaulin 1984). Drawing inspiration from Jaulin's seminal work, the French anarchist anthropologist Pierre Clastres proposed the following distinction between ethnocide and genocide in 1974: 'L'ethnocide, c'est donc la destruction systématique des modes de vie et de pensée de gens différents de ceux qui mènent cette entreprise de destruction. En somme, le génocide assassine les peuples dans leur corps, l'ethnocide les tue dans leur esprit.' (Clastres 1974, 102). But whereas Jaulin's writings reflected on the ethnocidal tendencies of modern Western civilisation, Clastres associated ethnocide with the political form of the state more generally: 'toute organisation étatique est ethnocidaire, l'ethnocide est le mode normal d'existence de l'état.' (Clastres 1974, 107; see also Moyn 2004). Of course, insofar as there is a close connection between Western civilisation and state-building, Jaulin and Clastres's perspectives are not mutually incompatible; it is rather a question of emphasis.

The dissemination of the word 'ethnocide' since the late 1960s has been punctuated by a series of key events. Among the first was a gathering of a dozen or so anthropologists on Barbados in 1971, featuring prominent Latin American intellectual figures such as Guillermo Bonfil Batalla from Mexico, Darcy Ribeiro from Brazil, and the aforementioned Stephano Varese from Peru. The meeting culminated in the Declaration of Barbados, which not only asserted that indigenous groups were subjected to internal colonialism in Latin America, but also located this oppression within the broader neo-imperial structure of the international system: 'Colonial domination of the aboriginal groups [...] is only a reflection of the more generalised system of the Latin American states' external dependence upon the imperialist metropolitan powers. The internal order of our dependent countries leads them to act as colonising powers in their relations with the indigenous peoples.' The failure or inability of Latin American states to guarantee a truly multi-ethnic society, the Declaration continued, 'implicates the State in direct responsibility for and connivance with the many crimes of

genocide and ethnocide that we have been able to verify.’⁸ A second conference was held on Barbados in 1977, which included indigenous activists alongside anthropologists (Varese 1997).

Another major event to take place in 1977 was the International NGO Conference on Discrimination against Indigenous Populations in the Americas. Held in the Palais des Nations in Geneva under the auspices of the United Nations, the conference brought together spokespeople for more than fifty international NGOs and sixty indigenous groups from fifteen countries. During the conference, representatives of indigenous groups foregrounded ongoing ethnocidal practices that were being justified by a rhetoric of national integration and economic development, and called upon the international community to recognise ethnocide as a violation of international law on par with genocide (Niezen 2003, 44–45; Benvenuto 2015, 26–27). Inspired by the success of the conference, the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation invited indigenous leaders and activists to present their experiences of genocide, ethnocide, oppression, and discrimination before the Fourth Russell Tribunal in 1980. This people’s court, held in Rotterdam before an international audience of thousands, followed the format of a conventional trial, complete with plaintiffs, defendants, prosecutors, defence attorneys, and a jury (Varese 2006, 46–47). The resulting Declaration of Indigenous Peoples condemned ‘genocide and ethnocide in all its forms’ and called ‘upon the people of the world to join us in asserting that the genocide and dispossession of Indigenous Peoples is a matter of rightful concern to the world community’.⁹

It is against this backdrop of indigenous activism and anthropological critique that the term ‘ethnocide’ entered into the formal channels of the United Nations. In 1971, the United Nations Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities commissioned two reports: a study on the prevention and punishment of genocide, to be prepared by Nicodème Ruhashyankiko, and a study on discrimination against indigenous peoples, to be prepared by José Martínez Cobo. The Ruhashyankiko report was completed in 1978 and dedicated several pages to the discussion of cultural genocide or ethnocide, albeit without arriving at any firm conclusions about its relationship to genocide. A glance through the footnotes of this section of the report testifies to the central role of Robert

⁸ The Declaration of Barbados is available online from the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs at <https://www.iwgia.org> (accessed 30 June 2020). The Declaration of Barbados was also published with comments in volume 14(3) of the journal *Current Anthropology* in 1973.

