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Identicide

Precursor to Genocide

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Precursor to Genocide

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Abstract

Since World War II genocide scholars have focused on describing the strategies and effects of genocide. However, genocide studies and wider genocide discourse have been without a conceptual framework for the strategies themselves that lead to genocide. This paper articulates genocide's precursor framework by suggesting that the destructive strategies that come before genocide have results in and of themselves and can be placed within a broader theoretical framework. Scholars and practitioners have identified categories of killing that describe the intentional destruction of particular qualities of people, places, and practices, such as *terricide*, *memoricide*, *urbicide*, *domicide*, and *gendercide*, amongst others; however, there is a limitation associated with each, as they are exclusive categories rather than inclusive. It is argued here that "identicide" (Meharg 1999) encompasses the destruction of any or all of the particular qualities that make up, not necessarily the actual elimination of people, but rather, the places which they have constructed over time and in which they habitually live, and their customary and routinised social practices. It is a robust theory that frames the categories of killing, qualifies them, and enters into a more existential concern that is more powerful and inclusive for contemporary debates furthering the study of genocide. This paper sets out the theory of identicide to serve as the framework for the process that may lead to physical genocide, but which, through strategies for the intentional destruction of identity, may serve as alternatives to it.

About the Author

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INTRODUCTION

Coined by Raphael Lemkin in 1944, and since framed by other scholars such as Leo Kuper and Gregory Stanton, the study of genocide has evolved since its inception in a world coping with the effects of mass destruction experienced during the Second World War. Describing the strategies and effects of genocide has been the task of genocide scholars, and more recently interdisciplinary scholars from the fields of human geography, sociology, and political science. However, genocide studies and wider genocide discourse have been without a conceptual framework for the strategies themselves that lead to genocide, perhaps because genocide is widely understood as an empirical act rather than a concept or framework. When the term genocide was first introduced following the Second World War, a different social context existed along with a corresponding international community with its own hierarchy of power. There now exists a disconnect between that social context and the one in which we are now experiencing in the likes of Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Sudan. It is questionable whether the framework for codifying destructive acts is useful and the terminology itself remains loaded with political baggage that makes it difficult to employ within current discourse. Although Gregory Stanton's *Eight Stages of Genocide* (1996) have contributed to recognizing the process of genocide, the process itself is not a war crime as outlined in the *Convention of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* (1948). Rather, the act of genocide is the cumulative end result of multiple destructive strategies and is a punishable crime of war according to international law. Genocide is legally understood as the result of acts committed with the intent to destroy a contested group, in particular, by inflicting mental and physical harm; creating the conditions that bring about destruction; intentionally preventing births; removing children; and wide scale killing. Inasmuch as the term genocide was able to describe the empirical results of whole-scale killing in 1948, the social context in which these parameters now exist have evolved in a way that suggests Lemkin's typology may no longer work within contemporary debates.

This paper articulates genocide's precursor framework by suggesting that the destructive strategies that come before genocide have results in and of themselves and can be placed within a broader theoretical framework. Scholars and practitioners have identified categories of killing that describe the intentional destruction of particular qualities of people, places, and practices, such as *terricide*, *memoricide*, *urbicide*, *domicide*, and *gendercide*, amongst others;¹ however, there is a limitation associated with each, as they are exclusive categories rather than inclusive. It is argued here that "identicide" (Meharg 1999) encompasses the destruction of any or all of the particular qualities that make up, not necessarily the actual elimination of people, but rather, the places which they have constructed over time and in which they habitually live, and their customary and routinised social practices. It is a robust theory that frames the categories of killing, qualifies them, and enters into a more existential concern that is more powerful and inclusive for contemporary debates furthering the study of genocide. This paper sets

¹ Of particular interest are the recent articles published in the *Journal of Genocide Research*. Refer to Jones (2006:9-25).

out the theory of identicide to serve as the framework for the process that may lead to physical genocide, but which, through strategies for the intentional destruction of identity, may serve as alternatives to it.

UNDERSTANDING PEOPLE AND THEIR PLACES

People are strongly connected to their places because it is in place that routinised, even ritualised, quotidian practices construct distinctive identities. Identity, derived from *identitas*, and from *idem*, meaning same, is the quality or condition of being a specified person or thing. It refers to the state of being, or relating to, the same substance, nature, and qualities which can determine one's role in relation to society. Identity is distinct from associations or identifying with others, however multiple individuals with distinct identities can share a collective identity as a group while maintaining their individual qualities. Identity begins with the individual and his or her understanding and sense of self, positioned upon a group history/heritage, collective memory, and upon experience. Insofar as identity refers to the characteristics shared by individuals and groups, it refers both to the material conditions that constitute place, and the behaviour, beliefs, actions and rituals that are materialized in such places. That is, identity is space-bound: it refers to the specific places created by people sharing a way of life, as well as contributing to the particular experience of life in such landscapes.

