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**CLAREMONT MCKENNA COLLEGE**

***Killing Within Communities: What Causes Collective Violence,  
How We Remember It, and Why It Matters***

**SUBMITTED TO:  
Professor Heather Ferguson  
and  
Professor Jon Shields**

**By  
Laleh Ahmad**

**For  
Honors Senior Thesis in History  
Fall 2019-Spring 2020  
Submitted May 11, 2020**



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“Then again, perhaps it does feel like a fire - the blue core of it, not the theatrical orange crackling. I have spent a lot of time staring at this core in my own “dark chamber,” and I can testify that it provides an excellent example of how blue gives way to darkness - and then how, without warning, the darkness grows up into a cone of light.”

(Bluets by Maggie Nelson)

“This is  
an overdue  
love letter  
to each  
& every  
woman  
who walked  
these fields  
before me  
&  
made  
the path  
soft enough  
for me to  
walk through  
to get to  
the side  
they could never reach.

for that,  
i owe you  
so much.”

(the witch doesn’t burn in this one by Amanda Lovelace)

*For all the women in my life who inspire me every single day with their grace,  
confidence, kindness, and intelligence.*

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## **Abstract**

This thesis seeks to understand motivations for collective violence beyond the traditional explanations of ethnic hatred or racism. Often, historical scholarship focuses on ethnic hatred and racism, and elaborates on the processes by which those notions and hatreds came to be. Scholarship in the political science realm often gets past the hatred hypothesis but does not explore historical myths and legacy formation as they contribute to past and current violence. This thesis employs a case study approach to understand collective violence that is global and takes multiple cultures and religions into account. The case studies were chosen thematically, and each case study had personal relevance, and elucidated concerns of ethical remembrance and memorialization particularly well. It employs the power/threat and political elite framework as the primary motivator of collective violence and seeks to explore the historical myths that led to past violence and how the legacies of those events are causing current conflict.

## **Introduction**

*“Be prepared... the past is coming.”*  
“Words from a Young Night” by Qassim Haddad

### **An Explanation of Collective Violence**

Collective violence can be broadly defined. It is usually described as violence by people who identify themselves as members of a group against those of another to achieve political, economic, or social objectives. As such, the definition of “group” begins to play a large role in what we define as “collective.” For the purposes of this analysis, collective violence is largely defined as most group versus group dynamics, including mob violence and riots, as well as violence by an individual acting on behalf of a larger group, often framed in ideological terms. This thesis will explore the dominant pre-existing frameworks that are used to explain collective violence, and case studies to determine how effective those frameworks are. It will also explore historical memory, and legacy formation as a result of violence and dominant themes and factors that exist across different cases of collective violence.

This analysis is primarily based on incidences of violence that would be described as ethnic or racial violence. While the case studies at play are indeed motivated by ethnic and racial hatred, this thesis explores alternative explanations for these events. This thesis, rather than arguing that ethnic and racial violence are not significant motivators for violence, stems instead from an exploration of the limitations of ethnic/racial hatred



models, and their treatment of the “collective.”<sup>1</sup> These models often take a bird’s eye view, allowing the causes for political differences to seem like inevitabilities that stem from hatred. Ethnic violence is never easy to comprehend, especially when the perpetrators are civilians and their victims are their neighbors, friends, and community members. It is this “intimate” violence that this thesis seeks to make thinkable, while avoiding a default assumption that simplistic notions of hatred motivate collective action. Ethnic/racial violence exists in many communities, but pogroms, massacres and genocides occur in a minority of communities. This thesis highlights and explores specific moments of collective violence as they relate to larger movements that then create problematic legacies.

The four localities discussed in this analysis, Tulsa, Poland, the Indian subcontinent, and Rwanda, were all surrounded by communities with similar group dynamics, and yet violence only broke out in a limited geographic subset. And so, ethnicity and race can only be one factor amongst many, rather than the primary factor. Not only is accepting ethnicity and race as primary motivators worrying in that it allows us to overlook other factors, but it also plays into problematic tropes that political leaders push as an attempt to veil their failings or mask other political problems as racial and ethnic divisions. In fact, allowing ethnic or racial divides to serve as the primary motivation and explanation for violence means that many commentators become complicit in political projects of governing elites. Another important lens to apply to questions of collective violence is to view it as a process rather than a moment. This not only means that it is key to place it in a larger historical context to examine the complex

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<sup>1</sup> Ben Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

dynamics at play, but also to allow actors to move between or occupy multiple categories at the same time. Viewing actors in a dynamic way allows us to better understand their role in contexts of violence.<sup>2</sup> Actors often move between “perpetrator” and “bystander,” or “rescuer” and “victim.” Furthermore, actors cannot be easily put into one box or the other in regard to ethnicity, because this erases the role of elites or the state in generating these identities to serve a political end. While that end may not be intentional violence, it could be an attempt to draw convenient lines to carry out state projects, which might eventually result in violence.

At its core, this analysis seeks to provide a framework by which to consider intimate collective violence. Collective violence is difficult to understand for many reasons, including but not limited to the fact that it is difficult to grapple with the idea of people killing those close to them. Violence often confounds rational explanations. Civilians do better in times of peace than they do in times of war and so, it does not make sense for civilians to go along with elite projects, given that civilians stand to gain the least with the most risk, and elites stand to gain the most with the least risk. Intimate violence makes it even more difficult to consider given that strong kinship ties should preclude violence, especially genocide, not facilitate it.

### **The Rationale Behind the Case Studies**

The first case study explores the Tulsa Race Massacre as an example of racial violence. The chapter introduces how national tropes, such as the myth of the American

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<sup>2</sup> Lee Ann Fuji, *Killing Neighbors: Webs of Violence in Rwanda* (Cornell University Press, 2009), 11.

Dream, come to play a dominant role in motivating violence and assesses the theory of power/threat as a means to analyze this historical moment. This chapter will first examine the riots, and how they began, and Tulsa's cultural context. The Tulsa context is key because black people in Tulsa lived with relative freedom and social mobility, especially as compared to the rest of the South. Black Tulsans not only did relatively well financially, hence the existence of a "Black Wall Street," but also were somewhat politically engaged, and spoke out against the racist injustices of the time, like lynching. Greenwood, the predominantly black neighborhood in Tulsa, was a largely self-sufficient community and did not have to rely culturally or economically on Tulsa's white residents—it had schools, a theater, a library, hospitals, and a thriving commercial street. In many ways, this community, which contained people who were former slaves, was well on its way to achieving the American Dream. The chapter explores how even if a marginalized community is able to overcome the systemic barriers against it to attain the American Dream, it can be forcibly and violently stripped of the ability to attain it because the realization of prosperity becomes a threat to the racial hegemony.

The chapter will chronologically follow the legacy of the Tulsa Race Riots, first examining how the black and white community constructed different memories of the events in the immediate aftermath of the violence, and then following the riot's legacy through history through multiple primary sources before exploring the present conversation around reparations and the Tulsa Race Riot's new resurgence in our collective memory embodied in the new HBO show *The Watchmen*. The chapter thus presents one method for analyzing collective violence through the power/threat theory, which is the idea that the dominant population will strike out against a minority

population if they are perceived to be amassing too much (political/cultural/social/economic) capital. Even if the threat is not absolute, due to the huge disparity in capital, many majority groups often lash out when capital is perceived to be amassed too quickly or “catches up” to the status of the hegemonic group. Interestingly, this often takes the form of social or cultural capital, rather than political or economic, adding strength to the theory that it might have more to do with group pride than group power.

The second case study in this thesis explores anti-Jewish pogroms during World War II as a form of ethnic violence. The theories and questions explored in this chapter relate to the creation of political hegemony and the consequences of competing national projects. The pogroms occurred in primarily Polish and Ukrainian communities, often with very little pressure or involvement from the Nazi forces. Fewer than 10% of these communities experienced violence, leading scholars to wonder what set apart the communities that did. This case study largely supports the findings of the previous one, showing that violence typically stemmed from a desire to maintain Polish and Ukrainian dominance, rather than anti-Semitic hatred. This case study is valuable because it compares well with the Tulsa Race Massacre since it contains a similar power/threat framework, but this threat was political and national rather than cultural and economic. The pre-existing narrative focuses on the myths of Jewish culpability grounded in theology and Nazi facilitation. This approach, while clear cut, fails to acknowledge that anti-Semitism persisted throughout Germany and Eastern Europe, but civilian led massacres occurred in a minority of localities. Furthermore, pinning the blame squarely

on the Nazis ignores civilian culpability and the aspect of popular violence (violence with mass participation).

When we assume that the Nazis forced the civilians to involve themselves, we not only remove civilians from the category of perpetrators and ignore their role as complicit witnesses, but we also ignore the pernicious factors at play that persuaded citizens to take up arms against their Jewish neighbors. Nazis were often present but did not act as a central force. The collapse of local order also meant that pogroms were conducted in times of statelessness and so political elites could not be blamed. The violence was also intimate, unlike the sanitized machine of the Holocaust. The violence was carried out with clubs and shovels, and Jews were paraded through the town. The violent event was often based on humiliating rituals and seemed intensely personal. Most scholarship on the violence of the period focuses on Nazi involvement, economic rivalry, and the anti-Semitic revenge theory. This chapter's approach is to explore how pogroms were instead a means by which to get rid of Jews because Jews were seen as future political rivals—the deciding factor was the popularity of parties that pushed minority rights. In localities in which Ukrainian and Polish political parties advocating for minority rights for Jews were popular, pogroms were more likely to occur.

The next chapter explores violence as a result of nation-building and nationalism and focuses on violence stemming from the 1947 Partition of British India. This chapter will explore how political elites, specifically Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawarlal Nehru, were able to use religious rhetoric to construct national identities for Hindus and Muslims, and then created polarizing and explosive situations wherein

violence was likely to break out to achieve their personal and political aims. The chapter also explores how other elites within the All India Muslim League and the National Congress stoked religious hatreds and spread propaganda that enabled the massacres to become a wave of violence rather than random and localized bursts. Thus, while much of the sentiment and violence was grounded in religious sentiment, the chapter will argue that it would not have occurred with the intensity that it did without the threat of independence and political inconsequentiality looming on the horizon. The chapter focuses on the figure of Jinnah because Jinnah originally refused to deploy religious rhetoric and felt that doing so was a dangerous strategy, but then decided to adopt it as a means to emerge as the sole spokesman of India's Muslims.

