
Introduction



In the Karen language, there's a word, "myo dong," that didn't exist until survivors of genocide against the Karen created it. It's a term they created to describe what was happening to them and their families: the torching of villages, the slaughter of children, and the intentional undoing of a culture. The fact that people had to create a new word in their language to describe their own eradication is a small lens into the central question of this book. At every point in human history and in every country on this planet, communities have been attacked not for what they've done but for who they are: their ethnicity, their faith, their language, their heritage. And still, the words we use to understand and condemn these crimes are loaded, messy, and deeply political.

This book covers the history of ethnic cleansing and genocide, two words you should be familiar with. Among the most important, and most urgently moral ideas in contemporary international law and human rights, ethnic cleansing and genocide are catastrophes of unparalleled human scope. This book tells their story, from the first recorded mass deportations ordered by the kings of the Neo-Assyrian Empire to atrocities being committed right now in the twenty-first century. It's not an objective overview. Atrocities like the Roman destruction of Carthage, the Ottoman destruction of the Armenians, the Holocaust, Rwanda, Syria, Burma, Sudan, Gaza (all events catalogued here) require our moral seriousness. Looking at them directly requires empathy and a strong mind.

The book is structured around three fundamental questions. Firstly, what is ethnic cleansing and genocide? Secondly, how has it been perpetrated throughout history? And thirdly, why does it still continue today, despite seventy years of international law?

Ethnic cleansing is a relatively recent term; it did not come into widespread use until the Yugoslav Wars in the 1990s. But the practice itself is ancient. It is the deliberate forcible removal of ethnic, racial, or religious groups from a given territory, by deportation, terror, or massacre, or by combinations of these acts, with the intent of making that territory ethnically homogeneous. Methods range from mass murder, forced march, and concentration camps, to more subtle techniques of economic strangulation, cultural suppression, and the gradual bureaucratic dissolution of a people and its rights within a given territory. The term is still in dispute. Definitions vary. Some scholars define it to include coercive assimilation. Others consider ethnic cleansing a synonym for genocide. International law has yet to clarify the distinction.

Genocide is defined by Article II of the 1948 United Nations Genocide Convention as "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group." Raphael Lemkin, a Polish-Jewish lawyer who coined the word genocide, after years of lobbying the international community to criminalize attacks against specific populations, helped draft and shepherd through negotiation the Genocide Convention. Lemkin's dream of a convention that would end acts of genocide was, from its inception, a compromised one. Reluctant to open colonies

up to allegations of genocide, powerful states watered down language that included political groups, gender-based killings, and cultural destruction. Lemkin believed the convention to be a failure. He wasn't wrong. But the term he bequeathed to us remains one of our most important: It identified a reality that always was, but had never been named.

One of the central questions the book considers is the link between ethnic cleansing and genocide. Ethnic cleansing aims at forcibly removing a group from a particular area, while genocide involves the intent to destroy that group, in whole or in part. Though these acts are not identical, they exist on a continuum, and one often develops into the other. When removal is not possible, perpetrators may resort to killing. Once killing begins, removal is no longer considered. The distinction between the two is real but unclear at the boundaries, and perpetrators themselves often disregard it once violence begins.

The book is divided into 2 parts and 46 chapters, each building on the last.

Chapter One lays the conceptual groundwork. It discusses what ethnic cleansing is, how governments and scholars have defined it, how international organizations define it, and why the definition is important. The chapter argues that this discussion is not purely semantic. If we call something genocide, ethnic cleansing, or a crime against humanity, it can affect what legal recourse is available to victims, which courts can prosecute these crimes, and whether the international community has a responsibility to respond. This chapter reviews several definitional debates and how ethnic cleansing became part of the modern political and legal lexicon.

Chapter Two focuses on genocide – its definitions, legal frameworks, and contentious debates over what exactly falls under the term. We examine Raphael Lemkin's original broad conceptualization of genocide, the subsequent narrow definition that entered the Genocide Convention, and the space between these two definitions that perpetrators have exploited since the Convention was enacted. We discuss intent, the hardest part of any genocide to prove, and review major legal bodies from the Nuremberg trials to today's International Criminal Court that have sought to bring perpetrators to justice.

Chapter Three looks at three accelerants of genocide and ethnic cleansing: religion, war, and colonialism. None of these are root causes, but they set the context. Religion has been used time and again to target minorities for destruction. War hides these acts, creates emergencies, and removes normal restraints on mass violence. Colonialism, especially settler colonialism, is a constant driver of ethnic cleansing—from the Americas and Australia to the present. These factors are crucial for understanding atrocity wherever and whenever it occurs.

Chapters Four through Forty-Six are where the heart of the book lies: an encyclopedia of ethnic cleansing campaigns and genocides from ancient history to the modern day. Starting in the ancient world with Assyrian deportations, the destruction of Carthage, and massacres of Melos, it travels through the Middle Ages, the early modern period of religious cleansing and colonization, the machine-powered killing frenzies of the twentieth century, and right up through today's bloodletting. Individual cases are analyzed both on their own merits and as part of the larger history of how people have violently altered the demographic makeup of their regions.