Although space can be made up of material things, it can also evoke specific kinds of meanings and serve as the geographical, historical, and mnemonic coordinates of identity (Osborne 2002a:9). Places that are socially constructed represent the cultural imprint that people stamp onto their world. "Place and space are forces [that] braid together nature and culture (which includes social relations and meaning) and help constitute self" (Sack 1997:1). Culture and cultural elements are understood to be the heritage and artistic products that are intrinsic to the celebratory and aesthetic dimensions of a society and are physically expressions of the relational aspects of culture (Rao and Walton 2001). Culture is defined through language, religion, region, market economies, places, urban/rural modalities, collective memory, group membership, politics, ideology, economics, vernacular practices and behaviours, domicile, and homeland, amongst others. Sack asserts cultural space to be "an essential framework of all modes of thought, from physics to aesthetics, from myth to magic, to common everyday life" (1986:14). Our spatial ordering system shows the far-reaching effects that cultural thought has on constructing human environments.

People cannot be separated from this spatial world because they are physically born into it and continue creating it by expressing cultural values and beliefs through it, and so, create places. Through the creation of such places we create grounded identities that allow us to orientate ourselves and make sense out of the world, and ensure cultural continuity (Connerton 1989; Osborne 2002a). The importance of continuity to daily living is critical, for without the repetition and re-enactment of elements in daily life people are unable to orient themselves, and they lose their spatial and temporal

connectivity and much of this continuity and connectivity resides in the experience of the vernacular landscape.

Place becomes unique and particular because it is where a series of events happen, both real and imagined. This sense of place is a synthesis of nature and culture based on a history recalled by both individual and collective memories. As elements of symbolism and meaning create a particularity of place, they also act as narratives of collective memory that underpin the cohesion and identity of groups (Halbwachs 1992; Connerton 1989; Fentress and Wickham 1992; Hutton 1993; Gillis 1994; Nora 1996), in fact, “reinforcing the common practice of conceiving place-based social relations as particularistic” (Entrikin 1997:264). This particularity of place reinforces ethnicity, culture, and identity. Some places have great value to the cultural groups that subscribe to them, and the markers that suggest heritage, sacredness, and a collective past assist people to remember and to give meaning to their lives (Sack 1997:135). Places, with their defining material elements, become a part of the mythology of cultures and are building blocks of identity. As elements of culture materialize in the landscape, there is but little choice for those who work in these landscapes but to identify with these particular places (Mitchell 2000:119).

By loading specific meaning onto landscapes, people choose the signifiers of their identities, individually and as groups. Groups can implement the use of specific symbols to create places of religion, politics, or culture, known as landscapes of identity. Landscapes of identity evolve over time and symbols separate and define the significance of the landscape and its intended cultural usages.

Symbols enhance a psychic understanding of religion, race, or ideology. Humans load the landscape with symbols, which “serve to punctuate time, focus space, and figure the landscape, converting it into a psychic terrain” (Osborne 1996:25), adding to the development of both individual and group identities. Certain events have claimed significance throughout history and create symbolically charged space and time, and reside beyond the material world in the psychic terrain. Cultural cues in the landscape - symbols - can summon emotions and strengthen power of place.

Mircea Eliade states, “a symbol speaks to the whole human being and not only to the intelligence” (Eliade 1957: 129). In fact, symbols effectively render the mythological into the material, and catalyze people’s relatedness to place. Osborne suggests that landscape is then transformed as an external phenomenon to be engaged visually, into a psychic terrain of internalized symbolic meaning. This psychic landscape of symbolic meaning is referred to as an *inscape* (Hopkins in Gardner 1976:20); Osborne 1998:433; 2001b:47). In each instance of re-using a symbol, the past is recreated in the present and identity is reinforced by place, which “remains the pivot and all participating agents consequently invest it with symbolic value” (Werlen 1993:175). By loading specific meaning onto the landscape, we are able to choose how we want to be identified, individually and as a group. We use symbols to represent relationships - individual to community, individual to religion, individual to state - and to satisfy our relationships with the future (Lynch 1972:65). Symbolism is all around us, acting as an important indication of a people’s behaviour within an environment (Appleton 1975:82). All

symbolism is dependent upon interpretation (Vale 1992:286) however interpretation and understanding are dependent upon subscription to a particular identity.