⁹ The Declaration of the Fourth Russell Tribunal is available online from the Fourth World Documentation Project archives at the Centre for World Indigenous Studies at <https://www.cwis.org> (accessed 30 June 2020).

Jaulin in the emergence of this new concept in international political and legal discourse.¹⁰ The Cobo report, completed in 1986, also features passing references to ethnocide, but does not discuss the concept in depth.¹¹ In 1982, the Sub-Commission authorised Benjamin Whitaker to prepare a revised and updated version of the Ruhashyankiko report. Released in 1985, the Whitaker report did not elaborate on the relationship of ethnocide and genocide, but concluded that '[f]urther consideration should be given to this question'.¹² Ultimately, the concept of ethnocide remains marginal to these reports, and while Jaulin's views are cited, they are not explicitly endorsed. Nonetheless, as Jeff Benvenuto (2015, 31) observes, the dialogue between the Cobo report on discrimination against indigenous peoples and the two reports on genocide demonstrate that the indigenous rights movement 'was also instigating conceptual changes in the field of genocide studies and prevention'.

While the Cobo report was in the works, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) backed a series of three conferences that were expressly dedicated to the matter of ethnocide: the first in San José in December 1981; the second in Ouagadougou in January-February 1983; and the third in Karasjok in May-June 1983. Robert Jaulin was again involved, participating in all three events and authoring a paper on ethnocide that was circulated during the Karasjok meeting.¹³ A central concern raised at these meetings was the neglect of indigenous voices in international political and legal discourse. Even existing international instruments that were expressly dedicated to indigenous matters, such as the International Labour Organization's Convention No. 107 on Indigenous and Tribal Populations, were based on the universalistic principles of national integration and economic development and thus left no room for the autonomous development of indigenous groups. 'The first battle, therefore, will be one of definition', reads the Final Report of the San José conference: 'a conceptual space must be created in which these ideas can acquire credibility and grow.'¹⁴ It is precisely in this spirit that the conceptual history of ethnocide in world politics should be understood, that is, as an emergent critique of the state-centric discourses of national integration and economic development that held sway in the post-war decades. A major achievement of these meetings was the Declaration of San José, the first formal (albeit non-binding) international instrument to define the concept of ethnocide: 'Ethnocide means that an ethnic group is denied the right to enjoy, develop and transmit its own culture and its

¹⁰ UN Doc. E/CN.4/Sub.2/416, paras. 459-461.

¹¹ UN Doc. E/CN.4/Sub.2/1986/7/Add.1-4.

¹² UN Doc. E/CN.4/Sub.2/1985/6, para. 33.

¹³ UNESCO Doc. SS.83/CONF.616/1.

¹⁴ UNESCO Doc. SS.82/WS/32, p. 6.

own language, whether collectively or individually.’¹⁵ The declaration went on to state that ‘ethnocide, that is, cultural genocide, is a violation of international law equivalent to genocide’, thus establishing a moral equivalence between genocide and ethnocide.¹⁶

In addition to lending further credibility to the concept of ethnocide, the three UNESCO-sponsored conferences also launched into international prominence the concept of ethnodevelopment. Proposed as a remedy to the ethnocidal tendencies of the states-system, the concept of ethnodevelopment was a direct challenge to the prevailing dichotomisation of ethnicity and development. Modernization theory depicted ethnic groups as archaic survivals of an earlier age, while Marxist approaches saw ethnic loyalties as a barrier to the development of class consciousness – in both cases, the assumption was that particularistic ethnic identities would eventually be overcome by the universal laws of human socioeconomic development. Rodolfo Stavenhagen, a leading theorist of ethnodevelopment, has described this neglect of ethnicity in development thinking as ‘a paradigmatic blind-spot’ (Stavenhagen 1986, 77). ‘The overall impression, after reviewing what the major theoretical traditions have to say, is that ethnicity and development belong to different worlds’, Björn Hettne concurs. In contrast, the concept of ethnodevelopment aims to provide ‘a model of development that releases the potential inherent in different ethnic groups’ (Hettne 1993, 124). In this spirit, the Declaration of San José affirmed ethnodevelopment as ‘an inalienable right of Indian groups’ and defined it as follows:

