Perspectives on the Social Scientific Study of Genocide

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Overview

- History of the term “genocide” and the UN Genocide Convention
- The emergence of the field of genocide studies
- Examples of genocide
- Four disturbing “stylized facts” about genocide
- Genocide prevention and the responsibility to protect (R2P)
- Social scientific study of genocide risk
- Economics of genocide
- Statistical risk factors for genocide onet
- Roger Williams, genocide studies, and the practice of toleration
- Discussion
Question

- Have you studied any genocide cases in your courses at Roger Williams or in high school? If so, which cases?
Where did the term “genocide” come from?

- Winston Churchill called the Holocaust “a crime without a name”
- Raphael Lemkin (1900-1959)
  - A Polish Jew with expertise in law and languages
  - In the 1920s, he became interested in the Armenian genocide (1915-1923)
    - Soghomon Tehlirian’s assassination of Mehmed Talaat (March 15, 1921) was a catalytic moment for Lemkin
  - Published *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (1944) where he coined the term “genocide” (Genos = race/tribe + Cide = killing)
  - He worked tirelessly to have the United Nations codify genocide as a crime in international law
The United Nations and the Genocide Convention

● Genocide Convention
  ■ December 9, 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations unanimously passed the “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide”

● Article 2 of the Genocide Convention defines genocide as “…any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:
  (a) Killing members of the group;
  (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
  (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
  (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
  (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another”

● Raphael Lemkin on the word “genocide” (CBS News)
The Emergence of the Field of Genocide Studies

- Began to emerge following Lemkin’s work and the Holocaust
- Extensive work by social scientists, historians, and others on
  - What genocide is and is not (definitional and categorical controversies)
  - Why genocides happen and what can be done to prevent them

- Multidisciplinary
  - Social sciences: social psychology, sociology, political science, economics…
  - Life sciences: biology, biological psychology, mathematics, statistics…
  - Humanities: history, languages and literature, philosophy, religion, culture…

- Multiple methodological perspectives
  - Statistical studies of risk factors for genocide onset and severity
  - Mathematical and non-mathematical theories/models of genocide onset and spread
  - Case studies (single and comparative) of genocide onset and spread
  - Laboratory experiments

- Synergies between academics, policymakers, and activists
Selected Examples of Genocide

- Hereros of SW Africa, 1904
- Armenian genocide, 1915-23
- Soviet Union, 1920-53
- Nazi Holocaust, 1939-45
- China, 1958-62
- Indonesia, 1965-66
- Bangladesh, 1971
- Burundi, 1965-73, 1988, 1993
- Afghanistan 1978-92
- Cambodia, 1975-79
- East Timor, 1975-79
- Bosnia, 1992-95

Execution of Ukrainian Jew by member of Einsatzgruppen (mobile killing unit)
Examples of Genocide Cont’d

- Guatemala, 1978-90
- Iraq, 1988-91
- Rwanda, 1994
- Sudan-Darfur, 2003-????

Photos of Rwandan Genocide Victims

Child’s Drawing of Attack on Village in Sudan-Darfur
Four Disturbing “Stylized Facts” About Genocide

1. Genocides keep happening again and again and again and again

Data Sources: Political Instability Task Force for genocides and Ulfelder and Valentino (2008) for mass killings.
For Disturbing “Stylized Facts” About Genocide

2. Genocides are shockingly severe

Estimated fatalities from selected genocides, 1966-2011

- Afghanistan, 1978-92: 1,176,000
- Bosnia, 1992-95: 228,000
- Burundi, 1965-73, 1988, 1993: 189,750
- Cambodia, 1975-79: 2,700,000
- China, 1966-75: 480,000
- El Salvador, 1980-89: 49,450
- Guatemala, 1978-90: 71,400
- Iraq, 1988-91: 336,000
- Rwanda, 1994: 750,000
- Sudan-Darfur, 2003-11: 400,500