As well, symbols possess a tremendous condensing power. “[Symbols] can act as a burning glass, kindling a flame of response from the heat of a myriad of social concerns that they draw together into a single impact” (Frye 1987:5). A symbol embodies the past and present and future into a single descriptive element, which can be used at will to communicate one’s identity subscription. Experts suggest that elements of group identity including histories, heritages, libraries, monuments, art, music, gender, language, religion, rituals, economies, politics, collective memories, and cultural landscapes, amongst others, are potent representational symbols of a people, as much as existence itself (Osborne, 2002; Kaiser 2002; Shirinian, 2000; Meharg, 1999). Moreover, the notion of place as a factor of identity is significant because of the sense of relatedness between people and their places, which in turn modify cultural practices and behaviours. This sense of connection creates a kind of empathy between people and their places. Identities are entrenched in place because people define community through them, commune in them, and to them. The bond is deep and functions on both the conscious and subconscious levels.

WAR PRACTICES

Identity is among the most salient of social factors and can provoke the greatest degree of ambivalence and conflict between peoples (Guntram and Herb 1999:1). Some societies have gone to great lengths to destroy cultural places and practices, forcefully disperse contested groups, and deliberately and systematically destroy an entire people. Such strategies of warfare that denigrate and destroy people and their places are not new, and before the 19th Century, international rules of warfare were not standardized and although there existed so-called traditional war practices, war was unregulated and the actions of warring parties unlimited (Jote, 1994:25).

Taking spoils of war, rape, abuse, burning libraries, archives, and museums, and toppling famous architecture have been effective tactics of war through the ages (Nicholas in Simpson, 1997:39; Jones, 2006) and became part of the culture of soldiering. Part of a soldier’s payment was to plunder the goods of a vanquished group after the battle was over; such permissible behaviour made cultural objects targets of appropriation that could become trophies of conquest (Jote, 1994:25) and a means to undermine a vanquished group by attacking its symbols of identity. Although the targeting of strategic military points, such as munitions factories, transportation routes, and communication lines is still an effective war tactic, there seems to be an increased awareness of the impact that the destruction of symbols – people, places, practices - can have on civilians. These tactics are some of the most effective war tools and have been revived in recent years. Now, contemporary armed warfare is symbolized by brutalities reminiscent of another age, meted out on civilians by insurgent forces, militias, and rebels and surprisingly, regular forces who are obliged to comply with the laws of armed conflict.

This is most apparent when prevailing hierarchies of power in the form of political regimes are repulsed by contested peoples, places, and their practices. Often, strategies to destroy places and cultural practices ensue as a way to rid an area of a marginalized or openly contested group, which can become a highly territorial form of nationalism (Kaplan, 1993; Cigar, 1995; Wood, 2001). Typically, this is achieved through the manipulation and control of symbols and, thereby, the territorialization of the collective space in which they are embedded. Political movements that seek to gain control over the social production of space, place, and landscape to manipulate citizens have been witnessed in the politically contrived ethnic wars of the 1990s (Cigar, 1995; Allcock, 2000; Glenny, 2000; D. Mitchell, 2001). On 2 July 1998, Protestant arsonists set fire to ten Catholic churches in Northern Ireland, - three of which were completely destroyed. Cited as “sectarian madness” by David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, and as “criminal [acts] and disgraceful” by Reverend Ian Paisley, no stranger to anti-Catholicism, both warring factions agreed on the absurdity of targeting culturally significant civilian sites. (Toronto Star, 1998:A16). Between 1991 and 1994, sixteen mosques and eleven Roman Catholic churches and monasteries were destroyed in Banja Luka, Bosnia-Herzegovina, (most were systematically dynamited and bulldozed) though there was no actual fighting in the city, which was under Serb national control throughout the war. The destruction made historical reconstruction impossible. According to Dodds, “a national newspaper quoted Bosnian Serb officials as saying that ‘the levelled site [of the Pasina mosque] would make an excellent parking lot’” (1998:48). The heightened use of this culturally destructive strategy reflects the increased recognition of the significance of symbols as the key to group identity. Perpetrators think that targeting the symbols of a culture reduces the transfer of memory and identity to future generations and, in effect, erasing the existence of a group. Therefore, symbols have become significant penultimate targets in the process of genocide and such purposeful acts to remove the symbols of cultural groups in order to erase any record of a people’s existence should be recognized as acts of identicide.

