

# **Examining Islamic State's Mechanisms to Carry Out Genocide in Iraq**

Written by Tyler Headley

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### **The Islamic State's Genocide:**

#### **Examining the Mechanisms Used by the Islamic State to Carry Out Genocide in Iraq**

Throughout the post-Cold War period, scholars have worried about the prospect of genocide between religious groups being carried out in the Middle East.[1] These fears have recently been realized: as of 2012, the self-proclaimed Islamic State[2] attained a critical mass of followers to begin a genocidal religious-cleansing campaign. The group killed more than twenty thousand civilians in 2014, and the mass-killings have only escalated since[3]. Because of the group's recent emergence there is sparse literature analyzing rather than describing the group, and no literature analyzing the mechanisms that the Islamic State employs to carry out genocide in Iraq and Syria. There exists a pressing need to analyze the Islamic State's genocidal mechanisms so that the international community can

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efficiently end the genocide before it inexorably escalates. In this article, I use existing literature on genocide and bystanders as well as a set of case studies to examine three questions: first, how is the Islamic State able to commit genocide? Second, to what extent are local and international bystanders responsible? Finally, how can the genocide be stopped?

The emergence of the Islamic State and its ability to commit a widespread and self-publicized genocide in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is alarming for two reasons. First, there was a relative breakdown in the scholarly and intelligence communities' ability to predict the Islamic State's success. This is shocking because the Islamic State is the first group in decades where "a single party combines the necessary ideological zeal, determination, and military skill to implement a revisionist agenda and redraw regional borders." [4] The failure to predict this group's rise to power indicates that there is an absence of literature on the emergence of both terrorist groups and genocidal regimes. Second, the lack of a unified international recognition of the ongoing genocide and full-military intervention in response to the genocide is alarming in that it harkens back to the international community's lack of response in Cambodia and Rwanda. Namely, during the Rwandan genocide, many states "drew a distinction between genocide acts occurring versus genocide occurring," but later acknowledged that the acts were part of a larger intent to systematically eliminate the Tutsi population. [5] Because the international community failed to act, Hutu militias were able to murder more than 800,000 people in a single month. Despite the White House's recent acknowledgement that there is, in fact, genocide ongoing in Iraq, no practical force has been assembled to stop the genocide with any speed.

In the wake of the Holocaust, the United Nations drafted its Convention on Genocide with the intent that should there ever be another genocide the international community would intervene. Genocide is the antithesis to what the United Nations stands for: Lebor writes that "genocide is the most egregious crime against humanity, and the severest breach of the United Nations' three founding documents: the Charter, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Geneva Convention". [6] Despite 145 UN member states signing and ratifying the UN Convention on Genocide, the Convention failed to prevent further genocide: four of the six major genocides of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were committed after the Convention's ratification [7]. While interstate conflict gets the brunt of the scholarly world's attention, many scholars argue that genocide and mass-killings are proportionally by deaths a more pressing issue: while about 61 million people were killed in international conflicts during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, between 50-150 million were killed in mass-atrocities or genocides. [8] Rummell argues that this figure is higher, that more than 170 million unarmed civilians were killed by regimes during this time period. [9] The broad failure of the international community to stop these mass-atrocities indicates that there is no solid mechanism for preventing or stopping genocide, despite the recent technology boom and rise of state superpowers.

To analyze the mechanisms that allow the Islamic State to commit genocide, I draw upon a wide breadth of genocide and bystander literature. Using this literature, I create a model that explains when and how genocides begin. I posit that societal change and economic hardships create an atmosphere conducive to genocide, and preexisting cultural norms and characteristics allow the perpetrator to accumulate followers to target the victims. To address how and to what extent local and international bystanders are responsible for the genocide, I create a bystander theoretical framework that I apply to both the areas under the control of the Islamic State and international state actors. Specifically, I look at whether the local and international bystanders positively affirmed the perpetrator and indirectly harmed the victims.

Finally, to create coherent policy suggestions, I examine two case studies. I first examine the Nazi Regime in Germany before and during World War II. With the second case study, I look at the successful genocide mechanisms of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. I then compare these two case studies to the Islamic State, and draw further conclusions about the IS structure and genocidal mechanisms.

I find that, despite the mass publicity and local lore about the Islamic State's uniqueness, the Islamic State vastly resembles previous genocidal regimes. Understanding the underlying mechanisms of how the Islamic State is able to perpetuate genocide has large implications on the international community's ability to craft policies to stop the genocide and end the Islamic State's rule of terror. This article's analysis of the Islamic State also adds to the scholar community's knowledge of the Islamic State.

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## Genocide in Syria and Iraq

Despite the failure of the United Nations or the multilateral military coalition led by the United States against the Islamic State to overtly label the Islamic State's actions as genocide,[10] there is widespread public opinion that the Islamic State is committing genocide.[11] The modern definition of genocide, created by the United Nations in 1948 in response to the Holocaust, defines genocide as the *systematic killing with intent to destroy in whole or in part an ethnic, racial, religious, or other designated group*. [12] The definition subsequently states that genocide is "a crime under international law which [member nations] undertake to prevent and punish." [13] As this is the definition of genocide that has been ratified by 145 out of the 193 United Nations member states, I will use this definition to analyze whether the Islamic State is committing genocide.

The modern Islamic State was founded with two main intentions: to 'cleanse' its area of infidels, and to 'destroy' secular or non-radical Sunni States.[14] Both show genocidal intent. The first intention shows that the Islamic State will murder any individual who does not convert. Prem Mahadevan describes the Islamic State's mission as "not only openly sectarian, but adhering to a rigid interpretation of Islam that allows it to openly brand all who disagree with it as apostates worthy of being killed." [15] Indeed, in Islamic State-controlled territory, non-believers have, if they were not slaughtered outright, had to choose between conversion and death. All non-radical Sunnis are labeled as infidels, especially Shia Muslims. Napoleoni writes "both al Zarqawi and al Baghdadi have used takfir to legitimize their *genocidal* wars against the Shias." [16] The second intention of the Islamic State is equally worrying: there is little doubt that the Islamic State disdains the very notion of sovereignty and the nation-state. Should the Islamic State ever control foreign territory such as Israel, it would not hesitate before initiating a mass-slaughter of Jewish people.[17]

The Islamic State has brutally acted upon its genocidal intent. Although the United Nations recently stopped just short of definitively calling what the Islamic State is doing genocide, its human rights report on the IS' massacres of the Yazidis stated that the slaughters "pointed to the intent of [the Islamic State] to destroy the Yezidi as a group", and "strongly suggests" that the Islamic State is committing genocide.[18] The genocide has not only been directed at Yazidis: members of all religions have been targeted to such an extent that Shia Muslims, Christians, and other religious minorities in the region have fled their homes in the advance of the Islamic State or were killed trying to do so.[19] Recent reports indicate that the Islamic State is escalating the frequency and intensity of such mass-killings. Gareth Stansfield wrote, "the summer months of 2014 witnessed developments in Iraq that have transformed both the country and the geopolitical environment in which it exists. These developments have also seen the re-emergence of human rights abuses and atrocities committed on a genocidal scale." [20] There is little doubt that the Islamic State is instigating systematic killings with the intent to destroy all non-radical Sunni religious groups, not only in the areas that they control, but also in the broader region. Attacks on Christian minorities this year doubled over the previous year in the Middle East and North Africa solely because of the Islamic State's increasing reach.[21] The systematic killing of all non-radical Sunni Muslims has clear implications: the Islamic State is committing genocide.[22]

The remainder of the article proceeds in six sections. First, I craft a comprehensive model of genocide and bystanding, drawing from existing literature. Second, I apply this theory to the Islamic State. Third, I create two case studies with which I compare the Islamic State and the Islamic State's genocidal mechanisms. Fourth, I conclude with a series of policy recommendations.

## The Genocide Model

How does a regime commit genocide?[23] To address this question, I look to a plethora of literature on genocide[24]. In my model, there are three primary actors: the perpetrators, victims, and bystanders. Literature indicates that, of the three groups, there is always a larger population of bystanders than there are perpetrators or victims. Additionally, the victims are usually a minority population, which has often held control of power, been more wealthy, or is perceived to have had one of the two. In my model, social change and economic hardships are the catalyzing factors that create a frustration amongst the perpetrator-followers, which, under the perpetrator leadership, causes the followers to aggressively target the victim population. The perpetrator leadership will employ pre-existing cultural

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norms and characteristics to both gain enough followers to carry out the killing and to pacify the local bystander population.

## *Social Change*

Rapid social change serves as the catalyst for genocide. Leo Kuper argues in his *plural society* theory that deep ethnic, cultural, religious or class divisions create the platform through which genocide can occur.[25] Its offshoot *political opportunity* theory writes that these societal divisions will be funneled into the scapegoating of a minority population.[26] These victims will bare the brunt of the population's frustration and anger over rapid social change and recent economic hardships. This social change can take many forms including, but not limited to: political or regime change, revolution, war or occupying military forces, modernization or westernization, changing gender parity, changing religious makeup of the population, and violence.[27] Barbara Harff found that 36 out of 37 genocides and politicides between 1955 and 1998 happened during or immediately after political upheaval.[28] In addition to creating frustration within the society, social change often gives rise to radical nationalist political or extra-political organizations that purport they can solve the problem. Social change can also promote zero-sum politics, "where one group's benefits come at the expense of another's," in a competition for power during uncertain times.[29] In sum, great social change can often radicalize or bring rise to radical groups which perpetrate genocide.