By ethno-development we mean the extension and consolidation of the elements of its own culture, through strengthening the independent decision-making capacity of a culturally distinct society to direct its own development and exercise self-determination, at whatever level, which implies an equitable and independent share of power. This means that the ethnic group is a political and administrative unit, with authority over its own territory and decision-making powers within the confines of its development project, in a process of increasing autonomy and self-management.¹⁷

During the deliberations in San José and Ouagadougou, ethnodevelopment was presented as an ‘authentic’ form of development and opposed to the prevailing capitalist model, which encouraged production for production’s sake and failed to take into account the varying needs of different ethnic groups.¹⁸ ‘Indian communities are swallowed up by the capitalist system, which clashes with their own system’, observed Donald Rojas, the representative of the Indian

¹⁵ UNESCO Doc. SS.82/WS/32, p. 32.

¹⁶ UNESCO Doc. SS.82/WS/32, p. 33

¹⁷ UNESCO Doc. SS.82/WS/32, p. 33.

¹⁸ UNESCO Doc. SS.82/WS/32, p. 15; UNESCO Doc. SS.82/C/39/5, pp. 4-5.

Association of Costa Rica at San José.¹⁹ Similar concerns were raised with reference to the African context at Ouagadougou: ‘Modernization depending exclusively on western science and technology has eclipsed and discredited Africa’s own scientific and technological heritage, especially where it is particularly rich, as in art, agriculture, housing, medicine, and pharmacology’, reads the Final Report of the Ouagadougou meeting. ‘This would-be universalist approach tends to exclude any recourse to the peoples’ deep knowledge of their own environments.’²⁰

The success of the indigenous rights movement is evidenced by the inclusion of the word ‘ethnocide’ in the Draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, approved by the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations in 1993. ‘Indigenous peoples have the collective and individual right not to be subjected to ethnocide and cultural genocide’, affirmed Article 7 of the draft declaration.²¹ When asked about the meaning of the terms ‘ethnocide’ and ‘cultural genocide’, the Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Working Group, Erica-Irene Daes, offered the following clarification: “‘cultural genocide’ referred to the destruction of the physical aspects of a culture, while “ethnocide” referred to the elimination of an entire “ethnos” and people.’²² When the Language Services of the United Nations reviewed the draft declaration in 1994, it simply repeated this statement.²³ How, exactly, ‘the destruction of the physical aspects of culture’ was supposed to differ from ‘the elimination of an entire “ethnos” and people’ was not explained.

In the subsequent stage of the drafting process, the centre of influence shifted from indigenous groups to member states, leading to several modifications in the wording of the declaration. Notably, the terms ‘cultural genocide’ and ‘ethnocide’ were deleted and replaced with the following, more general, statement in what became Article 8 of the final declaration: ‘Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture.’ The main justifications for this change were the unclear definition of ‘cultural genocide’ and ‘ethnocide’ as well as their lack of foundation in international law. The Declaration of San José was mentioned during the deliberations, but it was observed that this had been developed by experts rather than states and that its status in international law was thus ambiguous.²⁴ The final text of the United Nations Declaration on

¹⁹ UNESCO Doc. SS.82/WS/32, p. 26.

²⁰ UNESCO Doc. SS.82/C/39/5, p. 11.

²¹ UN Doc. E/CN.4/Sub.2/1994/56, p. 107.

²² UN Doc. E/CN.4/Sub.2/1993/29, para. 48.

²³ UN Doc. E/CN.4/Sub.2/1994/2, para. 15.

²⁴ UN Doc. E/CN.4/2003/92, paras. 51-61.

the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the General Assembly in September 2007, makes no mention of ‘cultural genocide’ or ‘ethnocide’ (Benvenuto 2015, 33–34; Mako 2012, 187–88).²⁵

