Genocide, Ethnic Cleansing, Mass Atrocity: Rational Policy, or Folly?

By Robert J. Muscat

Introduction

Human history has been marked by slaughter. In stone inscriptions going back 4,000 years or more, kings proudly recorded their destruction of enemy cities and peoples. In the past century, technologies for large-scale murder and for enflaming the minds of large numbers of potential killers have enabled perpetrators to inspire and implement the slaughtering of huge numbers of non-combatants and the ejection (ethnic cleansing) of entire populations. Despite the development and near-universal ratification of punitive international laws and conventions, new genocides and mass atrocities (GMAs) continue to occur.

At the same time, a vast array of scholars, institutes, museums, and conflict-resolution organizations has emerged to study GMAs and try to devise methods to settle dangerous conflicts and prevent emergence of future GMAs. The literature is immense and growing.

One perspective appears (surprisingly) to have been neglected: Did the genocides and massacres accomplish their strategic objectives? We know they have usually succeeded, if not entirely, in their proximate objective of eliminating or ejecting target populations. But did this aggression accomplish the ends for which the GMAs were launched as the means? The victims were killed not merely because they were disliked. Their elimination was a means to accomplish something: to "purify" the perpetrating people by eliminating an alleged source of biological or cultural contamination; or to ensure the political domination of the perpetrating (ethnic, national, religious, etc.) group; or to achieve identity homogeneity; or to facilitate a program of political, economic, and/or military consolidation or expansion; or some combination.

Have the GMAs achieved these objectives? Or have they (or some of them) turned out to be utter folly, failing strategically, even rendering the perpetrators worse off than before? In fact, history shows that some of these episodes have been delusional, reckless and self-defeating; in short, folly.

We explore these questions looking at a few, mostly recent, cases. Thumbnail sketches should be sufficient to illustrate the point. (For catalogues and accounts of genocides throughout history, see both Kiernan and Lieberman, cited in the bibliography.) As these cases demonstrate, GMAs can lead to results the opposite of those intended by the perpetrators.

The extensive literature on GMAs has covered the causes, sequences of events, and the cruelties employed. In examining consequences, the relevant time-frame may be short or long. In some cases, consequences have already had years to play out. Some consequences may be washed out in a few years or decades of historical change and economic recovery. Social and psychological effects are harder to nail down and may last longer, while inter-generational effects will attenuate and become more difficult to identify over time. In recent cases some significant consequences may not yet be evident. Inter-state and geopolitical consequences may last and be evident over long time periods, as has been the case in the Balkans.

Genocides and massacres have been perpetrated for many reasons, to achieve varied objectives, and have taken different forms and scales. Any attempt to embrace the whole range risks drawing generalizations from misconceived parallels and comparisons. Further, despite all the journalistic, scholarly, and philosophical scrutiny the GMAs have drawn, coverage has in fact been very uneven. In some major cases, complicit governments have not released internal documentation and have avoided any public truth-telling process or other transparent accounting.

For this essay, I define massacre as killings by government or by a group, not isolated murders by individuals. I also restrict the purview to purposive slaughters, excluding unpremeditated riots and pogroms. (Also set aside are massacres motivated by other-worldly delusion, such as the conviction of many ordinary Catholics during the sixteenth century French religious wars that slaughtering Protestants was a sacral act embodying God's wrath as the end of the world was approaching.) Typically, the perpetrators command overwhelming force. If both the winning and losing forces are more or less well organized and equipped, the more appropriate term is battle; the dead are conventionally termed casualties, not victims. If victors subsequently murder battle prisoners, the term

massacre does apply (as at Malmedy in 1944 where German military executed 84 American soldiers). In warfare, large-scale, post-battle killing of combatants or non-combatants (e.g. as reprisals) are violations of international conventions and merit the term massacre. In general, massacre is mass killing that crosses both legal and moral bounds.

Nazi Germany: Defeated by Genocide?

Historians of World War II cite many reasons why Germany lost. Some were losses of turning-point battles: El Alamein, Stalingrad. Other reasons are strategic: the German armies were overextended on the Eastern Front, and failed to reach the Russian oil fields; Hitler's decision to declare war on the U.S. after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor enabled Roosevelt to devote major resources to the war in Europe. Bad conflict management is also cited: Hitler's overconfidence in his own strategic decision-making, rejecting advice of his generals that could have avoided major blunders. Historians also credit Allied intelligence superiority. At bottom, Germany and Japan misjudged the capacity of American industry and the American political will to respond, while Hitler misjudged Soviet resilience. The Allies' material and manpower advantages more than compensated for all Allied mistakes.