Books about genocide and ethnic cleansing can fail in two opposite ways. They can become abstract: approaches to mass atrocities that theorize rather than reckon with human catastrophe. Or they can become paralyzed: catalogues of horror that neither explain their causes nor identify their patterns or prevention. This book tries to do neither.

This is not a list of inevitable tragedies. Ethnic cleansing and genocide are not natural acts; they result from choices. Leaders, officials, propagandists, and citizens all chose to act or accept violence against neighbors. Studying these choices and their reasons and justifications is our best hope to prevent recurrence.

The 20th century was known as the century of genocide. The 21st appears poised to earn that nickname as well. From the genocide in Sudan, to Gaza, to Myanmar, and beyond, at the time of writing, we continue to witness large-scale atrocities that show the conventions, tribunals, and "never again" pledges made in response to the Holocaust have failed to go far enough. Accountability is still rare. Denial is still commonplace. The conditions that allow genocide to occur; nationalism, war, the dehumanization of minority groups, international institutions failing to act, have not disappeared.

This book has no simple answers. But it offers something better than answers: an honest assessment of what occurred, based on the best scholarship available, that acknowledges both the complexities of what happened and the humanity of the people who endured it. The Armenians marched into the Syrian desert. The Rohingya were driven into the sea. The Yazidis were sold into slavery. The Tutsi were hunted through Rwanda's hills. They were not statistics or numbers. They were people with names, families, and their own languages and histories. This is my attempt to remember them that way.

The cases presented in Chapters 4 through 46 vary widely in the amount and quality of available evidence: ancient cases depend on sometimes-contested archaeological and textual records; modern cases are often documented with harrowing (and often incomparable) detail by international courts and tribunals, human rights organizations, and eyewitness accounts. In each case, I have endeavored to present the facts to the best of my ability, to distinguish the established from the controversial, and to judge different moments in human history by the same standards.

Debates over what should be considered genocide or ethnic cleansing have never been solely academic exercises. They are always political, legal, and moral. This book is no exception. It challenges you to take these considerations seriously, because, as the history presented here shows, nothing less than the highest stakes are at issue.

A Word on Ethnic Cleansing



The term ethnic cleansing is used to describe the planned elimination or removal of all or part of an ethnically, racially, or religiously defined population from a determined geographical area, for the purpose of establishing an area that will be purely made up of one ethnic, racial, or religious group. Direct forms of ethnic cleansing may include the forcible deportation or transfer of a population from a determined area; indirect forms may include but are not limited to murder, rape, enforced disappearances and arson of non-combatant, political, or ethnic civilian residents, intended to create an atmosphere of terror that will force the victims to leave and never return. The definition remains a subject of dispute between academic disciplines, governments, and various international bodies. Some sources consider coercive assimilation a form of ethnic cleansing, while others describe ethnic cleansing as a synonym for genocide or cultural genocide.

Ethnic cleansing was first used to describe the behaviors of the ethnic Albanians towards the Kosovo Serbs during the Yugoslav Wars from 1991-1999, and gained popularity for that purpose. Ethnic cleansing has been noted as an increasing academic and journalistic term since that time. Initially, there were many studies that connected ethnic cleansing to existing levels of hostility between groups. More recent studies support the cause of ethnic cleansing as a result of geographic and historical changes needed by nations to create homogenous populations for purposes of security or democratization. In addition, not every country uses ethnic cleansing when experiencing these pressures.

Though ethnic cleansing is a term that is not defined within the framework of international law, some elements of ethnic cleansing could still be found to violate international laws, specifically they could be found to be guilty of a crime against humanity. Genocide could also apply to some instances of ethnic cleansing.

Records of ethnic cleansing date back to antiquity. According to scholarship on resettlement policies, the Neo-Assyrian Empire has been recognized as an early example, being developed from the 9th to the 7th centuries BCE. The use of the Greek word *andrapodismos* as it relates to the mass killing and enslavement of civilian populations by Atropatene provides a historical example of ethnic cleansing. At this time, the Atropatians destroyed the city of Sestos in approximately 353 BCE. All members of the Sestos population were enslaved or killed and nothing alive remained, not even their livestock. When Alexander the Great destroyed Thebes sometime in 335 BCE, after enslaving the surviving members of the Theban population, he stole from and burned every structure and item located within the city limits, completing his intent of destroying Thebes as an area that could be repopulated.

In his definition of genocide, Raphael Lemkin refers to the genocide of Amerindians as a type of genocide, while others feel that "ethnic cleansing" would be a more appropriate description of events experienced by native Americans.

Gary Anderson references an example from the 1860s when the Russian state employed Russian soldiers to remove Circassians from their homelands, and it was referred to by Russian officials as an "act of cleansing."

Before the start of World War I, the term for Ethnic Cleansing (cleanse a race) already existed in Czech, Polish, French and German. It was only after World War I when this term began to be widely used in the English language, specifically through the Carnegie Endowment report on the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, that created a new language to discuss the violent actions taken against certain ethnic groups. The Nazi regime's plan to create a Judeo-free Europe, through the Holocaust (Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing of the Jews), is an example of this.