Ethnic Cleansing

‘Ethnic cleansing’ is a literal translation of the Serbo-Croatian expression *etničko čišćenje*, which formed a part of the military vocabulary of the Yugoslav People’s Army. During the Bosnian War, this expression was apparently used by Serbian commanders as a code word for leaving nobody in the area alive. It was against the backdrop of Serbian atrocities in Bosnia around 1991-1992 that the term ‘ethnic cleansing’ was also adopted by commentators in the West. Because of the rapid proliferation of the expression in the media, it is difficult to establish exactly when, or by whom, it was first used. The contours of the concept have subsequently been fleshed out by academics, lawyers, and various organs of the United Nations, but its boundaries remain ambiguous. Although ‘ethnic cleansing’ is the predominant expression in the English language, alternatives such as ‘ethnic purification’ have also been used to describe the same phenomenon. In French-language texts, including official United Nations documents, corresponding terms include *purification ethnique*, *nettoyage ethnique*, and *épuration ethnique* (Petrovic 1994, 343; Walling 2000, 48; Krieg-Planque 2003; Pégurier 2013, 7–9).

Due to the rapid and widespread take-up of the expression ‘ethnic cleansing’ among Western journalists, lawyers, politicians, and academics, it is not feasible to reconstruct its history in the same manner as was done with the concept of ethnocide in the previous section. Therefore, instead of attempting to trace the dissemination of the term ‘ethnic cleansing’ over time, the analysis here examines the various conceptualisations and applications of this expression following its emergence in the 1990s. Rather than being a problem, this contrast in the trajectories of the two concepts is in itself highly revealing: whereas the conceptual development of ethnocide has been characterised by a gradual movement from the margins of the states-system to its core, the concept of ethnic cleansing has been at the heart of the states-system since its inception. This contrast is also manifest in the fact that the concept of ethnic cleansing is much more widespread in international political discourse than the concept of ethnocide, even though the latter has been actively promoted by the indigenous rights movement since the late 1960s. On a deeper level, this points to the contrasting political

²⁵ UN Doc. A/RES/61/295.

implications laden in these two concepts: whereas ethnic cleansing can be quite easily depicted as a pathology of particular states or leaders, the articulation of ethnocide represents a more fundamental critique of the states-system in general.

A good starting point for mapping out the meaning of ‘ethnic cleansing’ are the various definitions produced by the United Nations during the conflict in Yugoslavia. An early definition of the expression was provided in November 1992 by a report from Tadeusz Mazowiecki, special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in former Yugoslavia: ‘The term ethnic cleansing refers to the elimination by the ethnic group exerting control over a given territory of members of other ethnic groups.’²⁶ A further definition of ethnic cleansing was provided by the United Nations Commission of Experts in its first Interim Report in February 1993, which explained that ethnic cleansing entailed ‘rendering an area ethnically homogeneous by using force or intimidation to remove persons of given groups from the area.’ The Interim Report also noted that ethnic cleansing was ‘contrary to international law’.²⁷ This definition was reaffirmed by the Commission of Experts in its Final Report in May 1994, which went on to describe ethnic cleansing as ‘a purposeful policy designed by one ethnic or religious group to remove by violent and terror-inspiring means the civilian population of another ethnic or religious group from certain geographic areas.’²⁸ Many other definitions of ethnic cleansing could be cited, but the above examples suffice to illustrate the core features of this concept in the work of the United Nations in the 1990s. In particular, there is one recurrent feature that stands out: the focus on territory.

The centrality of territory for the concept of ethnic cleansing is reflected in academic works on the subject: ‘while ethnic cleansing affects people, what is really at stake is territory’, asserts Jennifer Jackson Preece (1998, 821). In an influential study, Michael Mann offers the following definition: ‘An ethnicity is a group that defines itself or is defined by others as sharing common descent and culture. So ethnic cleansing is the removal by members of one such group of another such group from a locality they define as their own’ (Mann 2005, 11). Continuing this trend, the historian Philipp Ther asserts that the ‘main goal’ of ethnic cleansing is ‘the systematic removal of a population group from a given area’ (Ther 2014, 2). This territorial focus brings the concept of ethnic cleansing into the orbit of neighbouring terms such as ‘forced migration’ and ‘population transfer’ (Lieberman 2010, 44–45). ‘At one end, it is virtually indistinguishable from forced emigration and population

²⁶ UN Doc. A/47/S/24809, para. 9.

²⁷ UN Doc. S/25274, para. 55.

