

The G Word: Genocide and Gradations of Horror

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An Introduction: The “G” Word

We –even we here –hold the power, and bear the responsibility. - Abraham Lincoln

Do we, as American citizens, or we as humans, hold the responsibility to act in times of injustice? Are we our brothers’ keepers?

A report by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq Human’s Rights Office found that in the past 21-month period in Iraq, the Islamic State (ISIS) ¹ killed at least 18,802 civilians, half of them in the capital, Baghdad, injured another 36,245, internally displaced over 3.2 million people, including a million school-aged children, and created hundreds of thousands of refugees.¹ The civilian victims all have something in common: they are *not* followers of their extreme, violent variant of Salafi Islam.² As evidenced by the abominable statistics, these “infidels” were faced with three choices: to convert, to be killed, or to flee.²

Some call this mass murder and displacement of non-believers, *genocide*. The United Nations human rights instigators and the Secretary of State John Kerry, for instance, have recently identified ISIS’s pattern of killing Yazidis, Christians, and other religious minority populations, including other Sunni and Shiite Muslims, and have begun to call it *genocide*.³ Why did it take so long for Western governments to use the term? Is it indeed genocide? In order to answer these two questions, it is important to first understand what *genocide* means and, second, why calling something *genocide* matters.

What it Means

The term “genocide” was not coined until the Holocaust when a Polish Jewish lawyer, Raphael Lemkin, combined the Greek prefix *geno-*, meaning *tribe* or *race*, and *caedere*, the

¹ In this paper, I am going to call the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, also known as The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, as “ISIS” for the sake of simplicity. The group also goes by “ISIL,” “IGIL,” Daish,” “Daesh,” and “the Islamic State.”

² It is important to note that not all Salafi Muslims are supporters are also supporters of ISIS, however, all ISIS supporters are Salafi Muslims.

Latin word for *kill* in 1944.⁴ As a lawyer, Lemkin understood the significance of having proper language to describe events, and thus, correlated the lack of seriousness and sense of urgency committed to the horrors in Europe with the lack of vocabulary. In creating the word, “genocide” he ignited a wave of awareness and importance that significantly expedited the American fight against Hitler and his Holocaust.⁵

However, just because the term was not used until the Holocaust, doesn’t mean atrocities that could be classified as genocides didn’t happen before 1944. In fact, in world history and in the twentieth century, many significant cases preceded the original definition. However, at the time, and in some places, still today, the world didn’t call the systematic mass extermination of civilians genocide, rather they claim it was a consequence of “inter-ethnic violence” or a result of the “greater conflict of war”.⁶ As the century continued, scholars, politicians, and victims struggled to find a word that would accurately encapsulate such a horrific act. For example, in 1941, when Winston Churchill was describing the Nazi mass killings of Russian prisoners of war and civilians, he used the phrase “the crime without a name.”⁷ After Lemkin’s publicity of the word *genocide*, the United Nations followed with the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crimes of Genocide in 1948.⁸ This UN Convention attempted to define the term and create international law that would prohibit these acts from occurring again. The document itself states that, “in order to liberate mankind from such an odious scourge, international co-operation is required.”⁹ Inventing this term and having the world tribunal consider it as important, signals an attempt and willingness for the world’s political and military powers to work together to prevent such acts from occurring again in the future. However over 50 years later, few governments, scholars, and individuals have been able to settle on a comprehensive, consensus definition. The prime example of this disagreement is the Armenian

Genocide. As of 2015, only 29 countries including Russia, France, Germany, Canada, and Italy, as well as 44 states of the United States of America, have recognized the American Genocide.¹⁰ The federal government of the United States has yet to acknowledge the genocide, and the governments of Turkey and Azerbaijan actively deny its historical factuality. In this case, and in many others, the reason for this is political. The United States values its Turkish allies in a time and region of great conflict, and knows the negative consequences of condemning one of its only “friends” in the increasingly turbulent Middle East. The consequence of the polarization of the word *genocide* has led to its increasing ineffectiveness. It is my aim to depoliticize this word, so that its potency can be rightfully used to uphold our global human rights standards independent of any political influences.

Why it Matters

The word is potent; the word has power – using this word could be the difference between someone living and someone dying because calling something *genocide* demands the attention of the international community and requires, via international law, a robust response. A likely route would be creating a case in front of the International Criminal Court (ICC) through a referral from the United Nations Security Council. Additionally, other options could include the creation of an international criminal tribunal or the prosecution of the local governments.¹¹ Apart from current legal ramifications, the word *genocide* could also provide for better historical documentation, acknowledgement for the suffering victims, and serve as a possible deterrent for potential future recruits.¹² When the acknowledged verdict of *genocide* frames a conflict, the international community is driven to act and cooperate. For instance, the last time the United States used the word *genocide* to categorize a situation, was in 2004 when then-Secretary of State Colin Powell declared genocide in Darfur and Western Sudan. As a result, in 2009, the

Sudanese president was the first president to be indicted by the ICC for his alleged role in ordering mass slaughter and rape in Darfur.¹³

The use of the “G word” in modern political parlance has a similar rallying affect as calling a political ruler a “Hitler.” For example, when Former President George H. W. Bush compared Manuel Noriega and Saddam Hussein to Adolf Hitler, he signaled that their removals were both a humanitarian emergency and a necessity.¹⁴ Both of these verbal attacks were followed by intervention in Panama and Iraq, respectively. Using these words justifies, galvanizes, and motivates intervention and international cooperation – people with the guns and power make a united response when the weights of the word *Hitler* or *genocide* are added to a situation. The world acts as if we are our brothers’ keepers.