## *Economic Hardship*

Economic hardships can also give rise to the same societal frustration as rapid social changes. Realities such as high unemployment and high poverty can leave many people, especially young men, frustrated and without a job, leaving them susceptible to radical or fundamentalist groups who often scapegoat a group. Substandard economic situations can also bring rise to brutishness within the populace, another catalyst for mass-killings and genocide.[30] Examples of economic hardship includes, but are not limited to: high unemployment, declining GDP, recession, inflation or hyperinflation, increasing economic disparity, increasing poverty, and a worse economic position relative to the regime's geographic neighbors.

Generally, the culmination of rapid societal change and economic hardships is, first, the perpetrating group increasingly applying extreme measures to minorities. Second, the society will develop genocidal dynamics such as scapegoating or dehumanizing of a population. Third, there will be accelerating bureaucratic control of minorities such as the registration of a minority or a visible marking of that minority. [31] And fourth, there will be systematic demographic abuse through rape, plunder and murders.[32] Note, however, that rapid social change and economic hardships don't always turn to genocide. The most cited example is post-Apartheid South Africa, where without the benevolent Nelson Mandela, most would have expected many blacks to violently seek retribution against the white settlers. Goldhagen writes, "mass elimination is *always* preventable and *always* results from conscious political choice." [33] Thus, with the right leader, genocide can be averted.

## *Cultural Norms and Characteristics*

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The standing cultural norms and characteristics of a society allow the perpetrators to amass a following and carry out the genocide against the victims without significant local bystander or civilian intervention.[34] Helpful societal characteristics for genocide include a history of devaluation, an unwavering respect for authority which increases the likelihood of followers obeying violent orders, and past genocide or dehumanization of the victims.[35] There is additionally literature that argues that there are some cultures such as Danish or Swedish cultures which are more likely to help the victims than others.[36] There are also some cultures that cause higher incidences of inaction from the general public. The most cited is the Weimar Republic before World War II. Many historians argue that Germany's bureaucratic ways were engrained into society so that when the government gave an order, people would tacitly comply. In this example, the German society's custom of following orders helped the perpetrators carry out their killing, as no one would contradict an order, and caused inaction amongst bystanders.[37]

## *Perpetrators*

### 1. Leaders

Although most leaders will avoid mass-killings when possible, genocide can also give totalitarian or authoritarian leaders legitimacy and consolidate power around him or her.[38] Leaders of genocidal regimes are fanatical and radical in their pursuit of the elimination of a group, but also politically adept and often smart, appearing rational to their followers.[39] Fanaticism is not, however, always the motivation of the regime leaders for committing genocide. Alternative incentives have been found to be social change, economic hardship, group conflict, and self-interest.[40] Group conflict is when there is a conflict with another group, such as an invading or occupying force or a conflict with another ethnic, religious, or class group. Self-interest is when the leader believes that there is something to be gained individually by committing genocide.[41]

Genocide will often fester within the leadership that will use ideological, dehumanizing, and scapegoating tactics to garner support amongst the group's followers and local populace.[42] The more of a monopoly on power this regime has, the more it can act with arbitrary violence against subpopulations.[43] Additionally, most regimes that have committed genocide have been authoritarian rather than democratic. Finally, many genocidal regimes have been highly bureaucratic; bureaucracy helps in that it removes individual responsibility in the minds of the perpetrators for killing and it creates an efficient platform for efficiently executing the genocide.[44]

### 2. Followers

The followers, who are the people in charge or carrying out the murders, are almost always impressionable young men. These men are extremely loyal to both the state and their fellow soldiers, and are trained and psychologically ready to kill.[45] However, usually there is very little time or notice leading up to the slaughter, so that the followers have less time to formally develop inhibitions to killing.[46] These followers additionally are likely to hold an *ethnocentric* ideology: they hold their 'group' above all others, often dehumanizing others in order to maintain this mental pecking order.[47] Interviews with these perpetrators find that most believe that 'killing civilians is a distasteful but ultimately necessary task' to be carried out.[48] When analyzing followers, most social scientists point to the famous Milgram experiments[49]. The findings of this experiment, which has been repeated with the same results many times since, is that a shocking number of people – almost fifty percent – will hurt another person repeatedly if told to by an 'authority' figure, who gives a somewhat rational rationale for why they must hurt the other person. When applied to genocide theory, the Milgram experiment indicates that this hurting-mechanism might be the reason why so many followers participate in genocide. The end result is that the perpetrators almost always succeed in eliminating their targets and altering the world around them.[50]

### 3. Victims

Genocide and mass-violence are often between dominant and subordinate groups in a society. The victims of genocide are oftentimes a minority population that devalued a majoritarian group.[51] The victimized population is usually actually or believed to be wealthier than the perpetrating group, or historically controlled the political sphere. Victims are often blamed for social and economic woes that have befallen the country. Oftentimes only some of the

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victimized population will fight back, and if they do, this action doesn't succeed against the better-armed and prepared perpetrators.[52] Additionally, the victims are not able to successfully call the rest of the population to defend them.

## Bystanders and Bystander Theory

A bystander is 'one who is present but refrains from involvement, and is often vulnerable to social norms and makes choices of action as the situation dictates'.[53] While literature on the subject is often vague and applies only to individual case studies, I have consolidated many theories into this framework, which attempts to create an encompassing theory for bystander actions during genocide. To do this, I have categorized bystanders into two separate groups: local and international actors.

### *Local*

Many historians have estimated that in genocide, usually fifty to sixty-five percent of the local population plays the role of bystander: that is, fifty to sixty-five percent of people do not help either the perpetrators or the victims. There are many conflicting rationales for why so many bystanders fail to act. These reasons range from *therational choice theory* to the *herd instinct theory*. [54] Nevertheless, most researchers agree that local bystanders tend to distance themselves from the victims in order to justify passivity, reduce guilt, and reduce their empathy.[55] This distancing leads, in turn, to more passivity and in some cases, makes the local bystander join the perpetrator; the local bystander is more concerned with material loss than people.[56]

History also indicates that citizens and even victims are often unaware of the scale, magnitude, and truth of the genocide that is going on around them until the genocide concludes.[57] Studies indicate that bystanders are less likely to help if others do not help, specifically neighbors that they know and see.[58] Studies also show that bystanders are more likely to help those who they feel alike to – people that they share common attributes, history, or ethnicity with.[59] Bystanders are more likely to help shelter those who they feel are 'in group' or alike. Finally, local bystanders don't act to maintain some semblance of the normal life that they were living in before the conflict or genocide began.

### *International*

International actors often have the capability to stop genocide through full-scale military interventions. An example of this is the Bosnian genocide, which was ended through strategic airstrikes by NATO. However, intervention is often a risky proposition that many international state actors attempt to avoid when possible. As Campbell put it, "states as agents has led to a conceptual framework in world politics where human tragedies are ignored until they infringe on prerogatives of state agents." [60] He points to the five years it took until the international community finally took military action in Bosnia. Why does it take so long for the international community to intervene in a crime as heinous as genocide?

First, for a country to intervene, the intervening agent must have sufficient political capital. While Butler points out that Presidents, for instance, do not technically require public support to go to war, many have also noted that in humanitarian cases there is often no incentive for intervention unless the people are behind the conflict.[61] This being said, a recent study indicated that more than 70% of Americans support the use of troops to stop genocide, compared to the 30% who support protecting Taiwan if China invades or the roughly 50% who would support using troops to support Israel if Iran attacked.[62] These statistics indicate that there is public will behind the use of troops to stop an active genocide, thus providing enough political will, at least in America, for stopping genocide.

Second, if an international wants to intervene and has the necessary political capital, the international state actor will ask whether the invasion of a sovereign state is a legitimate course of action. Much literature has been written on the legitimacy of foreign interventions, and the general consensus is that intervention of a sovereign state to stop genocide can be considered a 'just cause,'[63] and there will be very few repercussions.[64] However, Abrams does note that this poses a potential slippery slope problem: if the invasion of a sovereign country is permitted under

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humanitarian grounds, at what point does it stop – mass-murders? Political killings?[65] To alleviate uncertainty, during a 2005 United Nations conference, member states debated a new proposition: the Right to Protect (R2P). According to the member states, because “the international responsibilities of States and International Law are *post facto* mechanisms which do not satisfy the rights of victims,” new agreements would have to be drafted.[66] The resulting R2P agreement stated that the international community can act forcefully in response to mass-atrocities, but action must first be taken through the Security Council.[67] This legislation gave more legitimacy to foreign interventions, but the necessity for Security Council approval limited the agreement’s applicability.

