

# Investigating Indoctrination to Incitement: What is the Relationship between Hate Media and Genocide?



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*For the millions of victims affected by genocide,  
may the pain and suffering you endured be remembered.*

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*“You have to understand what caused genocide to happen. Or it will happen again.”*

—Tim Walz

## **Abstract**

This thesis utilizes a synthetic, thematic approach to evaluate the role of hate media in inciting genocidal violence in six historical cases: Rwanda, the Islamic State, Myanmar, Guatemala, Yugoslavia, and Germany. Many scholars have debated the centrality of hateful discourse in cases of state violence, especially when voiced in a politically and economically charged context. This enduring debate has risen to the forefront of international jurisprudence, beginning with the trials of Nazi propagandists at the Nuremberg war crimes tribunal. The consequent “Media Case” in Rwanda held media executives accountable for inciting genocide. Moving into the modern century, the “media effects” debate remains unsettled: does hate media directly incite bloodshed, or does it serve as a secondary driver of violence? This thesis will examine if hate media can be deemed as culpable for incitement to genocide as those who drew up the extermination plans, wielded weapons, or manufactured military munitions.

## **Introduction**

The extent to which hate speech and propaganda can be said to factually and legally cause mass atrocities is a complicated issue. Jonathan Leader Maynard and Susan Benesch have observed that it is “one of the most underdeveloped components of genocide and atrocity prevention, in both theory and practice”— and that’s before social media enters the picture.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Facebook’s Role in the Genocide in Myanmar: New Reporting Complicates the Narrative.” *Lawfare*, 22 Oct. 2018, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/facebooks-role-genocide-myanmar-new-reporting-complicates-narrative>.

It has been argued that virulent hate propaganda and hate media must be accorded the status of an international crime; hate media leads to the creation of a climate where the commission of genocidal crimes is possible.<sup>2</sup> Many believe hate media is itself as dangerous as incitement due to the environment of impunity it creates. Hate media subconsciously infiltrates the mind with baleful reasoning “which is later used to justify the perpetration of the incited crime.”<sup>3</sup> The peril of this media communication lies in the creation of the circumstance.<sup>4</sup> Scholarly research shows that “under particular circumstances, most people have the capacity for extreme violence and the destruction of human life.”<sup>5</sup> So how does hate media contribute to this escalation of violence?

Episodes of systematic intergroup massacres have been prevalent for hundreds of years of human history. The 20<sup>th</sup> century infamously introduced a sinister type of aggression: genocide, a term that did not exist in the lexicon of homicide until post-World War II.<sup>6</sup> The word “genocide” was first coined by Polish lawyer Raphael Lemkin’s 1944 book, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, after he escaped the Holocaust. Its nomenclature relates to the Greek prefix *genos*, meaning race or tribe, with the Latin suffix *cide*, translated as killing. Genocide was codified as an independent crime in the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. As such, genocide was defined as:

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<sup>2</sup> Timmermann, Wibke Kristin. “The Relationship between Hate Propaganda and Incitement to Genocide: A New Trend in International Law towards Criminalization of Hate Propaganda?” *Leiden Journal of International Law*, vol. 18, no. 2, June 2005, pp. 257–82. *DOI.org*, doi: 10.1017/S0922156505002633.

<sup>3</sup> Badar, Mohamed Elewa. “The Road to Genocide: The Propaganda Machine of the Self-Declared Islamic State (IS).” Brill Nijhoff, no. *International Criminal Law Review*, 2016, pp. 362–411.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Oberschall, Anthony. *Propaganda, Hate Speech and Mass Killings*.

<sup>6</sup> Dutton, Donald G., et al. “Extreme Mass Homicide: From Military Massacre to Genocide.” *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, vol. 10, no. 4, May 2005, pp. 437–73. *DOI.org*, doi:10.1016/j.avb.2004.06.002.

Acting with the intent to destroy, in whole or part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group, as such: killing members of the groups; causing serious bodily harm or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.<sup>7</sup>

In this definition, the *dolus specialis*, or the special intent, makes the crime of genocide unique. Victims of genocide are deliberately targeted because of their real or even perceived membership in the targeted group. We have developed a working definition of what genocide is, however, there is no precise scholarly consensus on how or why it occurs. While each instance of genocide is different, from its geolocation, victims, and methodology, many argue the one constant has been the ubiquitous presence of hate media in pre-genocidal societies. To effectively conduct a thorough analysis of hate media in major genocidal episodes in modern history, it is necessary to define the meaning of hate media in the context of my analysis. Using the United Nations' guidelines, hate media is "any kind of communication in speech, writing or behavior that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language regarding a person or group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, color, descent gender or other identity factors."<sup>8</sup> The precise threshold at which hate speech is believed to incite veritable discrimination, hostility, or violence still remains controversial and

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<sup>7</sup> "United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect." *United Nations*, United Nations, [www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide.shtml).

<sup>8</sup> "The UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech: Tackling Discrimination, Hostility and Violence." *Universal Rights Group*, 20 Aug. 2019, [www.universal-rights.org/blog/the-un-strategy-and-plan-of-action-on-hate-speech-tackling-discrimination-hostility-and-violence/](http://www.universal-rights.org/blog/the-un-strategy-and-plan-of-action-on-hate-speech-tackling-discrimination-hostility-and-violence/).

widely disputed.<sup>9</sup> In general, incitement means “encouraging or persuading another to commit an offense by way of mass communication, employing broadcasts, publications, drawings, images, or speeches.”<sup>10</sup>

Hate media manipulates the minds and emotions of its audience under false pretenses, justifying destructive, harmful, and lethal actions against adversaries.<sup>11</sup> For Holocaust and Genocide professor Dr. James Waller, hate media has three distinct components. First, the target group is negatively stereotyped as different, alien, inferior, and inhuman which awakens sentiments from dislike and animosity to passions like hatred.<sup>12</sup> Next, the target is characterized as an extreme threat to the survival and wellbeing of one’s nation or ethnic group. Lastly, hate media advocates for an eliminationist solution to the threat, which ranges from limitations and discrimination to expulsion and in extreme cases, annihilation.<sup>13</sup> Hate media is believed to contain threats, incitement to violence, and prejudicial actions against the target.<sup>14</sup> The cases I explored in this thesis all feature a form of hateful discourse in which perpetrators were exposed to extreme negative stereotyping, fear and threat dialogues, and linguistics related to extermination.

There has been a long-established perception that incitement can lead to genocide. Elihu Richter and his team applied models and tools of epidemiology and public health to show the

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Incitement to Genocide in International Law.” *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, [encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/incitement-to-genocide-in-international-law](https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/incitement-to-genocide-in-international-law).

<sup>11</sup> Oberschall, Anthony. *Propaganda, Hate Speech and Mass Killings*. Mar. 2013. [www.taylorfrancis.com](http://www.taylorfrancis.com), doi:10.4324/9780203180921-15.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

roles of ideologies, indoctrination, and incitement in genocide and genocidal terror.<sup>15</sup> Building on previous research, Richter focused on word pollution —the motifs, language, and images of incitement spread through propaganda.<sup>16</sup> His study noted the role of propaganda in creating climates of genocide as these media messages utilize paths of mass exposure to incite susceptible populations. Incitement does not pertain to a particular belief system; its widespread purpose is to rouse individuals to violent action. Incitement includes the “5 Ds” of dehumanization, demonization, delegitimization, disinformation, and the denial of past atrocities perpetrated against the targets.<sup>17</sup> In his research, Richter acknowledged incitement can carry enormous weight, especially when initiated or endorsed by persons of authority. Under international jurisprudence, criminal courts have prosecuted actors who spread hateful media, recognizing media’s ability to steer sensitive populations toward genocide. For example, the International Criminal Court prosecuted a number of media sources for incitement after the Rwandan genocide. However, Richter clarified there remains a need for a more nuanced exploration of the media-violence nexus and how it perpetuates genocidal terror. He concluded ideological indoctrination is a trigger to genocidal outcomes, but indoctrination may be upstream to incitement.<sup>18</sup> To better understand if and how hate media can incite genocide, I will be analyzing cases of genocide in Rwanda, the Islamic State, Myanmar, Guatemala, Yugoslavia, and Nazi Germany.

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<sup>15</sup> Richter, Elihu D et al. “Incitement, genocide, genocidal terror, and the upstream role of indoctrination: can epidemiologic models predict and prevent?” *Public health reviews* vol. 39 30. 22 Oct. 2018, doi:10.1186/s40985-018-0106-7

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*



## Chapter 1: Rwanda

Almost 50 years after the horrors of the Holocaust, the small nation of Rwanda experienced 100 days of surreal brutality wherein over 800,000 people were hacked to death with machetes.<sup>19</sup> Many of the victims were of the minority Tutsi ethnicity while the killers belonged to the majority Hutu group. Rwanda was characterized by colonialism from the early 1900s, which had lasting impacts on the ethnic identity of the region. Hutu and Tutsi groups primarily represented fluid socioeconomic groups.<sup>20</sup> However, they later became synonymous with ethnic classifications, even though the Hutus and Tutsis shared a common language and religion. To understand what happened during the 1994 genocide and how the media manipulated the masses to violence, we must understand Rwanda's history.

Rwanda is a small country landlocked in the Great Rift Valley, where the African Great Lakes region and East Africa converge. The small nation is often referred to as *le pays des mille collines*, or the land of a thousand hills in French. Linguistically and culturally, the Rwandan population was relatively homogenous, with three main groups: the Hutu, Tutsi, and the Twa. *Kinyarwanda* was universally spoken, and all groups lived side by side with intermarriage being commonplace. Before colonization, Hutu peoples were farmers, while Tutsis herded cattle. According to Jean-Marie Kamatali, a former dean at the University of Rwanda, *Ubuhkwe*, a social system in which Hutus worked for the Tutsis in exchange for cattle characterized relations between the groups. Like European feudalism, this order led to a class-dominated

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<sup>19</sup> Preface. *Machete Season: the Killers in Rwanda Speak*, by J (Jean). Hatzfeld, Picador, 2005, pp. vii.

<sup>20</sup> Jones, Adam. "Genocide in Africa's Great Lakes Region." *Genocide*, 3rd ed., Routledge, 2017, pp. 476.

system cementing the Tutsis as a privileged minority and the Hutus as the working-class majority.<sup>21</sup>

European colonialism had an enduring impact on Rwanda, with ramifications lasting long after its independence in 1962. In 1884, Germany took formal control of the region. Upon first entering Rwanda, Germans rationalized and supported the subjugation of the larger Hutu population with racialized reasoning. Tutsis are typically thought of as having lighter skin than those of Hutu descent. In this, anthropologists have cultivated long lists of the characteristics dividing the groups, with these compilations being subject to a serious academic debate on their scientific standing. Tutsis are said to have “higher cheekbones, larger skulls, and longer necks than Hutus.”<sup>22</sup> Hutus are generally considered to be “darker-skinned,” with their tones paralleling the “very dark browns of other Central Africans.”<sup>23</sup> Additionally, Tutsis are typically tall and slender; a German anthropologist in the early 2000s found a differential of 12 centimeters between the height of Hutus and Tutsis.<sup>24</sup> With these distinct physical appearances, colonizing Germans perceived the Tutsis as more “Caucasian, and thus fitter to rule.”<sup>25</sup> A chasm exists in determining the true theory underpinning the racial categorizations of Hutus and Tutsis. Disputing this “phenotype” theory, several scholars look to the social differences between the groups. Because the Hutu were not as wealthy as the Tutsis and did not have an equitable protein intake, they were shorter and stockier, as described by Ugandan author Mahmood Mamdani.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Skok, Stephen. “What Impact Did the Belgian Presence in Rwanda Have to Spark Further Conflict?” *Education*, 21 Nov. 2017, [education.seattlepi.com/impact-did-belgian-presence-rwanda-spark-further-conflict-5558.html](http://education.seattlepi.com/impact-did-belgian-presence-rwanda-spark-further-conflict-5558.html).

<sup>22</sup> Smyth, Joshua. “The Physical Differences between Hutus and Tutsis.” *Synonym*, 30 June 2020, [classroom.synonym.com/the-physical-differences-between-hutus-and-tutsis-12081834.html](http://classroom.synonym.com/the-physical-differences-between-hutus-and-tutsis-12081834.html).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> “Hutus and Tutsis.” *Imaging Genocide*, [genocide.leadr.msu.edu/stories/hutus-and-tutsis/](http://genocide.leadr.msu.edu/stories/hutus-and-tutsis/).

<sup>25</sup> Skok, Stephen. “What Impact Did the Belgian Presence in Rwanda Have to Spark Further Conflict?”

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

In a more monetarily privileged position, the Tutsis drank more milk and had access to meat. In regard to their differing lifestyles, the Hutus completed more manual labor while Tutsis accessed more administrative rural roles.<sup>27</sup> Overall, the original “distinction between Hutu and Tutsi was not based on ethnic differences, but rather defined by their geographical origin and relation to a royal ruler.”<sup>28</sup>

Later, Belgium inherited the colony as part of the League of Nations mandate, which redistributed German territories after World War I. The Belgian colonizers exerted a more concerted control in the country, which allowed native monarchs to rule over the local populous. The Belgians believed the Tutsis were superior to the Hutu population. The Tutsis were seen as “Caucasians under a black skin,” seen as superior to their Bantu Hutu neighbors.<sup>29</sup> With this Hamitic theory, the Tutsis “fit the role of the Hamitic civilizer; and the Hutu were classified as Bantu Africans.”<sup>30</sup> These developments exacerbated ethnic divisions between Hutu and Tutsi, which later exploded in genocidal violence in 1994. While these theories help explain how colonizers perpetuated ethnic tensions between Hutu and Tutsis, it is important to note these theories “fail to account for the Rwanda of the 1900s.”<sup>31</sup> The groups had lived in relative peace for most of the century. While an economic-political divide between the groups existed, J.J. Carney’s *Rwanda before the Genocide* notes this did not translate to a racial divide. There were not specific villages for the groups, nor separate spheres for daily life. Though, with Belgian rule, Tutsis were able to exhibit greater control over the Hutus. Furthermore, the Belgians lent

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<sup>27</sup> “Hutus and Tutsis.”

<sup>28</sup> Hefti, Angela, and Laura Ausserladscheider Jonas. “From Hate Speech to Incitement to Genocide: The Role of the Media in the Rwandan Genocide.” *Boston University International Law Journal*, vol. 38, no. 1, ser. 2020. 2020, doi:[https://www.bu.edu/ilj/files/2020/08/Article\\_HeftiJonas.pdf](https://www.bu.edu/ilj/files/2020/08/Article_HeftiJonas.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> “Hutus and Tutsis.”

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

military and political support to Tutsi leaders who maintained the policies of their colonial rulers.

<sup>32</sup> According to the University of Pennsylvania's African Studies Center, Belgium instituted both political and economic reforms in the 1920s and 1930s in hopes of integrating native Rwandans into the political process; however, these policies "only served to consolidate power among the Tutsi elite, who controlled much of the country's resources and intuitions."<sup>33</sup> Notably, the formal identification process that began under Belgian rule would have lasting ramifications: during the genocide, Tutsis were identified with government-issued identification cards which stated their ethnicity.<sup>34</sup>

After World War II, ethnic divisions continued to grow due to increasing political activism on part of the Hutus. As the final vestiges of old systems of class and colonization dissipated with post-war pushes for independence, the Belgians became more sympathetic to Hutus. Violent clashes ensued and Tutsi leaders were deposed and replaced with Belgian-backed Hutus, formalizing further differences between the groups. Thus, thousands of Tutsis were forced to flee and take refuge in neighboring countries. Rwanda became independent in 1962, and 100,000 Tutsis would flee Rwanda in the next 25 years before the genocide even began.<sup>35</sup> In the decades preceding the genocide, we can see communal divisions, polarization, and instances of group violence, but no ignition of genocidal violence as seen in 1994.

In 1990, the Rwandan Patriotic Front backed by Tutsis from Uganda invaded and began a civil war that lasted until Aug 4, 1993. This war resulted in a joint government between the Tutsi RPF and the Hutu President Juvenal Habyarimana. Concurrently, Hutu extremists founded the

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<sup>32</sup> Skok, Stephen. "What Impact Did the Belgian Presence in Rwanda Have to Spark Further Conflict?"

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> James, Eric. "Media, Genocide and International Response: Another Look at Rwanda." *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2008, pp. 89–115., doi: 10.1080/09592310801905785.

*Coalition pour la defense de la Republique*, a far-right political party toting the slogan “*Mube maso*” meaning “watch out” in reference to conceived Tutsi supremacy.<sup>36</sup> The Arusha Peace Accords officially established a transitional government in Rwanda that included the RPF. However, within days of signing the Arusha accords, the RTLM began broadcasting anti-Tutsi propaganda.

The period immediately before the genocide was characterized by radical hate media publications by Hutu extremists. First, “with the growing fear of attack and threat to the regime, printed media was seen as a primary arrow in the quiver against Tutsi aggression.”<sup>37</sup> *Kangura* was the most radical and unabashed in its attacks against the Tutsi. Established in May 1990, the newspaper transmitted a vehemently anti-Tutsi message from its inception. One article from 1993 shows psychologically dehumanizing themes and techniques:

The malice, the evil is just as we knew them in the history of our country. We are not wrong in saying that a cockroach gives birth to another cockroach. Who could tell the difference between the *Inyenzi* who attacked in October 1990 and those of the 1960s? They are all linked ... their evilness is the same. The unspeakable crimes of the *Inyenzi* of today ... recall those [memories] of the elders: killing, pillaging, raping girls and women, etc.<sup>38</sup>

The paper’s strategic goals were clear from their “Ten Commandments” for Hutus, published in 1990. The French historian Jean-Pierre Chrétien compares this list to the Protocols

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

of the Elders of Zion fabricated by the Russian secret police to launch an anti-Semitic pogrom.<sup>39</sup> The commandments condemned ethnically heterogeneous elements of the government and heavily insinuated Tutsis were planning an attack against the Hutus. In the following years, more journals followed *Kangura*'s example, imbuing their papers with blunt warnings and threats against the Tutsis. In the extreme caricatures, *Kangura* depicted Tutsis, specifically Tutsi women, as envoys of the devil. The cartoon below shows a Hutu farmer being led into temptation by a “seductive woman in a scene that is full of religious overtones.”<sup>40</sup> The farmer is unmasking the “snake’s subterfuge: Fred Rwigema, the main leader of the RPF,” who was replaced with Paul Kagame after dying in the first offensive against the regime.<sup>41</sup> While the *Kangura* paper strengthened sentiments of division, it was the radio that swayed mass opinion “in a radical direction.”<sup>42</sup>



Le sang et le sexe. Les "horreurs de la guerre attribuées au FPR  
(*Kamarampaka*, 7. avril 1993, n° 15, p. 14)  
- Les Inkotanyi ont travaillé à Ruhengeri.

**Fig. 1.** *Kangura* cartoon from: Seroussi, Julien. “The Devils from the Thousand Hills.”

<sup>39</sup> Keiner, P, ‘Allmahlich schward die Bewunderung fur Habis Regime’, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 5 November 1992.

<sup>40</sup> Seroussi, Julien. “The Devils from the Thousand Hills.” *Books & Ideas*, Apr. 2016. *booksandideas.net*, <https://booksandideas.net/The-devils-from-the-Thousand-Hills.html>.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> James, Eric. “Media, Genocide and International Response: Another Look at Rwanda.”

As Joseph Goebbels, Hitler’s propaganda minister described, “the radio is the most important instrument of mass influence that exists anywhere.”<sup>43</sup> In Rwanda, the radio was seen as more advantageous: it allows coverage in more remote areas, listeners do not have to be literate, and is logistically more attractive since several broadcasters can operate with little support besides electrical power. The *Radio Television Libre Milles Collines* (RTL) was established on April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1993, by Hutu extremists Ferdinand Nahimana and Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza as a response to the “Tutsi media monopoly,” representing the official government-sponsored Radio Rwanda station.<sup>44</sup> RTL quickly gained a large following with music, jokes, slogans, and anecdotes. The station was inherently different from traditional radio as listeners could call in to interact with messages from citizens and communicate while RTL was broadcasting live. Transmitters would then disseminate the information without verification of its veracity. RTL’s personnel consisted of famous entertainers, comedians, musicians, and journalists paired with purposefully provocative and crude discourse and news reports. The station was a “highly charismatic endeavor, a concept that bears further theoretical elucidation.”<sup>45</sup> Jason McCoy’s study of auditory cues in *Making Violence Ordinary: Radio, Music, and the Rwandan Genocide* notes RTL’s charisma of collective experience arose from modes of rhetoric and ritual that strategically drew upon communal symbolic resources.<sup>46</sup> The effect of

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<sup>43</sup> Yanagizawa-Drott, David. “Propaganda and Conflict: Evidence from the Rwandan Genocide.” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Volume 129, Issue 4, November 2014, Pages 1947–1994, <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qju020>

<sup>44</sup> Hefti, Angela, and Laura Ausserladscheider Jonas. “From Hate Speech to Incitement to Genocide: The Role of the Media in the Rwandan Genocide.”

<sup>45</sup> McCoy, Jason. “Making Violence Ordinary: Radio, Music, and the Rwandan Genocide.” *African Music*, vol. 8, no. 3, 2009, pp. 85–96. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/20788929](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20788929). Accessed 5 May 2021.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

this charisma shifted the audience's perceptions of the world and served as an "impetus for a transformation of habitus."<sup>47</sup>

In the nine months that it was broadcasting before the genocide, RTLM "took on a critical role in strengthening and extending the extremist themes used by *Kangura*."<sup>48</sup> This included the vilification of the Tutsi, Hutu unity, and the threat to traitors. RTLM clarified the danger of Tutsi with consistent thematic messages casting suspicion on these internal enemies, calling for Hutus to defend themselves. Any Tutsi sympathizers were branded as traitors, which helped to polarize moderates and apathetic individuals. The radio unequivocally called for Hutu consolidation to rise and strike against their suppressors. For example, singer-songwriter Simon Bikindi's songs on the station embodied a "myriad of local historical and cultural tropes" and his "soft, gently cadenced voice" gave a lyrical intimacy to calls to "carry on the slaughter."<sup>49</sup> As Dr. Jolyon Mitchell discusses, the radio's tactics included name-calling and demonizing the enemy "fused into a mock liturgical chant," manipulating theistic language and religious symbols for violent ends.<sup>50</sup> Broadcasters called Hutus to arms, evoking the approval of the Good Lord in their just struggle against the Tutsis. Mitchell describes broadcaster Kantano Habimana proclaiming "the Good Lord is really just, these evildoers, these terrorists, these people with suicidal tendencies will end up being exterminated."<sup>51</sup> We can see that the dominance of radio in the Rwandan media environment shows the greater significance of hate media to co-opt space and time to influence the behavior of larger populations.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> James, Eric. "Media, Genocide and International Response: Another Look at Rwanda."

<sup>49</sup> McCoy, Jason. "Making Violence Ordinary: Radio, Music, and the Rwandan Genocide."

<sup>50</sup> Mitchell, Jolyon. "Remembering the Rwandan Genocide: Reconsidering the Role of Local and Global Media." *Global Media Journal*, Research and Reviews, 30 Dec. 2014, [www.globalmediajournal.com/open-access/remembering-the-rwandan-genocidereconsidering-the-role-of-local-and-global-media.php?aid=35262](http://www.globalmediajournal.com/open-access/remembering-the-rwandan-genocidereconsidering-the-role-of-local-and-global-media.php?aid=35262).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.



After the assassination of Hutu President Habyarimana in April 1994, Hutu extremists took control of the government and began mobilizing, directing, and organizing Hutu militants to carry out genocidal activities. The RTLM quickly began broadcasting instructions and information to start the slaughter. Within an hour of the plane crash, the *Interahamwe* (Hutu paramilitary organization) set up roadblocks in Kigali and ignited their genocidal campaign. The killings were not random outbursts of violence; instead, orders were handed down from government ministers to prefects and mayors, who then gathered the masses to conduct the killings using the radio as a guide. For example, one announcer said:

All who try to protect themselves by sympathizing with both sides, they are traitors... They will pay for what they have done. You have missed some of the enemies in this or that place. Some are still alive. You must go back and finish them off. The graves are not yet quite full. Who is going to do good work and help us fill them completely? <sup>52</sup>

During the last phase of the genocide, it was in fact, the RTLM that popularized the term *Guhumbahumbu*, meaning “to track down the last Tutsi.” <sup>53</sup> The propagandists in Rwanda were very adept at using apprehension of the “other” to bring people together and in instructing them on how to proceed in a crisis. The RTLM consistently sought to paint the Tutsi as a monolithic mass to be despised and destroyed, reinforced a separate Hutu ideology, and cultivated fear among the Hutu population. Given these facts, it is clear the radio and hate media publications were important weapons for influence to incite and direct the genocide. As historian Eric Hobsbawm observed, “evil scientists do not wear white lab coats and work in labs, but rather

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<sup>52</sup> James, Eric. “Media, Genocide and International Response: Another Look at Rwanda.”

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

write history and develop social theories.”<sup>54</sup> The Hutu extremists systematically used hate media and caustic programming to create an alternate history wherein the Tutsis threatened their every way of existence.<sup>55</sup>

As Eric James stated in his work on *Media, Genocide and International Response: Another Look at Rwanda*, it is crucial to understand the process of communication concerning the years before the genocide of 1994. Though, he underlines his work “does not intend to dismiss or discount other causal explanations which include democratization, economic and ecological circumstances, the peace negotiations and conflict, and most importantly the manipulation of the croon people by powerful elites.”<sup>56</sup> In a similar vein, I am not analyzing this genocide through a monocausal lens but rather examining how hate media was utilized to incite a human catastrophe of an extreme pace and scale. James specifies that the United Nations commander, General Roméo Dallaire, singled out the radio station for inciting its listeners to kill:

All day long RTLM had been reporting the murders of his moderate allies and their families. The station encouraged its listeners to kill Tutsis and called for the death of all moderate Hutus, calling them traitors. The statements were accompanied by taped music from popular singers, and violence-provoking songs with lyrics such as ‘I hate Hutus, I hate Hutus, and I hate Hutus who think that Tutsis are not snakes.’<sup>57</sup>

In former Secretary-General of the UN Kofi Annan’s *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, he blames hate media organizations for playing an “instrumental role in laying the

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<sup>54</sup> Kirsch, Adam. “Red Eric.” *Tablet Mag*, 1 May 2019, [www.tabletmag.com/sections/arts-letters/articles/red-eric](http://www.tabletmag.com/sections/arts-letters/articles/red-eric).