The Rwandan Genocide serves as a valuable case study because of the distinct role that the Rwandan government played in its attempt to reconcile the two populations to avoid immediate bloodshed. It embarked on a path to transitional justice and education and thus represents the only case study in which there was an urgent need, and therefore a strategy, to reconcile the two warring populations. This means that the Rwandan Genocide, while certainly still with hidden motivations, does not seek to villainize and polarize the population but rather acknowledges the plights of the victims and perpetrators. The Rwandan Genocide was both intimate and popular, and emerged largely out of the racialization of the Hutu/Tutsi difference by Belgian colonial ruling strategies. The themes and theories explored in this chapter are the alien/native dynamic—how Hutus were disenfranchised and considered to be less civilized, while the

Tutsi were uplifted as superior, based on the Hamitic hypothesis<sup>3</sup>. This created a dynamic wherein the Tutsi were seen as a privileged minority with access to power, parallel to colonizers, which eventually led to them being constructed as an alien population within the emergent nation-state. This chapter makes the point that ethnic divides can result in massacres and pogroms, but a racial difference is required for genocide, and so it examines how an ethnic difference was racialized to the point that almost everyone in Rwanda became either a victim or a perpetrator. Further, it explores the significance of historical memory and legacies of violence by analyzing the victim/perpetrator cycle from the 1959 Revolution, to the later civil war and Rwandan Patriotic Front invasion and eventually the genocide.<sup>4</sup>

Partition violence was not as intimate as the first case studies because the targets were often refugee caravans and trains, but there was certainly popular participation. Political elites used historical and theological myths to mold a national identity for Hindus and Muslims and to exacerbate the Muslim threat to the Sikhs. Gandhi himself had employed this strategy from the earlier part of the twentieth century, and Jinnah had derided it as dangerously sectarian. After a humiliating defeat in the 1937 elections, it became clear to Jinnah that he had to employ any tools necessary to regain political capital. The distrust that existed between Jinnah and Nehru before Partition only increased afterward, and that legacy festered on after the death of these key figures. Pakistan and India are currently grappling with very similar conflicts and will continue to

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<sup>3</sup> Supposes that any progress and development among agricultural blacks was the result of conquest or infiltration by pastoralists from northern or northeastern Africa, allegedly a branch of the Caucasian race.

<sup>4</sup> The Rwandan Patriotic Front is the current ruling political party in Rwanda. Its armed wing, led by current president Paul Kagame, ended the Rwandan genocide in 1994.

be plagued by these divisions unless there is an intentional strategy in place to break the cycle and tell an honest history. Like the Partition, each of the case studies explored in this thesis continue to unfold in the present and demonstrate the importance of legacies and how we write history. In the case of the Tulsa Race Massacre, the current relevance is reparations, and for anti-Jewish pogroms, it is the political upheaval in Poland. In both these situations, responsible memorialization and legacy formation would lead to better political situations that might mitigate the violence that the target communities face. However, for the legacy of Partition, the effects are very direct. There are still consistent Muslim massacres in India and skirmishes over Kashmir, and the rhetoric causing these can be directly traced to the legacy of Partition. Reparations and memorialization would right some past wrongs and create a moment of education, but it is not clear that it would fully prevent violence against black Americans. With Poland, proper memorialization and remembrance would likely prevent denialism and anti-Semitic narratives that allows nationalist parties to gain a hold, and so would result in better civic and political conditions for the Polish Jews, but it's not necessarily true that it would prevent civilian violence or hate crimes. With Pakistan/India and the next case study, the Rwanda genocide, responsible legacy creation could prevent civilians from taking up their arms against each other.

### **Historical Memory and Legacy Formation**

This project is concerned with the ethics of history as a discipline and the consequences of reproducing narratives without critically examining the notions they perpetuate. These historiographic narratives do not reproduce neutrality, but often



reproduce an indifference that silences the most marginalized voices in the story. The historical subjects of violence are vulnerable to power dynamics that are then reproduced through irresponsible stewardship of their stories. It is not only important to resist reproducing such irresponsible narratives to avoid these actors' further subjugation within historical paradigms, but also to avoid the potential use of such narratives to continue to subjugate already precarious populations. The preservation of historical memory that validates the diversity of collective violence is crucial since people build the present and the future on the basis of the past, and so the past cannot be written in such a way that it fulfills the original intent of violent acts. The past is often used as a moral lesson by hegemonic groups to justify their actions or agenda. Historical analysis can intervene in this discourse and the abuse of history as a means to retain power. Historical memory also serves as a basis for hope and can act as a reconciliatory or uniting force. If legacies can be used to resolve disputes and solve problems, since they act as common stories and lessons, we may begin to use them to prevent or undo damage done.

History can be used as a self-affirming force in most cases, as individuals and groups are able to find their own histories to cling to. Memory is subject to manipulation, and so groups with ulterior motives will always be able to construct a version of events that can incentivize a population to create conflict. Since the Holocaust, the theme of "never forget" has been dominant but has not effectively guarded the world against collective violence or genocidal tendencies. Even the Holocaust was justified on the basis of historical myths of anti-Semitic legends. The Holocaust further proves the point that most ideological groups have long held the belief that "they are destined in the long run

to triumph over the infidels,”<sup>5</sup> and groups in power are able to construct the “infidel” as whomever they so choose. This makes it clear that the admonition to “never forget,” is not enough, and rather, there must be an active attempt to preserve the past in a way that does not diminish the true victims or incite further violence.

As memory passes from generation to generation, it changes. This is in part due to the fragility of memory and in part due to elites manipulating history for their ends. This process of passing on memories results in individual, group, and national identity formation, and serves as a context from which people may choose to take further political actions. As explained earlier, the process of establishing group identities is important because how we define groups not only changes how one understands collective violence, but how one creates it. In these case studies, it becomes clear that historical myths (theological and sociological) and historical processes (accruing capital and status) serve a dual purpose: the construction of group identities and the creation of the right environment for violence.

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<sup>5</sup> Stuart Hampshire. *Innocence and Experience* (Harvard University Press, 1989), 136.

## **Violence as a Result of Economic Threat: The Tulsa Race Massacres**

“The things that abandon you get remembered different.  
As precise as the English language can be, with words  
Like *penultimate* and *perseverate*, there is not a combination  
of sounds that describe only that leaving.”  
“Blood History” by Dwayne Betts

### **The Myth of the American Dream and Power Threat Theory**

The 1921 Tulsa Race Riots’ events were contested and controversial, even in academia, until very recently. Even now, after the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot Commission published *A Report by the Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921* in 2001, no one knows exactly how many people died.<sup>6</sup> The report could on corroborate the bare bones story of events that as fact. The neighborhood of Greenwood, Tulsa was a prosperous and thriving black community, especially by the standards of the time. The community was doing well across the board: politically, culturally, socially, and economically. “Black Wall Street” was a space that was unlike any other in the United States at the time, until it was burned to the ground. The Tulsa Race Riots was one of the nation’s darkest and bloodiest acts of violence, and one of the most defining acts of racial violence. The economic and social capital of Greenwood caused a violent backlash from white Tulsans, and the subsequent silence surrounding the riots served the same end of oppressing an already marginalized group. The legacy of the Tulsa Race Riots illustrates the importance of historical memories in reconciliation and rebuilding.

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<sup>6</sup> Oklahoma Commission to Study the Race Riot of 1921, *Tulsa Race Riot*, (2001).

The riots' erasure from our historical memory brings up important questions about the formation of historical and collective memory and the way enduring legacies of momentous events are shaped. Moreover, the intentional nature of the riots' violence illuminates the hypocrisy of the American Dream myth. Some of the events of the Tulsa Race Riots can be agreed upon. The black community did believe that Dick Rowland would be lynched, and they knew that the reasons for his arrest were highly suspicious. Dick Rowland was a 19 year old shoe-shiner who was accused of assaulting a 17 year old white girl names Sarah Page. The black community also felt a pressure to act, believing that his safety was in their hands. At the gathering of several hostile groups, tensions worsened, and government forces did not take effective action to calm the situation. Once violence erupted, civil officials chose to deputize some men. All these men were white and some of them were participants in the violence. None of them caused the violence to erupt, but many took actions that were illegal and potentially amplified the situation. Public officials provided firearms and ammunition to civilians, all of them white men. Units of Oklahoma's National Guard mass arrested almost all of Greenwood's residents and detained them in mass holding centers or in other parts of the city. People, some of them government officials, entered Greenwood and began to steal property left inside homes and businesses. They then burned or destroyed over a thousand homes and structures such as churches, schools, businesses, a hospital, and a library. No government official at any level intervened. Credible estimates, such as those of the American Red Cross, estimate that between one and three hundred people were killed.<sup>7</sup> None of these

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<sup>7</sup> Maurice Williams, "Disaster Relief Report," American Red Cross, 3.

acts have ever been prosecuted and rebuilding efforts were left to the victims of the destruction.

The aforementioned series of events represents a barebones outline of the violence that was carried out by one side of Tulsa on another, but there is an important context to explore.<sup>8</sup> Greenwood, or “Little Africa,” was a largely self-sufficient community. The black people of Greenwood lived in relative freedom, with their own hospital, school, theater, shops, and newspapers. Oklahoma was not plagued by the traditions and racism of the Old South, and the black community often spoke out against lynching and were advocates for equality. They believed that schools could be separate, but they should be of the same quality—blacks, segregated, should receive the same treatment as whites. These ideas were distributed in black newspapers, and often made their way to courts.<sup>9</sup> After World War I, there was even more talk of equal rights. Black men had served in the military, risked their lives for their country, watched President Wilson talk about the need for freedom and the horror of pogroms. The community was vibrant and thriving.<sup>10</sup> Economically, Greenwood’s businesses were a commercial success. The area’s affluence and entrepreneurial spirit led many to call it “Black Wall Street.” And Tulsa’s booming economy was, in part, dependent on this financial success since black patrons had nowhere else to take their business. Limited by segregation, black residents could not frequent downtown white-owned businesses. Intellectually, politically, and religiously, Tulsa also stood apart. There were two newspapers, a library,

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<sup>8</sup> Oklahoma Commission to Study the Race Riot of 1921, *Tulsa Race Riot*, (2001). 10.

<sup>9</sup> Alfred Brophy, *Reconstructing the Dreamland: The Tulsa Riot of 1921: Race, Reparations, and Reconciliation*, (Oxford University Press, 2002). 6.