Nazi Germany also created a plan for the Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing of the Slavic people to establish a "Generplan Ost" in Eastern Europe.

Both the Ustaša regime in Croatia and Chetnik militia groups in Serbia utilized double-speak to justify their own raging campaigns of ethnic cleansing against one another. These two factions referred to their campaigns of genocide and ethnic cleansing as "Border Cleansing." In 1947, the 750,000 Palestinians who were forcibly removed from their homes as part of the Nakba were victims of ethnic cleansing.

According to the UN Commission on Experts, ethnic cleansing has been defined as follows: Ethnic cleansing "is the policy or practice of an ethnic or religious group to remove by the use of violence, the threat of violence or other means one or more groups of persons from a specific territory." Ethnic cleansing may involve killing, wounding, raping, arbitrarily arresting and detaining persons, as well as forcibly displacing persons from their homes, and deliberately creating hunger and disease among the targeted population through the destruction of infrastructure, homes, properties, and culture, and through destruction of access to food and medical care via economic and social means.

It has been determined that acts of ethnic cleansing constitute crimes against humanity and may lead to genocide under the United Nations Convention on the Prevention of Genocide.

The widely accepted definition set forth by the United Nations is: "To render an area ethnically homogeneous by use of violence or intimidation to compel persons of different ethnic or religious groups to leave." Ethnic cleansing occurs in a variety of contexts, including forced emigration and population transfer, deportation and genocide.

In general, the common thread among all acts of ethnic cleansing is the coercive removal of individuals or groups from the land they occupy.

There is no legal definition of ethnic cleansing that allows any legal remedy to be pursued against individuals for genocide, or to proceed with the prosecution of those crimes successfully. As a result, the phrase is often used to describe either forced displacement or mass emigration. The entry of this language into the definition of genocide can diminish the attention received by those harmed by the accompanying violence. No international treaties define ethnic cleansing, however, forcing the departure of a person from their home through a process that potentially meets the definition of ethnic cleansing is considered by the ICC and ICTY to be a crime against humanity. Any acts of violence (e.g. mass murder) that occur on a large scale and meet the same criteria may also be legally categorized as a violation of international law (as a crime against humanity or as genocide).

There are many different examples of genocide that have not been punished in a court of law, including the removal of Germans from their homes after World War II. Law professor Timothy V. Waters has warned that if there is a further instance of genocide in the future, it will most likely also go unpunished.

In Michael Mann's *The Dark Side of Democracy* (2004), he explains that ethnic cleansing often happens as a result of nationalist objectives and democratizing efforts that tie citizenship only

to certain ethnicities, while excluding all other ethnicities. It is improbable that stable democratic governments will engage in ethnic cleansing on their minority populations, and it is also improbable that most stable, authoritarian governments will engage in the practice, with some exceptions to the rule. Most cases of ethnic cleansing occur in countries that are transitioning towards democracy or democratizing. Ethnic cleansing is most likely to occur when an individual ethnicity meets another individual's social class, when a number of ethnically and socially opposed parties to the same area are competing, and when an opposing party believes there is an ethnically and socially opposed group that has ambitions toward the same land as the party making the complaint.

According to Michael Mann's analysis, only a functioning country or organization with a high level of capability and organizational ability can carry out acts of ethnic cleansing; therefore, failed nations cannot carry out acts of ethnic cleansing. The perpetrators of ethnic cleansing also tend to receive support from nationalistic and statist entities. The phenomena of ethnic cleansing were very common in Europe during the Age of Nationalism, specifically in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, particularly for multi-ethnic states that were afraid of losing territory or having their minorities secede. Ethnic cleansing was also very prominent in the context of interstate wars.

The terms ethnic cleansing and genocide are often considered to represent a continuum of violence, wherein genocide represents the most extreme form of violence on the continuum. While both ethnic cleansing and genocide may include elements such as forced population transfer, the objective of ethnic cleansing is to remove a specific ethnic group, whereas the goal of genocide is to eliminate an ethnic group completely.

According to scholars like Norman Naimark, ethnic cleansing and genocide are distinct but related ideas. Ethnic cleansing can often lead to genocide. As such, William Schabas sees ethnic cleansing as an indicator that genocide may occur, especially when a group is unsuccessful at being removed from an area.

A number of scholars who study genocide specify that there is no difference between the act of ethnic cleansing and genocide, contending that mass deportations will result in the annihilation of the targeted population, which the perpetrators of such acts also appreciate. They allege ethnic cleansing is a euphemism for genocide, and/or it is a euphemism for cultural genocide.

During and after World War II, the Yugoslav Partisans committed mass murder, engaged in ethnic cleansing and deported many to create a new state without Italians, anti-communist Slavs, or the local population. As part of this process the Italian Istrian-Dalmatian exodus took place forcing 230,000 to 350,000 ethnic Italians to leave for Italy or other countries. After 1947, further pressure was applied causing additional intimidation and departure. By 2002, only about 22,000 ethnic Italians remained in the former Yugoslav republics.

There were also examples of ethnic cleansing in the area during the Lebanese Civil War in the 1970s-1980s. Prior to development of these active resettlement policies (e.g., Christian, Druze and Palestinians), through various forms of ethnic cleansing and forced migration, hundreds of thousands of people were displaced.

