BOOK SYMPOSIUM


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In The Politics of Nation-Building, Harris Mylonas explores the various policies that the emerging states in the Balkans used to manage diversity and attain order. To be sure, establishing boundaries for legitimate membership in the state – and, by the same token, defining enemies and minorities – was one of the most pressing issues for state elites during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These new states typically included substantial minority enclaves and had large swaths of territory with ethnically, linguistically, and religiously mixed populations. What is more, ethnic, linguistic, and religious cleavages were often crosscutting as opposed to reinforcing, and boundaries were still in flux. Although Balkan states shared centuries of Ottoman rule and had similar modernization trajectories, state policies toward non-core groups ranged from ethnic cleansing to formal accommodation. Nation-building policies also varied cross nationally and over time. The Politics of Nation-Building engages these interlocking historical puzzles with an impressive combination of theoretical rigor and descriptive richness.

Rather than focusing myopically on only the relationship between host-states and non-core groups, Mylonas reorients our attention to the complex regional and international context in which state consolidation takes place. He argues that nation-building policies are largely determined by two factors: (1) patterns of strategic interaction between the host-state and (often meddlesome) external powers and (2) the wider international ambitions of a given host-state. Even while zooming-out to capture the dynamics of the larger international arena, the book’s argumentation remains elegant and parsimonious, laying out a crisp set of theoretical predictions. States will typically accommodate non-core groups that are supported by allied powers. When non-core groups are supported by an enemy power, however, state policies take a different form, which in turn depends on whether the host-state has status quo or revisionist political aims. Overt or covert support for a non-core group by an enemy power produces assimilationist policies toward that group in status quo states and exclusionary policies toward that group in revisionist states.

Although Mylonas is not the first to explore how international factors shape minority policies, his approach is unique in that it does not rely ex ante on the idea of territory ethnic kinship and/or the existence of politically salient differences between groups. Rather than assuming that certain differences matter, one of the most sizable contributions of The Politics of Nation-Building is the way in which the book links the macro-level international environment to other micro-level processes that then drive the mobilization and politicization of some group identities and the fusing and merging of others. Toward this
end, one of the book’s central claims is that the inclusion versus exclusion dichotomy typically used to describe a state’s relationship with non-core groups tends to obscure more than it illuminates. Mylonas’ archival research vividly demonstrates that state policy rarely comes in a binary, either/or form. States often pursue mixed policies that blend inclusionary and exclusionary elements toward non-core groups as they seek to establish order. What is more, the inclusion versus exclusion binary suggests a sense of permanence to state policy that is rarely born out in reality. States can and do shift their approach to non-core groups over time, moving between inclusionary and exclusionary objectives as circumstances change.

For all of these reasons, Mylonas’ conceptual move to assess nation-building policies in terms of a three-part categorical variable – assimilation, accommodation, and exclusion – is a welcome addition that indeed better captures the range of observed variation in state policy. This framework also enables Mylonas to sidestep some obviously misleading normative connotations (inclusion = good, exclusion = bad). As the book’s empirical chapters make clear, policies of assimilation and accommodation were rarely born out of a warm and fuzzy concern for tolerance and/or a genuine respect for multi-culturalism as the term “inclusion” might somehow suggest. The motivation to adopt policies of assimilation and accommodation was also firmly rooted in structural conditions of fierce international competition for territory, influence, and resources. State elites did not hesitate to pursue the assimilation and accommodation of non-core groups via tactics that were coercive and/or discriminatory if security and geostrategic concerns so demanded.

This question of tactics and means is an interesting one, and it cannot be entirely resolved through The Politics of Nation-Building’s theoretical architecture as I understood it. Although Mylonas’ argument about external involvement can predict which policy goal – assimilation, accommodation, or exclusion – a state will aspire to with an impressive degree of accuracy, crucial questions remain when we begin to examine the actual means that policy-makers use to achieve their preferred end. Assimilationist policies can take violent and nonviolent forms; and even within the realm of blatantly coercive, exclusionary policies the various means used to achieve this outcome/goal (segregation, deportation and forced migration, mass killing) leave a number of theoretical and normative questions hanging in the balance. Forced migration and ethnic cleansing are both exclusionary, but are they analytically (and morally) equivalent? Furthermore, some tactics are common across nation-building policies and this can be confusing. For example, internal displacement is used as means for achieving both assimilation and exclusion in the book’s framework. How is it that the same tactic can be central to such divergent policy aims?

