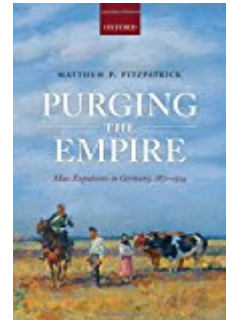


**Matthew P. Fitzpatrick.** *Purging the Empire: Mass Expulsions in Germany, 1871-1914.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. 304 pp. \$99.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-19-872578-7.



**Reviewed by** Stefan Manz

**Published on** H-Nationalism (August, 2017)

**Commissioned by** Cristian Cercel (Ruhr University Bochum)

Matthew P. Fitzpatrick has an eye for original themes and their potential to develop strong arguments. In his first book, *Liberal Imperialism in Germany: Expansionism and Nationalism, 1848-1884* (2008), he showed that liberal engagement with the colonialist project after 1884 was not an aberration but had strong roots in the decades since 1848. German liberals were firmly intertwined with precolonial endeavors, helping to prepare the ground for the establishment of formal colonies after 1884. The strength of his first book consists in identifying disparate voices and ideological undercurrents leading to political decision making. This is also a strength of his latest book on mass expulsions in the German Empire, 1871-1914. It constitutes the first comprehensive study of this topic, bringing together case histories in which the *Reich* and its states expelled political, religious, and ethnic “outsider” groups. Those groups were conceived as a danger to the homogeneity of the newly founded national body politic. The theoretical conclusions are significant and far reaching. On the basis of extensive prima-

ry sources covering legal, political, and press texts, Fitzpatrick poses central questions about the nature of the *Kaiserreich*: To what extent was it a polity governed by laws (*Rechtsstaat*)? What was the nature of—at times centrifugal—dynamics between centralist autocracy on the one hand, and the forces of territorial, political, and civil interests on the other hand? Fitzpatrick does not provide simple answers. He dissects each case study in its own right, identifying different choruses of legal and politico-constitutional voices that are best subsumed under a Foucauldian model of polymorphous power sources. On the surface, it is tempting to see repressive measures such as mass expulsions as the outgrowth of a centralized *Obrigkeitsstaat* (authoritarian state). Fitzpatrick contradicts convincingly. For him, they “demonstrate the extent to which [imperial Germany] was a *Rechtsstaat* characterized by multiple, constitutionally delineated sites of sovereign power which were subject to intense and often effective forms of political scrutiny and civic pres-

sure that were by no means politically monodirectional” (p. 261).

The first part of the book, “Democratic Expulsions,” deals with three case histories. The first one was a road not taken. Following the example of other European powers, the idea of penal colonies for troublesome citizens encountered both strong support and fierce opposition but failed to get party-political support in the Reichstag. Then follows an analysis of the Jesuit expulsion of 1872. In the context of the *Kulturkampf*, Jesuit houses were banned, and 634 Jesuits had to leave the *Reich*. This case provided a blueprint for the Socialist Laws of 1878, which, inter alia, introduced restrictions on movement. A total of 797 German socialists were banned from specifically sensitive regions, and some of them decided to emigrate. Foreign socialists were expelled. Laws affecting Jesuits and socialists were implemented by parliamentary representatives within their constitutional limits. These responded to popular demands by interest groups who perceived those with unorthodox political and religious views as a threat to national cohesion. The principles of the *Rechtsstaat* were in place.

Part 2, “State-Based Expulsions,” brings another power player into the Foucauldian mix, namely, the constituent territorial states of the *Reich*. Prussia was concerned about the German character of its eastern borderlands and, in 1885-86, expelled a staggering thirty-two thousand Poles holding Russian or Habsburg nationality. This is the largest group discussed in the book. Notwithstanding the human costs, this expulsion was entirely within the legal framework as it was directed against non-citizens. Among those Polish-speaking non-citizens were ten thousand Jews. Fitzpatrick shows that although anti-Semitism was ripe in the *Reich*, it was not the prime motivation behind expulsion in the East. Fear of Polonization was a more powerful factor than anti-Semitism. In the northern borderlands, over one thousand Danes who had not taken out Prussian

citizenship after the German-Danish War in 1864 were another target. Their expulsion was “a clear case of the use of sovereign state power to radically transform the political and demographic dynamics of a national frontier” (p. 151). The policy did not originate in Berlin but was instigated by local pressure groups and authorities, questioning conceptions of Prussian centralism. “Gypsies” experienced much hostility in the press and from conservative pressure groups, but those holding German citizenship were protected by their legal status. Non-citizen Gypsies, in contrast, were expelled.

Part 3, “Extra-Constitutional Expulsions,” deals with Alsace-Lorraine and German Southwest Africa. The former was annexed in 1870-71 and had an anomalous constitutional status as *Reichsland*. It was held by all the other states in common under the custodianship of the kaiser. Inhabitants were technically citizens of the *Reich*, not of a state. This created an exceptional space but not, as Fitzpatrick shows, a lawless one. The kaiser and his administrators were closely watched. The *Reich* governors, Chlodwig zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst and then Edwin von Mantuffel, were responsive to local conditions and resisted demands from Berlin and pressure groups for extensive expulsion. In the end, this only affected around one thousand French speakers. German Southwest Africa constituted another anomaly. The colonies were external to the constitutional *Rechtsstaat* and stood under the prerogative of the kaiser. Yet, although the expulsion of the Herero and Witbooi populations amounted to genocide, even here a combination of protests by civil society actors (especially missions) and bespoke laws reigned in and regulated this imperial satellite.

The book’s practical conclusions are equally important as its theoretical ones. None of the instances of expulsion actually solved the problems they were supposed to address. They “failed spectacularly in their professed aims of settling the

empire's various 'national' questions, consolidating power in contested borderlands, making nomadic 'Gypsies' live sedentary lifestyles, securing the colonial periphery of the empire, and politically nobling Catholicism and socialism" (p. 258). The policy of expulsion was an inappropriate means of addressing the social, political, and economic rifts that were opening up in the *Kaiserreich*. The ramifications of Fitzpatrick's exemplary study go far beyond the history of the *Kaiserreich*. They will be highly relevant for scholars working in a range of academic areas, including migration studies, political discourse analysis, legal and constitutional studies, and colonial studies.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at <https://networks.h-net.org/h-nationalism>

**Citation:** Stefan Manz. Review of Fitzpatrick, Matthew P. *Purging the Empire: Mass Expulsions in Germany, 1871-1914*. H-Nationalism, H-Net Reviews. August, 2017.

**URL:** <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=48305>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License.