²⁸ UN Doc. S/1994/674, para. 130.

exchange while at the other it merges with deportation and genocide’, summarises Andrew Bell-Fialkoff (1993, 110).

The relationship of ethnic cleansing and genocide has been the subject of substantial controversy. According to some commentators, the phrase ‘ethnic cleansing’ is a problematic euphemism which ‘bleaches the atrocities of genocide’ and should therefore be eliminated from official use (Blum et al. 2007). Several statements emanating from the United Nations also imply, to varying degrees, that ethnic cleansing is a form of genocide (Schabas 2009, 224–25). The most authoritative statements to this effect is a General Assembly resolution from December 1992 referring to ‘the abhorrent policy of “ethnic cleansing”, which is a form of genocide’.²⁹ It is certainly true that genocide may serve as a tool of ethnic cleansing and, accordingly, that some cases of ethnic cleansing may amount to genocide – an association that is reflected in the emergence of the compound term ‘genocidal ethnic cleansing’ (Pégorier 2013, 95). Nonetheless, there are two important differences between ethnic cleansing and genocide. The first is the explicitly territorial orientation of the former: whereas the focus of ethnic cleansing is on (the cleansing of) a specific territory, the focus of genocide is on (the destruction of) a specific group (Lieberman 2010, 44). The second important difference is that ethnic cleansing may be contractual. Indeed, some of the most significant cleansings in modern history have been supported by bilateral or international agreements. In contrast, the idea of contractual genocide is ‘a contradiction in terms’ (Ther 2014, 244). Prominent historical examples of contractual ethnic cleansing include the Greco-Bulgarian exchange of populations during the interwar years, pursuant to the Treaty of Neuilly, and the forced removal of ethnic German populations from Poland after 1945, in accordance with the Potsdam Protocol. It is only relatively recently, in the wake of the Cold War, that such practices have come to be seen as morally and/or legally indefensible (Schabas 2009, 226–27; Ther 2014, 241–45). During the drafting of the Genocide Convention in the 1940s, for example, the representative of the United States expressed concern that the proposed definition of genocide ‘might be extended to embrace forced transfers of minority groups such as have already been carried out by members of the United Nations’ (quoted in Schabas 2003, 118). Accordingly, the Secretary-General’s draft of the Genocide Convention took care to clarify that ‘[m]ass displacements of populations [...] does not constitute genocide’ unless

²⁹ UN Doc. A/RES/47/121.

such an operation ‘were attended by such circumstances as to lend to the death of the whole or part of the displaced population.’³⁰

The term ‘ethnic cleansing’ might be only three decades old, but as the deliberations surrounding the Genocide Convention in the 1940s testify, the corresponding practice is significantly older. In the context of the Yugoslav wars, the Final Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts noted that the practice of ethnic cleansing ‘is not new to history’ and ‘has been involved in efforts to establish nationhood and define national boundaries in the Balkans since the 19th century.’³¹ In support of this claim, the Final Report cited the work of Andrew Bell-Fialkoff, who has argued that ethnic cleansing is ‘in some ways as old as antiquity’ (Bell-Fialkoff 1993, 110). For instance, the Assyrian ruler Tiglath-Pileser III, who reigned in the eight century BCE, is said to have displaced one half of the population of his conquered territories. Similar examples can be found in ancient Babylonia, Greece, and Rome, among other places. Crucially, however, such relocations in ancient times were not primarily motivated by the ideal of an ethnically homogeneous territory, but by economic or strategic objectives, such as punishing rebels, populating cities, or acquiring manpower in the form of soldiers or slaves (Bell-Fialkoff 1993, 111–12; Lieberman 2010, 47).

Rather than being an ancient phenomenon, the development of ethnic cleansing closely mirrors the development of the modern territorial state and the parallel attempts to construct a homogeneous political community as the foundation of the state’s legitimacy (Rae 2002). In this regard, the monarchical states of late medieval Europe, which were the first to practice systematic territorial cleansing along religious lines, serve as a kind of bridge between the pre-modern and modern worlds. At one time or another, the Christian kingdoms of England, France, and Spain all targeted their Jewish subjects, either expelling them from their domains or forcing them to convert (Bell-Fialkoff 1993, 110–11; Lieberman 2010, 47). In the wake of the Reformation, the experience of cleansing also punctuated the lives of Catholics and Protestants who were caught under the dominion of a different religious authority. At the end of the sixteenth century, for example, Spanish persecution of Protestants in the Low Countries led to the flight of more than 175,000 people (Walling 2000, 51).

