# INTRODUCTION

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Millions have died from poverty, millions from war and, as will become evident in this book, millions have been victims of genocide. While the social sciences have long been concerned with poverty—its effects, causes, and prevention—much less attention has been given to the nature of social conflicts and their possible escalation into war and the destruction of human lives. Attempts to increase our understanding of the nature of social conflicts and ways to de-escalate them (e.g., Kriesberg 1973) are part of a relatively recent endeavor to use social science insights for the prevention of war and the maintenance of peace. Still, despite the growing number of individuals and research institutes devoted to "peace research," efforts to successfully destroy life through war far outweigh those to preserve it. When it comes to genocide, the situation is even more precarious. Although genocide has been a recurring social phenomenon and has become ever more devastating in terms of lost human life as we have moved into the twentieth century, little effort has been spent in assessing its causes in the hope of better preventing it. It is as if events of genocidal proportions have—for whatever psychological or sociological reasons—been suppressed and excluded from the researchers' agenda. Yet, it is our opinion that genocide, like poverty, war, and all other events and processes destructive of human life, should gain top attention from scholars. With this collection of essays, we wish to enhance and facilitate this process in the hope that knowledge and "scientific" effort will increasingly be directed toward and serve the preservation of life.

If such scholarly efforts are to contribute to the improvement of the human condition by preserving life, in the case of genocide we can no

longer conceive of it as a random (although relatively rare) historic phe-
nomenon. Instead, we are compelled to look for patterns which lead to
and are associated with these annihilations. Difficult as it may be to ac-
cept such a notion, we must also look upon the history and nature of so-
cieties giving rise to genocides as man-made and thereby influenceable.
Any other perspective would preclude the human agency necessary to act
preventively. Thus, postulating that the social and historic circumstances
making genocide possible are man-made, and that genocides, far from
being random events, may be associated with certain social patterns, we
must begin to penetrate the circumstances under which human beings
have been annihilated in the past so that we can establish criteria for the
prevention of similar destructions in the future.

This volume is divided into two parts. The first part contains contri-
butions of a general nature. They are primarily concerned with defini-
tions, typologies, and explanations of genocide. The essays in the sec-
ond part focus more heavily on special aspects of the phenomenon. On
the one hand, they illuminate processes or special characteristics asso-
ciated with a particular genocide. On the other hand, they attempt to test
specific hypotheses or to explain the emergence of a given event of
genocide. Ultimately, both the more general and the specific articles
complement and draw from each other. In no way can they be treated as
mutually exclusive. Both parts, we believe, bring us a step further in the
"scientific" analysis and understanding of genocide as a modern social
and historical phenomenon.

Any disciplined analysis of genocide requires that certain definitional
issues and problems be clarified. Even if such problems cannot imme-
diately be resolved, they must nevertheless be articulated. This we have
attempted to do at the outset. Here the discussion centers around such
issues as the groups that should be subsumed under any discussion of
victims of genocide. In addition to racial groups, for example, should
the annihilation of ethnic, religious, economic, or political groups also be
included in a definition of genocide? Other points concern the question
of numbers killed, intent, and plan. How many or what percentage of
members of a group must be destroyed before an event should be called
genocidal? Must this destruction be intentional or should any com-
parable destruction, intentional or not, be categorized as genocide? The
important question also arises concerning when, if at all, war is genocide
and genocide is war.

Not unrelated to definitions of genocide is the attempt to classify
events of genocide. In fact, classifications and typologies are a neces-
sary prerequisite if genocide is to be understood and explained at all.
Again, we have chosen to place contributions aiming to develop and
justify typologies of genocide in Part I, which investigates how geno-
cides have varied throughout history and to what extent this variance
may have been "caused" by differences in modes of production; differ-

ences in warfare; economic competition; the tendency to accumulate economic power and wealth; differences in state power; the need to maintain political control; or bureaucratization, ideology, and technology.