<sup>10</sup>Oklahoma Commission, *Tulsa Race Riot*, 4.

all black Democrat and Republican clubs, and high church membership. By most accounts, the residents of Greenwood, many slaves just sixty years prior, were on their way to achieving the American Dream. This suggestion is not to imply that most Greenwood residents were wealthy, but many were homeowners and seemed to have a shot at class mobility.<sup>11</sup>

The Tulsa Race Riots may have been set off by the prospect of Dick Rowland's lynching, but the violence was no less motivated by an outrage at the economic ambitions of black Tulsans and a fury at the audacity of black World War I veterans to demand equality. A framework that is helpful to analyze the events of Tulsa in 1921 is Hubert Blalock's power threat theory.<sup>12</sup> Blalock asserts that when a dominant group perceives an economic or political threat from a minority group, the dominant group will take action to maintain their hegemony. This theory has often been applied to situations of collective violence to explain why one group would turn on another, even though they inhabit the same communal and physical space. Greenwood's wealth and prosperity created a violent backlash intended to weaken the economic, and therefore political and social, power of the black community in Tulsa.

Any chance of black Tulsans achieving the American Dream was intentionally destroyed by the rioters. While social mobility in the way that white Tulsans experienced it was probably never on the table for black Tulsans, they had been getting dangerously close. There was a powerful upper class developing, and many had the means to amass wealth. The swift and sudden destruction of Greenwood shows us how the American

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<sup>11</sup> Brophy, *Reconstructing the Dreamland*, 8.

<sup>12</sup> Hubert Blalock, *Toward a theory of minority-group relations*, (New York: Wiley, 1967).

Dream has often played out historically for black communities. Even when they can prosper, with the institutional and structural inequalities and injustices that they are faced with, their wealth will be wiped out. The rioters were ruthlessly efficient in terms of effectively wiping out all sources of wealth from the community, but there was also a larger symbolic aim to be achieved: keeping a race in its place. There were individual crimes committed against individual people, but intentional enough that these acts did not serve as individual but rather as a collective trauma. Like a lynching, the Tulsa Race Riots served not to “punish with death, but to terrify the living.”<sup>13</sup> There was a message to be sent. Ambitiousness and assertiveness were not tolerated from black Tulsans.

In the weeks following the riots, reactions revolved around the assignment of blame. When the riot initially happened, it was front page news across America. *The New York Times* ran the headline, “85 WHITES AND NEGROES DIE IN TULSA RIOTS.”<sup>14</sup> Across the country, similar headlines appeared in newspapers.<sup>15</sup> *The Nation*, often a supporter of black causes, ran the headline, “The Eruption of Tulsa,”<sup>16</sup> by Walter White. This article is still considered to be one of the influential accounts of what happened, and it is worth noting what language was used.<sup>17</sup> The white woman who accused Dick Rowland of assault is described as “hysterical.” The article goes on to discuss how black Tulsans were often regarded as radical, and how that designation is absurd considering it referenced their denunciation of Jim Crow era laws. Meanwhile in the *Survey*, Amy Comstock wrote “Another View of the Tulsa Riots,” an article deflecting blame from

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<sup>13</sup> Oklahoma Commission, *Tulsa Race Riot*, 17.

<sup>14</sup> “85 WHITES AND NEGROES DIE IN TULSA RIOTS,” *The New York Times*, June 2, 1921.

<sup>15</sup> Oklahoma Commission, *Tulsa Race Riot*, 25.

<sup>16</sup> Walter White, “The Eruption of Tulsa,” *The Nation*, June 29, 1921.

<sup>17</sup> Editors and Walter White, “Tulsa, 1921,” *The Nation*, August 20, 2001.

Tulsa's white citizenry and instead onto Tulsa's poor black community.<sup>18</sup> She argued that it was the responsibility of white officials to fix the conditions that led to such poor infrastructure and law enforcement, conditions that made it difficult to have "good citizens."<sup>19</sup> She argues that Greenwood became a "crook's paradise" but now Tulsa officials would rebuild it to be a more sanitary area. She regularly equates cleanliness with criminal activity, which is a common tool to avoid overtly equating cleanliness with black people (or other people of color). These two articles work somewhat as a summary of the black reaction versus the white reaction in Tulsa, but do not adequately convey the sense of remorse on behalf of the white community in Tulsa. In the immediate aftermath of the riots, there was remorse and a promise to rebuild. But the blame from white Tulsa was still on "bad negroes" and the criminals of Greenwood. In fact, Tulsa Mayor T.D. Evans was happy the destruction was limited to Greenwood: "I say it was good generalship to let the destruction come to the where the trouble was hatched up, put in motion, and where it had its inception."

The search for blame continued in the press. *The New York Times* published two articles on June 4th and June 5th (1921), first implying responsibility on the part of the African Blood Brotherhood, and then releasing a statement by the head of the organization denying it. The Blood Brotherhood say that they believe in black people's right to self-defense, but did not intentionally incite the riot.<sup>20</sup> *The Chicago Tribune* ran "POLICE AIDED TULSA RIOTERS," a long piece summarizing the events leading to

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<sup>18</sup> Amy Comstock, "Another View of the Tulsa Riots," *Survey*, July 2, 1921.

<sup>19</sup> Comstock, "Another View of the Tulsa Riots."

<sup>20</sup> "Denies Negroes Started Tulsa Riots," *The New York Times*, June 5, 1921.



the riot, and focusing on how the police intentionally gave “armed white ruffians” guns to help them murder black Tulsans.<sup>21</sup> Within Tulsa, the conversation had taken on a peculiar tone. While there was an emphasis on rebuilding and restoring Greenwood and raising funds for victims, the discourse about “bad black” men was thriving. There was a sense that the riot had originated from black Tulsans’ decision to take the law into their own hands. The idea was that they should have trusted the law to protect Dick Rowland. Most articles agree that there was significant white criminal behavior in the riots but frame the criminality as a reaction to black provocation. The conversation for white interpreters was often framed by the purported arrogance of Greenwood residents and discussed how their ideas of racial equality were inflammatory and led to the agitation that eventually provoked the riot.<sup>22</sup>

The white interpretation of the riot is key to understanding why the riots began. In a white paper, appearing a few days after the riots, the article emphasized kindness where there was hatred: “The white citizens of Tulsa have forgotten the bitter hatred and their desperation that caused them to meet the negroes in battle to the death Tuesday night and are now thinking of them only as helpless refugees.”<sup>23</sup> If the white Tulsans were trying to put Greenwood residents in their place through the riot, seeing them as victims afterwards supported this aim. Greenwood residents as helpless victims and refugees perpetuates the narrative that they are no longer a threat to white authority. Now, they are subject to

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<sup>21</sup> “Police Aided Tulsa Rioters,” *The Chicago Defender*, June 11, 1921.

<sup>22</sup> Brophy, *Reconstructing the Dreamland*, 71.

<sup>23</sup> Brophy, *Reconstructing the Dreamland*, 73.

white pity and reliant on white charity for help. Their kindness is not to suggest that white Tulsans viewed black Tulsans in a positive light. Black Tulsans were still seen as criminals, childlike, arrogant and lazy. The white hegemony and social control remained intact and was not threatened by white kindness to black Tulsans but upheld by it.

These views were made official in the Grand Jury report. The report considered predominantly white accounts of the riots and chose evidence so selectively that it was essentially a retelling of the white side of the story. The report blamed social agitation amongst the blacks and a breakdown of law enforcement.<sup>24</sup> Key to blaming the riots on the black Tulsans was the denial of the lynching threat. If the threat of Dick Rowland lynching was nonexistent, the veteran's initial actions are no longer defensible.

Therefore, it is easy to frame the riots as black Tulsans inciting violence in a space in which there was none, and framing the white Tulsans as peaceful and innocent, swept up in the violence as it erupted. The report also focused on law enforcement and talked about how there was a breakdown of governance in Greenwood. To prevent more incidents like the riots, policing and enforcement should be stricter in Greenwood, and whites and blacks should not be allowed to mingle freely in dance halls. Black Tulsans also viewed the riots through the lens of a breakdown of the law, but they saw the law as having failed

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<sup>24</sup> "Grand Jury Blames Negroes for Inciting Race Rioting; Whites Clearly Exonerated," *Tulsa World*, 26 June 1921, i, quoted in Alfred L. Brophy, *Reconstructing the Dreamland: The Tulsa Riot of 1921; Race, Reparations, and Reconciliation*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 74.

to protect Greenwood from violence.<sup>25</sup> They viewed the riots as being part of a long pattern in which they were denied equal protection under the law.

In the weeks and days following the riots, there was significant news attention. Most of the press was negative, many papers offered harsh condemnations of the events



Credits: Greenwood Cultural Center

Figure 1: The aftermath of Tulsa Race Massacre

move in and contribute to growth. People feared that this kind of negative press attention would turn away prospective residents and business owners. For Tulsa's white business and political leaders, it was clear that this entire affair had to be swept under the rug.

Historically, it is remarkable that the silence was created so effectively. History textbooks published in the next two decades did not mention it, news stories began to disappear, and collective memory began to view this as an event that invoked shame rather than pride.<sup>27</sup> In the decades immediately following the riots there wasn't much acknowledgement of them. *The Chicago Defender* published a piece in July of 1922

in Tulsa. The *Christian Recorder* called the incident a "shame upon America."<sup>26</sup> For Tulsan citizens, and especially for public or civil officials, this kind of attention was totally undesirable. Oklahoma and Tulsa were growing economic centers, desperate for people to

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<sup>25</sup> White, "The Eruption of Tulsa."

<sup>26</sup>Oklahoma Commission, *Tulsa Race Riot*, 25.

<sup>27</sup>Oklahoma Commission, *Tulsa Race Riot*, 27.

called “Will Tulsa Riot Horrors Awaken America’s Indifferent Attitude,” but that seemed to be the end of the conversation for years.<sup>28</sup>

### **The Legacy That Formed and Our Collective Memory**

Until very recently, the riots legacy has been one of silence. The *Tulsa Race Riot* report summarizes the reactions to and engagement with the events of the Tulsa Race Riots from its inception to the report’s publication. In short, there was very little activity until 1946. There were a few attempts by teachers and professors, such as Nancy Feldman, a sociology professor at the University of Tulsa in 1946, to engage with the material but they were met with little success until Loren Gill decided to make the riots the subject of his master’s thesis.<sup>29</sup> A white World War II veteran, he was attending the University of Tulsa when his interest was caught by the lingering memories of the riots. His product, named “The Tulsa Race Riot,” was a result of impressive research skills and diligent investigative work.<sup>30</sup> Despite his efforts, however, records about the riots remained buried and talk of the riots remained out of the public arena.

Change began to be seen in the 1950s through the 1970s. As debates, nationally and in Tulsa, began about segregation and civil rights it was increasingly difficult to ignore Tulsa’s bloody and racist past. On June 1st, 1971, African American riot survivors gathered in Mount Zion Baptist Church to commemorate the riots. There were a few dozen survivors, and a few audience members, and it was the first public

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<sup>28</sup> A.J. Smitherman, “Will Tulsa Riot Horrors Awaken America’s Indifferent Attitude,” *Chicago Defender*, July 22, 1921. The article itself is interesting, talking about not only the events of the riot but also reactions to it.