Finally, for a third-party state actor to intervene in an ongoing genocide, the actor must have the capability for intervention. There are two components to capability: first, capability can take the form of having enough clout in the market to levy and enforce economic sanctions to having the military might to engage in a military intervention away from home. Second, capability also entails the probability of success: for instance, a country will have a larger military and humanitarian capability in Rwanda than in Russia because of Russia’s superior forces and international clout.

So if there is political will, legitimacy and capability behind the state actor’s action, then there is a high probability that the state will intervene. However, the degree to this intervention is variable, ranging anywhere from economic and weapons sanctions to a full-scale military intervention. This intervention is also often muddled, as genocide is often committed under the ‘fog of war,’ and the third-party intervention is carried out as part of the war, not specifically to stop the genocide.

Using the definitions and indicia of action detailed above, I created the model below. This model is specifically only for international state actors’ extrajudicial *humanitarian* interventions once the country’s leadership determines that they would like to intervene. Note also that while this model fits many cases, it does not fit all.

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## *Conclusion*

By speaking out or taking action, bystanders have the power to temper or change the actions of the perpetrators. This is partly because most groups and members of groups that are perpetuating the violence have what some might describe as tunnel-vision: they aren't able to see what they are doing. Outsiders, the bystanders in this case, are able to cast a light on these actions. The lack of action by either the local or international bystanders signals a tacit approval for what the bystanders are doing, which indirectly aids the perpetrators. Therefore, bystanders play a large role in determining the extent and scope of a genocide, and have the collective power to stop a genocidal regime from taking power.

## **Models Applied to the Islamic State**

### *History*

The foundation of the organization that we now know as the Islamic State started with the release of Abu Musab al-Zaraqawi from a Jordanian prison in 1999.[68] Upon his release, al-Zaraqawi moved to Iraq and formed the radical terrorist group Jama'at al-Tawhid wa' al-Jihad (JAWJ). A foiled bombing forced the group and al-Zaraqawi underground until the September 11, 2001 attacks, when the group fought together with Al-Qaida. During this time, JAWJ used bombings, both suicide and remote, to carry out attacks.[69] The most notable attack was the August 19, 2003 bombing that killed the UN Special Representative in Iraq.[70] During this time, the group had four goals: expel the United States from Iraq, establish a Caliphate, attack Iraq's secular neighbors, and attack Israel.[71] Shown by JAWJ's goals and attacks, the radical and fundamentalist group was intensely anti-Shia Muslim, and called Jews and Christians 'infidels,' despite their being classified by most Muslims sects as 'people of the book'.[72]

JAWJ increased the frequency of its operations in the period of 2004-2006 while American troops were on the ground, and, in September 2004, pledged allegiance to Osama bin Laden's terrorist network, Al-Qaida. Despite the alliance, there was tension between Zaraqawi's group and Bin Laden's, chiefly that Zaraqawi wanted to attack Shia Muslims, while Al-Qaida wanted to focus on attacking foreign regimes.[73] On June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2006, Zaraqawi was killed. Despite this loss, his death strengthened the resolve of the organization. Four months later, on November 10<sup>th</sup>, JAWJ pledged bay'a (allegiance) to Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, not to be confused with the current 'Caliph,' Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) was born.[74]

By 2007, ISI had a stable economy, raising roughly \$70-200 million dollars a year through a combination of oil and extortion.[75] A major setback occurred, however, when in 2007, United States President George Bush ordered a US troop surge in Afghanistan and Iraq.[76] One part of this surge included gaining the support of local Sunni tribes, and these tribes rose up against the ISI, vastly weakening the group's support and funding in a multilateral effort known as the 'Sunni awakening.' As a result of this campaign, almost 80% of ISI's leaders were killed or captured including Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, and the United States regarded the group as mostly defunct.[77]

Under the newly-elected President Obama, from 2009-2010, the United States began a phased military withdrawal. This withdrawal, combined with the anti-Sunni policies of the Nuri al-Maliki Iraqi administration, once again strengthened ISI and fueled recruitment. One primary reason many joined the group, which remains today, is that ISI was able to pay much higher public salaries than the government.[78] In 2011, the Syrian revolution began, and ISI used this instability to spread influence through widespread and well-coordinated attacks. Al-Baghdadi used this time to consolidate power, assembling a new leadership team, many of whom previously were military commanders under Sadaam Hussein.

After a dispute with the Syrian rebel group al-Nusra, many al-Nusra fighters joined the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. In early 2014, despite an initial loss of territory, the Islamic State initiated a widespread attack throughout Iraq.[79] While still a relatively small fighting force, the group was very well equipped, having stolen US-made heavy weaponry that had been vacated by the Iraqi military. IS troops are also very well funded, with a revenue stream amounting to almost a billion dollars per year.[80] [81] Experts on terrorism have agreed that "the advent of the IS



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changes the potential dynamics of the conflict [in the Middle East]."[82] This is for two reasons: the Islamic State lays claim to all lands once controlled by Muslims and is attempting to implement the first Caliphate in centuries, and it is the first group to be at least moderately successful in this goal.

## *Social Change*

In the last twenty years, there have been remarkable social changes in Iraq. These changes can be condensed into five primary events: foreign occupation, regime change, religious oppression, westernization, and the Syrian collapse.[83] The United States invasion of 2003 radically changed the internal political system of Iraq from the autocracy of Saddam Hussein to a state of relative anarchy to a 'failed' democracy. Saddam's deposition not only placed hundreds of thousands of war-trained Iraqi soldiers out of work, it also collapsed the Iraqi economy. The invasion created a common enemy for many Iraqis in the United States, and animosity carried over to what many considered the US-appointed Malaki administration. The Malaki administration pursued an aggressive anti-Ba'athist and anti-Sunni Muslim strategy which ostracized Sunni tribes and radicalized many, increasing the already prevalent sectarian conflicts. The net sum of the Malaki administration's policies was "a Sunni tribal uprising; the IS quickly jumped on the bandwagon and turned it to its own advantage. By forging tactical alliances with Sunni militias, it built pockets of influence in the Sunni heartland." [84]

The United States invasion also had a modernizing and westernizing effect. Schools became more integrated and western education was implemented across the country, to the displeasure of Islamic fundamentalists – though many Iraqi elites had been western-educated for decades. The fabric of Iraqi society was being torn apart by two factions of the country, one pushing for modernization and the other for traditionalism. Finally, the 2011 collapse of the Syrian government created a safe haven for Iraqi fighters, and also caused an influx of Syrian fighters into Iraq; effectively, the Iraqi-Syrian border ceased to exist except on paper. The collapse of the Syrian government combined with the withdrawal of United States troops created a massive power vacuum within Iraq.

## *Economic Hardships*

The Iraqi economy has gone through several shock periods in the last two decades. The five most significant have been: the Iraqi military and Ba'athist party disbandment, increasing poverty, an oil-based economy, religion-based public goods provisioning, and poor business opportunities. In addition to dissolving the Iraqi military, the ruling Ba'athist party was expelled from government. During this time there was massive inflation and unemployment in the country, but the United States and the newly-elected Malaki government worked to improve the economic situation in the country. By some standards, they succeeded: the official unemployment rate dropped (though this number has widely been criticized as being factually inaccurate), and Iraq's Gross Domestic Product skyrocketed.

While these numbers seem to indicate a positive trend, they aren't exactly what they seem. By 2013, it was evident that Iraq had a very weak business environment. Poverty was high (21% country-wide), especially in rural areas (40%)[85]. Business and entrepreneurial opportunities in the country were labeled as 'very little' by the IMF, further frustrating a growing youth population. Additionally, the entire economy was largely oil-driven: in 2013, only 46% of the economy was not oil-based[86]. The mixture of high poverty and an oil-based economy created a massive advantage for the Islamic State. Using captured oil fields, the Islamic State could, and still does, use the revenue to recruit soldiers, promising a wage, food, and a roof to sleep under.

The combination of the social and economic hardships is a tumultuous situation through which the Islamic State is able to recruit a following of frustrated, unemployed, and impressionable young men. In addition to the social and economic factors which destabilized the failed Iraqi State and allowed the IS to take control, there were two existing *structural* factors that allowed the IS to keep control. The first factor is public goods provisioning. The Malaki administration was terrible at provisioning public goods, especially in towns further away from the capital or in proportionally Sunni cities.[87] The Islamic State, however, has created an efficient system of public goods provisioning, which has made many of the city-people complicit under IS rule. Second, the Islamic State has brought a relative stability to these cities that were, because of the social change and economic hardships, violently volatile.

### *Cultural Norms and Characteristics*

I will examine the Iraqi cultural norms and characteristics through two lenses: societal and religious. I also analyze the underlying norms and characteristics of Iraq rather than Syria because the group was founded and operates out of Iraq.

