Connecting War and Genocide

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Genocide

Definitions of genocide have been produced by lawyers, scholars, politicians and victims. Debates about these definitions manifest in tension over broad and narrow conceptions of genocide. For instance, the UN Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide narrows target groups to those with ethnic, religious, racial, national identity. The term is also used more broadly as a rhetorical device by news media and activists in order to mobilize popular opinion. The simplest definition of genocide is that it is the intended destruction of specific groups. Despite definitional debates, this type of destructive action has been part of human history as long as warfare itself, however, the two are not necessarily synonymous. Whilst war can occur without genocide, genocide rarely occurs without war, yet, this is not a strictly cause and effect relationship. This explorative article will address social and legal approaches to genocide, some historic intersections of war and genocide, the problematic nature of intent and ideology, humanitarian warfare aimed at preventing genocide, and historic and contemporary issues of resources and climate in war and genocide.

A Social or Legal Phenomenon?

The term "genocide" itself originates with a single author, Raphael Lemkin. Prior to Lemkin's naming of this phenomena, it has littered recorded history. Both the Bible and Quran document divinely mandated mass slaughter of noncombatants. Greek and Roman traditions also describe the destruction of Troy and Carthage. Yet, what makes genocide a unique phenomenon was the purposefully labelling by a contemporary observer of twentieth century warfare. It was this history that captured Lemkin, as seen in his later writings on genocide throughout human history.

Reviewing photographic evidence and eyewitness accounts of the destruction of Armenians in the waning Ottoman Empire, Lemkin, a Polish jurist in the 1930s pushed for international law to prohibit this level of destruction, banning attacks on a national group's physical and cultural integrity. Unsuccessful, but determined, Lemkin escaped Poland after its defeat by Nazi Germany and fled to the USA. There he took up work in the early 1940s describing the process of destruction underway in Eastern Europe. Termed as genocide, or literally race-killing, Lemkin articulated a process by which a group is subjected to a range of processes and outcomes, including both cultural and physical destruction, with planned elimination of a group's rights, integrity and life. Groups may even be forcibly re-identified as another group, resulting in the similar destructive outcome.

Following the establishment of the United Nations in 1945, and the uncovering of Nazi crimes during the war, Lemkin lobbied incessantly for the international, judicial recognition of genocide. Although, "genocide" was not a major feature of the Nuremberg trials, the logic of prosecuting Nazi war crimes under the rubric of the mass destruction of civilians was pervasive throughout the trials and sentencing. Government representatives at the UN entered into negotiations of a treaty that defined and outlawed the crime. The first round of negotiations produced a document that explicitly acknowledged the multiple aspects of Lemkin's "genocide": cultural, physical, and biological destruction, the latter referring to the removal of children from a group and the reproductive sterilization of members of the group. The final treaty accepted by the General Assembly in 1948, excluded cultural destruction and the targeting of political groups. Genocide was also acknowledged as a crime that could occur in both times of war and peace.

Even though Lemkin's law had finally been established, it saw little exercise in the coming decades. The term itself was subject to Cold War rhetoric and political debates, while under the cover of US and USSR interests internationally, violence against specific groups, labelled as ideological enemies, was encouraged and permitted in contexts of decolonization and independence. Most notably in Latin America, genocides have been documented in Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Guatemala. The latter case continues to be legally contested into the 2010s and also involved US training of military forces in tactics of torture and violence against civilians. The People's Republic of China also engaged in civilian group destruction and forced famine at a massive scale during Mao's "Great Leap Forward" and "Cultural Revolution". These internal Cold War conflicts that reached genocidal proportions were fostered, or went unquestioned, during geopolitical bi-polar rivalry.

It was not until after the Cold War that the UN Convention on Genocide was used in prosecuting and attempts at preventing genocide. The 1990s saw mass destruction as simultaneously broadcasted across the satellite TV connected world and devoid of Cold War

divisions that in the past had protected genocidaires. The International Tribunals for both Yugoslavia and Rwanda ushered in the significance of international criminal law, and judgements that utilized Lemkin's first framing of genocide. In some cases such courts are burdened with defining atrocities as genocide or not. Significantly, these ad-hoc tribunals established case law for rape as a weapon of war in the context of genocide. This highlighted issues of gender in genocide, not only raising the question of whether or not genocide is particularly more lethal for men or women, but also how genocide might be experienced differently based on gender. It was the case against Jean-Paul Akayesu, mayor of the Taba Commune during the 1994 Rwandan genocide, which heralded the first genocide conviction. Rape, as a weapon, was framed in the prosecution and conviction of Akayesu as an integral part of genocide in this local context.

