
History 489

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to analyze historical cases of genocide and mass murder perpetrated against groups not expressly mentioned or under-represented in the United Nations Genocide Convention. Among historians and genocide scholars there is an agreed-upon theory on the progression of genocide; the processes necessary to get to elimination and murder of a group of people. What is missing from this dialogue is stateless nations, political groups, and other groups that exist in the minority of their society, putting them at risk of extermination. The purpose of this paper is to expand the conception of the process of genocide to those groups left out of the common historical dialogue. This paper will employ a case study method, analyzing primary sources from survivors and perpetrators alike, as well as international sources focusing on intervention, or lack thereof. The case study will focus on the White Terror in Spain which took place from 1936 until 1939. There will be supplementary cases focusing on the Cambodian Genocide and the Holodomor/Great Terror in the Soviet Union from 1930-1937. Primary sources will be supplemented with secondary sources from genocide scholars and historians that describe genocide processes, principles, and theories. These sources will be used to support the argument for a more inclusive definition of genocide from the United Nations and to provide a road map for groups that are less likely to see intervention based on a lack of information of their situation.
and its implication. This paper seeks to expand the definition and identify times in history in which historians, politicians, political scientists, and humanists viewed Genocide under a narrow lens leading to the death of persons and their social influences on culture.

Introduction

In 1948 The United Nations created a genocide convention shortly after the liberation of Nazi concentration camps across Europe. Leading the charge for the convention was Raphael Lemkin, a polish Lawyer who coined the word ‘Genocide.’ In 1944, his book “Axis Rule in Occupied Europe”\(^1\) was published, and thus the term given to the intentional mass slaughter of a group was thrust into the public lexicon. Genocide is defined by the United Nations as “acts committed with the intention to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group.”\(^2\) The definition has offered avenues for justice for victims of mass atrocities as well as an international pact to intervene in instances of genocide which has in turn, saved many lives. Nonetheless several other groups have been excluded from the definition and continue to be systematically murdered based on a common classification.

Within the Genocide Convention there is detailing of the acts of violence that can be classified as genocide or intent to commit genocide. Included within these definitions is “killing members of a group, causing serious bodily or mental harm to a group, deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group, forcibly transferring children of

the group to another group." These classifications are meant to classify genocide as separate from other types of violence as all these actions are done with the goal of the destruction of a group. Warfare and other types of violent repression may see gruesome acts that lead to death in large proportions, however, the actions laid out in the United Nations convention are specific and are rarely committed outside of the context of genocide. If these acts are detailed within an event, scholars and international observers must begin to investigate the event as a genocide, regardless of the group being persecuted.

To illustrate this point, from 1930 to 1934 the Soviet Union deported and murdered over 2 million Kulaks; these people belonged to an economic group deemed to be a danger to the goal of the state. The word Kulak was invented by the government to separate them out from society and justify their murder. The Spanish Civil War saw the systematic extermination of political dissidents in manners that are outside the actions of normal warfare. The Soviet Union's murdering of Kulaks and the Spanish White Terror are still not recognized as genocides by the larger international community or the United Nations. Cambodia, a genocide recognized by the United Nations, brutally singled out, tortured, and murdered the upper class, former political actors and those perceived to be intellectuals in mass numbers from 1975 to 1979.

The argued intrinsic distinction between communal groups (such as religion, race, ethnicity, and nationality) and hierarchical groups, such as political groups, in practice does not make sense. The mass murder of political groups mirrors the exact process of those of protected groups. The intense dehumanizing language to strip groups of their dignity and humanity used in genocide is identical to that of the language used for political groups. To prove that the

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difference between groups protected and political groups is insignificant. The analysis of three cases of genocide against political groups will therefore be needed. These case studies, which will include the Spanish Civil War, the Soviet Union’s winter collectivization and Holodomor, and the Cambodian genocide, will demonstrate that the process for murdering political groups mirrors that of protected groups nearly identically. Because the process of genocide is incredibly detailed and distinct, the identical process for political groups will demonstrate that political groups should not be excluded from the United Nations Convention.

**Literature Review**

Since the creation of the United Nations Genocide Convention in 1945, many scholars have attempted to rectify various issues and holes within the convention as well as developing theories on how to detect, define, and intervene in episodes of mass killings. Many scholars have developed new definitions that seek to create a more efficient understanding of an incredibly complex process and topic. New terms and classifications have since been created to explain and define processes that are not explicitly outlined in the Convention. Among these are Democide, government sponsoring of genocide; ecocide, destruction of the physical environment and nature; and femicide, mass murder or intent to destroy based on gender. The purpose of this paper is to explore and elevate politicide,” the destruction of a group based on political position or affiliation. Scholars have not only created these new terms and definitions, but many have also argued why these new groups should not and were intended not to be included in the United Nations definition.

Among these scholars is Dr. Barbara Harff, a political scientist from Kassel, Germany, one of the pioneers in the study of causes, risk factors, and documentation of genocide and
political violence. Harff is a staunch advocate for the separation of political groups from the
United Nations (U.N.) Convention. Harff has created data sets with her criteria to identify forty-
six episodes of genocidal violence and politicide since the second World War.\textsuperscript{4} Harff’s working
definition of genocide is “the promotion and execution of policies by the state or its agents which
results in the deaths of a substantial portion of a group.”\textsuperscript{5} The main differences between Harff’s
definition and the UN definition lie in her detailing of the perpetrator of the violence. Harff
limits this violence to being carried out by “the state or its agents”\textsuperscript{6} excluding militant groups,
insurgent groups, and those existing outside of their state. These non-state groups make up a
small fraction of the population of genocides, nonetheless, they still meet the U.N. criteria,
though not Harff’s. Harff also offers a distinction between politicides and genocides. To Harff,
the difference rests in the identity of the victim, not in the process or the type of violence.
According to Harff, “politicides are defined in terms of their hierarchical position or political
opposition to the regime’ whilst genocides are defined by the victim’s “communal
characteristics.” The difference between communal characteristics (race, ethnicity, religion, and
nationality) “in some instances, political groups have no shared communal traits, but rather are
members of a political parties or ideological movements, or class” victims of genocide may not

\textsuperscript{4} Barbara Harff, “No Lessons Learned from the Holocaust? Assessing Risks of Genocide and Political Mass Murder

\textsuperscript{5} Barbara Harff, “No Lessons Learned from the Holocaust? Assessing Risks of Genocide and Political Mass Murder

\textsuperscript{6} \textit{Id}. 58
be involved in an “oppositional activity.””7 Victims of genocide, according to Harff, have an intrinsic trait that was not chosen by the victim, whereas political affiliation is chosen.