<sup>29</sup> Oklahoma Commission, *Tulsa Race Riot*, 28.

<sup>30</sup> Loren Gill, “The Tulsa Race Riot,” *M.A. Thesis*, 1946.

acknowledgement of the riots in decades. In the same spring, there was another attempt at public acknowledgement. The publications manager at the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce decided that there should be an article published about the Tulsa Race Riots to commemorate its fiftieth anniversary. He hired Ed Wheeler, the host of 'The Gilcrease Story,' a popular history radio program, to research and write the article, and Wheeler agreed to do it. Wheeler dug up old records and spoke to dozens of riots survivors. Twice, he was threatened and told not to write the article. Both times he ignored the threats and forged ahead. The article, once written, was revolutionary and included never before published pictures, but the Chamber of Commerce killed the article. He had to publish it in *Impact Magazine*, a new and black oriented magazine, which limited the article's audience from being citywide. There were similar efforts to bring the Tulsa Race Riots into the limelight through the 1970s. But all of them, like Wheeler's article, were largely unsuccessful. But even if it were not in the spotlight, it was a little closer to the light, and laid the groundwork for efforts in the coming decades that would finally give the riots the attention they deserved.

In the years before the *Tulsa Race Riot* report's publication, there was a surge in interest in the riots. Leading up to the eightieth anniversary of the riots, stories about the riots appeared in most major publications and news stations. Less visible, but even more important, efforts were made to investigate and research the riots academically. Scholars began to comb through archives and conduct oral interviews to compile an accurate history of the riots so the incident might be more fully documented. The report itself was a tremendous undertaking and acted as a locator of a muddled truth. The *Tulsa Race Riot* report is an incredibly powerful document and wrote the history of an event that had been

intentionally forgotten and silenced. If the riots were undertaken by white Tulsans in order to relegate black Tulsans to a lower status, and history is written in a way that reflects the voices of white Tulsans, there is no way to make up for the injustices of the past. ‘Objective’ reports and documentation can often act as a means by which to silence histories depending on the agendas of the authors. If this report had simply written a history based off the sources easily available, it would have achieved the same effect. The intentional creation of historical memory, achieved with the *Tulsa Race Riot* report, was key in the path to reconciliation and rebuilding.

While the Tulsa Race Riots re-emerged as part of a national collective memory after their eightieth anniversary, 2018 and 2019 saw a resurgence in the conversation



Credit: 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Commission

Figure 2: Logo for the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Commission

surrounding the riots. In December 2017, the *Tulsa 2021* project was announced.<sup>31</sup>

This project, in turn, established the 1921 Tulsa Race Riots Centennial Commission to “develop programs, projects, events and activities to commemorate and inform.”<sup>32</sup>

Specifically, the commission’s aim is to work on fostering sustainable

entrepreneurship and heritage tourism

within the Greenwood District. In

November 2018, the chair of the commission, Senator Kevin Matthews, announced that

<sup>31</sup> Senator Kevin Matthews, “Words from the Commission Chair,” *Tulsa 2021*, available at <https://www.tulsa2021.org/matthewsletter> (last accessed December 19, 2019).

<sup>32</sup> Matthews, “Words from the Commission Chair.”

the commission would change its name.<sup>33</sup> He changed the name from the 1921 Tulsa Race Riots Centennial Commission to the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Commission. The designation of massacre, rather than riots, is important for a few reasons. Firstly, the name change caught on and academic circles have since begun to refer to the riots as a massacre instead. Secondly, it serves an important historical purpose in terms of accuracy. Massacre adequately conveys how one group had significantly more power than the other and killed members of that group along racial lines. Massacre conveys intentionality. Riots does not. Thirdly, the “riot” designation was the grounds upon which insurance companies turned away the claims of the black victims. The language used was significant in the obstacles to rebuilding and undermined avenues for legal action. The change of name is thus important as it works to acknowledge the injustice and constitutes a step towards reparations.

Legal and journalistic acknowledgement is important but does not fully succeed



Credit: HBO

Figure 3: Scene from *The Watchmen's* pilot episode on Tulsa.

in terms of putting the massacre in the public consciousness. In October 2019, *The Watchmen* premiered on HBO. The opening scene of the show depicts the Tulsa Race Massacre and suggested it could be a recurring plot point. In the show's

alternate timeline, reparations have been paid to victim's families and bitterness about

<sup>33</sup> Randy Kriebel, "1921 centennial commission to replace 'riot' with 'massacre' in official title," *Tulsa World*, November 27, 2018.

this lingers amongst white supremacists.<sup>34</sup> This led to a slew of articles that commented on HBO's decision to focus on this event, and serve as a means to explain the "history" of the Tulsa Race Massacre. Articles appeared in *The New York Times*,<sup>35</sup> *The Washington Post*,<sup>36</sup> *Vox*,<sup>37</sup> and *The Atlantic*,<sup>38</sup> among others. A whole generation that had previously never heard of the riots was exposed to the controversy and the cultural commentary that *The Watchmen* and subsequent media provided. The first episode created a social media storm, with most viewers articulating that they had never heard of the Tulsa horrors.<sup>39</sup> *The Watchmen* brought the Tulsa Race Massacre back into our collective memory by linking it to popular culture. The show also restarted the conversation about reparations with the presentation of their alternate timeline. The lingering bitterness amongst white supremacists speaks to the omnipresent existence of anti-Black sentiment and violence and breaks the façade of a post-race society. The show serves as a commentary on how American society still grapples with racial violence and a racial hegemony because it never acknowledged the horrific violence of the past.

### **Current Relevance: Reparations**

The Tulsa Race Massacre was one symptom of a pervasive and deeply rooted symptom of white supremacy in the US. This country is still grappling with the legacy of

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<sup>34</sup> Jennifer Vineyard, "'Watchmen' Opened With the Tulsa Race Riot. Here's What to Read About It," *The New York Times*, October 21, 2019.

<sup>35</sup> Vineyard, "'Watchmen' Opened with the Tulsa Race Riot. Here's What to Read About It."

<sup>36</sup> DeNeen Brown, HBO's 'Watchmen' depicts a deadly Tulsa race massacre that was all too real," *The Washington Post*, October 21, 2019.

<sup>37</sup> Alex Abad-Santos, "Some Watchmen fans are mad that HBO's version is political. But Watchmen has always been political," *Vox*, October 24, 2019.

<sup>38</sup> Natalie Chang, "The Massacre of Black Wall Street," *The Atlantic*.

<sup>39</sup> Daniel Arkin, "'Watchmen' recreates the 1921 Tulsa race massacre, exposing viewers to an ugly chapter," *NBC News*, October 21, 2019.



redlining and racist housing laws. Police brutality terrorized black people right after slavery and still does. The net worth of the average white family is almost ten times greater than the average black family.<sup>40</sup> Without acknowledging the real history of racial violence in this country, it is doomed to continue to exist in a racial system. There is an effective solution, and it would be to commission a group to study the question of reparations and assess possible solutions. This commission would be tasked with uncovering decades of anti-Black racism and would inevitably have to produce a report acknowledging it.<sup>41</sup>

Tulsa dodged its responsibility to rebuild and to administer reparations. The city was tasked with establishing order, reuniting loved ones, and providing food, shelter, and clothing for the affected families. However, beyond initial promises to rebuild fueled by remorse, the city quickly sidestepped their responsibilities. The conversation was quickly reframed to focus on rebuilding Greenwood geographically far away from white Tulsa and making sure it was “cleaner” and better policed in its second iteration. The Oklahoma legal and political system, as usual, left black citizens without hope of justice. The reparations debate concerning the Tulsa Race Massacre exists at both a local and a national level, with academic and policy makers working together to come to a constructive conclusion. However, it is important to acknowledge the role that the shape of historical legacies play in the path to reconciliation. Financial reparations are only one of the ways in which injustice must be grappled with to facilitate healing. The role of memorialization and documentation is also crucial for reconciliation and redress, and for

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<sup>40</sup> Kriston McIntosh, Emily Moss, Ryan Nunn, and Jay Shambaugh, “Examining the Black-White Wealth Gap,” *Brookings Institute*, February 27, 2020.

<sup>41</sup> Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” *The Atlantic*, June 2014.

the national conversation about race in the US. Without honestly grappling with the past, it is nearly impossible to pursue a meaningful and purposeful conversation about racism.

## **Violence as a Result of Political Threat: Anti-Jewish Pogroms**

“While helicopters bomb the streets, whatever they will open, will open.

What is silence? Something of the sky in us.”

“Deaf Republic” by Ilya Kaminsky

### **Political Hegemony and Threat**

In the aftermath of the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, there were waves of massacres of Jewish people throughout Ukrainian and Polish localities. This level of brutality is not particularly surprising, given that it paralleled the Nazi regime’s systematic extermination of the Jewish people in Germany and Poland. Not all cases of anti-Semitic violence were pogroms—the key feature of a pogrom is that it was civilian led. These massacres were not carried out by the Nazi establishment but rather by civilians and did not break out in most localities despite general anti-Semitic sentiment. This civilian led violence requires explanation since these instances of collective violence generally occurred in small localities in which people had known each other for several years, if not decades. The fact that there was a collapse of local order also means that the violence cannot be blamed on political elites, who often play a significant role in situations of ethnic violence.

The Nazis were often present during pogroms but did not act as a central authority and their efforts to incite pogroms often failed. The pervasive presence of German army units, police battalions, and mobile killings has clear historical evidence. However, it seems that while Nazis might have desired more generalized anti-Semitic violence, they

did not force it.<sup>42</sup> In the case of anti-Jewish pogroms, violence was situational rather than inherent. Their situationality means that we can compare localities to discover specific causes for these instances of collective violence that occurred along ethnic lines but were not exclusively motivated by ethnic hatred.

Anti-Jewish sentiment and anti-Semitic hatred are leading theories to explain pogroms given that there is a long history of brutality and victimization of Jews in Eastern Europe (and elsewhere). These were not the first pogroms to occur. There was considerable evidence of anti-Semitic sentiment in preceding periods, and there had been repeated pogroms in many localities even just within the early part of the twentieth century. Further, Jews faced violence and discrimination (officially and unofficially) in their economic and social lives as well. Jews were subjected to a range of prejudices and stereotypes by non-Jews. There is anecdotal evidence that non-Jews viewed Jews with hostility and as an alien element. A lot of the anti-Jewish sentiment was construed in religious terms, for example labeling Jews as Christ-killers, which then evolved into the modern stereotypes that persisted, for example, in the form of labels such as swindlers or communists. While anti-Semitic sentiment had strong roots in Poland going back thousands of years, if anti-Semitic hatred was the primary driving force behind pogroms, we would see far more pogroms than we do. Anti-Semitic sentiment tells a very important aspect of the story, but it is nevertheless only one aspect. Politically, Jews were consistently put in a position to have to defend the few minority rights that they possessed amidst various restrictive laws.