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> James, Eric. “Media, Genocide and International Response: Another Look at Rwanda.”

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

groundwork for genocide” and actively participating in the extermination campaign.<sup>58</sup> From the moment the President’s plane was shot down, the *Radio-Television Libre des Milles Collines* station announced the Tutsis were to blame. Along with the extremist paper *Kangura*, the RTLM explicitly and relentlessly targeted the Tutsis for destruction as it called for Hutus to rise up and “cut down the tall trees,” a euphemism for the Tutsi population.<sup>59</sup> Annan’s work is a compilation of several authors who conducted interviews with victims, studied newspaper records, radio transcripts, and other primary sources. Most of the work focuses on RTLM because Rwanda was a “radio country,” in which the radio equated to the voice of God.<sup>60</sup> According to Annan, the RTLM station appealed to ordinary people; the station was dynamic and engaging, playing the newest music and covering entertainment for local villages. Hutu perpetrators used the airwaves to instill the notion of a “democratic alibi.”<sup>61</sup> The Tutsi population was believed to pose a viable threat to the majority population, and it was in the best interest of all Hutus to join the murderous campaign. Annan concludes the Rwandan state appropriated one of the most “innocuous aspects of everyday life” in the service of the genocide.<sup>62</sup>

So too, David Yanagizawa-Drott from the Harvard Kennedy School investigated the role of mass media in conflict and state-sponsored violence against citizens. In contrast to Annan’s literary analysis, Drott utilized primary village-level data sets from the Rwandan genocide. His results showed the broadcasts had a significant effect on participation in killings; the study revealed the violence of around 51,000 perpetrators can be attributed to the RTLM station.<sup>63</sup> His

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<sup>58</sup> Annan, Kofi. *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*. Edited by Allan Thompson, Pluto Press, 2007. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt18fs550](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt18fs550).

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

results show that the broadcasts “led to more violence during the genocide” with direct effects on participation, with violence increasing with more radio coverage in villages.<sup>64</sup> Specifically, there was one standard deviation increase in radio coverage associated with a 12%-13% increase in participation in total violence, with similar effects for militia and individual violence.<sup>65</sup> His battery of robustness tests shows that the effects were unlikely to be spurious due to omitted variables, outliers, or measurement errors in violence.<sup>66</sup> Additionally, Drott presents evidence suggesting the RTLM broadcasts were more effective in inducing village violence where the population was relatively uneducated and illiterate, as they would have more strongly internalized the “official” message of the state. The number of people engaged in militia violence in a village was higher when more people in neighboring villages had radio coverage, consistent “with the hypothesis that social interaction determines the spatial diffusion of violence.”<sup>67</sup> Overall, this study provides substantial evidence that mass hate media affects participation in genocidal violence. As Drott concludes, “allowing the station to broadcast had substantial human costs, with consequences detrimental for the targeted population... creating a long-term impact on human capital formation, social capital, and political stability.”<sup>68</sup>

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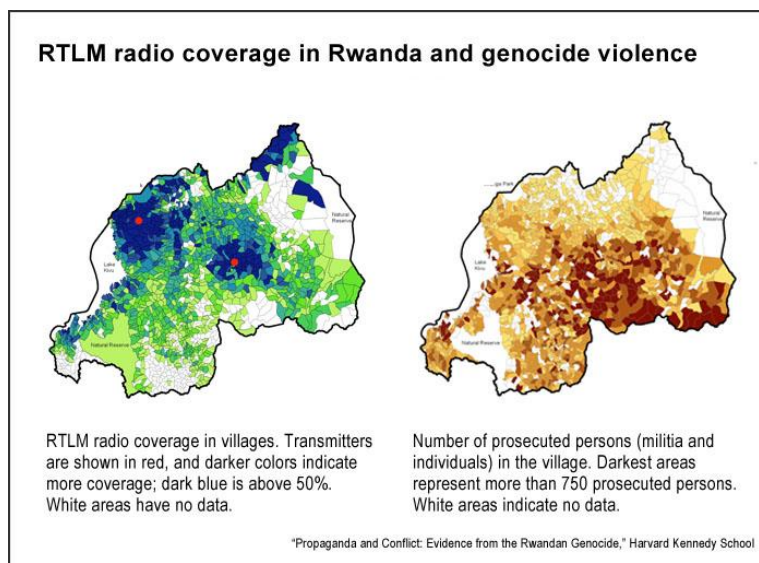
<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Maximino, Martin. “Propaganda, Media Effects and Conflict: Evidence from the Rwandan Genocide.” *The Journalist's Resource*, 7 Dec. 2020, [journalistsresource.org/politics-and-government/propaganda-conflict-evidence-rwandan-genocide/](https://journalistsresource.org/politics-and-government/propaganda-conflict-evidence-rwandan-genocide/).



**Fig. 2.** Map of RTLM radio coverage and genocidal violence from: Yanagizawa-Drott, David. "Propaganda and Conflict: Evidence from the Rwandan Genocide."

This figure shows RTLM radio coverage and the number of prosecuted persons in Rwanda. Drott's findings show that the relationship between RTLM reception and mortality is positive, statistically significant, and stable across specifications. Though, the maps illustrate that while radio broadcasts were stronger in the northwest, prosecutions were more extensive in the southeast. The prosecution data for each village comes from the local Gacaca courts, set up in 2001 to process the thousands accused of committing genocidal crimes.<sup>69</sup> Not all perpetrators were tried in this punitive system: some died, fled, or were never found after the genocide concluded. As Drott points out, since we do not observe actual participation but rather prosecutions, some measurement error is to be expected.<sup>70</sup> That is, in some villages more individuals were prosecuted relative to the number of individuals that actually committed the given crime, and vice versa. This figure serves to visualize rates of radio coverage and

<sup>69</sup> Yanagizawa-Drott, David. "Propaganda and Conflict: Evidence from the Rwandan Genocide."

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

prosecution rates but cannot be interpreted in strict terms of causality. With correlations between RTLM reception and death rates being positive, these maps clarify that there is some correlation between radio reception and prosecutions.<sup>71</sup> Although, they cannot inherently depict a larger view of the specific influence of radio on genocidal participative rates. It is more important to note RTLM's role was part of a sophisticated plan that systematically influenced the Hutu with propaganda. Human rights expert William Schabas described the importance of media within the Rwandan context as follows:

A well-read and well-informed *genocidaire* will know at the early stages of planning of the crime of crimes, his or her money is best spent not purchasing machetes, or Kalatchnikovs, or Zyklon B gas, but rather investing in radio transmitters and photocopy machines.<sup>72</sup>

The radio was under *de facto* government control, meaning conditions were excellent to convey hate messages to a large audience. Because RTLM broadcasts were endorsed by the government, they arguably carried some credibility and signaled “the official policy and agenda of those in power,” conveying that the government was actively persecuting Tutsis.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, RTLM promoted the message “kill or be killed,” which referred to the notion of self-defense against a Tutsi takeover but also operated as a threat to Hutu citizens who refused to partake in the killings.<sup>74</sup> Thousands of moderate Hutus were killed by militias. So taken together, these factors make it more evident that Hutus listening to RTLM broadcasts “had good reason to

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<sup>71</sup> Yanagizawa-Drott, David. “Propaganda and Conflict: Evidence from the Rwandan Genocide.”

<sup>72</sup> Wilson, Richard. “Inciting Genocide with Words.” *Michigan Journal of International Law*, vol. 36, no. 2, Apr. 2015, pp. 277–320.

<sup>73</sup> Yanagizawa-Drott, David. “Propaganda and Conflict: Evidence from the Rwandan Genocide.”

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

fundamentally revise their beliefs about the cost-benefit tradeoff of participation and non-participation, and ultimately these beliefs could have affected their behavior according to Drott.

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In a similar vein, a study by Meghan Lyon showed the radio became a powerful tool used to incite and direct the Rwandan genocide. In her work, Lyon analyzes RTLM broadcasts from the International Monitor Institute's organizational records. She finds the discourse of revelation in the broadcasts especially telling, as they frame the call for genocidal action as Hutu liberation from Tutsi slavery.<sup>76</sup> RTLM considered the extermination campaign a necessary slave rebellion, not a genocide. She noted one broadcast that aired 6 days after Habyarimana's assassination drew on historical documents testifying that "Tutsis killed Hutu kings and enslaved Hutu people."<sup>77</sup> In listening to several broadcasts, Lyon reports the broadcasts framed genocide as the only perceived way to break out of a historical cycle of discrimination and oppression. Overall, Lyon's research demonstrates how hate media in Rwanda monopolized historical discourse using specially crafted, incendiary messages to call ordinary Hutus to join the Tutsi massacre.

After the slaughter came to an end in July 1994, the international community called for justice. Within the next year, the United Nations Security Council established the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the first international court of law to prosecute high-ranking individuals for massive human rights violations in Africa.<sup>78</sup> The ICTR was the first tribunal to hold members of the media responsible for broadcasts intended to inflame the public to commit

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Lyon, Meghan. "Radio in the Rwandan Genocide." *The Devil's Tale: DUKE*, 1 May 2017, [blogs.library.duke.edu/rubenstein/2013/05/10/radio-in-the-rwandan-genocide/](https://blogs.library.duke.edu/rubenstein/2013/05/10/radio-in-the-rwandan-genocide/).

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> "Incitement to Genocide in International Law." *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, [encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/incitement-to-genocide-in-international-law](https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/incitement-to-genocide-in-international-law).

acts of genocide.<sup>79</sup> In 1997, the ICTR indicted three Rwandans for “incitement to genocide,” including the publisher of the *Kangura* magazine and the founders of the RTLM station.<sup>80</sup> In the months preceding the genocide, *Kangura* published articles dehumanizing Tutsis as *inyenzi*, or cockroaches, while RTLM directly called for their murder.<sup>81</sup> The ICTR consolidated these cases into a single trial, referred to as “The Media Case.”<sup>82</sup> Later in 2003, several Rwandan journalists were sentenced to life in prison for their roles in fueling the 1994 genocide.<sup>83</sup> Their phrases like “go to work” and “the graves are not yet full” gave direct instructions to killers. The trial compared these words to bullets.<sup>84</sup> This tribunal solidified the precedent that media actors who use their power to attack an ethnic group will “have to face justice.”<sup>85</sup> As the ICTR declared in their verdict, “those who control the media are accountable for its consequences,” as it has the potency to both “create and destroy human values.”<sup>86</sup> Public incitement to commit genocide requires a calling on the audience to take action and must be “direct.”<sup>87</sup> To prove incitement to genocide, it is critical to carefully parse metaphors, allusions, and other linguistic nuances in a cultural context. The ICTR had important ramifications in the legal sphere; the trial demonstrated international genocide law recognized the dangerous capabilities of hate media to incite genocidal violence.

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<sup>79</sup> “United Nations International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals.” *Three Media Leaders Convicted for Genocide* | *United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda*, 3 Dec. 2003, [unictr.irmct.org/en/news/three-media-leaders-convicted-genocide](http://unictr.irmct.org/en/news/three-media-leaders-convicted-genocide).

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> “Incitement to Genocide in International Law.” *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*.

<sup>82</sup> Scharf, Michael P. “United Nations Audiovisual Library of International Law.” *United Nations*, United Nations, [legal.un.org/avl/ha/ict/ict.html](http://legal.un.org/avl/ha/ict/ict.html).

<sup>83</sup> Staff. “Journalists Jailed for Inciting Rwandan Genocide.” *The Guardian*, *Guardian News and Media*, 4 Dec. 2003, [www.theguardian.com/media/2003/dec/04/pressandpublishing.radio](http://www.theguardian.com/media/2003/dec/04/pressandpublishing.radio).

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> “Incitement to Genocide in International Law.” *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*



In this consideration, we can see that RTLM functioned as a propaganda channel that facilitated the genocide. Leaders of the militia used RTLM to quickly deploy journalists to the roadblocks where Tutsis were discovered and killed. It became the infallible resource to direct killings and mobilize perpetrators, as described:

In a broadcast on June 4, 1994, RTLM directed its call to kill: “One hundred thousand young men must be recruited rapidly. They should all stand so that we kill the *Inkotanyi* [Tutsi] and exterminate them, all the easier that...the reason we will exterminate them is that they belong to one ethnic group. Look at the person’s height and his physical appearance. Just look at his small nose and then break it. Then we will go on to Kibungo, Rusumo, Ruhengeri, Byumba, everywhere.”<sup>88</sup>

Since the Rwandan genocide, many scholars from disparate fields of research have been drawn to this case, seeking explanations “of this macabre phenomenon.”<sup>89</sup> Much of the research has born competing hypotheses concerned in “various hues with the perplexing questions of “how and why did this happen?”<sup>90</sup> The genocide took place on a national scale, with ordinary civilians as the main agents, wielding “crude instruments of death” often against those they knew.<sup>91</sup> As the London School of Economics’ Dr. Omar McDoom reports, the mass mobilization of Hutus was contingent on the internalization of a set of historical and ideological beliefs deriving from an oppressive historical order.<sup>92</sup> The genocide also required the

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<sup>88</sup> Hefti, Angela, and Laura Ausserladscheider Jonas. “From Hate Speech to Incitement to Genocide: The Role of the Media in the Rwandan Genocide.”

<sup>89</sup> McDoom, Omar. “Rwanda's Ordinary Killers: Interpreting Popular Participation in the Rwandan Genocide.” *Destin Development Center: LSE*, vol. 77, 2005, doi:<https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/57602/wp77.pdf>.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

commitment of state institutions to the genocidal project. This commitment was perpetuated through the media as hateful propaganda provided the initial trigger, legitimacy, and impunity for civilian participation in an anti-Tutsi program.<sup>93</sup> McDoom argues that once triggered, the degeneration into genocidal violence was the product of a “complex interaction of other motives ranging from coercion, opportunism, habituation, conformity, racism, and ideological indoctrination.”<sup>94</sup> Chretien and Hughes maintain that consent was built through extensive ideological preparation that included intensive dehumanization and rewriting history to reduce Tutsis to non-human status.<sup>95</sup> While I agree this genocide requires a conversation of the interaction of top-down and bottom-up factors in explaining mass mobilization, it is undeniable hate media was culpable in conditioning a collective Hutu memory to spur violence.

Scott Straus’ *Order of Genocide: Race, Power, and War in Rwanda* recognizes the role of ethnicity in the Rwandan genocide, but argues it was a singular facet amongst several causative elements.<sup>96</sup> He argues that the genocide was temporally situated in conditions ripe for chaos and destabilization. Straus conducts empirical research using sub-national analysis of prefectures, communes, and individuals to explain previous assumptions about the antecedents and the processes of genocide. He largely argues that the genocide should be attributed to “regime survival, manipulation of fear, the state of war, and the opportunity that war brought.”<sup>97</sup> The genocide materialized from “top-down instrumental decisions,” as extremist institutions in Rwanda had control of the state apparatus and convinced ordinary Hutu that Tutsi were enemies.

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Mironko, Charles. “*Igitero* : Means and Motive in the Rwandan Genocide.” *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 6, no. 1, Mar. 2004, pp. 47–60. *DOI.org*, doi: 10.1080/1462352042000194700.

<sup>96</sup> Straus, Scott. *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power, and War in Rwanda*. Cornell University Press, 2006. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt24hg8g](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt24hg8g). Accessed 4 Apr. 2021.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Notably, *Order of Genocide* offers a unique perspective on the discourse of the Rwandan genocide for Straus gives a rare voice of “the disdained and intellectually crucified perpetrators.”

<sup>99</sup> He provides an “anti-thesis for the existing knowledge” on the subject; circumventing the existing body of knowledge pervaded by the ethnic factor as the prime factor. <sup>100</sup>

Notwithstanding the bias in Straus’ primary interviews, his work underscores the role of hate media in inciting the Rwandan genocide. He describes “the state, in short, threw its considerable weight behind a policy of killing Tutsis and instructed the Hutu population to hunt down their Tutsi neighbors.” <sup>101</sup> The state effectually authorized the extermination with the radio as a ubiquitous vehicle for this rhetoric, but as he reminds us in his 2007 article on the “Radio Machete,” the media was conditional when situated in a broader context of violence. <sup>102</sup>

In Charles Mironko’s *Igitero: Means and Motive in the Rwandan Genocide* he interviewed over 200 confessors to the crime of genocide in six major prisons. Many *avoues*, or those who have accepted, stated their political leaders taught them it “was a civic duty to kill their Tutsi friends and relatives.” <sup>103</sup> Propaganda firmly held Tutsi had killed their “parent” (*umubyeyi*) or “leader” (*umukuru*), President Habyarimana. <sup>104</sup> These interviews also revealed perpetrators killed for a range of reasons including safeguarding their assets from the invading Tutsi, as per government propaganda. Others killed for material gain or to save their own lives as RTLM warned listeners of a kill-or-be-killed policy. Mironko theorizes group processes,

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Straus, Scott. “What Is the Relationship between Hate Radio and Violence? Rethinking Rwanda’s ‘Radio Machete.’” *Politics & Society*, vol. 35, no. 4, Dec. 2007, pp. 609–637, doi: 10.1177/0032329207308181.

<sup>103</sup> Mironko, Charles. “*Igitero* : Means and Motive in the Rwandan Genocide.”

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

including propaganda, were used in conjunction with indoctrination methods common to the formation of group cohesive fighting units. RTLM also cultivated a “carnavalesque” atmosphere with music that complemented the consumption of alcohol and strong hashish (*urumogi*).<sup>105</sup> Hate media untied Hutu under a common identity of impunity such as “we all do this together.”<sup>106</sup> In the verdict against RTLM’s founders, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda stated that violence by militia groups had been affected by the broadcasts:

The *Interahamwe* and other militia listened to RTLM and acted on the information that was broadcast by RTLM. RTLM actively encouraged them to kill, relentlessly sending the message that the Tutsi were the enemy and had to be eliminated once and for all.<sup>107</sup>

Rwanda has become a paradigmatic case of media sparking extreme violence, with the importance of hate radio pervading commentary on the genocide.<sup>108</sup> Overall, the genocide was a product of a century’s worth of injustice and division cultivated by colonizers. Economic hardship in conjunction with “ethnic” tensions brought the situation to a boiling point. The population size placed a burden on resources, meaning food was scarce. There was an imbalance of available land and economic opportunity. Many Hutus felt they had no prospects in such an environment; thus, they were receptive to the anti-Tutsi ideology. Yet it was hate media, specifically the RTLM, which propagated this acute anger to “systematically influence the Hutu with propaganda and lies to bring about the genocide.”<sup>109</sup> Furthermore, Straus’ qualitative

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Yanagizawa-Drott, David. “Propaganda and Conflict: Evidence from the Rwandan Genocide.”

<sup>108</sup> Straus, Scott. “What Is the Relationship between Hate Radio and Violence? Rethinking Rwanda’s ‘Radio Machete.’”

<sup>109</sup> Hefti, Angela, and Laura Ausserladscheider Jonas. “From Hate Speech to Incitement to Genocide: The Role of the Media in the Rwandan Genocide.”

evidence based on interviews with perpetrators indicates that RTLM “instigated a limited number of acts of violence, catalyzed some key actors, coordinated elites, and bolstered local messages of violence.”<sup>110</sup> The scholarly consensus largely casts blame on hate media for inciting and directing the Rwandan genocide, albeit with a consideration of the concurrent macro-historical, economic, and social factors that allowed RTLM to flourish and find a receptive audience. The following chapters will explore hate media in a more modern modus with magazines and social media platforms, but highlights the continuum of destruction incendiary propaganda wreaks when situated in a society at risk for genocidal violence.

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<sup>110</sup> Yanagizawa-Drott, David. “Propaganda and Conflict: Evidence from the Rwandan Genocide.”

## Chapter 2: The Islamic State

Just as the *Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines* was a catalyst for genocide in Rwanda, the Islamic State of Syria and Iran (ISIS) has invested enormous effort and resources into its media strategy, using its diverse communications to “seed hatred and facilitate genocide.”<sup>111</sup> Amid their genocidal holy war waged against all “infidels,” ISIS pursued the mass slaughter and sexual enslavement of the Yazidis, whose homeland it overran in 2014.<sup>112</sup> According to the UN Independent Commission of Inquiry, ISIS’ violence against the Yazidis is considered a case of genocide.<sup>113</sup> The assault was designed to destroy the religious minority group through rape, mass executions, forced religious conversions, indoctrination of children into militancy, and extremist ideology.<sup>114</sup> The group has successfully capitalized on hate media to circulate lethal ideas and mobilize the population on a large scale to materialize these intentions.<sup>115</sup> ISIS’ use of propaganda and terror as techniques of governance will be discussed in terms of preparing and waging war, fostering the idea of an Islamic state, and dehumanizing their targets for genocidal violence.

The foundation of ISIS can be traced back to 1999 under the name Jama’at al-Tawhid waal-Jihad, which developed into al Qaeda in Iraq in 2004. The Islamic State emerged from the remnants of this offshoot, remaining in obscurity until its reemergence in 2011. Over the next few years, the group used the growing instability in Iraq and Syria to its advantage to carry out

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<sup>111</sup> “ISIS Propaganda and the Yazidi Genocide.” *CMHR*, [humanrights.ca/news/isis-propaganda-and-the-yazidi-genocide](http://humanrights.ca/news/isis-propaganda-and-the-yazidi-genocide).

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Cetorelli, Valeria, et al. “ISIS’ Yazidi Genocide.” *Foreign Affairs*, Foreign Affairs Magazine, 14 Aug. 2019, [www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/syria/2017-06-08/isis-yazidi-genocide](http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/syria/2017-06-08/isis-yazidi-genocide).

<sup>114</sup> Minwalla, Sherizaan, et al. “Genocide, Rape, and Careless Disregard: Media Ethics and the Problematic Reporting on Yazidi Survivors of ISIS Captivity.” *Feminist Media Studies*, 2020, pp. 1–17., doi:10.1080/14680777.2020.1731699.

<sup>115</sup> Badar, Mohamed Elewa. “The Road to Genocide: The Propaganda Machine of the Self-Declared Islamic State (IS).”

attacks and bolster its ranks.<sup>116</sup> The group became nominally known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria in 2013, launching its campaign to form a caliphate stretching from Aleppo to Diyala.

The Yazidis comprise an ethnoreligious group centered on the Kurdish region of Nineveh and Dohuk Governorates of north-western Iraq.<sup>117</sup> Many Yazidis reside in Iraqi Kurdistan, with a diaspora across other Middle Eastern and Western countries. Although the primary religion within Kurdistan is Sunni Islam, the Kurdish people represent a more diverse minority linked by ethnic, geographic, and linguistic commonalities. The Yazidis are a unique monotheistic people whose beliefs blend elements of Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism, and pre-Abrahamic Mesopotamian religions.<sup>118</sup> Yazidi dualism has been often misunderstood as *mushrik* (polytheistic), thus, the group has been persecuted as heretics numerous times throughout its history. ISIS propaganda has specifically exploited these misinterpretations of Yazidi beliefs to lay the foundations for their *jihād*. In ISIS publications on Qur’anic “orthodoxy,” Yazidis stand out as *kufir* (apostates) from other Kurdish groups.<sup>119</sup> While Abrahamic individuals, Christians, Jews, and Sunni/Shiite Muslims, have the right to live under the *jizya*, ISIS policy claims Yazidis do not have any rights, only a choice of conversion or death. Brandishing this policy, ISIS fighters have committed gross atrocities against the Yazidis on a size and scale that constitutes genocide, threatening their continued viability as a group.<sup>120</sup>

Beginning August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014, ISIS forces stormed the mostly Yazidi city of Sinjar with the defensive retreat of KRG Peshmerga forces. ISIS fighters threatened to kill all Yazidis who did

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<sup>116</sup> “Timeline: the Rise, Spread, and Fall of the Islamic State.” *Wilson Center*, [www.wilsoncenter.org/article/timeline-the-rise-spread-and-fall-the-islamic-state](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/timeline-the-rise-spread-and-fall-the-islamic-state).

<sup>117</sup> Vanderbilt Law. “Yazidi Genocide Opinion.” *International Legal Studies*, Vanderbilt University, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344485326\\_Suffering\\_for\\_Her\\_Faith\\_The\\_Importance\\_of\\_an\\_Intersectional\\_Perspective\\_on\\_Gendered\\_Religious\\_Persecution\\_in\\_International\\_Law](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344485326_Suffering_for_Her_Faith_The_Importance_of_an_Intersectional_Perspective_on_Gendered_Religious_Persecution_in_International_Law)

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

not convert to Islam, “besieging almost 50,000 civilians trapped on Mt. Sinjar without access to food or water.”<sup>121</sup> Stranded in the heat, hundreds of Yazidis died from “dehydration, malnutrition, and suicide.”<sup>122</sup> ISIS killed thousands of Yazidi men and elderly members, while women and children were largely subject to sexual and gender-based violence, contributing to a pattern of widespread and systematic enslavement, rape, and sexual slavery. Young boys were pressed into military service and forced to fight for ISIS. Since the attack, at least 5,000 Yazidis have been killed, with many graves yet to be identified.<sup>123</sup> According to the Yazidi Rescue Office, ISIS kidnapped over 6,400 children, and almost 2,740 children have become orphans.<sup>124</sup> Hundreds of thousands of Yazidis remain displaced. In addition, ISIS destroyed significant Yazidi cultural sites in Bahzani and Bashiqa. More than half the total estimated global population of Yazidis “remain displaced within Iraq and thousands remain in ISIS’ captivity.”<sup>125</sup> Evidence shows ISIS intentionally targeted the Yazidi for destruction, as they have “long been explicit about its intention to wipe out the Yazidi community, which it reviled as infidels and idol-worshippers.”<sup>126</sup> Notably, ISIS hate propaganda has cultivated a toxic climate opening the door “to the realization of incitement to commit genocide as a crime under international law.”<sup>127</sup>

According to a Human Rights Council report, ISIS “explicitly holds its abuse of Yazidis to be mandated by its religious interpretation,” and its public statements have been directly

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> “Mass Violence and Genocide by the Islamic State/Daesh in Iraq and Syria.” College of Liberal Arts | University of Minnesota, [cla.umn.edu/chgs/holocaust-genocide-education/resource-guides/mass-violence-and-genocide-islamic-statedaesh-iraq-and-syria](http://cla.umn.edu/chgs/holocaust-genocide-education/resource-guides/mass-violence-and-genocide-islamic-statedaesh-iraq-and-syria).