Although the religious cleansings of monarchical states constitute an important precursor to modern ethnic cleansing, it was not until the late nineteenth century that such

³⁰ UN Doc. E/447, p. 24.

³¹ UN Doc. S/1994/674/Add.2, Annex IV, para. 111.

homogenising practices acquired an ‘ethnic’ character. With the ascendancy of the nation-state in nineteenth-century Europe, the religious principle of *cuius regio, eius religio* gave way to the ethnonationalist principle of *cuius regio, eius natio*, paving the way for modern ethnic cleansing (Jackson Preece 1997, 75). Crucially, it is also around this time that the idea of ‘cleansing’ the national society first began to acquire traction in several European languages (Ther 2001, 43). At the end of the First World War, the idea of ‘racial adjustment’ of populations was embraced as a means of lessening international tensions in the Balkans by creating homogeneous nation-states, with the League of Nations overseeing reciprocal exchanges of population between Greece, Bulgaria, and Turkey (Ladas 1932). A more sinister precursor is Heinrich Himmler’s use of the expression *völkische Flurbereinigung* (cleansing the soil in the fields) to describe the Nazi policy of rendering German territories clean of foreign elements such as Jews (Naimark 2002, 4, 67). Reflecting on these historical linkages, Philipp Ther has evocatively and convincingly described ethnic cleansing as ‘the dark side of nation-states’ (Ther 2014; see also Mann 2005).

The rise of the nation-state in Europe was, of course, paralleled by the consolidation of European imperial rule globally. By the same token, forced population transfers were not limited to European soil, but were also a recurrent feature of European imperialism. In the colonies, however, the objectives of such relocations were generally economic or strategic in nature, most commonly the acquisition of land as cheaply as possible – no ethnonationalist territorial claims were made (Walling 2000, 51; Ther 2014, 6). Rather than being a feature of colonial rule abroad, ethnic cleansing has primarily served as ‘an instrument of nation-state creation’ at home (Jackson Preece 1998, 821).

In sum, the conceptualisation of ethnic cleansing has been largely the accomplishment of Western journalists, politicians, lawyers, and academics appalled by the events unfolding in the Balkans in the 1990s and, later, elsewhere. Generally speaking, the concept has served as a derogatory label used to criticise certain practices of nation-state creation, whether in the past or in the present. In contemporary contexts, ethnic cleansing has also been invoked to justify international intervention in the name of universal humanitarian values (e.g. Kresock 1994). Although it continues to lack a clear legal status, ethnic cleansing has been repeatedly discussed and denounced through the universalistic medium of international law, especially international humanitarian law, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of genocide (e.g. Petrovic 1994, 353–58; Jackson Preece 1998, 832; Lieberman 2010, 46; Pégrier 2013).

Two Logics of Homogenisation

Having traced the contrasting conceptual histories of ethnocide and ethnic cleansing, it is time to compare the two concepts side by side in order to tease out some of their theoretical and political implications. As has been seen, both ethnocide and ethnic cleansing share a core reference to ethnic homogenisation, but they posit a very different relationship between the universal and the particular. In the case of ethnocide, the universalistic pretences of modernity and development that are deemed to be the root of the problem, while particular ethnic identities are reified and idealised as the source of salvation, for example through the discourse of ethnodevelopment. In direct contrast, the articulation of ethnic cleansing has entailed a condemnation of ethnic particularism and a defence of universal values such as human rights. It is as if the two concepts are opposite sides of the same coin, each revealing something about the limitations and dangers of the other.