To Mylonas’ credit, given the complexity and scope of the cases studied in the book, such ambiguities are perhaps inevitable and attest to the fact that The Politics of Nation-Building is as much a work of history as it is political science. The balance between theory, on the one hand, and attention to historical detail and contingency, on the other, is superb. Not once did I get the sense that the book was obscuring crucial historical facts for the sake of theoretical “fit.” The empirical chapters, rooted in thick descriptive accounts that are derived from an impressive array of sources, also provide a great deal of insight as to where future research should shine a light in order to better understand the exact form that nation-building policies take. Still, I sometimes found myself wanting to see a more in-depth discussion of what shifts in nation-building policy meant in practice. For example, one such instance occurred in my reading of the book’s fascinating discussion of the case of the Muslim Valaades and Koniareoi populations in Western Macedonia (Chapter Six). Although I was convinced (and also surprised) by the shifts in nation-
building goals toward these groups that Mylonas is able to trace through his excellent analysis of General Governor Ioannis Eliakis’ reports, I had a difficult time visualizing what a very short-stint of assimilationist policy would actually look like on the ground. Although it is admittedly beyond the scope of the chapter’s timeframe, I was also hoping for more on how the Greek–Turkish war of 1919–1922 shifted attitudes towards these Muslim non-core groups and potentially rendered the issue of religion more salient. Put simply, the condensed timeframe of this chapter makes sense from the vantage point of micro-level theory testing, but I wondered if religious differences would still be seen as less significant than security/geostrategic factors if the time period of the analysis was extended by even just a few years.

Mylonas is well aware of the fact that the coding timespan of a study can affect its conclusions. In fact, one of the most interesting aspects of the book is the way in which such potential “problems” are used to generate an insightful and transparent discussion about research methodology. Chapter Four is exemplary in this respect, with its treatment of how to conceptualize the difference between transitional versus terminal nation-building strategies as well as cases where policy change is driven by a learning mechanism. This chapter, together with the section on “Methodological Contributions” in the Conclusion, should be required reading for those engaged in research on nation-building or on any other political phenomenon where intentions, policies, implementation, and outcomes risk being conflated.

To conclude, I would like to suggest that The Politics of Nation-Building is much more than just a book about state policies. Embedded in the two most detailed empirical chapters – Chapter Six on Greek Nation-Building in Western Macedonia and Chapter Seven on Serbian Nation-Building toward Albanians – is also a novel and illuminating argument about the popular origins of nationalism. Through its focus on the international context of nation-building and the dynamics of external agitation and support for non-core groups, this book is also sure to inspire and inform future research on why some groups turned into awakened nations while others did not.

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In the age of nationalism, many states have attempted to shape the identities of their subjects to create or enhance their loyalty to a particular nation-state project. The policies states adopt to accomplish this goal have often been referred to as forms of “nation-building.” In his 2012 book The Politics of Nation-Building (Cambridge), Harris Mylonas develops and tests a general theory of nation-building. Specifically, he tries to account for variation in state policies, which he groups into three general types: exclusion, assimilation, or accommodation. State elites representing the nation-state’s “core group” direct these policies toward what Mylonas calls “non-core groups” in order to produce a loyal population. Policies of exclusion—which include mandatory population exchanges, ethnic cleansing, and genocide—attempt to remove non-core groups whose presence is deemed, for whatever reason, inconsistent with the goals of state elites. Assimilation policies aim to induce or
compel non-core groups to adopt the identity profile of the core group. Compulsory education and universal military service are types of assimilation policies. Both exclusion and assimilation aim to erase difference. Accommodation polices preserve, and sometimes even defend or promote, difference by officially protecting non-core groups as such. Accommodation produces “national minorities,” while exclusion creates “refugees” (or corpses) and assimilation makes “co-nationals.”

It is often the case with very important works of scholarship that their biggest advance over prior work is in the way they pose a question, rather than in their answer to it. I believe this is the case with Mylonas’s book. We have enormous literature on all three of the policy types he deals with, but we have very little that treats the three under a common theoretical umbrella, as policy substitutes. Mylonas does this in an exceptionally transparent way, with a minimum of jargon, all of which is defined and explained clearly and compactly. It seems to me not only clever, but also the right approach, even if not all the details can be successfully defended. Future scholarship on nation-building will have to address Mylonas’s framework, either by using it or by explaining how to supersede it.

How does Mylonas use it? He proposes a theory in which nation-building policy choice is mainly a function of geopolitics. States (“external powers”) cultivate non-core groups on the territory of other states (“host states”), providing money, diplomatic support, arms, etc., to non-core group organizations. Host states fear this activity as a potential source of secessionist movements or fifth columns, especially when it is carried out by enemies (rather than allies). In general, Mylonas assumes that all states prefer a policy of assimilation; when they are unconstrained – when a non-core group has no external power supporting them – they assimilate. They deviate from their most preferred policy under two sets of circumstances. First, non-core groups mobilized by external powers that are allied to the host state are accommodated. Second, when an external power supports a non-core group on the territory of an enemy host state, and that host state has “revisionist” goals, the host state will exclude the non-core group.