However, one further Nazi error – which, if avoided, could have more than offset all the Nazi mistakes and Allied advantages – can be traced to the outset of Nazi rule in the 1930s: the failure of Germany's effort to develop a nuclear weapon. The failure was partly due to the anti-Semitic measures that forced the country's Jewish physicists to flee mostly to Britain and the U.S. Physicists of Jewish descent (or married to Jews) who remained in Germany nevertheless, were ejected from their academic and research institutions. Under the 1935 Nuremberg race laws, no less than one quarter of Germany's physicists were fired for being Jewish or having "Jewish blood." Other reasons cited for the atomic failure include the British destruction of Norway's "heavy water" production; the regime's decision not to devote the level of resources that might have solved the technical problems; technical errors by the remaining physicists; and the post-war claims (by Carl von Weiszacker and Werner Hiesenberg, the most prominent of the remaining "Aryan" physicists), that they had deliberately distorted their calculations in order to thwart the nuclear bomb research, claims shown to be

dubious. In a remark of singular stupidity, Hitler famously dismissed nuclear physics as "Jewish science." This senseless idea that a branch of science could derive substantive authority from its racial ("Aryan") character was developed by a clique of German physicists hostile to Jews, to Einstein personally, and to his theory of relativity. The Nazi leadership ultimately decided to support nuclear research anyway, but bereft of Jewish physicists.

The critical importance of the ejected brainpower was demonstrated by the contribution many of the Jewish scientist refugees then made to the U.S. development of the atomic bombs that precipitated Japan's surrender. The physicists driven out included Niels Bohr, Leo Szilard, Edward Teller, Hans Bethe, Emilio Segre, Enrico Fermi, Lise Meitner, and Albert Einstein. While Einstein did not personally work on the Manhattan project, his famous letter (actually drafted by Szilard) to Roosevelt warning of the German atomic project triggered the launching of the US atomic program.

The Nazi program of the 1930s to fire and make German Jews emigrate, was only the prelude. It was followed by the creation of concentration camps and ghettos, evacuation to the East, and the "final solution" in the death camps for mass extermination. One can only speculate how the war might have turned out if Nazi ideology had not been obsessed with eliminating Jews, and had instead nurtured its Jewish scientific capital. Achieving nuclear capability was a credible "what-if." Historian John Keegan wrote that such a what-if would have been "dreadful."

"As we know now, the dispersion of scientific effort within Nazi Germany so held back Hitler's atomic weapons program that, by 1945, it was still years away from developing a bomb….In another sector of weapons research, eventually to be thought an essential element of nuclear strategy, Germany far outstripped the Allies. Pilotless weapons, which would become the means of delivery of the American nuclear warhead, were a German invention. By June 1944, Germany was bombarding Britain with cruise missiles; on September 8, the first ballistic missile landed on London. Its impact inaugurated the missile age. The outcome of a war in which Nazi Germany came to possess both pilotless and nuclear weapons is too dreadful to contemplate." [John Keegan, 1995, *The Battle For History,* New York: Random House, p. 101.]

Besides ejecting the small number of scientists, the obsession over Jews also destroyed a large pool of intellectual capital and productive expertise across many fields. There is no telling how much this cost German war-making capacity, but it was not insignificant. The half-million German Jewish population of the early 1930s could have provided troops for additional army divisions. Staffing and running the camps and organizations implementing the Holocaust absorbed resources that could otherwise have been allocated to the war. One estimate puts the manpower the camps required at 100,000 to 500,000, much of it regular military and SS. Overall, there was a severe shortage of labor. In 1943 over 200,000 men waiting to be conscripted for military service had to be diverted to armaments production. At the height of the shortage Germany had to employ 7.5 million foreign workers.

Even while Allied bombing was attacking the transportation system, considerable rolling stock, used to move millions of persons from all over Europe to the death camps, mostly in Poland, was unavailable for military logistics. By 1943 transport was in permanent crisis due to the bombing, sabotage by the resistance, and the huge competing requirements for troop movements and food and fuel distribution. The occupied countries were looted for their rail cars. Nevertheless, rail capacity continued to be allocated to move Holocaust victims.

In a famous speech Himmler gave in October 1943, he dismissed criticism of his policy of closing armament and other factories manned by Jewish slave labor in order to ship the workers off for destruction: the genocide was more important than war production. [See Dan Van Der Vat,1997, *The Good Nazi:The Life and Lies of Albert Speer,* Boston:Houghton Mifflin, for discussion of slave labor and the war production problems.] Within the camps that housed war factories, the policy inconsistency between utilization and destruction of the camp labor, and the tensions between the overseers responsible for each objective, remained unresolved, and the extermination carried on. In addition, the underfeeding of camp labor – starvation was one method employed to ensure their death – meant that these workers were less productive than they could have been, another drag on war production.