Another premier scholar in the field is Dr. Daniel Feierstein, a sociologist from Buenos Aires, Argentina. As a sociologist, Feierstein is critical of the legal approach taken to prevent and punish genocidal violence. He argues that defining a practice of humans by a purely legal and historic term is too black and white and that the rhetoric must be humanized. Feierstein states that, “any new definition of genocide will need to include the principle of equity under the law, a principle currently violated by the 1948 Genocide Convention, which protects some groups but not others.”8 Feierstein goes on to argue that the Genocide Convention as it stands contains immense bias in those it protects and those it does not. Feierstein explains that the United Nations only protects social groups and those with a specific type of culture, and other groups (gender, political, economic, ecological) are ignored and put at a detriment. For Feierstein, annihilation of a group of people is enough to fit into one crime, not to be limited by the type of person being targeted. This is a liberal view of the definition of genocide compared to many other scholars. Politicide under Feierstein would not have its own name and definition, but instead, it would be prosecuted and legally protected just as the destruction of national, ethnic, religious, or racial groups.

The United Nations definition may be the legal definition; however, many scholars have found faults within the Convention that they seek to rectify through scholarly advocacy. Dr. Ervin Staub, a professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst has produced several works


regarding reconciliation and protecting potential victims of genocide. Staub challenges the limitations of United Nations protections and offers historical background to the determination of groups protected by the UN Convention. Staub states that the exclusion of political groups was “a result of political considerations that led some states at the time, especially the Soviet Union, to resist the inclusion of political groups under the Genocide Convention.”

Staub’s explanation of the exclusion of political groups is not one that has to do with what defines the group, but instead a result of individual political interests. The Soviet Union and Spain had both committed genocidal acts against political groups prior to the ratification of the convention, and therefore vehemently opposed the inclusion of political groups. Staub also states that he, as well as many other genocide scholars, include political groups in their definitions of genocide.

One of most acclaimed political scientists to work on genocide and mass murder was Dr. R.J. Rummel, a professor at the University of Hawaii-Manoa. Rummel focuses on democide, a sub-category of genocide, which is defined as genocide committed by a government. Like other scholars, Rummel has adopted his own definition of genocide as he finds the United Nations definition to be wrought with flaws. The definition crafted by Rummel described genocide as “the intentional killings by the government of people because of their race, religion, ethnicity, or other indelible group membership.”

Rummel’s work centers around government killings, which he argues are different from genocide as targeted at political opponents or murdering prompted by a quota. Additionally, government killings see the government create an environment that

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leads to the death of political dissidents or opponents. This is a distinction not expressly stated in the Genocide Convention.

Many scholars have taken the pioneering work of Harff and Rummel and expanded on these definitions to explain the onset and prevention of mass murder. Among these scholars is Dr. Frank Wayman, professor at the University of Michigan – Dearborn. Wayman combines genocide and politicide as “Geno-politicide” and defines it as “genocide by killing as understood by the Genocide Convention plus the killing of a political or economic group.”11 This definition stresses the difference between communal attributes and hierarchical attributes, as established by Harff, as well as including economic groups in the definition of politicide. Perpetrator behavior is not discussed to be different for either definition, both are intentional destruction of a group in whole or in part. Wayman also builds off Rummel’s assertion that government-sponsored killings are different from genocides, due to issues of intent and classifications. Democide, Wayman argues, combines government killings, politicide, and genocide, and therefore is the best way to define and assess the onset and intervention of human rights atrocities.

The final scholar that provided groundbreaking conclusions on prevention and education of the process of genocide is Dr. Gregory Stanton, the founder of Genocide Watch. Stanton is best known for his creation of the Ten Stages of Genocide, which details how genocide progresses from the creation of groups to the elimination of the group. Stanton states in an explanation of the Ten Stages, that it is meant to “put Barbara Harff’s analysis of country risks of genocide and politicide into a processual structure.”12 Further, in a data set produced by

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Genocide Watch, the events listed are coded by the victim group effects, with the description distinguishing genocide from politicide. Stanton’s research and organization follow the work of Harff, which advocates for political groups to be held outside of the protections of the United Nations Genocide Convention.

As scholars have attempted to identify ways to intervene and prevent episodes of mass murdering of various groups, problems of inclusion and definition have arisen. The exclusion of political and economic groups from the United Nations Genocide Convention can be explained by the political motivations of several countries during its ratification, but today a massive obstacle within prevention and intervention is the defense of this decision by top scholars within the field. As they try to include politicide in their various research works, one glaring deficit remains in advocacy, and that is legal protection. This gap affirms that communal groups are worthy of full protection under the law, however, hierarchical groups, murdered by the same intent, through the same processes, must seek alternative remedies or laws for protection, placing higher priority and importance on communal groups at the expense of hierarchical ones.

Hierarchical groups are thought to have chosen the identifier that leads to their extermination, neglecting that political groups have the tendency to attract people of similar experiences that lead to the need to advocate for various needs and measures over another. A political group centered on economic and land reform will attract the working class, discounting that the working class may not have wanted to pose a genuine threat to government integrity, but instead wished to improve individual autonomy and quality of life in a peaceful manner. One could also argue that religion is chosen, though there are various religions that are not based on converting members. However, “universal religions,” those who ‘welcome all who believe’ and hinge on conversion, are in fact based on chosen traits. The distinction of politicide and
genocide is permanently obstructing a global effort to end mass murder by a technical means of classification that does not serve any purpose. The distinction of crime should depend on the means of the perpetrator, not on the victim injured, anything else is punishing the victim, not the perpetrator.

Figure 1:

![The Ten Stages of Genocide by Gregory Stanton](image)

*The Ten Stages of Genocide by Gregory Stanton*

In 1996, Stanton created the Eight Stages of Genocide to explain how episodes of genocide progress from simple classifications into widescale extermination. Stanton credited the creation of the eight stages to Barbara Harff’s pioneering work on risk assessment and risk factors for potential conflict and genocide. The initial project was meant to be a briefing paper for the United States Department of State for the improvement of their intervention policies in

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instances of genocide. The initial Eight Stages are as follows: Classification, Symbolization, Dehumanization, Organization, Polarization, Preparation, Extermination, and Denial. Stanton numbered the stages one through eight but warned against the use of this model as a linear progression. Stanton states that “This processual model demonstrates that there is a logic to the genocidal process, though the relationship between the processes is not linear. The ‘stages’ are processes that occur simultaneously.” Since the creation of the eight stages in 1996, two stages have been added: Discrimination and Persecution, now numbered three and eight respectively. Since the creation of the Ten Stages of Genocide, Stanton’s nonprofit organization, Genocide Watch, applies the stages to ongoing conflicts around the world to warn in an attempt to prevent and intervene in ongoing or potential genocides. This has also proved to be a valuable tool for scholars.  