Mylonas tests this theory against quantitative and qualitative data from the early twentieth century Balkans. The Balkan Wars and World War I led to big shifts of territorial control. The states of the region, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Albania, and Yugoslavia, all contained heterogeneous populations and faced choices about how to build cohesive national communities. Mylonas uses a purpose-built group-level, cross-sectional quantitative dataset to assess how often Balkan states in this period adopted the policies his theory predicts toward non-core groups. The fit is pretty good. More importantly, Mylonas’s theory outperforms its competitors. Crucially, by coding down to the group level, he shows that states have pursued different nation-building policies toward different non-core groups at the same time. In addition, Mylonas has an excellent chapter in which he carefully assesses his theory’s mis-predictions. He convincingly shows that many of them stem from the necessary rigidities implied by imposing sharp thresholds on the data. When those thresholds are relaxed slightly, the theory’s fit to the data is even better. Another empirical chapter provides a close-up of the decision-making process of state elites through the extraordinary correspondence of Ioannis Eliakis, the Greek governor who was charged with managing the heterogeneous population of Western Macedonia from 1916 to 1920. A fourth empirical chapter examines how Yugoslav policy toward Kosovar Albanians varied over time in response to changes in the local pattern of alliances. The evidence is imperfect, but I came away convinced that Mylonas has captured one of the key dimensions of variation in nation-building policies, at least within the somewhat narrow parameter conditions he imposes.
There are some problems. Given my expertise, I focus on issues of conceptualization and theory. To begin with, I wonder if the triple-typology of nation-building policies is exhaustive. For all three types of policies Mylonas examines, states act and groups are affected. However, we know that nation-states’ conceptions of what constitutes their core groups can and do change over time. Mylonas acknowledges that the content and boundary conditions of core groups are not fixed, but if this is true then forging co-nationhood could, in principle, involve changes to the non-core group’s identity or changes to the core group’s identity, or both.

Mylonas’s discussion of post-war Greek policy toward Muslims in Western Macedonia provides an excellent example (122–129). Although Mylonas describes the “national type” of the core group, Greeks, as including “Orthodox Christian” among its elements, Eliakis enthusiastically courted Muslim peasants in Western Macedonia as potential co-nationals. Mylonas tells us that Eliakis shared with then Prime Minister Venizelos an inclusive vision of Hellenism, reminiscent of Renan, in which “national consciousness,” or the will to be a member of the nation, was the primary criterion. If the core group was, in part, defined by Orthodox Christianity, then Venizelos and Eliakis were advancing an expanded conception of the nation that could assimilate Muslims not by inducing Muslims to change their religion, but rather by trying to shift the criteria for inclusion in the core group. Explicitly theorizing the political tradeoffs involved in defining the boundary criteria of the core group introduces additional complications involving domestic politics that Mylonas’s may have been right to avoid in the interests of a streamlined theory. Future work in this vein might productively open up some of these questions.

In addition to issues of exhaustiveness, Mylonas’s policy types may be somewhat leaky as well, in the sense that it can be difficult to sort cases cleanly among the types. Consider, for instance, apartheid as a nation-building policy. It was intended to preserve racial and cultural differences between black Africans and the descendants of white settlers, and it did not physically remove blacks from South African territory. Thus, one could reasonably argue that apartheid was neither a form of exclusion, nor a form of assimilation; it created neither refugees nor co-nationals. Yet, of course, it was premised not on “respect” for cultural difference, as Mylonas says accommodation policies are, but rather on racial hierarchy and economic exploitation. Mylonas codes apartheid as a form of exclusion, but this seems to me to be inconsistent with his own conceptualization and likely to be driven more by a normative preference for modern multiculturalism. It makes much more sense to concede that state policies premised on the preservation of difference can encode profound and lasting forms of injustice and inequality and perhaps choose a term different than “accommodation,” with its benign overtones. After all, the classic form of accommodation practiced in the region Mylonas studies, the Ottoman millet system, was explicitly hierarchical and unequal, though far less brutal and exploitative than apartheid. In general, it would be better to avoid collapsing normative considerations into the definition of positive concepts, as I suspect was the case here.

Finally, I have a concern about the logic of Mylonas’s theory. When a non-core group is supported by an ally of the host state, the core group deviates from its most preferred policy, assimilation, and accommodates the non-core group. Why? Mylonas explains that assimilation or exclusion policies might jeopardize the alliance, which is valuable to the core group (40). This raises two linked questions. First, why would the allied external power object to mistreatment of the non-core group by the host state, especially if this mistreatment is fairly mild, as we might expect from an assimilation policy? Mylonas leans toward a realist account of alliance behavior in which expressions of communal affinity by an external power toward a non-core group on the territory of another state are merely
window-dressing for geopolitical interests (32-33). By Mylonas’s logic, we should expect external powers to prioritize their geopolitical interests over any genuine commitment to the interests of non-core groups in other states (See also 46–47, where Mylonas emphasizes that alliances are unlikely to be endogenous to nation-building policies). Second, if this is true, then why should we expect a host state to deviate from its most preferred policy of assimilation? Threats by an external power to switch alliances or wage war on behalf of a non-core group it supports in the host state should not be regarded as credible when the external power has good geopolitical reasons to maintain the alliance. By the same token, a policy of accommodation risks leaving unassimilated non-core groups that could act as fifth columns later, when the alliance structure shifts and the present ally becomes a rival. Indeed, Mylonas suggests that a policy of accommodation makes such a future scenario more likely due to the legal-institutional status of the “minority group” that it creates (40–41).