History Does Not Repeat Itself, It Rhymes

“Never forget,” the citizens of the world chanted.

These two words have been a global mantra ever since over six million Jews were brutally murdered by Nazis in the Holocaust. But, what exactly are we “never forgetting” and “never repeating”? Racism? Religious persecution? Random killings? War crimes? Crimes against humanity? *Genocide*?

What *is* genocide? And how does it differ from these other atrocities?

One of the reasons for the slowness of the international community to attribute the word *genocide* to ISIS’s actions might be the ambiguity and disagreement about the meaning of the word. For example, what is the difference between *war crimes*, *crimes against humanity*, and *genocide*? According to the International Criminal Court (ICC), *war crimes* are defined as:

“Geneva Conventions and other serious violations of the laws and customs applicable in international armed conflict and in conflicts ‘not of an international character’ listed in

the Rome Statute, when they are committed as part of a plan or policy or on a large scale.”¹⁵

Examples of war crimes would include intentional killing of civilians or prisoners, torture, taking hostages, rape, using child soldier, destroying civilian property, and so on.¹⁶ Comparatively, also according to the ICC, *crimes against humanity* include:

“Any of the following acts committed as a part of widespread of systematic attacks directed against any civilian population: murder; extermination; enslavement; deportation or forcible transfer of a population; imprisonment; torture; rape, sexual slavery, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity; persecution against an identifiable group on political, racial, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, or gender grounds; the crime of apartheid; and other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great suffering or serious bodily or mental injury.”¹⁷

These two definitions differ from *genocide* in scope. While war crimes and crimes against humanity may share similarities with genocide in the physical crime being committed, they differ in that genocide requires “the intent to *destroy*, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group.”¹⁸ In genocide, the magnitude of this destruction is larger than that of a war crime or crime against humanity.

If “genocide” can be distinguished from “war crimes” and “crimes against humanity,” can “religiously-inspired genocide” be distinguished from “genocide?” While there are a lot of differing opinions on what exactly constitutes a religious genocide, there *is* a baseline that is universally accepted: in order to be considered a genocide, there must be (1) intent on the part of those behind the genocidal acts, and (2) the physical acts of genocide themselves.¹⁹ This criterion

is grounded in the text of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (The Genocide Convention).

Some scholars such as the authors of “Exploring Critical Issues in Religious Genocide: Case Studies of Violence in Tibet, Iraq, and Gujarat,” Robert Petit, Stuart Ford, and Neha Jain, found the Genocide Convention definition adequate for analyzing and measuring religious genocides of the past. Using the Convention definition as their guide, Petit et al. broke down the three genocides by utilizing the accepted definition to highlight where each case would and would not qualify for persecution under international law. They discussed the importance of identifying the *intent* behind the killing, evidence that can be found in statements made by perpetrators, the general political context of the attacks, and the nature, preparation, and repetition of the attacks. Furthermore, they went into detail about what it meant to kill a substantial part of a population. Using the example of killing Buddhist monks, but not the entire Buddhist faith, they argued that it is important to look at the quantity killed in the context of the whole population as well as the influence they had over that population.²⁰ While the Petit et al. source succeeded in analyzing religious genocides with the simple, two part Convention definition, there have been other definitions developed that challenge this “black and white” approach of measuring genocides. The question now arises: if we already have a UN definition that is accepted by most nation states, why is there a need for newer, more detailed variations?

The answer lies in the simple, yet fundamentally true prophecy, “History does not repeat itself, it rhymes.” In theory, a simple definition of genocide created in 1948 should last and apply forever, but in reality, newer, more complex definitions have been created in order to meet the demand of relevancy. Genocides have occurred decade after decade, before and after the Holocaust and share many similarities. But, they all aren’t identical. Each perpetrator has a

different motivation, a different method; unfortunately, humans are infinitely creative about ways to kill, discriminate, and destroy each other. As a result, I have come to the conclusion that these four cases all fall on a continuum. In studying the application of the word *genocide*, I am determining where each case, the Holocaust, the Bosnian Genocide, the Armenian Genocide, and ISIS violence, falls on this scale of gradations of horror. In short, the first definition evidently didn't work in preventing future genocides, so we need another.

In my paper, I suggest the usage of Dr. Gregory H. Stanton's "Ten Stages of Genocide" as the most effective way to compare and identify genocides. Stanton's definition includes the following stages: classification, symbolization, discrimination, dehumanization, organization, polarization, preparation, persecution, extermination, and denial.²¹ There are four main reasons for why Stanton's definition is superior – it's comprehensive, it provides clarity, it allows for a gradient or continuum, and it heavily focused on prevention. Firstly, I would argue that Stanton's definition is so comprehensive that it *includes* the Genocide Convention definition. The first part of the Convention definition, "the intent on the part of those behind the genocidal acts," is covered in more detail in the first 8 steps of the Stanton definition. Stanton shows the intent behind the genocide by detailing how perpetrators purposely classify, symbolize, discriminate, dehumanize, organize, polarize, prepare, and persecute their victims before the actual act of extermination, which is covered in part two of the Convention definition. Not only does Stanton's definition encapsulate the accepted United Nations Convention definition, but it also serves as a clarifying tool as it provides a formula for analyzing a contemporary, ongoing situation, such as ISIS, while the Convention definition is more useful after the fact. Since Stanton's definition is based on a series of ten stages, it is easier to track and isolate the genocidal atrocities being committed. Furthermore, the very nature of "stages," rather than a