The mirrored logics of ethnocide and ethnic cleansing are a reflection of what R. B. J. Walker (2006, 58) calls the 'double outsides' of modern subjectivity: 'The world of modern subjectivity and objectivity, or interiority and exteriority, already assumes its own distinction from some world outside of itself.' This doubled structure is also at work in the constitution of the modern international order. That is to say, the modern international order entails a pattern of exclusion and discrimination not only along the boundaries of particular states, but also along the boundaries of the universal system of states as a whole. The distinction between the inside and the outside of the state, so familiar to IR scholars, is thus always-already accompanied by a second, perhaps less evident, distinction between the inside and the outside of the international system. Even if one were to accept the Eurocentric reading of modern history as the global triumph of the sovereign state, Walker notes, 'there must remain the nagging question about what, and whom, has been left outside of this process of internationalization as internalization.' It is in relation to this doubled structure of the modern international order that the twinned concepts of ethnocide and ethnic cleansing are best understood and theorised.

The concept of ethnocide operates along the boundaries of the modern international order as a whole, signalling the pathological homogenising effects of the universal standards upon which that order has been grounded. These universal standards include not only formal legal principles such as non-intervention and formal sovereign equality among states, but also a wide array of moral and ideological standards pertaining to modernity, development, economic growth, liberal democracy, and human rights. Seen in historical perspective, these

universal standards are essentially a continuation of the Eurocentric standard of civilisation that circumscribed the boundaries of the international society in the nineteenth century and legitimated European imperial rule over 'primitive' peoples (e.g. Gong 1984; Donnelly 1998; Rist 2008; Bowden 2009; McCarthy 2009).

The basic norms and standards embodied by the modern international order masquerade as universals, yet their historical development is deeply Eurocentric and entails the suppression of alternative forms of social and cultural organisation, often through violent means. As Paul Keal (2003, 2) underscores, the standard success story about the expansion or globalisation of the modern international order also has a 'dark side' that is defined by 'the dispossession and destruction of indigenous societies'. Modernity and coloniality, civilisation and barbarism, should not be viewed as simply opposed, but as intimately intertwined, such that the progress toward modernity and civilisation can, under certain circumstances, go hand-in-hand with the annihilation of local cultural traditions and alternative ways of life (van Krieken 1999; Mignolo 2011). It is in an attempt to combat this coercive power of modern universals and to defend those alternative forms of social and cultural organisation that the concept of ethnocide has been elaborated by the indigenous rights movement in the second half of the twentieth century. Fundamentally, the concept of ethnocide represents a critique of the universal from the vantage point of the particular.

If ethnocide operates along the boundaries that demarcate the modern international order as a whole, then ethnic cleansing operates along the boundaries that demarcate individual national states. The close linkages between state-formation, nation-building, and ethnic homogenisation are already well established in the literature and does not call for belaboured analysis. In his influential study of nationalism, for example, Ernest Gellner (1983, 50–52) characterises the emergence of modern industrial society as the displacement of heterogeneous 'wild' cultures with homogeneous 'garden' cultures. Others have pointed to the symbiotic relationship between homogenisation and war-making (Tilly 1994; Conversi 2007). Even if the ideal of the ethnically homogeneous nation-state is rarely, if ever, actually achieved in practice, the legitimacy of the modern state requires an ideological appeal to national cohesion that generates certain homogenising pressures (Connor 1981). In her work on the relationship between state-building and culture, Heather Rae (2002, 5) uses the term 'pathological homogenisation' to describe the set of coercive strategies – ranging from the legal exclusion of minorities from citizenship rights to forced expulsion and extermination – through which state-builders seek to construct a unified national population as the basis of the state's legitimacy.

Even as the pursuit of homogeneity fortifies the domestic legitimacy of the state, it also places the international legitimacy of the state into question. Whereas the domestic legitimacy of the state depends upon the invocation of a particular national history anchored in the ethnic continuity of the nation through time, the international legitimacy of the state is grounded on the espousal of future-oriented universal values such as modernity and development. Jelena Subotic and Ayşe Zarakol (2013, 921) describe this tension between the domestic and the international faces of state identity as ‘the dilemma of *cultural intimacy* – what holds the state identity together is exactly the same thing that opens it to international criticism.’ The salience of this tension varies from state to states, largely depending on the manner in which the state was incorporated into the international order. It is especially pronounced among non-Western states that were incorporated into an alien system ‘the rules of which they did not create, the norms of which were unfamiliar at best, the major players of which judged and explicitly labeled them as inferior, and the ontology of which convinced them that they indeed were lacking in some way’ (Zarakol 2011a, 6). It is for this reason that the charge of ethnic cleansing has typically been levelled at peripheral states that the core members of the international community consider to be in some way ‘backward’ or ‘primitive’ – the Balkan states on the periphery of Europe are the exemplary case in this regard (Todorova 2009). Fundamentally, the concept of ethnic cleansing represents a critique of the particular from the vantage point of the universal.

