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## Warning Signs: A Study in the Proximate Causes of Genocide

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Warning Signs:

A Study in the Proximate Causes of Genocide

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Lee Honors College Thesis

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## **Introduction**

The Armenian genocide under Ottoman Turkey inspired Raphael Lemkin to create the term genocide to describe the mass extermination of a group. Years later, the horrors of the Jewish Holocaust lit the fire that would lead to the overwhelming approval of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (henceforth referred to as CPPCG) (Power, 2003). However, the term genocide does not belong solely to these two cases, their victims, or perpetrators. The acts that the world named genocide in 1948 have occurred since the beginning of recorded human history; portrayed in religious texts as well as in classical literature and continue to this very day in cases where prevention and intervention has both succeeded and failed (Kiernan, 2007). Many scholars believe that study of these events will reveal a pattern which concerned parties can use to anticipate and prevent genocide, making the perennial declarations “never again” a reality.

Research in the field of genocide studies is not only important as an academic exercise in a university, but can have serious real world applications. It is no mistake that the United Nations, many other intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, as well as national governments have taken an interest in the prevention of genocide following the passage of the CPPCG. It has been shown time and time again that genocide and similar mass atrocities tend to cause destabilization throughout the region in which they occur. Additionally, scholars, activists, and many policy makers seem to agree that genocide prevention efforts and early nonmilitary intervention tend to be more effective and generally less expensive than costly UN “blue helmet” peacekeeping missions or NATO interventions.

Genocide Studies as an academic discipline and the comparative study of genocide are in fact relatively recent developments, growing out of a post-World War II movement that sought

to analyze the Jewish Holocaust and the actions of Nazi Germany. As the field grew, however, it became apparent to scholars that these mass murders were part of a larger human narrative stretching back through recorded history and beyond to our earliest human ancestors (Kiernan, 2007).

Because the field is still relatively new and centers around a term that did not exist prior to its invention by Raphael Lemkin in 1944, most work surrounding genocide can be described as taking a definition-driven approach where a scholar first defines genocide as it will be approached in the work before cases can be selected or analyzed (Lieberman, 2012). This approach, utilized by Lemkin himself in his work *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, first categorically explains why a case is genocide, and then compares the selected cases on a number of levels.

### **Genocide**

Unlike the killing of the individual which has had a name for hundreds of years and has even become specialized by who is killed or doing the killing (e.g. homicide, suicide, fratricide, etc.), the killing of the masses did not have a name. The closest humanity ever came were the terms “mass murder” or “war crimes” both of which are fairly recent constructions. That is until 1944 when Raphael Lemkin introduced the world to the word he created: genocide. Its prefix, coming from the Greek *genos* meaning race or tribe, and its suffix coming from the Latin *cide* for killing, he defined it in his work *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* as “the destruction of a nation or of an ethnic group” (Lemkin, 1944 p.79). Additionally, he analyzed the methods through which the Nazi party committed genocide across Europe, focusing not only on the death camps, well known in popular history but also examining the destruction of political, social, cultural, economic, religious and moral facets of the communities they sought to control or exterminate.

Finally, he offers his recommendations for the future including the strengthening of international law to prevent and punish genocide as a distinct crime (Lemkin, 1944).

Although Lemkin was a lawyer and law professor, he was not a lawmaker and as such, he could not directly write or change laws. Instead he made it his life's mission to see genocide become a crime under international legal statutes. For this, he spent nearly every day lobbying and pleading his case to anyone who would listen and even those who would not (Power, 2003). The first legal appearance of the term genocide is in count three of the indictment of the twenty-two Nazis tried at the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg, Germany. The count charging the defendants with "War Crimes", under the charge of "Murder and Ill-Treatment of Civilian Populations of or in Occupied Territory and on the High Seas", reads in part:

"They conducted deliberate and systematic genocide, viz., the extermination of racial and national groups, against the civilian populations of certain occupied territories in order to destroy particular races and classes of people and national, racial, or religious groups, particularly Jews, Poles, and Gypsies and others." (Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal, 1945-46)

In 1946, the United Nations General Assembly would pass UNGA Resolution 96 defining genocide as "a denial of the right of existence of entire human groups, as homicide is the denial of the right to live of individual human beings." The resolution goes on to state:

"genocide is a crime under international law which the civilized world condemns, and for the commission of which principals and accomplices—whether private individuals, public officials or statesmen, and whether the crime is committed on religious, racial, political or any other grounds—are punishable" (1946)

Although its mention in the Nuremberg indictments and UNGA Resolution 96 speak strongly to the criminality of genocide under International law, neither document is binding. On one hand, its appearance in the Nuremberg trials was simply as evidence to the charge of War Crimes. On the other hand, resolutions passed by the General Assembly are purposely non-

binding under the UN Charter and can only offer recommendations to member states as opposed to those passed by the Security Council.

It would not be until two years later and the passage of the UN Convention on the Punishment and Prevention of the Crime of Genocide that the term would exist as a crime punishable under international law. The CPPCG states:

“genocide means any of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole, or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.” (1948)

It goes on to state in the later articles that “conspiracy to commit genocide; direct and public incitement to commit genocide; attempt to commit genocide;” as well as “complicity in genocide” are criminal acts. In addition, the CPPCG requires the states which are parties to the convention to make genocide a domestic crime and requires that states extradite any person indicted on genocide related charges. It also allows for UN organs to take action, when called upon, to suppress or prevent genocide (1948). This definition of genocide would later be reasserted in the Rome Statute, the founding document of the International Criminal Court (1998).