single definition of a final result, allows for more of a gradient or continuum to distinguish between different kinds of horrors. Measuring the level at which each stage is met allows us to see where each genocide falls on the “gradations of horror.” Lastly, and arguably most importantly, the Stanton definition has a dual purpose of not only identifying these stages when they happen, but also preventing the next stages from happening. Stanton realizes that, when isolated, these stages don’t automatically lead to genocide, yet in order to ensure that they don’t, we must consider the worst case, and as an international community, do all that we can to stop the development of hate at the earliest possible stage. Ultimately, in comparing contemporary genocides to the patterns of genocides of the past, we will be best served by utilizing a definition that is more comprehensive and detailed.

Given the importance of the word genocide, the difficulty of designation, and the current humanitarian crisis in the Middle East that beckons for a united, international response, it is curious that more scholarly attention has not been given to the question of genocide in Iraq and Syria, the areas currently under control of ISIS. This paper is an attempt to remedy that deficiency. The main question is: How should we conceive of the documented slaughters of ISIS? Are these acts best conceived as “war crimes,” “crimes against humanity, or indeed, “genocide”? My thesis is that ISIS’s intention to murder civilian populations based solely on religious beliefs is consistent with the historical actions and intentions of Nazis, Turks, and Serbs, groups that have been widely condemned for sponsoring and committing genocide, and furthermore, the call for united international action should recognize a cause that is common to all previous genocides I have studied, namely, economic disparity. To show this, I will illustrate the maximum, medium, and minimum cases for genocide, utilizing Stanton’s “Ten Stages of Genocide” as my guide. Firstly, for the maximum case for genocide, I will detail the

findings from the Holocaust. As the first case to be actually described as genocide, this practically universally accepted definition of *genocide* will be useful in molding my definition to an acknowledged timeline. After solidifying my main defining tool, Stanton's ten stages, in the Holocaust case, I will begin to apply this to the three following cases. I will then illustrate a "medium case for genocide," the killing of Bosnian Muslims by Bosnian Serb forces, as it is the most recent and has a noteworthy reversal of victims and perpetrators (the religious identities are reversed as compared to the ISIS case), which illustrates the idea that no one religion is at fault – all religious fundamentalism can lead to genocide. Thirdly, I will analyze what I will call my "minimum case for religious genocide," the Armenian Genocide, as it illustrates an interesting opposing argument about wartime atrocities. The Armenian Genocide still is of dispute by some states like Turkey, the perpetrator, and also mirrors a familiar history of that of the Holocaust. Lastly, I will use these maximum, medium, and minimum cases to determine where, and if, ISIS falls on the continuum of genocide³.

Maximum Case: The Holocaust

Many have called the Holocaust, "The Greatest Crime in History." When you think Holocaust, you may also, very quickly, think of *genocide*. The extermination of six million Jews across Europe has now turned into a practically undisputable example of genocide.⁴ I will be using the horrific events of the Holocaust as a guide in testing and curating my definition of genocide. After all, Raphael Lemkin, created the term as a response to the atrocities he witnessed during the Holocaust. As a Polish Jew himself, Lemkin was forced to flee Europe in 1939 when the Nazis invaded Poland.²² As a result of his publication of the term in the United States, the

³ In creating "levels" of genocides, I am in no way undermining the monumental atrocities that occurred in each case. I am merely using this continuum as a way to illustrate the variations between genocides and the various stages they include.

⁴ It is important to note that even in this case, there are still "Neo-Nazis," Nazi sympathizers, or "Holocaust deniers," that refuse to recognize the atrocities against the Jews and other minorities of Europe.

Genocide Convention added the legal legitimacy needed in order to (hopefully) keep these genocidal acts from occurring again. However, as we have seen from the experience of more recent mass slaughters, this has unfortunately failed. Genocides are too often confirmed and pronounced as *genocides* after they have already happened. Thus, scholars like Dr. Gregory H. Stanton have developed new ways of identifying genocides, in hopes of stopping the crime before it is “too late,” or better, before it ever begins. We can trace all ten of these stages through the Holocaust:

The first stage is called “classification,” and is mainly characterized by the usage of “us and them” rhetoric. Historians can trace the seeds of the Holocaust to the term *Das Volk*, meaning “people” in German.²³ German anti-Semitism sprouted out of the belief that Germans were a *people* before they were ever a *nation*. Germans were united as a people around their history, culture, and language, not their national borders on the map, and primarily identified themselves as Germans because of their Arian bloodline.²⁴ While the Jews in Germany spoke German as their first language, were participants in the economy and local art scene, they were never not considered a part of *Das Volk*.²⁵ In fact, the classification stage and anti-Semitism in Germany actually predated Adolf Hitler. In 1543, the German priest and revolutionary Martin Luther had already started the classification stage with his dividing rhetoric. “Since **they** live among **us** and we know about **their** lying and blasphemy and cursing, **we** cannot tolerate them,” he said referring to the Jews.²⁶ This attitude was only amplified after Germany lost World War I to the victorious Allies and was forced by the Versailles Treaty to accept responsibility for the war and pay huge reparations.²⁷ The treaty set off a wave of bitterness, resentment, economic unrest, and violence across the country. Hitler rose to power initially as a strong opposition to the growing communist and Marxist revolutions. In 1919, he joined the German Workers’ Party, in

which he rose to high positions delivering passionate, intense speeches that urged a strong nationalistic government and the rejection of Jews.²⁸