In short, taking account of these impediments to Germany's war capacities and of the "Jewish science" absurdity, the genocide and precursor policies can be

seen as self-inflicted, strategic blunders. The point was made by Holocaust historian Lucy Davidowicz: "The murder of the Jews was Hitler's most consistent policy, in whose execution he persisted relentlessly, and obsessiveness with the Jews may even have cost him his war for the Thousand Year Reich." [Lucy S. Davidowicz, 1981, *The Holocaust and the Historians,* p.38. Davidowicz does not expand on this assertion.] The argument remains a hypothesis, a what-if, but a cogent hypothesis nonetheless.

The loss of the war, and the cruelty visited upon other peoples singled out for expulsion and exploitation resulted in the exact opposite of what the Nazis had promised the German people: widespread destruction of their own country, millions of German deaths, and no territorial or power aggrandizement. The end result of the ethnic cleansing of Slavs – forcing them east in order to seize land for German settlers -- was completely reversed after Germany's defeat. Poland forced out all the Germans who had settled on its "cleansed" territory; Czechoslovakia forced out its Sudetenland ethnic Germans. If it were not for the exigencies of the Cold War and the US effort to hasten (West) Germany's recovery, the German people would have suffered a much more extended post-war period of misery and deprivation.

In the more than seventy years since the fall of the "thousand-year" Third Reich, Germany has utterly repudiated the core principles of the Nazi state. It is the West European country most committed to avoiding military action outside its borders. It has welcomed immigrants and refugees that have brought diversity to the country's ethnic make-up. And in place of governance by the totalitarian "Fuhrer principle," it has maintained vigorous parliamentary and local democracy. This historical repudiation has not made Germany immune to the populism revival other European countries are experiencing, fueled in part by the Muslim refugee inflow. But any return to genocidal extremism appears unthinkable.

Khmer Rouge: Auto-Genocide, Self-Destruction

The literature on the military history of the Khmer Rouge (the Cambodian communist party) is miniscule compared with that on the Second World War. The argument is even stronger, however, that the collapse and overthrow of the Khmer

Rouge (KR) regime's brief rule (1975-1979) was self-inflicted, and that the so-called auto-genocide was a major factor in the disaster.

First, by launching a series of cross-border raids on villages in Vietnam, the KR provoked a military response. Vietnam's military strength was much greater than Cambodia's; it took only a few weeks for Vietnam to drive the KR out over the Thai border (along with a large number of non-KR refugees fleeing Vietnamese occupation). The KR had expected their incursions would incite the numerous ethnic Khmer (known as the Khmer Krom) living in Vietnam's Mekong delta region to join the KR, fight against the Vietnamese, and help the KR annex this region of Vietnam. This expectation was delusional along with the KR's overestimation of its own military strength. The delusion apparently stemmed from the KR interpretation of the US withdrawal from Vietnam, and of the KR's defeat of the preceding US-backed Cambodian regime of Lon Nol, as evidence of KR invincibility.

Second, the KR's economic policies exhausted the mass of the population, especially their bizarre program of cultural purification which began with ejecting the urban inhabitants into rural areas to cultivate rice under forced labor conditions. They also thought that cultural purification, and the restoration of Cambodian greatness, would be enhanced by ridding Cambodia of Buddhism and its monkhood and by persecuting or killing people who showed signs of foreign cultural influence. One upshot was the decimation of the country's technical and intellectual capital. The total number of Cambodians killed by these programs is estimated at one and a half to two million out of a population of only six or seven million. Apparently intent on challenging Vietnam from the start, the KR devastated the human capital that is the principal source of economic and military strength in the modern world, and substantially reduced the population base from which it could draw foot-soldiers.

The KR leaders aimed to restore Cambodian greatness, lost when the centuries-old Angkor kingdom began to decline in the fifteenth century. In their view, reversal of past humiliations and victimization required radical collectivization of the economy and society, and the enslavement or elimination of an entire cohort of the population (the "new people") which they believed was polluting and undermining the country's "base" (or "old people) population and

culture. The shadowy KR leadership of Pol Pot and his tiny coterie acknowledged an intellectual debt to China's Cultural Revolution, the core of which was a vicious campaign against intellectuals and bourgeoisie. The KR boasted they would achieve their own cultural revolution faster than China could. The resulting slaughter and deaths from deprivation have been called an auto-genocide since the KR were killing their own Khmer people. But straight-out genocide, as defined in international law, also applies since Vietnamese and other non-Khmer minorities were also targeted for elimination.