In short, the theoretical rationale for a policy of accommodation does not fully add up. If we follow the logic of Mylonas’s argument, we should expect rational host states to adopt policies of assimilation with respect to non-core groups that are supported by the host states’ allies. The external power might not like this policy, but they should be constrained by their own geopolitical interests from interfering with it. While I believe this is a genuine flaw in the logic of the argument, it does not seem to me to be fatal to Mylonas’s approach to the problem. The line between policies of assimilation and accommodation is not always easy to draw, especially given the disordered conditions of the post-World War I Balkans. Mylonas himself points to mixed types (“assimilation through accommodation,” [37] for instance), which suggests that a somewhat more nuanced theory might help us to better understand the conditions under which states opt for policies of accommodation.

I conclude by reiterating that Mylonas’s book makes a genuine and significant contribution to the study of nation-building. The book is, in many ways, a model for how to do theoretically ambitious and empirically multi-method scholarship on historical topics. I have now had the opportunity to use the book twice in advanced undergraduate seminars. It has been particularly useful to me as a means to unsettle naïve, oversocialized conceptions of nationalism, and to get students thinking seriously about politics.

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The Politics of Nation-Building is a highly innovative, remarkable book that combines rich archival research with comparative analysis. It is an important research in several aspects: First, it introduces a novel theory that explains nation-building policies combining national and international levels. Second, it introduces a comparative analysis by quantifying archival data and is able to identify, and introduce solutions to, its own methodological issues. Third, it does not limit itself to theoretical explanations but offers policy implications. Let me explain these points in detail.

Mylonas’s theoretical contribution starts with his critique of existing explanations of nation-building. Alternative explanations of primordialism, status reversal, reputation, the dark side of democracy, and national homeland (18) usually focuses on one factor
such as ethnic identities or the importance of opportunities for non-core groups. According to Mylonas, theories focusing on international factors are also limited in their predictive capacity for nation-building. Rogers Brubaker’s perspective of the triangular relationship among nationalizing states, minority and national homelands – which were criticized for reducing the international component to national homelands by Mylonas – is the closest that could get to Mylonas’s explanation of nation-building policies (Brubaker 1993). What Mylonas does is not to substitute new terms for old concepts such as non-core group instead of minority or external power instead of national homeland. Rather he revises and expands the very definition of these terms: The term “non-core group” replaces that of minority as a useful category since it does not imply legal status, particular group size, recognition by the host state and existence of claims or mobilization by the non-core group unlike the term minority (27). Similarly, unlike national homeland, the external power category does not assume kinship or ethnic ties. These categorical shifts broaden the horizon for international factors by understanding neighboring states, great powers, diaspora groups or a combination of the above (19) as external powers.

Mylonas’s theory works at the meso level. It explains nation-building policies toward non-core groups by analyzing international factors, mainly external power support and host state’s foreign policy goals. His theory predicts that when there is no external support, host states tend to assimilate non-core groups. When there is an ally state supporting a non-core group, host states tend to accommodate non-core groups. In the existence of an enemy state supporting a non-core group, policies of host states toward non-core groups depend on the host state’s foreign policy goals: a revisionist host state is likely to exclude the enemy-backed non-core group while a status-quo state is likely to assimilate it (37).

Mylonas studies post-World War I Balkan states to test these theoretical predictions, and engages in an extensive study of archival data and secondary sources to identify 90 non-core groups in six Balkan states. His quantitative analysis proves that his theory is applicable to the majority of cases although 19 of the cases in the data set were incorrectly predicted. Mylonas takes the pain to explain the incorrectly predicted cases and identifies some methodological considerations impacting the nation-building policies such as periodization of the study, instances where there is an overlap of some nation-building policies, and the combination of different policies in transitional periods (112). These considerations are called “methodological caveats” in the book (112) but they have important implications for Mylonas’s theoretical argument.

Take the example of the periodization issue: Mylonas argues that coding the timespan of an analysis influences the outcome of nation-building policies. He mentions that the first five years after World War I was quite chaotic since the conditions changed rapidly. He presents the example of the Jewish community in Turkey in which his theory predicts assimilation (in the absence of external support). The real outcome was accommodation conflicting with this prediction. Mylonas argues that assimilationist policies toward the Jews did not start until the late 1920s. If the coding timespan of the study was expanded a few years, the Jewish case would fit in his theoretical framework. Similarly, the existence of mixed policies for short time periods and changing policies in transitional periods hints to processes of state consolidation, an important factor that is not taken into consideration in the book’s theoretical framework. Mylonas acknowledges that the six Balkan states under study were transitioning from empire to nation-states and that he controlled for the impact of this transition since all six experienced similar conditions (therefore, it is possible to measure impacts of other factors such as external power involvement). The point that is
forgotten is that this transitionary period also comes with a theoretical challenge that is the role of unified elites during a state’s consolidation process. Power struggles among ruling elites influence state policies: Unified central governments can allow ruling elites to mobilize and deliver resources to respond to minority demands. Alternatively, a unified government with more resources can allow ruling elites to successfully repress minorities depending on other factors (Marx 2003). The effects of elite unity can vary in the long term. Once they consolidate their rule and secure their hold on the state, ruling elites tend to erode the previous legacies of imperial rule and could pursue assimilationist policies more easily.