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> “What Is ISIS? The Definitive Guide.” *Preemptive Love*, 10 Apr. 2019, <https://preemptivelove.org/blog/what-is-isis/>.

<sup>126</sup> “Without Justice and Recognition the Genocide by ISIS Continues - Iraq.” *ReliefWeb*, <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/without-justice-and-recognition-genocide-isis-continues>. Accessed 8 May 2021.

<sup>127</sup> Badar, Mohamed Elewa. “The Road to Genocide: The Propaganda Machine of the Self-Declared Islamic State (IS).”



demonstrative of its intent to destroy the group.<sup>128</sup> In the ISIS article entitled “The Revival of Slavery Before the Hour” published in the *Dābiq* magazine, the group sought to determine how the Yazidis were to be treated under ISIS ideology before conducting an attack on Sinjar. ISIS declared:

Upon conquering the region of Sinjar... the Islamic State faced a population of Yazidis, a pagan minority existent for ages in the regions of Iraq and Sham [Syria]. Their continual existence to this day is a matter that Muslims should question as they will be asked about it on Judgment Day...<sup>129</sup>

Having decided the Yazidis were a *mushrik* group, judged not to have faith in God as worshipped by *Ahl Al-Kitab*, or the People of the book ISIS stated there was no option for the *jizyah* payment (a tax to be paid to avoid conversion or death). Also, Yazidi women could be enslaved and be divided among the Islamic State’s authority as a spoil of war. The report details ISIS’ plan to attack Sinjar was presaged by research into how its religious interpretation mandated the treatment of Yazidis, paving the way for their subsequent abuse of men, women, and children. Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi's translation of an *Islamic State Pamphlet on Slavery* perpetuates holy justifications for Yazidi slavery.<sup>130</sup> Al-Tamimi illustrates that ISIS believes there is no other option than to kill and decimate the disbelievers, specifically the Yazidi people. As translated, this page of the pamphlet dictates:

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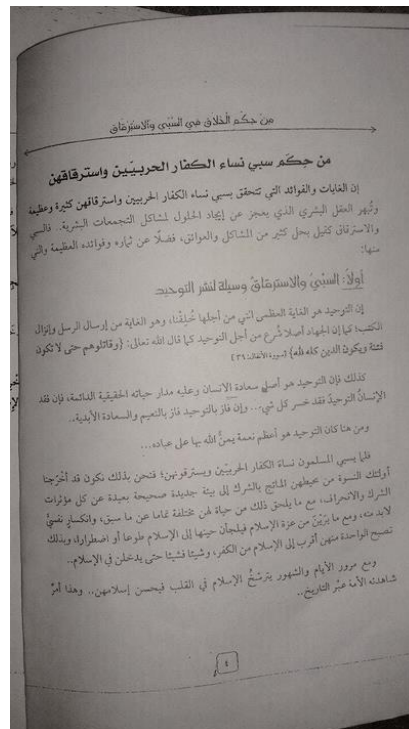
<sup>128</sup> Human Rights Council. “*They Came to Destroy*”: *ISIS Crimes Against the Yazidis*. June 2016, [https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/A\\_HRC\\_32\\_CRP.2\\_en.pdf](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/A_HRC_32_CRP.2_en.pdf).

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

Indeed, the objectives and benefits that are realized in the captivity and enslavement of the women of the disbelievers waging war are numerous and great, dazzling the human mind that is incapable of finding solutions to the problems of human societies. For captivity and enslavement are a guarantor to solve many of the problems and impediments, in addition to its great fruits and benefits that include captivity and enslavement . . . For whenever the disbelievers refuse to enter into Islam or give the *jizyah* or enter under the rule of Shari'a, there remains no other option at that point except for us to attack them, fight them, kill them, take prisoners from them, lie in wait for them, surround them and catch them...so they become either killed, taken prisoner or driven out.

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<sup>131</sup> Al-Tamimi, Aymenn. "Unseen Islamic State Pamphlet on Slavery." <https://Www.Aymennjawad.Org/2015/12/Unseen-Islamic-State-Pamphlet-on-Slavery>, 29 Dec. 2015.

**Fig. 3.** Page from ISIS pamphlet from: Al-Tamimi, Aymenn. “Unseen Islamic State Pamphlet on Slavery.”

To further study this propaganda process, Mohamed Elewa Badar analyzed hate propaganda used in online ISIS publications. Badar explains the “propaganda machine at the forefront of the ISIS artillery” comprised of a robust, multi-level organizational structure designed to exercise central control over the group’s external messaging “while harvesting important content from different geographic areas of its operation.”<sup>132</sup> In his study, he concluded propaganda is a primary method of human conditioning and has the power to distill an idea in the human mind to influence their future actions.<sup>133</sup> Badar compares propaganda to a tool of psychological mass manipulation inducing individuals to act violently, especially when the propaganda’s intent is laced with *dolus specialis* of the crime of genocide. In studying ISIS online publications and radio broadcasts, Badar’s analysis focuses on key terms and labels including *kafir* (unbeliever) and the practice of *takfir* (ex-communication) in their linguistic contexts. ISIS has controlled an extensive media infrastructure system that produced high-quality broadcasts fitting their narrative. On average, the group releases three videos and more than fifteen photographic reports per day.<sup>134</sup> Often, their content utilizes religious programming to juxtapose salvation and hope with conversion, conquest, and combat.<sup>135</sup> In addition, social media has allowed its poisonous and distorted message to flourish globally. Badar found that online publications on *Dābiq*, and broadcasts on the radio station *Al-Bayan*, showcased hate speech to incite and commit genocide through systematic and meticulous propaganda. *Al-Bayan* is “slickly produced” and has been compared to NPR and BBC for the quality of production,

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<sup>132</sup> Badar, Mohamed Elewa. “The Road to Genocide: The Propaganda Machine of the Self-Declared Islamic State (IS).”

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

making their messaging more deadly in terms of efficacy.<sup>136</sup> These mediums facilitated genocidal violence against the Yazidis after ISIS invaded their territory in northern Iraq as part of the ISIS holy war.<sup>137</sup>

Badar reveals that ISIS propaganda boasts a high degree of demonization that awakens and fuels sentiments from dislike and animosity to passions of hatred, while concurrently working to unify Sunni Muslim communities against both Shia Muslims and religious minorities, especially the Yazidi. Badar's analysis acknowledges that ISIS' primary targets are Shia Muslims, as they have been fighting for generations.<sup>138</sup> However, no religious groups are spared persecution and Yazidis have suffered the worst in terms of physical violence and abuse. At the core of the Yazidis' marginalization is their worship of a fallen angel, Melek Tawwus, contributing to their undeserved reputation for being devil-worshippers.<sup>139</sup> They are branded as "devil worshippers" who inherently represent a threat to their puritanical religious vision.<sup>140</sup> Badar confirms the group's identification as an "other" has created a poisonous atmosphere that "enables speech acts inciting genocide to flourish in a catalytic manner similar to how oxygen can catalyze a forest fire."<sup>141</sup> As we see in Issue 1 of ISIS' propaganda magazine:

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<sup>136</sup> Lori Hinnant, 'The isis radio station targeting European recruits sounds like npr', Business Insider uk, 1 June 2015, [uk.businessinsider.com/the-isis-radio-station-targetingeuropean-recruits-sounds-like-npr-2015-6](http://uk.businessinsider.com/the-isis-radio-station-targetingeuropean-recruits-sounds-like-npr-2015-6)

<sup>137</sup> Cetorelli, Valeria, et al. "ISIS' Yazidi Genocide."

<sup>138</sup> Badar, Mohamed Elewa. "The Road to Genocide: The Propaganda Machine of the Self-Declared Islamic State (IS)."

<sup>139</sup> "Who Are the Yazidis and Why Is Isis Hunting Them?" *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 11 Aug. 2014, [www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/07/who-yazidi-isis-iraq-religion-ethnicity-mountains](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/07/who-yazidi-isis-iraq-religion-ethnicity-mountains).

<sup>140</sup> Winfred, Charlene. "What Is ISIS? The Definitive Guide." *Preemptive Love*, Preemptive Love, 11 Mar. 2020, [preemptivelove.org/blog/what-is-isis/](http://preemptivelove.org/blog/what-is-isis/).

<sup>141</sup> Badar, Mohamed Elewa. "The Road to Genocide: The Propaganda Machine of the Self-Declared Islamic State (IS)."

The camp of Islam and faith, and the camp of *kufr* (disbelief) and hypocrisy – the camp of the Muslims and the mujahidin everywhere, and the camp of the Jews, the crusaders, their allies, and with them the rest of the nations and religions of *kufr*, all being led by America and Russia. <sup>142</sup>

This passage encompasses the overarching view of ISIS: the world is separated into two distinct categories. The first is the Muslims aligned with ISIS, referred to as the *mujahidin*. This romanticizes the actions of ISIS, “glorifying their brutality while depicting their members as the knights who are going to restore Islam to the golden age of the Prophet Muhammad.” <sup>143</sup> ISIS sees the West, their allies, and other religions (Yazidis) falling under the banner of *kufr*. In this sense, the world can be traced back to classical Islam where Muslims viewed the world in bilateral spheres: the *dar al-Islam* (abode of Islam) and the *dar al-harb* (abode of war). This perpetual holy war presents a religious obligation through an aggressive *jihād*, which endorses the use of force until those opposing ISIS fall under their swath of belief or are killed. In reference to Yazidis, they fall outside the status of an equal being, meaning their murder is just. Badar finds that ISIS propaganda desensitizes its audience “through cognitive activation of subconscious hatred.” <sup>144</sup> Dehumanizing generalizations are implemented alongside legitimate justifications to “be distilled into the mind of the audience.” <sup>145</sup> All thirteen publications of *Dābiq* are heavily laced with reference to the Qur’ān, categorizing the dehumanizing stereotypes in a position of divine truth, therefore placing their audience in a position where to deny the claims would be the deny the teachings of Allah. ISIS uses *Quranic* exegeses to strengthen their rallying

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

narrative, using the *vox populi, vox dei* technique, meaning everyone “is in favor of our program,” paralleling their good vs. evil paradigm Badar proves the pivotal role hate speech plays as a prerequisite of incitement to commit genocide.<sup>146</sup> ISIS propaganda effuses radical messages claiming:

*Rāfidah* are *mushrik* apostates who must be killed wherever they are to be found, until no *Rāfidī* walks on the face of earth, even if the *jihād* claimants despise such and even if the *jihād* claimants defend the *Rāfidah* with their words day and night.<sup>147</sup>

This is an explicit call to take action urgently against enemies of Islam. Overall, we can see that ISIS propaganda is relentless and calculated to incite its audience to take immediate criminal action. Their hate media creates an environment of moral distortion, manipulation, and indoctrination of extremist values.

Religious fundamentalist organizations pose a serious threat to international security. Organizations like Boko Haram, Al-Shahab, and Al Qaeda have similar backgrounds and share similar views of the world. However, ISIS has been the most successful in conquering new territories and developing its terrorist network using military action and genocide. ISIS summons its followers to *jihād*, the armed expansion of the Muslim community, and to kill infidels who reject Islam, in which they characterize Christians, Jews, and Yazidis as infidels. ISIS leaders call their supporters to kill infidels abroad to “wipe them off the map of the future Caliphate.”<sup>148</sup> As Shaykh Abū Mus’ab az-Zarqāwī, a militant who formed Al-Qaeda in Iraq, stated, “we

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid,

<sup>148</sup> Pastucha, Wiktor, and Aleksandra Sychalska. “How Islamic State Uses Propaganda in the Service of Genocide.” *THINK.IAFOR.ORG*, 24 May 2019, think.iafor.org/islamic-state-use-propaganda-service-genocide/.

perform the *jihād* so that Allah’s word becomes supreme and the religion becomes completely for Allah . . . everyone who opposes this goal or stands in the path of this goal is an enemy to us and a target for our swords.”<sup>149</sup>

While genocide in Rwanda was limited to traditional-state media, ISIS uses the internet and new communication technologies on a global scale. Following Gregory Stanton’s eight stages of genocide, ISIS used its propaganda to begin the initial stages of genocide and then encourage further violence once killing commenced.<sup>150</sup> In this, ISIS especially targeted Yazidis, classifying them as an outgroup, symbolizing Yazidis as Satanists, and enacting discriminatory policies in their conquered territories. Its clear ISIS media dehumanizes Yazidis, calling them “devil worshippers” to be driven “like sheep by the edge of the sword.”<sup>151</sup> After comes polarization: ISIS has fought moderate leaders who speak out against their extremist rhetoric and tactics. In the next stage – preparation and persecution – future victims are marked, and then exterminated. Scholars Pastucha and Spychalska confirmed this process in their language analysis based on ISIS’s main propaganda channel, *Dābiq*. In their analysis, they examined word frequency and word concordance. They found the Islamic State orders its followers on what to do and how to conduct their violence. Also, there was a vivid separation of “us” and “them” with words like “brotherhood” and “families” to describe the Caliphate.<sup>152</sup> ISIS utilized pejorative propaganda to encourage its followers to take up arms against all infidels. This has translated into extreme violence and genocide against those who do not align with ISIS views, especially the Yazidis.

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<sup>149</sup> Jessica Stern and J.M. Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror* (William Collins, London, 2015) 219

<sup>150</sup> Badar, Mohamed Elewa. “The Road to Genocide: The Propaganda Machine of the Self-Declared Islamic State (IS).”

<sup>151</sup> Pastucha, Wiktor, and Aleksandra Spychalska. “How Islamic State Uses Propaganda in the Service of Genocide.”

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

Furthermore, a study of ISIS propaganda revealed the group relies heavily on culturally and religiously well-established Islamic concepts to incite its devotees to violence. Badar and Polona Florijančič sought to uncover these propaganda techniques by analyzing key concepts and labels employed and placing them in their linguistic, historical, religious, and ideological contexts to investigate the various manifestations of intent.<sup>153</sup> In this study, cognitive modes of criminal conduct emerged wherein the intention, propagandistic conduct could be prosecuted as “the inchoate crime of direct and public incitement to commit genocide.”<sup>154</sup> The authors translated ISIS publications from Arabic to decipher the meaning behind the words as they were intended to be heard by ISIS combatants. Overall, the study shows ISIS appeals to its audience with imagery, music, and sound effects to make its polarizing message effective. Their propaganda narrative fulfills the necessary *actus reus* and *mens rea* of public incitement to commit genocide as it holds the necessary physical standards and the mental element of intent.<sup>155</sup>

In Ariel Lieberman’s study, *Terrorism, the Internet, and Propaganda: A Deadly Combination*, she describes how the Internet has revolutionized terrorism and genocidal processes. Its publications and visuals combine horrifying and tantalizing themes to deliberately target young adults and twist their perceptions of morally acceptable behavior. Social media provides terror groups with unlimited content directly to a plethora of numerous individuals or websites. Groups can convey their message directly to their target audience, permitting terrorists to tailor their recruiting pitch, sending different messages to followers based on their age, gender,

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<sup>153</sup> Badar, Mohamed, and Florijančič, Polona (2019) *The cognitive and linguistic implications of ISIS propaganda: proving the crime of direct and public incitement to genocide*. In: *propaganda and International Criminal Law: From Cognition to Criminality*. Routledge, Abingdon, pp. 1-58. ISBN 9781138335639 (In Press)

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Schabas, W. (2009). The physical element or *actus reus* of genocide. In *Genocide in International Law: The Crime of Crimes* (pp. 172-240). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511575556.007



location, or other factors.<sup>156</sup> Lieberman notes ISIS has been “shockingly successful” at spreading its message through 21<sup>st</sup>-century social media. ISIS propaganda frames its campaign in “epochal terms,” mounting a frontal assault on the national divisions and boundaries, and colonial structures of capitalism in the region drawn by Western powers.<sup>157</sup> While espousing a return to a seventh-century caliphate, (a unified Muslim state run according to a strict interpretation of Islamic law) ISIS propaganda provokes religious nostalgia, which collectively resonates with target audiences.<sup>158</sup> In Issue 13 of ISIS’s propaganda magazine, researchers read “the *Rāfidah* are the insurmountable obstacle, the lurking snake, the scorpion of deception and malice, the prowling enemy, the deadly poison.”<sup>159</sup>

In this passage, *Rāfidah* translates to “those who reject,” depicting their enemies as subhuman cultivations of evil. While ISIS propaganda espouses that crusaders, Shi’a, and other religious sects like the Yazidis have their own derogatory generalization, all equate to the same concept: *kufr*. These groups are all tarnished with the same brush, and “embodied together through ideological hatred.”<sup>160</sup> Although ISIS hate media addresses all enemies on a similar platform. While Rwandan hate media focused on the specific “other” denigration, ISIS hate media addresses all enemies on a similar platform. However, the Yazidis have been specifically cited for annihilation. Their hate propaganda amounts to direct and public incitement of others to commit genocide with “agitational linguistics tactics” and religious references stirring sentiments

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<sup>156</sup> Lieberman, Ariel. “Terrorism, the Internet, and Propaganda: A Deadly Combination.” *Journal of National Security Law and Policy*, vol. 9, no. 95, doi:[https://jnslp.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Terrorism\\_the\\_Internet\\_and\\_Propaganda\\_FINAL.pdf](https://jnslp.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Terrorism_the_Internet_and_Propaganda_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> El-Badawy, Emma, et al. “Inside the Jihadi Mind: Understanding Ideology and Propaganda .” *Tony Blair Institute for Global Change* , doi:[https://institute.global/sites/default/files/inline-files/IGC\\_Inside%20Jihadi%20Mind\\_18.08.17.pdf](https://institute.global/sites/default/files/inline-files/IGC_Inside%20Jihadi%20Mind_18.08.17.pdf).

<sup>160</sup> Badar, Mohamed Elewa. “The Road to Genocide: The Propaganda Machine of the Self-Declared Islamic State (IS).”

of violence in their devout followers.<sup>161</sup> As Trevor Hawkins notes, ISIS relies on a “scheme similar to cult indoctrination: deconstructing a target’s social reality, reconstructing their social reality, and preventing outsider influence.”<sup>162</sup> ISIS propaganda targets specific populations to persuade their participants for homogenous influence. The group reconstructs reality with hate media according to the goals and intentions of the ISIS caliphate.<sup>163</sup> Considering the group’s widespread use of hate media to demonize their targets and call their followers to realized violence, I conclude that ISIS hate media has incited genocidal violence resulting in grievous crimes against the Yazidi community.

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Hawkins, Trevor. “A Theoretical Analysis of ISIS Indoctrination and Recruitment.” *Capstone Projects and Master’s Theses*, Dec. 2016, [https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps\\_thes\\_all/7](https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes_all/7).

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

### Chapter 3: Myanmar

As technology has proliferated, methods to disseminate hateful media have evolved to spread content faster to a wider audience. Described as the “world’s most persecuted minority,” the Rohingya Muslims have been persecuted by Burma’s Rakhine State military in a campaign of ethnic cleansing.<sup>164</sup> Since 2017, Burmese security forces have directed mass killings, sexual violence, and widespread arson —over 742,000 Rohingya refugees have fled to Bangladesh.<sup>165</sup> The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has named the northern Rakhine State “as one of the most prolific slaughterhouses of humans in recent times.”<sup>166</sup>

The Rohingya are an ethnic Muslim minority who practice a Sufi-inflected variation of Sunni Islam.<sup>167</sup> Of the estimated one million Rohingya in Myanmar, a majority resided in the Rakhine State, where they accounted for nearly a third of the population.<sup>168</sup> Myanmar is dominantly Buddhist, thus, the Rohingya differ ethnically, linguistically, and religiously. The Rohingya trace their origins in the region to the 15<sup>th</sup> century when thousands of Muslims came to the former Arakan Kingdom, with many others arriving during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries when Rakhine was a part of British colonial India. Shortly after Myanmar’s independence from Britain in 1948, the Union Citizenship Act was passed, specifying which ethnicities could gain citizenship. The Rohingya were not included, as the government viewed the migration that took

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<sup>164</sup> What Forces Are Fueling Myanmar's Rohingya Crisis?" *Council on Foreign Relations*, Council on Foreign Relations, [www.cfr.org/background/rohingya-crisis#:~:text=The%20Rohingya%20trace%20their%20origins,as%20part%20of%20British%20India](http://www.cfr.org/background/rohingya-crisis#:~:text=The%20Rohingya%20trace%20their%20origins,as%20part%20of%20British%20India).

<sup>165</sup> United Nations. “Rohingya Emergency.” UNHCR, [www.unhcr.org/en-us/rohingya-emergency.html](http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/rohingya-emergency.html).

<sup>166</sup> Simpson, Adam, and Nicholas Farrelly. “The Rohingya Crisis and Questions of Accountability.” *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 74, no. 5, Sept. 2020, pp. 486–94. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, doi:10.1080/10357718.2020.1813251.

<sup>167</sup> “What Forces Are Fueling Myanmar's Rohingya Crisis?”

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

place during British rule as “illegal” to refuse citizenship to the minority group.<sup>169</sup> Successive governments have refuted the Rohingya’s historical claims and denied the group recognition as one of the country’s 135 official ethnic groups.<sup>170</sup> In 1982, a new citizenship law was passed rendering the Rohingya stateless. The legislation established three levels of citizenship: in order to obtain the most basic level of naturalized citizenship, proof was needed that the person’s family lived in Myanmar before 1948, as well as fluency in one of the national languages. Most Rohingya lacked such paperwork and speak Rohingya or Ruaingga, a dialect distinct to the group. With this legislation, the Rohingya’s rights to vote, study, work, travel, marry, navigate health services, and practice their religion has been restricted. In other words, Myanmar has effectively institutionalized discrimination against the ethnic group through “restrictions on marriage, family planning, employment, education, religious choice, and freedom of movement.”<sup>171</sup> Couples in the northern towns of Maungdaw and Buthidaung can only have two children. Furthermore, Rohingya must seek permission to marry, often requiring bribes to authorities; Rohingya must also provide photographic evidence of the bride with a headscarf and the groom with a clean-shaven face, practices that directly conflict with Muslim traditions.<sup>172</sup> To move or travel to a new township, Rohingya require government approval. Since 1970, several “crackdowns” on the Rohingya in the Rakhine State have forced hundreds to flee to neighboring Bangladesh as well as Malaysia, Thailand, and other Southeast Asian countries. During such crackdowns, refugees have reported “rape, torture, arson, and murder by Myanmar security forces.”<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Staff, Al Jazeera. “Myanmar: Who Are the Rohingya?” *Humanitarian Crises News* | *Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera, 18 Apr. 2018, [www.aljazeera.com/features/2018/4/18/who-are-the-rohingya](http://www.aljazeera.com/features/2018/4/18/who-are-the-rohingya).

<sup>170</sup> “What Forces Are Fueling Myanmar’s Rohingya Crisis?”

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> Staff, Al Jazeera. “Myanmar: Who Are the Rohingya?”

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

After the killings of nine border police in October 2016, the government blamed the violence on fighters from a Rohingya group, prompting troops to pour into villages of the Rakhine State. Government troops were accused of extrajudicial killing, rape, and arson, which they officially denied. The militant group known as the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) claimed responsibility for attacks on police and army posts in August 2017.<sup>174</sup> The group was declared a terrorist organization and the government mounted an even more extensive campaign against the Rohingya that destroyed hundreds of villages and forced nearly seven hundred Rohingya to leave Myanmar.<sup>175</sup> Security forces opened fire on fleeing civilians and planted land mines near border crossings used by Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh.<sup>176</sup>

In 2018, a UN fact-finding panel released a report that claimed the government had “genocidal intent” against the Rohingya.<sup>177</sup> The United Nation detailed evidence that security forces shot hundreds of Rohingya in their homes, killed children, and gang-raped women during a military campaign the year before. An estimated 6,000 civilians died, though veritable numbers remain unknown.<sup>178</sup> The UN has specifically criticized the role of state media in perpetrating extreme speech and normalizing hateful characterizations of the group. Articles from the state-run newspaper *The Global New Light of Myanmar* describe Rohingya as “thorns” that must be removed, urging the Buddhist government to take action.<sup>179</sup> The paper also compared the group

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> “What Forces Are Fueling Myanmar's Rohingya Crisis?”

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Mandhana, Niharika. “Rohingya Genocide Case Against Myanmar Opens Before U.N. Court.” *The Wall Street Journal*, Dow Jones & Company, 10 Dec. 2019, [www.wsj.com/articles/rohingya-genocide-case-against-myanmar-opens-before-u-n-court-11575990274](http://www.wsj.com/articles/rohingya-genocide-case-against-myanmar-opens-before-u-n-court-11575990274).

<sup>179</sup> *Sources of Hate Speech - Burma's Path to Genocide - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*. <https://exhibitions.ushmm.org/burmas-path-to-genocide/chapter-3/sources-of-hate-speech>. Accessed 10 May 2021.

to “fleas” and likened their existence to an invasive species.<sup>180</sup> As Ronan Lee of Queen Mary University of London describes, the state media publication GNLM has ‘actively produced anti-Rohingya speech in its editions and influenced violent narratives about Rohingya Muslims circulating on social media.’<sup>181</sup> Through a historical contextualization, interviews, and a content analysis, Lee found that almost 88% (47 out of 53) GNLM front-page articles related to security issues in the Rakhine State once the Rohingya crisis began in August 2017, despite the Rakhine State population only representing around 6% of Myanmar’s total.<sup>182</sup> These articles focused on official fears about Muslim terrorism and included “photographs suggesting a chaotic situation in northern Rakhine State being calmed by security forces, of burning villages allegedly attacked by Muslim terrorists, and of locals and emergency services working to defend and repair homes from Muslim destruction.”<sup>183</sup> Headlines adopted a sensationalist tone, suggesting the country was under siege by terrorist forces. Headlines like “Terrorists Trying to Destroy Maungtau” and “Let Us Eradicate Extremist Terrorists, Destructive Elements Together!” dominated the front page and helped contribute to an environment that both excuse and allowed nationalist hate speech, “providing license and encouragement for the Myanmar military’s campaign of ethnic cleansing.”<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Lee, Ronan. “Extreme Speech in Myanmar: The Role of State Media in the Rohingya Forced Migration Crisis.” *International Journal of Communication*, 2019, doi:<https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/10123>.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.