Despite the clear codification of genocide into international law as found in the CPPCG, many scholars argue that its definition should be greatly expanded. Much of this debate has arisen from the fact that the CPPCG only extends the title “genocide” to cases involving national, ethnic, racial or religious groups. This leaves out the victims of a number of prominent mass exterminations of the twentieth century, most notably Cambodia under the rule of Pol Pot; as well as a perceived vagueness in its legal definition (Katz, 1994). As such, Steven T. Katz and

other scholars have offered alternate definitions of genocide; Katz defining it as “the actualization of the intent, however successfully carried out, to murder in its totality any national, ethnic, religious, political, social, gender or economic group, as these groups are defined by the perpetrator by whatever means” (1994, pp. 131). Nearly all alternate definitions for the crime of genocide begin with the definition as it stands in the CPPCG contributing additional specific groups, most often political, or apply it broadly to any targeted group. These definitions are useful in that they offer a look at how the charge of genocide could be applied under a more liberal legal definition. However, they are not codified and have led the scholarly and activist communities to create a multitude of terms for those actions including: politicide, democide (Rummel, 1994), genocidal massacre, genocide-like acts/conditions and mass atrocities.

In his work, *Genocide* Leo Kuper makes a compelling argument regarding the controversy and debate surrounding the CPPCG definition of genocide stating:

“I shall follow the definition of genocide given in the Convention. This is not to say that I agree with the definition. On the contrary, I believe a major omission to be in the exclusion of political groups from the list of groups protected. In the contemporary world, political differences are at the very least as significant a basis for massacre and annihilation as racial, national, ethnic or religious differences. Then too, the genocides against racial, national, ethnic or religious groups are generally a consequence of, or intimately related to, political conflict. However, I do not think it helpful to create new definitions of genocide, when there is an internationally recognized definition and a Genocide Convention which might become the basis for some effective action, however limited the underlying conception. But since it would vitiate the analysis to exclude political groups, I shall refer freely . . . to liquidating or exterminatory actions against them” (1981, p.39)

Kuper hits at the heart of the debate. As the definition set forth in the CPPCG and Rome Statute is the only one that can be currently used for prosecution, it is senseless to ask bodies such as the ICC to prosecute beyond the bounds of codified laws. However, today, as throughout history, the lines are often blurred. Groups that receive protection under the legal definition of genocide are often persecuted for political reasons independent of religious, ethnic, racial or national

affiliation. Further complicating the equation are events such as the Argentine Dirty War, Stalin's Great Purge, Mao's Great Famine and many other political mass killings. As such it is important to analyze these cases alongside those that fit the legal definition as they follow similar patterns and could be possibly prevented.

Additionally important to the field of genocide studies is the term genocidal massacre. Coined in his work *Genocide*, Kuper defines the term as "the annihilation of a section of a group — men, women and children, as for example in wiping out of whole villages" (1981, pp. 10). These events are most often distinct atrocities that exist as part of a larger ethnic, racial, religious or geopolitical conflict and can be key to the discussion of more recent genocidal events as well as those events that have been prevented or suppressed. This concept becomes especially important in some cases as wholesale extermination was often not the goal, but ethnic or political cleansing of a region via deportation or the quelling of an uprising punctuated by massacres of communities that resisted or were simply in the way.

Building from these conventions, this work will analyze the proximate causes of genocide.

For the purpose of genocide studies, causality is often divided chronologically into three distinct categories: deep historical context, proximate cause and triggering events. The deep historical context surrounding any given genocide may stretch back hundreds of years or even millennia, however these seemingly ancient events have come to the surface as cause for acts of great violence. On the other hand, triggering events are a distinguishable point in time or event where the genocide begins. Unlike deep historical context and triggering events, the timeline for proximate cause tends to differ from case to case. For the purpose of this work, proximate cause will be defined as events or conditions within the generation immediately preceding the case that

directly, indirectly or in combination with other factors lead to genocide or the intervention of foreign powers to prevent genocide.

As events that fit the definition of genocide exist in such a broad scope from the earliest of recorded human history to the present and in nearly every culture around the world, it is almost impossible to analyze every case. Therefore, this work does not attempt to reach an exhaustive, definitive answer with regard to the cause of genocide. It is merely a humble approach to tackling the pressing issue of the causes genocide and related mass atrocities.

Consequently, I will highlight a selection of cases that have occurred between 1990 and the present, focusing on the proximate cause applied to a preexisting framework, “The Eight Stages of Genocide” (Stanton, 1996). For the purpose of this work, I have chosen the cases of Bosnia, Rwanda, Kosovo and Libya. The first two cases are widely recognized throughout the international community as cases of genocide whereas the latter cases involve humanitarian interventions resulting from claims that inaction would result in genocide or other mass atrocities. These cases allow the work to explore the proximate causes in cases that could be left out of other genocide studies as they did not result in large numbers of deaths. Finally, because of the presence of journalists, peacekeepers or other sources on the ground in these cases, they provide a unique view of the information available at the time when world leaders chose to intervene or not.

### **Bosnia**

In 1991, the relatively peaceful transitions from communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union were underway. It appeared that the transition or breakup of Yugoslavia would occur the same as the others. However, as its constituent republics began to break away beginning with Slovenia and Croatia in 1991 it became apparent that the situation was going to

be far more complex. Running beneath the stable façade of the Federation of the Yugoslavs were divides that extended as far back as the Ottoman conquest of the region. These divides came to light as the Serb-led Yugoslav army attacked both Slovenia and Croatia after their declarations of independence and supported attempts to expel ethnic Croats from large parts of the country; resulting in the occupation of one third of its territory by the end of 1991.