The Ten Stages can be split up into three types of activity (See Figure 1.) To make the analysis more concise, the exploration of the stages will be split up accordingly. These three categories are Segregation, Coordination, and Action. Starting with the segregation grouping are the stages Classification, Symbolization, Discrimination, and Polarization. Each of these demonstrates the dominant groups' attempts to separate the oppressed class from the rest of society; each of these stages (one, two, three, and six) is a more extreme form, as well as building upon the one that comes before it. Classification, Stanton’s first stage is the creation of an us-versus-them, such as distinguishing between a German and a Jew. This stage is present in society on every level and is not necessarily harmful, but it must exist for the preparation of

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14 Gregory Stanton,” The Ten Stages of Genocide” Genocide Watch, 1996
genocide. Symbolization, Stanton’s second stage builds from Classification by taking the classification and giving it a name or a symbol, placing constructed meaning into the equation to further the othering of one group. Examples of Symbolization include the blue scarves worn by people living under the Khmer Rouge. Discrimination, the third stage, is the denial of rights through “law, customs, or political power.”\(^{15}\) This can only be done after concrete othering of a population and seeks to further segregate people through rights and privileges. An example of Discrimination is the winter collectivization during the Soviet Union. The final type of Segregation is Polarization, the sixth stage, which is defined by propaganda and “laws [that] may forbid intermarriage or social interaction.”\(^{16}\) A clear example of this is the Nuremberg laws that were passed in Nazi Germany, eroding completely the rights of Jewish people.

The second type of activity is Coordination, in which the dominant power organizes either militarily, societally, or culturally for the destruction of a group. The stages included in this type are stages five and seven; Organization and Preparation. Preparation can be seen as the more extreme form of organization. Organization is the training and arming of militias and militant groups that will later carry out the killing of the oppressed group. The training of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia prior to the genocide represents a clear example of Organization. Preparation, the seventh stage is the implementation of propaganda and a call to action for the citizens. It is a form of cultural organization that seeks to garner support from the populous for the militants trained in the stage previously mentioned. Stanton explains that this stage is where leaders instill fear in the population and state “if we don’t kill them, they will kill us.”\(^{17}\)

\(^{15}\) ibid
\(^{16}\) Ibid
\(^{17}\) Ibid
Organization and Preparation are crucial to the extermination of groups of people as they provide and combine the means and the rationale behind the killing.

The third type of activity grouping is Action, in which all the previous stages are put into severe forms of action, discrimination, violence and murder. This grouping includes stages four, eight, and nine, Dehumanization, Persecution and Extermination, respectively. Dehumanization is a difficult stage in terms of definition and where it fits into the Ten Stages; it is defined as where “one group denies the humanity of another group. Members are equated with animals, vermin, insects, or diseases.”\(^{18}\) The likening of people to vermin or diseases is where tensions between groups turn into a dangerous division, intent begins to morph into murder and extermination and justification is established. Persecution is the point in which the violence becomes genocide in the eyes of international law, Stanton states that this stage is marked by where “the victim group’s most basic human rights are systematically violated through extrajudicial killings, torture and forced displacement. Death lists are drawn up.”\(^{19}\) This stage is seen within the forced deportations in the Soviet Union during collectivization or within the deportations to ghettos, concentration, or death camps in Nazi Germany. Finally, Extermination, the stage most people think of when they think of genocide and the process aligned, is what the other ten stages lead up to. Extermination plays off dehumanization as “the killers do not believe their victims to be fully human.”\(^{20}\) Mass murders ensue with the goal of murdering and destroying the entire group. Extermination is seen in Cambodia with executions of the urban class, the Holocaust within concentration and death camps, and Russia with the public executions of communists and intellectuals.

\(^{18}\) ibid

\(^{19}\) ibid

\(^{20}\) ibid
Throughout each of these stages rests the final tenth stage, Denial. The group committing the mass atrocities attempts to cover up or conceal the genocide through the burning of bodies, destruction of records, public denial, and prohibiting foreign journalists or visitors to the state. Denial is seen in the Soviet Union with the denial of journalists to enter the country and foreign ministers proclaiming the absence of famine within the state. Cambodia denied the living conditions in the farm and classified evidence of prisons. Nazi Germany consistently burned the bodies of the murdered Jews in the death and concentration camps. Denial seeks to prevent outside intervention or prosecution by international organizations like the United Nations and well as preserving their reputation on the global stage.

**Spanish Civil War and The White Terror**

During the 1930’s the global community suffered economic depression, which prompted many governments to falter, unravel and fail. Spain however entered 1930 with a stable democracy unlike any other European state. Nevertheless, by 1936 the country entered a brutal civil war that resulted in the mass murder of political dissidents in a genocidal fashion, leaving the country in a repressive dictatorship after the war’s end. During the time leading up to the war, two distinct political parties grew out of democracy, a distinct fascist group, and a communist faction, each attempted to pursue their own political goals through democracy. The early 1930’s saw small revolutionary attempts on both ends but in 1936 a major coup attempt sparked the onset of a bloody and violent civil war. Within this civil war came violent repression and brutal murdering of about 200,000 political dissidents, this event has come to be referred to by historians as the *White Terror*.

The White Terror finds itself separate from the warfare practiced in the larger battle between communists and fascists due to the nature of the murders. The means of war shifted
from defeating the other side to gain control to the purported necessity of eliminating the communist faction to create a better Spain. This shift marks a difference between ordinary warfare and the need to defeat an enemy and the need to eliminate an enemy in an effort to create a utopia. During the White Terror, an estimated 200,000 political dissidents faced brutal murder by public execution and there was also a systematic raping of women viewed to have been aligned with a political group. This event will be analyzed through the usage of Gregory Stanton’s Ten Stages of Genocide to prove that the White Terror should be recognized and put into public memory as a genocide.