In many ways, typologies imply explanation because events of genocide are grouped according to criteria which in themselves can serve as explanation. Nevertheless, the first part of this volume also includes contributions which focus, aside from any explanatory power inherent in typologies, on more general explanations of genocide. Thus, it is discussed how genocide could be a technique of dealing with surplus populations, implying that if the rise of surplus populations could be prevented genocide might not occur. Other endeavors look for an explanation of genocide in the existence of severe social cleavages, and in the outright support of (or lack of constraints placed on) totalitarian regimes by other nations. Also, it is postulated that the inability to carry through structural social and political readjustments induces genocide, particularly when drastic changes might be called for as a result of defeat in war, national independence, revolution, and so on. Finally, it is suggested that we should begin to understand modern genocides not as examples of a rather impersonal process of technological rationality, or as the results of structurally induced crises, but rather as acts of societal madness. The entire notion of purposeful intentionality is critically explored.

More specific studies characterize Part II. By focusing on the corruption of the law as it preluded genocide, by examining the Jewish Holocaust, and by looking at other instances of genocide such as the Armenian case or the "genocide" perpetrated against the Aborigines in connection with colonialism and imperialism, it is possible to improve our understanding of mass death. In addition, the question of the uniqueness or universality of genocide(s) can fruitfully be dealt with in this manner. For should the Holocaust, for example, prove to be unique, the criteria making it thus can be drawn upon as explanatory variables for a better understanding not only of the Holocaust but also, by inference, of other examples of mass death. Thus, it is postulated that the Holocaust is unique because of its scope, its unprecedented involvement of the legal and administrative apparatus, the horrible treatment meted out to the individuals to be annihilated, and the concerted ideological campaign directed against the population targeted for destruction. Yet these destructions do not occur in a vacuum. In as much as it is individuals who carry out these atrocities, it also is important to pose certain questions on the social psychology level. For example, which ideology, mind sets, and personalities must already exist or be created for individuals or even major segments of a society to feel unashamed and justified in being part of an extermination enterprise?

It has been suggested that middleman minorities, due to their peculiar position, and to the cleavages and conflicts in which they partake or be-

come involved, are particularly likely to be discriminated against. Could it be that, since such discrimination has often assumed high levels of intensity, middleman minorities are therefore likely to become victims of genocide? Is there a connection between middleman minority status and genocide? For, should such a connection exist, we may have come a step closer to understanding the phenomenon and possibly being able to devise ways of preventing it.

Given the issues and questions raised in this collection, where do we go from here? What points need further clarification, and what problems still are to be solved? Admittedly, they are many, and if we, as editors, now enter the discussion by pointing out some of the issues we believe need further attention, we are fully aware of the selective nature of our attempt. Yet, we maintain that these issues are pressing and important. They concern the connection between genocide, surplus population, economic gain, and middleman minorities, and the question of intentionality as it pertains to genocide.

We believe that it is of great importance to further investigate the connection between genocide and the presence or absence of surplus populations, just as it has been important to investigate the evolution of societies, their stratification systems, and the corresponding existential conditions in a manner that includes population size in relation to available resources (Lenski 1966). However, in studying the connection between genocide and surplus population, we need not necessarily confine ourselves solely to the question of how so-called surplus populations have been and are being eliminated. We can equally inquire how society has "constructively" rather than "destructively" dealt with surplus populations throughout history. For instance, we can study, as Mizruchi (1983) shows, how potentially troublesome surplus populations, far from being annihilated, have been socially controlled and regulated. Thus, by inference, ways might be found which preempt genocidal strategies of surplus population management.