Fig. 4. Newspaper article from the Global New Light of Myanmar from: *Sources of Hate Speech - Burma's Path to Genocide - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*

Furthering compounding the securitization of the Rakhine state in the public purview, social media platforms like Facebook have had a “determining role in whipping up anger against the Rohingya minority.”<sup>185</sup> Myanmar was a latecomer to the Internet revolution, with prepublication press censorship only ending in 2012. Previously, mobile phone ownership levels were so low that only North Korea had fewer mobile phones, per capita.<sup>186</sup> Policy changes during Thein Sein’s tenure resulted in reduced SIM card prices. In concurrence with the market opening to international carriers, “there was a huge growth in mobile phone penetration.”<sup>187</sup> This made the Internet readily available to Myanmar’s 51 million residents, effectively altering the way Myanmar’s residents communicate. It is important to note that with Facebook’s aggressive chasing of market share in Myanmar, many Internet users in Myanmar only understand the existence of the Internet in terms of tools like Facebook, making social media “incredibly

<sup>185</sup> Mandhana, Niharika. “Rohingya Genocide Case Against Myanmar Opens Before U.N. Court.”

<sup>186</sup> Lee, Ronan. “Extreme Speech in Myanmar: The Role of State Media in the Rohingya Forced Migration Crisis.”

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

influential.”<sup>188</sup> In this, Myanmar’s media “liberalization has allowed divisive voices to foment ethnic and religious conflict.”<sup>189</sup> Over 18 million in Myanmar are regular Facebook users.<sup>190</sup> The population lacks internet experience, making them especially vulnerable to propaganda and misinformation; there is no internet literacy. Thus, Facebook became a weaponized tool for ethnic cleansing. A Reuter’s investigation found more than 1,000 Burmese posts, comments, and pornographic images attacking Rohingya in 2018.<sup>191</sup> Several posts cataloged by the study described Rohingya as dogs, pigs, and terrorists.<sup>192</sup> As Silvia Venier outlines in the Italian Yearbook of International Law, Facebook was extensively used “for sharing posts to demonize the Rohingya minority,” and the company took no immediate action despite evidence linking “the use of the social network with hate speech that contributed to the violence.”<sup>193</sup> Her paper analyzed the role of Facebook in furthering the commission of mass atrocities against the Rohingya, confirming an online dimension in the genocidal campaign. So too, these posts were shared not only by ordinary people but also by senior military officers. Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur echo Venier’s conclusions in their 2019 *Spread of Hate Speech in Online Social Media*. By collecting a massive dataset of 341,000 users with 2.1 million posts, Mathew, Goyal, Dutt, and Mukherjee investigated the diffusion of posts generated by hateful and non-hateful users.<sup>194</sup> Providing a cross-sectional view of user interaction that

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Claburn, Thomas. “Facebook Quietly Admits Role in Myanmar Killing Fields – but Fret Not, It Will Do Better next Time.” *The Register*® - Biting the Hand That Feeds IT, *The Register*, 7 Nov. 2018, [www.theregister.co.uk/2018/11/06/facebook\\_myanmar\\_report/](http://www.theregister.co.uk/2018/11/06/facebook_myanmar_report/).

<sup>191</sup> Subedar, Anisa. “The Country Where Facebook Posts Whipped up Hate.” *BBC News*, BBC, 12 Sept. 2018, [www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-45449938](http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-45449938).

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Venier, Silvia. “The Role of Facebook in the Persecution of the Rohingya Minority in Myanmar: Issues of Accountability Under International Law.” *The Italian Yearbook of International Law Online*, vol. 28, no. 1, Oct. 2019, pp. 231–48. *brill.com*, doi:10.1163/22116133\_02801014.

<sup>194</sup> Mathew, Binny, et al. “Spread of Hate Speech in Online Social Media.” *Proceedings of the 10th ACM Conference on Web Science - WebSci '19*, 2019, doi:10.1145/3292522.3326034.



facilitates the spread of malicious speech, they find that hateful content, like the posts of the Rohingya military accounts, tends to spread faster, farther, and reach a much wider audience as compared to content generated by normal users.<sup>195</sup> The researchers underscore that the frequent and repetitive exposure to hate speech leads to sensitization “to this form of verbal violence and subsequently to lower evaluations of the victims and greater distancing, thus increasing the outgroup prejudice.”<sup>196</sup> As a testament to the power of this priming, many people who circulated hate media on Facebook “had not even met a single Rohingya in their life.”<sup>197</sup> Instead, their view of the target community was completely manipulated by the unbridled spread of hate speech on Facebook.<sup>198</sup>

Further research proves inflammatory Facebook posts were shared by Myanmar military personnel posing as pop stars and national heroes with penchants for “parroting military propaganda” as discussed by Paul Mozur of the *New York Times*.<sup>199</sup> Former military officials, researchers, and civilians in the country reported military officials were behind a systematic campaign on Facebook that stretched back half a decade. Officials flooded their fake posts with “incendiary comments and posts timed for peak viewership.”<sup>200</sup> They were tasked with collecting intelligence on popular accounts and criticizing posts unfavorable to the military, working in shifts out of bases clustered in foothills near the capital. By setting up what appeared to be news pages and fan accounts, the military accrued large numbers of followers who internalized the posts as fact. In 2017, the military intelligence arm spread warnings on Facebook

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Subedar, Anisa. “The Country Where Facebook Posts Whipped up Hate.”

<sup>200</sup> Mozur, Paul. “A Genocide Incited on Facebook, With Posts From Myanmar's Military.” *The New York Times*, *The New York Times*, 15 Oct. 2018, [www.nytimes.com/2018/10/15/technology/myanmar-facebook-genocide.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/15/technology/myanmar-facebook-genocide.html).

Messenger via widely followed accounts that “jihad attacks would be carried out,” tapping into a rich history of psychological warfare to warp perceptions about Rohingya.<sup>201</sup> This campaign generated sentiments of vulnerability and fear in the Buddhist sect so they would take violent action to protect themselves against the Rohingya.<sup>202</sup> One of Burma’s most popular cultural and political cartoonists, APK Cartoonist posted the cartoon below, titled “Crocodile Tears” depicting exiled Rohingya as crocodiles crying artificial tears to the international media about returning to Burma.<sup>203</sup> The cartoon appeared on the cover of the *People’s Affair Journal* and was shared on Facebook in September 2017. The cartoon received over 6,900 likes and 4,200 shares.<sup>204</sup>



**Fig. 5.** APK Facebook Post from: *Sources of Hate Speech - Burma’s Path to Genocide - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Claburn, Thomas. “Facebook Quietly Admits Role in Myanmar Killing Fields – but Fret Not, It Will Do Better next Time.”

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> *Sources of Hate Speech - Burma’s Path to Genocide - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.*

A report by Evelyn Douek at Harvard Law School further expands on Facebook's culpability as an instigator of the genocide. Douek confirms the spread of anti-Rohingya misinformation across Facebook was not merely organic, but the "result of systematic and covert exploitation by the military."<sup>205</sup> She acknowledges that one of the most difficult aspects of prosecuting the crime of genocide is the "stringent requirements of providing genocidal intent."<sup>206</sup> However, the UN-commissioned independent Fact-Finding Mission concluded that there is sufficient information suggesting such intent exists in the Myanmar case — relying substantially on the digital record created by social media. The report underscores that many slurs and euphemisms used to vilify the Rohingya were subtle, relying on "specific understandings of history and context and even on local pronunciation."<sup>207</sup> Technology has a magnifying on old conflict, and the situation in Myanmar epitomizes this phenomenon. One ultranationalist monk-led group, MaBaTha, regularly circulated vehemently anti-Rohingya publications.<sup>208</sup> The most well-known purveyor of anti-Rohingya social media posts is Ashin Wirathu, a highly influential monk known for his hate-filled diatribes. Wirathu turned to Facebook after he was banned from preaching by the government. On the site, he linked Muslims to "mad dogs" and posted pictures of "dead bodies he claimed were Buddhists killed by Muslims."<sup>209</sup> Facebook restricted his access in the past but made no concerted effort to monitor it for hate speech, exemplifying how the site's inefficacious oversight allows collective actors to fuel hatred and nationalistic fervor.

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<sup>205</sup> Douek, Evelyn. "Facebook's Role in the Genocide in Myanmar: New Reporting Complicates the Narrative." *Lawfare*, 31 Oct. 2019, [www.lawfareblog.com/facebooks-role-genocide-myanmar-new-reporting-complicates-narrative](http://www.lawfareblog.com/facebooks-role-genocide-myanmar-new-reporting-complicates-narrative).

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>208</sup> *Sources of Hate Speech - Burma's Path to Genocide - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.*

<sup>209</sup> Gowen, Annie, and Max Bearak. "Fake News on Facebook Fans the Flames of Hate against the Rohingya in Burma." *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 8 Dec. 2017, [www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/fake-news-on-facebook-fans-the-flames-of-hate-against-the-rohingya-in-burma](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/fake-news-on-facebook-fans-the-flames-of-hate-against-the-rohingya-in-burma)

In her work *Dangerous Speech, Anti-Muslim Violence, and Facebook in Myanmar*, Christina Fink observed that Buddhist ultranationalists utilized Facebook to stoke fear, normalize hateful views, and facilitate acts of violence against Rohingya and other Muslim communities in Myanmar. Fink calls the anti-Muslim narrative “dangerous speech,” or language meant to persuade a group of people to fear, hate, and take violence against another group.<sup>210</sup>

Ultrnationalists have framed Muslims as posing a personal threat to the Buddhist-majority nation. They cite high Rohingya birthrates and their increasing economic influence as evidence of their plans to take over the country. Fink found the wide reach of Facebook, the speed of information dissemination, the impact of arresting images and incendiary text, and the participatory nature of social media platforms to have contributed to an environment of heightened anxiety among Buddhists which spurred offline action, including boycotts and killings.<sup>211</sup> In concluding her analysis, Fink detailed that Facebook posts and hate speech have played a “key part in spreading fear and inciting anti-Muslim violence in Myanmar,” and urged both the social media company and the government to take steps to ensure the platform will no longer catalyze lethal violence.<sup>212</sup>

The Rohingya crisis has religious roots but is also both economically and politically driven. The precarious conditions of the Rohingya rest upon local conflicts over resource distribution and economic opportunities, center-periphery tension, state-society antagonism, and armed violence.<sup>213</sup> Francis Wade has explored the violent fissures between Myanmar’s religious

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<sup>210</sup> Fink, Christina. “Dangerous Speech, Anti-Muslim Violence, and Facebook in Myanmar.” *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 71, no. 1.5, 2018, pp. 43–52. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/26508117](http://www.jstor.org/stable/26508117).

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>213</sup> Wolf, Siegfried O. *Genocide, Exodus and Exploitation for Jihad: The Urgent Need to Address the Rohingya Crisis*. Heidelberg University Library, 2021. *DOI.org (Datacite)*, doi:10.11588/XAREP.00004442.

communities with attention to socioeconomic factors. His work, *Myanmar's Enemy Within: Buddhist Violence and the Making of a Muslim Other*, argues that the military manipulated Buddhism since it seized power in 1962, to “fuel fervor for its largely coercive and homogenizing nation-building project.”<sup>214</sup> He claims out of this maneuvering, rose the extremism that dominates traditional Myanmar today, from which the stateless Rohingya have marginally suffered. Wade writes “so violently had notions of identity and belonging been manipulated and thrust to the center of life under the military that, as it began to step back, those contestations formed a core part of the search for the new Myanmar.”<sup>215</sup> Wade’s factual misreading of history produces an inaccurate narrative; Myanmar’s military didn’t promote Buddhism as its nation-building tool until after a 1988 democratic uprising. The country’s socialist period (1962-1988) gave rise to the laws and attitudes leading to the “othering” of the Rohingya, and the eventual emergence of Islamophobia, not the zealous promotion of Buddhist zeal.<sup>216</sup> Nevertheless, he underlines that the country’s political and moral authorities have done little to control the violence as the country’s leader Suu Kyi and her party were “complicit in fueling the mentality that led to the debasement of the Rohingya.”<sup>217</sup>

It has been argued that the crimes committed in Myanmar were caused by “bad apples in the military, rather than by systematic design.”<sup>218</sup> This defense has been “debunked by the

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<sup>214</sup> “Book Review: The Making of Myanmar’s Buddhist Rage.” *Time*, <https://time.com/4964592/myanmar-rohingya-muslims-francis-wade/>. Accessed 10 May 2021.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Beech, Hannah, et al. “‘Kill All You See’: In a First, Myanmar Soldiers Tell of Rohingya Slaughter.” *The New York Times*, 8 Sept. 2020. *NYTimes.com*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/08/world/asia/myanmar-rohingya-genocide.html>.

accumulated evidence” including satellite imagery and countless testimonies.<sup>219</sup> For example, video testimonies from soldiers support the widespread accusations that the military tried to eradicate the minority group. Private Myo Win Tun was told “shoot all you see and all you hear” and “kill all you see, whether children or adults.”<sup>220</sup> The violence against the Rohingya has been orchestrated by extremists who want a racially pure and religiously homogenous state, and in part by the military regime “which is content to see a degree of unrest.”<sup>221</sup> Both the state of Myanmar and the local community have committed four out of five acts of genocide as spelled out by the 1948 Convention on the Punishment and Prevention of the Crime of Genocide.<sup>222</sup> The Buddhist community has persecuted Muslims in the name of preserving their religion, race, and nation. Social media has been weaponized to steer the conflict narrative in Myanmar, with hateful posts and publications furthering the commission of genocide and crimes against humanity. Violence against the Rohingya is not new: the 1991 “Clean and Beautiful Nation” military campaign included the execution, rape, and assault of thousands of Rohingya, following a decades-long tradition of persecution.<sup>223</sup> Though new modes of communication have in the past several years made this process more sinister in Myanmar. There are now more ways for hate speech directed at the Rohingya to circulate. Using social media, the Burmese community government, the Buddhist community, and military officials have amplified racist language and promoted violence against the group. We see hate media largely emanating in a binary model, with local communities and state-sanctioned social media channels synergistically working to convey messages of discrimination. Altogether, I am in agreement with many of the field’s

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<sup>219</sup> “Book Review: The Making of Myanmar’s Buddhist Rage.”

<sup>220</sup> Beech, Hannah, et al. “‘Kill All You See’: In a First, Myanmar Soldiers Tell of Rohingya Slaughter.”

<sup>221</sup> Ibrahim, Azeem. *The Rohingyas: inside Myanmar's Hidden Genocide*. Hurst & Company, 2018.

<sup>222</sup> Zarni, Maung, and Alice Cowley. "The slow-burning genocide of Myanmar's Rohingya." *Pacific Rim Law & Policy Journal*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2014, p. 722+. Accessed 4 Apr. 2021.

<sup>223</sup> *Sources of Hate Speech - Burma's Path to Genocide - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*.

scholars that hate media bolstered by nationalist civilians and the state has helped to incite genocidal processes in Myanmar, which has led to one of the largest humanitarian crises in the world.

### **Other Factors Leading to Genocide**

As described in the preceding chapters, hate media has played an integral role in inciting genocidal violence in several cases. According to Dr. Gregory H. Stanton, “genocide is a process that develops in eight stages that are predictable, but not inexorable.”<sup>224</sup> It is not a linear progression, but logically prior stages continue to operate throughout the process. The stages are as follows:

1. **Classification:** All cultures have categories to distinguish people into “us and them” by ethnicity, race, religion, or nationality.
2. **Symbolization:** We give names or other symbols to the classifications. Classification and symbolization are universally human and do not necessarily result in genocide unless they lead to the next stage, dehumanization.
3. **Dehumanization:** One group denies the humanity of the other group. Members of it are equated with animals, vermin, insects, or diseases. Dehumanization overcomes the normal human revulsion against murder.
4. **Organization:** Genocide is always organized, usually by the state. Special army units or militias are often trained and armed, Plans are made for genocidal killings.
5. **Polarization:** Extremists drive the groups apart.

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<sup>224</sup> Kmeid, Amani. *The Eight Stages of Genocide According to Gregory Stanton's Criteria*. 2018. *repository.arizona.edu*, <https://repository.arizona.edu/handle/10150/630281>.

6. **Preparation:** Victims are identified and separated because of their ethnic or religious identity. Death lists are drawn up.

7. **Extermination:** Massacre begins and quickly becomes the mass killing legally called “genocide.” It is “extermination” to the killers because they do not believe their victims to be fully human.

8. **Denial:** The perpetrators of genocide dig up the mass graves, burn the bodies, try to cover up the evidence, and intimidate witnesses. They deny that they committed any crimes, and often blame what happened on the victims

Often, hate media comprises the development of the “dehumanization” stage. As such, the diminished value of the discriminated group is communicated through hate media and propaganda. Following the Rwandan genocide, Taba mayor Jean-Paul Akayesu was charged with genocide, crimes against humanity, and violations of the Geneva Convention, marking the first conviction for genocide. In the *Akayesu* trial, the mental element required for direct and public incitement to commit genocide was explained as follows:

The *mens rea* required for the crime of direct and public incitement to commit genocide lies in the intent to directly prompt or provoke another to commit genocide. It implies a desire on the part of the perpetrator to create by his actions a particular state of mind necessary to commit such a crime in the minds of the person(s) he is so engaging. That is to say that the person who is inciting to commit genocide must himself have the specific intent to commit genocide, namely, to destroy in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group as such.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> *ICTR-96-4 | United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.*  
<https://unictr.irmct.org/en/cases/ictr-96-4>.



The language used in hate media is believed to be an indicator of intent, and as such, the legal concept of intent relies on the intentional use of specific utterances by the perpetrators. Therefore, the cognitive desire to bring about the “constituent parts of a genocidal plan and policy may be revealed” through the identification of this use.<sup>226</sup> Many scholars agree that hate media manifests hatred and violence against minority groups, normalizing atrocities committed against these communities. When analyzing well-documented cases of genocide in the last century, hate media is a commonality preceding the onslaught of violence. During the Armenian genocide, Ottoman propaganda characterized Armenians as “traitors, saboteurs, spies, vermin, and infidels.”<sup>227</sup> Propagandist Ziya Gokalp called to save Turkey by “ridding itself of its non-Muslim elements.”<sup>228</sup> The extent to which Nazi propaganda incited genocide against Jews will be discussed in later chapters, but nonetheless, Nazi propaganda portrayed Jews as subhuman “parasites, cancer, fleas” plaguing German society.<sup>229</sup> Slobodan Milošević referred to Bosnian Muslims as “black crows,” and the Wolves of Vučjak helped the Serb Democratic Party seize TV stations to disseminate pro-Serb propaganda, with the extreme *Brđanin* broadcast “openly inciting people to kill non-Serbs.”<sup>230</sup> Additionally, my Rwanda, ISIS, and Myanmar chapters illustrate virulent hate media being employed to stir sentiments against minority groups, depicting them as immediate threats to be exterminated. These cases follow the process of Stanton’s stages. As Timmerman discussed in “Incitement in International Criminal Law,” Soviet delegates at the Genocide Convention argued that “it was impossible that hundreds of

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<sup>226</sup> Timmermann, Wibke Kristin. “The Relationship between Hate Propaganda and Incitement to Genocide: A New Trend in International Law towards Criminalization of Hate Propaganda?”

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

thousands of people should commit so many crimes unless they had been incited to do so.”<sup>231</sup>

With evidence of hate media being present in these aforementioned cases and the concurrent scholarly consensus on hate propaganda’s psychological potency to catalyze violence, it seems hate media is a prerequisite in the process of genocide. However, other cases with no evidence of large-scale hate media precipitating genocidal violence disprove this frequent trend. In the next chapter, I will show how the Guatemalan genocide deviates from the pre-genocidal pattern of propaganda, necessitating the exploration of other causal explanations excluding the influence of modular media.

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter 4: Guatemala

According to Frank Smyth, the “bloodshed woven through the fabric of Guatemalan society remains a rarely told story.”<sup>232</sup> Impunity has long seeped through the highest levels of the northern Central American nation. Referred to as the “Silent Holocaust,” the genocide under the reign of General Efraín Ríos Montt decimated large portions of the Mayan population.<sup>233</sup> The scale of the violence was staggering; more than 200,000 people were killed or forcibly disappeared in the late 1970s and early 1980s, according to the UN Commission.<sup>234</sup> Guatemala’s toll from the period “would be equivalent of killing more than seven million people today in the United States.”<sup>235</sup>

Like many Latin American countries, the socioeconomic norms prevailing in Guatemala after independence from Spain in 1821 was the supremacy of the privileged white minority over the majority of the indigenous or mixed population forced into a subordinate role, devoid of rights. This followed norms established at the time of conquest: the dominant Spanish colonizers were self-designated as *gente de razon*, or people of reason, while the indigenous population was called *naturales* and considered innately inferior.<sup>236</sup> A military coup in 1954 ended an attempt at agrarian reform that threatened to destabilize the traditional economic and power balances. Years

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<sup>232</sup> Smyth, Frank. “Painting the Maya Red: Military Doctrine and Speech in Guatemala’s Genocidal Acts.” *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, <https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20100423-speech-power-violence-smyth.pdf>.

<sup>233</sup> Pereira, Ana. *General Efraín Ríos Montt and the Silent Holocaust: A Guatemalan Genocide*. California Polytechnic State University, Mar. 2014, <https://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://scholar.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1033&context=histsp>.

<sup>234</sup> Smyth, Frank. “Painting the Maya Red: Military Doctrine and Speech in Guatemala’s Genocidal Acts.”

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Manz, Beatriz. *Paradise in Ashes: A Guatemalan Journey of Courage, Terror, and Hope*. University of California Press, 2004.

of mass protests followed the coup. From 1960 to 1996, a civil war raged, pitting the interests of the wealthier urban classes against those of the poorer classes and *campesinos*.<sup>237</sup>

By the time former general Montt became the country's dictator in 1982, Guatemala had endured civil war for over 20 years. In a temporal context, the "goal of erecting a stem against the worrying expansion of communism was placed above any respect for human rights."<sup>238</sup> The more privileged classes were concerned that social reform would depreciate their property rights; this was the motive behind the elaboration of the "doctrine of national security," which provided legitimization for the generalized violence of the state against whoever claimed more advances for social justice.<sup>239</sup> Such doctrines permitted the state to categorize and label groups who stood on the opposing side of this doctrine as "objectively communist," dooming them to complete annihilation as an internal enemy.<sup>240</sup> Thus, a month after Montt came to power, he launched a scorched earth operation against the Ixil Maya population.<sup>241</sup> Montt was only head of state for 17 months, but his reign stands out as one of the bloodiest periods in the country's history.<sup>242</sup>

State records officially document Operation Sofia as a counterinsurgency campaign waged against leftist guerrillas instead of genocide. The offensive sent hundreds of soldiers against the guerrillas, although their numbers were estimated at fewer than 100 in the Ixil area.<sup>243</sup> The military claimed to only target specific villages which authorities deemed to be supportive of the nation's Marxist insurgencies. However, the military targeted the village

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<sup>237</sup> "Guatemalan Genocide." *Gariwo: Garden of Righteous Worldwide*, <https://en.gariwo.net/education/insights/guatemalan-genocide-7841.html>.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>241</sup> The Guatemala Genocide Case – CJA. <https://cja.org/what-we-do/litigation/the-guatemala-genocide-case/>. Accessed 27 Apr. 2021

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>243</sup> Malkin, Elisabeth. "Court Papers Detail Killings by the Military in Guatemala." *The New York Times*, 4 Dec. 2009. NYTimes.com, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/04/world/americas/04guatemala.html>.

population en masse within these villages. Nominally, Montt's extermination does not meet the specific threshold of genocide, though the UN Commission for Historical Clarification confirmed the Guatemalan military committed "acts of genocide" involving the wholesale annihilation of men, women, and children in hundreds of ethnic Mayan communities.<sup>244</sup> In this consideration, the atrocities committed against Mayan communities illustrated a government policy of genocide.<sup>245</sup>

According to almost two hundred pages of platoon reports, Montt's campaign set out to systemically decimate the Maya population. The reports repeat a similar story: a military patrol enters a Mayan village in the El Quiché region in the summer of 1982. The soldiers captured anyone who failed to flee in time and "eliminated" anybody who tried to escape. Houses were burned, crops destroyed, and livestock killed. Pieces of testimony document the executions of women, children, and the elderly during the military campaigns led indiscriminately against entire villages.<sup>246</sup> The military exterminated entire Mayan communities in the most remote and poor villages of the Central-Western region. The pattern of the murders ranges from dismemberment to the beheading and burial of the victims in mass graves. With the scorched earth policy, soldiers ravaged the remnants. This translated to the complete "destruction of

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<sup>244</sup> U.N. Commission for Historical Clarification, 1999, paragraphs 108 – 122. (Only portions of the report have been translated into English by the American Association for the Advancement of Science; see <http://shr.aaas.org/guatemala/ceh/report/english/toc.html>, and also *Quiet Genocide: Guatemala 1981 – 1983*, edited by Etelle Higonnet, Transactions Publishers, 2009. The original U.N. report in Spanish is titled *La Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico*, and it is posted at <http://shr.aaas.org/guatemala/ceh/mds/spanish/toc.html>.)

<sup>245</sup> *Operation Sofia: Documenting Genocide in Guatemala*.