Introduction to the Spanish Civil War: Ideology and Roots of Extermination

The causes of the war have been described in three ways according to Historian Helen Graham, who describes “the extremely uneven levels of development obtained inside Spain... The Manichaean brand of Catholicism that still predominated in Spain.... and the emergence of rigid and intolerant political culture in its officer corps during the early decades of the 20th century.” Catholicism and the protection of traditional values in Spain became a major source of tension for the growing fascist movement. In 1898, Spain lost its colonial possessions in the Caribbean and Americas, leaving it with questions on how to modernize and improve its economy within the state. The idea of agricultural reform brought forth by this loss was not well received in several areas where agriculture was controlled by elites or where agriculture existed in a rural, traditional, and communal form with profound ties to the church and individual communities. The opposing agricultural views were held by those that did not see or care for the

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influence of the Catholic church, these groups contained urban workers and peasants who did not control their land and constantly found themselves fighting off starvation. Thus with the implementation of a democracy in 1931, a further splinter was made in Spanish society between the Catholic elites and those benefitting from monarchy and one-party rule and those pushing for reform with the new democracy, the urban workers, the educated, and the peasants. This division created by the ambitious reforms of the republic in 1931 created tensions that would result in a civil war just five years later.

In 1936, many republican members of the Falange Espanola Tradicionalista (FET), a group campaigning for fascism made public calls for the elimination of enemies of the state. The emergence of racial inferiority came in the form of newspapers and other publications through the common theory at the time of a Jewish-Masonic-Bolshevik conspiracy. Jose Calvo Sotelo, a politician and leader of the monarchist movement within the Frente Popular made several public speeches calling Spanish civilians to act violently on racial terms. Building upon the Jewish conspiracy, Calvo stated in a public speech “inside every Jew, there is a Freemason: cunning deceitful. Secretive, hating Christ and his civilization, thirsting for extermination. Freemasons and Jews are the begetters and controllers of socialism and Bolshevism.” Calvo also referred to a leader of the Socialist party as a “Moroccan Lenin” to paint him as a danger to Spanish tradition and wellbeing. After several assassinations of prominent figures on both sides of the ideological fight, on July 13th, 1936, Calvo Sotelo was murdered by the Assault Guards, a

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special military unit of the Spanish Government. This marked the last straw for the FET; the coup staged by the FET happening three days later, marking the start of the war.

_Scott's Ten Stages Applied_

The first grouping of stages from Scott’s model deals with the segregation of groups. Many of these stages can contain mild forms of classification while other drift into genocidal intent. These stages include Classification, Symbolization, Discrimination and Polarization. The first of Scott’s Ten Stages is Classification, the initial formation of an “us versus them.” As stated previously, growing tensions mounted between those believing in a one-party rule, monarchy, and dictatorship and those supporting the republic and democratic reform. As these tensions continued to fracture Spanish society, it was the classification between fascism and socialism that the war became to be built on.

The next stage is Symbolism, furthering the classifications previously discussed by giving them names or physical symbols to identify an oppressed group. For this case, politicians aligned with the FET and the fascist movement began to refer to socialists as Bolsheviks, Jews, and Freemasons, all under the context of a supposed Jewish world conspiracy and antisemitism. These terms, though they do not carry racist context in isolation, came with historic implications that sought to separate people out as enemies.

The third stage, Discrimination comes after political power is established, when civil rights are most likely taken away. This stage, due to the context of war and a lack of head of state is not present in this example. Nonetheless, genocide can still occur if one stage is not present and highlights that genocide can and does occur in contexts where the mass killing is not committed by the government.
The final stage within this grouping is Polarization, which builds upon social and legal classification to further drive the groups apart. Those attempting to aid or hide the persecuted group are killed or beaten and leaders from the opposition group are silenced. This stage also sees an increase in propaganda and other damaging rhetoric. In a speech made by Juan Yague, a prominent military officer, he warned that “for those of you who resist, you know what will happen, prison or the firing squad, either will do.”\textsuperscript{27} The FET began to strike fear into the moderate fascists and those that were not entirely dedicated to the cause. A prominent general warned the military “Anyone who helps or hides a communist or a supporter of the popular front will be shot.”\textsuperscript{26} By threatening death and the same treatment of the socialists and Frente Popular, the FET polarized the groups even further. Additionally, posters were produced that depicted an

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alien with several mouths, wings, and a large head with the caption “El Rumor: Guerra a Muerte al Rumor. Que intenta a destrozar nuestra moral y nuestra union”

(see fig. 2) The dissemination of propaganda and polarizing language seeking to destroy moderates are all straightforward signs of Polarization within the Spanish Civil War.

The next grouping of stages is the coordination grouping, containing the fifth and seventh stages. The first of these is Organization, the training and creation of special military groups or militias. For Organization, this stage looks different in the context of war. The creation of a military group was simply the creation of an oppositional rebel militia, which is what the FET was by design. The FET began as the Junta of National Defense with Francisco Franco as the leader, but as the group grew larger and gained more support it changed to the FET, which sought to establish an authoritarian state. Franco established a Catholic appeal as well as a fascist one, appealing to international actors such as Italy and Germany who had recently installed fascist leaders. What makes this different from ordinary warfare was the focus on elimination and annihilation within the military. General Mola, one of the organizers and most prominent organizers of the coup and the FET led the ordering of the military. He was responsible for the goals of the war and for the creation of atmosphere within the military. After the installation of martial law, Mola stated to the military that “it is necessary to spread terror. We have to create the impression of mastery, eliminating without scruples or hesitation those that do not think like we do. There can be no cowardice.”

group capable of committing a genocide as the major leaders ruled in such a way that focused on total annihilation and dehumanizing language that only exists in theatres of genocide, not simply of civil wars.

The second and final coordination stage is Preparation, which unlike Organization calls the public to action and organizes ordinary citizens. Stanton explains that it is through this stage that the rhetoric of cleansing becomes apparent, indoctrination appears, and militaries are built up even further. Prior to the start of the civil war a law was passed prohibiting schools run by religious orders. The FET was able to attract Catholics and those devout to the religious tradition present in Spain. Leaders of the FET spoke to the Women’s Association for Civic Education explaining that this law was a “satanic plot” by the Masonic-Jews and the Bolsheviks, furthering the fear of the other side and stating to the women that “you are duty bound to pour into the hearts of your children a drop of hatred everyday against the Law on Religious Orders and its authors. Woe betide you if you don’t.”

News groups in France spoke with General Mola about the possibility of the end of the war through negotiation to which Mola responded “this war can end only with the extermination of the enemies of Spain.” In this interview Mola publicly stated that the nation needed to eliminate the threat and appeared to make an appeal to their international allies. The National Defense Junta (not to be confused with the first Junta of National Defense that predated the FET) was established through martial law that gave military power precedence over civil law. The National Defense Junta went on to persecute those guilty of rebellion against the republic either by guns or morals. Those subject to this persecution were


either executed immediately or imprisoned. The specialization of the military, the communication with citizens and the wider broadcasting of hate and propaganda are all signifiers of preparation for a genocide as laid out by Gregory Stanton.