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<sup>42</sup> Jeffrey Kopstein and Jason Wittenberg, *Intimate Violence: Anti-Jewish Pogroms on the Eve of the Holocaust* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2018), 18.

Pogroms typically followed a routine of ritual humiliation. The humiliation generally centered around perceived Jewish religious norms, or perceived support for the Soviet occupation.<sup>43</sup> Another defining characteristic of the violence was that it was not sterile—the violence was intimate. Perpetrator could not kill scores of people from far away- the violence was conducted in communal spaces and carried out by murderers who knew the Jews that they were beating to death. The violence was distinct from what the Nazis conducted elsewhere, which was sanitized and intended to be carried out on an industrial scale. Perpetrators in the pogroms used shovels and clubs, and the violence was carried out in full view of the town. The perpetrators were often neighbors or landlords. This was not a case of ethnic hatred causing perpetrators to mentally dehumanize their enemy—the perpetrators were clearly aware of the humanity of their victims. The dilemma of ethnic violence is that the violence is not distant, sterile, or sanitized, and so one has to acknowledge the humanity of their victims.

A majority of the scholarship that focuses on pogroms explores the following few explanations: economic rivalry, Jewish collaboration with the Soviet Union, and anti-Semitism. These explanations do not fully account for the unique nature of these pogroms in Poland and the Ukraine. For this reason, we might also explore the case of anti-Jewish pogroms through the power-threat theory framework. However, the threat in this historical context might best be understood as political rather than cultural. While the economic and social capital of Greenwood caused a violent backlash from white Tulsans, it was primarily the political threat in Polish and Ukrainian localities that caused the massacres to occur. Pogroms did not always occur in communities with sharp cultural

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<sup>43</sup> Kopstein and Wittenberg, *Intimate Violence*, 4.

divides, or those with Nazis present. In fact, it was often the Nazis who were able to step in and mitigate the violence. One of the best approaches to the political valences of the power/threat theory is the scholarship of Jeffrey Kopstein and Jason Wittenberg.<sup>44</sup> Their recent book, *Intimate Violence*, locates the main cause of this example of ethnic violence in political polarization. They theorize that pogroms were a strategy by which non-Jews attempted to rid themselves of future political rivals. The deciding factor was the popularity of parties supporting minority rights. Kopstein and Wittenberg, after analyzing voting data from two thousand localities, find that there are three main factors that influence the probability that a pogrom will occur: the support for Polish and Ukrainian parties advocating ethnic tolerance, the demographic presence of Jews, and the degree to which Jews advocated for national equality with Poles and Ukrainians. The similarity between these factors lies in the centrality of Jewish people being suspect for Polish and Ukrainian nationalists.

The first factor often played itself out between the National Democrats and their allies, who sought minimal minority rights, and the pluralist BBWR, *Bezpartyjny Blok Współpracy z Rządem*, which favored minority rights in exchange for loyalty to Poland.<sup>45</sup> While Ukrainians were largely a minority in Poland, they constituted a majority in some regions of Galicia and inhabitants felt strongly about their sovereignty from Poles. However, they, too, were conflicted about the extent to which Jews should be included in their nationalist agenda. If we accept that the power threat theory might meaningfully apply to these situations, pogroms were most likely to occur in localities in which

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<sup>44</sup> Kopstein and Wittenberg, *Intimate Violence*, 41.

<sup>45</sup> Translation: Nonpartisan Bloc for Cooperation with the Government

popularity of tolerant parties indicated a population supportive of pluralistic nation-building policies. In these areas, nationalists would feel the threat to their political hegemony more keenly. Therefore, it would make sense to attack Jews to delay any recognition of their national rights. Of course, according to this theory, there would be no pogroms in localities in which Jewish rights were respected. Unsurprisingly, situations like this are extremely rare. This is the way in which anti-Semitism and myths of Jewish culpability play a key role in collective violence. While ethnic hatred was not the defining motivator of the massacres, it created the fragile environment in which political fractures could cause brutal violence.

The second factor described by Kopstein and Wittenberg is demographic: the number of Jewish relative to that of non-Jewish inhabitants. In this reading, the increased size of the Jewish population corresponds to a higher chance of a pogrom occurring. This was probable for two reasons. First, increased Jewish visibility made Jewish people an easier target. Second, simply the numerical increase of Jewish people created a substantial threat to Ukrainian and Polish political dominance. A further point of nuance with the demographic analysis was the tension within the Jewish community between assimilation and cultural autonomy. Jewish people were not able to align themselves politically with Polish and Ukrainian nationalists because that would cost them their cultural autonomy. Therefore, Jewish people were put in a difficult situation, from which they could not emerge without causing distrust. Like the Tulsa Race Massacre, in which the economic threat was dependent on cultural autonomy, the Jewish community's political threat was exacerbated by their cultural autonomy.

The third factor is the fraction of Jews that supported recognition of a distinct nation equal to that of Poles or Ukrainians. The political cause of Jewish nationalism had the least support amongst non-Jews. Minority rights for Jews was unpopular, but the idea of Jews wanting to engage fully in political life drew some sympathy. Even non-nationalist Poles and Ukrainians were hostile to the idea of Jewish self-government and comprehensive Hebrew and Yiddish education. Localities in which Jews pushed for national equality with a majority group were highly vulnerable to pogroms. Collective violence in these situations was especially likely to occur because non-Jews felt the least community solidarity and connection with their Jewish neighbors. While Jews were, in some senses, segregated from their neighbors, they still existed in the same community. Furthermore, the violence was intimate because of how it was carried out- in common spaces with shovels and clubs. This not only meant that there was a greater number of potential killers, but also a larger number of non-Jews who were willing to be complicit in the massacres and not intervene on the behalf of their Jewish neighbors. Kopstein and Wittenberg equate Jewish nationalism to the proportion of Jews who supported parties advocating minority rights.

Even beyond a greater number of potential killers, there were many people who were complicit. In cases of collective violence, the role of the non-perpetrators is key. This engineers the right “social environment for killing.”<sup>46</sup> Not only could non-perpetrators often intervene or rescue Jews, but perpetrators often would not act violently if they did not suspect popular support for their actions. In this way, it was bystanders

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<sup>46</sup> Donald Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot* (University of California Press, 2000), 326-373 .



that set the tone for the community.<sup>47</sup> Massacres typically could not occur in situations that had some opposition to the violence, especially because they occurred in small communities and the massacres required significant community involvement. This was especially true in situations in which those who were against violence were community leaders, like priests or teachers, or other figures with recognized authority. In most of the pogrom situations, however, it seemed that even those who should have had a reason to mitigate the violence could not muster sufficient sympathy. This points to the fact that even the bare minimum of solidarity was not present between the Jews and non-Jews.

The Lwów Pogrom (currently Lviv) in June 1941 is a good example of the role that non-perpetrators play in shaping the dynamics of the urban crowd ultimately responsible for the violence. Jews were forced to clean the streets on their hands and knees, a form of ritual humiliation that was often used in anti-Semitic violence. Women were singled out for a special type of violence: they were beaten with sticks and tossed from one pogromist to another. Often, they were undressed and ridiculed.<sup>48</sup> Jewish people were marched to the prison as they were beaten, stoned, and ridiculed by onlookers. It is important to note that there *were* onlookers who did not participate in active violence but took part in name calling and served as complicit witnesses.<sup>49</sup> Ukrainian nationalists played an important role in the violence and felt especially threatened by Jewish nationalism.<sup>50</sup> Ukrainian militiamen went from house to house to round up Jews for

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<sup>47</sup> Lee Ann Fuji, *Killing Neighbors: Webs of Violence in Rwanda* (Cornell University Press, 2009), 30.

<sup>48</sup> Shoah Foundation, 9851 Rose Moskowitz, 19.

<sup>49</sup> Shoah Foundation, 51593 Tamara Branitsky, 50–51.

<sup>50</sup> Orest T. Martynowych, "Sympathy for the Devil: The Attitude of Ukrainian War Veterans in Canada to Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1933 –1939," in *Re-imagining Ukrainian Canadians: History, Politics, and Identity*, edited by Rhonda L. Hinther and Jim Mochoruk (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011) 189 –190. 72

abuse.<sup>51</sup> Beyond their motivations for violence, they also had the means to implement it. While the Ukrainian nationalists were the initiators of the violence, the crowd was crucial in influencing the course of events. It was typical of pogroms for random elements to join the violence and perpetuate it, and what happened in Lviv embodies these trends. As militiamen marched Jews to prisons, civilians attacked the Jews from the sidelines. The militiamen were happy to let the crowd play out its riotous nature and sustain the ritual and sexual humiliation of Jews on the streets. The violence perpetuated by the urban crowd was doubtless influenced by anti-Semitism and insecurity over the Soviet occupation, but the fact that Jews were considered to be “outsiders” of the community, were present in large numbers, and were mobilized into their own nation-building projects were key elements that allowed this hatred to be acted on.

The pogrom in Boryslaw in November 1941 also depended on the involvement of the urban crowd. The carnival atmosphere is present in multiple testimonies describing the violence.<sup>52</sup> Recorded testimonies describe how murderers were egged on by hysterical laughter and cheering by large crowds, and that the atmosphere in the streets was generally cheerful, as though celebrating a festival. In Irene Horowitz’s account of the violence, Jews were made to dance and perform tricks. Survivors described the town as a hunting ground in which Jews were the prey.<sup>53</sup> Horowitz goes on to describe how many people were killing neighbors and friends that they had known all their lives with pipes and shovels in full view of the public. This targeted violence was intimate, but it was also

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<sup>51</sup> Shoah Foundation, 14797 Lusia “Lisa” Hornstein, 14; 29911 Maria Gesiola, 10.

<sup>52</sup> Kopstein and Wittenberg, *Intimate Violence*, 108.

<sup>53</sup> Irene Horowitz and Carl Horowitz, *Of Human Agony* (Shengold Publishers, Inc, 1992), 90.

an attempt to remove that source of intimacy and closeness. The aim of the violence was to marginalize, and in some cases totally remove, a group perceived to be a threat.