Throughout the conflicts of the 1990s in the former Yugoslavia (e.g., Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo), people were subjected to ethnic cleansing. Among other things, people were intimidated, pushed from their homes, and murdered. Religious and cultural properties were also destroyed. Both the Croat and Serb forces have been convicted by international courts of committing acts of ethnic cleansing to create mono-ethnic successor states. Similarly, Israeli shepherds have pushed Palestinian shepherds off their land, denying them access to grazing rights in the West Bank, which represents an instance of economic warfare for nationalistic purposes.

Norman Naimark, a political scientist at Stanford University, says that those who commit ethnic cleansing will destroy the many symbols related to their victims. This would include temples, books, monuments, graveyards, and in some instances even street names. To erase every memory of

their victims' past, they will typically try to eliminate as many symbols as possible. In addition, those who have survived the acts of ethnic cleansing will often bear severe emotional scars from the trauma they incurred by witnessing or being subjected to the actual acts of brutality. The psychological consequences of this trauma include PTSD, depression, anxiety, and long-term emotional harm. These psychological symptoms not only impact individual people but may last through generations and affect the entire collective health and identity of all the individuals in a society.

The actions of ethnic cleansing have many forms such as deportation, mass killing, and terrorist acts. However, the goal of all these actions is the intentional and systematic removal of an ethnic or religious group from their homes and territory against their will. Ethnic cleansing is a crime under international law and is therefore punishable under international law. The destruction of a population based solely on their race or religious beliefs is not acceptable and requires the punishing of those responsible for the actions committed against the people. Many countries and organizations have become more aware of the problem of ethnic cleansing and there are now international legal systems that exist. Although these systems have improved, ethnic cleansing continues to occur as a result of nationalism, democratization, and political manipulation of ethnic differences. The use of the terms "ethnic cleansing" and "genocide" can often be confusing, however, both terms describe the same general acts. Oftentimes an act of ethnic cleansing can lead to genocide, when the focus changes from the removal of a population to the total destruction or killing of a given population. The effective prevention of all forms of homicide will depend on the existence of sound international law, and by having the will to intervene to stop the persecution of a population before that persecution leads to a situation of genocide.

A Word on Genocide



Genocide is the intentional killing, in whole or in part, of a group of people. In most cases, this includes death on a massive scale. According to many legal standards and scholars, genocide will always be targeted at the group, whether the act itself is lethal or non-lethal. For example, the act of forcing someone to have a child of a different race to “breed out” the perceived inferior race can be viewed as an act of genocide, as is taking a child away from their parents to specifically raise the children in a different culture.

In the 1940s, Raphael Lemkin defined genocide and worked towards its gaining recognition as a crime on the international level. The Genocide Convention went on to give a much narrower definition that included just five acts perpetrated on a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. Still, today, there continues to be disagreement about exactly what constitutes genocide among academic scholars.

The Genocide Convention defines five acts as genocide:

1. Killing members of a group;
2. Causing serious bodily or mental harm;
3. Deliberately inflicting conditions meant to destroy the group;
4. Imposing measures to prevent births and
5. Forcibly transferring children to another group.

The United Nations Commission of Experts investigating the Bosnian Genocide expanded the conventional definition of genocide, broadening it to include acts like torture, arbitrary arrest, execution, sexual violence, forcible population displacement, and destruction of property, provided these are committed with genocidal intent.

Throughout history, genocide has occurred during war, imperialism, colonialism, and under totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. Repeatedly, international intervention has failed to prevent or stop genocidal activities. For many, the Holocaust remains the event most strongly associated with genocide, symbolizing the deliberate targeting of innocent victims due to their group identity.

The most serious type of crime is genocide, which is commonly referred to as the “crime of crimes.” Genocide is usually committed by governments and regularly committed by average citizens perceiving themselves as facing a life-threatening risk. When committing such acts, there is usually a violent method used, such as murdering adult men, while non-lethal methods are used against women and children, such as sexual violence. Additional methods that commonly accompany genocide include taking away individuals from their lands through forced removal, taking land away from citizens, and destroying the culture. Denial and lack of prosecution by the government or entities acting on behalf of the state are characteristics of genocide.

Polish-Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin coined the term genocide between 1941 and 1943 by combining the Greek word for 'race' and the Latin word for 'killing.' Inspired by learning about the Armenian genocide, Lemkin became committed to preventing genocide. In 1944, he published *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, by which time his definition had evolved to include attacks on a group's political and social institutions, language, culture, religion, and economic means, in addition to mass killing. Lemkin saw genocide as directed at individuals because of their group membership, not simply as isolated crimes. He believed criminalizing genocide would foster international tolerance.

Lemkin's definition of "nation" was very broad, potentially including any human collectivity. He viewed genocide as often colonial in nature and analyzed it in the context of European empires, including Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. His original definition of genocidal acts was much broader than the five specific acts later enumerated in the Genocide Convention. The first legal use of the term occurred in a 1946 Polish tribunal's verdict against SS official Arthur Greiser, which applied Lemkin's original definition.