The final grouping of stages is the Action section, containing the fourth, eighth and ninth stages, Dehumanization, Persecution and Extermination. These three stages are when violence drifts into legally recognized genocide rather than acts of violence or warfare. During the civil war, the FET called the communists and supporters of the old republic by many names, Reds, Checa's, etc. Nonetheless, the dehumanization and denial of their humanity can be seen in a speech given by Enrique Suner Ordonez, the president of the national tribunal of political responsibility. He describes politicians supportive of the old republic as

Wild beasts and cloven-hoofed beasts running through parliament, in search of sacrificial victims to bite with their fangs or smash with their hooves. Monsters in the style of Nero, leaders of sects and their agents, murdered the greatest hope of the fatherland...Spain has been before and is again the theatre of epic combat between Titans and apocalyptic monsters. 33

The comparison made by Ordonez is not unlike other language used in other genocides. This language was used to justify the brutal murdering, torture, and imprisonment of the Frente Popular as well as to call to action the public and militant groups out of fear of these other groups. Dehumanization has many outcomes and purposes in genocide, one of which is indoctrination of fear, by introducing into the public the idea that the other side is a beast with fangs, or an apocalyptic monster. The public, with enough indoctrination or real fear, will align with the perpetrator and commit atrocities on the local level.

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The Eighth Stage, Persecution is where torture, mass killings, deportation begins, and death lists are created. Antonio Vallejo-Najera, a Spanish psychologist, sought to find a link between intellectual disabilities or “anti-social psychopaths” and Marxism. Through this, an estimated 30,000 children were taken from their Marxist families and put with Francoist families. Vallejo-Najero believed that “left wing families could intoxicate their children and damage the mental health of future generations.” Additionally, by 1940 a policy was put into place to remove children from their homes if “there were sound reasons to consider that the child’s moral foundation was at risk.” Additionally, the theories introduced by Vallejo-Najero were experimented and tested in concentration camps and prisons set up by the FET containing political dissidents. These tests sought to draw a concrete link between political affiliation and mental stability/health to provide added rationale for their mass extermination and sterilization. As one historian describes, “Vallejo provided the Dictator with ‘scientific support for the inferiority of the political adversary, both socially and historically, which then justified the endorsed segregation and purging practices, institutions, and policies.” These practices prove to be violent against one specific group, not out of the need to defeat the enemy, but to eliminate them. These practices serve as simultaneous justification for extermination while also subjugating the group to horrific conditions in prisons and concentration camps.

The tenth stage, Extermination, is the systematic murder of the oppressed group. This stage takes all the actions from the previous stages and uses them to attempt to eliminate a group based on a common characteristic. The existence of Extermination can be proved through the examination of the FET ‘Death Squads.’ These death squads would often take prisoners out of their facilities in the middle of the night, this was called a “Saca.” roughly translating to “extraction” in English. The death squad would take the prisoner and shoot them in the back of the head and bury them where they fell. This was a common occurrence and shows the systemic murdering of people deemed to be political dissidents, the imprisoned endured torture before being brutally murdered. Among people that were murdered in this fashion included women and children as to stop the reproduction of ideas or based on the eugenic belief created by Vallejo-Najera just years prior. The estimated death toll from the White Terror is around 200,000, under the rhetoric that socialists and political dissidents were dangers, monsters, and viruses. The rhetoric and death toll combined proves that the massacres that occurred within the Spanish Civil War were not products of ordinary warfare, but out of a goal to eliminate a threat to society from the earth. The shift to dehumanizing language and eugenic research changes the nature of the violence from war to genocide, cemented with a death toll of massive proportions.

The final stage within Gregory Stanton’s model is Denial which occurs throughout the genocide. This is the denial of genocide, the blocking of investigation, classifying documents, digging up mass graves and burning the bodies, and the framing of the genocide as counterinsurgency in the cases of civil war. Denial during the civil war was difficult due to the

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context of war and the involvement from foreign actors. Nevertheless, military actors continued to state that their actions were justified in the context of war, which has led to genocide scholarship nearly ignoring this event entirely. However, the denial that followed the civil war was intense as Franco went on to rule Spain until his death in 1975; within his dictatorship the country did not address the horrors from the Civil War. During Franco’s rule there was a mass commitment to brainwashing and indoctrination of the goals of the war and the justification of the murdering of political dissidents. There is a phenomenon within Spain called El Pacto de Olvido (the pact of forgetting) which was adopted by politicians, elites, and ordinary civilians alike to not speak or commit public memory to the event.\(^\text{39}\) Many historians and activists today are attempting to undo this narrative and to provide justice for those that disappeared or were brutally murdered at the hands of the FET.

\textit{The Spanish Civil War’s White Terror as a Genocide}

Gregory Stanton’s Ten Stages of Genocide have been used to track and prove the existence of genocides against religious, racial, ethnic, and national groups in accordance with the United Nations genocide convention. The White Terror is not well documented by genocide scholars, and there are several gaps in scholarship within Historians, Political Scientists, and other disciplines. However, through the analysis of the White Terror through Stanton’s stages there is a comparison made inherently to the genocides that receive protection under the U.N. genocide convention, they abide and pass the same tests, thus they should receive the same treatment. Additionally, it is important to note one significant process shown within the White

Terror, that is the narrative surrounding the group’s identity and the dehumanization that ensued. Many scholars have noted that the reason political groups do not necessitate genocide is due to the hierarchical nature rather than the communal nature of their identity. However, as highlighted through this case study, political identities can be manipulated in the same way as national, ethnic, racial, or religious groups can be. Political groups become subject to being deemed a virus that needs to be cleansed from the earth. Political groups can also be associated with global myths like the Jewish world conspiracy to justify their danger. The White Terror saw a scientific effort to link political views to an intrinsic biological deficiency, proving that political groups can be viewed as a communal group with intrinsic differences and identities that can be made into danger by an oppressive group. The White Terror, through the usage of the Ten Stages, illustrates how political affiliation can be morphed into an identity subjected to the same violence as those protected by the United Nations.

Soviet Union Case Study

From 1929 into 1930 the Soviet Union issued and implemented a new policy to recollect and redistribute land. “Winter Collectivization” was the removal of land from the class of peasants that owned and collected money from large swaths of land in rural areas. Called ‘Kulaks’ this group of people constructed an economic group that was subjected to deportation, labor, harsh conditions, and death. The word Kulak has historical significance in this specific region; Vladimir Lenin began to use the phrase to describe “village extortioners, ‘skinners alive’ those who ‘eat up the commune,’ men of special rapacity whose wealth came from usury or trading rather than agriculture.” In other contexts, this word was used to describe rural capitalists or

rural entrepreneurs. Winter Collectivization brought brigades into rural places to forcibly remove kulaks, deport, move them to labor camps, or execute them. All of this to achieve the goal of eliminating a political and economic class that often opposed or rejected policy created by the government.