<https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB297/index.htm>. Accessed 10 May 2021.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*

resources, subsistence means, cultural symbols, social, economic and political institutions, cultural and religious values and practices.”<sup>247</sup>

In “Painting the Maya Red,” Frank Smyth explores the interaction between military doctrine and speech in Guatemala’s genocidal acts. He posits hateful discourse, including doctrine and speech played roles in Guatemala, “but perhaps in different ways from other cases of modern genocide or genocidal acts.” He describes Yugoslavia in the late 1980s and 1990s and Rwanda in the early to mid-1990s as clear cases wherein racist doctrine and speech were developed for dissemination among both loyal political cadre and the public at large through the media.<sup>248</sup> Whereas in Guatemala, hate speech in the media was not utilized as a tool to incite genocide. The destructive doctrine was primarily directed at military personnel through a vehicle of formal commands. Smyth focuses on the primacy of military institutions in carrying out genocidal acts. Scholar Vahakn N. Dadrian confirmed, “genocide not only requires opportunistic decision-making, its execution depends on functional efficiency.”<sup>249</sup> In his work, Dadrian noted the key roles played by ideology and indoctrination among military forces in genocide. In Guatemala, the military officer corps pursued different types of language “to indoctrinate military personnel and other select groups.”<sup>250</sup> The Army developed colloquial speech for senior officers and soldiers. Field officers and soldiers were then ordered to communicate similar language to individuals and civilians, shifting the onus of blame for the atrocities from the

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<sup>247</sup> Smyth, Frank. “Painting the Maya Red: Military Doctrine and Speech in Guatemala’s Genocidal Acts.”

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

<sup>249</sup> “The Comparative Aspects of the Armenian and Jewish Cases of Genocide: A Sociohistorical Perspective,” Vahakn N. Dadrian. *Is the Holocaust Unique? Perspectives on Comparative Genocide*, edited by Alan S. Rosenbaum, Westview Press, 2008.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

military perpetrators to the victims.<sup>251</sup> The rationalizations in this doctrine and speech helped forces overcome their own moral and emotional reservations. Drawing upon Scott Straus' work, Smyth documented how the Army used violence and intimidation to divide indigenous people into camps, "either for co-optation or destruction based on their perceived political loyalties."<sup>252</sup> Field officers regularly urged their paramilitary units to embrace their cleansing, as those who were "killed or abused deserved their plight."<sup>253</sup> Moreover, the discourse was not deployed alone, the language was coupled with "mechanisms to induce unwavering obedience by soldiers."<sup>254</sup> Extreme training rituals prepared soldiers for their roles in the carnage to come.<sup>255</sup> One Guatemalan military recruit described the grisly conclusion of one Army training course:

We completed three months that they said were for study. They arrived at a firing range and sent us to grab about three hundred dogs. We grabbed them and they shut us in together. "Okay, listen, this is the meat that we are going to eat today." They took us to a firing range located below the university among the gullies, and they set us to kill those dogs. They filled a cauldron with blood, like a barrel. Each one of us had a disposable cup filled with blood and had to down it. Whoever didn't drink it was two-faced. They gave us each a cup of dog blood.<sup>256</sup>

In addition to the psychologically manipulative training embedded with themes of unwavering obedience, military discourse in Guatemala played upon existing racism against

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<sup>251</sup> Smyth, Frank. "Painting the Maya Red: Military Doctrine and Speech in Guatemala's Genocidal Acts."

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> *Guatemala, Never Again!* Proyecto Interdiocesano Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (Guatemala), et al., editors. Orbis Books ; CIIR ; Latin America Bureau, 1999

ethnic Mayans, aligning with a hierarchy of prejudice against those of indigenous descent. Smyth describes that the Army exploited prejudice to not only facilitate violence but to break down the cultural cohesion of Mayan communities.<sup>257</sup> He also discusses the Human Rights Office of the Guatemalan Catholic Archdiocese's exhaustive report of the nation's war-time violence titled *Never Again! Recovery of the Historical Memory Project*. Based on the testimony of survivors and perpetrators, the violence was not gratuitous by any means. The report found "human rights violations have been used as a strategy of social control in Guatemala."<sup>258</sup> The State believed indigenous communities were especially vulnerable to insurgent influence because of the "social, economic, political and military isolation of the region."<sup>259</sup> The nation's highland Mayans had been disenfranchised from the rest of the nation with a minute concentration of land ownership. The military recognized the impact of such factors, determining "the guerilla's base of social support is seated among the indigenous peasants and their flag is planted in their various dialects," according to a 1982 Guatemalan military high command operations plan.<sup>260</sup> The proclamation of the subversion and indoctrination led the military to favor "nearly blanket extermination."<sup>261</sup> Smyth reports Army intelligence used four different colors of pins on a map in the high command headquarters and department garrisons to designate different levels of suspected subversive influence, with red marking villages condemned to annihilation. A majority of the red pins dotted the Ixil-speaking areas.<sup>262</sup> Oftentimes, it was the Mayans' clothes that

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<sup>257</sup> Smyth, Frank. "Painting the Maya Red: Military Doctrine and Speech in Guatemala's Genocidal Acts."

<sup>258</sup> *Guatemala, Never Again!*

<sup>259</sup> Smyth, Frank. "Painting the Maya Red: Military Doctrine and Speech in Guatemala's Genocidal Acts."

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>261</sup> Smyth, Frank. "Painting the Maya Red: Military Doctrine and Speech in Guatemala's Genocidal Acts."

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*



gave their identity away, as the regional population had long worn traditional costumes with unique color schemes. Overall, military doctrine and speech were “instrumental in fomenting the bloodshed that continues to soak Guatemala’s national fabric.”<sup>263</sup> Hate media was not widely circulated to the general population of Guatemala to incite genocidal violence.

Further studying the factors that surrounded the origins and dynamics of genocide, Roddy Brett draws on literature from genocide studies, comparative politics, anthropology, history, and peace and conflict studies to approach the Guatemalan genocide through an empirically driven study based upon primary-source immersion. Brett shares the perspective of more recent second-generation genocide scholarship that a concern with “structural conditions may help to elucidate why, and under which circumstances political violence may transform into genocide.”<sup>264</sup> He argues the genocide was facilitated by the “weight of the past, by a history of racism against and slaughter of indigenous peoples, and by the absence of consequences for those that had hitherto perpetrated this violence.”<sup>265</sup> He argues Guatemala’s genocide was a ramification of a systematic and organized counterinsurgency policy, but also a response wrought from the contingent possibility that sought to craft a nation in a period of heightened contestation and mobilization.

Many scholars have studied the theoretical considerations of genocide. Kruijt and Koonings typify violence in the highland region into three separate cycles: violence related to the maintenance of the traditional rural oligarchic order, state modernization and the incorporation of

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<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> Brett, Roddy. *The Origins and Dynamics of Genocide: Political Violence in Guatemala*. Springer, 2016.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

the masses into politics, and post-conflict and post-authoritarian violence.<sup>266</sup> In this regard, political violence had shaped politics in the region for over a century, leading “to the embedding of political violence in everyday life and social and political transactions,” with violence and politics being intimately related.<sup>267</sup> According to another author, Grandin, social and political violence was endemic in Latin America since the aftermath of independence, and the 1960s expanded the scale, breadth, and sheer egregiousness of violence victims faced at local and state levels.<sup>268</sup> Stern, Scheper-Hughes, Schlesinger, and Robben all explore the nature, dynamics, and impact of political violence in Latin America since the Cold War. Being cognizant to avoid a sweeping narrative that mass violence is terminal and petrifying, I believe the Guatemalan genocide relied on state-led political violence to contain an “insurgent threat” while forging a new society purified of potential subversion.<sup>269</sup>

The state’s terror had roots in both colonial power and Guatemalan independence; per Daniel Goldhagen’s theory “genocide is a plausible crime because it is deeply embedded within the cultural archetype of a society.”<sup>270</sup> Mayan communities were separated from most of Guatemala’s population because of their different culture and physical segregation in the highlands prepared the racist proclivities engrained in the psyche of the upper echelon since the colonization of Guatemala.<sup>271</sup> The massacre of Mayan people in the Ixil area cannot be seen as a discrete and isolated incident of state violence, but rather as an “integral strategic operation

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<sup>266</sup> Skrabut, Kristin. “Violence and Resilience in Latin American Cities. Kees Koonings and Dirk Kruijt, Eds., London: Zed Books, 2015. 195 Pp.: Book Review.” *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology*, vol. 23, no. 1, Mar. 2018, pp. 223–25. DOI.org (Crossref), doi:10.1111/jlca.12336.

<sup>267</sup> Brett, Roddy. *The Origins and Dynamics of Genocide: Political Violence in Guatemala*.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

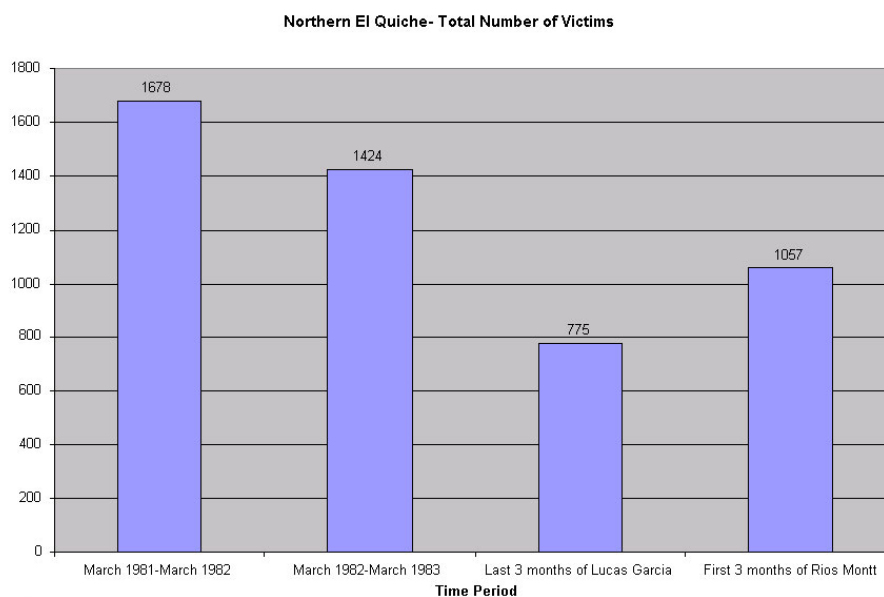
<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> *Genocide: Worse than War*, directed by Daniel Goldhagen, 2009, PBS, 2010 aired on PBS.

<sup>271</sup> Pereira, Ana. *General Efraín Ríos Montt and the Silent Holocaust: A Guatemalan Genocide*.

which in the sum form the army's first genocide campaign" as Victoria Sanford describes.<sup>272</sup>

The armed forces brutalized entire villages, razed communities, and wiped-out generations of families.



**Fig. 6.** A table detailing the total number of victims in the Northern El Quiche region in the early 1980s from: *Violence and Genocide in Guatemala* | *Genocide Studies Program*. <https://gsp.yale.edu/case-studies/guatemala/violence-and-genocide-guatemala>.

Through an analysis of the pattern of massacres in El Quiché and Baja Verapaz during the last twelve months of General Lucas Garcia's regime (March 1981-82) and the first twelve months of General Ríos Montt's reign (March 1982-83), Sanford demonstrates that massacres were not the result of rogue field commanders; massacres were a systematic and strategic campaign of the army as an institution. Ríos Montt not only continued the campaign of

<sup>272</sup> Sanford, Victoria. *Buried Secrets: Truth and Human Rights in Guatemala*. 1st ed, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

massacres initiated by Lucas Garcia, he actually further systematized the massacre campaign; and, this sustained campaign of massacres was the army's first genocidal campaign.<sup>273</sup>

As part of the Peace Accords of 1996 that ended the civil war, the UN-sponsored Truth Commission was created to investigate human rights violations in Guatemala. The Commission used 9,000 testimonies from war victims and a confidential database to conclude that over 200,000 people had been killed or disappeared during the war.<sup>274</sup> Initially, the army denied having committed massacres. By 1997, five years of exhumations of clandestine cemeteries had firmly placed responsibility on the army for the slaughter of civilians in the public consciousness.<sup>275</sup> In 1999, the Rigoberta Menchu Foundation filed a criminal complaint before the Spanish National Court against Montt and other senior officials. The Center for Accountability and Justice brought over 40 indigenous Guatemalans to Madrid to testify marking the first time a national court heard evidence from Mayans on the "Silent Holocaust."<sup>276</sup> In 2012, a Guatemalan court indicted Montt on accusations of torture, genocide, forced disappearances, state terrorism, and crimes against humanity.<sup>277</sup> Montt was sentenced to 80 years in prison. Additionally, this trial was the first time a former head of state was convicted of genocide by a national court and was the state's first official acknowledgment that the genocide occurred. However, the judgment was overturned weeks later and a retrial was ordered. In 2017, a separate case ruled that Montt could stand trial for genocide in the Dos Erres Massacre, in which more than 200 civilians were killed. Overall, community organizations and courts have

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<sup>273</sup> *Violence and Genocide in Guatemala - Chart 3 | Genocide Studies Program.*  
<https://gsp.yale.edu/resources/maps-satellite-images/deforestation-ixil-triangle/violence-and-genocide-guatemala-chart-3>. Accessed 27 Apr. 2021.

<sup>274</sup> Commission for Historical Clarification. *Guatemala Memory of Silence: Report of the Commission for Historical Clarification Conclusions and Recommendations*. N.d.

<sup>275</sup> Brett, Roddy. *The Origins and Dynamics of Genocide: Political Violence in Guatemala*.

<sup>276</sup> *The Guatemala Genocide Case – CJA*.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*

pursued justice for the genocide for over a decade. This continuous effort to prosecute Ríos Montt demonstrates the widely accepted concept that the former head of state had a high degree of personal culpability in leading the systematic campaign of violence. The management of the genocide was conducted through a top-down design, thus, Montt was the paramount target.

Examining the “Silent Holocaust” of Guatemala, we see the genocide was part of the framework of the internal armed conflict in the counterinsurgency actions of the armed forces. The evidence I present suggests the genocide was not incited by a widespread campaign of hateful propaganda available to the public as was the case in Rwanda, ISIS, and Myanmar. It was under Montt’s direction that the violence against Mayans escalated to genocidal proportions. Military doctrine and speech from the top ranks of government were disseminated down through the ranks from officers to non-commissioned officers, soldiers, paramilitaries, as well as to civilians. The military was the physical arm of the state serving the violent machinations manifesting from commands of leading officials. The UN commission reported, “during the massacres, the authorities also tried to inculcate the concept of ‘just’ punishment in the population . . . through discourses and speeches and by means of the selection of victims.”<sup>278</sup> Furthermore, in Pamela Yates’ film footage for *When the Mountains Tremble* (1983), she captures the Guatemalan military’s brutal campaign against the Mayan people. When returning to the original footage in 2011’s *Granito: How to Catch a Dictator*, Yates elucidates new evidence in which Efraín Ríos Montt admits to his responsibility for the killing of Mayan civilians and leftist guerillas.<sup>279</sup> Specifically, Montt gives verbal confirmation he commanded

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<sup>278</sup> Smyth, Frank. “Painting the Maya Red: Military Doctrine and Speech in Guatemala’s Genocidal Acts.”

<sup>279</sup> “ICTJ Presents: Granito: How to Nail a Dictator.” *International Center for Transitional Justice*, 26 June 2012, <https://www.ictj.org/news/ictj-presents-granito-how-nail-dictator-0>.

his army during his entire presidency, and therefore directed the genocidal acts committed by his military forces. The interview was later used in court against Montt.

In their 1972 study, Zimbardo, Haney, and Banks describe that one group will embody an extreme power advantage over another group whom they perceive as putative enemies during a massacre.<sup>280</sup> In Guatemala, indigenous Mayans were considered “so supportive of the guerillas” that constituted the extreme Marxist threat that they deserved to be eliminated.<sup>281</sup> As a survivor recalled, the military held the nation’s indigenous people with disdain, “they really treated us with contempt . . . we have no dignity.”<sup>282</sup> The case of Guatemala also meets another set of general conditions potentiating a massacre: a leader or small cadre of leaders “who are extremely prejudiced against the target group and capable through the hierarchical form of social structure to enforce compliance with execution of their exclusionary program.”<sup>283</sup> The decision to eradicate the target group originated with this hegemony of “coercion, obedience to authority, fear-mongering, an appeal to xenophobia to generate compliance in others,” which was headed by the military machine.<sup>284</sup> Obedience is central to military institutions. Coupled with the extreme military socialization and indoctrination of Guatemalan soldiers, the military operated above the law as a homogenously destructive force to indiscriminately decimate the Ixil Mayan population.<sup>285</sup> Impunity permeated Guatemala to such an extent “that it took control of the very structure of the State, and became both a means and an end,” found the UN commission.<sup>286</sup> The

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<sup>280</sup> Dutton, Donald G., et al. “Extreme Mass Homicide: From Military Massacre to Genocide.”

<sup>281</sup> Smyth, Frank. “Painting the Maya Red: Military Doctrine and Speech in Guatemala’s Genocidal Acts.”

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

<sup>283</sup> Dutton, Donald G., et al. “Extreme Mass Homicide: From Military Massacre to Genocide.”

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Smyth, Frank. “Painting the Maya Red: Military Doctrine and Speech in Guatemala’s Genocidal Acts.”

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

military protected and sheltered the repressive acts of the State and acts committed by like-minded individuals; whilst to an end, it was a repercussion of the methods used to repress and remove political and social opponents.

In simple terms, Montt's government and military transformed their hunt for insurgents into a genocidal campaign to eliminate the Ixil-Mayans, attacking 626 villages.<sup>287</sup> The Mayans were a marginalized group and were demonized by the highest levels of the state. Innocent men, women, and children were identified as subversive guerilla sympathizers. Under Montt's military junta, the "rifle and beans" reforms began.<sup>288</sup> As quoted in the New York Times in 1982, Montt told an indigenous audience "if you are with us, we'll feed you; if not, we'll kill you."<sup>289</sup> Political and social violence had been long been normalized in Guatemala, creating a cultural phenomenon synonymous with indifference to brutality and impunity in the "defense" of the state. This is not to suggest the country was innately violent; in fact, much of the suffering of Guatemalan civilians stems from American intervention in the 1950s that overthrew the democratically elected president to install a military dictatorship more attuned to the interests of the United States. The repurposed, yet emblematic tactics of American colonialism rekindled stark ethnic, economic, social, and political divisions in society that the Guatemalan government had begun to repair. The civil war that erupted stifled the country's economic growth and encouraged a corrupt ruling class to dominate national affairs.<sup>290</sup> The Guatemalan army's use of indiscriminate torture, rape, executions, and massacres was under the auspices of protecting the

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<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

<sup>288</sup> "Guatemala Military Dictator Testifies at His Genocide Trial." DW.COM,

<https://www.dw.com/en/guatemala-military-dictator-testifies-at-his-genocide-trial/a-16802537>.

<sup>289</sup> Guzaro, Tomás, and Terri Jacob McComb. *Escaping the Fire: How an Ixil Mayan Pastor Led His People out of a Holocaust during the Guatemalan Civil War*. 1st ed, University of Texas Press, 2010.

<sup>290</sup> Oettler, Anika. *Guatemala in the 1980s: A Genocide Turned into Ethnocide?* German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA), 2006. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep07565>.

country from an egregiously exaggerated socialist threat, strengthening the existing narrative of the “guerilla and elite; us and them.”<sup>291</sup> As Grandin argues, the “anti-communist zeal and racist hatred were refracted through counterinsurgent exactitude” in a logic that equated indigenous culture with subversion.<sup>292</sup> The military was seeped in hateful doctrine and discourse that built upon preconceived predispositions of racism and exclusivity towards the indigenous people. The perpetrators were internally incited, but the interplay of indoctrination, training, social pressures, and psychological manipulation appears to have contributed to the veritable initiation of the genocide. Specifically, the “overkill” practices in the genocide cannot be explained in simple terms of negative out-group perceptions, and suggest a collective sentiment of sadism, as highlighted by Dutton and Kerry. The pathology of the genocide and the psychological rationalizations for violence will be later explored in the discussion of Nazi Germany, but overall, the Guatemalan genocide deviates from the pattern of methodical, publicized propaganda that incited violence. The “Silent Holocaust” has similar managerial modules to Myanmar in the sense that the genocides were largely run by the military state. Yet I would argue the perpetrators of the Guatemalan genocide were in essence “ordered” to commit the genocide, and thus the veritable degree of incitement necessary for the violence to take place remains tenebrous. The cases are intrinsically different, with Myanmar’s utilization of social media as a platform for hate propaganda accelerating the trajectory of the genocide. But the existence of a vulnerable group excessively demonized by martial forces to the point of complete destruction is a shared feature with Guatemala, calling into question the specific conditions that

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<sup>291</sup> Perrigo, Billy. “The Devastating Effects of American Intervention in Guatemala.” *The Panoptic*, The Panoptic, 4 June 2018, [thepanoptic.co.uk/2016/11/19/american-intervention-guatemala/](http://thepanoptic.co.uk/2016/11/19/american-intervention-guatemala/).

<sup>292</sup> Ibid.



precipitate this totalitarian trend. The case of Yugoslavia will be explored next as it exemplifies a top-down trend of violence molded by a multifaceted compendium of factors.

## Chapter 5: Yugoslavia

The case of Bosnia raises important theoretical and practical questions concerning the role of politicians and intellectuals in promoting and inciting genocide violence. The Bosnian genocide refers to the atrocious crimes perpetrated by Bosnian Serb forces against Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) and Croatian civilians, resulting in the deaths of over 100,000 people in 1995. The genocide of the Bosniaks exemplifies “the biggest massacre on European soil since World War II.”<sup>293</sup>

The roots of the genocide can be traced back a decade prior, when the Balkan States of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Slovenia, and Macedonia became part of the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia. The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia led by Josip Broz Tito was one of the most liberal communist regimes.<sup>294</sup> Under Tito, several different ethnic and religious groups resided together under the unified course of a “greater Yugoslavia.”<sup>295</sup> In the 1960s and 1970s, Tito fashioned a system of “symmetrical federalism” which formalized equality among the six republics and Serbia’s two autonomous provinces through internal rules.<sup>296</sup> Enshrined in the 1974 constitutional ideals, this system promoted the weaker and less populous federal units at the expense of Serbia and Croatia. Serbia’s displeasure with its provinces’ autonomy and the promotion of minority identity would later become radicalized with Tito’s death in 1980.

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<sup>293</sup> Goethals, Coen van de Ven, Kasper. *Srebrenica: Playing Football on the Ruins of Genocide*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2016/7/11/srebrenica-playing-football-on-the-ruins-of-genocide>. Accessed 27 Apr. 2021.

<sup>294</sup> “Yugoslavia | History, Map, Flag, Breakup, & Facts.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Yugoslavia-former-federated-nation-1929-2003>.

<sup>295</sup> “Josip Broz Tito - Retrenchment of the 1970s.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Josip-Broz-Tito>. Accessed 27 Apr. 2021.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*

In the following years, the end of the Cold War and the decline of communism in Europe greatly altered the international political scene. Specifically, the reunification of Germany, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the departure of Czechoslovakia from Communist influence marked crucial geopolitical changes across the continent. Tito's death left a large political vacuum, and with growing nationalism among the differing republic, politicians began exploiting fiery rhetoric to set the Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks against each other. Leaders like Slobodan Milošević of Serbia and Franjo Tuđman of Croatia promulgated their platforms based on campaigns of fanatical propaganda and ethnonationalism.<sup>297</sup>

From 1991-1992, Slovenia, Croatia, and Macedonia declared their independence from Yugoslavia. When Bosnia attempted to secede, Serbia, under Milošević's leadership, initiated a crusade to "free" fellow Serbian Orthodox Christians living in Bosnia.<sup>298</sup> In 1991, 44% of Bosnia's population were Bosniaks, 31% were Serb, and 17% were Croatian.<sup>299</sup> An election in the late 1990s was held to elect a new president named Alija Izetbegovic as the new leader of the country. Being a Bosniak, Bosnian Serbs were irate with his ascension to power. In retaliation, Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and his Serbian Democratic Party set up their own Serbian National Assembly.<sup>300</sup> Bosniaks and Croats voted for veritable independence from Yugoslavia in a referendum in March 1992. The larger European community recognized an independent Bosnia on April 6<sup>th</sup>.<sup>301</sup> The same day, Serb militants opened fire on demonstrators in Sarajevo. The Serbs in Bosnia set out to "ethnically cleanse" the territory to create a Serbian-dominant

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<sup>297</sup> "Yugoslavia | History, Map, Flag, Breakup, & Facts"

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

<sup>300</sup> "Yugoslavia | History, Map, Flag, Breakup, & Facts"

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

state by systematically removing all Bosnian Muslims.<sup>302</sup> Together with Bosnian Serbs, Serbia attacked Bosniaks with former Yugoslavian military equipment and surrounded the capital city. Milošević moved to blockade all roads to the city and shut down the airport, isolating it from auxiliary attempts from neighboring states. This siege produced horrific violence and human rights abuses. Soon after, a soccer game in 1993 ended with the death of 15 people, Red Cross trucks were raided and destroyed, maternity wards were hit to kill mothers and newborns, and Sarajevans were forced into starvation.<sup>303</sup>

Serbian forces also attacked Bosniak-dominated towns in eastern Bosnia including Zvornik, Foča, and Visegrad to forcibly expel Bosniak civilians. Men were sent to concentration camps while women and girls were taken to “rape camps” to face repeated sexual violence by Serb paramilitary forces “in an estimated 20,000 rapes between 1992 and 1995 in Bosnia.”<sup>304</sup> Mass murder, and the destruction of Bosnian property and cultural sites, including the demolition of 13 mosques, were commonplace in the campaign against non-Serb civilians.<sup>305</sup> Furthermore, hundreds of concentration camps were established in which nearly 10,000 incarcerated Muslim men perished.<sup>306</sup> In 1993, the United Nations Security Council declared that the Muslim enclaves Srebrenica, Zepa, and Gorazde were to be safe areas protected by a contingent of UN peacekeepers. In July 1995, Bosnian Serb forces advanced on Srebrenica, overwhelming a Dutch peacekeeping battalion. About 23,000 women, children, and elderly were placed on Serbian buses and driven to Bosniak-held territory while men and boys were taken to various holding

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<sup>302</sup> *Bosnia, World Without Genocide - Making It Our Legacy*. <http://worldwithoutgenocide.org/genocides-and-conflicts/bosnia>. Accessed 27 Apr. 2021.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*

sites.<sup>307</sup> About 8,000 men and boys of “battle-age” were detained and slaughtered in football fields, meadows, warehouses, and schools.<sup>308</sup> The victims of the massacre had their arms and feet bound, and many of the bodies exhibited signs of mutilation. The executions continued for at least four days. Bosnian Serb forces were primarily responsible for the killings, but police units from Serbia were recorded killing several Bosniaks on video.