At the Nuremberg trial, there was no possibility under international law to prosecute a state for any consideration of atrocious crimes, if such crimes were committed solely against a nation's own citizens, or during the course of that nation's own civil war. Because of this, state actions towards its own citizens have no recourse under international law. In 1946, Raphael Lemkin took his proposal for defining genocide as a crime to the United Nations, where he experienced more resistance to his proposal than he expected. States were concerned that the broad definitions of genocide would provide a basis for the United Nations to investigate the treatment of their own indigenous groups, colonialism, racial discrimination, and so forth, and that, therefore, they would be unwilling to accept a draft convention that could expose them to potential international accountability.

The major powers of the time, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union, sought to ensure that the Genocide Convention would not be enforceable against them or apply to them. The involvement of decolonized nations was very limited, as only a handful participated in developing the convention. Additionally, most countries did not want to help empower victims or assist with accountability for genocide. As a result, Lemkin's overall idea of genocide was significantly reduced and now excludes political groups, gender-related violence (including forced pregnancy and forced marriages), forced migration, and cultural genocide from the definition. Lemkin felt that the final convention would be a failure, as it favored colonial powers ahead of all other nations while omitting many forms of destruction of groups, which he believed were genocide.

On December 9, 1948, the United Nations adopted the Genocide Convention and it entered effect following ratification by 20 nations in 1951. As previously stated, genocide is defined by this convention as acts (such as killing others, imposing harm upon them, placing them into situations which will cause destruction to them, preventing births and removing children by force) done with the intention of destroying, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group.

Proving genocide legally requires proving that there was specific intent (*mens rea*) to destroy the group as such. This standard can be difficult for courts to prove. The dominant approach is the purposive approach, which requires that the perpetrators expressly intended to destroy the group. Others argue for a knowledge-based approach. Prosecutors often face significant hurdles proving that perpetrators intended destruction because perpetrators can often argue that they merely intended to remove the group, or that genocide was simply a byproduct of military actions.

The convention prohibits not only genocide but also attempted genocide and conspiracy to commit genocide. The convention bans genocide, attempted genocide, conspiracy, and direct public incitement to commit genocide. It does not, however, apply retroactively before 1951. Signatory states promise to prevent and punish genocide. Many have added these rules to their national laws. International criminal tribunals and courts use this definition. The International Criminal Court

prosecutes genocide. Genocide is forbidden under customary international law, so even non-signatory countries cannot commit genocidal acts. Authorities have often feared prosecuting those who have committed genocide, although some states have appointed commissions of inquiry rather than initiating prosecutions.

Article III of the Genocide Convention criminalizes attempted genocide, conspiracy, incitement, and complicity, but attempted genocide has seen little case law or scholarly attention.

In response to its failure to prevent the genocides in Bosnia and Rwanda during the 1990s, the UN established criminal tribunals for these atrocities, as well as other international crimes. The tribunals had mixed success, but the adoption of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2002 marked progress, with most countries ratifying the treaty. However, large countries like the U.S., China, India, Russia, and Turkey have not joined. Genocide has been prosecuted in domestic and international courts. There is no statute of limitations.

Khieu Samphan was the first former head of state convicted of genocide in 2018 for his role in the Cambodian genocide. Even though prosecutions cannot "repair the wrong of genocide," they help shape public understanding of historical events. The International Court of Justice has tried several genocide cases against states involving Bosnia, the Rohingya, and Gaza since the 1990s, in response to the Bosnian and Rwandan genocides, as well as the Kosovo conflict. Some early work in genocide studies assumed liberal and democratic nations were inherently incapable of committing genocide. Later scholars, including many working with the International Network of Genocide Scholars, challenged this idea, pointing out how Western ideas enabled genocide. The role of European colonialism in committing genocide against indigenous peoples was not originally studied under the paradigm of genocide, however, studies on settler colonialism, especially that of Patrick Wolfe, began to recast these atrocities in terms of genocide.

While much progress has been made, the majority of genocide studies continue to focus on only a few genocides from the 20th century, leaving many others overlooked. Genocide scholars seek to study and understand genocide objectively as well as prevent it from happening in the future.

Determining what exactly constitutes genocide is controversial and fiercely contested each time allegations of genocide emerge. Martin Shaw, a sociologist, writes, "the very concept of genocide is hotly debated whenever an alleged instance occurs, despite (or perhaps because) it sits at the heart of public discussions." Some scholars and advocates use the Genocide Convention's definition, while others adopt narrower definitions that only refer to mass killing, or only apply when victims are innocent and defenseless.

Because most genocides take place during war, it can be difficult to distinguish genocide from genocidal warfare and other wartime atrocities. Genocide is also defined in contrast to coercive forms of governance that aim to modify behavior rather than destroy communities wholesale. Brief or isolated events similar to genocide have been described as "genocidal violence".

Acts of cultural genocide or ethnocide (e.g. destroying the language, culture, or way of life of a group) were omitted from the Genocide Convention. However, most scholars of genocide would include acts of cultural genocide as genocide, when committed with the intent to destroy the group. Many sociological definitions of genocide conflate it with crimes against humanity, including extermination. Lemkin's definition included political and social groups, but they were omitted from the Convention, allowing perpetrators to circumvent application of the label genocide by claiming they were targeting political or military foes.