The 2002 establishment of the International Criminal Court and the Rome Statute, whilst having its roots in the post-World War II international justice movement, stemmed from a global campaign during this 1990s era of international jurisdiction and prosecution. The Rome Statute articulates verbatim the UN Convention on Genocide, entrenching crimes against humanity, war crimes, and crimes of aggression into the court's jurisdiction. Cases taken on by the Court include those in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Sudan, Côte d'Ivoire, Libya, Central African Republic, and Uganda. Of note was the warrant for the arrest of Omar al-Bashir, as the first sitting head of state charged with genocide during counter-insurgency warfare in Darfur. While the court makes no specialized connection between war and genocide, many of the cases tacitly acknowledge the prevalent context of war for acts of genocide, or the role of military leaders and former heads of state involved in wars that commit genocide.

Given the variety of outcomes for the legal prosecution of genocide, and the deep, contextual connection to war, many academic and sociological perspectives of genocide have run the gamut of amending Lemkin's law to a broader definition, reminiscent of the first committee draft, to separating the legal and social studies of the phenomenon altogether. According to scholar Adam Jones, genocide remains a potent rhetorical tool for popular mobilization, both in the name of preventing destruction and protecting civilians.

Historical Cases of Genocide and War

Genocide occurs following warfare, in the context of, or during warfare, and sometimes within a social or political "war" or campaign that becomes violent on a massive scale. The following examples, grouped by type, demonstrate these intersections of war and genocide. These also utilize the varied aspects of violence (structural, direct and cultural) as described by scholars such as Johan Galtung. The genocide of Tutsis, moderate Hutus and Twa peoples in 1994 Rwanda, erupted following a peace agreement pausing a violent civil war in the north. With the Rwandan Armed Forces, militias and the Rwandan Patriotic Front still mobilized and arming themselves, violence very easily rolled into successive wars starting with the "War of Liberation" in 1996 Zaire. Further retaliatory massacres and genocides continued against both Hutus and Tutsis of Rwandan, Burundian and Congolese origin. Indigenous peoples, in the expansion of colonial Europe, were subject to violent warfare, and campaigns of social or cultural destruction. From opposite ends of the Western colonial world, Tolowas in 1890s California and Tasmanians in early 1800s Van Diemen's Land were exposed to settler violence, programs of resettlement and re-education, extinguishing the cultural and physical life of these groups. Practices of warfare and military cultures have also influenced the scale of destruction. In German South-West Africa Herero and Nama peoples were hunted down and herded into the Omaheke desert as part of German annihilationist military tactics forged in past colonial and European wars. First Nations' children in Canada were also targeted in social warfare that aimed to destroy the Indian and enforce western, white values, education and culture. Regardless of how these two phenomena collide, it is when they do that the scope and magnitude of destruction is catalysed into a level of violence that destroys groups of human beings.

Genocide is also produced by wars of independence and wars of state crisis. The wars of the 1990s break-up of Yugoslavia, saw mass scale destruction of cultural and physical life from the burning of libraries, heritage sites and museums, to the use of rape as a weapon of war and the use of overwhelming military force on civilian populations. The rise of the Islamic State in the Levant (ISIL) has also produced regional warfare and the highly publicized destruction of historic religious communities and ancient cultural sites; such conflict continues to affect the lives of many in the region,

Arkan's Tigers kill and kick Bosnian Muslim civilians during the first battle for Bosnia in Bijeljina, Bosnia, March 31, 1992. The Serbian paramilitary unit was responsible for killing thousands of people during the Bosnian war, and Arkan was later indicted for war crimes. (Photo Credit: Ron Haviv)

displacing and target specific groups. The Srebrenica attacks often act as the zenith of this episode and demonstrate a form of genocide: a gendercide of combat aged males were selected from Bosnian refugees and executed by Bosnian-Serb soldiers.

Such wars may also intend on forging a new state, again in the context of crisis. The Ottoman, Cambodian, and French ideological struggles for power and new state formation saw the targeting of people outside of those that are perceived to "naturally" belong to the new state. Armenians and other Christian minorities, caught between a World War I front and an emerging state were subjected to cultural and physical destruction. Cham Muslims and even Cambodians within the Khmer Rouge party structure were executed in the so-called killing fields. Many were taken into prisons where they were tortured with physical, sexual and mental violence before finally being executed. Others were forced to produce fabricated, self-incriminating evidence of their transgressions against the regime, in a manner to rival George Orwell's dystopian 1984. During the French Revolution the Catholic and royalist Vendée became subject to a counter-insurgency war that implemented scorched earth policy and mass drownings on a weary and defeated civilian population. The new Jacobin dominated regime, finding itself confronted by both a British fleet in the channel and an insurrection only

a year after the execution of King Louis XVI, reacted swiftly and pointedly against those outside the new parameters of belonging set by revolutionary politics.