Whenever the notion of surplus population is being used, it is important to distinguish between absolute and relative surplus population, something Lenski and Mizruchi fail to do. For a portion of the society may appear to us as superfluous while in fact it is not. Appearances can be misleading and superficial; our observation that some people can no longer maintain themselves or lack sufficient integration into the economic system may tempt us to conclude that a surplus of people exists. However, taking appearances for reality has more often than not been a source of great error. If, as is the case in capitalist societies, for instance, millions go hungry, are unemployed, underemployed, or on welfare while factories run at much lower than full capacity and land remains uncultivated or inappropriately used, the problem is not one of having too many people. The problem lies instead in the structure of the economy and the entire mode of production and distribution. The ap-

parent surplus population is, under these circumstances, only relative, not absolute, and should not even be called a surplus population. This term itself tends to blame the victims, i.e., those negatively affected by the politics inherent in a given mode of production. It tends to single them out as the problem's source, overlooking the real sources of the apparent overpopulation located in the economic system as a whole. In short, the problem of relative surplus population is one of political economy, not one of individuals reproducing at a rate faster than economic means can be made available. Even if one were able to show that a society or segments thereof reproduce in excess of what can be produced to maintain everyone, it must be kept in mind that fertility rates themselves are influenced by existing economic conditions. This can be observed in those cases in which some elements of the population who are marginalized economically distribute their risks by increasing the number of offsprings. All this goes to demonstrate that so-called surplus populations are rarely absolute. Should the presence of a relative surplus population, therefore, be connected with events of genocide, it follows that in order to prevent the latter, structural economic changes preventing the rise of relative surplus populations must be brought about.

The present tradition (see, for instance, Rubenstein 1983) of linking relative surplus population with genocide postulates that this surplus population consists of the chronically unproductive and generally unemployable who, in times of crisis, might be eliminated. Since large-scale elimination has been witnessed under Joseph Stalin as well as under Adolf Hitler, it is concluded that these genocides served as a means to reduce or eliminate the existing relative surplus population perceived to be problematic. It is our opinion, however, that the population eliminated in both cases should not be characterized as chronically unproductive and generally unemployable, and when they showed such "traits," as in part was the case in Germany, this was the result of a policy that systematically cut Jews off from economic activity. What we are confronted with here, therefore, seems to be a problem involving the categories employed. This problem deserves further attention and scrutiny. The following questions must be asked: Why were other groups not eliminated who readily appeared as superfluous, i.e., as chronically unproductive and generally unemployable? Why should the relative surplus population be eradicated indirectly? What can be gained, and who benefits (politically and economically) from an elimination of middleman minorities or otherwise situated economically integrated segments of a population in order to "solve" the relative surplus population problem? In a larger economic and political context, what could be the function of generating "vacancies" by eliminating groups that would not usually be called chronically unproductive or generally unemployable? Why is it that programmed and planned annihilation, historically speaking, seems to be directed more often against economically integrated non-wage labor

groups (such as middleman minorities) while wage laborers, the margin-
alized, and the poor of all ages seem to perish without explicit effort and
intention on the part of the remaining society?

The related idea that only intentional or planned massive destruction
of human lives should be called genocide can also be a very difficult and,
in our opinion, an inadequate notion. As such it has the tendency to
gloss over structural violence which through various mechanisms can be
equally as destructive of human life as many an intentional and planned
program of annihilation. In addition, the presence of structural violence
promotes the use of planned violence. The problem here lies not in the
difficulty of demonstrating what intentionality means psychologically
speaking, but rather in the neglect of those processes of destruction
which, although massive, are so systematic and systemic, and that there-
fore appear so "normal" that most individuals involved at some level of
the process of destruction may never see the need to make an ethical
decision or even reflect upon the consequences of their actions. What
prevents people from stepping outside of their particular situations and
from reflecting upon the consequences of their actions or inactions? Has
society, a product of human activity, become so objectified, so alien to
its source, that its creators feel no part of its operation, feel no possibility
of affecting its course of movement? Why is it that individuals do not
seem to be able to reflect upon the processes that have made them
anonymous actors, cogs in the system, and that have nudged many of
them to participate in genocide?