Though the international community did little to prevent the abuses committed against the Bosniaks, it did seek justice against high-level conspirators of the violence. The conflict ended in 1995 with U.S.-led negotiations in Dayton, Ohio. Since then, the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia at The Hague has charged more than 160 people, with Serbians and Bosnian Serbs facing a majority of the charge.<sup>309</sup> Former-President Milošević was formally charged with genocide, in part of his 29 offenses including complicity to commit genocide, crimes against humanity, and grave breaches of the Geneva Convention.<sup>310</sup> The indictment held that Milošević “planned, instigated ordered, aided and abetted the ethnic cleansing of the area, which frequently involved the murder, torture, sexual abuse and illegal incarceration of non-Serbs.”<sup>311</sup> Karadžić was tried in 2008 and charged with 11 counts, including crimes against humanity and genocide for his role in the siege of Sarajevo and the Srebrenica massacre.<sup>312</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> *Holocaust Museum Houston*. <https://hmh.org/library/research/genocide-in-bosnia-guide/>. Accessed 27 Apr. 2021.

<sup>308</sup> “Srebrenica Massacre | Facts, History, & Photos.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Srebrenica-massacre>. Accessed 27 Apr. 2021.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>310</sup> “Milosevic Charged with Genocide.” *The Guardian*, 24 Nov. 2001, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/nov/24/balkans.warcrimes>.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>312</sup> *Holocaust Museum Houston*.

Bosnian Serb military commander, General Mladic, was indicted by the ICTY for genocide as well, earning the nickname the “Butcher of Bosnia” during his trial process.<sup>313</sup>

The Bosnian genocide proved the cry of conscience “never again!” after World War II would be an only idealistic culmination of human optimism, as injunctions went unheeded for decades to come. Soldiers under Mladić’s command killed, brutalized, and starved unarmed Muslim and Croat prisoners, “deliberately shelled and sniped the civilian population of Sarajevo,” and systematically murdered several thousand Bosnian men and boys.<sup>314</sup> As Alphons Orié, the judge presiding over Mladić’s trial, “the crimes committed rank among the most heinous known to mankind.”<sup>315</sup> These crimes meet the threshold for intent and depravity. The logistics of the killings speak “to their premeditation” as scores of buses were necessary to move men and boys to execution sites, dozens of executioners willing to shoot unarmed prisoners were recruited, and remote sites along the Drina River were chosen as killing grounds before excavators dug mass graves for corpses.<sup>316</sup> Even though the ICJ did find that the massacre at Srebrenica constituted genocide, the Court found that it could not be conclusively proven that “these atrocities were carried out with the deliberate attempt to destroy Muslims as a group or in part.”<sup>317</sup> However, I will be referring to this case as genocide, based on the notion of the Serbs systemically killing a victim group, accompanied by other acts to deliberately cause mental or bodily harm to members, and physical and social harm to their heritage and culturally significant

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<sup>313</sup> Editors, History.com. “Bosnian Genocide.” *HISTORY*, <https://www.history.com/topics/1990s/bosnian-genocide>. Accessed 27 Apr. 2021

<sup>314</sup> Editors, History.com. “Bosnian Genocide.”

<sup>315</sup> Rohde, David. “Why Did Ratko Mladic Commit Genocide Against Bosnia’s Muslims?” *The New Yorker*, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/why-did-ratko-mladic-commit-genocide-against-bosnias-muslims>. Accessed 27 Apr. 2021.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> Hoare, Marko. “Genocide in the Former Yugoslavia Before and After Communism.” *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 62, no. 7, 2010, pp. 1193–1214., [www.jstor.org/stable/20787620](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20787620). Accessed 10 May 2021.

sights.<sup>318</sup> The Bosnian Serbs intended to destroy the Bosniaks in part with the slaughter of military-age men and stymie future generations of Bosniaks with the widespread rape of Muslim women. Marko Hoare discusses the specifications of genocidal nomenclature in his work. He describes the atrocities of the 1990s in the former Yugoslavia have “been largely responsible for the explosion of scholarly interest in the phenomena of genocide, ethnic cleansing, and mass murder.”<sup>319</sup> Yet scholars remain divided over what induced this extreme violence. The violence in Yugoslavia has frequently been portrayed as an expression of “ancient ethnic hatred.”<sup>320</sup> However, there is no academic authority that supports this straightforwardly racist declaration. There were “ideological fissures between Yugoslav people” that made genocidal violence possible, without predetermining it.<sup>321</sup> Hoare notes that class conflict underlays the divisions between Muslims and Orthodox Christians so that remnants of feudal class tensions became a national divisor between Muslims and Serbs. During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, new nation-states emerged “from the former Ottoman Empire and its borderlands, and in every case, these new nation-states were unable to bridge the ethnic-religious divide inherited from the Ottoman system.”<sup>322</sup> Likewise, the emergence of modern party politics in Bosnia meant that Serbs, Croats, and Muslims were divided between different political parties all vying for hegemony. The Bosnian genocide arose “out of the context of genuine power struggles between nationalities,” but was also linked to a conflict between states, not merely nationalities.<sup>323</sup> With some scholars blaming the genocidal violence on long-standing ethnic and religious differences compounded by deteriorating economic and political situational factors under the leadership of

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<sup>318</sup> “United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect.”

<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

charismatic political leaders, others believe “media have arguably been the most destructive weapon in the wars of Yugoslav dissolution.”<sup>324</sup> Christopher Bennet, the Director of International Crisis Group’s Balkan Project noted “it is said in the former Yugoslavia that all victims died twice: first on television and then in reality.”<sup>325</sup> During Yugoslavia’s 1990 conflict, official Serbian propaganda reached “more than 3.5 million people every night,” which suggests its effectiveness as the public did not have alternative sources for information.<sup>326</sup> The pictures below show a war report published by *Večernje novosti*, a Serbian daily tabloid newspaper, supposedly from Bosnia. The report is illustrated with an 1888 painting (right) by Uroš Predić, presented as an actual photograph with the headline “A Serbian boy whose whole family was killed by Bosnian Muslims.”<sup>327</sup>



**Fig. 7.** Serbian war-report published by *Večernje novosti* from: Kurspahić, Kemal. *Prime Time Crime: Balkan Media in War and Peace*. United States Institute of Peace Press, 2003.

<sup>324</sup> *Bosnia - How Yugoslavia’s Destroyers Harnessed The Media* | *The World’s Most Wanted Man* | *FRONTLINE* | PBS. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/karadzic/bosnia/media.html>. Accessed 27 Apr. 2021.

<sup>325</sup> *Bosnia - How Yugoslavia’s Destroyers Harnessed The Media*.

<sup>326</sup> *Bosnia - How Yugoslavia’s Destroyers Harnessed The Media* | *The World’s Most Wanted Man*

<sup>327</sup> Kurspahić, Kemal. *Prime Time Crime: Balkan Media in War and Peace*. United States Institute of Peace Press, 2003.



In Ayele Gessese's *Ethnic Nationalists Abuse of Media: Lessons of Yugoslavia and Rwanda for Ethiopia*, he conducts a qualitative study on frame analysis on ethnic mobilization. While Gessese addresses that numerous studies have explored the triggering and amplifying the role of politicians in inter-ethnic conflicts of the country (Beklau, 2017; Dagnachew, 2018; and Yusuf, 2019); few studies truly explore how this ethnic mobilization is done by "extreme ethnic nationalists" by using the media.<sup>328</sup> With the mobilization frames developed by Desrosiers (2011), Gessese notes that crisis frames are utilized for consensus-building fueled by fear.<sup>329</sup> Likewise, the "moral superiority frame" aimed to dehumanize the other group was an integral component of the Serbian media campaign.<sup>330</sup> Unverified stories were presented as facts by Serbian media. For example, media stories stated, "Bosnian Muslims were feeding Serb children to animals at the Sarajevo zoo."<sup>331</sup> He posits that the mainstream media, including television and print, were abused and framed intolerance, fear, and instigated animosity to create the feeling of threat among Yugoslav nations. Serbian media framed other ethnic groups as "Ustashe hordes, Vatican fascists, Mujahidin fighters, fundamentalist warriors of Jihad, and Albanian terrorists."<sup>332</sup> Gessese concludes the repetitive use of pejorative descriptions became part of the common language and Milošević "used Serbian state media to create an atmosphere of fear and hatred among Serbs by spreading exaggerated and false messages of ethnically-based attacks by Bosnian Muslims against Serb people," and is convinced hate media expanded a spiral of

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<sup>328</sup> Gessese, Ayele Anawetie. "Ethnic Nationalists Abuse of Media: Lessons of Yugoslavia and Rwanda for Ethiopia." *European Scientific Journal ESJ*, vol. 16, no. 16, June 2020. DOI.org (Crossref), doi:10.19044/esj.2020.v16n16p98.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid.

aggression and reprisals.<sup>333</sup> However, Frohardt and Temin (2003) argue there was no strong evidence provided that determines the direct impact of media.<sup>334</sup> Instead, the media was partially successful in triggering and widening conflicts by transmitting “imminent” threats from conflicting groups. They argue the genocide was incited by ethnic nationalists with a top-down approach, utilizing the military as a force for destruction. I agree that Milošević and other generals commanded troops at Sarajevo and Srebrenica to attack and destroy Bosniak groups. Though in the case of Bosnia, it seems that the media’s culpability relates more to promoting a collective of bystanders to passively allow state forces to kill Bosniaks, as Arne Vetlesen states in the *Journal of Peace Research*. Citing Paul Ricoeur’s insight, “not acting is still acting.”<sup>335</sup> In short, inaction means complicity as genocide is a collective action.<sup>336</sup>

But in recalibrating the focus to the role of hate media in inciting genocide, Vetlesen indicates that we see that intellectuals form a crucial group in the “activities amounting to such incitement.”<sup>337</sup> By virtue of the popular impact exerted by prominent academics and writers, “they carry a major responsibility for creating what be deemed a genocidal atmosphere.”<sup>338</sup> In this sense, the 1986 *Memorandum*, conceived under the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts, ideologically prepared for the fallout from Yugoslavia’s fragmentation, but I would not amount this to incitement paralleling the RTLM in Rwanda or Facebook in Myanmar. The *Memorandum* was a plea for safeguarding Serbian autonomy and integrity “in times of crisis, regionalization, and disintegration in Yugoslavia.”<sup>339</sup> Headed by famous novelist Dobrica Cosic, the document

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<sup>333</sup> Ibid.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid.

<sup>336</sup> Vetlesen, Arne Johan. “Genocide: A Case for the Responsibility of the Bystander.” *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 37, no. 4, 2000, pp. 519–532. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/424645](http://www.jstor.org/stable/424645). Accessed 10 May 2021.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

was drawn up by 16 prominent academics. *Memorandum* was leaked in 1986 in Belgrade newspapers, causing a “political earthquake in the whole of Yugoslavia.”<sup>340</sup> Specifically, the Praxis group dovetailed with Yugoslavian ethnic-nationalist politics as headed by Milošević. The group was composed mainly of philosophers and social theorists. Praxis “went along with the tide drummed-up anti-Muslim frenzy in Milošević-led Serbia” and “channeled the tide” to contribute to an ethnic-nationalist ideology preparing for the subsequent carnage.<sup>341</sup> So too, Bogdan Denitch writes that “much of the intellectual underpinning and respectability for the nationalist developments among Serb intellectuals and academics came from the highest levels of society.”<sup>342</sup>

Examining other sources of incitement in Yugoslavia, an unlikely divisive driver may be frenzied nationalism streamlined through football fans. Serbian anthropologist Ivan Djordjevic studied this phenomenon in his book *An Anthropologist among the Football Fans*. He notes “you have hooligans everywhere, but I have not seen anywhere, except Croatia, where fans have as much political importance as Serbia.”<sup>343</sup> Serbian hooligans are a “group for pressure, a paramilitary formation that does certain tasks when needed by politicians.”<sup>344</sup> Some of these hooligans were recruited to fight during the 1990s war by paramilitary chief Zeljko Arkan Raznatovic, who led Red Star Belgrade ultras group, the Delijfe. Additionally, many were present at the violent showdown between Red Star and Dinamo Zagreb’s Bad Blue Boys in 1990 at the Maksimir stadium. The fighting at the match “has taken on iconic status for the Blue

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<sup>340</sup> Ibid.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

<sup>343</sup> “Croatian and Serbian Hooligans: Football Foes Share Love of Hate.” *Balkan Insight*, 19 June 2020, <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/06/19/croatian-and-serbian-hooligans-football-foes-share-love-of-hate/>.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid.

Boys,” who see it as the first clash of war which broke out the following year as Yugoslavia collapsed.<sup>345</sup>

Dario Brentin from the University of Graz in Austria, an expert on sport and nationalism in Yugoslavia, describes the match as taking on a larger meaning for the social memory of Croatia and Yugoslavia. The game was important because it “further radicalized society at the time,” creating an “us and them narrative” for Serbian nationalists.<sup>346</sup> Specifically, this “sphere of hooliganism” encouraged radical Serbians to pursue increasingly aggressive actions to preserve a Serbian homeland for the survival of their state.<sup>347</sup> The match was a turning point in that Serbians realized “Yugoslavia really could collapse.”<sup>348</sup> This entailed destroying the fifth column of Bosnian Serbs. While the precise impact of the riot on the conflict remains open to question, the incident was crystallized as an almost “mythical” conspiracy in the case of Yugoslavia and surely provides insight into the cultural culmination of incitement in Serbia for hate speech “on the terraces has deep political roots in the Balkans.”<sup>349</sup> The rise of nationalism in Yugoslavia’s final years “was mirrored in football stadiums throughout the former unified state,” and stadiums later became arenas for politicians and polarized nationalists to promote their ideas.<sup>350</sup>

This theory has gained traction in more recent years, as Hooligans have been active in clashes with police, human rights activists, and LGBT campaigners since the October 2000 revolution. Last year, hate speech from nationalist fans made a comeback, with fans displaying

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<sup>345</sup> “1990 Football Riot Becomes National Myth in Croatia.” *Balkan Insight*, 13 May 2016, <https://balkaninsight.com/2016/05/13/1990-football-riot-remains-croatia-s-national-myth-05-12-2016/>.

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>347</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>348</sup> “Croatian and Serbian Hooligans: Football Foes Share Love of Hate.”

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*

flares and banners with derogatory slogans in Croatia.<sup>351</sup> Juraj Vrdoljak, a football writer in Croatia, reported that “unfortunately, hate speech is a common occurrence at football games and is most often directed against various minorities.”<sup>352</sup> The fact that football fans continue to spread political messages that come “from the top” in Croatia and Serbia demonstrates the potency of political messaging in the sports arena, suggesting this sector could have served to incite a degree of violence in Yugoslavia.

John Mueller also contributes an alternative approach to explain the genocidal violence in Yugoslavia. He argues that the concept of “ethnic warfare” may be severely misguided, insofar as it is taken to imply a war of all against all and neighbor against neighbor, and an ethnic group becomes the ardent, dedicated, and murderous enemy of everyone in another group.<sup>353</sup> Mueller states the conflict in Bosnia was spawned not so much by the “convulsive surging of ancient hatreds or by frenzies whipped up by demagogic politicians and the media,” as by “ministrations of “small bands of opportunistic marauders recruited by political leaders and operating under their general guidance.”<sup>354</sup> In accordance with the aforementioned “hooligans,” he states that many of the participants were drawn from street gangs or bands of soccer fans. Others were criminals released from prison for the purpose. This participation was required because despite years of “supposedly influential nationalist propaganda and centuries of supposedly pent-up ethnic hatred,” the Yugoslav army disintegrated early in the war and refused to partake in combat.<sup>355</sup> Mueller calls the mechanism of violence in the former Yugoslavia “remarkably

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<sup>351</sup> Ibid

<sup>352</sup> Ibid.

<sup>353</sup> Mueller, John. “The Banality of “Ethnic Conflict.”” *Quarterly Journal: International Security*, vol. 25. no. 1. (Summer 2000): 42-70.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid.

banal.”<sup>356</sup> Rather than reflecting deep, historic passions and hatreds, the violence seems to have been the result “of a situation in which common, opportunistic, sadistic, and often distinctly non-ideological marauders were recruited and permitted free rein by political authority,” that both permitted and encouraged the genocide of Bosniaks.<sup>357</sup> He cites the shallowness of militant nationalism in Yugoslavia to dispel claims that the history and memory of the Balkans were a multiplier effect for violence. While he acknowledges politicians may have initiated the war and may “have whipped up a fair amount of hatred,” the effective murderous core of wards were not “hordes composed of ordinary citizens ripped loose from their repression or incited into violence against their neighbors.”<sup>358</sup> Rather, it was groups of well-armed thugs and bullies encouraged by official security services and local authorities that created a carnivalesque atmosphere of drunken looting, destruction, and violence. Moreover, he rejects Samuel Huntington’s view that the wars and genocide in Yugoslavia were major “fault line” wars between clashing civilizations and Kaldor’s depiction of Bosnia as an archetypal example of violence derived from a paroxysm of civilianization angst and frenzied nationalism in his book, *The Remnants of War*.<sup>359</sup>

Mueller’s work directly contrasts Christopher Bennett who called the “media a key detonator of the war” and the following genocide.<sup>360</sup> Bennett extrapolates the media “served as a conveyor belt for the views of authority.”<sup>361</sup> While I agree the media deliberately fanned the “flames of national hatred” and bolstered support for the stances taken by leadership, I disagree that the media must bear an extreme and “heavy responsibility for the carnage.”<sup>362</sup> When

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<sup>356</sup> Ibid.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid.

<sup>359</sup> Mueller, John E. *The Remnants of War*. Cornell University Press, 2004.

<sup>360</sup> *Bosnia - How Yugoslavia’s Destroyers Harnessed the Media*.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid.

<sup>362</sup> Ibid.

looking at the nexus of propaganda, hate speech, and mass killings, Anthony Oberschall's content analysis on behalf of the ICTY in the Vojislav Šešelj trial records inflammatory ethnic rhetoric used in speeches, interviews, news articles, and broadcast appearances.<sup>363</sup> Šešelj founded and headed the Serb Assembly which recruited and indoctrinated volunteers for the Bosnian wars. He was indicted at the ICTY for stimulating violence against non-Serbs. Oberschall outlines Šešelj's Serb nationalist narrative characterized by xenophobic nationalism massively relying on "stereotypes, threat discourse, falsehoods, fear-inducing discourse, victimhood, and other propaganda techniques" to appeal to the emotions, deceive, and manipulate.<sup>364</sup> Similarly, former Polish Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki wrote, "the media has served as an effective tool for the dominant political forces in formulating a new agenda based on Serbian nationalism and in fomenting hatred against other nationality groups in the former Yugoslavia."<sup>365</sup>

Taking these analyses into account, along with the fact that Milošević controlled the media organs of former Yugoslavia, I believe hate media did play a role in inciting the Bosnian genocide. However, I am wary to unconditionally assign this responsibility. Investigating the composition of the *genocidaires* and scholarly work suggesting incitement was sustained through frenetic provocation at sporting events and Milošević's notorious rallies distorts the common perception that hate media in Yugoslavia catalyzed existing ethnic tensions to incite genocide. The potential for rallies and psychological pressures to incite collectives to genocidal violence will be explored in the next chapter on the Holocaust, but as a corrective to conventional wisdom, I conclude that hate media was a factor in this case. Nonetheless, identifying hate media

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<sup>363</sup> Oberschall, Anthony. *Propaganda, Hate Speech and Mass Killings*.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid.

as the central and focal cause of genocide does not seem to hold infallible weight when considering the more complex aspects of this case.



The Holocaust has become the paradigm against which recent genocides have been considered —Germany’s systematic, state-sponsored persecution campaign resulted in the mass murder of over 6 million Jews.<sup>366</sup> These deaths represented two-thirds of European Jewry and one-third of all world Jewry.<sup>367</sup> The word Holocaust derives from the Greek *holokauston*, a translation of the Hebrew word *’olah*, meaning a burnt sacrifice offered whole to God.<sup>368</sup> Semantically, this word was chosen and gained wide usage because in the “ultimate manifestation of the Nazi killing program, the extermination camps, the bodies of victims were consumed whole in crematoria or open fires.”<sup>369</sup> Scholarly research on the Holocaust has been carried out in many disciplines and is constantly progressing. The library of Yad Vashem, Israel’s research and memorial institution for the Holocaust has grown in collection with about 4,000 titles every year.<sup>370</sup> Thousands of scholars have conducted historiographical overviews of the interpretational debates, cognitive schools, developmental stages, and the political, social, and cultural impacts of the Holocaust. As such, international historians and theorists have adopted diverging positions on specific precipitators, causes, and representations of this event. As the Hungarian writer and Holocaust survivor, Imre Kertesz wrote “we may form a realistic view of the Holocaust, this incomprehensible and confusing reality, only with the help of our aesthetic imagination.”<sup>371</sup> This chapter aims to analyze the inciting factors of the Holocaust from

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<sup>366</sup> History.com Editors. “The Holocaust.” *History.com*, A&E Television Networks, 14 Oct. 2009, [www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/the-holocaust](http://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/the-holocaust).

<sup>367</sup> *An Introductory History of the Holocaust*. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/an-introductory-history-of-the-holocaust>. Accessed 10 May 2021.

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>369</sup> “What Is the Origin of the Term Holocaust?” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/story/what-is-the-origin-of-the-term-holocaust>. Accessed 10 May 2021.

<sup>370</sup> Professor Dan Michman, review of *Debates on the Holocaust*, (review no. 1160) <https://reviews.history.ac.uk/review/1160>

<sup>371</sup> Braun, Robert. “The Holocaust and Problems of Historical Representation.” *History and Theory*, vol. 33, no. 2, 1994, pp. 172–197. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/2505383](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2505383). Accessed 28 Apr. 2021.

a macro-oriented perspective on the temporal and spatial conditions of pre-war Germany. Much of the popular literature cites the Nazi party effectively using propaganda to facilitate persecution, war, and ultimately genocide. The Nazi media machine skillfully utilized hate media to further dehumanize the Jewish population, mobilize the German population to support its wars, and secure the acquiescence of millions as bystanders. Yet, hate media did not exclusively incite the Holocaust. I will argue it was Hitler's charismatic leadership, a culture of military obedience and martial fervor, and concurrent economic vulnerabilities that incited the most shocking and disgraceful event of the twentieth century. As he presaged in 1924, Adolf Hitler noted "propaganda is a truly terrible weapon in the hands of an expert."<sup>372</sup> The Nazis skillfully used their "terrible weapon" in the course of their genocidal campaign but hate media did not function independently in terms of igniting the Holocaust.<sup>373</sup>

Tracking Hitler's rise to power, the National Socialist German Workers' Party emerged from the turmoil that followed Germany's defeat in World War I. Inflation of monstrous proportions exploded as commodity prices rose between 15 and 28 times. In addition, Germany was forced to pay reparations to the Allies, German territory was gifted to France, Italy, and Poland, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire was broken up.<sup>374</sup> The implications of these truncations for the German economy were enormous. Consequently, the government was weak, lacking electoral and financial backing as well as prestige.<sup>375</sup> Additionally, Germany was

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<sup>372</sup> "State of Deception - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum." *Google Arts & Culture*, <https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/state-of-deception/MgJiSSb7oRR7Jg>. Accessed 10 May 2021.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>374</sup> Boesler, Matthew. "Weimar: The Truth About History's Most Infamous Hyperinflation Horror Story." *Business Insider*, <https://www.businessinsider.com/weimar-germany-hyperinflation-explained-2013-9>. Accessed 10 May 2021.

<sup>375</sup> *Voice/Vision Holocaust Survivor Oral History Archive*. <https://holocaust.umd.umich.edu/>. Accessed 10 May 2021.

saddled with sole responsibility for starting the war, undermining the pride of the national psyche. The German political scene that emerged from the wreckage “was wildly volatile.”<sup>376</sup>

Anti-Semitism dates back nearly as far as Jewish history. In the ancient empires of Babylonia, Greece, and Rome, Jews were criticized and persecuted for their efforts to remain a separate cultural group, rather than assimilate into the cultural and social customs of their conquerors.<sup>377</sup> With the rise of Christianity, anti-Semitism spread throughout Europe. Jews were accused of hematophagy and vilified for their religious and economic practices.

Historically there has been an enduring tendency to link capitalism and money with the Jew. In early modern Europe, Jews were pushed into financial roles by a church that barred Christians from lending money for interest. In a feudal society in which Jews could neither be “peasants nor lords, there was no other niche available.”<sup>378</sup> Psychologically, Christian society was able to shed “sinful aspects of itself” and project the pursuit of wealth and profit to the hated other: the Jew.<sup>379</sup> The archetype of the “avaricious Jew” acquired a place in the accepted culture of societal crisis calling for a scapegoat.<sup>380</sup> Early cartoons of the 20<sup>th</sup> century depict grotesque caricatures of “rich, fat Jewish bankers controlling the globe, sometimes rendered as repulsive, multi-legged, insect-like monsters.”<sup>381</sup> Jews were mocked for being too rich and too poor, both for being beggars and bankers, peddlers, and plutocrats. Unsurprisingly, the lure of antisemitism

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<sup>376</sup> Boesler, Matthew. “Weimar: The Truth About History’s Most Infamous Hyperinflation Horror Story.”

<sup>377</sup> Editors, History com. “Anti-Semitism.” *HISTORY*, <https://www.history.com/topics/holocaust/anti-semitism>. Accessed 10 May 2021.