#### 1. Societal Norms and Characteristics

Iraq has a history of distrust towards foreigners, originating from the British mandate of 1920, which set a template for the political sphere of the country but lacked any local Iraqi voice.[88] Under foreign rule, Iraqis rarely if ever saw economic or social improvements.[89] As the lore of the country goes, since Alexander the Great, no foreigner can hold Iraq. Non-local leaders have been, and still are treated as illegitimate; and since the introduction of sectarian policies by Saddam Hussein, which were continued by the al-Malaki administration, people increasingly follow leaders who belong to the same sects as themselves. After the poor distribution of public goods by the Malaki administration, which were often based on sectarian policies, many people also began following tribal and local leaders who could provide the public goods they needed. [90]

The last twenty years have also seen an escalation of a traditionalist narrative. This policy began with Saddam Hussein, who downplayed Islam's importance and played up Iraq's Mesopotamian roots. This movement increased as the country was invaded by the US military, which, to many people's displeasure, began westernizing Iraq. [91]

Al-Musawi put it best when he wrote that the cultures of Iraq in incredibly complex, full of "underlying cultural amalgams of antiquity and modernity, ethnic multiplicities and Arabo-Islamic centralities".[92] The three most important societal norms and characteristics are the societal urge to follow a 'legitimate' leader, public goods provisioning, and a prevalent and pervasive traditionalist narrative.

#### 2. Religious Norms and Characteristics

Since the 1940s, politicians in Iraq have been using religion to advance their own political careers. This scheme is employed because religion is deeply ingrained in Iraqi culture; there is an immense respect among many Iraqis for religious authority. Before the Ba'athist party came to rise, there was a Sunni-Muslim domination over the country.[93] The British, who drew up the lines to the country without regard to ethnicity or religion, caused this sectarian friction. The result of this districting was a slight Sunni minority controlling the government, with largely unhappy Shia Muslims, Kurds, and Christians all fighting for more minority political representation. With the rise of the non-sectarian Ba'athist party and Saddam Hussein, many believed that this fracture would cease.[94] However, most Shia Muslims came to see the Ba'athist party and Saddam Hussein as Sunni Muslims, which, especially in the later years of the regime, they were. Most Sunni Muslims boycotted the first Iraqi democratic elections, which caused the election of Nuri Al-Malaki, a Shia Muslim. Malaki quickly engaged in sectarian politics, consolidating Shia Muslims in important leadership positions around him, casting out most Sunni Muslims from government.[95] The result of this has been a deeply fractured sectarian landscape in Iraq. Because of this fracturing, there has been relatively little inner-sectarian fighting: a lack of Sunni-Sunni and Shia-Shia fighting to be precise.

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## 3. Conclusion

The social and religious norms and characteristics provide some key points about the state of Iraq and how the Islamic State was able to come to power and hold the seized territory. First, in the wake of the Malaki-elections, many Sunni Muslims became disenfranchised with the government. Add this to many Iraqis viewing the Iraqi administration as a foreign-appointed government run by the United States, and the Malaki government faced a legitimacy problem. The Islamic State was able to use this openness to profess itself as the only legitimate government in Iraq. Second, due to the country's complex narrative, of which the collective consciousness is primarily told through narratives and song, and in the wake of the rapid social changes that the US invasion brought, there has been a traditionalist movement sweeping through Iraq. The Islamic State capitalized on this by making a tenet of its message geared towards living life how it would have been lived during the Prophet's time. Finally, in the face of so much uncertainty, many people still look to religious leaders for authority. It is this authority that Baghdadi attempted to use as his source of legitimacy amongst the local people.

### *Perpetrators*

When utilizing my model to show how the Islamic State was and is able to commit genocide, I analyze the Islamic State through three prongs: the leaders, followers, and the group's beliefs.

### *Leaders*

The Islamic State leadership is highly bureaucratic and segmented, through three tiers of leadership: the overarching Strategic command, the Wilayaat (province) leadership, and the Qitahaat sectors (local districts). Each of the three tiers has a leader and a council, which is broken down into four parts: the religious, advisory, military, and security councils.[96] At the very top of the command structure is Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, the self-proclaimed Caliph of the Islamic State. His inner council is made up of an estimated twenty to fifty leaders, a blend of Salafi and religious scholars and military strategists, many of whom served directly under Saddam Hussein.[97] While the followers may not all be ideologues, the leadership all appear to be highly ideologically driven.

The legitimacy of the leadership comes in two prongs: legitimacy of the State itself and legitimacy of the Caliph, al-Baghdadi. When, in 2007, the Islamic State declared statehood, they released a full report on why the State was a legitimate entity.[98] The state as a whole seems very intent on nation-building. When it conquers a territory, it makes sure to first create a consensus amongst the local leaders about control of the city – creating a monopoly on violence, then works on public-goods provisioning – often surpassing the Malaki-administration's ability to provision public goods. Part of the Caliphate's legitimacy also comes from the Caliph himself, the illusive and mysterious figure of Al-Baghdadi. Baghdadi is the first self-proclaimed Caliph in 150 years, since Abdulmecid II, the 31<sup>st</sup> Caliph (1823-61).[99] Baghdadi claims descent from the Prophet Muhammad's tribe of Quraysh, speaks 'exquisite classical Arab,' is a former preacher at mosques, and holds a doctorate in Islamic jurisprudence from the Islamic University in Baghdad.[100] A mysterious figure, he has been known to wear a mask, even when conversing with his top military leaders.

### *Followers*

The total number of soldiers that the Islamic state has is estimated to be around 60,000 but is growing at a rate of a few thousand per month. Of these, an estimated 15,000 soldiers are foreign fighters from as many as a hundred different countries.[101] Understandably, there is a lack of public data on the identity of these follower-fighters. However, literature on the Islamic State suggests that these are young impressionable men who were incentivized to fight for the 'seductive' combination of religion, money, sex, and fighting.[102] Many of the recruits are ideologues, fully believing in the Islamic State's message. The IS's well-tuned propaganda machine draws a significant number of fighters through its distortion of the fighting and religious messages.[103] Data suggests, however, that many of the foreign fighters also participate for the adventure of the fight. Finally, these followers are usually well trained: upon entry to the Islamic State, recruits undergo a multi-week session consisting solely of weapons and religion training. Then, many are sent off to Syria to gain experience fighting against other jihadist groups and the Assad-regime,

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before returning back to Iraq to fight.[104]

## *Beliefs*

The Islamic State uses the concept of takfir to “legitimize their genocidal war against the Shias.”[105] The concept of takfir draws its origin from the first sectarian Muslim war in 655 AD, where both sects of Islam accused each other of being non-believers. Since then, it has remained anchored to political and economic issues. The modern use of takfir, or the extermination of Shias, was introduced by al-Zarqawi in 2003 against the wishes of Al-Qaida.[106] Goldhagen explains that radical Islamists “demonize infidels, especially those they deem their enemies, but they do not dehumanize them because all infidels must do to be redeemed is accept [and perfectly follow their radical version of] Allah, and their danger passes.”[107]

The legitimacy of the self-proclaimed Caliphate and its Caliph, al-Baghdadi, comes from the Islamic State's strict branch of Islam, Jihadi-Salafism.[108] This school of Islamic political thought is a distinct ideological movement in Sunni Islam. It is an amalgamation of Muslim Brotherhood ideas from the 1920s, chiefly the need for a Caliphate, and Salafism, which states that all non-Salafis are untrue Muslims.[109] This category of ‘untrue’ Muslims includes all Shia Muslims, non-Muslims and people who believe in democracy. The Draconian, stringent beliefs explain why the Islamic State believes that the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas are traitors against Islam. The leadership believes in both offensive and defensive jihad, and fully believes that the Islamic State is “on the right side of history.” Al-Baghdadi has been quoted as saying, “Allah has ordered us to fight his enemies and to wage Jihad in his name to establish his religion... The religion of Allah cannot be established except with the Sharia.”[110]

## *Victims*

The victims of the genocide perpetrated by the Islamic State are all non-Sunnis, specifically non-Salafi Muslims. The genocide has started with Shia Muslims and Yazidi's, but threatens to spill over into all religious groups. There are roughly 650,000 Yazidis, 1.3 million Christians, and 18 million Shia Muslims in Iraq. Multiple experts in the region has made the analogy that being Shia under Islamic State rule is equivalent to being a Jew in Nazi Germany.[111] Radical Islam has long been described as one of the most unaccepting, unbending fanatical beliefs.[112] Violence against the Shia Muslims and Yazidis is mostly in the form of killing, raping, and enslaving.

## *Local Bystanders*

Local bystanders in this conflict are anyone living under Islamic State rule who is not affiliated with the Islamic State and is not being actively targeted. Rough estimates indicate that there are millions of people living under Islamic State rule, including over a million in Mosul city alone.[113] Field reports, while not entirely accurate, indicate that most bystanders have opted for either inaction or tacit action in favor of the perpetrators. There are three reasons for the lack of bystander interaction: benefits, legitimacy, and repercussions.

First, the Islamic State attempts to create a peaceful takeover of the regions that it invades. It achieves this through building relationships with the area's leaders, usually through amicable means. This agreement is quickly followed by public goods provisioning – people in the invaded areas are often surprised by the quick and quality level of services such as sanitation, clean water supply, and free health care provided by the Islamic State.[114] The IS is also able to pay better salaries to public employees than the Iraqi government, fostering a loyal base of public servants.[115] This ‘carrot’ approach creates an atmosphere that incentivizes loyalty to the state.