Finally, perhaps to explain to themselves why their socio-economic policies were failing, the leadership began blaming and purging its own ranks while also jailing and killing cadre accused of conspiring with Vietnam and the CIA. In eastern Cambodia, the KR butchered whole villages for supposedly conspiring with Vietnam. By the end, the regime, weakened by factionalism and corruption, had turned large numbers of their own cadre, and of the very population they had promised restored greatness, against the KR themselves. In 1979, the invading Vietnamese were greeted by the population as deliverers (although the occupying Vietnamese soon wore out their welcome). Under the internationally brokered Paris Agreement of 1991, the Khmer refugees and the KR and other political factions living in exile in camps in Thailand returned to Cambodia, the Vietnamese withdrew, and elections were organized by the UN. The KR leaders were finally marginalized and aging, and a handful faced imprisonment. The rank and file KR scattered back into the battered society.

The KR aimed to make Cambodia great again. Instead, they destroyed around a fifth of the population; eradicated human capital that would have been required for such a rebirth; eliminated the entrepreneurial classes of the Cham, Vietnamese, and Sino- Khmer minorities; provoked an invasion and ten-year (1979-1989) occupation by Vietnam; and left a legacy of social and psychological ills and political dysfunction. Greatness was to be restored by rebuilding on a grander scale the hydraulic, rice-based, economy of the classic period of the past. By denuding themselves of modern technical capacity, this hydraulic dream became a technological failure. By trying to marry collectivization, elimination of family ties and sentiment, religious destruction, and elimination of social classes, the KR tried to destroy virtually everything that had comprised Khmer identity. In

short, inhumanity aside, the program was sheer folly, delusional, and self-defeating.

Turkey: The Armenian Expulsion

In the case of the 1915-1917 Armenian genocide, it has also been plausibly argued that the vast destruction of human capital weakened Turkey during the First World War. "Like the German Holocaust, the genocide [of the Armenians] was self-destructive. Turkey deprived itself of a large portion of its professional and administrative class. Resources badly needed for the war were diverted. Killing and driving out Armenians resulted in a shortage of support personnel that made the 1916 Russian invasion of Turkish Armenia easier. Count Metternich, a German official, noted that the Turkish government seemed almost bent on losing the war." [Staub, p. 184.] Ironically, it was ostensibly the Ottoman belief that its Armenian population was conspiring to aid the Russian invasion, thereby weakening Turkey, that provided the rationale for the genocide. Armenian deaths amounted to 1.5 million.

Of course, there is no parallel "what-if" concerning the Ottoman Empire's collapse. Even if there had been no genocide, the Empire could not have survived once it threw its lot in with Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Nevertheless, the Armenian genocide sapped Turkey's strength at a time of maximum challenge to the Empire's viability. The genocide has also had lingering costs ever since to Turkey's international relations and remains an unresolved moral problem for the Turkish people's identity. Successive Turkish governments have continued to deny the facts and the role of the Turkish authorities and populace in the whole lamentable history. Some three dozen countries have formally recognized the events as genocide. Such recognitions, as was the case most recently following the Dutch parliament's declaration in early 2018, cause diplomatic strain, even 100 years on.

Turkey remains unable to develop a *modus vivendi* with its other major ethnic minority, the Kurds. Oppression, violence, and violent reactions on both sides, have continued to roil the country and complicate its foreign relations. Policy towards the Kurds has wavered between periods of accommodation and negotiation and periods of violence and intransigence. At their worst, the

oppressive periods have not risen to a level of genocide matching the Armenian expulsion, but the Armenian tragedy continues to cast a shadow forward.

Rwanda: The 100-Day Genocide

Hutu-Tutsi ethnic differentiation began in the second half of the nineteenth century under a king of Tutsi lineage. The ethnic differentiation, initially economic (Tutsis were herders, Hutu farmers) was deepened (according to some observers, invented) under subsequent German (1899-1916) and Belgian (1916-1961) colonial rule through measures that enforced ethnicity as the mark of identity, and that extended Tutsi minority domination based on the bogus belief in Tutsi inherent superiority .

In 1958, as Rwandan independence loomed under general decolonization in Africa, Belgium switched to a pro-Hutu policy. The transition of power from Tutsi to Hutu ushered in a period of violence in 1959-1961 that forced tens of thousands of Tutsi into exile in neighboring countries. Tutsi refugees then launched a campaign of cross-border fighting.