The term genocide carries a powerful value judgment, being seen as the ultimate expression of human evil. Although sometimes celebrated by perpetrators, genocide has always met criticism. The idea that genocide stands atop a hierarchy of atrocity crimes, as worse than war crimes or crimes against humanity, is controversial. Critics argue that this narrow focus crowds out concern for protecting individuals to privileged groups and emphasizes the intent of states at the expense of

civilian suffering. A. Dirk Moses has argued that this can distract attention from addressing other causes of mass deaths of civilians, such as blockades and bombing. The concept of "attempted genocide", which has been criminalized, has rarely been prosecuted, leading some scholars to argue in favor of increasing attention to purely intent-based, smaller-scale attacks on groups.

Popular notions of genocide were shaped by the Holocaust, by which most people conjure up images of innocent victims targeted not for any political purpose but rather because of baseless hatred. In practice, genocide is rarely an end in itself; it is more often a tool used to try to achieve another goal and is usually a tactic of last resort. War is by far the biggest enabler of genocide as it creates the context, justifications, and cover for large-scale violence against other people. Genocides frequently happen in times of imperial expansion or during attempts to consolidate power after winning a regime change or civil war.

Genocides are seldom planned years ahead of time. More commonly, they result from a process of increasing radicalization and are often committed after resistance by the victim group provokes even greater violence. Genocide perpetrators have also often killed not out of desire, but from overstated or delusional fears for their own survival, committing atrocities they sincerely believe are justified by self-defense. Ideology matters but is seldom a cause in itself. Genocide has often been committed for what are believed to be compelling moral reasons, framed by the perpetrators as appeals to loyalty, duty, or self-defense against victimized populations.

There is debate over whether genocide stems from abnormal ideologies or is deeply connected to ordinary political ideologies and moral categories. Victims are demonized and marginalized before violence erupts, and guilt is often attributed to groups as a whole. Others also note rational motivations, like material benefits, theft, or land-grabbing: Genocide occurs not only for ideological reasons or fear for security, but also for material gains.

Genocide destroys individuals because they belong to a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group that the perpetrators of genocide wish to destroy. Groups that are victims of genocide are often dehumanized and accused of threatening the perpetrator group's very existence. Such groups are blamed and scapegoated for being criminals or enemy combatants. Genocide violence often disproportionately targets adult men of the victim group for killing, since they are more likely to be able to actively resist. Women and children are more likely to be subjected to sexual assault, enslavement, and forcible transfer. Indirect killing through forced deportation, starvation, and disease, as well as preventing people from practicing their culture and attacking their homes and properties, are also aspects of genocide.

Survivors face trauma and displacement, and routinely confront denial and impunity as they fight for acknowledgement, justice, and reparations. If victim groups resist, using armed force resistance may affect perceptions of external audiences, being employed to justify or minimize genocide, or denying that the violence even constituted genocide. Long-term resistance of intended victims occurs in many genocides and is frequently used by perpetrators and others to construct narratives around the violence.

Genocides are usually orchestrated by states through their elites, political parties, bureaucracies, armed forces, and paramilitaries. Research points to elites as the decision-makers and state structures as enablers, often using bureaucratic diffusion of responsibility. Military forces are often the main perpetrators due to their training and obligation to follow orders, but genocides are also commonly executed by paramilitaries to maintain secrecy and plausible deniability. In some cases, civilians become primary agents of genocide, especially in remote frontier areas.

The involvement of normal people in genocide is not well understood. Most participants are neither psychologically disturbed individuals nor zealous believers. Concepts such as obedience, conformity, and diffusion of responsibility play major roles. Ideological or racist propaganda does

not appear to be as motivating for involvement as once believed and can sometimes occur after the individual becomes involved in atrocity-committing, particularly with escalating violence.

Women can also commit genocide. Although this reality was ignored for a long time, recognition is now being given. Individual actors may kill one person during genocide and save another. In total, decisions and structures are understood fairly well on the one hand; on the other hand, what drives ordinary people who participate in genocide is complicated and unknown.

Perpetrators take advantage of the technologies at hand: they kill en masse with modern technology (gas chambers, Holocaust) or environmentally (forced marches in the desert, Herero genocide). Avoiding upsetting other nations, some governments engage in smaller-scale attacks such as drone killings, rather than risk looking like they are committing a "classic" genocide.

Genocide is often understood by the general public as synonymous with mass killing, but definitions of genocide often allow for genocide to occur without killing victims. Scholars specifically researching colonial genocide have noted that indigenous groups were also destroyed through methods such as land theft, forced labor, ecological destruction, apartheid, and systemic discrimination. Starvation and other forms of deprivation (of water, shelter, medical care) are examples of indirect killing.

Deportation or forced displacement is yet another strategy of genocide. Genocide victims may be killed in the process of deportation or expulsion. In many cases, perpetrators destroy the homes of indigenous peoples or outright steal their land (as occurred during the Armenian genocide). Cultural genocide is when a group is systematically destroyed through non-violent means. Strategies include targeting a group's language, religion, heritage, leaders, and way of life. Cultural genocide has been especially widespread in settler-colonial contexts and is often accompanied by the kidnapping of children (residential schools). Perpetrators of genocide have often denied indigenous groups' existence or right to identification.