Intent and Ideology
The impact of legal definitions has led to an emphasis on proving intent and establishing the presence of destructive ideologies. As such these elements have allowed scholars to narrowly identify specific cases of genocide (such as the Holocaust, Rwanda 1994, and the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia) as the gold-standard of this type of destruction, where perpetrator ideology and intent to destroy a group is apparent through historical interpretations or documentary evidence. The post-war trials of Nazi war criminals framed the party and state apparatus as a criminal organization that planned and executed destruction, following through on ideological tenets requiring the elimination of the Jews. However, within the context of warfare, scholars, such as Christopher Browning, have argued a different perspective. After the initial defeat of the Soviet war machine in the summer of 1941, a sense of inevitable triumph swept through the Wehrmacht. Within this atmosphere, mass killings of Jews increased as SS Einsatzgruppen, or mobile killing units, moved east encountering larger, Orthodox Jewish communities. From the late summer of 1941 to the following months, two distinct campaigns of mass shootings were conducted by Einsatzgruppen,

Wehrmacht, Ordnungspolizei and local collaborators. These operations embodied a war strategy that escalated as distinguishable enemy "Others" became more abundant in an area intended as agricultural colonies for the Third Reich.

Browning also documents the increase in tension between those who saw Jewish forced labour as an economic benefit of occupation, and those who considered such a logistical or ideological liability and that Jews were to be eliminated. Soviet resurgence further catalysed radical action, along with the establishment of the first series of several death camps throughout occupied Poland. Browning's study of the Hamburg reserve police battalion further demonstrated that middle class, middle-aged Germans, by and large devoid of ideological commitments to Nazism, became through the context of warfare well-trained executors and hunters of Jews. In the hostile environment of occupied territory, held together by shared sense of duty and necessary camaraderie, these men engaged in genocide around eastern front. On the surface these actions may seem intended and ideologically driven. Yet, a deeper perspective presents a view that is more socially complex and layered with elements of group loyalty and survival in a warzone. Genocide, therefore, became more likely as social conditions were nurtured through warfare or wartime mentality.

Humanitarian Wars and Genocide

Since Allied forces arrived and surveyed the lingering destruction of Nazi genocide at death and concentration camps stretching from Dachau and Bergen-Belsen to Auschwitz, Western humanitarianism and liberalism has placed moral and political value in waging war in the prevention of genocide. Yet, the prime driver for any international intervention most often falls to the national interests of the intervening party or state in question. This logic is not limited to Western states. Genocides in both Cambodia and Rwanda were curtailed by military interventions. However, these actions occurring in the context of civil or regional warfare demonstrate that whilst intervention may appear to be humanitarian or protective in nature, it is often the result of national or strategic interests. Intervention by NATO countries in both Kosovo and more recently Libya, demonstrate the interplay of political goals and hegemonic politics by large international powers, with interests in influence or resources.

Genocide can also be politicized so as to justify so-called humanitarian intervention. The War on Terror, following the terrorist attack in New York City, or "9/11", was legitimated by characterizing regimes in Iraq and Afghanistan as previously or currently genocidal, as well the accusation of supporting terrorists. Humanitarian intervention, therefore, transitioned into regime change and installing democracy, resulting in years of continued turmoil and instability. It is also often the case that international intervention facilitates retaliatory attacks between warring parties. In Kosovo and Serbia, following NATO bombings of strategic targets, parties exchanged incidences of massacre and expulsion. Currently, many politicians and Western actors continue to legitimize aerial bombing in the region on the basis that ISIL is likewise a genocidal regime worthy of such a response.

Rwandan refugee children plead with Zairean soldiers to allow them across a bridge separating Rwanda and Zaire where their mothers had crossed moments earlier before the soldiers closed the border on Aug. 20, 1994. (Photo Credit: Jean-Marc Bouju/AP)

Use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles or drones, as they are more popularly known, has further characterized humanitarian intervention against genocide. This type of strategic deployment intended to prevent massacre of civilians, more often than not endangers lives and destroys infrastructure, making post-conflict rebuilding challenging and utilizing doctrines like Responsibility to Protect, as another vehicle for state-interested interventions. In Libya, where Muammar Gaddafi threatened and engaged in mass killing of civilians in response to his regime collapsing in 2011, drone bombing was used repeatedly in attacking strategic military targets, allowing Libyan rebels to overwhelm Gaddafi's forces and end his regime. Again instability has followed such actions intended to prevent genocide.

