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Andreas Wimmer. *Waves of War: Nationalism, State Formation, and Ethnic Exclusion in the Modern World.* Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics Series. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. xi + 328 pp. $99.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-107-02555-4; $34.99 (paper), ISBN 978-1-107-67324-3.

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Andreas Wimmer's *Waves of War: Nationalism, State Formation, and Ethnic Exclusion in the Modern World* is a sweeping study of the rise of the nation-state, the incidence of ethnic exclusion, and the onset and prevalence of civil and interstate wars. In it, he presents a deceptively simple tale: a state's domestic institutions (such as its internal power configuration and its source of political legitimacy) determine its type of nationalism, the level of minority discrimination, and the likelihood that it will suffer the ravages of civil and interstate war. At the same time, the rise of the nation-state is the outgrowth of modernization processes, which induced new and more direct alliances between masses and elites based on a broad social contract as state elites increasingly came to rely on the masses for taxes and military conscription.

Wimmer makes a three-fold argument about the ways in which nationalism promotes conflict. First, the exclusion of a large population from domestic "exchange networks" (whereby elites distribute resources to the masses and subordinate elites) creates the basis for intensification of grievances by the excluded minority, triggering mobilization spirals. Second, if this exclusion violates the principle of political legitimacy, which is part of the social contract of the state, then this enhances both the grievances and motivation of the excluded group to mobilize against what is perceived to be an unfavorable balance of exchange. Finally, the very act of creating a "nation-state" can itself trigger violent mobilization by the excluded groups because "revolutionary" struggles between contending actors encourage marginalized groups to enter into their own contentious struggles in order to achieve a better institutional position in the state and thereby gain control over a larger share of state resources. In sum, "political exclusion that violates established principles of legitimacy or that involves actors who seek to change these principles represents the most violence-prone contexts" (p. 16).

What is the precise connection between domestic power configurations and conflict? Building on his earlier work *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict* (2002), Wimmer posits that "to understand such conflicts and change … we need to add elements of a theory of power configurations…. I assume that political actors struggle for control over the central state as well as over its institutional shape" (p. 15). As a general rule, "the larger the population excluded from the exchange networks centered on the state and the more unfavorable the balance of exchanges with the state, for those who are integrated into these networks," the greater the chance of both civil and interstate war (p. 16). In sum, the level of national exclusion in a country is determined by the particular power configuration in a given state, which in turn determines the likelihood of violence.

Wimmer argues that the power configuration of any given state is determined by the prevailing relationship between dominant elites (DE), subordinate elites (SE), dominant masses (DM), and subordinate masses (SM). Dominant elites are, as suggested by the label, largely in control of resource distribution in that state. When dominant elites distribute state resources to the wider public (DM and SM), populism is the result. When dominant elites distribute state resources to their own ethnic base (DM), ethnic closure is the result. The most inclusionary model is when dominant elites work together with subordinate elites to provide goods to the entire population. This model, termed nation building, is what Wimmer expects is least prone to civil or interstate wars.

The argument is illustrated using a game theoretic model. The resulting hypotheses are tested using extensive analysis of the Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) dataset that includes information on the relationship between groups at the sub-state level. This allows Wimmer to treat relations between groups as the unit of analysis rather than a subset of groups themselves, allowing for

a direct test of whether relations *between* groups help determine the level, onset, and frequency of civil and interstate war involving the state in which ethnic relations are embedded.

If the given power configuration is so critical to the prevalence of conflict, one wonders what determines the particular "power configuration" in any given state? Wimmer acknowledges that this is largely an elite/institutional story, where dominant elites control the distribution of state resources to both subordinate elites and dominant and subordinate masses. The scope of dominant elites' exchange networks are to a great extent driven by the capacity and centralization of the state that lie at their fingertips, such that a weakly centralized state does not allow the extension of exchange networks far beyond dominant elites' own ethnic masses (ethnic closure). On the other end of the spectrum, a highly centralized state offers the kind of resources that dominant elites can use to integrate all major players (SE, DM, and SM) into an all-inclusive exchange network.

This is a book of great scope and ambition, which advances a powerful and parsimonious argument for a great number of significant patterns: the global rise of the nation-state (or the model thereof); long-term fluctuations in the magnitude and frequency of both civil and interstate wars, and the variable type and level of ethnic exclusion across nation-states. The scope of claims advanced and tested in the book truly sets it apart. This very scope is also, however, the book's Achilles' heel, as the author appears to be trying to shoehorn a number of disparate processes under the vague rubric of "nationalism." In this sense, "nationalism" serves as shorthand for a number of distinct causal mechanisms that have already been specified in other works, often in more satisfying ways and with greater empirical validation.