The second stage of “symbolization,” followed soon after Hitler’s rise to power within the, now titled, National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP). In 1920, Hitler chose the symbol of the swastika and till this day, this symbol still serves as the image of the Holocaust and its values: the supremacy of the Aryan race and the exclusion of the Jews from the German Volk community.²⁹

The third stage, “discrimination,” really began after Hitler became the chancellor of Germany in 1933. The creation and passage of the Nuremberg laws, four hundred laws and decrees against Jews, served as a perfect fit for Dr. Stanton’s definition, “a dominant group (Nazi Germans) uses law (Nuremberg laws), custom, and political power to deny the rights of other groups.” Among many other extreme discriminatory acts, these Nuremberg laws stripped Jews of their German citizenship, prohibited their employment by the government or universities, and banned Jewish doctors and dentists from state hospitals.³⁰

The fourth stage, “dehumanization,” came into play during the same period of time as the Nuremberg laws as these discriminatory laws began to cross the line into dehumanization. These laws turned Jewish children into “objects of fear and hatred,” robbed them of their friends, and forced families into cramped ghettos with abysmal living conditions.³¹

The fifth stage, “organization,” was clearly taken on by the Nazis and their state-sponsored German army. The sixth stage, “polarization,” is characterized as the time when “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.”³² Again, we see this polarization in the Nuremberg Laws, where the Nazis

systematically isolate and distance Jews from the rest of European society. For example, the Nazis bankrupted their businesses with propaganda and posted signs reading “Germans! Protect Yourself! Don’t buy from Jews!”³³ Apart from economic polarization, the Nazis also enforced social restrictions that forbade relationships and interactions between the two, such getting married, drinking from the same water fountains, living in the same neighborhoods, and going to the same schools.

The seventh stage, “preparation,” is perfectly illustrated by the creation and planning of the “Final Solution.” According to Stanton, this stage is the “answer,” or in this case, “solution” to the targeted group “question.” The Nazis realized that answering this question would take more than just shooting squads and discriminatory laws, as a result they developed new killing methods that would be more effective in killing a larger number of people at once such as toxic gas.³⁴ A hallmark execution method of the Final Solution was forcing victims into a sealed chamber in which poisonous gas was pumped until all the occupants were dead. The eighth stage, “persecution,” enabled the Final Solution. Before the Jews of Europe were sent to these concentration camps, they were walled into corners of cities called ghettos. Here they were given little food or medicine, and as a result, many died.³⁵ Over the next few years, the Jewish inhabitants of the ghettos were transported to death or work camps all over Europe. There is where the majority of the ninth stage of “extermination,” took place. We know the rest of the story – upwards of six million innocent men, women, and children were murdered solely for the fact that they were Jewish. Still to this day, in alignment with the final stage, “denial”, there are Holocaust deniers and Nazi sympathizers who claim that the Final Solution was only aiming to “resettle” the Jews and that the death toll is actually significantly lower than the globally accepted figures.

Now that I have distilled comprehensive definition of genocide that has been confirmed by the “maximum case” of genocide, we can apply it to the “medium” and “minimum” cases, in order to ultimately see how well it applies to more recent mass slaughters.

Medium Case: Genocide against Bosnian Muslims by Bosnian Serbs

While the death toll in the Bosnian Genocide is the lowest of all three of my case studies, it still presented a very strong case for genocide – the killing was systematic, brutal, religiously motivated, and as a result, there was actual international legal action that followed.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1990, many areas that used to be under control of the Soviet Union were startled with political instability and countries like Yugoslavia began to fall apart. The break up of Yugoslavia was inevitable – the nation was an unstable amalgamation of many diverse religions, cultures, and ethnicities, each with their own historical rivalries, identities and memories that had been suppressed under a harsh Communist government for 40 years.³⁶ The conflict and “classification” stage began when Bosnia tried to secede from Yugoslavia after both Slovenia and Croatia declared independence and the Serbian army invaded. Bosnia’s population was 43% Muslim, 35% Orthodox Serb, and 18% Roman Catholic Croat.³⁷ Backed by the Serbian president, Slobodan Milosevic, the Bosnian Serbs declared their own separate state within the borders of the old Bosnia. Bosnian Serb soldiers and militiamen began to compile lists of leading Muslim and Croat intellectuals, scientists, politicians, musicians, and professionals, and within days of Bosnia’s succession from Yugoslavia, they rounded them up, beat them, and executed many.³⁸ They continued to strengthen Serbian nationalism with new vocabulary words that symbolized (stage two) this ethnic and religious cleansing, “wishing to erase any memory of a Muslim or Croat presence in what they called ‘Republika Srpska,’” they euphemistically dubbed their genocide, *etnicko ciscenje*.

