**Conclusion: From the Micro to the Macro**

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“Big structures, large processes, huge comparisons”--- This is the title of a 1984 book by the historical sociologist Charles Tilly that also describes one strand at the center of modern social science as it existed in the postwar years. This tradition also characterized the work of the founders of my own field within political science, comparative politics. The central aim of this research tradition is to explain macro differences in the organization of modern and modernizing societies. *National* patterns of political outcomes were usually the topic of interest, including but not limited to big structures and huge processes like state building, violent social revolutions, democratization, economic development, and the emergence of national political party systems.

In this tradition, “big” outcomes were usually also thought to have “big” causes. This macroscopic inclination sought to discern the structural and institutional drivers of different features of modernity. Different rates and patterns of economic development and breakthrough were thought to have been prompted, for example, by the national timing of industrialization (Gerschenkron, 1962). The structure of party systems was rooted in underlying patterns of national societal cleavages (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967). And, paths of democratization were shaped by nationally distinctive historical patterns of revolution and economic change (Moore, 1966).

Inspired by this founding generation of scholars, an enduring mode of research has now gone on to analyze an even broader set of topics: why welfare states look different among rich democracies (Esping-Anderson, 1990); the sources of different national varieties of capitalism (Hall and Soskice, 2001; Iversen and Soskice, 2018); different national responses to epidemics (Lieberman, 2009); and the robustness of authoritarianism (Slater, 2015; Levitsky and Way, 2015).

Building on the achievements of this research tradition, recent years have been marked, however, by a move in the social sciences away from the “big, large, and huge” to the “small, targeted, and focused.” We might dub this as shift in the field from “macro” to “micro” comparison. The impetus for this move is theoretical, empirical, *and* methodological. Theoretically, scholars have increasingly argued, the study of the macro may miss what really matters. Scholars argue macro national outcomes need to be disaggregated into their subnational components because sometimes national units of analysis may conceal important subnational sources of variation. To students of authoritarianism, for example, subnational authoritarian enclaves can persist in what appear to be otherwise democratic national political systems (Gibson, 2013; Mickey, 2015). Subnational patterns of industrial organization may matter more than national patterns (Herrigel, 1998). Local patterns of social ties can give rise to varying patterns of governance capacity that more directly affect the every-day lives of citizens (Tsai, 2007). Scholars of violence have moved to the local, pointing to the pitfalls of relying on maco-level indicators that “may aggregate local cleavages in misleading ways” (Kalyvas 2006, 370). And most recently, even our current populist moment in the West has been understood through this lens: the political resentments that have generated a decade of right-wing populist backlash are most usefully understood in their specific, often rural, geographical milieus (Rodden, 2018; Cramer, 2016). Substantive outcomes exist at the local level that fly “beneath the radar” of the standard intellectual equipment offered by Tilly’s “huge comparisons.”

There are also empirical and methodological reasons for the “micro” turn in the social sciences. The confluence of the “Big Data” revolution and increased emphasis on more rigorous standards of causal inference in the social science have led scholars to seek out treasure troves of disaggregated data with which they can zoom in from the macroscopic to the microscopic in order to analyze how individuals and groups behave. Whether one is analyzing determinants of politicians’ behavior in parliaments, combatants in civil wars, or economic entrepreneurs in informal black markets, the disaggregation of “big” processes into “small” ones creates more observations and allows for a more systematic probing of hypotheses with fine-grained data. The result has been a transformation in the practice of social science itself. In fact, a stark generational gap now exists between older scholars who continue to admire the sweeping narratives offered in “big books” and younger scholars who strive above all to craft short, but data-intensive articles that meet demanding standards of causal inference in social science journals

**The Study of the Holocaust**

The study of the Holocaust, though often isolated from the broader trends of contemporary social science (See Kopstein et al., this volume) has in fact paralleled these broader trends. Early work, as the editors make clear in their introduction, asked big questions such as: was the Holocaust a logical outgrowth of modernity, or fundamentally opposed to it? And, as historians, rather than social scientists, took on the challenge of explaining the Holocaust, an early framing of the study of the Holocaust took hold. It was presumed to be a single event that flowed from Germany’s Final solution designed at the Wannsee Conference in Berlin in January 1942 and implemented by the center over the course of the Second World War.