In the sixth century, the first Slavic tribes arrived in the Balkans. These tribes would eventually become the ethnic Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks populating the region today. As the Byzantine Empire declined in the thirteenth century, an independent Bosnian state emerged which would continue until its conquest by the Ottoman Empire 1463. Under Ottoman occupation the much of the Bosnian population adopted Islam and began to differ culturally from its Slavic neighbors. At the Congress of Berlin in 1878, Austria-Hungary was given a mandate to occupy and administer the newly liberated territory of Bosnia (*CultureGrams*, 2013).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Balkans and more specifically the territory that would become Yugoslavia was considered to be the powder keg of Europe. Currents of nationalism boiled on the eastern border of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. On June 28, 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife were assassinated in Sarajevo by a member of the Serb nationalist group known as the Black Hand, sparking the First World War (Hergesell, 2001).

Following the First World War and the fall of Austria-Hungary, Eastern Europe was again parceled into new countries, most of which were divided into ethnically homogeneous nation-states. However, the territory that would become the Kingdom of Yugoslavia crafted a state combining the Serb, Croat, Slovene and Bosniak ethnicities. This would last until the end of the Second World War when the communist strong-man Josip Tito took power proclaiming the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Following Tito's death in 1980, the ethnic tensions

throughout the country began to show, culminating with the disintegration of the federal republic beginning in 1990 (Pastinen, 1993).

The declaration of Bosnian independence in early March 1992 sparked ethnic violence across the country and a well-organized Serb response, including the barricading of city streets and the seizure of portions of the country (Gutman, 1993, p. 12). Throughout the Serb-held territory, Bosnians were forced from their homes and into camps where appalling conditions led to deaths from disease and starvation (Human Rights Watch, 1992).

In 1993, the U.N. designated a number of safe areas through Bosnia (A. P., 1993, Apr 17). These safe areas, deep in Serb-held territory, were destined to be attacked by the Bosnian Serb Army. However, they did not act to dissolve the safe zone, better arm the blue-helmets of the Dutch battalion (DUTCHBAT) or evacuate the civilians who had taken shelter in the hopes of U.N. Protection (Human Rights Watch, 1995). The soldiers of DUTCHBAT stood by only able to watch as General Ratko Mladic's troops overran the safe area of Srebrenica ("Safe Area" Overrun, 1995).

Responding to the deaths of more than 8,000 young Muslim men and boys at Srebrenica, ethnic cleansing throughout the country and the continued siege of Sarajevo, NATO intervened on behalf of the United Nation launching Operation Deliberate Force on August 30, 1995 (Atkinson, 1995, Sep 14). These bombings would eventually bring the Bosnian Serbs to the negotiating table resulting in the cessation of violence and the Dayton Agreement signed on December 14, 1995 (Smucker, P. 1995, Dec 15).

## **Rwanda**

On April 6, 1994, a plane carrying the Rwandan President was shot down (Dallaire, 2005 p. 221). As a result, the Hutu government forces as well as their surrogate militias began a

systematic slaughter of the Tutsi population that would leave more than 800,000 dead in four months (Rwanda: Overview, 2010).

The territory that would become Rwanda had been home to a population largely made up of two ethnic groups, the Hutu and Tutsi who lived side by side sharing a language and traditions and even intermarrying over the course of hundreds of years. In 1880, the territory fell under the control of Germany only to be turned over to the Belgians following the Second World War. During the colonial period, both the Germans and Belgians institutionalized support of the Tutsi ethnic minority. While the Germans simply preferred to run the colony through the traditional power structures dominated by Tutsis, the Belgians threw out Hutus that were in any positions of power and created laws limiting educational, social and economic privileges to the Tutsis (Gasana, Jean-Bosco, Deo. & Kareikezi, 1999).

Beginning in the 1950s, Rwanda and neighboring Burundi experienced periodic waves of ethnic violence between the Hutu and Tutsi peoples living in the area. In the case of Rwanda, many ethnic Tutsi left the country as a result of Hutu extremists coming to power in the 1970s. In 1990, soldiers from the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) invaded Rwanda sparking a civil war between Hutus and Tutsis. This ethnic war brought international intervention in the form of a U.N. brokered power-sharing agreement between the Hutu government and the Tutsi RPF (Rwanda Profile, 2012).

Although the power-sharing agreement was signed it had little chance to be implemented as President Habyarimana's death was the spark that would ignite militant factions within the "Hutu power" movement. These militias, supported by the Rwandan Army and civilians took to the streets murdering Tutsis and moderate Hutus with whatever weapons they had including machetes and baseball bats (Gasana, Jean-Bosco, Deo. & Kareikezi, 1999)

The violence would finally subside as the RPF invaded and took the capitol. However the Hutu soldiers and militia members who fled into neighboring countries continue to create political and humanitarian issues to this day (Rwanda Profile, 2012).

### **Kosovo**

Despite its self-proclamation of autonomy within Yugoslavia in 1992, Kosovo was able to avoid much of the brutal conflict that engulfed the Balkans in the early 1990s due to its election of a moderate as a president (Kosovo Profile, 2012). Unlike Slovenia, Croatia or Bosnia, Kosovo seemed to be content for the time to remain united with Serbia as long as it was returned its autonomy within Yugoslavia, which it lost under Milosevic in 1989 (Jimenez, 1999, May 29).

Although Kosovo is made up of a majority of ethnic Albanians, the Serbs have long considered it to be an integral part of their homeland and heritage. It was in Kosovo where the Serbs were defeated in 1389 by the Ottoman Empire which made them eager to retain it at all costs (Milosevic, 1999, May 29).