Resources and Climate

Studies of civil war, "new wars" and the continued occurrences of intrastate wars, frequently spilling violence and refugees across international borders, indicate that war continues to be part of human existence, with genocide as its most destructive form. As societies become more globally aware, resulting from digital connectivity or the rise of global challenges, conflict over resources seem to emerge at the front and centre of globalization and contemporary history. Wars over resources are certainly not new, neither is the application of genocide in such conflicts. The conquest of Central and South America by the Spanish and Portuguese armies and settlers was rife with resource and market driven violence. Genocides here were propelled by warfare based on a logic of white European superiority and the insatiable demand for exportable goods and natural resources. Christopher Columbus and Hernan Cortez's searches for gold were frustrated by the absence of accessible treasure and willing labour. Both engaged in campaigns of terror against indigenous populations that decimated these peoples. In the case of the Caribbean Arawak peoples, they were entirely exterminated. The spread of trade, markets and resource driven violence in European colonies also resulted in the commodification of people themselves, creating a transatlantic slave trade that was perhaps the most globalized episode of genocide.

The most salient case of genocide as an outcome or means of gathering and exploiting resources is the Belgian Congo, or the Congo Free State. Established in 1885, King Leopold II drained the region of rubber and ivory for sale on international markets. In doing so he left a wake of a seriously reduced Congolese population, many who survived were mutilated as a form of discipline and punishment. The Belgian run Force Publique conducted a reign of terror to ensure quotas were met and the continuing profitability of the colony. This private army, whose ranks were filled by Congolese men pressed into service, offered a less fateful role in colonial Congo, but nonetheless a brutalizing experience. The more recent pursuit of resources in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has fuelled and become interwoven with contemporary conflict in the region, with the seizure and illegal mining of precious metals being exported via regional powers sponsoring internal militias and rebel groups in the DRC.

Evolving forms of warfare and genocide, along with widening perspectives in an increasingly global world, present a web of crises where genocide becomes part of the phenomenon of climate violence. Whilst war and genocide have become infrequent in the Global North, the Global South is home to new crises where war, genocide and climate violence have become mixed, and especially acute where contests and unequal distribution of resources produce massive inequality. Mark Levene describes this web as post-genocide; a type of mass violence or so-called low-intensity conflict, where climate change, state collapse, war lords, competition and illicit use of resources create a type of destructive violence, without any clear intent to destroy. This condition of regions or states becomes more severe as actors endeavour to compete in global capitalism, or being subject to international debt or neoliberal financial systems. The context of ongoing or simmering conflicts and warfare further compound this scenario.

Violence in both Kyrgyzstan and Kenya has resulted in the targeting killings and destructive process of some groups. In Kenya desertification catalyses pastoralist societies into conflict where small arms are available, poverty is rampant and water scarce. The northern region of Turkana has seen some of the worst conflict and effects of this web of crises. Kyrgyzstan's ethnic minority of Uzbeks has been subject to discriminatory policies and communal violence in the wake of drought and poverty. Kyrgyzstan's dependency on hydroelectric power, wreaked havoc on by droughts in the region, creates post-genocide violence where Uzbek people were targeted as the state buckled under climate induced pressures.
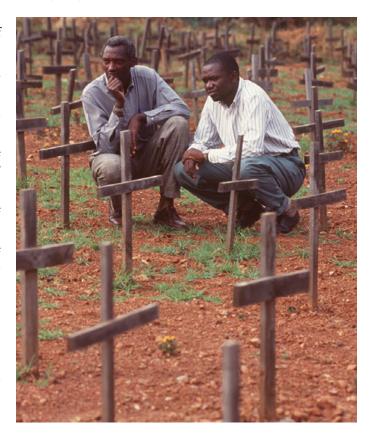
First as Tragedy, then as Farce

Reflecting the spirit of Marx's well-quoted saying, war and genocide, albeit in dynamic ways, continue to stride hand in hand across the pages of history and current affairs without humanity's critical attention. The connections are repeatedly underestimated, as demonstrated by the lack of acknowledgement of civilian burden in many conflicts, and disconnected in later analysis. This latter dysfunction is perhaps attributable to the problematic nature of intent and ideology as such continue to rule and reign over popular and political interpretations of genocide and war. The implementation of history in justifying interventions against genocide, likewise repeats, in a farcical manner the politicized simplification of

history, without recognizing the tangled relationship of war and genocide, more often than not coming together in destructive processes either aimed at or resulting in the obliteration of groups.

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