New discriminatory laws, regulations, and customs marked the third stage, “discrimination.” For example, local factories introduced a new quota that limited the number of Muslim or Croat employees to 1 percent of the overall workforce.³⁹ Furthermore, a dehumanizing (stage four) new curfew was imposed from 4 p.m. to 6 a.m. and non-Serbs were forbidden from: meeting in cafes, restaurants, or other public places; bathe or swim in the cities main rivers; hunt or fish; move to another town without authorization; carry a weapon; drive or travel by car; gather in groups of more than three men; contract relatives from outside the town; use means of communication other than the post office phone; wear uniforms; sell real estate or exchange homes without approval.⁴⁰ These discriminatory laws were so extreme that we can also escalate it to stage six, “polarization,” as these new laws drive the two groups, Serbs and non-Serbs, apart with laws that forbid social interaction. The Serb gunmen continued their killing campaign by raiding homes and rounding up and executing non-Serbs, but the Serbs knew they needed to intensify their agenda if they really wanted to “ensure the lasting achievement of ethnic purity.” Thus, through the “organization” stage, they decided to force fathers to castrate their own sons and molest their own daughters.⁴¹

However, the main, internationally recognized massacre, took place in 1995 in Srebrenica where more than 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys were murdered and somewhere between 25,000 and 30,000 more civilians were injured and displaced.⁴² This massacre is clearly in line with the ninth stage, “execution.” The International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Criminal Court have found that the massacre at Srebrenica was indeed *genocide*, and as a result, the former Bosnian Serb leader and first president of the Republika Srpska, Radovan Karadzic was found guilty and sentenced to 40 years in jail.⁴³

Despite this official international classification of the main massacre, there is still denial (stage ten) that the entirety of the events in the early 1990s in Bosnia can be classified as *genocide*. Due to its close match with Stanton's Ten Stages, I can conclude that Bosnia is indeed a medium case of religious genocide.

Minimum Case: The Armenian Genocide

While the Holocaust was the first genocide that was internationally recognized, there were many instances of genocide that preceded the extermination of the Jews in Europe. The Armenian Genocide killed half of the Armenian population, displaced 250,000, converted 200,000, and spared a mere 400,000.⁴⁴ While most of the international community recognizes this atrocity as genocide, still to this day, the Turkish perpetrators, and many governments of the Western world such as the United States, refuse to acknowledge the systematic killing of Armenians.⁴⁵

Similar to the Holocaust case, the roots of genocide were buried deep in the history of the two groups. In other words, the "classification" and "symbolization" stages were developed over a long period of time and were influenced by many political, economic, and cultural factors. You will be hard pressed to find another empire that could rival the glory of the Ottoman Empire in the 1550s. Controlling most of Asia and Eastern Europe, The Ottoman Empire ruled many people of different cultures, religions, and ideologies, even allowing Jews and Christians to practice their own religions as they acknowledged Islam's roots in those two religions.⁴⁶ However, falling under the "discrimination" stage, anyone who practiced any religion other than Islam was still considered a second-class citizen and did not enjoy the same rights and privileges that Muslims did.⁴⁷ The Armenians, majority a Christian population, were isolated by the rugged mountainous region of Central Asia, and were able to develop their culture and economy,

essentially independently from the control of the Ottoman Turks. Over time, as the Armenians prospered, growing their middle class, and taking important positions in commerce and trade, the Turks became intimidated due to the increasing amount of control Armenians held in the government.⁴⁸ Because of this lack of trust, the Ottomans had towards the Armenians, tensions began to arise. As the Ottoman Empire started to go into decline in the mid 1800s, the Turks began to become even more insecure. The Armenians, who were gaining more political and economic freedoms, were increasingly frustrated over still being regarded as second-class citizens and began to push back. The Turks immediately crushed a small rebellion in 1892 and due to increased conflicts; they continued to kill 200,000 to 300,000 Armenians over the next four years.⁴⁹ This sparked the beginning of what would become the Ottoman Turk's response to what they called, "The Armenian Question." Their solution – "resettlement." This "resettlement" was what led to stage seven, "preparation," and ultimately stage nine, "extermination."

The Ottoman Turks told the Armenian civilians that they were being "resettled" and that they were not going to be harmed – a familiar false promise from the Holocaust.⁵⁰ However, the Ottomans had a very different plan in mind. Instead, they escorted the men away from their village and immediately murdered them. The women, children, and families were left to march for days in barren dessert regions, without any food or water.⁵¹ A survivor recounted:

"In a few days, what had been a procession of normal human beings became a stumbling horde of dust-covered skeletons, ravenously looking for scraps of food, eating any offal that came their way, crazed by the hideous sights that filled every hour of their existence, sick with all the diseases that accompany such hardships and privations, but still prodded on and on by the whips and club and bayonets of their executioners."⁵²

This is was dehumanizing and deadly, and resulted in the death of half of the Armenian population.

I am using the Armenian Genocide as my minimum case because some of the stages are not as intensely or clearly met as in the Holocaust or Bosnian case. While this isn't a perfect example of religious genocide, as the events of war do muddy the historical accounts and the victims seem to be frequently characterized as a nationality rather than a religious group, it is important to recognize both the number of innocent civilians that were killed and the fact that it was the religious affiliations of the two nations that caused the initial tensions that led to the genocide.