Although the moderates in Kosovo maintained a policy of passive resistance, many ethnic Albanians grew restless under what they perceived as excessive Serb oppression. The result of this radicalization was the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), a militant group with the goal of Kosovo as a state free from Serbia (Daadler, 2000). However, KLA attacks on Serb police and civilian targets led them to be labeled as terrorists and insurgents by the Yugoslav government as well as the U.S. State Department (Moran, 2006). In 1998, KLA attacks increased and the Serbian Army mobilized to counter. The Serb counterattack followed the pattern of action taken against Bosnian Muslims just a few years earlier. However this was largely tempered by the violent actions of the KLA.

In September, the Security Council adopted a resolution condemning the actions of Serbian security forces for their implementation of excessive force (1998). The next day, NATO authorized the mobilization of forces to prepare for a limited air action in response to the deteriorating ground situation. The discovery of 45 massacred ethnic Albanian farmers by European peace monitors (Strauss, 1999, Jan 27) as well as rebuffed attempts at diplomacy with Yugoslav President Milosevic led to NATO air attacks on Serbian installations beginning on March 24, 1999 (Solana, 1999). The attacks effectively neutralized the threat to civilians and accomplished NATO's goal which is often stated as "Serbs out, peacekeepers in, refugees back".

### **Libya**

In December 2010 protests began across Libya's neighbor Tunisia following the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, a young man who had been harassed, humiliated and beaten by the police after he was caught selling fruits and vegetables illegally (Witnesses report rioting in Tunisian town, 2011). These protests grew quickly, culminating in the departure of Tunisian President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali (Chrisafis, 2011) the first leader to bow to popular pressure. By the time protests began in Libya in mid-February 2011, they had spread across the Arab world, toppling the government of Hosni Mubarak in neighboring Egypt days earlier (McGreal, 2011).

On February 16, hundreds of anti-Qaddafi protesters took to the streets of Benghazi, Libya's second city, after the detention of a popular activist (Libyan protesters clash with police in Benghazi, 2011). In the coming days, Libya descended into chaos as the protests spread and Qaddafi ordered his military to brutally crack down on protestors resulting in widespread bloodshed (Black, 2011). A week later, the first members of the international press were able to

reach Benghazi which they found comfortably in rebel hands despite the statements of the government in Tripoli (Chulov, 2011).

As time went on, Qaddafi's threats increase in severity and he ordered military forces to attack the rebels at Benghazi (Whitlock, 2011, Mar 16). In addition to these threats, the opinions of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Ambassador to the U.N. Susan Rice and Human Rights Advisor Samantha Power weighed heavily into the decision to intervene. They knew that by the next morning, many of the residents of Benghazi, Libya's second largest city may be slaughtered (Labott, 2011). Learning from previous mistakes in Bosnia and Rwanda, the U.N. Security council authorized a no-fly zone over the country. Shortly thereafter, NATO airpower led by French jets and American missiles obliterated the threat to the rebel capitol potentially saving the lives of thousands of civilians (Garamone, 2011). Unlike earlier cases, the international community recognized and acted upon the warning signs apparent prior to the launch of the wholesale slaughter of innocents.

### **The Eight Stages of Genocide**

There is a belief among many scholars, activists and policy makers in the fields of human rights and genocide that if a crisis can be identified before it happens, the international community can move to stop it before innocent lives are lost. In 1996, Gregory Stanton, a Foreign Service Officer who would go on to found Genocide Watch in 1999 presented the US State Department with a briefing entitled "The 8 Stages of Genocide", which discussed genocide as a process which he believes could be prevented at each stage instead of a singular event (Stanton, 1996). He broke the process of genocide down into eight stages: classification, symbolization, dehumanization, organization, polarization, preparation, extermination and denial. Beyond providing a template for the study of genocide, it focused on the idea that

genocide as a crime and as a process could be ended before the killing begins. In her book *A Problem from Hell*, Samantha Power, a journalist turned human rights crusader who is now one of President Obama's top advisors on Human Rights (Stolberg, 2011), also expresses a similar belief, but is highly critical of the U.S. government as well as other world powers for turning a blind eye to cases for political reasons while championing human rights at the United Nations and in the international press (2003). In 2008, the Genocide Prevention Taskforce, a joint operation between the American Academy of Diplomacy, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the United States Institute of Peace published "Preventing Genocide: A Blueprint for U.S. Policymakers" which focused more heavily on early warning, prevention and preventative diplomacy than the military options that can be applied after the conflict has taken many lives. These and many more works as well as policy decisions have shown that both the United States and the World are more interested in prevention of genocides, at least on paper, than being forced to employ military action to stop them after the fact.

The proximate causes of genocide often dovetail with the classification, symbolization, dehumanization, organization, polarization and preparation stages as defined by Stanton (1996). The stages laid out by Stanton do not always occur chronologically or lead to extermination in every case, especially where steps are taken by the international community to intervene.

**Classification:**

"All cultures have categories to distinguish people into "us and them" by ethnicity, race, religion, or nationality: German and Jew, Hutu and Tutsi. Bipolar societies that lack mixed categories, such as Rwanda and Burundi, are the most likely to have genocide." (Stanton, 1996)

Although Yugoslavia overall existed as a clearly multipolar society, there were regions within the Federal Republic that exhibited bipolar tendencies notably in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ethnic tensions dating back more than half a millennium were brought to the

surface prior to the break-up of Yugoslavia and during the subsequent conflicts (Montgomery, 1991, Mar 21). Prior to the Ottoman invasion, the sole difference between Bosniaks and Serbs was geography. However, under four hundred years of Ottoman occupation, a majority of Bosniaks converted to Islam while Serbs fiercely held onto their Orthodox tradition (*CultureGrams*, 2013).