Another neglected factor in Mylonas’s otherwise impressive theoretical argument is the lack of non-core group agency. Mylonas’s focus on state policies naturally leads to downplaying the role that non-core groups play in nation-building. The triangular relationship among non-core groups, host states, and external powers that is well presented in the book is mostly an interaction between host states and external powers. The third component, non-core groups, is usually in a passive relationship, meaning that non-core groups are either influenced by external powers or policies of host states. The possibility that non-core groups (their mobilization, political actions, fractions among elites, etc.) can influence external power or host state policies is not taken into account. Moreover, similar to political elites in host states, non-core group elites are not unified in early stages of nation-building. Different factions of non-core elites could ally or be in conflict with host states and external powers. Mylonas acknowledges that host states can adopt different policies for non-core elites than the rest of the non-core group. Some form of assimilation or accommodation can be employed for non-core elites, while the rest of the group is subjected to exclusionary policies. However, the non-core elites can be divided into different fractions and can form various relations with host states and external powers and these can influence nation-building policies.

In post-World War I Bulgaria, the political elites of the Muslim–Turkish minority were divided into two camps: supporters of secular reforms in the early Turkish republic vs. pro-Sultanate religious opposition. Secular groups received monetary and ideological support from Turkey, thus perfectly in line with Mylonas’s emphasis on external support. The pro-Sultanate religious opposition, however, was supported by the Bulgarian state, which directly appointed the Chief Müfti, the highest religious authority of the Muslim minority. These divisions among the non-core group helped the Bulgarian state to increase its control over the minority, and state policies shifted from indifference (a form of accommodation in Mylonas’s framework) to assimilation over time. Bulgaria was a revisionist state after WWI, and Turkey was an ally during WWI and continued to be a status-quo state forming friendly relations with Bulgaria afterwards. These conditions predict accommodation in Mylonas’s account, and until the late 1920s a mixture of assimilation and accommodation was the actual policy of Bulgaria. However, increasingly in the early 1930s, the Bulgarian policy turned toward assimilation and exclusionary policies when the relations between the two states worsened during the Balkan Pact negotiations. As Mylonas argued, expansion of the coding timespan can increase explanatory power of the theory, but this case brings certain issues to the forefront: First, instead of thinking in terms of either or categories, it can be better to think of both external power support: and the host state’s foreign policy goals as a continuum. The extent of revisionism or the extent of enemy/ally state perception by the host state can influence nation-building policies. Turkey was an ally state on paper but had worsening relations with Bulgaria in this period. Similarly, policies of assimilation, accommodation, and exclusion can be conceptualized as a continuum. Some assimilationist policies go to
an extreme, leading to exclusion or some accommodation policies can turn out to be assimilationist in practice.

Second, attaching more agency to non-core groups in the making and remaking of the host state’s nation-building policies is important. This will also problematize the assumption of states as unified entities and shift the emphasis to divisions and struggles among ruling elites in host states, external powers, and non-core groups.

Third, the case of the Turkish/Muslim minority in Bulgaria also shows the importance of not only external powers but also the interstate system. It is the attempts of forming the Balkan Pact as a way to contain revisionist claims and Bulgaria’s unwillingness to be part of it that intensified the tensions in Turkish–Bulgarian relations, which was in turn reflected in exclusionary nation-building policies toward the Muslim/Turkish minority. In the Balkans, it is not only one external power influencing nation-building policies but overall alliances and competitions among various states that explain shifts among state policies toward non-core groups. Mylonas acknowledges the existence of more than one external power in the cases of Tibet and China’s non-core groups and posits the impact of regional integration on nation-building policies as an important future research question (186).

As is clear by now, my comments on *The Politics of Nation-Building* do not challenge the main tenets of the study. Rather, they are invitations to expand the scope and develop distinctions for future applications of this brilliant theoretical approach. It is certain that Mylonas’s combination of international and national factors to understand nation-building policies will be used in many other studies focusing on different regions and time periods.

References


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*The Politics of Nation-Building Revisited: A Response to Fabbe, Kocher, and Köksal*

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In the last two centuries, many states were established following secessionist movements or the collapse of empires. The vast majority of them legitimated their authority with the help of nationalist ideology, that is, the principle that the boundaries of the state and the nation must coincide (Gellner 1983). In *The Politics of Nation-Building*, I focus on the policies that nation-states pursue in their effort to render state and national boundaries congruent. My research question is: Under what conditions are nation-state elites likely to target a non-core group – that is, any ethnic group perceived as unassimilated by the governing elites – with assimilation, minority rights, or exclusion from the state? I offer a geostrategic explanation: a state’s nation-building policies toward non-core groups are driven by its own foreign policy goals and its interstate relations with the external patrons of these non-core
groups. Through a detailed study of the Balkans, I show that the way a state treats a non-core group within its own borders is determined largely by whether the state’s foreign policy is revisionist or adheres to the international status quo as well as whether the state is allied or in rivalry with that group’s external patron(s). If the non-core group is perceived as mobilized by a rival external power, the government is more likely to adopt policies of internal colonization and displacement (if it is status quo) or exclusion (if it is revisionist), while groups backed by allied states are more likely to be accommodated. Non-core groups without external links are more likely to be targeted with nationwide assimilationist policies (see Figure 1).