Second, many Sunni Muslims have received the emergence of the Islamic State as a welcome and legitimate reprieve from previous governments. An expert on the region writes that the Islamic State “appears to many Sunnis as a promising new political entity... a new Golden Age of Islam.”[116] Yosef Jabareen writes that “It is the brutal tactics of the Islamic State that are less acceptable to many Muslims around the world, not its political conception, which enjoys considerable support in the Muslim arena.”[117] Thus, many Sunni Muslims do not try to sabotage the IS or help the state's enemies.

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Third, the Islamic State harshly punishes those who oppose it through its administration of strictly interpreted Sharia law. Punishments often harken back to medieval times, with punishments ranging from cutting of one's hand to crucifixions.[118] In the face of such harsh and unrelenting punishments, many bystanders are wholly unwilling to risk their personal safety and those of their family to help out those being persecuted and killed by the IS.

## *International Bystanders*

One could consider all non-involved states to be international bystanders. Because of the complexity that would be analyzing each individual state's individual choice to intervene or not, I've condensed this analysis into two categories: the US-led multilateral coalition and notable coalition-absentees.

The United States-led coalition is made up of eighteen countries.[119] This coalition is employing a two-pronged intervention against the Islamic State, consisting of training the Iraqi military and containment through a strategy of airstrikes. The combination of terrorist attacks and public beheadings gave the country leaders the political capital needed. Because the Islamic State is not recognized as a state, and because Iraq requested help, there was no issue over sovereignty: intervention is seen as a legitimate action. Finally, all of the coalition's members are either located in the region or have global military capabilities. However, due to the lack of foreign troops on the ground, many are calling this coalition's actions a 'proxy-war' of sorts: using another military to fight the Islamic State.[120] Its success has been moderate: the Islamic State has not lost a substantial amount of ground since the airstrikes began, but neither has it gained significant territory. For this reason, the US-led coalition is a hybrid between an intervening actor and an international bystander.

There are some notable coalition absentees. I have picked five countries that have some of the most citizens fighting for the Islamic state who are not part of the coalition. I use this indicator because having citizens fighting for the IS poses a large internal security threat, and thus an incentive for the country to join the coalition.

## **Countries**

### *Lebanon*

While Lebanon has an estimated nine hundred citizens fighting for the Islamic State and enough political capital to take action against IS, it does not have the military capability to fight in Iraq; Lebanon is preoccupied fighting the Islamic State and other terrorists within its own borders.[121]

### *China*

China has an estimated three hundred citizens fighting for the Islamic State, and is seen as regarding the Uighurs as terrorists – therefore China has an incentive to intervene.[122] However, China also is noted for its lack of non-Asian extrajudicial military intervention. The Chinese ambassador to the United Nations recently stated, on Resolution 1973 – the UNSC R2P resolution – that “China is always against the use of force in international relations.”[123] China has continued this military non-interventionist approach with the Islamic State, and instead has increased security measures and precautions across China.

### *Philippines*

The Philippines has an estimated more than two hundred citizens fighting for the Islamic State. It also has a large Muslim population in the South that it treats with hostility.[124] It even offered to join the coalition – the limiting factor despite having both the political will and finding the coalition's actions legitimate was its military capability.[125] The Philippines doesn't have the excess capital and overseas military strength to fight a war in the Middle East.

## **Islamic State: Conclusions**

It is interesting that unlike the United States which failed to nation-build Iraq despite billions of dollars worth of

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investments and top military and political strategists deployed to plan out the government, the Islamic State has made significant progress at nation-building. Its ideologue leadership has amassed a large following that can only grow larger with the Islamic State's recent successes. This has profoundly worrying implications, chief among which is that the Islamic State will aggressively increase the speed of its genocide.

Below I have drawn up a summation of the Islamic State's genocidal mechanisms. It is a complex slough of factors, an amalgamation of social change, economic hardships, cultural norms, bystander choices, and perpetrator ideologies. In response to my second question, to what extent are bystanders responsible for the genocide, I found that local bystanders have passively helped the Islamic State through inaction and complacency while international bystanders – notably the US-led coalition – have passively helped the victims. However, this containment strategy doesn't constitute enough action to be considered a full intervention capable of defeating the Islamic State.

## Case Studies

I have picked two case studies to compare the Islamic State to, in the hope that some knowledge can be gleaned about how the Islamic States and how it can be stopped. For this reason I have chosen to compare the IS to the Nazi regime in Germany and the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. As there is already a plethora of literature on these two regimes already, and because the main purpose is to compare them with the Islamic State, the case studies are mere drops in the bucket for understanding the true complexity of each situation.

### *Nazi Germany and the Holocaust*

From 1938-1945, the Nazi party committed what we now call the Holocaust, the systematic killing of over six million Jewish people. This genocide of unprecedented coordination and scale was only stopped by the defeat of Germany by the Allied Powers in World War II.

#### 1. Social Change and Economic Hardships

After the defeat of the Weimar Republic in World War I, Germany was in shock. Its military was almost completely disbanded, and the Treaty of Versailles was signed, requiring Germany to accept responsibility for the loss and damage of the whole war, reduce its borders, and pay reparations to the Entente powers. Although the Weimar

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leadership was given little choice but to sign the treaty, the signing was highly unpopular in Germany. In response to the signing of this treaty, many nationalist political parties emerged, amongst which was the German Workers' Party, a radical anti-Semitic political party. Adolph Hitler quickly was recruited into the party due to his oratory skills. Partly due to the heavy burdens that the Treaty of Versailles imposed, unemployment and poverty quickly rose. The German mark experienced hyperinflation in 1923 where it was suddenly devalued to 4.2 trillion marks per dollar.[126] The Great Depression in 1929 only increased widespread unemployment and further devalued the German mark.[127] The rebranded Nationalist Socialist German Workers' Party, also known as the Nazi Party, took advantage of this spiraling situation through two ways: first, it utilized the high unemployment to recruit young men into its own paramilitary group through the promise of a bed and warm food. Second, it was able to channel the frustration of the German people into winning political votes, scapegoating the Jewish people along the way for the social and economic hardships.

## 2. Cultural Norms and Characteristics

Much post-World War II and Holocaust literature details the culture of complacency and respect for authority that ran prevalent through German culture, which allowed the Nazi Party to create a culture of bystanders to the Holocaust. The party also utilized the rampant anti-Semitism to focus the frustration of the society against one specific group.

## 3. Perpetrators

The leader of the Nazi party was the now-infamous Adolph Hitler, who was the Nazi party chairman and who had complete control over the government and country. A leader with a cult-like following, Hitler commanded a godlike aura to many Germans, only exacerbated by his flowing oratory skills. Goldhagen describes Hitler as "a rational calculator, an astute, adept politician, and an obsessive governed by a hallucinatory image of humanity and the world and his megalomaniacal role in it." [128] The Nazi Party was highly bureaucratic, run by intelligent but fanatical men. The man designated by Hitler to design and implement the 'Final Solution,' or the extermination of the Jews, was Heinrich Himmler. Detailed in *The Banality of Evil*, Himmler like Adolf Eichmann, appeared like an ordinary man, was highly efficient, and was good at maintaining a disciplined bureaucratic structure.[129] In fact, after seeing the execution of two hundred Jews, Himmler became physically ill. Yet it was by Himmler's plans and orders that more than six million Jews were murdered.

The leaders of the Nazi party appear to have all fully believed in Hitler's anti-Semitic rationales; it was a group of ideologues. Litten writes that "with the Nazis, the assumption was that killing all Jews was a way of curing not only the Aryan race but all mankind." [130] Jones writes that by the end of the war, "it often seemed that the single-minded devotion to genocidal destruction outweighed even the Nazis' desire for self-preservation." [131] Hitler himself wrote that the Jews were "black parasites of the nation." [132]

The followers of the Nazi state started as mostly unemployed young men who would join the Nazi party in exchange for food, shelter, and work. However, as the Nazi party eventually took over more of government, its followers burgeoned out to include most of the young men in Germany who joined the military, as Germany was at war with the Allied parties.

## 4. Victims

While the majority of those killed by the Nazi party were Jews, gypsies, disabled people, and homosexuals were also murdered. The Nazis, who planned on exterminating eleven million Jews succeeded in killing six million.[133] All people considered non-Aryan and of some disability were silently eliminated by the Nazis. In particular, though, was the historical anti-Semitism against the Jews, not only in Germany but also throughout Europe. Dating back to the Middle Ages, Jews had become bankers due to the lack of religious-constraints on lending money. Medieval Christianity "held the Jews to violate the moral order of the world." [134] Few can forget the jarring depiction of Shylock the usurer and Jew in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. Yet despite the anti-Semitism, throughout the 1800s, most Christians and Jews still lived in harmony.[135] But through the frustration of the German people after the social changes and economic hardships of the 1920s, the Nazi party was able to capitalize and weaponise

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this anti-Semitism to create a common enemy.