Recently, historians have pushed back against this narrative with more fine-grained attention to local and decentered unfolding of events (Gross, 2001; Bartov 2018) With this volume, Kopstein et al. provide a forum to allow social scientists to join the conversation. This happens at moment when not only historians but also social scientists have now moved to the micro. At the core of this intellectual convergence is the proposition that the Holocaust is not simply to be thought of as a single “case” or singular event” that occurred between 1933 and 1945 directed by the hierarchical German Nazi war-machine. Instead, King (this volume) and the other authors suggest the Holocaust should be conceived of as a process of1) *disparate events*—mass killings, pogroms, forced migration, resistance, and survival; in which 2) *multiple types of actors*—perpetrators, victims, and bystanders—participated; all in 3) *multiple locations*—far from Berlin, and outside of German-directed concentration camps, and instead spread across the diverse landscape of both urban and rural communities in central and eastern Europe.

Disaggregating and decentering the analysis in this way generates a powerful close-up view that understands the Holocaust in its local contexts. Consider Daniel Solomon’s (this volume) analysis of the pogrom violence of November 1938’s *Kristallnacht*, which systematically analyzes a dataset of 1,000 synagogues across Germany to try discern which were attacked and which were not. He concludes that it is where attacks were most likely and most severe in cities where the Jewish population was largest and where the Communist Party was strongest, suggesting, in Solomon’s view, the symbolic motivations of the attacks—perhaps prompted by an effort to assault Jews where they were most prominent and where the political opponents of pogroms were most electorally successful. In short, characteristics of local milieu and social ties explains the unfolding assault.

Similarly, in his study of three cities in eastern Europe (Minsk, Cracow, and Bialystok), Evgeny Finkel finds substantial cross-city variation in how the Jewish community responded to ghettoization and the Nazi occupations. Whether Jews resisted or adopted other strategies (evasion, coped, or cooperated) vis-à-vis Nazi rule hinged, according to Finkel on the history of Jewish relations with state authorities and local communities in the pre World War II regimes. Where a history of social integration with non-Jewish neighbors and authorities was present (Minsk and Cracow, each respectively previously under Soviet or Austrio-Hungarian rule), Jews often “evaded” persecution by assimilating, hiding, or adopting a “fake” identity outside Ghetto walls. By contrast, in contexts where the pre-World War II authorities had discouraged or the communities resisted integration (e.g. Bialystok) as happened under pre-Soviet Russian rule and interwar Polish rule, evasion was simply not an option, Jews were more likely to “stay put” or resist. Pre-existing structures of authority and social relations shaped how ordinary Jews survived.

When we turn our attention away from the victims to the perpetrators, we see similar patterns of local variation in the borderlands of occupied Poland and western Ukraine in Kopstein’s analysis of the pogroms of the Summer of 1941. Here, rather than local ties mattering, it was the structure of political competition. In these nascent democracies of the interwar years, religious and ethnic cleavages played out in electoral politics in a way that quickly degenerated into more virulent forms of ethnic competition. Converging with Solomon’s findings on Kristallnacht, it is where Jewish populations were larger and more mobilized that pogroms were more intense. Kopstein’s work, (summarized more thoroughly in Kopstein and Wittenberg 2018), also is suggestive of dynamics in other times and places. Local and communal patterns of political competition tilt some societies more towards ethnically-motivated political violence than others.

And, finally, even more general cultural tendencies of anti-Semitism—as reflected in children’s stories-- are locally rooted, as Robert Braun’s analysis (this volume) make clear. Based on a new analysis of an old survey conducted in the early 1930s of 50,356 local experts from 19,828 locales on the prevalence of Jewish “bogeyman” stories in local folklore traditions, Braun makes clear that among other factors, it is in Germany’s borderlands—regions proximate to territory lost to the post-Versailles redrawing of German boundaries—that these stories had greater circulation. Not only overt violence, even deeper-seated cultural patterns reflected local regional experiences in the leadup to the Holocaust.

**From Disaggregation to Re-Contextualization**

All of the contributions in this volume pursue a similar tack: disaggregation and decentering. Shifting attention away from the “commanding heights “of the Nazi state in Berlin, we uncover the local determinants of violence in Lithuania (Mishkin), Jewish responses to the Typhoid epidemic in the Warsaw Ghetto (Stone and Lehnstaedt), survival strategies in the Netherlands (Tammes and Simpkin), the relationship of the Catholic hierarchy and the Vichy regime in France (Luft), the gender make-up of victims transported by train to concentration camps (Welch), and what survivors’ testimonies can teach us about the resistance to the Holocaust (Einwohner). We also learn about the politics of memory and remembrance outside of Germany (see Charnysh, this volume; Gitelman, this volume; and Subotic, this volume).