The reviews included in this symposium highlight key elements of the argument and are valuable contributions in their own right. I am genuinely grateful to the three reviewers for their comments and to Nationalities Papers for the opportunity to respond to them. It is important for such debates to occur. In what follows, I respond to some of their points as well as admit to certain limitations they have identified – which in turn help me to propose a new research agenda.

Conceptualization and operationalization

In The Politics of Nation-Building, I make three novel conceptual moves: from the uncritical use of the term “minority” to “non-core group,” which does not imply a relative size or presuppose any legal recognition of the group by the host state; from the restrictive “homeland” to more analytically accurate “external power,” which allows for the possibility of Great or Major Powers, diaspora networks, or other non-governmental actors to operate as agitators or supporters of a non-core group; and from the dichotomous conceptualization of nation-building policies as “inclusion/exclusion” or “violent/non-violent” to “assimilation, accommodation, and exclusion.” Fabbe, Kocher, and Köksal consider these conceptual moves significant innovations to the existing literature, though they took issue with the operationalization of the concepts in specific instances.
To begin with, Köksal correctly points out that, “non-core elites can be divided into different fractions and can form various relations with host states and external powers.” In my framework, host states are likely to err on the safe side and target the whole group with a nation-building policy even if only a portion of the group is perceived as backed by an enemy power; unless the governing elites of the host state have perfect intelligence and can selectively target the “bad apples” of a divided non-core group – that is, isolate the non-core group transgressors from the rest of the group. However, if non-core elites are deeply and discernibly divided – and each faction has a significant following – then the host state is likely to treat them as distinct non-core groups (see Mylonas and Shelef 2014, for more on this point). Thus, turning to the example from Bulgaria that Köksal uses to illustrate her point, the distinction between “supporters of secular reforms in the early Turkish republic vs. pro-Sultanate religious opposition” was deep and politically relevant enough for the core group elites to consider them as separate non-core groups. In this situation, according to my framework I would code the nation-building policies toward the two camps separately. In other words, the so-called “minority” would be conceptualized as two distinct non-core groups. This is another illustration of how my conceptual framework allows one to shift levels of analysis according to the realities on the ground rather than a reified “minority” category.

Fabbe concurs with my methodological discussion concerning the importance of the coding timespan we decide on for testing hypotheses (for more on this, see Mylonas 2015). She considers the cases of two Muslim non-core groups in Western Macedonia (Valaades and Koniareoi) to highlight the coding problems emanating from varied coding timespans. However, her discussion also highlights a tension between the operationalization of the core group and instances when ruling elites decide to change the very definition of the core group as part of an assimilation policy. In fact, Kocher discusses this possibility directly when he writes, “forging co-nationhood could, in principle, involve changes to the non-core group’s identity or changes to the core group’s identity, or both.” Indeed, a change in the constitutive story to include part or whole of a non-core group would be an assimilationist policy in my framework. When the particular assimilationist tactic chosen by the core group elites is the expansion of the definition of nationhood so that previously non-core groups can fit in it, then researchers’ efforts to define the core group become rather challenging. I strived to mediate this problem in my empirical chapters by coding the core group at $T_0$ and then tracing the changes in the definition of nationhood and the criteria for inclusion in the core group category.

In the case of Greece, for example, the dominant understanding of nationhood was ethnocultural. To be Greek, one had to be: born in Greece or be of Greek ancestry, typically speak Greek, and be an Orthodox Christian. But, as I discuss in the book, Ioannis Eliakis (the Governor-General of Western Macedonia [1916–1920] whose reports I used to code Greek policies toward non-core groups in Chapter 6) was part of a like-minded political elite surrounding Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos together with Governor-General of Epirus Aristeidis Stergiadis, Governor-General of Eastern Thrace Harisios Vamvakas, Minister of Interior and Deputy Prime Minister Emmanuel Repoulis, Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikolaos Politis, member of the Greek–Bulgarian Mixed Commission Alexandros Pallis, Governor-General of Macedonia Adosidis, and many more. Eliakis was trying to integrate Western Macedonia – a linguistically, religiously, and culturally heterogeneous region – into the Greek nation-state. As I have argued in a recent essay (Mylonas 2013b), during the Balkan Wars – and faced with the heterogeneity of the “New Lands” they were incorporating – Venizelist ruling political elites strategically emphasized the importance of national consciousness over language or religion. The views of the Greek
elites around Venizelos echoed Ernest Renan’s understanding of a nation’s existence as “a daily plebiscite” (Renan 1996 [1882], 41–55).