Starting in 1930, Jewish businesses were boycotted, and the 1935 Nuremberg laws stripped Jews of their German citizenship.<sup>[136]</sup> Quickly marked with the iconic yellow Star of David and catalogued into the German system, Jews were segregated into ghettos. Constantly dehumanized by the media through comparisons with vermin and tales of Jewish conspiracies, much of the German public quickly lost any sympathy with the plight of the Jewish people. While many Jews attempted to flee the country, other countries tightened immigration laws and therefore made the exodus of the Jewish people impossible. By the 1940s, many ghettos began liquidations: systematic killings of all Jews, or deportations to concentration or extermination camps such as Auschwitz or Dachau. In these mass killing sites where the chimneys never stopped expelling the chars of killed and cremated Jews, more than six million men, women, and children perished.

## 5. Local Bystanders

Because of a combination of the social changes, economic hardships, and cultural norms, not many bystanders intervened. In fact, complacency was the norm, not the exception. This inaction is shown through the relative few people noted, after the war was over, for helping out Jews. Out of roughly eight and a half million Germans, only a few thousand actively helped shelter, hide, or in some way help Jewish people.

## 6. International Bystanders

Before World War I broke out, even with news of rampant anti-Semitism and the marking of Jews, the international community failed to act. This inaction was caused by a lack of political capital: in the wake of the first World War, the world was weary of war an intervention, and as a result engaged in a policy of appeasement towards the Nazi party. However, after the Nazi invasion of Poland, the world once again was at war. Under the veil of war, the Nazi party was able to begin its extermination campaign against the Jews. Despite being at war, there was more that the international community could have done through strategic bombing and air raids to help the Jews from certain death. Therefore, the Allied powers do, to a certain extent, fall under the bystander category, though less so than local bystanders.

## *The Khmer Rouge and the Cambodian Genocide*

From 1975-1978, the Khmer Rouge implemented a genocidal campaign that killed a total of 1.7-1.9 million civilians – a stunning one-quarter of the total Cambodian population. Because of the Islamic State's proximity to warring and unstable countries, I have also included a case study of the Khmer Rouge in the hopes that it might shed some light on the Islamic State's genocide.

### 1. Social Change and Economic Hardships

Following the 1954 defeat of the British by the Vietnamese army at Dien Bien Phu, Vietnam left 1,000 cadres, including Pol Pot (1928-1998), in Cambodia. In 1966, Cambodian Prince Norodom Sihanouk began a crackdown against these communists still left in Cambodia. This constant fighting was a result of the conflict spillover caused by the 1965 United States invasion of Vietnam. By 1970, war spread into Cambodia, mostly from the Vietnam, but also partly from the Khmer Rouge. 1970 also marked two other major events: first, the United States supported a coup of Sihanouk who the US saw as a socialist. Sihanouk was replaced by Lon Nol, a corrupt official who incorrectly believed that the Buddhist religion would make his forces invincible.<sup>[137]</sup> Second, the United States also began bombing Cambodia – a campaign which not only killed an estimated hundred thousand civilians, but also completely destroyed Cambodia's rice production, which was key to the Cambodian economy. As a result, there was a massive shock to Cambodia's economy, which resulted in many peasant's losing their only way of earning money. This bombing is widely seen as the most radicalizing and important cause of the Khmer Rouge pursuing genocide. Martin Shaw writes that "under the impact of a destructive US bombing campaign against Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge underwent an extreme radicalization and, after seizing power in 1975, embarked on a genocidal restructuring of society."<sup>[138]</sup> In compliance with the 1973 Paris Peace Accords, Vietnam left Cambodia, but Pol Pot and the Khmer



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Rouge had already begun maintaining the constant fight against the government. Within a year, the Khmer Rouge was the dominant force within Cambodia.

## 2. Cultural Norms and Characteristics

In the decades leading up to the Khmer Rouge's takeover of Cambodia, there had been certain societal characteristics building up. The first was a split between the city elite and the countryside peasants: the growing economic disparity was very apparent to all who entered the country. Second, with the increasing economic hurt there was more of a longing to return to the times of the Angkor Empire times, between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, when Cambodia was a regional power with boundaries stretching throughout South-East Asia.

## 3. Perpetrators

The Khmer Rouge, under Pol Pot's leadership, was extremely ideological.[139] The four main tenets of the Khmer Rouge ideology were: (1) Hatred of the "enemies of the people." As a communist party following the wake of the Soviet and Chinese revolutions, the Khmer Rouge detested those who were rich, educated, or minority populations. (2) Xenophobic and nationalism. The Khmer Rouge believed in Cambodia's return to the Angkor Empire, including to the Empire's wealth and geographic boundaries. (3) Peasantism: the KR believed that there was no stop to the economic prosperity or the scientific knowledge that could be gleaned if the full force of the peasants was harnessed. (4) Purity, Discipline, and Militarism. The Khmer Rouge was extreme in its belief in purity: citizens found to have had sex before marriage were, in some cases, killed on the spot. Additionally, the KR believed in purity within the regime: there were constant internal purges of members. In carrying out these tenets, Pol Pot and his KR supporters aimed to erase all signs of French colonialism and restore the country to the Angkor Empire.[140] Most Khmer Rouge members were young peasants who were fully ready to kill for the regime. One Khmer Rouge maxim wrote that "what is too long must be shortened and made the right length," implying that society was too stretched out and needed to be cut down.[141] During March of 2015, in a stunning and unprecedented move, almost all cities, including Phnom Penh which had a population of more than two million, were completely emptied by the KR and their inhabitants forced into the countryside to work as farmers.[142]

## 4. Victims

The Victims of the Khmer Rouge were mostly city-dwellers, including the rich and educated 'bourgeoisie' class. All of the city-dwellers, named the 'new people' were forced to undergo reeducation in the countryside, a process that some scholars have likened to turning all of Cambodia into one large concentration camp like the ones the Germans employed against the Jews.[143] Ethnic minorities were also all targeted for execution by the KR, including the Muslim Cham, ethnic Chinese and Vietnamese, and Buddhist monks.[144] This purging of minorities is attributable to the Khmer Rouge's purity-centric attitude that hoped to cleanse the country of all non-pure Cambodian peasants. Unlike many other genocidal regimes, the Khmer Rouge saw their victims as humans, but also as enemies who must be exterminated.[145]

## 5. Local Bystanders

If someone wasn't part of the Khmer Rouge, than they were shepherded out of the city and into the field to participate in agriculture work. Therefore, there was little sheltering which could be done, even if someone wanted to help. Due to the structure of the genocide, the Cambodian genocide is one of the only genocides where there was little that local bystanders could do to help others, as they themselves were victims.

## 6. International Bystanders

The international community played an especially heinous role of bystanding during and after the Cambodian genocide. Before the genocide, the French Communist Party played a large role in equipping the Cambodian communist members as a worldwide campaign against "enemies of the people." [146] Pol Pot was himself French educated and a trainee of the French Communist Party.[147] The United States' bombing campaign, aimed at

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hurting the Vietnamese constituted the 'most important reason why the Cambodian genocide was able to occur.' The Cambodian genocide ended on December 25, 1978 when 150,000 Vietnamese soldiers invaded Cambodia, aided by 15,000 Cambodian rebels. However, because of the ongoing Cold War between the United States and Soviet Union, Western countries refused to help the overthrow of the KR. Egregiously, in the 1980s, Western countries recognized and embraced the Khmer Rouge as Cambodia's official representative, as shown by the KR holding an official seat at the United Nations. Samantha Power writes that the Cambodian genocide "elicited barely a whimper from Washington, which maintained diplomatic recognition of the genocidal regime even after it had been overthrown." [148] The diplomacy of the time was the 'enemy of a communist country (Vietnam) is my friend.' Even after the Cold War ended in 1991 and a UN-transition force created a democracy, when, in 1997 Hun Sen launched a coup d'état, the international community did not intervene.

## Discussion

*"Where justice and order are not restored, there can be no healing, leaving violence and hatred ticking like a bomb in the corner."* – Archbishop Tutu [149]

### Similarities

There are five primary similarities between the Islamic State, the Nazi party, and the Khmer Rouge that can be gleaned from the genocide model and case studies: leadership, ideology, base factors, international intervention, and perpetrator size.

First, leadership across all three is very similar. Like Hitler, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi holds an extraordinarily esteemed position amongst his followers. However, his cult of personality does not extend quite as far as Hitler's: while Hitler held a godlike position to his followers, Baghdadi is more of a mysterious figure, rarely appearing in public. However, Baghdadi's speaking, heard throughout the world through the Islamic State's propaganda hub, is still enough to inspire hundreds of thousands.

Second, all three groups share similar, if not symmetrical, ideologies. While the Khmer Rouge had strongly held communist beliefs about purity and peasantry, and the Nazi's had their belief about curing the Aryan race of the Jewish scourge, the Islamic State strongly believes in 'curing' the world of infidels and becoming God's perfect people.

Third, all three genocides happened and were aided by ongoing wars. Like Nazi Germany, the Islamic State is actively involved in a war against an international coalition, and like the Nazi party, the Islamic State was aided by the loss of the Iraqi government in the United States invasion. And like the Khmer Rouge, the Islamic State was able to gain traction campaigning against foreign intervention on its home soil.

Fourth, there is a lack of international involvement in all three cases. While not as extreme example as the Khmer Rouge, which was welcomed into international diplomacy by Western Powers, the international community has pursued an off-hands approach to dealing with the Islamic State. Just as the Allied powers did not bomb concentration camps run by the Nazis, the US-led coalition has not attempted anything more than training the Iraqi military and pursuing a bombing campaign.