The Hutu divided between those favoring reconciliation, and those pushing a hard line against power-sharing. The hard-liners gradually built up the organization and resources to carry out a drastic solution. The trigger in April 1994 was the death of president Habyarimana, a Hutu, in a plane crash, as he was returning from negotiations with representatives of the Tutsi, held in Tanzania. The hard-liners launched their well-prepared massacre against all Tutsis indiscriminately, and against Hutu identified as "moderate." In less than three months, some 800,000, or 70% of the Tutsi population, were butchered. This was not "conventional" warfare. Many ordinary Hutu, fired up by a radio campaign of Tutsi vilification, participated in the killings, with machetes their main weapons.

> The brutal nature and extent of the slaughter, along with the ensuing mass migration, swiftly and profoundly destroyed Rwanda's social foundation. Vast segments of the population were uprooted, thousands of families lost at least one adult and tens of thousands of children were separated from their parents. Because neighbors, teachers, doctors and religious leaders took part in the carnage, essential trust in social institutions has been destroyed, replaced by pervasive fear,

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hostility and insecurity. The social upheaval has affected interpersonal and community interaction across ethnic, economic, generational and political lines. [Eriksson, J.R. et al, 1996, *Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda,* London: Overseas Development Institute, Vol.4, p.15.]

The slaughter ended as the Tutsi military force, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), overcame the Hutu. The Hutu suffered an immediate reversal of fortune. Launching the genocide had triggered the return of the Tutsi refugee army from exile in Uganda and the collapse of Hutu power. Two million Hutu fled into neighboring countries, primarily the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Tanzania (igniting further conflict and instability in the surrounding region). In the DRC, the Hutu suffered severe deprivation in refugee camps. The continuing cross-border fighting heavily damaged the Rwandan economy and infrastructure. The country was shorn of much of its human capital, including teachers, medical personnel, and civil servants. Subsequent revenge killings took the lives of many hundreds of Hutu non-combatants. The RPF imprisoned tens of thousands of genocide suspects. The still-majority Hutu civilians now faced a Tutsi government, Tutsi security forces, and a devastated economy.

The country's fortunes began to recover soon, thanks to the extraordinary rebuilding, reconciliation, and "transitional justice" efforts by the now Tutsi-dominated government. The economic recovery programs and policies of the new government have been praised and supported by the World Bank and the international donor community. The entire population has been required to participate in social recovery programs aimed at pressuring peaceful reintegration of the communities where former killers and their surviving Tutsi neighbors now live again in close proximity.

The peaceful character of this national post-genocidal effort to restore normality and make a return wave of killings unlikely has earned the government and people well-deserved kudos. Nevertheless, the effort has not been without flaws. Because the number of identified killers was very large and included mostly "ordinary men," the majority of the jailed perpetrators were ultimately released so they could return to their families and put their farms back into production. (Leaders and particularly egregious perpetrators received long imprisonment.)

Critics point to the (probably unavoidable) superficiality of the social-harmony effects of such a large-scale program of psychosocial reengineering after trauma of such magnitude. Moreover, still justifying its actions by the genocide, the government has over the last decade imposed increasing limits on free speech, the press, and on political opposition. The long-term consequences of the spasm of hatred, violence, and theft, involving the entire society, and coming after some generations of Hutu resentment towards the Tutsi, may prove troublesome despite the extraordinary efforts undertaken so far. The continuing forays into Rwanda by Hutu extremists located in the DRC, while diminished, are still a threat.

Serbia: Paying the Price for Ethnic Cleansing and Atrocity

As the Ottoman Empire collapsed and was redrawn following its loss in World War I, the Balkan ethnic groups jockeying to establish territory and national homogeneity out of the empire's wreckage carried out several massacres and cleansing campaigns. One "solution" out of this turmoil was creation of the new state of Yugoslavia, comprising South Slavs: Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Bosnians, and others. The state was divided into several jurisdictions in each of which one ethnicity was dominant, but all had ethnically mixed populations. Yugoslavia held together but was a politically uneasy patchwork.

Under German occupation during World War II, the country's political turbulence took new forms and became extremely violent. A fascist regime took power under Nazi tutelage in Croatia, established the notorious Jasenovac concentration camp, and executed large numbers of Serbs, Jews, and others. In Serbia and Bosnia, the anti-Nazi resistance was divided between communist and right-wing rivals. In the immediate wake of the war, there was a spasm of mutual massacres. Jasenovac, seen by Serbs as the site of genocidal crimes mainly against themselves, poisoned the country's post-war politics.