Disaggregation and decentering gives us a vivid picture “on the ground” of the multiple processes and actors that shaped the inner-workings of the rupture of the Holocaust in twentieth century Europe as well as its global aftermath. We learn what happens when societies fall into the chasm of the Holocaust where rule of law is perverted and small-scale coordination is necessary for human survival. Further, by often operating with systematic data, we can see that these inner-workings can be analyzed by applying and testing theory drawn from other contexts—e.g. theories of “racial threat” (Kopstein, this volume) and “symbolic violence” (Solomon, this volume).

But understanding the local, proximate determinants inside the Holocaust do not immediately help us answer a broader question: why was it exactly that *this* particular region of Europe experienced the murderous wave of the Holocaust in *this* particular period? After all, that these regions of Europe, long under Imperial rule and prone to ethnic rivalries, would suddenly become the sites of massive human destruction *when* they did is in some respects surprising: by the 1930s, decades of economic progress and the recent democratization of political systems ought to have been liberating, if we are to believe much of the received wisdom of social science (Sen, 1999).

To answer a question like this requires, however, as some of the accounts in this volume suggest, that we step back from the micro back to the macro. Relinking the decentered processes within the Holocaust ---discovered by projects like the present volume--to the common antecedent external conditions that activated them nearly simultaneously across Europe is critical issue for the social scientific study of the Holocaust. In other words, the turn to the micro has to be supplemented by a focus on the macro.

**Antecedent Conditions of Human Destructiveness**

What triggered the processes identified in this book? One common view answers that democracy’s belated arrival in Central Europe is directly connected to the wave of human destruction that followed in its wake. The sociologist Michael Mann has argued that democracy has a “dark side”--a proclivity for ethnic violence (Mann, 2005). On this view, democratization destabilizes power relations, unleashes power struggles, and by prioritizing majority rule can, at least in the short-term, run amok by allowing the majority to tyrannize the minority. Other scholars of contemporary democratization, writing in the wake of the breakup of Yugoslavia and ethnic conflict of the 1990s (Snyder, 2000), have also argued that new democracies with weak institutions are prone to violence as traditional elites encourage ethnic and nationalist violence to maintain power. Political competition amidst intense ethnic cleavages can be dangerous. In Kopstein’s account (this volume), fiercely contested elections in a new democracy coincided with later pogroms in eastern Poland, and in Solomon’s data (this volume), more Communist Party electoral success in Weimar Germany triggered intense synagogue attacks across Germany in 1938.

But solely focusing on the *internal* or domestic antecedent conditions of violence is to presume democracies develop in relatively closed “natural systems” (Bendix, 1967). At the edges of all of the accounts in this volume, is another approach: *external* constraints and foreign models triggered the decentered wave of 1940s human destruction across Europe. Note, for example, that it is with the arrival of German troops in the Summer of 1941 in Lithuania that subaltern paramilitaries engaged in massacres (Mishkin, this volume). Or as Kopstein (this volume) lays out, it was the presence of German army units, police battalions, and mobile killing units in western Ukraine in the Summer of 1941 that prompted the wave of what Kopstein calls “pogrom rituals” following a common “German script.” But a more subtle use of power was undoubtedly at work: much of the violence was not done directly with German hands nor was the physical presence of Germans in a municipality a predictor of anti Jewish pogroms (Kopstein, this volume). Moreover, as Charnysh, Gitelman, and Subotic note in their contributions to this volume, external constraints and models structured not only the Holocaust but also shaped local responses and attempts at *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* outside of Germany after the fact. Thus, we need an approach that allows for more nuanced understanding of the interactions of external and internal drivers of political violence and its aftermath

Recent political science scholarship on the external drivers of regime change provide one possible approach. Seva Gunitsky’s important book *Aftershocks: Great Powers and Domestic Reforms in the Twentieth Century* (2017) has made clear that external drivers of domestic regime change occur not only through direct foreign intervention by hegemonic powers but through two more subtle pathways: inducements and emulation. Gunitsky notes that democratic breakthroughs and breakdowns tend to cluster in time. This fact reflects not internal drivers of regime change but major shifts in the balance of power in international systems. When new rising powers that are governed by democratic institutions (e.g. United States after 1945 and after 1989) emerge at the apex of the international system, waves of democracy follow. When new hegemons with nondemocratic institutions (e.g. Germany in the midst of the Great Depression) “shock” the international system, then waves of democratic backsliding and breakdown occur. Whether a new hegemon is democratic or not, the historical record of the twentieth century shows that new hegemonic powers take advantage of openings in the international system to impose their own regime type on smaller powers (Gunitsky, 2017, p. 15). Yet, great powers’ capacity to reshape the world in their image is only partly due to their overt coercive capacity to create replica regimes.