The Intent: Master Narratives and Ideologies of the Islamic State

Regardless of what definition one uses to define *genocide*, “the *intent* to destroy in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group,” is an essential criterion. In order to isolate and define the intent, or lack there of, in the case of ISIS violence in Iraq and Syria, it is important to analyze the ideologies and motivations behind these actions. *Why* are they brutally killing thousands? Displacing millions? Scaring the world?

The answer lies in the narratives of Salafi Jihadism, the religious demonization ISIS and its supporters follow. According to Dina Al Raffie in the Journal of Terrorism Research, the radical ISIS narrative found its roots in the Jihadist terrorist group, Al-Qaeda. “Perhaps the biggest mistake in the ‘War on Terror’ was the belief that the destruction of Al-Qaeda’s training camps would lead to the demise of the group, its affiliated movements, and Salafi Jihadist ideology,” Al Raffie claimed, highlighting how the War on Terror is still very much alive and taking new forms in more radical groups such as ISIS.⁵³

The meaning of Salafism is derived from the Arabic word *salaf*, and is a movement that seeks to emulate the earliest forefathers of the religion, rejecting even the traditional teachings on Islam in favor of a true ‘fundamentalist’ reinterpretation.⁵⁴ Raffie describes how followers of the Salafi ideology are what she calls “norm entrepreneurs,” people who craft their own master narratives to alter the urgency and accuracy of reality in order to justify their actions and attract more support.⁵⁵ “These stories are so deeply ingrained in cultures that they are an essential part of people’s identities and ‘who they are’ in any given cultural setting,” she wrote. She goes on to distinguish between narratives and master narratives outlining that “master narratives override narratives in importance in that they are a crucial element or reason for a certain culture’s *existence*.”⁵⁶ This sense of urgency and importance is a main reason for the strength and influence of the master narratives of Islamist extremism. The Jihadists effectively build bridges between moderates and extremists in order to rewrite Muslim cultures.

This bridge building and recruitment is the very basis of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi’s sermon on July 4, 2014 in which he declared the formation of the Caliphate (Islamic State) and self-proclaimed himself as the Caliph (ruler of the Caliphate). We can trace the stages of “classification,” “symbolization,” “discrimination,” “dehumanization” in the rhetoric of the speech. Furthermore, the speech itself is evidence of the “organization” stage. Al-Baghdadi begins with a call to all Muslims to “take up arms” and coins them as “soldiers of the Islamic State.”⁵⁷ He paints Muslims as victims – an essential step in creating a symbolic divide within society between the “underdogs,” in this case the Muslim sufferers around the globe, and their “subjugators,” the people and governments of other religious groups. Now that Al-Baghdadi has defined the enemy, he goes on to intensify the “classification,” stage by discussing the world order and how it, “has been divided into two camps and two trenches with no third camp

present.”⁵⁸ He classifies and symbolizes the groups as “the camp of Islam and faith,” and “the camp of *kufir* (disbelief) and hypocrisy,” which he names to include “crusaders,” “atheists,” and “jews.”⁵⁹ It is also important to note that throughout the entire sermon, Al-Baghdadi refers to “the Jews” as “the jews,” the lack of capitalization illustrates the roots of the “dehumanization” stage as he is aiming to “dwarf and reduce from them as a people.”⁶⁰ Furthermore, we see the classic “us versus them” rhetoric of speech that engrains the idea of classification and separation between ISIS followers and the rest of the world. He uses the words “you,” and “your” a total of 88 times and “we,” “us” and “our,” a total of 39 times.⁶¹

Another place where the ISIS rhetoric is indicative of the genocidal intent is in their official magazine, called *Dabiq*. The magazine is actually named after the location where ISIS believes it will win a battle against the army of Rome or the “Crusader army” – an obvious anti-Christian reference.⁶² Printed in the text of the magazine is evidence of the intent behind ISIS’s actions that will further prove that ISIS is not just a group intending to scare the world with global terrorism, but rather, truly does have goal of genocide:

“And nothing changes for the Islamic State, as it will continue to pronounce *takfir* [abandonment of Islam] upon the Jews, the Christians, the pagans, and the apostates from the Rafidah, the Nusayriyyah, the Sahwah, and the tawaghit [disbelievers]. It will continue to wage war against the apostates until they repent from apostasy. It will continue to wage war against the pagans until they accept Islam. It will continue to wage war against the Jewish state until the Jews hide behind their gharqad trees. And it will continue to wage war against the Christians until the truce decreed sometime before the Malhamah. Thereafter, the slave markets will commence in Rome by Allah’s power and might.”⁶³

This rhetoric of waging war and slavery is yet another example of how the killings taken on by ISIS are not random acts of terror, but are rather loaded with genocidal intent. Once one puts together the news headlines and the death and displacement toll with the proof of intent, it is difficult to argue the case of genocide.

The Results of ISIS Rhetoric: Genocide in Action

If you have seen any news headlines in the past two years, you know that Al-Baghdadi and his followers weren't just "talking the talk," they have definitely, and are continuing to, "walk the walk." We can follow many of the remaining Ten Stages throughout the ISIS violence in Iraq and Syria, and through the region and the world.