Due to the classification of Kulaks as a group not defined by racial, national, ethnic or religious association, this group would not be protected by the United Nations Genocide Convention as it stands today. However, the mechanisms of violence are ones the international community has witnessed in U.N. recognized and prosecuted genocides. A re-analysis would remedy this exclusion.

The U.N. definition of genocide includes “deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.” Deportation and forced movement are an example of creating an environment that is not going to be suitable for life in attempts to eradicate a group. It was understood within the government that deportation was leading to considerable damage to quality of life. In a report from the Arkhangelsk region the state described that “places of resettlement for ‘kulak’ families were, for the most part, not ready to receive them.” In order to attempt to fix this solution, they ordered “the construction of temporary barracks.” The intense physical labor required of these people, as well as the proximity of other people, is a clear example of the beginning of an environment that is not

41 Lewis Siegelbaum, “Collectivization” (Seventeen Moments in Soviet History, Online Archive, 2015)


suitable for sustained life. The government continued to produce rhetoric surrounding the Kulaks to cultivate animosity and fear stating that they were in communication with the church, another enemy of the state, on how to stop socialism from growing. Media produced material that stated “the Priest and Kulak create all sorts of miracles to prove that collective farms displease God. They fool the most backward element of the peasantry, especially women.” The same poster later calls for “more vigilance against the machinations of the Priest and the Kulak!” Propaganda called for “Destruction of the Kulaks as a Class!” and to “Throw the Kulaks Out of Your Way, the Sworn Enemies of Collectivization!” While it can be interpreted that they meant moving those people into different classes, rhetoric produced in media like those discussed above hints at a system-wide plan for the persecution and death of a group of people. The rhetoric cultivated was one that welcomed isolation, violence, and persecution against Kulaks to achieve state policies, this state-sponsored oppression turns very quickly into famine and death. Collectivization presents a concrete foundation for mass murder to come, one that was deliberate with mechanisms of dehumanization used to meet its goal.

The foundation created for the murdering of political dissidents and economic classes was laid through deportations, propaganda, and widespread fear. The following events are defined by historians as “The Great Terror” to detail the “extraordinarily intense, concentrated and, purposeful killing of hundreds of thousands of people.” Scholars liken the violence and killings to those perpetrated by Pol Pot in Cambodia and Hitler in Germany, both recognized

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44 Cheremnii, A Letter from Heaven, Still Image, 1932, Izgoz, Tri library Digital Collection
https://digitalcollections.tricolib.brynmaur.edu/object/sc92779

45 Unknown, “Destruction of Kulaks as a Class,” Still Image, 1930, Swarthmore College Peace Collection


genocides by the United Nations. Mass graves have been exhumed to reveal an estimated 750,000 political dissidents killed during the Great Terror. Archaeologists explained the murdering sentencing through the evidence found in graves and the amount of bodies as “they dug out pits in the garbage and threw these people in or shot them dead as they were standing there. And then they covered them up with the same garbage.” This account reveals the extent to which dehumanization was used during this time, likening these people to trash and dirt. Mass graves and shooting squads like these are common identifiers of genocide, according to Gregory Stanton this is a prime example of extermination, the ninth stage.

The Great Terror is not considered a genocide by the larger international community. The passage of the Convention after the violence ended does not play a role in the ‘naming and shaming’ aspect of reconciliation and memorialization. The genocide of Armenians by the Ottomans occurred in the early 20th century and has been recognized as recently as 2021 as a genocide, thus this is not a factor for the Great Terror. The victim group in question is the inhibitor to using the term genocide to define the event, and if this event were to have happened after the passage of the Convention, would not warrant the same protection under the Convention. Nonetheless, Gregory Stanton’s Ten Stages of Genocide can be used to argue that the genocide of political and economic groups occurs in similar progressions. The Great Terror can be traced through most of these stages and compared to recognized genocides with few differences.

The first three stages do not always lead to genocide but are needed for the process to become more severe. Classification and Symbolization function in tandem for the creation of an

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‘us versus them’ and the labeling of that distinction is seen clearly in the Soviet Union just through the use of the word Kulak, by naming the enemy the genocidaire can separate, segregate and harm the group. Discrimination, the use of law to deprive the rights of people, is displayed in the legislation produced in the 1930s that disenfranchised people who “did not engage in socially useful, productive work and exploited hired labor.”49 Groups of people, even if they had since changed careers, were permanently stripped of not only voting rights but other penalties that included “determination of tax obligations, the harshness of legal penalties, access to education and services.”50

The point where the process begins to turn into a severe risk of genocide is dehumanization, the denial of a groups humanity and likening them to vermin or diseases. Vladimir Lenin, the former head of state for the Soviet Union and a political revolutionary, made these comparisons to Kulaks in writings during his time in power. In one of his recovered writings, Lenin describes Kulaks as “leeches that have sucked the blood of the working people and grown richer as workers in the cities and factories starved. These vampires have been gathering the landed estates into their hands; they continue to enslave poor peasants.”51 The comparison of Kulaks to “leeches” and “vampire” is a clear example of a powerful force denying the humanity of a group to create a common enemy and to provide rationale for the destruction of the group. Returning to the common opposition for the exclusion of political groups from the U.N. Convention being the oppositional nature of the group, shown in these quotes is the power

50 Id, 31
group placing a characteristic onto an outsider group to bound them together as a problem to be solved.

Stanton’s Model Tested

The first three stages of Stanton’s model are present in many societies today and commonly do not lead to genocide. However, Dehumanization is where the major warning signs of extermination and genocide begin. Dehumanization demonstrates intent; it demonstrates the creation of a common issue that needs to be purged from society. If political groups do not have the same traits as communal ones, that would imply that dehumanization and calls to action for their murder would look different. Further implying that the dehumanization of communal groups rests on a historic hatred and that they have been plaguing society for many years. Nonetheless, an historic hatred is shown clearly in Lenin’s work, this economic class is portrayed as the source of all issues in Soviet history, and they are the reason for the stalling of progress. Dehumanization, a necessary process for genocide, is seen in the mass murder of political dissidents in the Soviet Union, further proving that political and economic groups have traits that are ignored by scholars today when discussing their inclusion in the United Nations definition.