Rwanda exhibits a classic bipolar system with its Hutu and Tutsi ethnicities. In thirteenth or fourteenth century, the Tutsi conquered Rwanda submitting the Hutu. When the territory was colonized preference was given to the existing Tutsi elite. However, this stratified dichotomy was overturned as a result of the country's 1959 revolution in which the majority Hutu population seized power from Tutsi elites (Gasana, E., Jean-Bosco, B., Deo, B. & Kareikezi, A, 1999).

Kosovo existed as part of the multipolar system of Yugoslavia as Bosnia and the other constituent republics. However, as Kosovo was considered by the Serbs to be part of Serbia proper rather than Greater Serbia it created an especially divisive bipolar society pitting Serbs against Kosovar Albanians. Similar to the Bosniaks, the majority of ethnic Albanians residing in Kosovo are Muslims or come from Muslim ancestry. However, unlike the Bosniaks, Albanians are not related to the Southern Slav ancestry of the Serbian population. These differences were used by agitators on both sides to increase ethnic tensions prior to the outbreak of violence in Kosovo (Starobin, 1999, Apr 03).

The system in classification in the case of Libya is very different than the other three cases being examined. While the country is relatively diverse, that did not lead to conflict as all governmental power was consolidated by Qaddafi in Tripoli. The classified divisions that were acted upon in Libya came to be during the uprising itself. Because of Qaddafi's consolidation of

power, anyone who threatened his rule threatened the state, thus the “us and them” nature became Qaddafi and those loyal to him against those who protested against his rule and anyone who happened to be in their vicinity (Black, 2011).

These cases each highlight the importance of classification as a cause of genocide. The animosity created by these engrained or even newly created classifications play an important role in rallying perpetrators of genocide to participate directly or indirectly in actions against the victims. Without the act of classification, it is impossible to have genocide. This does not mean that every society that classifies its members will produce or approach genocide. More important than the act of classification is its severity and how it is used within a society.

Because classification often takes place naturally and over great lengths of time, it is unproductive to look at every instance where it takes place. However it is useful to note Stanton’s observation that genocide tends to occur more prevalently in strictly bipolar societies (1996). Furthermore, it is entirely possible that a very old Serb in Bosnia or Kosovo could have experienced direct oppression under the Ottoman Empire and likewise a very old Hutu under Tutsi-favoring Belgian colonialism. However, it is important to recognize that it is not, in most cases, a simple retaliation to oppression, but a calculated reintroduction of generations old prejudices and classification systems that leads to genocide. Classification may not be singularly a cause of genocide, but monitoring countries that exhibit it in an extreme form may alert the international community to acts of symbolization and dehumanization.

**Symbolization:**

“We give names or other symbols to the classifications. We name people “Jews” or “Gypsies”, or distinguish them by colors or dress; and apply the symbols to members of groups. Classification and symbolization are universally human and do not necessarily result in genocide unless they lead to the next stage, dehumanization. When combined with hatred, symbols may be forced upon unwilling members of pariah groups: the

yellow star for Jews under Nazi rule, the blue scarf for people from the Eastern Zone in Khmer Rouge Cambodia.” (Stanton, 1996)

In Bosnia, symbolization was primarily tied to religion and its associated cultural factors. Ethnic Serbs believed that Bosnians were essentially Serbs who had converted to Islam under the Ottoman Empire. As such, people who had registered as being Muslim, or had names that could be perceived as Muslim-influenced were targeted. During the conflict, some Bosniaks attempted to change their names to Orthodox Christian ones or convert to avoid the fate that their fellow Muslims had suffered throughout Bosnia (Pomfret, 1993, Dec 24). During the period in which Yugoslavia was ruled by Tito, these religious differences remained somewhat dormant. However, the rise of Serb Nationalist rhetoric after his death and the declaration of independence by a Muslim Bosnian government brought them to the forefront once again. Although Bosniaks were not given a physical identifier, their names and association with a Muslim past were manipulated as an effective method of symbolization by the Serb groups that were targeting them.

Rwanda on the other hand was religiously homogenous. However, economic class and subtle physical differences separated the society into Hutu and Tutsi populations. Although Rwanda existed as a bipolar society prior to the arrival of European colonial powers, it was the Belgians who would make this distinction official. In the early twentieth century, at the extreme reach of the one generation range representing proximate cause, the Belgian colonial government undertook an effort to classify the entire population of Rwanda. They issued identity cards to the population designating each person as Hutu or Tutsi based, in theory, on physical differences. However, in effect, they served to reinforce the pre-colonial economic system bestowing the racial identifiers based on who worked the land and who owned more cows (Rall, 1996).

Although Kosovo and Serbia are religiously dissimilar, that was not how the Serbian authorities chose to symbolize the Kosovar population. The majority of the population of Kosovo is ethnically Albanian and is perceived by Serb Nationalists to have encroached on the heartland of Greater Serbia. Additionally, the Serb government of Yugoslavia portrayed the entire ethnic Albanian Kosovar society as terrorists because of the actions of the Kosovo Liberation Army (Moseley, 1998). Because of this, enemies of the Serb-led Yugoslav Army, militias and police forces became identified as all non-Serbs in the territory of Kosovo and their supporters in the surrounding countries.