Venizelos clearly stated his understanding of nationhood both before and after he became the Greek prime minister (for direct quotes illustrating this view, see Mylonas 2013a, 119–122). The Greek–Turkish War of 1919–1922, particularly its devastating result for Greece, shifted policy attitudes toward Muslim non-core groups away from assimilationist objectives. Religious differences were once again seen as incompatible within a single Greek nation. Thus, Fabbe is right to observe that the shared cultural understanding of a political community is a (slowly shifting) variable and that the 1922 Asia Minor Catastrophe was a transformative moment because of security/geostategic factors.

Kocher’s discussion of Apartheid, the former system of racial segregation in South Africa, gives me an opportunity, first, to reiterate that accommodation has a dark side and, second, to admit that Apartheid is outside the scope conditions of my argument. Kocher suggests that I should “concede that state policies premised on the preservation of difference can encode profound and lasting forms of injustice and inequality.” I agree with this statement. Policies of accommodation do not always “respect” cultural difference, and, rather, many times they serve to institutionalize a particular aspect of the differences between core and non-core groups as a convenient way to reproduce social inequalities (Lebanon is a case in point as discussed in Lijphart 1969).

Moreover, Kocher suggests that I should not have “coded” Apartheid as a form of exclusion since it does not squarely fit my definition of such policies. He is correct that normative considerations influenced my characterization of Apartheid as exclusionary – ironically, Fabbe argues that I avoided normative judgments. Kocher then suggests that I could “perhaps choose a term different than ‘accommodation,’ with its benign overtones” to characterize this case. But Apartheid was built on racial hierarchy and economic exploitation very close to a caste structure; thus, the most consistent approach would be to admit that Apartheid is beyond the scope conditions of my argument as I described them in the book’s introduction (Mylonas 2013a, 7).

Kökosal suggests that assimilation, accommodation, and exclusion can be conceptualized as a continuum. In particular, she argues that certain extreme assimilationist policies could lead to exclusion and that some accommodationist policies can turn out to be assimilationist in practice. Although Kökosal’s comment is spot-on when it comes to nation-building policy outcomes, my argument focuses on explaining the policy output. In other words, my argument is calibrated to account for variation in state intentions toward different non-core groups (for an elaborate discussion of this distinction, see Mylonas 2015, 741–746). Her comment, however, complicates the development and testing of a theory that tries to account for nation-building outcomes.

Having said all this, it is often difficult to find the appropriate evidence to actually code the intentions of ruling elites. As Fabbe notes, “some tactics are common across nation-building policies and this can be confusing.” Indeed, internal displacement could be a tactic used by a status quo host state toward a non-core group that is backed by an external enemy, but could also be part of an exclusionary campaign of a revisionist host state dealing with an enemy-backed non-core group. Moreover, as I discuss in Chapter 5, ruling elites could pursue tactics that appear accommodationist on the ground, but actually have assimilationist intentions. In all of these situations, coding becomes extremely difficult, but conceptually, these distinctions do not lose their importance or validity. Thus, I see these more as problems of coding or a weak evidentiary record rather than problems having to do with the conceptualization of my dependent variable.
**Logic of the argument**

We can now turn to the book’s argument. Kocher takes issue with one of my four configurations, the one predicting the accommodation of ally-backed non-core groups. The first question he raises is “Why would the allied external power object to mistreatment of the non-core group by the host state, especially if this mistreatment is fairly mild, as we might expect from an assimilation policy?”

Firstly, assimilationist policies are not necessarily mild. They can take many forms including internal colonialism and/or displacement, forced conscription, boarding schools for the children of unassimilated populations, and so forth. Secondly, there is a multitude of reasons for allied external powers to support a non-core group in another country. From a realist perspective, the linkages between a non-core group and an external power may not be as important during an alliance but could always operate as a bargaining chip later on if interstate relations deteriorate (in fact, they could operate as a bargaining chip even between allies; an implicit or explicit source of leverage in burden-sharing negotiations, or as a safeguard against defection). In other words, regardless of the origin of the connection, the externally backed non-core group is a latent asset for the external power that it prefers to nurture for future use. Because of this, there is no incentive for the external power to allow for the assimilation of a non-core group with which it has an existing affinity. Finally, once such linkages have been cultivated (along religious, ethnic, cultural, or other attributes), it is possible to see non-core group entrepreneurs who live in the host state as well as constituencies within the external power’s territorial boundaries lobbying the external power and developing a life of their own. Within a neoclassical realist framework, external powers also need to consider the domestic audience costs before renouncing their commitments.

Kocher asks a related question. Even if the allied external power objects to the assimilation of a particular non-core group, “[w]hy should we expect a host state to deviate from its most preferred policy of assimilation?” In other words, why would the governing elites of a national state deviate from the default option of assimilation for the sake of an alliance? This is an important question. Within my framework, accommodating an ally-backed non-core group is conditional to the architecture of the alliance and the host state’s foreign policy priorities (Mylonas 2013a, Chapter 5). If the alliance is asymmetrical in favor of the host state, that is, the host state does not rely as much on the external power, then my assumption should be relaxed and assimilationist policies are likely to be pursued.