The next three stages of the model are Organization, Polarization and Preparation, which are built on top of the precedent set by Dehumanization. Many of the events/processes in these stages can occur simultaneously or shortly after one another. In the Organization stage there is a collection of military groups to torture, hurt or murder people are formed as well as planning for future violence. The Soviet Union, through Collectivization demonstrated this stage, the formation and implementation, the central commission in charge of relocating and deporting kulaks through land reallocation, are the primary example. Polarization, furthering the divide between groups, is primarily defined by propaganda meant to spread fear and hate as well as
calls to action. These call-to-action statements encourage people to isolate the specific group and promote general violence against the group. The Soviet Union had many examples of intense propaganda, one of which was the warning about machinations between Kulaks and Priests, mentioned previously, calls for “More vigilance against the machinations of the Priest and Kulak!” (See Fig. 3) Posters are also noted calling to “Get the Kulak off of the Collective Farm!” explaining that “The kulaks are the most ferocious, the most predatory, the most ruthless exploiters.” Others stated that “Being against the Kulak means you are for the socialization of livestock” with the words “Kick the Kulak off the Collective Farms” in bold. Furthering fear and inundating everyday citizens with a sense of danger and urgency while placing the blame of any mishaps within the state on these ‘enemies’ is a common part of the path to genocide. Preparation, the final planning for mass execution of a group is clearly seen within the Great Terror with the forming of brigades after the raising of quotas in the mid-1940s. These brigades were given pamphlets on how to find and search for hidden grain within people’s homes, those that were found guilty were subsequently tortured and often killed. These brigades hunted the Kulaks homes for hidden grain and arrested what was found.

54 Id, 50
56 Id, 52
The final three stages of the model are Persecution, Extermination and Denial. Persecution and Extermination can happen simultaneously and consist of torture, humiliation, and murder. The Holodomor saw the death of an estimated 3,900,000 farmers and peasants from 1932-33, While the Great Terror led to the death of an estimated 700,000 political dissidents in 1937.\textsuperscript{59} The extermination methods included starvation, beatings, torture, internment camps (known as gulags) and systematic deprivation of resources. The victims were made up of political and economic groups that the government believed to be a threat to the expansion of socialism. These people were not murdered because they were of another ethnicity, nationality, religion, or race. They were systematically eliminated due to a potential political affiliation or previous economic condition.

The final stage, Denial is the covering up of the event, public denial, obstructing view from the public, and destroying evidence. Soviets hid the famine from international speculation; they had control of the press and attempted to keep journalists from acquiring information about

\textsuperscript{58} Cheremnii, \textit{A Letter from Heaven}, Still Image, 1932, Izgoz, Tri library Digital Collection https://digitalcollections.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/object/sc92779
the happenings within its borders, journalists described being “advised strongly by the Soviet Bureau not to make a further provincial trip for the time being.” Journalists were later prohibited from traveling within the country. Maxim Litvinov, a Soviet Diplomat is quoted saying “there is no famine in the Soviet Union” when asked about the increasing rumors of famine within the country. Denial was forceful and unwavering during these events and for many years after, which is a quite common indicator of genocide.

The Holodomor and Great Terror are examples of the extermination of political groups that progress the same manner as genocides, with slight differences. The most important takeaway from the application of Gregory Stanton’s model is that the mass murder of groups not protected by the United Nations prove no different than those protected. People murdered in the Holodomor and Great Famine may not have identified with any political or economic group that was in contest, it was the placement of a distinction on them by a governmental power that led to their deaths. This is true for the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide, people that did not identify as Jews who were traced to have a certain percentage of ancestry were murdered, those who aided and helped Tutsis were murdered, though they did not identify with the group. Classifications can be arbitrary and used for mass murder and hatred, but once those classifications are solidified, there is no dissolving the distinction. Once the term Kulak was cemented, it became an identifier no different than those used in other genocides and should not be regarded as any different.

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60 Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Foreigners Observed: Moscow Visitors in the 1930’s Under the Gaze of Their Soviet Guides,” Russian History vol.35 No. ½ (Summer 2008)
Additionally, using Stanton’s model shows the significance of intent and dehumanization, two things distinct to genocides and not argued for as much for politicide. Dehumanization of a political group has been argued to be conceptually difficult, as there is no defining characteristic within the group, hence it being hierarchical. However, this episode of violence demonstrates that people can give a defining characteristic to a group to function on, and that should not appear different in the eyes of international law. The use of Gregory Stanton’s model applied to instances of mass violence in the Soviet Union bolsters the assertion that the murder of political and economic groups functions nearly identically to that of protected groups and thus should be treated the same in the eyes of the law.

**Cambodian Case Study**

Starting in 1975 and ending in 1979 Cambodia saw the murder of between 1.5 and 2 million citizens after a coup d'état. Prior to the genocide a stark inequality of wealth existed in the state, peasants in the countryside worked hard with little resources and even less pay while urban residents typically enjoyed a much higher quality of life and wealth. On April 17, 1975, the Khmer Rouge overtook the capital city, Phnom Penh, and instituted a new communist regime and renamed the country Kampuchea. There was a massive burning of the city and deportation of urban residents to the countryside to work in fields and farms.

During this time, many families were separated and prominent government officials were singled out and murdered. Once resettled, people were subjected to horrific working conditions, starvation, brutality, and disease. Children were subjected to brainwashing and education to become child soldiers to fight under the Khmer Rouge; intense propaganda circulated promoting

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the message of the Khmer Rouge. Many groups were targeted by the Khmer Rouge’s brutal regime, a prominent faction being intellectuals, ex-government officials, and those that existed in the upper class prior to the coup. The violence committed in the Cambodian Genocide against intellectuals, politicians and upper-class persons has been accepted by the international community as part of the genocide, showing that there are holes in the argument that academics separate and exclude political groups from the definition of genocide.

Who Were the Khmer Rouge

Beginning in 1960 a group of Cambodians joined together under the ideology posed by Mao Zedong, a prominent Chinese politician. This ideology rested on combative insurgence to attain state power to implement state policies that mirrored Marxist-Leninist philosophies. Mao led an agricultural collectivization to redistribute land and enforce communism in all areas of the state with a rigid bureaucracy and strict quotas. This group of Cambodians who made up the Communist party came to be known as the Khmer Rouge or the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK). The Khmer Rouge garnered support in the countryside and became an oppositional force against the right-wing government that had risen to power. Pol Pot, the leader of the Khmer Rouge led an attack on the government in the Capitol in April of 1970, gaining power and establishing an authoritarian government that sought to implement communist ideals.