CHARTING GENOCIDE’S COURSE

When the term genocide was coined by Raphael Lemkin in 1944, the international community was still reeling from the effects of the holocaust in the Second World War. The West was particularly ready to understand how to stop, or in the least, mitigate intentional mass killings based on their relative inaction in arresting the genocide in Europe. Eventually, Lemkin spearheaded a UN conference on genocide with the objective of creating a convention to codify genocide as a crime against humanity. In 1948, the *Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* defined genocide in legalistic terms as any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, or religious group, as such: a) killing members of the group; b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; and e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. The conceptual framework of genocide laid out in the *Convention* was created to

quantifiably illustrate, beyond doubt, that if a series of intentional acts were committed resulting in the effects laid out in the *Convention*, then these could be classified as acts of genocide and punishable as a crime of war.

According to some member states, the sterile overtones of the Convention did not incorporate the realities of the practice and effects of genocide and they “wanted to go further to include the notion of cultural or economic genocide [and] others would have added political motivations” (Destexhe, 1995). The framework of genocide has been constructed in a way that makes it difficult to prove that ongoing actions will result in genocide and that they are indeed intentional actions aimed to eliminate a group and its cultural practices. The rubric of genocide may no longer be a useful framework in which to discuss the exigencies of contemporary armed conflict as Raphael Lemkin originally intended.²

An additional constraint embedded within the definition has been the *Convention’s* wording of genocide as an act, not a strategy of warfare or a process of destruction. According to this definition, the act of genocide can only articulate the empirical results of particular intentional strategies, rather than the strategies that lead to the results. According to Stanton’s typology (1998), a process precludes the act of genocide that develops in eight stages that are predictable but can be mitigated or arrested before resulting in genocide. The stages are *classification, symbolization, dehumanization, organization, polarization, preparation, extermination, and denial* (Figure 1).

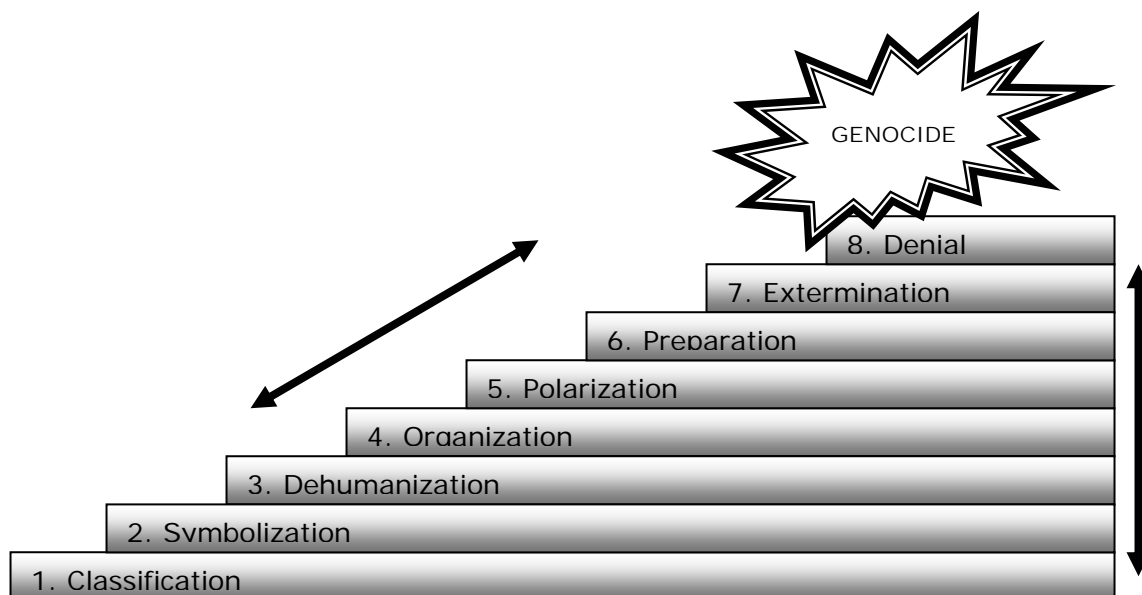


Figure 1. The Eight Stages of Genocide
Source: <http://www.genocidewatch.org/8stages.htm>

² It can be argued that the conceptual framework of genocide may need to be broadened to consider other modes and methods that, when employed, destroy the very fabric of societies and cultures, which in turn destroy people.