Fifth, like the genocides in Germany and Cambodia, the genocide by the Islamic State is being carried out by a relatively small number of perpetrators – about 60,000 in a population of more than thirty million. They are helped by the inaction of local and international bystanders.

The stark similarities between the Islamic State, the Nazi party, and the Khmer Rouge indicates that, while the Islamic State touts its uniqueness and its religious mandates as reasons for its certain success, it follows in the pattern of any genocidal regime. Not only does this partly de-mystify the State and its internal mechanisms, but it also shows the extent to which the Islamic State could escalate its genocide. The IS has, up until this point, massacred about twenty to thirty thousand civilians. The Khmer Rouge killed 1.2 to 1.7 million people. The Nazi party killed

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about six million unarmed civilians. It is only a matter of time before the terrifying genocidal potential of the Islamic State becomes a reality.

## *Differences*

First, the Islamic State occupies a gray area: it is not internationally recognized, nor is it a sovereign state, but it operates highly bureaucratically in its ever-changing borders. The influx of foreign fighters, drawn in by the Islamic State's harsh and radical ideologies, only exacerbates the State's nebulous legitimacy. This is perhaps the first genocide where a significant portion of individual actors has traveled to the scene with the express purpose of taking part.

Second, the Islamic State's genocide takes place firmly in the Internet age, and even uses this to its advantage to disperse its propaganda. This means that the brutality of the regime, usually confined to reporters' written up reports and after-the-fact reporting, is now being broadcast real-time throughout the world.

Both of these differences play to the Islamic State's advantage. Its struggle against traditional states has the potential to bring in significantly more disenfranchised people, especially young men, from conflict zones throughout the world. Operating adeptly within the Internet age only increases this recruitment potential. Following the media coups from the beheadings of Western aid workers and reporters, the Islamic State has an incentive to increase the number of brutal killings that it conducts and publicizes.

## **Policy Implications and Recommendations**

First, the international community should not let al-Baghdadi rise to the level of Hitler in his followers' eyes. This rise in notoriety would correspond with more killing and more recruitment. Perhaps Hitler would have been at least somewhat impaired in his control of the Nazi government had his past as a failed artist been unveiled. Therefore, my first recommendation is that the myth of al-Baghdadi be dissipated through a full disclosure of Baghdadi's past. Perhaps by dispelling the myth, his power, at least over foreign actors, can be tempered, and his influence can be substantially tempered.

Second, the international community should work out agreements with both places that are near the Islamic State and governments that are in hiding within the areas that the IS controls. As my model of the Islamic State's genocide shows, one of the main factors that allows the IS to control the population is through its public goods provisioning service, and the lack of provisioning that the Malaki government did, especially to Sunni provinces. The key to overthrowing the Islamic State, and thereby ceasing its genocidal activities, might be a second 'Sunni awakening.' This task, however, will not be easy: first, reliable guarantees must be made that the new Iraqi government will be non-sectarian and will treat all people and provinces equally. Second, the individual towns and provinces will need to be made guarantees that public goods will be able to be provisioned more reliably than with the Islamic State.

Third, it is worth noting how the other case study genocides were ended: international invasions. The Khmer Rouge's Cambodian genocide only ended with the invasion of 150,000 Vietnamese soldiers. The Nazi genocide ended only when the Allied powers finally defeated the Nazi party through a painstaking five-year-long war. The genocide committed by the Islamic State may only be resolved through military intervention, and the ensuing war will not be short. Many states will not to participate, especially the United States, weary from being militarily engaged in the Middle East for over a decade. Perhaps the solution will come from a GCC-led fight on the ground with the support of the Iraqi army. This interventionist approach may become more needed as the genocide escalates in frequency and intensity in the coming months.

Genocide anywhere is abhorrent everywhere. Perhaps by observing the Islamic State's genocide model, we can determine the weak points in the Islamic State's structure and therefore defeat it. But any successful solution must also be able to nation-build Iraq so that there won't be another genocide or more mass-atrocities committed.

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## Footnotes

[1] Weldes, "Cultures of Insecurity: States, Communities, and the Production of Danger," *University of Minnesota Press* 14(1999).

[2] This group has also been called the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), the Islamic State in Iraq and Sham (ISIS), and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). I have chosen to call them the Islamic State for two reasons: first, this is the name that they now call themselves. Second, the group now operates like an independent nation-state: at the time of writing this article, they bureaucratically control more area than the United Kingdom.

[3] Stansfield, "The Islamic State, the Kurdistan Region and Teh Future of Iraq: Assessing Uk Policy Options," *International Affairs* 90, no. 6 (2014).

[4] Center for Security Studies' *Strategic Trends 2015*, pg. 10.

[5] May, *Genocide: A Normative Account* (Cambridge, GBR: Cambridge University Press, 2010)., pp. 100.

[6] Lebor, *Complicity with Evil: The United Nations in the Age of Modern Genocide* (United States of America: R.R. Donnelley, 2006)., pp. 7.

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[7] The widely-acknowledged six major genocides in the 20<sup>th</sup> century are: the genocide of the Armenians by the Turks (1915), the Jews by the Nazis (1939-1945), Cambodians by the Khmer Rouge (1975-1979), Kurds by Saddam Hussein (1987-1988), Tutsis of Rwanda by the Hutus (1944), and the Croats, Muslims, and Albanians by the Serbs (1992-1995).

[8] Valentino, "Final Solutions: The Causes of Mass Killing and Genocide," *Security Studies* 9, no. 3 (2000).

[9] Rummell, *Death by Government* (Transaction Publishers, 1997).

[10] Keating, "Why It's So Hard to Prosecute Isis for War Crimes," *Slate* 2015.

[11] Napoleoni, *The Islamist Phoenix* (Seven Stories Press, 2014), pg. 103; Rajan, "Al Qaeda's Global Crisis: The Islamic State, Takfir, and the Genocide of Muslims," *Routledge* (2015).

[12] An additional charter of the UN Convention on Genocide writes that genocide is also classified as a group "causing serious bodily or mental harm to a group and imposing measures intended to prevent births within a group." [12] There is widespread acknowledgement that one tactic the Islamic State employs when it takes over a region is rape and marriage of the local women, with the intent of both preventing non-Muslim births and local births. [12]

[13] "United Nations: Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide," ed. Nations (1948).

[14] Napoleoni, *The Islamist Phoenix*.

[15] "Strategic Trends 2015," *Center for Security Studies* (2015), pg. 51.

[16] *The Islamist Phoenix*, pg. 86

[17] Recent survey data indicates that of the roughly 33 million people in Iraq, 17 million are Shia Muslims, 1.5 million are Christians, and 650,000 are Yazidis. Because the Islamic State has produced approval for the consideration of these populations as apostates who may therefore be killed, the genocide could quickly escalate to as of yet unseen levels of murder.

[18] United Nations Human Rights Office, "Report on Rights Abuses by Isil," (Print 2015).

[19] Ibid.

[20] Stansfield, "The Islamic State, the Kurdistan Region and the Future of Iraq: Assessing UK Policy Options," pp. 1332.

[21] "Strategic Trends 2015," pg. 50.

[22] I do not analyze the Islamic State through the lens of 'cultural genocide.' While rejected from the Convention, cultural genocide is defined by "destroying... historical monuments, places of worship, or other cultural objects" (May, *Genocide: A Normative Account*, pp. 102). With the Islamic State's noted destruction of any antique objects or monuments they conquer, notably Palmyra, there is little doubt that the regime is committing a cultural genocide as well.

[23] While there are a limited number of theoretical frameworks for why genocide occurs, analysis of these mechanisms remains vague. For instance, Kinloch writes that the five major factors behind genocide are: endemic ethnocentrism, escalating dehumanization, major impact of external factors, reinforcement through internal social characteristics, which results in destructive consequences for minorities. I find this too blasé a model for understanding the mechanisms behind the Islamic State.

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[24] Primary texts consulted for the model include that of Straub 2000, Kuper 1981, Fein 1993, Kinloch 2005 and Valentino 2000. The bystander portion of the model is inspired by the works of Baum 2008 and Lang 2001. Straub primarily focuses on the relationship of the perpetrators with the victims, and how certain underlying social factors might influence either group. Fein looks at the motives behind the perpetrators, and analyzes whether these means are ideological or retributive and reactive.

[25] Kuper, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

[26] Schaack, "The Crime of Political Genocide: Repairing the Genocide Convention's Blind Spot," *Yale Law Journal* (1997), 2259-2291.

[27] Staub, *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence* (Cambridge University Press, 1989); Harff, "Assessing Risks of Genocide and Politicide," *Peace and Conflict* (2005). – Harff creates six variables which impact the chance of genocide: (1) prior genocides and politicides, (2) political upheaval, (3) ethnic character of the ruling elite, (4) ideological character of the ruling elite, (5) type of regime, and (6) openness to trade.

[28] "Assessing Risks of Genocide and Politicide."

[29] Goldhagen, *Worse Than War: Genocide, Eliminationism, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity* (New York, NY, USA: Public Affairs, 2009).