Arising out of this turmoil, the Communist Party, under Marshall Tito, took power. Tito attempted to forge a new society based on Yugoslav identity, under party cadres from all ethnicities. While the religious differences among the Yugoslavs (Catholic Croatians, Orthodox Serbs, Muslim Bosnians) appeared to diminish in importance, and even though inter-marriage became common, ethnic elite rivalry remained at the core of the country's politics, emerging forcefully after

Tito's death in 1980. Propelled by deteriorating economic conditions, Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia seceded in 1991. The Serb leadership resorted to military action, initially to hold the Yugoslav state together, then to create a greater Serbia that would incorporate ethnic Serb areas located in other ex-Yugoslav states and provinces. Although the Serb minorities in Croatia and Bosnia favored absorption by Serbia, these ambitions were thwarted by Croatian and Bosnian resistance and finally by NATO intervention. The intervention was a reaction to Serbia's extremist acts including a massacre (commonly labeled genocide) of Bosnian men at the city of Srebrenica in 1995 and an ethnic cleansing campaign Serbia undertook to force ethnic Albanians to flee from the Serb province of Kosovo where they formed a large majority.

Forced to capitulate by NATO bombing, Serbia's violent overreach and use of GMA tactics ended in total failure. Kosovo seceded and gained UN recognition. Croatia's ethnically Serb areas remained integral parts of that country. The ethnic Serb area of Bosnia remained a constituent entity of Bosnia, although the fragile inter-ethnic governance structure of Bosnia remains minimally functional. The estimated 150,000 casualties of the war included many Serbs.

Several civilian and military leaders were subsequently tried and convicted of war crimes by an international tribunal. Serbian officialdom and public opinion, however, extolled these wartime leaders, showing no sign of regret or admission of guilt. Resistance to any process of transitional justice has thus far entailed a considerable economic cost: the refusal to abjure the wartime violations has stood in the way of Serbia's admission to the European Union.

Successes?

Some GMAs may appear to have been "successes" from the viewpoint of the perpetrators. An apparently successful, forgotten example (not forgotten by their descendants of course) was the Russian destruction and expulsion of the Circassians, a people who had for centuries lived along the northeastern coast of the Black Sea. The Circassian occupation of this territory traced back to the eighth century BCE. At the time of the Russian expulsion, they numbered over two million, living in an area somewhat larger than Denmark. To extend their control over the Black Sea littoral, the Tsarist regime undertook a campaign that lasted

from 1763 to 1864. The Circassian's final defeat involved massacres, terror, and forced ethnic cleansing. Their descendants now live in scattered communities, mostly in Turkey and the Middle East. Under the UN convention, this catastrophe might not be classified genocide: the Russian intent was to expel and displace the Circassians, not exterminate them. Nonetheless, the process caused the death of a large proportion of the Carcassian people. Russia then resettled other ethnic groups in the formerly Circassian homeland. One of the long-term consequences has been tensions among the newly settled peoples, including the Abhazia-Georgia war in 1992-1993. [For a detailed account, see Stephen D. Shenfeld, "The Circassians; A Forgotten Genocide?", in Levene & Roberts, from which this paragraph is drawn.]

A second apparently "successful" case was the anti-communist massacre in Indonesia in a six-month period in1965-1966. Charging the Indonesian Communist Party with a plot to overthrow the post-colonial, anti-Western Sukarno dictatorship, the military authorities inspired a supposedly preemptive strike, a widespread blood-letting undertaken largely by ordinary citizens responding to the urging of local army units. The details of the plot, the orchestration of the slaughter, the encouragement from outside powers (in one of the Cold War's developing-country proxy conflicts), even the numbers of victims (estimates range from several hundred thousand to one million), remain murky and under-researched. In many areas of this far-flung country, personal score-settling having nothing to do with politics was a driving factor. In the sudden enlistment of mobs of "ordinary men," the Indonesian massacre was unlike the Nazi or Rwandan genocides which were preceded by extensive demonizing propaganda campaigns. Nevertheless, like these other genocides, the killings were "extremely savage" and the victims were treated, dead or alive, with "huge contempt." [John Gittings, in Levene and Roberts, p.247.]