This typology is sequential, though earlier stages continue to operate throughout the process as the stacking illustration suggests in Figure 1.³ The stages of genocide do not always result in genocide and are linked with the end result rather than having attributes of their own that in and of themselves have devastating effects upon people. The stages have no name themselves and require the qualifying term ‘genocide’ in order to be considered the stages that come before the act of genocide.⁴

Indeed, the effects of genocide must be realized before the result is called genocide; yet, the destructive strategies themselves have no framework unless they are linked with the term genocide. For example, the terms *potential* genocide, *possible* genocide, and *patterns* of genocide are used to describe the destructive strategies that can lead to genocide; however, each implies, and is correct in its implication, that the strategies may not result in genocide.

The exclusion of the realities of genocide from its legal definition has resulted in 50 years of discourse that could be characterized as an era of typological testing. In fact, trying to ‘get it right’ when it comes to naming the strategies of genocide has been a major practice in forwarding genocide studies, which continue to struggle with the conceptual limitations surrounding the term genocide.

CATEGORIES OF KILLING

The typologies of genocide include different categories of killing that have been developed through a practical requirement to describe the phenomena of destructive strategies meted out on civilian populations during war, but also during times of relative peace. These include *ethnocide*, the killing of ethnicity; *topocide*, the killing of place; *terricide* the killing of earth; *democricide*, the killing of the institutions of democracy (Rummell, 1988); *memoricide*, the killing of memory (Wilkes, 1992); *urbicide*, the killing of city or urbanity (Curic, 1994; Berman 1996);⁵ *gendercide*, gender-selective mass killing (Warren, 1985); *gynocide*, the intentional rape and killing of women⁶ (Sells,

³ For detailed information on the Eight Stages of Genocide, please refer to the excellent information available at <http://www.genocidewatch.org/8stages.htm>

⁴ For example, if one is to theorize on the “extermination stage of genocide,” one is without a theoretical framework unless the qualifying term ‘genocide’ is added, as the author has done in this example.

⁵ Architect Borislav Curic coined the term *urbicide* in reflection of the destruction of cultural sites in Sarajevo prior to Marshal Berman’s use of the term in *Falling Towers: City life after Urbicide* (1997).

⁶ There is a conceptual link between ethnocide and gynocide that can include the concept of ‘ethnic cleansing’. For example, the forceful impregnation of women (now referred to as sexual-based terrorism) in order to eliminate their ethnicity in their offspring is a form of ethnocide and gynocide through so-called ethnic cleansing. It is commonly suggested that this term is not suitable for capturing the intentional destruction embedded in the “sanitary” overtones of the phrase. There is an increase in the use of sexual-based terrorism in contemporary armed warfare and the media is beginning to become informed on its usage within conflict zones. However from a legal perspective, there is a lack of recognition which tends to increase the effectiveness of sexual-based terrorism because terrorist acts can be successfully perpetrated without fear of reprisal (Hardy, 2001:3). It can also be argued that there are other conceptual

1998); *sociocide*, the killing of the social fabric that binds people within a society (Doubt, 2000); and the most recent addition of *domicide*, the intentional killing of home or homeland (Porteous, 2001). These strategies describe the removal of the ability to enact performances, rites, and rituals by eliminating the people and places that catalyze culture. They have become the strategic repertoire of the *génocidaire*. These sub-themes add to the discourse aiming to conceive of and codify contemporary war practice⁷ and reflect parts of the systematic destruction of that which constitutes individual and group identity.

There is much confusion on how these categories fit into the stages of genocide, or the process of genocide. Claims of potential genocide and possible genocide further confuse when and where to use these categories. As shown in Figure 2, the framework for understanding the process that leads to genocide is chaotic at best (Figure 2).

Each strategy describes elements that contribute to the formation of identities and with their destruction, can undermine identities. There is evidence, however, that the categories of killing are not adequate in framing the process that leads to genocide.

IDENTICIDE

The intentional annihilation of a group's identity through the destruction of places, people and practices are the underpinnings of genocide. Identicide is a strategy of warfare that deliberately targets and destroys cultural elements through a variety of means in order to contribute to eventual acculturation, removal, and / or total destruction of a particular identity group, including its contested signs, symbols, behaviours, values, places and performances (Meharg 1999). Identicide is the attack against place, people, and the negotiated outcomes of cultural identity. It derives its meaning from the collocation of identity with the epithet *-cide*. Taken literally, identicide refers to the intentional killing of that which is subsumed under the term identity. Significant in the meaning of identicide is, therefore, what is to be understood in the concept of identity, and what is destroyed in the act of killing identity. Identicide encompasses the categories of killing that contribute to genocide discourse, and offers a way to describe the precursor to genocide as something in and of itself, with effects of its own.