To illustrate, Wimmer critiques the vast literature on civil and interstate wars that fail to "treat nationalism as a serious candidate for explaining wars" (p. 26). He faults much of the ethnic conflict literature for offering overly materialist accounts of conflict processes, such as greed and resource wars approach, from which straw-men arguments appear to have been created for the express purpose of knocking them down (for instance, pointing out that not all countries with significant resources experience conflict, a fact readily acknowledged by the resource curse literature). Scholars who point to regime weakness or stability or rebel strength get a similar treatment. In their defense, few of these theorists would argue for a deterministic effect of their causal mechanisms, much less would they argue for a uni-causal theory of conflict; this is because land-based resources *may* make a country more prone to violence, but there are numerous mitigating factors that serve to reduce this risk. As well, there are other causal processes that might result in conflict that have little to do with a country's resource endowment. It is unclear why the author dismisses these arguments so harshly and, one feels, at times unfairly. By taking this tack, Wimmer runs a parallel risk of being perceived as one who elevates grievances as a principal cause of conflict to the exclusion of other important factors, such as elite opportunism, state capacity for repressing insurgencies, and resources for minority mobilization.

At times, indeed, it seems that Wimmer does not appreciate the importance that material incentives for rebellion play in his own account. For instance, following Stephen M. Saideman's *The Ties That Divide: Ethnic Politics, Foreign Policy, and International Conflict* (2001), Wimmer argues that kin state interventions occur when "(state) leaders care for co-nationals across the border because they have to show to their own constituencies that they are indeed concerned by the fate of the nation and that they will not tolerate that their 'brothers and sisters' across the border suffer from political discrimination" (p. 14). However, materialism is every bit as salient in this logic as nationalism or nationalist sentiment. This is because materialism (elite interests in gaining and maintaining power) works together with affective ties or nationalism (their ethnic constituencies' sentiments toward kin abroad) to produce kin state intervention in another state. Characterizing this mechanism as simply "nationalist" (particularly after having set nationalism against materialist accounts) oversimplifies a highly complicated causal mechanism that has both nationalist sentiment and interests in power and wealth-maximization at its core. A second problem with this oversimplification is that it strips out many of the conditions that account for the fluctuation of minority mobilization within a single state.

Wimmer would certainly respond that power is central to nationalism, which is why power configurations are central to his causal schema. However, *materialism* is also central to nationalism, for power is–to a great extent–the capacity to determine the distribution of material wealth, directed to oneself and one's political allies. Moreover, the theories that Wimmer criticizes for being overly materialistic are unlikely to argue that nationalist sentiment and power do *not* matter, so it is unclear why the author feels the need to overstate the differences between his own argument and that of others.

More concerning is the fact that the causal mechanisms in the book are fairly underspecified. Wimmer is aware of this, but argues that his book is not the place for careful cause-and-effect process tracing because "these micro-mechanisms have been elaborated by students of contentious politics (Tarrow and Tilly 2006), and need not be repeated here" (p. 16).[1] The book is therefore devoted to broad correlational tests of his hypotheses, both within the French and Ottoman cases and across large numbers of conflicts and state creation/consolidation. This approach is good for testing the baseline plausibility of the argument, particularly since it yields generalized predictions for nation-states around the world and across centuries. However, particularly given that the power configurational analysis is at the core of this argument (building on Wimmer's previous work), it would be nice to see more "stylized narratives" in the traditions of Robert H. Bates, as Wimmer puts it, that go beyond the presentation of proxy tests of power configurations and how these yield institutional change and conflict in the cases of France and the Ottoman state (given only in the appendices). Weaving these facts together with a causal narrative that utilizes close process tracing of events in these cases would do much to convince this reader that conflict processes and dispositions are largely a function of shifts in the level of ethnic exclusion exercised by dominant elites in any given state.

Concerning the methodology, this reader was left to wonder whether the selection criteria in the dataset may have somehow biased the results. Rather than selecting those national forms that existed at the beginning of the analysis and moving forward, which is standard practice in most survival analysis, the author selected the cases of nation-states that exist in the modern period (those existing in 2001) and coded background through time to see if and when there were conflicts (both civil and international) involving these units. But what of those nations that tried to mobilize but were eventually wiped out?- Why not select the cases for inclusion at the beginning of the period of analysis rather than the end? It would seem that this is sure to introduce significant biases in the results. Wimmer acknowledges this criticism, noting that the risk set has been determined "retrospectively," but justifies this approach by saying that the set of cases would not be substantially different had the risk set been determined prospectively (pp. 84-85). The ensuing statistical analyses provide confirmation of the authors' predictions, but since they are broadly correlational (demonstrating links between historical periods of nation building and periods of civil and interstate conflict, for example), what this analysis misses is tests of the finer causal processes that the author proposes in the first part of the book.

Overall, the book is impressive in scope, and sure to attract attention across a range of scholars who work on nationalism, ethnic conflict, civil violence, and interstate war. It is wide ranging in its argumentation and bold in its criticisms. Nonetheless, it would have been tighter had it focused on one cluster of questions, rather than attempting to explain the rise of nation-states (the national model might be a better term for this, as nation-states as political forms are very rare); the power configuration adopted by elites; and the link between institutional forms and the prevalence and timing of civil and interstate war. Still, this work is highly imaginative and offers much in the way of future research agendas for scholars of conflict. It is well worth the read.

Note

[1]. Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, *Contentious Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

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