The massacres "succeeded" in the sense that the objective – elimination of Communist Party members and sympathizers -- was accomplished. The military leadership under General Suharto that ordered the massacres went on to rule for over three decades. Knowledge of long-term effects on Indonesian society remains obscure. In contrast with the economic stagnation produced by Sukarno's inept, post-colonial socialism, the market-friendly policies installed by Suharto and designed by his team of American-schooled technocrats ushered in a prolonged

period of solid economic growth and eventual political democratization. All this might well have been achieved merely by removing Sukarno and the top leadership of the Communist Party organization. Whether the enormous spasm of ordinary men killing other ordinary men was needless and excessive, its barbarity aside, remains unanswerable.

Even Winning May Be Losing: Self-Dehumanization

GMAs stand out as episodes that reveal the nether depths of barbarity humans can plumb. The various episodes large and small, despite their great differences of causation and context, share a striking commonality: the perpetrators were not satisfied with mere murder (or opportunistic theft). In addition to eliminating the people they believed posed a threat, perhaps existential, to the interests if not sheer survival of the perpetrators' collective and individual person and family – a purpose that could have been fully met by mere murder – they went far beyond, dragging out the process by first humiliating, terrorizing, sexually violating, and torturing the victims, and finishing often by mutilating the corpses. The literature on these events is filled with one-on-one horrors.

Barbarity unnecessary for realizing the realpolitik objective of elimination is not a fringe phenomenon. The leaders are often sociopaths in addition to being power-hungry. But most of the direct perpetrators have been recruited from ordinary life situations, and they have numbered in the hundreds of thousands. Many studies have tried to understand how masses of "ordinary" people have been turned into killers. But then, less studied, is the question: what happens to the killers after it is all over? What happens to the society that inherits such a history? To the children of killers? To subsequent generations?

After the GMA is over, even if the perpetrators have "won," they are changed human beings, ethically depleted and cognitively warped. (There are always exceptions: sociopaths and fanatics who were enabled to indulge the blood-lust they could never have hoped to satisfy under "normal" conditions may be impervious to reflection, regret, or remorse.) Massacre perpetrators have commonly immersed themselves in depravity gladly, even gleefully, tossing away all restraints. They were not satisfied with mere expulsion, mere death.

One telling sign of moral warping is how rarely one reads of genocide perpetrators later expressing remorse over their brutality or empathy for their victims. The contrast with the common experience of regret by war veterans, psychologically scarred for having killed civilians (mostly as "collateral damage"), or even enemy cannon-fodder youth, is remarkable.

Why was mere dispatching not satisfying enough for the GMA killers? A common "rational" explanation cites the terrorizing effect of atrocities: ethnic cleansing can be achieved more rapidly if the victims have reason to flee. In the lead-up to the Srebrenica massacre in 1993, "The first objective was to force the Muslim population to flee their home towns and create an ethnically pure Serb territory. A certain amount of immediate 'demonstrative atrocity' was therefore deemed necessary." In one town, in front of the local inhabitants, the local Muslim cleric "was ordered to make the sign of the cross, had beer forced down his throat, and was then executed." [Cited in Jan Willem Honig & Norbert Both, 1997, *Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime,* New York: Penguin, p.76.]

Atrocities committed in the course of deliberate, leadership-orchestrated , genocide or ethnic cleansing might be considered "rational" in the sense that the resulting terror was expected to facilitate the eliminationist objective. In cases like the Rape of Nanking, where conquest, not genocide or cleansing is the objective, atrocities may also be seen by the orchestrators as "rational" because the terror may be expected to frighten an enemy into submission (which did not happen in that case). For the rank-and-file perpetrators, however, one must look deeper. In all the accounts of GMAs, and from the testimonies of eye-witnesses and surviving victims, one confronts barbarism that is excessive. That is, the individual perpetrators perform atrocities far beyond what would be required to achieve any "rational" personal or national objective, often out of sight.

As Edward Weisband put it: "The question thus becomes, why the hatred, the humor, and the routine violation played out performatively, often theatrically, in the most depraved manner available to the diabolical imagination?......Why are victims made to sing but to the tune of death and dying; why are they forced to dance as their spirits wither; why are they forced to laugh as their souls dissolve into numbness and decay;………Why does it appear "necessary" for perpetrator regimes and their agents to exact spiritual agony and physical torment often from

fellow and sister citizen-victims by means of their mental, psychic or emotional humiliation, their corporeal degradation, even the attempted demise of their very personhood?" [Weisband, 60.]