The large number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees as a result of the conflict represents the scope of the "discrimination" stage. In just the 21-month period between January 2014 and September 2015, 3,206,736 persons became internally displaced in Iraq alone.⁶⁴ Twenty percent of these IDPs have been forced to live in camps, critical shelter arrangements, informal settlements, and unfinished and abandoned buildings.⁶⁵ Husbands and wives have been separated for weeks at a time, some were offered freedom at the price of one family member, others have been isolated without word from their families for over a year and a half, and thousands of women and children have been raped. Christians have been living in Mosul, Iraq, the nation's second largest city, for over 1,700 years. After the fall of Saddam Husain, the Christian population was estimated around 45,000 – today, there are less than 100 Christian inhabitants.⁶⁶ Hearing just one account of the reasons for displacement is sufficient for determining discrimination (stage three), dehumanization (stage four), polarization (stage five), and persecution (stage six):

"After Daesh (ISIS) took Bartella on 8/7/2014 we stayed at home in Bartella without any

services without any aid because they did not allow us to roam the city. On 09/06/2014 Daesh came into the house and searched it. They gave us the choice to convert or leave and if we chose to leave one of the parents will have to remain behind. My husband stayed in Bartella and I saw him restrained and being beaten in the back of the pickup truck. Then they took my 11-month-old daughter and threw her on the couch under the pretext of inspection she began to cry and scream. Then they looted the house and took cash and gold then took us to their inspection office...they took my baby and threw her against the wall, she was hurt physically.” – Nidal (9/6/2014)⁶⁷

“They said to my husband that he would be killed if we didn’t convert to Islam.” – Yazi (8/6/2014)⁶⁸

These quotations are just two of many similar accounts that highlight the phrase that is central to this genocide: *convert or be killed*, or if you are lucky, leave. This pursuit of religious cleansing is also illustrated throughout (not-so) random killings and beheadings of civilians, destruction of holy sites, and deprivation of fundamental rights. For example, on June 27, 2015, four men accused of sodomy were thrown off the tallest building in the city of Fallujah.⁶⁹ These actions are examples of the polarization, preparation, persecution, and extermination stages.

I have found in the case of ISIS, these stages are not satisfied as clearly as in the previous examples. Since this genocide is still occurring, it is difficult to group these entangled current events into chronological steps, as the line is blurred between when ISIS transformed into a group committing genocide from a group of Islamic extremist terrorists. I conclude that the ISIS case falls after Armenia, the minimum case of genocide, on the gradations of horror as my least developed case because of this lack of clarity. With that being said, the ISIS case has both intent

and execution and should definitely be considered *genocide* by the international community.

A Conclusion: Equality, Empathy, and Growing Pains

We have claimed that ISIS is indeed committing genocide. Now what?

If I have learned anything about the ideology that fuels ISIS, I have learned that the worst possible solution to this conflict would be a “boots on the ground” military approach from the West. If United States, or any Western country or alliance, invaded and attempted a military solution of the past, not only would it fail, but also it would actively fuel ISIS’ fire, making the situation significantly worse.

With that being said, I wouldn’t have written this paper if I didn’t think it was of utmost importance to act. The international community cannot just sit and watch innocent civilians being brutally killed, injured, and displaced. I agree with Abraham Lincoln – we as humans in positions of power, have the moral obligation to first, open our eyes to atrocities even if they are happening on the other side of the globe, and second, to act in effective ways to stop and *prevent* genocide. In the case of ISIS, I would suggest diplomatic, legal, political, and economic solutions rather than a military one. Avenues could include: uniting the international community against ISIS by using the word genocide in order to deter recruits, condoning dual allies that secretly fund ISIS such as Saudi Arabia, or conducting ICC Tribunals that convict perpetrators.

However, while political and legal solutions will surely be steps in the right direction, they are simply not enough to crush such a powerful and ingrained master narrative such as that of ISIS. Putting a couple men who would otherwise be willing to blow themselves up in the name of Jihad *in jail* is unfortunately not going to destroy the mindset. Unlike other responses to genocide, not only is Western intervention, in the traditional sense, not a viable option, but also

the current legal ramifications in place are only temporary solutions. The long-term answer really lies in a fundamental shift of our global economic system.

What we see in the situation with ISIS in the Middle East today, what we have seen throughout history, and even what we see in the current presidential election in America with Donald Trump supporters, is anger and frustration rooted in a disconnect between expectations and reality. In a harsh economic climate, we see disaffected young males who are not living the lives that they were “promised,” struggling to keep roofs over their heads and food on the table. In times of turmoil, instability, conflict, and growing economic disparity, this gap is toxic. It is this resentment and insecurity that breeds extremism. As Aung San Suu Kyi said, “It is not power that corrupts but fear.” Most of men and women joining ISIS are doing so because they are *scared* of the alternatives. In no way, shape or form am I justifying the undeniably horrendous acts committed by ISIS or any other genocidal groups of the past or present, I am merely recognizing a pattern which I hope can be used to prevent future atrocities. Ultimately, every human being wants the same things. No one is born evil. No one is born with the life goal of destroying another race or blowing up buildings. When people are deprived of their very basic needs, they see no better alternative.

These four examples, the Holocaust, the Armenian Genocide, the Bosnian Genocide, and the ISIS Genocide, span over a century, but we see the same pattern: crazy people exploiting the needs of desperate, frustrated people, crafting master narratives that blame others for their misery, and fostering resentment that evolves into hatred, and ultimately simulates and enables genocide. People don’t become killers overnight. The only way to crush this violent and destructive narrative is to offer them an even better deal – an economic system that is truly built on the principles of equality of opportunity.