### **Narrative of Jewish Culpability and Anti-Semitism As the Motivator**

In the typical method of scholarship approaching the Holocaust, the abstract ideas of Jewish culpability and ethnic hatred are seen as key, but Kopstein and Wittenberg locate the catalyst in the political threat. The power-threat theory applies itself well to this case study, as it does with the Tulsa Race Massacre, because pogroms also occur in a situation in which a disenfranchised minority is beginning to fight for its rights. In Tulsa, this presented itself primarily via an economic and cultural threat to the racial hegemony. In the case of the pogroms, national rights were the key agitator. The cultural threat was likely exacerbating the issue, in the sense that Jews would have been willing to settle for robust minority rights instead of national rights were they willing to assimilate and lose their cultural sovereignty. To be clear, this approach is not meant to discount the real implications of anti-Semitism in ethnic violence. Poland and Ukraine's history are replete with anti-Semitic violence and oppression, and Jewish individuals and activists would likely not have advocated for minority or national rights without that history. There are various historical explanations for the outbreak of pogroms, such as revenge, anti-Semitic hatred and Jewish culpability. These approaches have altered the way in which we conceive of Jewish history and how we memorialize anti-Semitic violence. The power/threat theory intervenes in this problematic discourse.

Revenge is one of the most enduring explanations of pogroms. Many believed that Jews collaborated with the Soviet Union during the Red Army's harsh occupation of

Poland, and so pogroms could have been a mechanism of revenge for perceived Jewish collaboration. This is somewhat consistent with the historical evidence. We cannot be sure of how all Jews felt in regard to the Soviet invasion, but many felt relief. Having experienced harsh oppression, Soviet occupation offered the opportunity of civic equality, as oppressive as it might be in other regards, and was much preferable to Nazi rule in western Poland. Any relief that was openly expressed, as rare as that might have been, would only have served to exacerbate poor relations. Also, while all groups suffered under Soviet occupation, Jewish status increased relative to Polish and Ukrainian status because they were suddenly able to be (theoretically) as involved in government as Poles or Ukrainians, as limited as that involvement may be. Roger Petersen argues that this relative loss of status resulted in a Polish and Ukrainian resentment at their lack of national citizenship that primarily drove pogrom violence, regardless of the fact that Jews were not responsible for the reversal of fortunes.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, Jews were often forced to undergo ritual humiliation during pogroms. Much of the ritual humiliation associates them with the Soviet regime- for example, in Siematycze, Jews were made to dismantle a Lenin statue with hammers and sickles.<sup>55</sup> These incidences suggest that non-Jewish populations did blame Jews for the Soviet occupation, given the strong association between the symbols of Soviet nation-building. The revenge theory is important to analyze for two reasons: first, it is important to explore whether Jewish collaboration was legitimately a leading cause of anti-Semitic violence and second, it is necessary to explore whether non-Jewish attitudes were pervasive based on the evidence

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<sup>54</sup> Roger Petersen, *Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred, and Resentment in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 41.

<sup>55</sup> Kopstein and Wittenberg, *Intimate Violence*, 4.

present. These two paths of exploration are necessary because there is an important distinction, in terms of culpability and historical memory, between the punishment of perceived national traitors and the inhumane persecution of innocents. In the first case, while the mode of punishment is inhumane and horrific, one might be able to sympathize with the motivating sentiments. In the latter case, there is no defense to be had.

However, Kopstein and Wittenberg cast significant doubt on the theory of Jewish collaboration. Firstly, while some Jews certainly collaborated with the Soviet authorities, so did some non-Jews. They examine regional studies to confirm that while Jewish fortunes improved relative to other groups, they were still underrepresented in administrative posts in absolute and relative terms.<sup>56</sup> More influential positions were overwhelmingly non-Jewish, and so if pogroms were really about collaboration, they should have been aimed at non-Jewish collaborators. This seems to mean that anti-Jewish sentiment far outweighed anti-Soviet sentiment when it came to violence, and myths of Jewish collaboration have more to do with anti-Jewish stereotypes that existed far before Soviet occupation. This nullifies the Jewish collaboration theory and emphasizes the distrust of the Jewish population. This chapter argues that this distrust would not have turned into violence without the Jewish population being seen as future political rivals.

### **Current Relevance: Memorialization in Poland And Germany and Its Consequences**

The enduring causes of collective violence in our historical memory are important because they inform our current responses to Jewish culture and, very importantly, the tactics deployed for the memorialization of anti-Jewish violence. The Jewish story is not

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<sup>56</sup> Kopstein and Wittenberg, *Intimate Violence*, 6.

one of endless persecution and doom, even though their community has been historically oppressed. It is important that we tell a holistic and rich story that reflects the history of the Jewish community in Eastern Europe. Given that the nature of anti-Jewish violence, the Holocaust, and pogroms, focused on wiping out a community and a culture, it is unsurprising that there is not much evidence left behind. It is difficult to come to a consensus on who was responsible for the atrocities committed against the Jewish people. Given that anti-Semitism is still very much alive and well, memorialization is increasingly important, especially in Germany and Poland, where most of the violence was perpetuated. The case studies of Berlin and Warsaw provide an interesting comparison for competing projects of memorialization and its implications.

Berlin is a city with a layered history and has a wealth of memorials dedicated to its past, primarily World War II and the Cold War. After World War II, memorialization became an important policy priority in terms of reconciling German culpability. “The term *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, which literally translates as ‘coping with the past,’ has become a key concept in post-1945 German culture and describes the way in which Germans discuss and confront their history.”<sup>57</sup> It was reunification in 1990 that really began the trend of memorialization. Germany was the first to recognize a national day of remembrance for the Holocaust. The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe is the most famous of Germany’s memorials and the most controversial. It has been criticized as failing to address the suffering of the individual victims of the Holocaust, and for

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<sup>57</sup>Alexander Johnstone, “How Germany Remembers the Holocaust,” *The Local*, October 2016, <https://www.thelocal.de/20161019/how-germany-remembers-the-holocaust-world-war-two-nazis-jewish-history-germans>

allowing the suffering to be anonymous.<sup>58</sup> Many have argued that the abstract and symbolic nature of the memorial allows the horrific nature of the violence to be buried.

Well-known German political commentator Hendrik M. Broder states, the Memorial is “not meant to commemorate the Jews,” but rather “is meant to flatter the Germans.”<sup>59</sup>

Critics also argue that the title evades culpability, given that it does not answer the question of “murdered by whom?” In defense of the memorial, some have argued that its abstract nature allows German citizens to gain a sense of collective responsibility because they are able to interpret the memorial as they want.

Peter Eisenman, the creative force behind the monument, was intentional in its design.



Credit: Pierre Adenis

He wanted an abstract

*Figure 4: Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe*

monument because he felt that a traditional design would be inadequate for capturing the varied atrocities of the Holocaust. He believes that the viewer does not have to fully understand the memorial, because understanding the history behind it is impossible, and the memorial allows viewers to accept evil as a part of the natural world.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Richard Brody, “The Inadequacy of Berlin’s ‘Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe,’” *The New Yorker*, accessed May 10, 2020, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/richard-brody/the-inadequacy-of-berlins-memorial-to-the-murdered-jews-of-europe>

<sup>59</sup>Sharon Chin, Fabian Franke, and Sheri Halpern, “A Self-Serving Admission of Guilt: An Examination of the Intentions and Effects of Germany’s Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe,” *Humanity in Action*, 2011.

<sup>60</sup>Nicolai Ouroussoff, “A Forest of Pillars, Recalling the Unimaginable,” *The New York Times*, May 9, 2005, sec. Arts, <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/09/arts/design/a-forest-of-pillars-recalling-the-unimaginable.html>.

The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe is Berlin's most visible memorial, but most other attempts at memorialization were woven into the landscape of the city. One of these is the Places of Remembrance memorial, which consists of 80 signposts, each displaying a different anti-Semitic law from Nazi Germany. Another one of these are the "Stumbling Blocks," cobblestone-sized brass plates inscribed with the name and available information about victims of the Holocaust scattered throughout the streets of the city where Jews resided and worked. These memorials were also met with controversy, but many inhabitants are appreciative of the German government's attempts to acknowledge its violent history.

Warsaw's approach to memorialization is not as robust as Berlin's, and far more recent. Public memorials do not exist and walking through Warsaw one would never know what had happened in those very streets just 75 years ago. Warsaw's architecture does not suggest the past harshness of an anti-Semitic regime or the existence of a Jewish ghetto. One of the main differences between Warsaw and Berlin's approaches to memorialization is that the German government chose to make memorialization a priority, whereas the Polish government remained largely uninvolved. This is likely largely because Polish governments since the end of World War II have often been right wing, anti-Semitic, or both, and more interested in suppressing Poland's ugly past than acknowledging it. Warsaw's attempts at memorialization have been pushed by private actors and nonprofits.

One of the main examples of this is the Polin Museum in Warsaw, which celebrates a thousand year history of Poland's Jewish people. The museum is one of the main institutions in Warsaw that acts as a prism into Warsaw's past, as well as an



educational force for those who would like to engage with Jewish culture. It was pushed by the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute of Poland for many years before



Credit: Wojciech Kryński

*Figure 5: POLIN Museum faces the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes.*

garnering some support from the Polish government in 2005. Still, the museum is constantly under threat from various laws enacted by the Polish government since its opening in 2014. For example, in

February of 2018, the Polish

President decided to support a law

“making it illegal to accuse ‘the Polish nation’ of complicity in the Holocaust and other Nazi atrocities,” which is effectively historical revisionism.<sup>61</sup>

Berlin’s Jewish population is the fastest growing in Europe.<sup>62</sup> Once the epicenter of horrific anti-Semitic violence, the city welcomes thousands of young Israelis yearly. Meanwhile, Jews in Poland have been concerned with Holocaust denialism and anti-Semitism for many years. While much of this difference comes from having a left wing versus right wing government, there is something to be said for Berlin’s collective memory versus Warsaw’s. While anti-Semitism is still present in Berlin, it is difficult to deny a historical event that so thoroughly consumes the architecture of your city. On the other hand, if one were to grow up in Warsaw, all education about Poland’s bloody past

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<sup>61</sup> Marc Santora, “Poland’s President Supports Making Some Holocaust Statements a Crime,” *The New York Times*, February 6, 2018, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/06/world/europe/poland-holocaust-law.html>.

<sup>62</sup> Jess Smee, “Jess Smee on Germany’s Fast Growing Jewish Population,” *The Guardian*, November 3, 2006, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/nov/03/religion.germany>.

requires one to opt in. There are no public memorials, and historical education in schools does not discuss anti-Semitism. Berlin's citizens have a far more democratic access to historical education.