Whatever the answer, case by case, person by person, the perpetrators emerge distorted and depraved. While they dehumanize their victims, they dehumanize themselves in the process. The long-term economic, cultural and psychological effects on perpetrators, and on their societies as a whole (typically depleted of men and left with large numbers of widow-headed households and orphans living in poverty), is a subject that merits more scholarly attention than it has received so far. In short, beyond the immediate consequences found in the cases briefly described here, GMA perpetrators must face a final loss – their former selves. One comes away from these accounts reminded of the question posed by Matthew (16:26): "For what shall it profit a man though he should win the whole world, if he loses his own soul?"

What kind of soul are they left with? We can only sketch ways in which perpetrators have been observed emerging with warped personalities. The depth of immersion preparation for genocide has varied. At one extreme, preparation for unrestrained carnage has been comprehensive and pursued for extended periods. Nazi Germany indoctrinated and hardened an entire generation of youth to accept enthusiastically the idea that violence would have to be employed to save and aggrandize the country. In Japan, millions of young men inducted into the army were viciously trained to confront Japan's enemies with utmost brutality. At the other extreme, while cultural and historical roots of collective antagonisms have virtually always entailed a broad social climate with violent potential, the violence can emerge with a lurch, the perpetrators egged on by relatively brief vilification campaigns under relatively loose, decentralized organization, as was the case in Rwanda , Turkey, and Indonesia.

However the length and methods employed for inducing genocidal readiness, certain core elements have been used (apparently less so in Indonesia) to prepare the individual killer. These include: inculcating cognitive conformity and gullible acceptance of any authoritative assertions; reliance on conspiracy theories and stereotyping as explanations of reality, and dismissal of cognitive nuance; avoidance of independent, critical thinking or skepticism; repressing any signs of

disagreement; behavioral coarsening, and a normalizing of brutality; denigrating and hating the characteristics and cultures of Others; adoption of heated and violent rhetoric as appropriate discourse in public affairs; satisfaction from destroying victims' homes and robbing their goods. All this adds up to severe limitations on a person's cognitive capabilities, ability to separate truth from falsehood, moral sensibilities, and ability to empathize. After a period of submersion in such mental and personality configuration, a return to civility and sober normality may be difficult or impossible to achieve.

Most of the German youth born in the 1920s and schooled in the 1930s in an education system suffused with Nazi indoctrination ended up as cannon fodder or auxiliaries, not actual GMA perpetrators. In his study of this generation's experience and its consequences, *Hitler's Children,* historian Guido Knopp concluded:

"The poet and playwright Wolfgang Borchert, who was exactly eighteen when the war ended, wrote of his own war experiences: 'We are a generation of no home and with no farewell. Our sun is meager, our love cruel, our youth is without youth.' Inwardly deeply affected, the young writer expressed what was true for many child-soldiers of his age: the inhuman regime never allowed them to become human."

What about inter-generational effects? Apart from the post-Nazi generation, there is only sparse literature on the legacy GMA perpetrators leave to their children, individually or on a generation as a whole. None of the German children, very young during the Nazi years, bore any responsibility for the sins of their fathers. Nevertheless, they each had to define themselves and their lives as a response to the character and deeds of their fathers. At one extreme, some hated their father, choosing a life of moral repudiation, even recompense, despite their own innocence. Many lamented their parents' denial of any complicity despite the discovery of irrefutable evidence, their refusal even to talk about the Nazi period, and the father's cold if not hostile personality. At the other extreme, some felt deep affection, believed the father had been wronged, and worked to rehabilitate the father's reputation. In all cases, the fathers' shadows deeply affected the lives of the children. Even the grandchildren, decades removed from the Nazi years, were

keenly aware of, and affected by, what their grandfathers did in the Nazi years and how their parents had confronted this legacy.

The observations from Rwanda thus far are relatively scanty but also point to dysfunction in family life. In the case of the Cambodian genocide and its enormous numbers of victims, extensive and long-lasting mental health pathologies among the surviving victims have been studied. Much has been learned about the complexities and culturally-specific challenges to rebuilding family relationships and communal reconciliation, including in communities where former Khmer Rouge perpetrators have returned and resettled. Mental health consequences for victims have also been studied, or at least surveyed, in several other countries experiencing atrocities (including Algeria, Bosnia, and Sri Lanka, among others).

All in all, the literature on the psychological legacies of wars and GMAs focuses mainly (appropriately, of course) on the victims. The little evidence there is on the subsequent lives of perpetrators, mostly anecdotal rather than systematic, points to deleterious effects GMA participation has on the personalities and subsequent lives of perpetrators (formal punishment aside) and on their descendants. There is even some ("epigenetic") evidence that trauma can cause genetic alteration that is passed on to a person's descendants. The subject deserves more systematic attention as does the general perspective of the folly of GMAs.

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