Cambodians that made up the beginning movement of the CPK were those that lived in rural areas in the Northeast of the country and subsisted by agricultural means and lived independently. The policies implemented after the consolidation of power were implemented to recreate the culture and way of life found in these regions. Once in power, people were forced to resettle on agricultural communes, currency was abolished, and the ownership of private property was outlawed. Kampuchea was organized as a decentralized government with much of
the power in the hands of those controlling various communes. Within these communes brutality, starvation, and disease ensued.

*Victims of the Khmer Rouge*

While many people died due to conditions within the communes and manual labor, the Khmer Rouge established an estimated 200 detention centers, the most famous and elusive being the Tuol Sleng, otherwise known as S-21. These facilities were used to torture, interrogate, and execute perceived enemies of the state and those that belonged to the Khmer Rouge themselves who were thought to be a direct threat. Treatment once detained included “enduring long and brutal periods of torture before their eventual execution. Less important prisoners, including most spouses, children, and other relatives of the detainees, were often not interrogated, and were frequently executed within a very short time period.” There is no current evidence that any detainees were released from this prison. Those executed were buried in mass graves located near the prison.

Those that were murdered in S-21 were not killed because of an ethnic, national, racial, or religious affiliation but because of political activity. A common argument is that this would just be considered a revolution or insurgence. However, given the context of the event and of the prison, it represents total control of the government as many people arrested and murdered where not actually engaging in political activities. Spouses, relatives, and children of these prisoners were also murdered due to their affiliation, not because of action. S-21 is an example of political mass murder and represents the need for the inclusion of political groups in the definition.

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64 Id, 271
The genocide began with the takeover of Phnom Penh, the capital city. Political allies and supporters of the previous government were immediately murdered publicly while the rest of those belonging to the urban class were deported to the countryside to work on farms. Intense discrimination of former urban residents persisted on these farms, with many dying from starvation and exhaustion. It is described that “even after relocation, city-dwellers remained suspect and generally received lower food rations on the collectives. When famine struck, they suffered disproportionally. Perhaps 400,000 evacuees eventually died.”

A journal stated after the evacuation that “classes have already collapsed but their views still remain, their aspirations still remain.”

Any person suspected of intellectual, artistic, or oppositional potential was executed immediately, many times with little to no evidence, simply evidence of relation to someone imprisoned or killed or belonging to a suspect group. Since governments like that of genocidaires focus on the creation of a supposed utopia, classifications become intense and dehumanizing language becomes central. Political affiliation and economic membership shift from being a choice or a fluid thing to being a label placed on the victim with little to no logic, creating a new form of intent that aligns with the agreed-on definition of genocide.

One of the generally accepted crimes of genocide includes transferring children of a group to another. The Khmer Rouge forcibly removed children who had been evacuees or members of another suspect group and trained them to be child soldiers. An estimated 10,000 children, many of which were conscripted by force, with some volunteers made up this element


of the army. Training these child soldiers came with intense indoctrination and placing children as young as seven with small arms and landmines. In a memoir, a survivor of this indoctrination describes the event: “they took young children from their homes to live in a commune so that they could indoctrinate us. Parents lost their children. Families were separated.” Children were educated to be loyal to the “Angkar” which translated to the Organization. Many sources state that showing grief or sadness at the loss of your parents or family could be punishable by torture or death. These children were taken from parents that were deemed to be dangers to the state, which often meant their political or previous economic situation. These child communes are another example of the difference between war and genocide, something specific to the crime of genocide is not just the othering of people, but then separating children, transferring them and ‘reeducating them.’

*Global Context*

Cambodia has been recognized by the international community and by the United Nations specifically as genocide; when it is studied and taught, there is a focus on the murdering of elites. The Extraordinary Chamber in the Courts of Cambodia charged and prosecuting people that worked in S-21. That prison predominately murdered and tortured political dissidents and people that previously belonged to an economic group. The international community, perhaps unintentionally has therefore recognized politicide as genocide. As such, there is now precedent for the larger inclusion in other political contexts. Cambodia also illustrated how the genocide of political groups differs from warfare, as there was no territorial dispute, nor was there a declaration, and finally the victims of the genocide regard the event as the aftermath of civil war,

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not a continuation. War would imply that there was another side fighting back. However, the systematic torture, starvation, deportation, and execution proves that opposition was not possible. Genocide differs from war when there are not two (or more) sides fighting but when the only possibility for end is from international intervention, as was the case with Cambodia.

**Conclusion**

In many areas of the world intense violence and persecution of political groups ensues with little to no intervention. The argument over the inclusion of political groups in the United Nations Convention ignores the very real change that has occurred in world politics and societal treatment of political groups. As political groups begin to encompass people's advocacy for the safety of their gender, sexuality, livelihood, bodily autonomy, and innermost self, the very nature of the persecution shifts. Violence against political groups can be a result of revolutionary activity, as a byproduct of war or armed conflict, or simply due to oppressive regimes. This does not mean that it cannot shift into a dehumanizing and othering rhetoric that leads to systematic murder that can reasonably be considered genocide. It is when regimes or militant groups begin to identify the group as ‘vampires’ or ‘a disease’ or ‘vermin’ and then act on these repressive acts through systematic elimination that the tide turns. Conventions against genocide are meant to protect groups of people with shared values, traditions and lived experiences from harmful othering that eventually leads to the attempt to exterminate them from existence. For the Genocide Convention to fulfill its promise, it must be expanded and the rhetoric around communal groups must be broadened.

Victims of political genocide hint at a new form of community, a political community. Political groups draw people of similar backgrounds together to advocate for their most inner
desires. Nonetheless, a misconception about the inclusion of political groups in the United Nations definition is that they have posed some sort of actual threat to the regime or that it is warfare, not genocide. Political affiliations become a catch-all for groups of people with similar lived experiences that desire the same protections from their government. Lenin is quoted as describing political groups as a form of community: “we are not waging a war on individual persons. We are exterminating the bourgeoisie as a class.”

This economic group shares a quality of life, things enjoyed, leisure activities, values, and lived experiences that will lead to their demise, not their revolutionary insurrection or opposition. The Genocide Convention should protect people’s way of life, protect them from torture and murder based on a common trait, value, or lived experience and there should not be exclusion of certain groups based on arbitrary bases. Hate is hate; perpetrators have found ways to classify people through various characteristics but the intent is all the same regardless of the characteristic being focused on. As an international community, definitionalism or intense debate on the definition of topics and events, debilitates scholars, dehumanizes the subject, and leads to the systematic murder of groups of people. To get away from this trend, the definition of genocide must be expanded to one that can protect all people from this extreme form of violence.

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