Memorialization and historical memory as a whole are key to avoiding future mass violence. This is clear not only from Berlin and Warsaw's different cultures, but also from exploring how pogroms were motivated. A historical enmity easily shifts into violence in times of political pressure and crisis, and a clear historical record is important to combat dangerous and divisive historical myths. Perhaps there would have been less violence, or less humiliation during the violence of pogroms, had the non-Jewish people not linked Jews with communism, or had they not believed the Jewish collaboration myth. Poland's example also shows us that without historical memory, it is easy for political elites to distort the past to serve their own ends. In the worst case scenario, political elites can distort the past to divide communities and spark violence.

## **Violence as A Result of Nationalism: Pakistan/India Partition Violence**

*“Two or three years after the 1947 Partition, it occurred to the governments of India and Pakistan to exchange their lunatics in the same manner as they had exchanged their criminals. The Muslim lunatics in India were to be sent over to Pakistan and the Hindu and Sikh lunatics in Pakistani asylums were to be handed over to India.*

*It was difficult to say whether the proposal made any sense or not. However, the decision had been taken at the topmost level on both sides.”*

Toba Tek Singh by Saadat Hasan Manto

### **Political Elite Theory and Nationalist Rhetoric**

In August 1947, the British left after three hundred years and the subcontinent was partitioned into India and Pakistan. This began one of the largest migrations in human history, as millions of Muslims headed to Pakistan in search of a better life, a life in which they would be the majority. Millions of Hindus and Sikhs, in search of the same thing, headed in the opposite direction, seeking the safety of the Hindu-majority state. In theory, this separation did not matter. Pakistan and India have more in common with each other than any other country on the planet, politically, culturally, and socially. Economically, they were inextricable. Strategically, Pakistan had the only land invasion routes to India. The Indian Army, soon to be divided, had fought as one for a century. Hindu and Muslim soldiers swore oaths of undying brotherhood, Hindu and Muslim politicians had spent years fighting against the British together and had families that had spent decades socializing with each other.

And yet, over seventy years later, Partition's bloody legacy still haunts India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Across the subcontinent, communities that had coexisted for

almost a millennium, as friends and neighbors, attacked each other in what amounted to a mutual genocide. This violence was especially horrific in Punjab, with massacres, arson, forced conversions, mass abductions and barbaric sexual violence. Refugee trains arrived at their destinations full of corpses, foot caravans of unarmed and poor refugees were



Credits: Creative Commons

*Figure 6: A special refugee train at Ambala Station in February 1954 in northern India. The 1947 Partition of India resulted in the largest human migration in history, lasting years.*

subject to guerilla ambushes. Estimates of the dead, though the range is wide (between 200,000 to two million), are universally shocking.

The carnage, though appalling, was relatively confined to a

period of six weeks. Although the worst of the violence was confined to a limited period, by 1948, more than fifteen million people had been uprooted and up to two million were dead.

Partition is central to modern identity in the Indian subcontinent and omnipresent in the regional consciousness. While Partition was horrific and seared into many memories in South Asia, what truly continues to haunt today's world is the legacy of Partition. The fears, suspicions, and hatreds forged through the vicious carnage continue to haunt the region. Leaders on both sides would blame each other for, at best, not doing enough to contain the violence, and at worst, encouraging it. This distrust would persist,

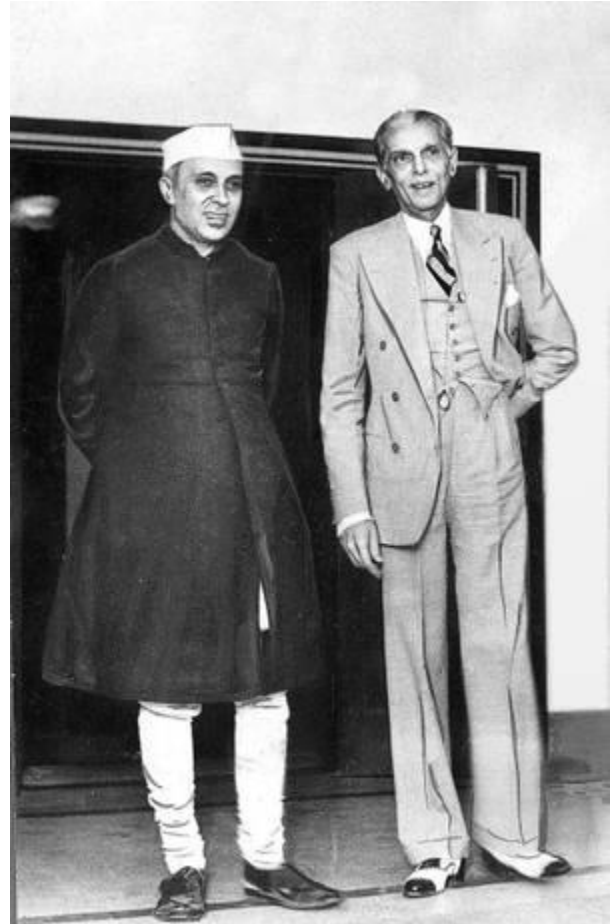
exacerbating the regional conflicts and growing pains of two young nations, each eager to establish themselves on the world stage, until it would bring the two countries to the brink of a war less than a year later, and many times after that. Many characterize the subcontinent's current problems as part of postcolonial dynamics, and while this does cause a significant proportion of the troubles, Partition's legacy caused Pakistan to develop a deep seated paranoia about India's ability to snuff out Pakistan's existence. Certainly, this sentiment was the more powerful of the two. And in 1948 especially, Pakistan, almost drowning under the never-ending waves of refugees and a collapsing government and economy, there was a sense that the country could not survive. The unresolved existential insecurity that Pakistan has suffered since Partition because of the "Indian threat," and Pakistan and India's rising religious nationalism, pose a legitimate threat to not only regional, but global, stability.

While much of the paranoia was just that, leaders on both sides had reason to believe that the other side might be winking at genocide. In the case of Partition violence, political elites hold significant responsibility in, firstly, creating the conditions for horrific sectarian violence, and secondly, encouraging it. The creation of conditions came from the very top: Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Mahatma Gandhi, and Jawarlal Nehru. These men chose to stir up religious frenzy for political gain and their personal egos. The encouragement of violence typically did not come from the highest echelons of the Indian National Congress or All India Muslim League, but still did arise from political officials within the parties. Sikhs were also encouraged to attack Muslims by their leaders, but for

the purposes of this case study, that is not the primary focus given that they were not part of a nationalist movement.

Political elites manipulated religious loyalties to create nationalist ties. Religious animosity had always existed, exacerbated by decades of colonial rule and the British's age-old "divide and rule" stratagem.<sup>63</sup> The British had spent decades defining communities strictly and attaching political representation to them, politicizing and worsening religious difference. Gandhi was able to play on these stark religious divides to build a following as early as the 1920s. The Muslim League picked up a similar strategy after the 1937 elections, using identity markers to shape a nationalist Muslim identity. The value of Partition as a case study in collective violence is that by mapping its

history, we are able to uncover how political elites are able to create civilian led violence without a direct call to violence and explore how collective violence can be inspired by nationalist ideology rather than just ethnic or religious strife. Although we must also recognize, as with previous cases, that identity doubtless also played a foundational role.



Credit: The Hindu Archive

Figure 7: Jawaharlal Nehru and Mohammad Ali Jinnah

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<sup>63</sup>Shashi Tharoor, "The Partition: The British Game of 'Divide and Rule,'" accessed May 10, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/08/partition-british-game-divide-rule-170808101655163.html>.

The Sikhs retained a historical fear of Muslim domination. Historical truths had power amongst the Sikhs, who adhered to a martially-defined faith, and many of their founding myths were dominated by Muslim oppression of their gurus.<sup>64</sup> Mughal rule from 1526 to 1857 only reinforced Sikh fears of Muslim domination, and so with Partition nearing, Sikhs were not in favor of a Muslim separatist movement creating a divide in their home state. Since then, thousands of Sikhs trained and fought in World War II, and many of them retained their uniforms and weapons. This is to say, within the biggest state being divided by Partition, a uniformed army lay in wait, ready to mobilize at the slightest provocation. Muhammad Ali Jinnah seemed to be perfectly happy to provide that provocation.

Jinnah, by nature, was a moderate nationalist. In the early part of the twentieth century, Jinnah was a member of the Congress party and a staunch supporter of League/Congress unity. Initially, he was not a separatist. He generally held disdain for the dangerous religious frenzy that he thought had confused Indian politics and endangered the independence movement. Jinnah eventually resigned from the Congress for this reason once Gandhi took over. Jinnah privately hoped that the parting would be temporary, but was worried about Gandhi's methods, the religious frenzy he created, and the religious militancy of the Muslims he attracted.<sup>65</sup> Jinnah found Gandhi to be dangerously sectarian. He would frame his political arguments in religious terms, framing the need for an independent India in the words of Hindu fables. He talked of "Ram

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<sup>64</sup>Nisid Hajari, *Midnight's Furies: The Deadly Legacy of India's Partition* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015), 73.

<sup>65</sup>Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), 9.

Rajya,” a mythical ideal state of government under the god Ram.<sup>66</sup> Jinnah found this talk to be little more than theatrics, an appeal to emotion. However, Jinnah worried about inflaming Muslims more than he did Hindus. Mullahs across the subcontinent were threatening to launch a jihad movement against the British to support the Khilafat<sup>67</sup> in Turkey. This “Khilafat” movement attracted what Jinnah considered to be fanatics and rough edged Muslims.<sup>68</sup> Jinnah was certain that this rage would inevitably turn from the British to Hindus. However, Gandhi did not have the same concerns. Needing Muslim votes to launch his Satyagraha movement, he threw his support behind the Khilafat movement.

Jinnah’s desire to unite Muslims and work with Congress was clearer in 1935, with the discussion around the 1935 Act.<sup>69</sup> The British were relying on this Act to strengthen Britain’s hold over India, and so the Congress and the League had a common interest in breaking up the provincial system of inter-regional politics upon which the British depended. Jinnah stressed the importance of Muslim unity in this moment—if the Muslims were able to form a solid voting bloc, they would be able to transform themselves from a group perpetually on the margins to a group that the Congress would have to bargain with. It was in this moment that it crystallized that Muslims, regardless of

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<sup>66</sup>Patrick French, *Liberty or Death: India's Journey to Independence and Division* (Random House LLC, 2016), 39.

<sup>67</sup> The Khilafat movement was a pan-Islamist political protest campaign launched by Muslims of British India to restore the caliph of the Ottoman Caliphate, who was considered the leader of Sunni Muslims, as an effective political authority. The importance of this was is represented/supported a Muslim identity that was above conflict or issues of nationalism.