<sup>378</sup> “For 2,000 Years We’ve Linked Jews to Money. No Wonder Antisemitism Is so Ingrained | Jonathan Freedland.” *The Guardian*, 9 Mar. 2019, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/mar/09/jews-money-antisemitism-judas-shylock-capitalism>.

<sup>379</sup> Editors, History com. “Anti-Semitism.”

<sup>380</sup> “For 2,000 Years We’ve Linked Jews to Money. No Wonder Antisemitism Is so Ingrained | Jonathan Freedland.”

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*

was especially attractive for the economically devastated Germany. The consul in Frankfurt described a disturbing trend of anti-Semitism on the rise as early as 1922:

It is no exaggeration to say that cultured German men and women of high social standing openly advocate the political murder of Jews as a legitimate weapon of defence. They admit, it is true, that the murder of Rathenau was of doubtful advantage ... but they say there are others who must go so that Germany shall be saved. Even in Frankfurt, with a prepondering Jewish population, the movement is so strong that Jews of social standing are being asked to resign their appointments on the boards of companies.<sup>382</sup>

Post-war Germany never fully recovered from its economic decimation. Democracy virtually collapsed with the Great Depression in 1929; millions of Germans found the simple and concrete messages of Nazi propaganda appealing in times of hardship and political instability. But to say that inflation truly caused Hitler is to wander “into the quagmires of irrelevant historical analogy.”<sup>383</sup> Although, the political paralysis brought on by the Great Depression paved the way for Hitler to run for the German presidency, widespread unemployment in the early 1930s gave Hitler the votes he needed to rise to power. In 1932, the Nazis won nearly 40% of the seats in the German Reichstag.<sup>384</sup> In 1933, Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany. Many voters resonated with Hitler’s extreme nationalism, including young Germans who wanted to restore the country’s lost territory and military might. Within less than six months of his election, German democracy was destroyed. The government became a one-party dictatorship and basic civil rights were suspended. Police authorities established concentration camps to

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<sup>382</sup> Boesler, Matthew. “Weimar: The Truth About History’s Most Infamous Hyperinflation Horror Story.”

<sup>383</sup> Ibid.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid.

imprison “enemies of the state” and the regime began implementing anti-Jewish policies.<sup>385</sup>

When Hitler came to power, Germany was a world leader in mass communications, producing more newspapers than any other European nation and pioneering developments in radio and television.

Hitler soon capitalized on these communicative capabilities. He streamlined a regular propaganda assault on Jews with the weekly Nazi newspaper *Der Stürmer*. At the bottom of the front page of each issue, the paper proclaimed, “The Jews are our misfortune!” in bold lettering.<sup>386</sup> The paper invoked old cartoonish personifications of Jews with “hooked noses and ape-like” features.<sup>387</sup> Likewise, the paper published lurid, false tales of Jewish ritual murder, financial malfeasance, and lascivious proclivities. By 1938, about half a million copies were distributed weekly.<sup>388</sup>

Next, the Nazis began the “Aryanization” of Germany, in which Jews were dismissed from civil service, their businesses liquidated, and professionals stripped of their clients.<sup>389</sup> The Nuremberg Laws of 1935 introduced several anti-Semitic policies and defined who was Jewish based on ancestral lineages. Thus, Jews became routine targets for stigmatization and persecution. Pogroms of street violence were commonplace, eventually exploding into a night of coordinated violence called Kristallnacht in November 1938.<sup>390</sup> More than 250 synagogues were burned, and 7,000 Jewish businesses were looted in two days.<sup>391</sup> Notably, Nazi policies towards Jews before Kristallnacht were antagonistic but primarily non-violent. Kristallnacht was a

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<sup>385</sup> Ibid.

<sup>386</sup> *An Introductory History of the Holocaust*.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid.

<sup>389</sup> Editors, History.com. “Anti-Semitism.”

<sup>390</sup> Ibid.

<sup>391</sup> Ibid.

decisive turning point. After the incident, conditions became progressively worse and the Nazi plan to exterminate the Jewish people took shape.<sup>392</sup>

Nazi propaganda served bilateral functions for the party: pushing their anti-Semitic agenda, but also forging unity and allegiance under Hitler's cult of personality. Propagandists cultivated his public image to radiate strength and a "single-minded devotion to Germany."<sup>393</sup> He was depicted as a young, dynamic statesman who was rescuing the nation from political divisiveness and rehabilitating German self-confidence and stability. The importance of Nazi programming cannot be discounted, as "spectacle was like oxygen for the Nazis."<sup>394</sup> Germans were expected to pay allegiance to Der Führer in quasi-religious demonstrations of the raised-arm Nazi salute and exclamation "Heil Hitler!"<sup>395</sup> Photographs from Hitler's Nazi Party rallies capture grand "Wagnerian fantasies of adoring and heiling troops."<sup>396</sup> Rallies and other Nazi events fed the regime's vast propaganda machine "and spread its demonic dream."<sup>397</sup> Because the nation was eager to reclaim its sense of self, I believe its confidence was rallied by Hitler's visage and his "seemingly invincible men aching to right wrongs."<sup>398</sup> His expertly rendered photographic propaganda is a testament to the persuasive nature of collective cultures of obedience. Non-compliance with these public displays signaled dissension and was interpreted as criticism of the regime, serving as grounds for imprisonment.<sup>399</sup> The Nazis further inculcated the

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<sup>392</sup> Ibid.

<sup>393</sup> "State of Deception - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum."

<sup>394</sup> "See the Story Behind The Photo That Captured the Nazi Regime." *100 Photographs | The Most Influential Images of All Time*, <http://100photos.time.com/photos/heinrich-hoffmann-hitler-nazi-party-rally>. Accessed 10 May 2021.

<sup>395</sup> "State of Deception - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum."

<sup>396</sup> "See the Story Behind The Photo That Captured the Nazi Regime."

<sup>397</sup> Ibid.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid.

masses with their ideology by recruiting tens of thousands of students and youths to pledge their allegiance directly to Hitler.



**Fig. 8.** Nazi propaganda depicting Hitler Youth organization from: Blakemore, Erin. “How the Hitler Youth Turned a Generation of Kids Into Nazis.” *HISTORY.com*

In *Evil Transformation: Social-Psychological Processes Underlying Genocide and Mass Killing*, Bilewicz and Vollhardt explain how media manipulates the socio-political situation of the victims to encourage violence, with a focus on the Holocaust. The authors leverage previous psychological research to address cognitive, moral, and motivational changes to outline how conflict evolves into genocide.<sup>400</sup> First, the victims must be classified and distinguished from the

<sup>400</sup> Bilewicz, Michal, and Johanna Ray Vollhardt. “Evil Transformation: Social-Psychological Processes Underlying Genocide and Mass Killing.” *Social Psychology of Social Problems the Intergroup Context*, edited by Agnieszka Golec De Zavaka and Aleksandra Cichocka, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, pp. 280–290.

rest of society, an initial step taken by the Third Reich. Following the Nazi seizure of power in 1933, Hitler established a Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, headed by Joseph Goebbels. With the Ministry's oversight, the anti-Semitic Nazi message was publicized to a wider German audience through art, music, films, books, and the press.<sup>401</sup> The party classified Jews as an 'alien race,' poisoning the purity of the German state. Jews were portrayed as intrinsically different from their neighbors. This hate media was also carefully tailored to its audience. Propagandists hired professional graphic artists to create eye-catching posters playing up common prejudicial perceptions with crude "caricatures of Jewish stereotypes."<sup>402</sup> Nazi films illustrated Jews as "subhuman creatures" infiltrating the pure Aryan society.<sup>403</sup> *The Eternal Jew* (1940), directed by Fritz Hippler depicted Jews as wandering parasites consumed by sex, money, and sin.<sup>404</sup> *The Triumph of the Will* (1935) by Leni Riefenstahl glorified Hitler and his Nazi party, while the *Festival of Beauty* (1938) promoted national pride and noted the successes of the Nazi regime at the Olympics.<sup>405</sup>

The authors cite the Behaviors from the Intergroup effect and Stereotypes map model that specifies contents of "stereotypes, emotions and discriminatory tendencies towards outgroup members" coordinate functionally and systematically.<sup>406</sup> In the early stages of genocide, stereotypes contribute to an essentialist view of social groups and manifest themselves in hate propaganda. The in-group is perceived as a coherent entity linked by a common biological

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<sup>401</sup> "Nazi Propaganda." *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, [encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/nazi-propaganda](http://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/nazi-propaganda).

<sup>402</sup> Ibid.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid.

<sup>406</sup> Bilewicz, Michal, and Johanna Ray Vollhardt. "Evil Transformation: Social-Psychological Processes Underlying Genocide and Mass Killing."



essence while the outgroup is perceived as inferior and suspicious.<sup>407</sup> This belief further designates the victims of genocide and spatially segregates them from society. In pre-war Germany, Jews were well integrated into society — they spoke the language, worked alongside German citizens, and embraced their nationality.<sup>408</sup> Thus, German propaganda was specifically created to highlight Jews as a fifth column and amplify fearful stereotypes. Bilewicz and Vollhardt posit stereotypes appear in “almost all genocides” and are often “disseminated through propaganda and other forms of hate speech,” which helps explain the Nazi’s primary steps to initiate the destruction of Jewish groups.<sup>409</sup>

Likewise, both Diane Kohl and Randall Bytwerk noted German propaganda was crafted to separate Jews and Germans into different races, further developing the premise that Jews were a dangerous outgroup seeking to destroy the fabric of German society. Nazi propaganda was based on traditional German values and incorporated then-contemporary psychological and biological theories.<sup>410</sup> After analyzing speeches by Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels, Kohl notes Nazi propaganda was aimed at “increasing in-group cohesion, creating fear towards others, and legitimized the treatment of non-human Jews.”<sup>411</sup> Nazi propaganda also incorporated economic themes in which Jews were blamed for high inflation rates and unemployment. Capitalizing on existent anti-Semitism, propaganda was used to help German citizens feel less helpless in the post-WWI economic crisis. German citizens were attracted to this anti-Semitic

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<sup>407</sup> Bilewicz, Michal, and Johanna Ray Vollhardt. “Evil Transformation: Social-Psychological Processes Underlying Genocide and Mass Killing.”

<sup>408</sup> “Jewish Communities of Prewar Germany.” *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, [encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/jewish-communities-of-prewar-germany](http://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/jewish-communities-of-prewar-germany).

<sup>409</sup> Bilewicz, Michal, and Johanna Ray Vollhardt. “*Evil Transformation: Social-Psychological Processes Underlying Genocide and Mass Killing*.”

<sup>410</sup> Kohl, Diane. “The Presentation of ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ in Nazi Propaganda.” *Psychology & Society*, vol. 4, 2011, pp. 7–26.

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid.*

explanation, as “people in unstable societal circumstances are attracted to ideologies that offer a restoration of control.”<sup>412</sup> As Jews were already classified as an outgroup, German citizens who abjured their deteriorating economic options after WWI likely embraced feelings of relative economic deprivation in comparison to “wealthy Jews.”<sup>413</sup> German propaganda instrumentalized perceptions of humiliation to psychologically motivate followers to support the destructive process of genocide.<sup>414</sup> The propaganda campaign first created an atmosphere tolerant of violence against Jews, then stoked existing fears to incite active hatred. Once the genocide began, Bytwerk noted the Nazis justified their extermination of Jews by claiming they were defending themselves against Jewish plans to destroy Germany and its population. Bytwerk recognized this justification was more prevalent in public meetings and speeches. The mass media provided a complementary role to normalize the theory that Jewish were engaged in an international conspiracy to first destroy Germany and take over the world.<sup>415</sup> In addition, both Bilewicz and Bytwerk touch on the importance of the *volksgemeinschaft*, the idea of a united German national purpose based on a racially homogenous society.<sup>416</sup> As a biologically inferior race threatening to destabilize their way of life, hate media emphasized Jews needed to be eradicated from German society.<sup>417</sup> In the wake of the financial crisis and a humiliating loss in WWI, Germans were especially wary of enemy outgroups. The Third Reich’s propaganda offered a way to regain German pride and safety at the expense of Jewish lives. Overall, Kohl and Bytwerk’s work describes how Nazi propaganda led to over 400 anti-Jewish decrees and

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<sup>412</sup> Bilewicz, Michal, and Johanna Ray Vollhardt. “*Evil Transformation: Social-Psychological Processes Underlying Genocide and Mass Killing.*”

<sup>413</sup> Ibid.

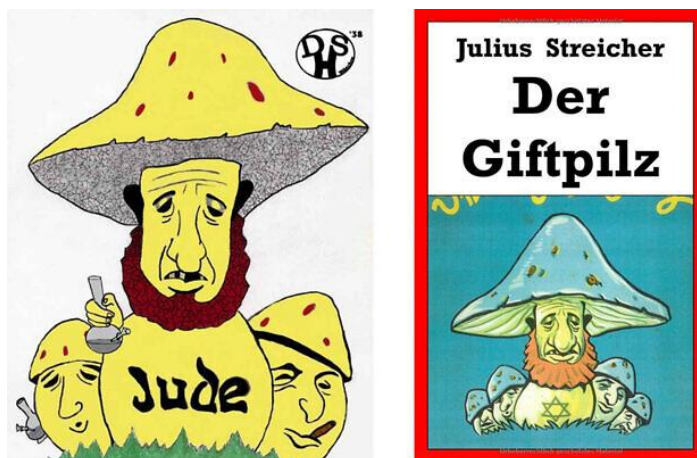
<sup>414</sup> Ibid.

<sup>415</sup> Bytwerk, Randall L. “The Argument for Genocide in Nazi Propaganda.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, vol. 91, no. 1, Feb. 2005, pp. 37–62. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, doi:10.1080/00335630500157516.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid.

regulations that transformed Jews into true outcasts.<sup>418</sup> Nazi hate propaganda inspired anti-Semitic legislation and helped to pave the way for more radical persecution of Jews, however; hate media alone did not incite the Holocaust.



**Fig. 9.** The covers of anti-Semitic children's books from: *Der Giftpilz*.  
<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/der-giftpilz>.

From 1933-1939, Nazi Germany unabashedly pursued anti-Jewish policies and ramped up hate media publications. However, some shunned this openly incendiary propaganda; many Germans opted for passive discrimination against Jews.<sup>419</sup> In fact, in 1941 many Germans in fact sympathized with their Jewish neighbors when ordered to wear the yellow Star of David on their clothing, according to the *State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda*.<sup>420</sup> Looking at Nazi propaganda in the later war years, success on the front brought millions of conquered Jews into German control. This development was important in the trajectory of inducing a Jewish genocide across Europe. Nazi policy shifted from mere expulsion to murder as the Ministry of

<sup>418</sup> "Anti-Jewish Legislation in Prewar Germany." *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, [encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/anti-jewish-legislation-in-prewar-germany](https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/anti-jewish-legislation-in-prewar-germany).

<sup>419</sup> Ibid.

<sup>420</sup> "State of Deception - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum."

Propaganda promoted the “mythic Jewish enemy” that aimed at world domination and the enslavement of non-Jews.<sup>421</sup> They buttressed Hitler’s echo chamber of thought, blaming the Jews for initiating the war and clandestinely preparing for German annihilation. In terms of incitement, Nazi hate media helped create a climate of indifference, hate, and fear that made possible the murder of millions of Jews.

While I believe hate media did not directly incite Germans to personally murder their neighbors nor join the militarized extermination campaign, it is essential to note that Article III of the UN Genocide Convention states that a number of related acts committed in furtherance of Article II (genocide) shall also be punishable.<sup>422</sup> This includes “direct and public incitement to commit genocide,” as defined in Article III(c). Article III(c) was the product of the “intellectual and legal foundation laid by the International Military Tribunal in the trial of Julius Streicher.”<sup>423</sup> Streicher was convicted for incitement to commit crimes of an international dimension with his virulently anti-Semitic articles in *Der Stürmer*. The Nuremberg Tribunal found that:

Streicher’s incitement to murder and extermination, at the time when Jews in the East were being killed under the most horrible conditions, clearly constitutes persecution on political and racial grounds in connection with War Crimes, as defined by the Charter, and constitutes a Crime against Humanity.<sup>424</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> Ibid.

<sup>422</sup> Gordon, Gregory S., “The Propaganda Prosecutions at Nuremberg: The Origin of Atrocity Speech Law and the Touchstone for Normative Evolution.” January 16, 2017. Loyola of Los Angeles International and Comparative Law Review, Vol. 39, No. 1, 2017, The Chinese University of Hong Kong Faculty of Law Research Paper No. 2017-06, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2958011>

<sup>423</sup> Ibid.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid

Professor Gregory Gordon notes Streicher's inclusion in the trial shows an early attempt at prosecuting incitement to racial hatred and genocide for his racist and inflammatory publications. Hitler's Press Chief Dietrich was convicted of crimes against humanity for creating and disseminating inflammatory teachers which incited Germans to the active persecution of political and racial undesirables."<sup>425</sup> Specifically, he was found liable for conditioning the German people to support Jewish prosecution.<sup>426</sup> The Nuremberg propaganda cases precedent were "seminal in terms of criminalizing speech in relation to atrocity," as hate speech was found to be criminally actionable for the "furnishing of excuses and justifications to subdue any doubts which might arise as to the justice of measures of racial persecution to which Jews were to be subjected."<sup>427</sup> These rulings were significant in terms of clarifying the scope of liability for the rhetoric of "conflict entrepreneurs" using hate media charged with persecution as a crime against humanity.<sup>428</sup>

When Germany attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941, four mobile killing squads called Einsatzgruppen began killing Jewish communities. The Einsatzgruppen gathered Jewish residents town by town, marched them to huge pits, and stripped them of their clothes and belongings before shooting them point-blank with automatic weapons.<sup>429</sup> During the infamous Babi Yar massacre, 30,000-35,000 Jews were killed in just two days.<sup>430</sup> In January 1942, several top officials of the German government met at the Wannsee Conference to officially coordinate a

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<sup>425</sup> Kevin Jon Heller, *The Nuremberg Military Tribunals and the Origins of International Criminal Law* 457, 2011.

<sup>426</sup> Gordon, Gregory S., "The Propaganda Prosecutions at Nuremberg: The Origin of Atrocity Speech Law and the Touchstone for Normative Evolution"

<sup>427</sup> Ibid.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid.

<sup>429</sup> Ibid.

<sup>430</sup> *An Introductory History of the Holocaust*.

system of mass murder of the Jews.<sup>431</sup> Jews were singled out for “Special Treatment,” or *sonderbehandlung*, which meant men, women, and children were to be methodically killed with poisonous Zyklon-B gas. In this mechanized system, Jews were forced into ghettos or concentration camps before being transported to the killing centers. Approximately 3.5 million Jews were killed in Nazi death camps.<sup>432</sup> Jewish philosopher Emil Fackenheim’s *To Mend the World* calls the Holocaust a unique part of human history due to its magnitude and vehemence for the complete termination of the Jewish population. Of his outline, one of the most perplexing facets is the composition of people who carried out the “Final Solution.” Fackenheim calls them ordinary job holders with extraordinary tasks, not perverts or sadists.<sup>433</sup> While genocide is an inherently state-led phenomenon, it requires the participation of foot soldiers at the local level, “people who join the process, soldiers, paramilitaries and civilians” who are mostly ordinary people who live inconspicuously in their societies before and after their crimes.<sup>434</sup> If Fackenheim is correct, how did these perpetrators “climb or slide into this abyss of human behavior?”<sup>435</sup> How can we explain this incitement and participation in the genocide?

As Timothy Williams lays out, a consensus in the interdisciplinary literature has emerged wherein the participants in genocide are neither demographically nor psychologically aberrant. Rather they are ordinary men, a theory that Christopher Browning publicized in his 1992 *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*. His study of German *Ordnungspolizei* (Order Police), which committed massacres and round-ups of Jews for

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<sup>431</sup> Ibid.

<sup>432</sup> Ibid.

<sup>433</sup> *What Makes the Holocaust Unique?* <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/what-makes-the-holocaust-unique>. Accessed 10 May 2021.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid.

<sup>435</sup> Williams, Timothy. “The Complexity of Evil: a Multi-Faceted Approach to Genocide Perpetration.” *Zeitschrift Für Friedens- Und Konfliktforschung*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2014, pp. 71–98. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/48518906](http://www.jstor.org/stable/48518906). Accessed 29 Apr. 2021.

deportations in German-occupied Poland, provides evidence that not all of the men were anti-Semitic. Included testimonies recall unit members begging to be released from their work. They were not expressing a Germanic evil but were average men twisted by historical forces intertwined with cowardice, ideological indoctrination, loyalty to their commander, and a reluctance to shirk their share of duty.<sup>436</sup> Browning's statistical and qualitative comparisons of perpetrators and non-perpetrators have found few or no differences between the groups. Situational influences have been accepted as more explanatory than individualistic personalities or socioeconomic characteristics.<sup>437</sup>

Williams emphasizes we must locate the intent, and thus refer to frame analysis theory, which highlights the relevance of the "struggle over the production of mobilizing and counter-mobilizing ideas and meanings."<sup>438</sup> Relying on empirical research, the theory states that "neither the commands of resources (money, media, and power) nor an advantageous political situation suffices to explain the formation and the collective action of social movements."<sup>439</sup> A cognitive frame that we can internalize as an "interpretative schemata that simplifies and condenses one's environment" by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, and events within one's present or past world.<sup>440</sup> Concerning the Holocaust, Hitler and his followers constructed a frame on a foundation of racism, eugenics, Nordic mysticism, and social Darwinism.<sup>441</sup> A genocidal frame sprung from this worldview that singled out the enemies of the Aryans, who were not worthy of societal inclusion. In this view, the perpetrators of the Holocaust were

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<sup>436</sup> Ibid.

<sup>437</sup> Reich, Walter. "The Men Who Pulled the Triggers." *The New York Times*, 12 Apr. 1992. *NYTimes.com*, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/04/12/books/the-men-who-pulled-the-triggers.html>.

<sup>438</sup> Williams, Timothy. "The Complexity of Evil: a Multi-Faceted Approach to Genocide Perpetration."

<sup>439</sup> Ibid.

<sup>440</sup> Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986).

<sup>441</sup> Ibid.

embedded in a cognitively limited situation in multiple social relationships. An individual will rely on the influence of others or authority figures on these issues to free oneself of cognitive exertions and minimize the risk of ostracism.<sup>442</sup> It is the imitation of this pattern that can lead to everyone taking on a similar frame and following this in action. If a group is assumed to be homogenous, those who do not support genocidal norms will still act within it to avoid in-group repercussions. According to Philip Zimbardo's research, this effect is multiplied more because for most people, this setting is novel, and we cannot call on previous guidelines for new behavioral options in a consensus.<sup>443</sup> Working within this theory, the perpetrators were incited by vertical and horizontal social influence.<sup>444</sup> Elites and leaders within the Nazi party develop genocidal intent in the framing process and realign the frame accordingly. This means that ordinary men were incited to conduct genocidal acts for simple reasons "ranging from obedience to authority, coercion, peer pressure, to sadism, opportunism, the allure of status and power."<sup>445</sup>

David Goldhagen's book, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, argues against this psychological contextualization and polemicizes against the alleged tendencies in Holocaust research to "downplay anti-Semitic ideology as a central cause of the genocide."<sup>446</sup> Rather, the destruction of the European Jewry was made possible only because the "overwhelming majority of the German population consciously, and when necessary, actively supported it."<sup>447</sup> A nineteenth-century political culture saturated by an "eliminationist mindset" paved the way for

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<sup>442</sup> Williams, Timothy. "The Complexity of Evil: a Multi-Faceted Approach to Genocide Perpetration."

<sup>443</sup> Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil* (New York: Random House, 2008), 212.

<sup>444</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>445</sup> Williams, Timothy. "The Complexity of Evil: a Multi-Faceted Approach to Genocide Perpetration."

<sup>446</sup> Hoffmann, Christhard, and Steven Bileca. *German Politics & Society*, vol. 14, no. 3 (40), 1996, pp. 108–116. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/23736373](http://www.jstor.org/stable/23736373). Accessed 29 Apr. 2021.

<sup>447</sup> *Ibid.*



the extermination of the Jews in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. <sup>448</sup> Goldhagen insists the Holocaust was a national project, not the result of “a fanatic Nazi minority that implemented its designs against the will of the German population.” <sup>449</sup> Goldhagen rejects Browning’s argument. According to Goldhagen, ordinary Germans had no innate inhibitions preventing their participation since they grew up amidst a culture of anti-Semitism, which was enough to induce their complete inward agreement and outward compliance. <sup>450</sup> The evidence Goldhagen assembles in support of his thesis is graphic and seemingly persuasive. It depicts German policemen murdering Jews with gruesome zeal and perverted pleasure, especially elderly and bearded Jews who seemingly aligned with the anti-Semitic stereotype. He asserts “with regards to the motivational cause of the Holocaust . . . a monocausal explanation does suffice.” <sup>451</sup>

The methodological problem in this one-dimensional answer is also what makes Goldhagen’s thesis impossible to prove: the belief that behind a given human action “one can discern a specific, unambiguous identifiable motivation.” <sup>452</sup> Maintaining such a belief becomes more onerous when the actions take place in hierarchically organized institutions where rigid and coercive structures of command dictate behavior. Ordinary men following orders confirmed their anti-Semitism through their actions, but this is a long way from proving they were overwhelmingly anti-Semitic beliefs. Goldhagen’s insistence on German anti-Semitism as a uniquely brutal conception is based on an implicit hypothesis. Few historians would agree that a direct line of continuity exists between the anti-Judaism of the late Middle Ages and the type of anti-Semitism that led to the Holocaust. As such comparative research shows that anti-Semitism

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<sup>448</sup> Ibid.

<sup>449</sup> Ibid.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid.

<sup>451</sup> Goldhagen, Daniel Jonah. *Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. 1st ed, Knopf : Distributed by Random House, 1996.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid.

mirrored German anti-Semitism until 1918. Also, anti-Semitism cannot be properly analyzed as an isolated, independent ideology.<sup>453</sup> Christhard Hoffmann describes this belief developing in a context of interactions with other ideologies and socio-political movements such as nationalism, anti-capitalism, and anti-modernism.<sup>454</sup> Goldhagen engages in a circular argument, claiming that only in Germany did anti-Semitism result in the Holocaust. This theory stands to support the faction of scholars who link hate media and incitement to genocide. Hoffmann dispels Goldhagen's generalizations of explanatory functions and refuses his overestimations of the extent and efficacy of German hatred toward Jews.