Identicide is the killing of the relatedness between people and place and eliminates the bond which underpins individual, community, and national identity. The method to destroy people and their places is most obvious when applied through military means, yet, the strategy can also be employed beyond the realm of guns and bombs through economic, social, political, and religious warfare, amongst others. Typically, as a

connections easily made within and between the 'cides' in this particular example. When women are raped in order to impregnate, this is a direct/indirect attack against contested homes and societies, amongst others. Therefore, domicile and sociocide may be equally applicable in formulating the extent of destruction caused by sexual-based terrorism.

⁷ Although many of the 'cides' occur during contemporary armed conflict, they are applicable during times of peace and development. Please see Porteous' *Domicide* for a detailed account of the destruction of homes for development projects around the globe.

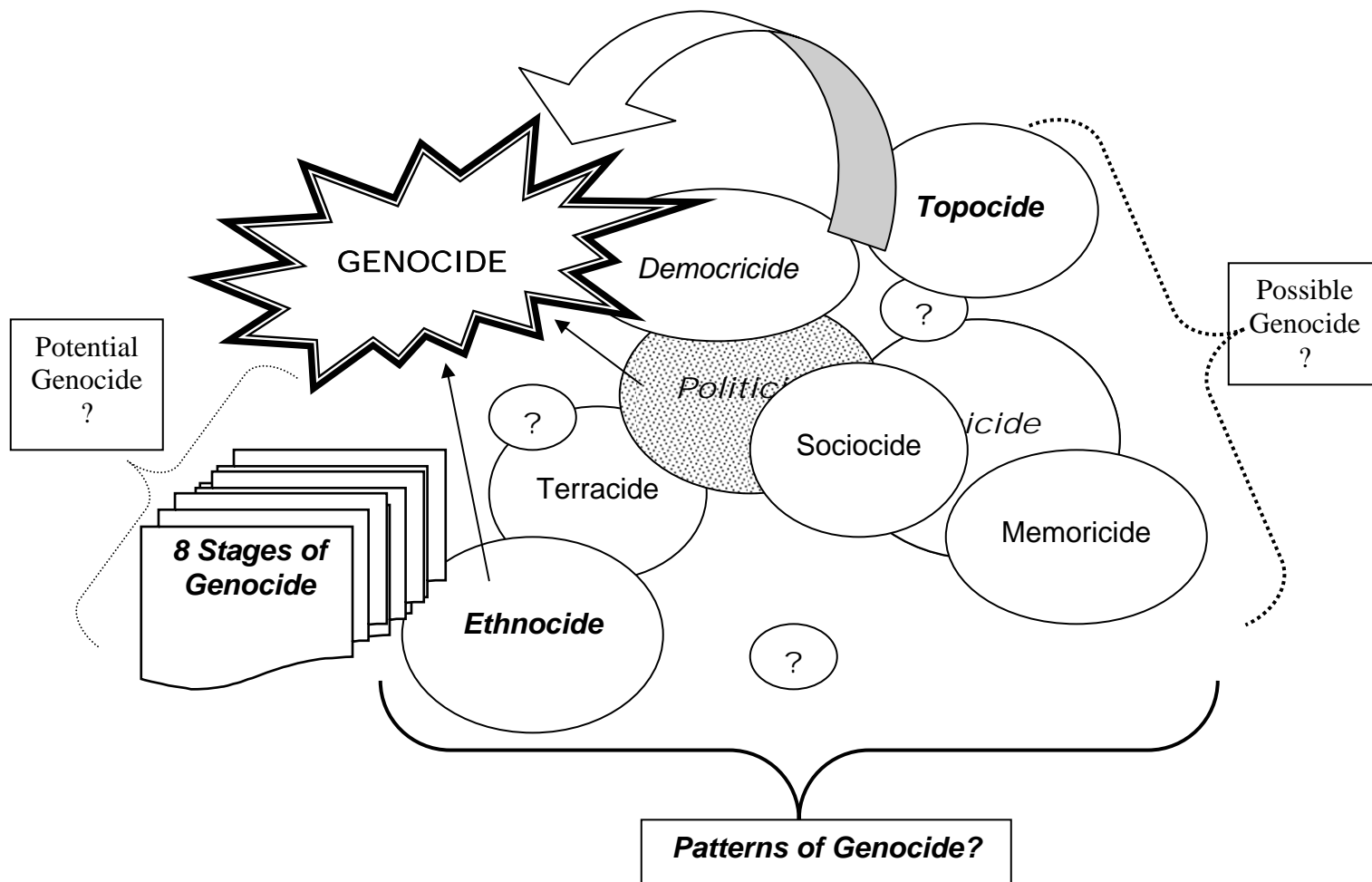


Figure 2. A framework for understanding genocide?

strategy of warfare. *identicide* is used against the material landscape in which people claim as their own and is the destruction of places that bear no military importance yet are strategically targeted in an attempt to erase identity. *Identicide* has a meaning of its own, rather than being incidental to, or an outcome of contemporary armed warfare.