Raphael Lemkin and others have retroactively applied definitions of genocide to historical events. Some definitions of genocide date the earliest cases to prehistoric tribal conflicts, where warfare regularly included the total elimination of a defeated tribe or absorption of the victor. Historical documents such as the Hebrew Bible also contain what many describe as genocides, which often involved the murder of adult males and the enslavement or assimilation of females and children. Ancient and pre-modern genocides were often conducted pragmatically rather than ideologically.

Some historians and analysts, including Mark Levene, argue that real genocide is tied to the rise of the modern state and Western expansion, and thus conflicts prior to this development should not be considered genocide. All empires have been violent, but they sought to rule their conquered subjects rather than kill them outright (although they sometimes committed genocide when confronted with resistance). However, settler colonialism, especially in instances where European settlers were in search of land instead of labor, created favorable conditions for genocide, which would have been less likely in classical empires. The lack of law enforcement on frontiers allowed for great impunity in committing these acts, which were later justified by state force and law.

The twentieth century has been referred to as the "century of genocide". Totalitarian regimes were responsible for atrocities on an unprecedented scale during the two World Wars. The Holocaust was the prototypical modern genocide, revealing how state infrastructure and extremist ideology could fuel organized mass murder. Despite the Genocide Convention and pledges of "never again," genocide has occurred many times since World War II. Mass killings regularly occurred during the Cold War. Groups targeted by these killings were often political or social rather than fitting the narrow legal definition of genocide. Genocide again became a focus of media attention in the 1990s, when a spate of ethnic massacres occurred in Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

Advances in communication technology in the 21st century have changed the dynamics of both committing genocide and rallying the international community on behalf of victims.

After genocide, survivors often seek justice and recognition through legal systems and reparations, but unless the perpetrators are militarily defeated (as after the Holocaust or Rwandan genocide), accountability is rare. Most states and their citizens deny, ignore, or reject responsibility for genocide, trying to move on from the past. Even acknowledgements of victims' suffering are elusive, though such acknowledgements improve relations between groups.

The effects of genocide reach not only those who were victimized or victimized others but also bystanders and even beneficiaries as well. Social effects have been less studied, however. Studies on survivors have examined mental health outcomes like depression, anxiety, PTSD, and post-traumatic growth with mixed results. Demographically speaking, most societies recover after genocide, though this depends on where they are in the demographic transition. Survivors of genocide often suffer forced displacement and have at times been labeled immigration offenders when arriving in new countries to start their lives over. Further, the psychological effects can cause impacts that effect future generations of the group.

Genocide remains one of the most complex and significant issues confronting humanity. From Raphael Lemkin's coining of the term and advocacy for its international prohibition to contemporary debates regarding its definition and prosecution, the concept of genocide has evolved. The question of what constitutes genocide continues to generate extensive discussion. The 1948 Genocide Convention, shaped by political considerations, omitted protections for political groups, cultural violence, and gender-based killings that Lemkin had sought. Despite the establishment of international tribunals and a permanent international court, accountability for genocide remains rare. Genocide persists in the present, with recent occurrences demonstrating that enabling conditions, such as war, dictatorship, and the delegitimization of groups, remain prevalent. Ongoing inquiry into the causes, perpetrators, victims, and prevention of genocide is essential.

Roles of Religion, War and Colonization in Shaping the Dynamics of Genocide



Genocide Attributed to Religious Differences

Religious differences are frequently identified as a catalyst for genocide. When religious definitions of group membership intersect with ethnic, national, racial, or political distinctions, inter-group competition can intensify. Majority groups may perceive religious minorities as existential threats, labeling them as heretics, infidels, atheists, or scapegoats. Acts of violence or discrimination against these minorities are often justified through religious rhetoric and endorsed by political and religious elites, as well as organizations. Such actions may be framed as divinely mandated, religiously necessary, or as measures to purify society. Persistent religious competition, fears regarding resource access or political participation, efforts to enforce social conformity, and anxieties about cultural or demographic change can become particularly dangerous when amplified by religious teachings. Both state and non-state militant groups may exploit religious differences to advance political objectives or incite paranoia against perceived enemies, utilizing anti-minority propaganda and enacting discriminatory legislation that legitimizes prejudice. In specific social, political, and economic contexts, religion can thus serve as a tool for perpetrators to justify acts of genocide.

The Relationship Between Genocide and War

War may also lead to situations in which genocide becomes possible. Once a country is engaged in war, genocidal policies by government officials are more likely to go unchecked by judicial branches or public opinion. War also allows extremist political leaders or factions to more easily single out targets for elimination. War-time propaganda can cause hysteria, aggression, and dehumanization that allow military bodies or civilians to see targeted groups as enemies of the state or threats to national security. Killing or deportation may be more likely to be portrayed as a military necessity. Programs of genocide may also hide behind war efforts. Additionally, war can cause economic breakdown leading to starvation, which in turn prompts groups to attempt to eliminate their competitors for resources, land, or political power.