Libya is again an outlier as it did not have any visible religious or ethnic strife prior to the uprising. Under Qaddafi's rule, tensions between the country's more than 150 tribes were kept in check with a strong central power in Tripoli (Siddiqui, 2012, Feb 04). Because of this centralization of power, any break from the official system was viewed as a challenge to the power of Qaddafi and Libya as a whole. As such, when the uprising began, the rebels became the enemies of the Libyan government. Many anti-Qaddafi Libyans self-symbolized, aligning themselves with the new National Transitional Council and the National Liberation Army. On the other hand the government of Libya and Qaddafi himself used symbolic language when referring to the rebels calling them "al Qaeda-inspired terrorists" and provocateurs while addressing his supporters, the nation and the world (RFE/RL, 2011).

Stanton himself acknowledges that symbolization, like the previous stage classification, occurs naturally in all human societies (1996). However, when these systems of symbolization are forced upon one group in a bipolar society, the results can be disastrous. Systems of symbolization make it easier for perpetrators to identify targeted members of a population.

Without symbolization, there is no genocide. However, these cases show that symbolization can take many different forms and evolve over differing lengths of time. These efforts of symbolization rarely begin in the generational period prior to the cases; however they are often intensified through rhetoric and physical symbolization in the lead-up to the conflicts.

Although symbolization can be identified as a proximate cause of genocide, it is difficult for observers to identify which systems of symbolization will lead to conflict and genocide and which are benign. This does not mean that the international community should ignore systems of symbolization around the world. In fact, countries with extreme examples of symbolization should be monitored more closely to identify if and when they proceed from that stage to the next: dehumanization.

**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. At this stage, hate propaganda in print and on hate radios is used to vilify the victim group.” (Stanton, 1996)

In a video from July 11, 1995, the day Bosnian Serb forces captured Srebrenica, their leader Ratko Mladic proclaimed “We give this town to the Serb nation... The time has come to take revenge on the Muslims” (Little, 2012). To the Bosnian Serb forces, the Muslim inhabitants were no longer individuals, they were a representation of the Ottomans who conquered the area centuries earlier. As such, the slaughter that followed was no longer the murder of innocents, but retribution for wound dealt to their ancestors and the reclamation of land they believed to be rightfully theirs.

Rwanda presents a classical example of dehumanization. The popular pro-Hutu *Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines* (RTLM) broadcast extremist propaganda encouraging Hutus to protect their country from the U.N. peacekeeping forces (Human Rights Watch, 1999c) and

their neighbors, the Tutsi (Gaillard, 2002). The radio station referred to the Tutsis as cockroaches (Kellow & Steeves, 1998) and broadcast the coded call to arms “cut down the tall trees” following the death of the president (Smith, 2003).

Kosovar Albanians, much like the Muslims in Bosnia, were portrayed in Serb propaganda as the modern agents of the Ottoman Empire which defeated Serbia there in 1389. Beyond the attachment to ancient grievances, the entire ethnic Albanian population was labeled as terrorists because of the actions of the KLA (Moseley, 1998).

In Libya, Qaddafi urged his supporters to “take the greasy rats out of the streets” (Sorcher, 2011, Feb 22). In his infamous speeches and interviews during the uprising he alleged that the rebels were al Qaeda, referred to them as cockroaches and asserted that the protestors in the streets were children under the influence of hallucinogenic drugs introduced into their milk and Nescafé by foreign powers (Amanpour, 2011, Feb. 28, Fahim, & Kirkpatrick, 2011, February 23).

These cases show that dehumanization comes in multiple forms. Unlike the previously mentioned stages, classification and symbolization, it can be said that dehumanization directly causes genocide. But for the connection of the Muslim religion to the defeat by the Ottoman Empire, the response to the breakaway of Bosnia from Yugoslavia would not have resulted in the feverishly violent response from ethnic Serbs. The country’s declaration of independence would have likely been met with resistance and conflict, but would have probably resulted in fewer civilian casualties. Some experts including Romeo Dallaire, the commander of the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Rwanda, have theorized that the genocide could have been halted or slowed if the transmissions from RTLM had been jammed (Dallaire, 2005). In the cases of Kosovo and Libya, the international community learned from its previous mistakes and acted

after dehumanization, among other factors, reached a point at which it deemed dangerous and unacceptable.

Because dehumanization does not exist pervasively throughout human cultures as classification and symbolization, it is one of the first signs that the international community can see and act on. Methods prevent further dehumanization should be taken and preparations should be made in the case that intervention is necessary to prevent violence against marginalized communities. Had the peacekeepers in Rwanda been given the permission to jam RTLM's signal or efforts been made to dissuade Serb nationalism in Bosnia prior to its independence, these cases may not have become the model cases of genocide they are seen as today.

**Organization:**

“Genocide is always organized, usually by the state, often using militias to provide deniability of state responsibility (the Janjaweed in Darfur.) Sometimes organization is informal (Hindu mobs led by local RSS militants) or decentralized (terrorist groups.) Special army units or militias are often trained and armed. Plans are made for genocidal killings.” (Stanton, 1996)

Prior to the Bosnian declaration of independence and the outbreak of conflict in the newly founded country, preparations were apparent. Reporters were provided with color coded maps by ethnic Serb leaders showing plans to take half to two-thirds of Bosnian territory should it choose to secede. These plans included taking the city of Banja Luka which was home to a 49% Muslim minority. Furthermore, leaders in the area that would become Republika Srpska, a Serb enclave within Bosnia, had ordered full military mobilization although it had been forbidden by the republican government in Sarajevo (Gutman, 1993, p. 8-10). Following the declaration of Bosnian independence, the ethnic Serbs declared their own state within Bosnia, *Republika Srpska*. This territory had its own military, led by Ratko Mladic which notoriously

carried out “Directive 7” which resulted in the isolation of the Srebrinica safe area and the eventual massacre of its people (Jones, 2008).