In a world that historically has moved from domination based pri-
marily on the will of given individuals (in the Middle Ages, for example)
to one in which individuals are dominated by anonymous forces such as
market mechanisms, bureaucracies, and distant decision making by com-
mittees and parliaments, the emphasis on intentionality almost appears
anachronistic. To be sure, we are not suggesting that the individual actor
qua actor, be it Eichmann, a Turkish nationalist, or a soldier sitting in a
missile silo, is not responsible and should not be held accountable for his
or her actions. Neither do we say that they would not be capable of
making existential decisions. People do have a choice. Neither are we
suggesting that a specific nation or group engaged in genocide is in-
volved in a process that has a degree of inevitability about it, hence
mitigating the issue of accountability. Rather, we are pointing to the fact
that in the modern age, the issue of intentionality on the societal level is
harder to locate because of the anonymous and amorphous structural
forces that dictate the character of our world. Technically speaking,
individuals have a will and retain the capacity to use it, but how often is
their agency the product of their will and intentions? Where in these
market mechanisms and decision-making processes lies the origin of in-
tent, and whose intentions are being carried out? If, as a result of world-
wide market involvement and market pressures, slaves in the eighteenth

century began to be worked to death within some seven or eight years, down from a much longer life expectancy, where can the plan for this large-scale destruction of members of the black race be located? And why was there no serious reflection on the part of slaveholding society concerning the long-run economic consequences for the slave system as a whole, to say nothing of the humanitarian and moral considerations, dictated by the waste of such a cruel and seemingly "irrational" system? And where was the rest of the world? Ideology, racism, and the availability of surplus labor to exploit, be it in the American South or in the Nazi slave labor camps, are certainly operative and important factors, but they are only partial explanations.

These are important questions since they force us to probe more deeply and fundamentally into the nature of social structures and systems. Aside from the presence or absence of intentions and plans, it must be investigated which forms of social organization are more likely to guarantee the preservation rather than the systematic destruction of lives through structural violence. Which forms of social organization also make it less likely for a massive genocide to occur? Along these lines it can be hypothesized that the less a society is permeated by structural violence, the lower will be the likelihood of genocide and mass destruction, for societies with lower levels of structural violence are also less likely to allow for planned large-scale genocide. The less individuals' lives are ruled by anonymous forces, i.e., the less they are subject to structural violence of any kind, the less likely it is that they will become involved as perpetrators in an event of genocide. Conversely, in societies where all are perpetrated upon, all become perpetrators in one way or another. Therefore, freedom from structural violence and the anonymous forces that dominate modern man seems to be one precondition for overcoming our age of genocide. For, if in history we have increasingly moved to more frequent and massive forms of genocide as anonymous and impersonal domination increased, it follows that, aside from personal domination and intentions, the structural domination—that anonymous domination exerted by the character of an entire social system—would have to be reversed. Not necessarily eliminating genocide resulting from personal domination or the exercise of that power (by dictator, tyrant, king, tribal chieftain, for example), this reversal may contribute to the mitigation of the massive and frequent genocides that have been part of the landscape of modern human intercourse. Making genocide by definition dependent on the existence of any intention and plan to destroy lives, therefore, seems historically and politically too limiting.

What is required, then, is a greater degree of reflection upon and awareness of the anonymous societal forces that frame and propel our existence so that we can begin the arduous task of eliminating the structural violence that leads to domination, inequality, and the possibility of

genocide. Ultimately what seems to be needed is a society that can provide an equal access to power and resources for all with a minimum degree of personal or structural coercion. We are fully aware of the utopian nature of our suggestions and recognize that such a world order may never be achieved. Nevertheless, we stress our conviction that efforts in this direction must begin. We believe that the clarification of this predicament must be attempted so that the struggle to eliminate structural violence and domination can be initiated. Correct action requires understanding. Whatever progress is made in this pursuit, be it modest or radical, will contribute to diminishing the possibility that in the future we will engage in genocide, this most pernicious of anti-life-affirming behaviors.

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