More significant, Gunitsky finds, with echoes in Germany’s relations with eastern Europe is first of all, the power of inducements. A rising power can enlarge its networks of trade and patronage, shifting preferences of coalitions and domestic actors. In post 1933 Germany, Nazi leadership regarded trade policy with central and eastern Europe through this mercantilist lens: the open plains of central Europe were a source of agricultural goods and raw materials for Germany’s military build-up. In exchange, these regions would receive credits to buy German industrial goods, creating a German sphere of influence running eastwards to the Soviet Union (Kopstein, 2021; Hirschman, 1945).

A second, equally powerful mechanism is the force of emulation. After Nazi Germany’s apparent success in breaking through the Great Depression of the early 1930s, the British Home Secretary wrote in 1938, “If the Danubian States begin now to put on the Nazi garb, it will be because imitation is the sincerest form of flattery and because they want to ingratiate themselves in time with their future master” (quoted in Gunitsky, 2017, p. 23). Institutional emulation occurs when smaller states voluntarily imitate what they regard as “pioneer” and high prestige states. The sudden rise of a new hegemon—if even a regional hegemon—prompts emulation by reducing uncertainty about the relative success of different models, and so can be driven by both material and ideological motivations. In eastern and central Europe, traditional Conservatives like Miklós Horthy nurtured rocky governing coalitions with national radicals in the mid 1930s, that passed “Jewish laws” (in 1936 in Poland; 1938 in Romania and Hungary). Though motivated by anti-Semitism, the ambivalence of Hungary’s older political classes was apparent. The Romanian Premier Armand Calenescu felt he had to explain that his government’s new anti-Jewish law had been passed “*pour calmer l’opinion publique,*” Polish legislators remarkably described their bill “as an act of necessary cruelty” that they hoped would be carried out without too much “brutality” (Janos, 2000, p. 193).

But these bills set dangerous precedents, and with the rise of Hitler and the growing shadow of Germany’s ambitions in the east, beginning in 1939 local fascists were empowered to enthusiastically implement their own agendas with encouragement of German military forces. The model and encouragement of a high-status power like Nazi Germany was at the very least a “permissive cause,” opening the door for the whole destruction of Europe’s Jews over the next six years.

**When Democracy Dies in a (Global) Hegemon**

The Holocaust was not the outgrowth of democratization gone wrong. It was the opposite. It was made possible only when democracy *died---* along with its attendant guarantees, including the rule of law and the civil liberty protections of citizenship. But most importantly, it was when democracy died in 1930s Germany, a (regional) hegemon, that reverberations were felt across Europe and the world. New patterns of inducement and emulation were unleashed. Fascism diffused. And so did the Holocaust.

There is a lesson for our own era. Too often we think of the contemporary challenges to democracy as driven strictly by internal problems. If polarization, demographic challenges, and economic inequality are present, a democracy is a risk; if we are lucky enough to live in a country where such challenges are successfully managed, democracy is thought to be safe. But we must remember to avoid the myth of the closed natural system. If democracy dies in a global hegemon like the United States, the reverberations would be massive. Not only would America’s model of democracy be tarnished. But, also the lessons of 1930s Europe suggest it would become a source of emulation for would-be autocrats and demagogues around the world.

In many ways, we have already begun to see the warning signs. At times, it feels that in the post-2016 world, as American democracy has decayed, we have begun to witness the resurrection of a fascist international in established democracies. The rise of radical right populism in a hegemonic power inspires imitators using similar rhetoric, similar tactics, and a similar assault on the basic norms of democracy. We have never witnessed democracy die in a global hegemon in the modern era. For this reason, the Holocaust offers an important warning: local processes of political violence, opportunism, and demagoguery that shaped the every-day experiences of the Holocaust were triggered when democracy died in a powerful nation. With this insight in hand, as resilient as some democracies may appear, we must remember all our political systems remain vulnerable.

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