In Rwanda, the preparations for genocide revolved around an extreme Hutu nationalist political bloc. These politicians proclaimed “Hutu power” and formed a number of well-armed militias including the infamous *Interhamwe*, despite officially acknowledging the power-sharing agreement that was to be signed between the government and the RPF (Dallaire, 2005). In December 1993, government support for these militias was accidentally acknowledged on an open radio channel (Human Rights Watch, 1999c) and confirmation would come as these groups acted in concert with the Hutu-led Rwandan Army throughout the course of the conflict.

In Kosovo, the atrocities that were committed were organized through the highest levels of the Serbian government. As opposed to Bosnia where local Serbs organized to create their own Army, the Serb-controlled Yugoslav Army and Serbian Police forces took up arms against the KLA in Kosovo. Although these groups fought in Kosovo it was the Special Anti-Terrorist and Special Operations Units that are implicated in most of the atrocities. These clandestine units were created specifically to counter the KLA and enact revenge on the Albanian populace for their attacks (Strauss, 1999, Jan 27).

In the case of Libya, the organization for systematic violence against those who opposed the regime laid with Qaddafi, his inner circle and the portions of his army that remained loyal. This meant that his word was law, and that his speeches declaring that he would cleanse Benghazi of the rebels (Kershner, 2011) were met followed by sixty-strong tank column from the Libyan Army headed straight for the city (Pendlebury, 2011, Mar 21).

Like dehumanization, organization, as defined by Stanton, can be cited as a cause of genocide. Even the Rwandan case, where most of the killings were committed with machetes and

wooden bats, there was extensive planning behind the actions. Some of these organizational aspects are apparent to observers while others are hidden deep within state and non-state apparatuses. Still, when these are recognized by the international community, they should be a clear warning that genocide may occur in a country or region and should be a clear.

**Polarization:**

“Extremists drive the groups apart. Hate groups broadcast polarizing propaganda. Laws may forbid intermarriage or social interaction. Extremist terrorism targets moderates, intimidating and silencing the center. Moderates from the perpetrators’ own group are most able to stop genocide, so are the first to be arrested and killed.” (Stanton, 1996)

Prior to the outbreak of violence in the early nineties, the Serb, Croat, and Bosnian populations lived side by side relatively peacefully. However in the lead-up to the genocide in Bosnia, racism and religious intolerance fueled by both Bosnian and Serb nationalism pushed the political rhetoric to the extremes. In Serb-held territories, Bosniaks were stripped of their rights while Serbs in Muslim held territories feared retribution. Because of this the political and social center that had existed previously based on language, shared customs and generations of intermarriage largely disappeared (Bugajski, 1993, Apr 27).

In Rwanda, moderate leaders from both the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups were assassinated. These assassinations removed those who threatened Hutu nationalism from power allowing dehumanization and preparations for the extermination of Tutsis to proceed unchecked (Human Rights Watch, 1999c). Because the moderate and Tutsi elements in the government had been silenced, nothing was done to suppress the hate speech broadcast by RTLM or the rise of violent Hutu nationalist militias.

Throughout the early nineties, Kosovo managed to avoid falling into the violence that had erupted in the Balkans thanks to the passive resistance tactics of Ibrahim Rugova leader of the shadow government that existed in Kosovo. However, as Serb pressure on the region mounted,

many ethnic Albanians grew discontented and turned to nationalism and violence. Coming from the vein of Kosovar nationalism, the KLA attacked Serbian civilians, military and police installations and many moderate ethnic Albanians, going as far as labeling those in the center traitors (Jimenez, 1999, May 29). This further polarized the Serb inhabitants of Kosovo, leading them to demand protection and retribution from Belgrade.

Prior to the uprising, there was very little political action so speak of in Libya. Opponents of the regime were jailed or executed. Furthermore, the very nature of the revolution was polarizing in and of itself pitting the rebels and the National Transitional Council against Qaddafi fighting for control over the country.

Although polarization does not always lead to genocide, the political conditions within polarized systems are favorable to it. When the control of the discourse falls to the extremes, or even worse, one party, it changes the nature of the discussion. Classification and symbolization are intensified and dehumanizing language and acts spread throughout the area without question from a moderate center.

While polarization is difficult to stop, it is easier to prevent by providing international support to encourage civil political discourse and to promote respect for minorities as well as their political rights. This is one of the aspects of the “Eight Stages” occurs in many countries throughout the world without leading to genocide or even armed conflict. However, because it opens the doors to dehumanization, it is most definitely a cause in these cases of genocide.

**Preparation:**

“Victims are identified and separated out because of their ethnic or religious identity. Death lists are drawn up. Members of victim groups are forced to wear identifying symbols. Their property is expropriated. They are often segregated into ghettos, deported into concentration camps, or confined to a famine-struck region and starved. At this stage, a Genocide Emergency must be declared.” (Stanton, 1996)

In Bosnia, the first reports of “ethnic cleansing” came in June 1992. All sides in the conflict accused the others of eviction and confiscation of property (Rowley, 1992). This was especially bad in the area around Banja Luka where entire Muslim villages were forced to sign over their property (Gutman, 1993, p. 20-23), then deported by railcar to concentration camps (Human Rights Watch, 1992).