Kocher is right that “a policy of accommodation risks leaving unassimilated non-core groups that could act as fifth columns later, when the alliance structure shifts and the present ally becomes a rival.” In fact, this is a critical part of the reasoning behind my assertion that assimilation is the default policy pursued by elites motivated by a homogenizing imperative. Given that my argument is only applicable to states where there is a core group with a clearly defined “national type” and a governing elite motivated by a homogenizing imperative, ceteris paribus, I argue that the default option for such states is to assimilate non-core groups. Thus, we should expect that non-core groups who are backed by allied powers that are relatively weaker than the host state will be targeted with assimilation rather than accommodation. If, however, the alliance is symmetrical or if the alliance is asymmetrical in favor of the external power, then accommodation is the most likely policy.

But even in symmetrical alliances, threats by an external power to switch alliances or wage war on behalf of a non-core group it supports in the host state should not be regarded as credible when the external power has good geopolitical reasons to maintain the alliance,
as Kocher put it. Although it is true that the credibility of the “threat to switch alliances or wage war” coming from an allied external power may be undermined by the geopolitical (or other) reasons that brought about the alliance to begin with, these same reasons are sufficient for the host state to respect the demands coming from the allied external power’s side. Thus, when the external power is interested in the fate of a specific non-core group, then automatically this becomes part of the alliance architecture and could potentially unravel it altogether. Moreover, the host state has uncertainty about whether such an action would not harm the alliance. Allies do switch and bail. All things considered, the host state is likely to accommodate a non-core group backed by an allied external power that is stronger than or equally as strong as the host state.

The final factor that is implied in the discussion above and that may complicate the line of reasoning leading to accommodation is a country’s foreign policy priorities. If an allied external power is backing a non-core group but its well-being is not a top priority, then Kocher’s concern could prevail. In fact, as I have shown in Chapter 5, this is what happened with the Greeks in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (KSCS) after World War I. The newly founded KSCS targeted the Greek community in Monastiri with intense assimilationist policies – including internal displacement and colonization – without jeopardizing the alliance between the two states because Venizelos was focused on the Greek-speaking population in Asia Minor and Greece needed the alliance with the KSCS while fighting Kemal Ataturk’s army (see Mylonas 2013a, 110–111). Thus, the KSCS could target the Greek community in Monastiri (an ally-backed non-core group) with assimilationist policies because Greece’s foreign policy priorities (the external power interested in this group) were focused on the Greek communities in Asia Minor.

Theoretical extensions

The reviews included in this symposium have pushed me to not only defend the conceptualization and logic underpinning the argument I developed in The Politics of Nation-Building, but also to think of some theoretical extensions to my work. For example, despite the fact that my initial dissertation prospectus at Yale focused on variation in different assimilation strategies, Fabbe correctly points out that my argument is not calibrated in such a way as to predict the actual means that policy-makers use to achieve their preferred end – assimilation, accommodation, or exclusion. An exception is my discussion of the two types of assimilationist policies that I develop in the book (i.e. the default nationwide assimilationist policies, involving mass schooling with nationalist content and military conscription, versus the group-specific assimilation policies pursued when a state with a status quo orientation is faced with an enemy-backed group, involving internal displacement and/or colonialism).

Regardless, the inability of my argument to account for variation in the means of exclusion (e.g. segregation, deportation, forced migration, and mass killing) does leave a number of theoretical and normative questions hanging in the balance. Clearly, forced migration and ethnic cleansing are not morally equivalent, despite the fact that forced migration often comes with acts of ethnic cleansing and vice versa. My argument is not calibrated at the appropriate level of analysis to deal with variation in means. It is a theory attempting to predict the aspirations of state elites motivated by a homogenizing imperative.

Kocher’s suggestion concerning the change in the definition of nationhood as an assimilationist policy, which I mentioned above, is relevant here. To be sure, some of the domestic politics underpinning these choices are necessarily obscured in my framework, which
highlights the geostrategic logic of nation-building. However, addressing this issue would require a theory that accounts for the choice of tactics and means to accomplish the goals that The Politics of Nation-Building focuses on. A theoretical framework that would explain the variation in the means and tactics pursued by state elites to achieve their desired goals would need to take into account group-level characteristics, terrain and military capabilities, past history of violence between groups, and more. This would be a fruitful research agenda.

Similarly, many of Köksal’s excellent points are either addressed elsewhere or point to new research questions. For instance, Köksal asks what would be the effect of the presence of multiple external power(s) backing a non-core group as well as of the variation in the international system over time and across space. These questions have motivated both my discussion in Chapters 8 and 9 as well as my work with Enze Han and Erin Jenne (Han and Mylonas 2014; Jenne and Mylonas 2011). Köksal also calls for theorization of the role of elite unity during a state’s consolidation process, suggesting that the power struggles among ruling elites may influence state policies toward non-core groups. Indeed, issues of elite unity or division could figure more prominently in a theory of nation-building, as Kocher has also suggested. I hope to see future works pursuing this research agenda.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my gratitude to Fabbe, Kocher, and Köksal for their insightful and thought-provoking comments. I would also like to thank the associate editor, Sener Akturk, and the editor of Nationalities Papers, Peter Rutland, for their hospitality and professionalism. It has been a pleasure participating in this forum.

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