Milton Himmelfarb explains that anti-Semitism was a necessary condition for the Holocaust, but not a sufficient condition. As I have argued that hate media alone did not incite the Holocaust, Himmelfarb takes a position on a parallel plane wherein Hitler was needed to initiate the Holocaust. This idea correlates with Hitler's cult of personality helping to create conditions that allowed the genocide to take place. Himmelfarb describes that Jewish scholar Hyam Maccoby also clarifies "the obedience of Himmler and the SS was to Hitler, not anti-Semitism."<sup>455</sup> "Socioeconomic stresses and strains, political backwardness, group psychopathology, religious hatred, and racism" were all present, but Himmelfarb determines Hitler was affected by them, not determined.<sup>456</sup> Like Fackenheim's resolve to "reject all facile deterministic explanations as interpreting the Holocaust in terms of economics, xenophobia, or the vicissitudes of German history," Himmelfarb explores the counterfactual of "no Hitler, no Holocaust."<sup>457</sup> Moral responsibility for the Holocaust resides, in part, with Hitler for his

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<sup>453</sup> Hoffmann, Christhard, and Steven Bileca. *German Politics & Society*.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid.

<sup>455</sup> "No Hitler, No Holocaust." *Commentary Magazine*, 1 Mar. 1984, <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/milton-himmelfarb-2/no-hitler-no-holocaust/>.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid.

<sup>457</sup> Ibid.

pathological hatred of Jews formed the basis of the Nazi genocide. That is not to say one charismatic man alone incited thousands to genocidal violence, but rather Hitler's authorization was necessary to incentivize and oversee the extermination of millions of people. It was Hitler who first authorized the first Nazi mass killing program for "undesirables" in the T-4 Euthanasia Program, and later approved the establishment of *Einsatzgruppen*.<sup>458</sup> For example, Hitler explicitly ordered the "annihilation of Jews" in a 1941 speech and influenced his regime in an oligarchic fashion, but still, other top leaders and propagandists provided ideological fodder to encourage the Holocaust which was then carried out by military forces.<sup>459</sup>

Many scholars and Holocaust historians have turned to psychology as controlled windows into the horrors ordinary people can inflict one on another. Stanley Milgram's studies of obedience conducted in 1961 at Yale University are almost always explicitly linked to understanding perpetrator behavior in the Holocaust.<sup>460</sup> After hearing that many Nazi war criminals plead they were only following higher orders, Milgram designed an experiment relying on forces he suspected incited the Holocaust — Nazi-like pledges of loyalty, strict obedience to harmful orders, and little steps toward a radical outcome.<sup>461</sup> Instead of rudimentarily pledging to engage in a physical assault, participants were instructed to deploy shocks to a distanced "learner."<sup>462</sup> While the laboratory setting lacked the representational and naturalistic repercussions of the Holocaust, it did produce conclusions that ordinary people feel compelled

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<sup>458</sup> Lifton, Robert J. (1986). *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide*. New York: Basic Books. ISBN 978-0-465-04904-2.

<sup>459</sup> Gerlach, Christian (2000). "The Wannsee Conference, the fate of German Jews, and Hitler's decision in principle to exterminate all European Jews". In Omar Bartov (ed.). *Holocaust: Origins, Implementation, Aftermath*. New York: Routledge. ISBN 0-415-15036-1.

<sup>460</sup> Russell, Nestar. "Conclusion—The Milgram-Holocaust Linkage and Beyond." *Understanding Willing Participants, Volume 2: Milgram's Obedience Experiments and the Holocaust*, edited by Nestar Russell, Springer International Publishing, 2019, pp. 277–99. *Springer Link*, doi:10.1007/978-3-319-97999-1\_9.

<sup>461</sup> Ibid.

<sup>462</sup> Ibid.

to obey people in positions of authority, even when it entails hurting another. About 65% of the participants in Milgram's study administered 450 volts to their learner, the highest voltage level.<sup>463</sup> Milgram summarized it as "the extreme willingness of adults to go to almost any lengths on the command of an authority constitutes the chief finding of the study and the fact most urgently demanding an explanation."<sup>464</sup>

Milgram explained the behavior of participants suggesting people were entering their agentic state, where people allow others to direct their actions and pass off responsibility for the consequences to the person dictating the orders. The party giving the orders must be seen as legitimate and could possibly accept responsibility for what happens, like battalions and soldiers obeying orders to kill Jews. Despite the initially convincing linkages, Milgram's critics were quick to remind him that, unlike his experiments, German perpetrators were exposed to a severe propaganda campaign, often despised their victims, engaged in excesses, and rarely expressed remorse.<sup>465</sup> George Mastroianni points out, Milgram's explanation of the Holocaust in terms of the mechanism of obedience is too narrow. The murder of Jews was the work of people from a broad swath of German society, from "economists who planned mass starvation to ordinary soldiers in the Wehrmacht, often acting without duress or apparent pressures to conform."<sup>466</sup> The transitory conditions created in a lab did not make the genocide possible; it was the product of generations of human experience and elaborate rational, emotional, and logical justifications.<sup>467</sup> Clearly, Milgram's approach fails to provide a wholly adequate account of the Holocaust.

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<sup>463</sup> *Milgram Experiment* | *Simply Psychology*. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/milgram.html>. Accessed 10 May 2021.

<sup>464</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>465</sup> Russell, Nestar. "Conclusion—The Milgram-Holocaust Linkage and Beyond."

<sup>466</sup> Mastroianni, George R. "Obedience in Perspective: Psychology and the Holocaust." *Theory & Psychology*, vol. 25, no. 5, Oct. 2015, pp. 657–669, doi:10.1177/0959354315608963.

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.*

Though it may well account for the dutiful destructiveness of the genocidal Nazi program, it cannot explain the more zealous “hate-driven cruelties that also defined the Holocaust.”<sup>468</sup>

Along with Milgram’s experiments on human cruelty, Philip Zimbardo’s Stanford Prison Experiment “has become a kind of grim psychological touchstone, an object lesson into humans’ hidden ability to act sadistically” as social conditions permit.<sup>469</sup> It is a long-standing staple of social psychology and social science and has been invoked to explain the horrors of the Holocaust. The experiment seemingly confirmed in another way “the idea that ordinary people could be transformed into evildoers by situations.”<sup>470</sup> For the experiment, Zimbardo built a mock “Stanford County Jail,” and divided volunteers into prisoners and guards to test whether rigid power structures of social environments influence one’s behavior rather their personal disposition. Within a few hours, guards and prisoners settled into their roles. Guards became more aggressive and assertive demanding more obedience from prisoners. Zimbardo concluded the experiment revealed people will “readily conform to the social roles they are expected to play.”<sup>471</sup> The situational circumstances were an important factor in eliciting the guards’ brutal behavior; none of the volunteer guards had shown sadistic tendencies before the study. However, Zimbardo was criticized for issues of selection bias, mental manipulation, and questionable experimental design. Applying this conclusion to the Holocaust, Hitler’s strong authoritarian presence amidst the instability of the Republic provided the German people with a powerful source of leadership. With many Germans putting their trust in Hitler to transform their country into a utopia of sorts, Nazi policies created conditions that justified the brutal treatment of Jews.

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<sup>468</sup> Ibid.

<sup>469</sup> *New Stanford Prison Experiment Revelations Question Findings*.

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/06/20/new-stanford-prison-experiment-revelations-question-findings>. Accessed 10 May 2021.

<sup>470</sup> Mastroianni, George R. “Obedience in Perspective: Psychology and the Holocaust.”

<sup>471</sup> *Stanford Prison Experiment | Simply Psychology*. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/zimbardo.html>.

Zimbardo was convinced the guards turned violent due to “an inability to resist the pressure of their role” as leaders and were more willing to follow Hitler’s lead because of collective conditions of powerlessness and group failure in pre-war Germany.<sup>472</sup>

These famous experiments emphasize a situational approach to obedience and behavior. But what happened in the Holocaust can never be duplicated in the laboratory. It is important to be careful about generalizing findings from “simplified situations constructed in labs to more complicated real-world interactions.”<sup>473</sup> Obedience cannot be wholly abandoned as an explanatory mechanism for the behavior of Holocaust perpetrators, I will assign it a more modest supporting role. Roy Baumeister’s psychological explanation of genocide is based on “four roots of evil: idealism threatened egotism, instrumentalism, and sadism.”<sup>474</sup> He sees idealism and threatened egotism as the primary factors relevant to the incitement of the Holocaust. The architects of the Holocaust viewed their mission in world-historic terms as creating a better future for Germany was understood to justify the means eventually employed to achieve their goal.<sup>475</sup> Baumeister and Campbell’s 1999 study, *The Intrinsic Appeal of Evil: Sadism, Sensational Thrills, and Threatened Egotism* cite human violence as being attributed to instrumental or ideological motives.<sup>476</sup> More specifically, violent responses to threatened egotism may characterize groups who have both “a strong emotional investment in being superior to others and deep concern with having this favorable self-image validated by others.”

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<sup>472</sup> Sindic, Denis, Manuela Barreto, and Rui Costa-Lopes. *Power and Identity*. London: Psychology, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015. Print.

<sup>473</sup> Mastroianni, George R. “Obedience in Perspective: Psychology and the Holocaust.”

<sup>474</sup> Ibid.

<sup>475</sup> Ibid

<sup>476</sup> Baumeister, Roy & Campbell, W. Keith. (1999). The Intrinsic Appeal of Evil: Sadism, Sensational Thrills, and Threatened Egotism. *Personality and social psychology review : an official journal of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Inc.* 3. 210-21. 10.1207/s15327957pspr0303\_4

<sup>477</sup> This seems plausible looking at the intense desire of the Nazis to prove their intrinsic superiority to the Jews. They hypothesize that the situational push and intrinsic pull of violence could work to explain the Holocaust.

Ervin Staub also has written extensively about genocide. He posits that societies confronting economic or political upheaval are more prone to the development of mass violence and attempts by groups to address these difficult conditions can, given the nature of human intergroup relations and individual psychology, operate to promote intergroup hostility and violence.<sup>478</sup> As many countries with these prerequisites have not descended into genocide, Staub identifies “cultural devaluation, authority orientation, cultural factors, an aggressive past, and the lingering effects of past victimization as risk factors.”<sup>479</sup> Raleigh scholar Richard Evans claims that Nazi violence, real and threatened, was applied to German populations to coerce citizens to violence against the Jewish population. With this view, the leaders of the Nazi party incited genocide with its state terror apparatus.<sup>480</sup> Lastly, several scholars in the past few decades have questioned the driving role of anti-Semitism in the Holocaust, moving away from viewing it as the “prime motivation behind Hitler’s Final Solution.”<sup>481</sup> Henry Friedlander and Sybil Milton stress the fixation on anti-Semitism is misplaced, calling for more of a focus on World War II and the context of new racism that developed in Europe in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>482</sup> Adhering to

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<sup>477</sup> Ibid.

<sup>478</sup> Staub, Ervin. “Genocide and Mass Killing: Origins, Prevention, Healing and Reconciliation.” *Political Psychology*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2000, pp. 367–382. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/3791796](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3791796). Accessed 30 Apr. 2021.

<sup>479</sup> Ibid.

<sup>480</sup> Johnson, Eric A. “Criminal Justice, Coercion and Consent in Totalitarian Society: The Case of National Socialist Germany.” *The British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 51, no. 3, 2011, pp. 599–614. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/23640328](http://www.jstor.org/stable/23640328). Accessed 10 May 2021.

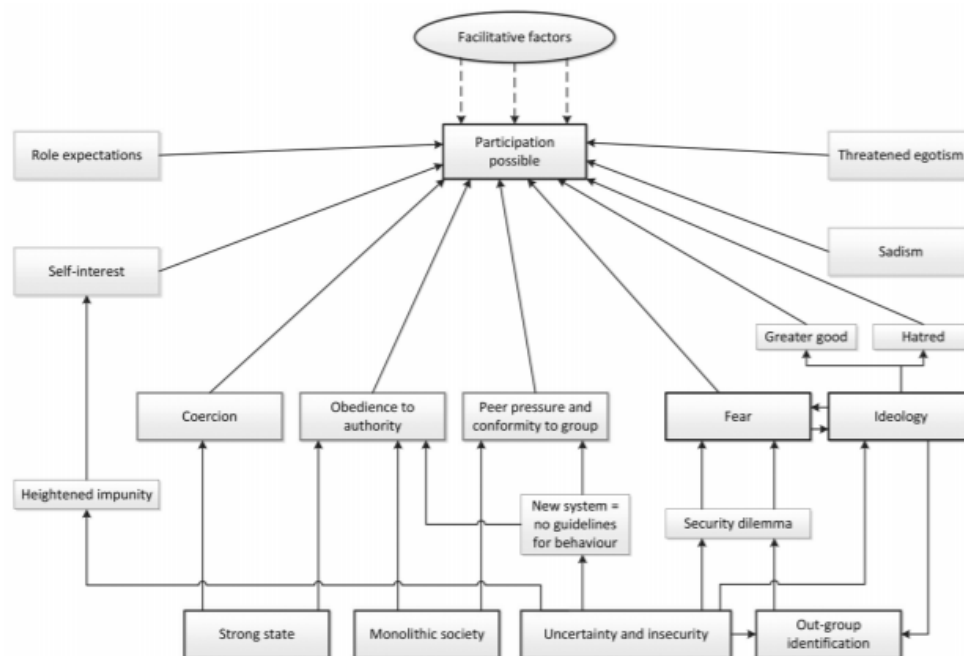
<sup>481</sup> Winkler, Karen. “Scholars Debate the Role of Anti-Semitism in the Holocaust.” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 22 Sept. 1995, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/scholars-debate-the-role-of-anti-semitism-in-the-holocaust/>.

<sup>482</sup> Ibid.

this hypothesis would shift the proportional responsibility of anti-Semitic hate media for inciting the genocide to other external sources.

Taking all of these theories into consideration creates a confusing nexus of causes contributing to the incitement of the Holocaust. Timothy Williams synthesizes the case study literature of political scientists, sociologists, and historians with the insights of social psychologists to demonstrate the complexity of micro and macro-level dynamics of genocide participation. First, all humans are capable of evil and thus of genocide perpetration, but they must be incited to participate. He visualizes the variables that determine the possibility of participation with further facilitative factors that can make one's involvement easier to cope with.

*Figure 1: Why do people participate in genocide? What are their motivations?*



**Fig. 10.** Table showing possible participation factors for perpetrators from: Williams, Timothy. “The Complexity of Evil: a Multi-Faceted Approach to Genocide Perpetration.”



These individual factors do not necessitate participation, but the more these conditions are fulfilled, the more likely one will be incited to participate. As many of the authors mentioned in this chapter focus on singular aspects in their analyses, much of this empirical work can be integrated to provide a more complete picture of the factors that fomented the Holocaust. Hatred and ideology may be two distinct concepts, but they complement and interact with each other. The anti-Semitic ideology purported by Hitler utilized a constructed notion of hatred towards the victim group, the Jews, as an ideological legitimation of the genocidal process, and “in turn to stoke fears about potential threats posed by this group.”<sup>483</sup> Some perpetrators internalize this belief for the greater good and become the first element of the model. Hitler’s ideology helped facilitate killing as it likely helped conquer cognitive dissonance and normalized criminal acts and duty. The vulnerable situation in the Republic invoked fear, hatred, and resentment which all contributed to a security situation perpetuated by a feedback loop desiring safety from the Jewish enemy. Next, Williams states obedience may be important in explaining initial incitement to participation, but the informational and normative social influence may have been at play in the Holocaust. He also notes that incitement occurred, in part, through state coercion.<sup>484</sup> Self-interest and opportunism in the Holocaust are cited by Baumeister and Jones as credible causes for incitement.<sup>485</sup> The penultimate variable presented is threatened egotism, as people with a favorable view of self that has been impugned by others tend to react with aggressive behavior.<sup>486</sup> Albert Bandura describes the continuum of destruction (Staub, 1989) in which victims can be progressively devalued while perpetrators get accustomed to increasingly violent acts. In this case, violence against Jews escalated at a progressive pace over several years, as it became more socially acceptable to outwardly prejudice the group. Perpetrators of the Holocaust also could have

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<sup>483</sup> Williams, Timothy. “The Complexity of Evil: a Multi-Faceted Approach to Genocide Perpetration.”

<sup>484</sup> Ibid.

<sup>485</sup> Ibid.

<sup>486</sup> Ibid.

been incited by processes of diffusion where legal and moral responsibility was displaced to an authority (Hitler), and the majority did not feel to be actual agents of their actions. Overall, Williams synthesizes a model of inciting motivations people have to participate in genocide, which was augmented or triggered by various macro-level background variables and accompanied by facilitative factors. Most importantly, Williams asserts that dehumanizing victims, albeit through hate media in the case of the Holocaust, makes it easier to kill them but does not seem to specifically incite them to do so. Lastly, Oberschall describes that hate media and hate ideology against an ethnic target can incite violent cadres, but “hate does not have to be the sole and main motivation.”<sup>487</sup> As seen in many of the preceding chapters, some mass killings take place under state authority and military command, meaning perhaps hate media was not necessary for battalions to become efficient execution machines. Therefore, dehumanization through hate media is facilitative for genocide, but not necessary.

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<sup>487</sup> Oberschall, Anthony. *Propaganda, Hate Speech and Mass Killings*.

## Conclusion

In all of these cases, we see atrocities largely perpetrated by soldiers or civilians with no known prior history of violence. Therefore, there must be a “transitional process” by which the perpetrator is altered by situational conditions into a different person. Several theories have attempted to explain this transformation. Lifton argues that killing can represent a form of “transcendence whereby the killer comes to feel immortal,” but requires escalating violence to sustain the same subjective state after the first kill.<sup>488</sup> In addition, embracing extreme violence can “also serve as an antidote for death terror,” suggesting that both attitudes conducive to killing and the act of killing itself may rely on similar motives.<sup>489</sup> Staub argues that once violence is initiated, it generates an evolution in the personality of perpetrators, especially regarding “normative behavior and perceptions of the victim.”<sup>490</sup> Violence will become incrementally acceptable as empathy disappears. In Mawson’s 1987 model of transient criminality, conditions eliciting significant stress (natural disasters and combat) can lead to a loss of identity, a sense of being depersonalized, a decline in self-esteem, and a partial loss of abstract standards like moral and legal rules.<sup>491</sup> Sympathetic arousal produces situation-seeking behavior wherein the individuals’ “cognitive map” begins to disintegrate, and the likelihood of impulsive, potentially injurious actions increases.<sup>492</sup> War or civil conflict were present conditions in many of the cases I discussed, giving some testimony to Mawson’s predictions about human behavior in chaotic and uncontrollable situations. In a similar vein, Baumesiter’s 1990 study of suicide suggests a

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<sup>488</sup> Dutton, Donald G., et al. “Extreme Mass Homicide: From Military Massacre to Genocide.”

<sup>489</sup> Ibid.

<sup>490</sup> Ibid.

<sup>491</sup> *Transient Criminality: A Model of Stress-Induced Crime* | Office of Justice Programs.

<https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/transient-criminality-model-stress-induced-crime>. Accessed 10 May 2021.

<sup>492</sup> Ibid.

psychological transition from norm-regulated behavior and “meaningful thought to impulsive aggressive behavior” with the stress of combat fear of violence, and orders to kill for superiors all amalgamating to increase the likelihood of “such transitory actions.”<sup>493</sup>

To better marshal my final conclusions on hate media and genocide, I spoke with Dr. Peter Ronayne, author of *Never Again?: The United States and the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide since the Holocaust*. Ronayne’s work provides a provocative and comprehensive first look at American foreign policy as it relates to the prevention and lawful punishment of genocide since the Holocaust. When asked if he believed hate media could incite genocide Ronayne stated:

It would seem to me that it’s a necessary, but not a sufficient factor. In many, but not most cases, there is some other structural factor at play that makes people receptive to hate media and violence. You don’t see genocide happening in prosperous economic times. When there is uncertainty, we are vulnerable and susceptible to messages of hate.

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After an exploration of several different cases of genocide, I believe that hate media is often a necessary factor, but not wholly adequate to incite a population to genocidal violence. Hate media is a variably consistent and contributing factor to incitement; it takes different shapes to evolve and change with the times. In looking at Stanton’s stages, it is more logical to perhaps assign weights to the role media played in different cases of genocide. A visualization of this pattern could look something like the table below:

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<sup>493</sup> Baumeister, R. F. (1990). Suicide as escape from self. *Psychological Review*, 97(1), 90–113. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.97.1.90>

<sup>494</sup> Ronayne, Dr. Peter. *Can Hate Media Incite Genocide?* 26 Apr. 2021.

Case	Rwanda	ISIS	Myanmar	Guatemala	Yugoslavia	Germany
The extent to which hate media incited the genocide (%)	80%	75%	85%	20%	50%	60%

Hate media has been so persuasive throughout history because of its simplicity. Dr.

Ronayne noted:

This media provides seemingly simple answers to ultimately complex situations. It finds purchase and a landing zone when people are afraid, especially about their futures, and it is malevolently well done. The human brain naturally categorizes people, and it is a human tendency to move towards categorization in life. When there is insecurity already present, we use heuristics and the simplicity of those messages to mentally move away from out-groups. Hate media plays to the base instinct that we keep under lock and key, but when the circumstances are wrong, it comes out in all of us.<sup>495</sup>

Hate media plays to our basic simple instincts with descriptive language, appealing imagery, and messages that are easy for the audience to internalize. Next, in trying to decipher the exact role of leadership in incitement, I would say genocide requires some form of political leadership to further crystallize resentment towards a vulnerable group and officially allow the

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<sup>495</sup> Ronayne, Dr. Peter. *Can Hate Media Incite Genocide?*

violence to become more organized through the state apparatus in most cases. Those in power can overtly leverage hate media to move the process of genocide along from indoctrination to incitement. Deep-seated animosities and ethnic nationalism are neither an invention of political leaders, nor an artificial creation of mass media, “but leaders and propaganda amplify them, manipulate them, and legitimize ethnic aggression.”<sup>496</sup>

My research provides insight into various causes of genocide, with a specific lens on the role of hate media in the genesis of violence. However, my work does not encompass all of the underlying, contributing processes that precipitate genocide. I selected the most relevant studies from the academic, social, and political spheres to engage analytically and theoretically with the primary source material, as well as modern inquiries into genocide. Macro-level state processes, policy decisions, non-elite perpetrator motivations, and the social construction of victim group identities were explored to conclude if hateful media and propaganda truly have incited genocides throughout the last century.<sup>497</sup>

## Looking Forward

In looking toward the future, the nature and scope of genocidal violence may change. The proliferation of technology around the world has expanded the possibilities for discourse across the political spectrum from a variety of actors. Regarding these changes, Dr. Ronayne expressed:

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<sup>496</sup> Oberschall, Anthony. *Propaganda, Hate Speech and Mass Killings*.

<sup>497</sup> Owens, Peter B., et al. “Social Scientific Inquiry Into Genocide and Mass Killing: From Unitary Outcome to Complex Processes.” *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 39, no. 1, July 2013, pp. 69–84. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, doi:10.1146/annurev-soc-071312-145650.

We have universal access to media today. Social media gives more matches to throw on barrels of gasoline [societies at risk for genocide] and equips potential perpetrators with more tools for incitement. On the flip side, technology gives the rest of us the tools to fact-check and counter hate media with other information. There is promise in the fact that we can connect with people in a new way, offering possibilities to mitigate dehumanization. There is a fine line: we have more windows into nation-state borders and new modes of monitoring hate media, but we are also combatting a wider swath of malicious actors.<sup>498</sup>

To conclude, hate media alone cannot incite genocide, though it does open the door for the normalization of genocidal violence, as it has often complimented societal cleavages, economic distress, charismatic leaders, and tumultuous state environments embroiled in domestic conflict or war. We can use psychology to gain nuanced insights into the human condition in terms of supplemental processes driving incitement but must be cautious to explain genocide in only these terms, as this serves to exculpate malevolent actors who advanced the violence with personal direction. All of the cases I explored saw national vulnerabilities including economic instability, infighting, and competing groups with different religious beliefs, ethnic identities, or social statuses. These are the “dominoes” that must be set up before hate media can begin driving perpetrators to violence with concurrent calls from the top leaders.<sup>499</sup> Genocide is not new, nor will it likely abate in the future. However, what can be gleaned from a detailed analysis of these cases is that this is a story of evolution. After the Holocaust, international criminal procedures have taken shape to try perpetrators of genocidal violence; the International Criminal Court has

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<sup>498</sup> Ronayne, Dr. Peter. *Can Hate Media Incite Genocide?*

<sup>499</sup> Ibid.

tried and convicted malefactors from Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Myanmar. This matters; recently President Biden acknowledged the mass slaughter of Armenians by the Ottoman Turks as genocide, derailing decades of precedent by officially naming this crime.<sup>500</sup> Honoring those who have perished, but also renewing the resolve to prevent future atrocities is imperative for international reconciliation and peace. This story is one of slow, but steady nonlinear progress for the international recognition and prosecution of genocide. Hopefully, these lessons from the past will prevent seeds of hatred from being sown in the future.<sup>501</sup>



**Fig. 11.** Political Cartoon about genocide from: “Genocide Today: From Acknowledgement to Prevention.” *Euromaidan Press*, 6 Feb. 2020, <http://euromaidanpress.com>

<sup>500</sup> “Biden Calls Slaughter Of Armenians A Genocide, Posing Test For U.S. Ties With Turkey.” *NPR.Org*, <https://www.npr.org/2021/04/24/990292454/biden-calls-slaughter-of-armenians-a-genocide-posing-test-for-u-s-ties-with-turk>. Accessed 11 May 2021.

<sup>501</sup> “Critical Thinking and Learning about the Past Are Key to Preventing Future Genocides.” *UNESCO*, 8 Apr. 2020, <https://en.unesco.org/news/critical-thinking-and-learning-about-past-are-key-preventing-future-genocides>.