Although the process of issuing identification cards labeling Rwandans by their ethnicity had been instituted by the Belgian colonial powers, these cards were reissued and updated for accuracy prior to the 1994 genocide. Additionally, lists of remaining moderate Hutus were written up, targeting them for extermination alongside the Tutsi (Human Rights Watch, 1999b).

In Kosovo, reprisal attacks were carried out by skilled, trained death squads. These squads, under the guise of the Special Anti-Terrorist Unit and the Special Operations Unit targeted ethnic Albanian civilians in retribution for KLA attacks. These attacks showed clear preparation as they would gather dozens of civilians before summarily executing them together (Strauss, 1999, Jan 27).

Before his tanks approached the rebel enclave of Benghazi, members of Qaddafi’s inner circle gave speeches decrying the rebels and vowing to wipe them out in 48 hours (Karam, 2011). Furthermore Qaddafi himself gave an infamous speech in which he declared that his army would hunt down the protestors and rebels in Benghazi “inch by inch, house by house, home by home, alleyway by alleyway” (Kershner, 2011).

The preparation stage prior to genocide is the often the immediate cause of the slaughter of innocents or the intervention by foreign powers and is clearly shown in these cases. This stage is also one of the clearest to the international community if reports from sources on the ground

are trusted their information is analyzed. This is also the point at which prevention efforts become intervention as it is often only a matter of time before the killing starts.

### **Conclusion**

Stanton's "Eight Stages of Genocide" clearly work within an academic context analyzing the cases in retrospect. I remain unconvinced, however, that they are an effective manner of evaluating conflicts in real time.

The division of genocide into stages as Stanton suggests, provides an analyst with a clear delineation of the course these conflicts take and accurately depicts genocide as a process instead of a singular event. Although Stanton notes that his "Eight Stages of Genocide" are not meant to be taken as linear in nature (1996), his numeration of the stages as published them leads one to assume that the process follows a distinct order. These cases, however, make it clear that it is not necessarily so.

Due to their similar nature, classification and symbolization often occur simultaneously. In fact, by listing classification first, Stanton fails to note that in some of the cases groups are classified based on symbolization, notably Bosnia where religious differences and their symbolic qualities played a large role in the classification stage.

Likewise, polarization which falls farther down the list as numerated by Stanton can occur prior to the stages of classification and symbolization. This occurs as a consequence of the society in which the conflict occurs. In the case of Rwanda, ethnic divisions date back far longer than the polarization of the society, whereas the classification in the case of Libya only occurred after the polarization of the state driven by Qaddafi's monopoly on political discourse and the ensuing rebellion inspired by the Arab Spring.

The first six stages may be described as proximate causes of genocide. Each step leads to the extermination stage or provides the international community with reason to intervene and some aspect of each occurs within the generation prior to the conflict. Although systems of classification and symbolization usually have existed for some time prior to the current generation experiencing the conflict, those tensions are often increased with rhetoric and propaganda in the years and months before genocide. Polarization allows the extremes at one or both ends of the spectrum to take hold, creating an environment permitting one side to commit gross human rights abuses and mass atrocities against the other. Finally, the stages of organization and preparation lead directly to the commission of genocide, as plans are drawn up, the methods of extermination are acquired and the gears of mass murder are set in motion.

Although Stanton's first six stages accurately fit the definition of proximate causes; that does not mean that they are equally valuable in the prevention of genocide. In particular, the stages of symbolization and classification as these seem to be endemic to nearly every human culture. Because of the pervasiveness of classification and symbolization throughout humanity, it is important that the international community focus on cases where these phenomena have been pushed to the extreme in especially vulnerable, bipolar societies. Instead of looking to classification and symbolization as warning signs of genocide, the international community must concentrate its efforts on preventing them from being used by extremists against sections of society.

As symbolization and classification often evolve into dehumanization as a result of polarization, it is important for the international community to support programs to keep countries from devolving into extremely divided societies. It is only then that dehumanization begins to appear and plans to exterminate or deport a segment of the population can be

organized. Although all highly polarized societies do not produce genocide, it serves as a better indicator of at risk countries than symbolization or classification. If the middle had been supported and preserved in the above cases, had U.N. Peacekeepers been authorized to protect centrist politicians, had programs to support the development of healthy civil and political society been implemented, they may not have resulted in the slaughter of innocents.

Although there are methods to prevent dehumanization, it will at some point occur somewhere. Although it does not always lead to genocide, dehumanization is a strong indicator that some segment of a society is having its human rights violated, justifying observation by the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights as well as human rights NGOs. The presence of these observers would allow the international community to take decisive, preventative action in the case that the condition worsens and the stages of organization or preparation become apparent.

To prevent and intervene in cases of genocide, the international community must first seek to understand its proximate causes to accurately identify warning signs. Through tools like Stanton's "Eight Stages of Genocide", scholars, activists and government officials alike are beginning to understand what causes genocide and which warnings provide significant evidence to act upon.

Today, there are a plethora of resources available to predict genocide. Organizations including Genocide Watch, the Enough Project and the U.S. Institute of Peace, along with many other national and international groups, regularly publish studies and alerts bringing attention to conflicts that they believe are in danger of developing cases of genocide. Furthermore, the advent of drone and satellite technology has allowed governments and organizations such as John

Prendergast and George Clooney's Satellite Sentinel a birds-eye view of ongoing conflicts throughout the world.

However, information is not the only variable missing in the equation of genocide prevention. For politicians, governments and intergovernmental organizations to act, there must be sufficient political will backing policies of intervention and prevention. Without requisite motivation, governments will continue to ignore the warning signs, only intervening after the chorus of activists and the death toll in these conflicts rise or waiting for the fire to burn itself out.

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