Strategic decisions to target and destroy elements of identity are intentional, yet such destruction is veiled as unintentional collateral damage. However, recent examples of the elimination of the Bridge of Mostar, the Bamiyan Buddhas, and the World Trade Towers suggest that these places were high-value targets with extensive “symbolic footprints” that went far beyond their material value to further any war efforts. As one journalist suggested, cultural casualties of war are not “accidental occurrences of hostilities. It has been one of the main objectives of (...) war to destroy (...) identity. You can do this in a number of ways: you take peoples' lives; you can humiliate them, rape them, expel them from their homes; and you can destroy the physical and historical identity of a place” (Dodds, 1998:52). There are various examples of type and scale of *identicide* through recorded history, such as the forced Christianization of early pagan symbolic sites in Ireland, as well as the changing of Maori place names to that of the lexicon of the colonists in New Zealand. *Identicide* takes many forms, but serves a single function: to lead to the decimation of a people, their places, and practices.

People are more likely to react negatively to the loss of a significant symbolic place than to the murder of an individual from their own community. Some suggest that the emotional response to the destruction of an inanimate object is a disturbing sign of indifference to human suffering and that the international community may be more interested in preserving “stones” rather than people (Williams, 1993). However, the visceral response that people have to the destruction of their places distinct from the death of their neighbours is widely documented and speaks to the power of symbols. For example, author Slavenka Drakulic recollects a newspaper publication that showed the graphic photo of a woman, a victim of Yugoslav army violence, with her throat slit from ear to ear. Drakulic remembers the inaudible societal response to the photo in comparison to the response to the destruction of the Bridge of Mostar in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The author questions herself:

Why do I feel more pain looking at the image of the destroyed Bridge than the image of the woman?...We count on our lives ending. The destruction of a monument to civilization is something else. (Drakulic, 1993).

Drakulic makes it clear that there is a response to the destruction of *known* people and places yet it is important to point out that with relatively little knowledge of people and their places an equal and visceral response can be experienced through the destruction caused by contemporary armed warfare. For example, during the Yugoslav wars, 1991 – 1995, although the wide use of the Internet was just beginning, the destruction of the famous Mostar Bridge was relayed world-wide in a fashion that had previously been left to print media. As well, the net enabled individuals and groups to connect their support faster than ever before. Personal web sites appeared during and

after the war, which garnered international support. Some web site creators were individuals who had ancestral roots in the former Yugoslavia, and some had merely been travellers to that part of the world, yet they found the destruction of the Bridge to be a horrible act of war that they needed to communicate to those who would listen. The power of the Bridge extended into this virtual world of communication and it came to symbolize unity amongst users. Thus, the news of the incident transcended international ethnic, political, and ideological borders resulting in a response from people who had never even known this symbolic site.

Claims to one's past are incited by the destruction or endangering of that particular past, especially the symbols and signs that create it. Even the possibility of threat can incite a group to great lengths to preserve something from the past. Elements of architecture, oral and written history, landscapes, industry, and the symbols which represent them, can be violently protected by those claiming identity through their existence. As Paul Connerton succinctly suggests:

Those who adhere most resolutely to the principles of the new regime and those who have suffered most severely at the hands of the old regime want not only revenge for particular wrongs but a rectification of particular iniquities (Connerton, 1989:7).

Targeted groups may regroup, repatriate, and reinvigorate those symbols which were the focus of the destruction (Clout, 1996) thereby never reaching the end state of genocide as the perpetrators intended. These targeted groups maintain identities through the sharing of language, song, symbols, heritage, folklore – in fact, strengthening their identity through collective remembering despite the intent to eliminate their symbolic footprint (Shirinian, 2000). However, this may not occur due to many complex factors, and a targeted group may eventually be absorbed by the hegemonic culture through acculturation and adapt new cultural traits.

By looking at the nature of destruction implied in identicide, it is possible to identify a logic of destruction that defines its purposes. In light of recent systematic attacks upon significant cultural properties during conflict, the strategy of identicide emerges as a commonly employed element in contemporary warfare.⁸ When potent cultural symbols are intentionally targeted and destroyed, the resulting phenomenon forever changes identities.