Taken together, the coinage and popularisation of the concepts of ethnocide and ethnic cleansing constitute a concerted critique of homogenising practices that had formerly been accepted without a second thought. At the national level, the articulation of ethnic cleansing has entailed a denunciation of nation-building practices that, for much of the modern era, had belonged to the standard repertoire of states – both the League of Nations and the United Nations had espoused the forced relocation of populations as a viable solution to the problem of national minorities in the twentieth century. Meanwhile, at the international level, the articulation of ethnocide has offered an important critical contribution to the dismantling the universal façade of modernity and development. Although neither concept has been enshrined in positive international law, their widespread dissemination and acceptance is indicative of a profound normative shift in approaches to ethnic diversity. In this regard, the conceptual histories of ethnocide and ethnic cleansing can be contextualised as part of a broader pushback against modernist ideals of national integration and economic development, also manifest in calls for ‘multiculturalism’ (e.g. Modood 2007) and ‘alternatives to development’ (e.g. Escobar 1995).

Despite the way in which ethnocide and ethnic cleansing seem to mirror and complement one another, the two concepts are by no means symmetrical. The very different political projects in which the two concepts have been embedded testifies to this: the concept of ethnocide has been characterised by a laboured movement from the periphery to the core of the international order, whereas the concept of ethnic cleansing was conceived at the very heart of that order. Indeed, the critical difference between the two concepts comes down to their relationship to the modern international order. By undermining the universal pretences of core ideals such as modernity and development, the discourse of ethnocide represents an existential threat to the system as a whole. In contrast, the discourse of ethnic cleansing emerging from the structural contradiction between the domestic and international faces of state identity and thus remains essentially internal to the system. The conceptual histories of ethnocide and ethnic cleansing are thus attached to system-threatening and system-affirming projects respectively.³² While the critical potential of ethnocide covers the universal pretences of the modern international order as a whole, the critical potential of ethnic cleansing is limited to particular deviant states. By targeting particular localised phenomena, the discourse of ethnic cleansing turns a blind eye to the routine practices of governmentality responsible for ethnocide. This also explains why it has been much easier for the international community to incorporate into its vocabulary the critique of ethnic cleansing, which can be localised in particular states and directed at particular leaders, than the critique of ethnocide, which entails a much more fundamental challenge to the modern international order as a whole.

Conclusion

The end of the Second World War is widely seen as a watershed moment in the history of genocide, marking the downfall of scientific racism and the criminalisation of genocide in international law. At the same time, the onset of decolonisation heralded an acceleration of genocidal processes in the newly independent states (Moses 2002, 34; Levene 2005a, 164; Shaw 2013, 86–97). The purpose of this paper has been to complemented these analyses by shifting the focus away from what Benjamin Meiches (2019) calls *genocide as politics* and more towards the *politics of genocide*. By tracing how the concepts of ethnocide and ethnic cleansing have emerged from the shadow of genocide, the paper has suggested that the legal definition of genocide ultimately proved too narrow for both critics and defenders of the

³² Ayşe Zarakol (2011b) makes an analogous distinction between system-affirming and system-threatening forms of terrorism.

international order. Marginal groups critical of the international order have leveraged on the concept of ethnocide to mount a wide-ranging attack on its core principles of modernity and development, while its defenders have taken up ethnic cleansing as a means of denouncing the coercive nation-building practices of deviant states. Taken together, the historical development of these concepts points to two contrasting yet strangely complementary logics of homogenisation generated by the modern international order: an international logic of ethnocide, unfolding through the register of universality, and a domestic logic of ethnic cleansing, unfolding through the register of particularity.

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