Data Source: Political Instability Task Force
Under certain conditions, leaders of an authority group choose genocide

- Genocides are not spontaneous and random events
- Genocides tend to be systematically planned and executed

Most genocides can be viewed as “disturbingly rational”
Four Disturbing “Stylized Facts” About Genocide

4. Many “ordinary people” perpetrate or condone genocidal actions

- 100,000-500,000 people were involved in genocidal actions during the Holocaust (≈ 6 million killed)
- About 200,000 people conducted genocidal acts in the 1994 Rwandan genocide (≈ 800,000 killed in 90-100 days)

=> Most genocide perpetrators must be “ordinary people” rather than psychopaths because psychopathology is relatively rare

How is it possible for so many ordinary people to perpetrate (or not resist) genocide?
Genocide: Worse Than War

- Daniel Goldhagen’s documentary, “Genocide: Worse Than War” (show first 6 minutes)
Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

- Genocide prevention is a critical part of the work in Genocide Studies
- At the United Nations 2005 World Summit, leaders made a commitment to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. This commitment is known as the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)
Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

R2P stipulates the following three “pillars”

1. A **State has a responsibility to protect** its population from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing (mass atrocities).
2. If the State is unable to protect its population on its own, the **international community has a responsibility to assist** the State by building its capacity.
3. If a State is manifestly failing to protect its citizens from mass atrocities and peaceful measures are not working, the **international community has the responsibility to intervene** at first diplomatically, then more coercively, and as a last resort, with military force.
Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

- R2P appears to be an emerging international policy norm
- R2P was invoked on March 17, 2011 when the United Nations Security Council approved resolution 1973, which reiterated the responsibility of the Libyan authorities to protect the Libyan population.
- Resolution 1973 laid the legal groundwork for foreign military intervention in the Libyan civil war.
Social Scientific Study of Genocide Risk

- Theoretical models of genocide choice and spread
- Statistical models of genocide risk
  - Analogous to medical research on risk factors for disease
  - Almost 20 published statistical studies of genocide risk
    - Pales in comparison to the thousand or so statistical studies for interstate conflict risk, several hundred such studies for civil war risk, and about two hundred such studies of terrorism risk
- Laboratory experiments
- Case studies
Economics of Genocide
Ways That Economics and Genocide “Go Together”

1. Genocide Affects the Economy
2. Economic Conditions Affect Genocide
3. Genocide Requires Forms of “Business” Organization
4. Genocide is a Mode of Wealth Appropriation
5. Segmentation of Security as a Fundamental Service
6. Genocide is a Choice
Statistical Risk Factors for Genocide Onset

- Working on statistical risk assessment project with J. Carter
- Sample: 155 countries, 1955-2006, about 8,000 obs.

- Risk factors
  - Threat of political/territorial loss to an authority group
  - Monopoly (autocratic) control of the polity
  - New state ($\leq 3$ years)
  - Low per capita income
  - Discrimination, particularly economic discrimination
  - Cold war period (pre-1990)
  - Low trade openness ($??$)
  - Low internet/mobile phone access ($??$)
We found in our study that:

- If a state is in the “bad sides” of the 6 major risk factors, it has over a 90 percent chance of genocide in a 10-year period.
- If a post-cold war state is in the “bad sides” of the 5 other major risk factors, it has over a 60 percent chance of genocide in a 10-year period.
- Our work is just one study in a developing literature.
- We have much to learn.
Roger Williams, Genocide Studies, and the Practice of Toleration

- Genocide and Atrocity Crimes (course in the Law School)
- Prejudice and Institutional Violence (CORE course that covers Holocaust and genocide)
- Student Presentation, “Polemics and Denial: Redefining the Assyrian Genocide”
- RWU event, STAND: A Student Anti-Genocide Coalition
- Services in Commemoration of U.S. Holocaust Remembrance Day
- Roger Williams and the Promotion of Civil Discourse
Discussion

- What would you like to talk about?
- Thank you!