⁸ Canadian military officers vehemently refuse to accept that formal regular forces use identicide in their approach to warfare, believing that this method of warfare is only sanctioned by irregular forces. Yet countries with regular armies, some having signed the Geneva and Hague Conventions, have employed identicide throughout this century. For example, the US used the strategy of identicide in the Korean War by destroying villages and sacred temples of no military importance; the British in the Boer War destroyed the material elements of culture such as farms and homes; and the Japanese used it against the Chinese in Nanking by waging war against the culture of "honour" of the people, raping and defiling women, children, and sacred material elements.

The theory of identicide offers a useful way in which to understand the process of genocide and provides a framework for the other ‘cides’, such as *terracide*, *gynocide*, *memoricide*, and *domicide*, amongst others (Figure 3).

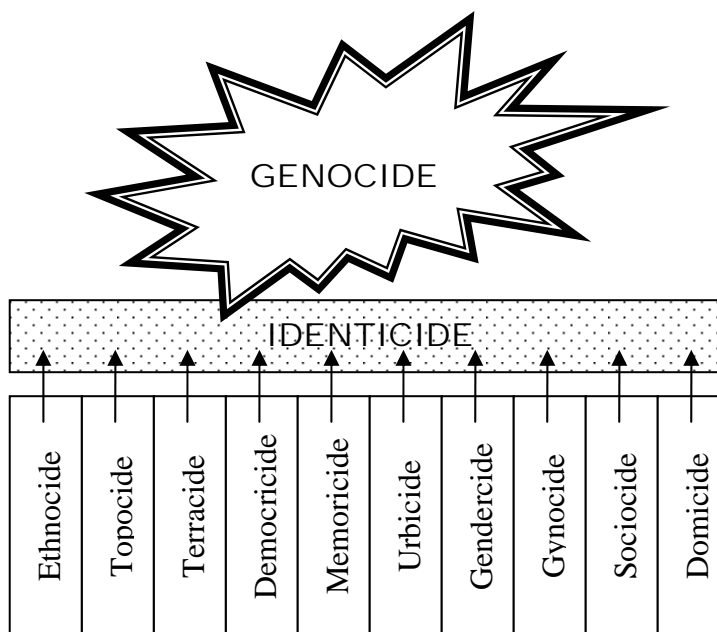


Figure 3. A framework for understanding the process of genocide

Up until now, these descriptive and useful typologies have not adequately related to one another to further the understanding of the destructive strategies of conflict which potentially lead to genocide. Rather, these typologies function as exclusive categories of killing, despite their inter-relatedness to one another and their role in affecting identity.

CONCLUSION

This article offered a framework for the destructive strategies used against civilians that could potentially lead to the act of genocide. Idenicide is the process that comes before genocide. As a precursor to genocide, it is an end in itself. If particular intentional actions unfold, identicide has indeed occurred and can be named as such. Currently, the international community must wait until after a series of events unfold and a particular effect is reached before genocide can be committed or claimed. The results of destructive strategies meted out on a contested people and their places may never result in genocide according to the *Convention of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* (1948), however they do have results in and of themselves. The theory of identicide provides a framework for integrating other more specific strategies of acculturation, domination, and destruction. These include ethnocide, topocide, terracide,

democricide, memoricide, urbicide, gendecide, gynocide, sociocide, and domicide. Identicide offers insight into the effects of these categories on identity.

The act of genocide may never be fully realized by its perpetrators, but the deep and lasting impacts of identicide can forever change people, their places, and their cultural practices. Identicide opens up the conceptual limitations of genocide, and articulates an aggressive war strategy. One may suggest that identicide is too inclusive to be useful in describing and categorizing the granularity of destruction within the contemporized warfare environment. If the term can equally be applied to the destruction of home, of ideologies, and of symbolic cultural icons, how then can it serve to describe something as specific as that which leads to genocide? It is suggested, however, that in its categorical breadth, it names the destructive activities meted out on civilians as important in and of themselves, rather than merely incorporated into a sub-category of 'potential' genocide. As genocide has no conceptual framework to serve the contemporary social context in which it finds itself, it has been argued here that identicide encompasses the destruction of any or all of the particular qualities that make up not, necessarily the actual elimination of people, but, rather, the places which they have constructed over time and in which they habitually live, and their customary and routinised social practices.

Accounts of identicide are increasing in this time of continued attack upon civilians in contemporary armed conflict. The routinisation of such destruction will indeed lead to an unprecedented global identicide resulting in the loss of the uniqueness of people, their places, and the bonds between them. Identicide remains a robust theory that frames the categories of killing, qualifies them, and enters into a more existential concern that is more powerful and inclusive.

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