By no means is this a simple feat. Creating equality between the West and the East and, even within those respective regions, would require either lowering the standard of living and expectations of the West or rising of standard of living and expectations of the East. Either shift would be monumental and extremely difficult to administer.

We are in a new age; a new age that for *some* is characterized by information, knowledge, community, empathy, understanding, and connection. The birth of new technologies enables *some* citizens to see what freedom can and does look like, demand change, require equality, and ultimately, achieve progress. We have never before been able to access so much of the truth – the revolutions across the Middle East, or even in our own country, might be result of progressive *growing pains*. The extremist, often genocidal, response is a result of the insecurities, often born of real inequities, towards a new age where the definition of power is changing. Those in power are being challenged, questioned, removed, and those who have been oppressed are opening their eyes to a more equal global society. We must fight this hatred with empathy and understanding. We must empathize with those who have been left behind, blinded from the modernizing world by authoritarian regimes and understand where they are coming from. We must not seek to westernize them, but instead work towards an inclusive economic system that allows for a diverse global community to thrive.

In order to end global terror and genocide, we must first acknowledge the human tendency to turn to violence in times of conflict, resentment, jealousy, inequality, insecurity, and turmoil, and then work towards an economic climate that comforts and enables rather than scares. We must cultivate a society in which something as beautiful and life giving as religion cannot be utilized as justification for death and destruction.

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² Amaryllis Georges, *ISIS Rhetoric for the Creation of the Ummah* (Abu Dhabi, UAE: TRENDS Research & Advisory, 2015), [Page #], accessed February 25, 2016, <http://trendsinstitution.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/ISIS-rhetoric-for-the-creation-of-the-Ummah.pdf>.

³ Nick Cumming-Bruce to New York Times newsgroup, "United Nations Investigators Accuse ISIS of Genocide Over Attacks on Yazidis," March 19, 2015, accessed March 18, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/20/world/middleeast/isis-genocide-yazidis-iraq-un-panel.html>.

⁴ Brendan January, *Genocide: Modern Crimes Against Humanity* (Minneapolis, MN: Twenty-first Century Books, 2007), 29.

⁵ January, *Genocide: Modern Crimes Against*, 28-30.

⁶ "Q&A: Armenian genocide dispute," BBC News, last modified March 5, 2010, accessed April 20, 2016, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6045182.stm>.

⁷ Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2002), 17.

⁸ Power, *A Problem from Hell*, 38.

⁹ *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crimes of Genocide*, New York, 9 December 1948, *United Nations General Assembly*.

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¹¹ Elise Labott and Tal Kopan, "John Kerry: ISIS responsible for genocide," CNN, last modified March 17, 2016, accessed March 18, 2016, <http://abcnews.go.com/International/stake-us-isis-committed-genocide/story?id=37723660>.

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¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ "Saddam as Hitler," The Hoover Institution, accessed April 25, 2016, http://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/0817945121_83.pdf.

¹⁵ ICC, "Frequently Asked Questions," International Criminal Court, accessed March 18, 2016, https://www.icc-cpi.int/en_menus/icc/about%20the%20court/frequently%20asked%20questions/pages/faq.aspx.

¹⁶ ICC, "Frequently Asked Questions," International Criminal Court.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crimes of Genocide*, (1948).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Petit, Robert, Stuart Ford, and Neha Jain. "Exploring Critical Issues in Religious Genocide: Case Studies of Violence in Tibet, Iraq, and Gujarat." *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law* 40, no. 1 (2008): 163-214.

²¹ Gregory H. Stanton, "The Ten Stages of Genocide," Genocide Watch, last modified 2013, accessed February 22, 2016, <http://www.genocidewatch.org/genocide/tenstagesofgenocide.html>.

²² January, *Genocide: Modern Crimes Against*, 27.

²³ Ibid., 32.

²⁴ Ibid., 33.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 32.

²⁷ Ibid., 35.

²⁸ Ibid., 36.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 38.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Stanton, "The Ten Stages of Genocide," Genocide Watch.

³³ January, *Genocide: Modern Crimes Against*, 43.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 43-45.

³⁶ Ibid. 96.

³⁷ Power, *A Problem from Hell*, 248.

³⁸ Ibid., 249.

³⁹ Ibid., 250.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 251.

⁴² Ibid., 260.

⁴³ Prosecutor v Jelisi (Judgment in Sentencing Appeals) IT-95-10-T (14 December 1999).

⁴⁴ Power, *A Problem from Hell*, 10.

⁴⁵ Robert Melson, *Revolution and Genocide: On the Origins of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 10.

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⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 12.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 15.

⁵¹ Ibid., 16-17.

⁵² Ibid., 17.

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⁵⁴ Al Raffie, "Whose Hearts and Minds?," 15.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 14.

⁵⁷ Amaryllis Georges, *ISIS Rhetoric for the Creation of the Ummah* (Abu Dhabi, UAE: TRENDS Research & Advisory, 2015),9, accessed February 25, 2016, <http://trendsinstitution.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/ISIS-rhetoric-for-the-creation-of-the-Ummah.pdf>.

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⁶¹ Ibid., 19.

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