Colonialism as a Catalyst for Genocide

Colonialism often involves imperial land seizure and expansion, land dispossession, resource extraction, and cultural erasure. These processes have often included genocidal violence perpetrated against Indigenous populations. Colonialism frequently entailed imperial land acquisition, dispossession of Indigenous populations, resource extraction, and cultural erasure. These processes

often involved genocidal violence directed at Indigenous peoples and, at times, settler populations. Historian Patrick Wolfe observed that "the question of genocide is never far from discussions of settler colonialism." Although colonialism does not invariably result in genocide, historical studies have consistently identified a strong correlation between colonial practices and genocidal outcomes. The Enlightenment (also known as the Age of Reason) helped bolster social classifications that placed whites and certain Europeans on top while rendering Black, Indigenous, and people of color as inferior. Processes of colonization often began with attacks on Native homes and lives, and the portrayal of Native people as backwards or uncivilized.

Some genocide scholars, including Israel Charny, have expanded the definition of genocide to encompass acts perpetrated. Notable colonial-era examples include the genocide of Aboriginal Tasmanians by European settlers, the genocide of Indigenous Californian tribes during the California Gold Rush in the mid-1800s, and the Taíno genocide during the Spanish colonization of Hispaniola. The Taíno genocide in Hispaniola exemplifies the link between colonialism and genocide. Following Columbus's arrival and the Spanish colonization of Hispaniola in 1492, the Taíno population, originally numbering in the hundreds of thousands or possibly over a million, was subjected to murder, enslavement, and exploitation. By 1514, only 32,000 Taíno remained of the original Taíno population.

In Tasmania, during the period known as the Black War (1820s–1832), British colonists waged genocide against Aboriginal Tasmanians, killing almost 900 Aboriginal Tasmanians and nearly wiping out the island's Indigenous population. In California, when gold was discovered there in the mid-1840s, thousands of people moved west to participate in the California Gold Rush, as facilitated by government-sponsored migration. Native tribes in California were then subjected to genocide. California's first governor, Peter H. Burnett, praised the "war of extermination" against Native Americans in explicit terms, and his rhetoric was echoed by newspapers at the time. By the time of the Gold Rush's end, Indigenous tribes in California faced even worse atrocities.

There is debate over other alleged incidents. The Tibetan Government in Exile claims that Chinese rule caused the death of 1.2 million Tibetans before China eased restrictions. Tibetologist Barry Sautman argues against the number as well as the term colonial or genocidal, citing political and legal equality of Tibetans.

Belgian colonial brutality in the Congo Free State has, until recently, been overlooked in popular Belgian culture and in Belgian educational curricula. Belgian atrocities committed during the colonization of the Congo Free State were largely absent from Belgian public discourse due in part to the destruction of the colonial-era archives, as well as a prolonged period of silence regarding Belgium's imperial role. Public discussion of Belgian colonial-era mass atrocities has since received greater attention, with publications such as Adam Hochschild's *King Leopold's Ghost*. This increased attention has led Belgium to begin reckoning with its colonial history.

A substantial body of international scholarship documents the strong connection between settler colonialism and genocide. Unlike immigrants, settlers seek to replace the original population, frequently resulting in the destruction of Indigenous societies.

Australian historian Ann Curthoys cites Leo Kuper, who wrote that European colonization of the Americas, West Indies, Australia, and Tasmania "was often associated with genocide." Noam Chomsky referred to settler colonialism as "the most murderous type of imperialism" and criticized the American unwillingness to recognize their own history of genocide.

Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Bernard Bailyn asserts that conquests by the Dutch and English could be as violent and "genocidal" as those conducted by the Spanish and Portuguese. While these histories are not lost, they are often deliberately overlooked. Historian David Stannard contrasts Spanish and Anglo-American colonial practices, arguing that the British conquest was

motivated by the need for land, necessitating extermination and the displacement of survivors onto reservations, whereas the Spanish conquest was driven by the demand for labor.

Gregory D. Smithers cites scholars who have characterized the colonization of North America as an "American holocaust." Historian Mark Levene associates state-building in Anglo-America with genocide and observes that Australian authorities have historically refused to address such acts. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz contends that settler colonialism inherently involved genocide, emphasizing that genocide does not require total destruction to meet its definition.

Historians such as Stephen Howe and Martin Shaw have emphasized the close relationship between colonialism and genocide. Shaw has argued that both victim and perpetrator groups committed genocidal massacres against civilians. Jacques Depelchin and Christian P. Sherrer maintain that the crimes of colonization, including genocide, were routinely denied or justified by nearly all colonizing European nations. Elyse Semerdjian asserts that settler colonial warfare represented a "slow-moving process that was always genocidal."

Genocide rarely has a single cause; rather, it evolves as multiple influences develop over time. As shown through this exploration, religion, war, and colonialism have each played central roles in enabling, rationalizing, and expediting genocide. Whether at home or abroad, propagandized against for their spirituality, nationality, or race, dominant power structures have often depended on dehumanizing the victim group and using political force to remove them. Understanding the converging reasons behind genocide is crucial to preventing it from happening again.