[30] Ibid.

[31] Valentino, "Final Solutions: The Causes of Mass Killing and Genocide.", 1-59.

[32] Kinloch and Mohan, *Genocide: Approaches, Case Studies, and Responses* (Algora Publishing, 2005).

[33] Goldhagen, *Worse Than War: Genocide, Eliminationism, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity.*, pp. 300.

[34] Despite what many believe, genocides do occur in ethnically homogenous societies.

[35] Staub, "Reconciliation after Genocide, Mass Killing, or Intractable Conflict: Understanding the Roots of Violence, Psychological Recovery, and Steps toward a General Theory," *Political Psychology* 27, no. 6 (2006).

[36] Valentino, "Final Solutions: The Causes of Mass Killing and Genocide."

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[38] Fein, "Accounting for Genocide after 1945: Theories and Some Findings," *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 1, no. 2 (1993).

[39] Goldhagen, *Worse Than War: Genocide, Eliminationism, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity.*, pp. 282. Goldhagen describes this shared similarity as the "radical intolerance complex."

[40] Ibid.

[41] Kinloch and Mohan, *Genocide: Approaches, Case Studies, and Responses*.

[42] Gregory Stanton, president of Genocide Watch, describes the eight steps of genocide as: classification, symbolization, dehumanization, organization, polarization, preparation, extermination, and denial.

[43] Fein, "Accounting for Genocide after 1945: Theories and Some Findings."



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[44] Kinloch and Mohan, *Genocide: Approaches, Case Studies, and Responses*.

[45] Baum, *The Psychology of Genocide: Perpetrators, Bystanders, and Rescuers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[46] Goldhagen, *Worse Than War: Genocide, Eliminationism, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity.*, pp. 270.

[47] Kinloch and Mohan, *Genocide: Approaches, Case Studies, and Responses*.

[48] Valentino, "Final Solutions: The Causes of Mass Killing and Genocide."

[49] In these experiments, the subjects were asked to apply higher and higher levels of electricity to an actor based on whether or not the actor could memorize certain phrases – in reality there was no electricity and the actor was faking the cries of pain. Note that the subject did not know the actor was an actor.

[50] Goldhagen, *Worse Than War: Genocide, Eliminationism, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity.*, pp. 361.

[51] Baum, *The Psychology of Genocide: Perpetrators, Bystanders, and Rescuers*.

[52] Ibid

[53] Ibid

[54] Staub, "The Psychology of Bystanders, Perpetrators, and Heroic Helpers," *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 17, no. 3 (1993).

[55] Baum, *The Psychology of Genocide: Perpetrators, Bystanders, and Rescuers*.

[56] Ibid.

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[59] Ibid.

[60] Lang, *Just Intervention* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2003).

[61] Butler, "Us Military Intervention in Crisis, 1945-1994 an Empirical Inquiry of Just War Theory," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 47, no. 2 (2003).

[62] Ibid.

[63] May, *War Crimes and Just War* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[64] Elbe, "The Evolution of the Concept of the Just War in International Law," *American Journal of International Law* (1939).

[65] Abrams, "To Fight the Good Fight," *The National Interest* (2000).

[66] Gowan, "Stop Mass Atrocities," *IAI Research Papers* (2013).

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[67] Ibid. p. 19

[68] Lister, *The Islamic State: An Introduction* (Washington D.C.: HarperCollins, 2015)..

[69] Ibid.

[70] Centre, "Top Un Envoy Sergio Vieira De Mello Killed in Terrorist Blast in Baghdad," (United nations, 2003).

[71] Lister, *The Islamic State: An Introduction*.

[72] Musawi, *Reading Iraq: Culture and Power in Conflict*, vol. 51 (IB Taurris, 2006).

[73] Lister, *The Islamic State: An Introduction*.

[74] Laub and Masters, "Islamic State in Iraq and Greater Syria," *The Council on Foreign Relations* (2014).

[75] Ibid.

[76] Secretary, "President's Address to the Nation," (2007).

[77] Napoleoni, *The Islamist Phoenix*.

[78] Lister, *The Islamic State: An Introduction*.

[79] "Strategic Trends 2015."

[80] Malas and Abi-Habib, "Islamic Economy Runs on Extortion, Oil, Piracy in Syria, Iraq," *The Wall Street Journal*, 28 August 2014 2014.

[81] Napoleoni, *The Islamist Phoenix*.

[82] "Strategic Trends 2015.", pg. 23.

[83] It should also be noted that outside of this twenty-year period, from 1987-1988 there was genocide of the Kurdish people in Northern Iraq by the Iraqi dictator, Saddam Hussein. Hundreds of thousands of Kurds were killed through a combination of chemical weapons use and forced migration tactics.

[84] "Strategic Trends 2015.", pg. 51.

[85] IMF Data: <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2013/cr13217.pdf>

[86] Ibid.

[87] Lister, *The Islamic State: An Introduction*.

[88] Marr, *Modern History of Iraq* 3ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2011).

[89] Ibid.

[90] Marr, *Modern History of Iraq*

[91] Isakhan, *Democracy in Iraq: History, Politics, Discourse* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012).

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[92] Musawi, *Reading Iraq: Culture and Power in Conflict*, 51.

[93] Marr, *Modern History of Iraq*

[94] Ibid.

[95] Ibid.

[96] "Strategic Trends 2015.", pg. 53.

[97] Wood, "What Isis Really Wants," *The Atlantic*, 15 February 2015 2015.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Napoleoni, *The Islamist Phoenix*.

[100] Bunzel, "From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State," *The Brookings Institution* 19(2015).

[101] "Strategic Trends 2015."

[102] Napoleoni, *The Islamist Phoenix*.

[103] Wood, "What Isis Really Wants."

[104] Ibid.

[105] Napoleoni, *The Islamist Phoenix*., pg. 86

[106] Ibid.

[107] Goldhagen, *Worse Than War: Genocide, Eliminationism, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity*., pp. 322.

[108] Bunzel, "From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State."

[109] Ibid.

[110] Jabareen, "The Emerging Islamic State: Terror, Territoriality, Adn the Agenda of Social Transformation," *Geoforum* 10, no. 009 (2014)., pp. 54

[111]Napoleoni, *The Islamist Phoenix*.

[112] Goldhagen, *Worse Than War: Genocide, Eliminationism, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity*., pp. 283.

[113] Marr, *Modern History of Iraq*

[114]Napoleoni, *The Islamist Phoenix*.

[115] Wood, "What Isis Really Wants."

[116] Ibid.

[117] Jabareen, "The Emerging Islamic State: Terror, Territoriality, Adn the Agenda of Social Transformation.", pp.

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52.

[118] Wood, "What Isis Really Wants."

[119] These countries are: the United States, the United Arab Emirates, Canada, Jordan, Morocco, the United Kingdom, Australia, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Turkey.

[120] Sadat, "Genocide in Syria: International Legal Options, International Legal Limits, and the Serious Problem of Political Will," *Washington University in St. Louis Legal Studies Research Paper* (2015).

[121] Loveluck, "Islamic State: Where Do Its Fighters Come From? ," *The Telegraph* 2015.

[122] Cottee, "Pilgrims to the Islamic State," *The Atlantic* 2015.

[123] Hehir, "The Permanence of Inconsistency: Libya, the Security Council, and the Responsibility to Protect," *International Security* 38, no. 1 (2013).

[124] Loveluck, "Islamic State: Where Do Its Fighters Come From? ."

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[126] Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

[127] Ibid.

[128] Goldhagen, *Worse Than War: Genocide, Eliminationism, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity*.

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[130] Lifton and Markusen, *The Genocidal Mentality: Nazi Holocaust and Nuclear Threat* (Basic Books, 1991).. P. 226

[131] Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*.. P. 154.

[132] Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Houghton Mifflin, 1924).

[133] Goldhagen, *Worse Than War: Genocide, Eliminationism, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity*.

[134] Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in Nazi Germany* (Oxford Paperbacks, 2002).

[135] Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*.. P. 148.

[136] Ibid.. P. 149.

[137] Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History* (Silkworm Books, 1993).. P. 205.

[138] Shaw, *Genocide and International Relations* (Cambridge, GRB: Cambridge University Press, 2013).., pp. 106

[139] Bartrop, *Genocide: The Basics* (Florence, KY, USA: Taylor and Francis, 2014).

[140] Ibid.

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[141] Goldhagen, *Worse Than War: Genocide, Eliminationism, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity.*, pp. 284.

[142] Bartrop, *Genocide: The Basics*.

[143] Goldhagen, *Worse Than War: Genocide, Eliminationism, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity.*

[144] Bartrop, *Genocide: The Basics*.

[145] Goldhagen, *Worse Than War: Genocide, Eliminationism, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity.*, pp. 321.

[146] Jones, Adam. *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*. P. 187.

[147] Bartrop, *Genocide: The Basics*.

[148] Power, *A Problem from Hell* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2002)., pp. xix.

[149] Albright, "Confronting the Crisis of Global Governance," *Report on the Commission on Global Security, Justice & Governance* (2015).

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