<sup>68</sup>Hajari, *Midnight's Furies*, 27.

<sup>69</sup>The Government of India Act 1935 was an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. Salient Features of the Government of India Act 1935 were as follows: abolition of provincial dyarchy and introduction of dyarchy at the center, abolition of Indian Council and introduction of an advisory body in its place, provision for an All India Federation with British India territories and princely states, elaborate safeguards and protective instruments for minorities, supremacy of British Parliament.



political views or background, had to fall in line behind a single leader.<sup>70</sup> Although it was not immediately clear at the outset, it was Jinnah who would fill this role. Ayesha Jalal convincingly makes the case that “Jinnah is not only a rather unorthodox Muslim, but also a ‘sole spokesman,’ a nationalist in quest of his nation. For him, Islam provided the cultural basis for an ideology of ethnic nationalism to mobilize the Muslim majority to defend the ‘minoritarian Muslims’”.<sup>71</sup>

The 1937 elections marked an important turning point. The League was forced to adopt a new line after being rebuffed by the Congress and suffering a humiliating defeat in the elections.<sup>72</sup> The elections had made it clear that the League did not have popular support and their goal in 1935 for Muslims to unite behind a single leader and slogan had become irrelevant. In a bid to speak for the Muslims of India, in 1940 the League formally demanded a separate Muslim state. This was Jinnah’s decision, coming from his desire to speak for all Indian Muslims, not just Muslims in the minority provinces where the League had achieved their success in the 1937 elections, but also the Muslims in provinces where they had been unequivocally rejected.

This was the beginning of the League’s successful movement to create a new Muslim identity and to serve as its spokespersons. As mentioned earlier, they began to use identity markers to forge a new nationalist Muslim identity.<sup>73</sup> Core to the manipulation of cultural symbols was not only Islam, but Urdu as a linguistic identity. The ideologues of the Muslim League worked hard to present this as the language for

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<sup>70</sup>Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, 18.

<sup>71</sup>Christophe Jaffrelot, *Pakistan: Nationalism Without A Nation* (Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 2002), 11.

<sup>72</sup> Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman*, 4.

<sup>73</sup>Jaffrelot, *Pakistan*, 10.

Muslims, even though it was almost indistinguishable from Hindi as a spoken language. This clearly indicates an important pattern in nation-building, in that the initial Pakistani identity was not inherent, but a construction. The mobilization of these identity markers helped Muslim separatism to gain a foothold, at the same time as the Congress was using symbols like the sacred cow to create a Hindu nationalist frenzy.

Jinnah's decision to pursue Partition ruffled feathers all around, from other Muslim leaders to Congress leaders to the British, but perhaps the most dangerous was the Sikh frustration that ensued.<sup>74</sup> As early as January 1939, a British intelligence report predicted that "the Sikhs to a man would fight literally to the death rather than to submit to Muslim domination."<sup>75</sup> Punjab was a powder keg ready to explode as it was, with all parties seriously preparing for a civil war, but the most serious were the Sikh activities by far.<sup>76</sup> The violence that ensued had been organized and ordered from the highest levels of Sikh leadership.<sup>77</sup> Jinnah, in his desire to seize political control of Punjab, pushed his followers to organize and demonstrate. The disobedience movement grew as days passed, and protesters became more and more bold. Jinnah ignored the warnings that protests were in danger of becoming violent and continued to push his supporters to continue to protest. Unsurprisingly, they did turn violent, and as they did, Hindus and Sikhs grew more resentful and more frustrated. Tara Singh, who occupied the highest levels of Sikh leadership, pushed Sikhs to form fighting units. This was a key moment in which Jinnah pushed aside caution in a moment of ego and defensive nation-building and created the

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<sup>74</sup>Hajari, *Midnight's Furies*, 89.

<sup>75</sup>Hajari, *Midnight's Furies*, 74.

<sup>76</sup>Hajari, *Midnight's Furies*, 103.

<sup>77</sup>Hajari, *Midnight's Furies*, 144.

perfect conditions for later massacres. The Sikhs should never have been provoked and threatened.

There were several key moments that led to the massacres in 1946, apart from the religious/nationalist frenzy that leaders created with their charged rhetoric. Jinnah's establishment as the "sole spokesman" for all Muslims was one of these, as was his subsequent disillusionment with the Congress. Jinnah's transformation from moderate nationalist to a man who was willing to use religion to achieve his political aims was perhaps the most important moment in terms of Partition violence. Of course, without him, there would be no Partition, but even if there was, Muslims might not have engaged in the violence or provoked Hindus and Sikhs in the ways that did. There would have been violence anyway, on account of ethnic strife that had been ongoing for decades, but probably not to the same degree. Jinnah's new line was that the Hindu dominated Congress could not be trusted and would put Islam in danger, and Muslims needed their own nation. This message worked. Pirs (term used to describe spiritual guides in the Sufi faith) were attracted to the promise of their own nation and attracted Muslim masses to the League. The Hindus had had a movement inciting religious frenzies since 1915, the Sikhs had been historically threatened by Muslims, and now the Muslims had a united political movement based on religion and separatism.

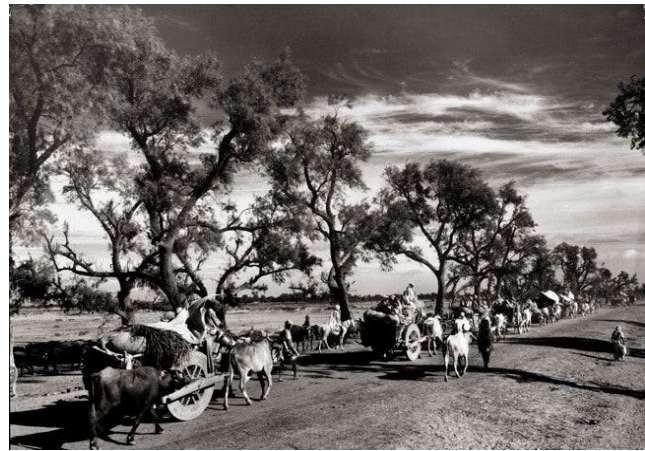
Each side had cause to fight, and very soon, each side also had uniformed fanatics and provocations towards mob rule. The 1946 Calcutta Killings<sup>78</sup> was the first massacre after which Nehru and Jinnah might have become aware of what was to follow. However,

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<sup>78</sup> Direct Action Day (16 August 1946), also known as the 1946 Calcutta Killings, was a day of widespread communal rioting between Muslims and Hindus in the city of Calcutta. The day also marked the start of what is known as The Week of the Long Knives.

the path of violence was not inevitable. The Calcutta Killings happened on the 16th of August, 1946. The next bout of violence was in Noakhali, months later. As isolated incidents, these were not particularly worrying, especially since they seemed confined to the subcontinent's eastern corner. However, Muslim propagandists showed up across India's northern provinces with photographs of corpses and charred pages of the Qur'an that they claimed Hindus had burnt in Bihar and Calcutta. League officials in Punjab were already stockpiling weapons and recruiting Muslim university students for "underground secret work."<sup>79</sup>

Noakhali created a huge boost for Hindu militants' members numbers. As the uproar around it increased, the police noticed that the Hindu Mahasabha and other orthodox Hindu parties, which previously "had very little following or political influence,"



*Credit: Margaret Bourke-White, GETTY IMAGES*

*Figure 8: A convoy of Sikhs migrating to East Punjab in October, 1947.*

were coming "out into the open and... rallying Hindus all over the country to fight Islam." Tales of Hindu women being violated by Muslim men were a powerful recruiting tool.<sup>80</sup>

It was in this tense setting that Jinnah was encouraging his followers to create a disobedience movement in Punjab, and in this environment that he ignored warnings that protests might turn bloody.<sup>81</sup> Khizar's government in Punjab banned all demonstrations

<sup>79</sup>Hajari, *Midnight's Furies*, 64.

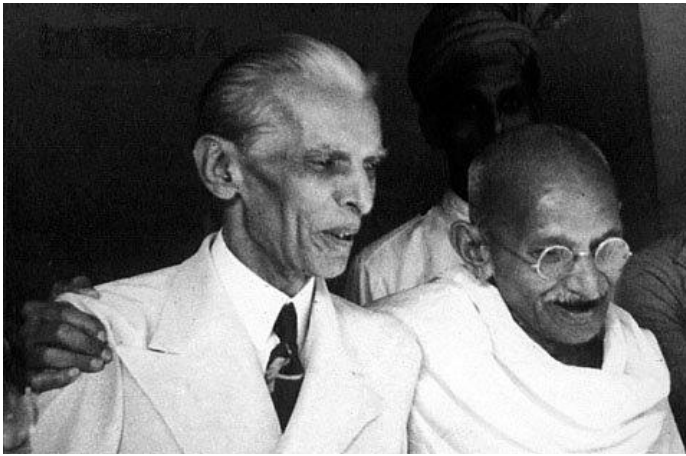
<sup>80</sup>Hajari, *Midnight's Furies*, 58.

<sup>81</sup>Hajari, *Midnight's Furies*, 72, 74, 81.

in the province, but it was too late. And anyway, Jinnah had been Khizar's foe for years, fighting for political control of Punjab, and this mandate, if anything, provided more incentive for the disobedience movement.<sup>82</sup> Now it would serve as a means to settle a personal vendetta as well as gain political control. Is it any surprise that 1946 saw dozens of massacres in Punjab, and in 1947, when refugees would try to cross the Punjabi border, they would be witness to a horrific mutual genocide?

### **Historical Myths, Patriotism, and Nationalism**

In this environment, and against the backdrop of years of fierce political arguments, it is not surprising that there was some distrust and animosity between the new leaders of India and Pakistan. Pakistan held a deep fear that India would try and destroy the state before it even got a chance to exist. This was not wholly surprising. India, at many points, refused to give Pakistan the funding or supplies that were



Credit: The Hindu Archive

*Figure 9: Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Mahatma Gandhi*

promised. Gandhi's hunger strike, right before his assassination, was on the grounds that India was trying to starve her sister state into submission by not handing over the 550 million rupees that Pakistan had been promised.

Without the threat of Gandhi starving, it is not clear that the money would ever have been handed over. And even

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<sup>82</sup> Hajari, *Midnight's Furies*, 74.

though Gandhi did not starve to death, his hunger strike did eventually kill him. To Hindu and Sikh extremists, the only outcome of the hunger strike was a richer Pakistan. And so, on the 30th of January 1948, Nathuram Vinayak Godse, an editor of a Hindu nationalist newspaper and a member of the nationalist political party, the Hindu Mahasabha and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh,<sup>83</sup> shot Gandhi three times at point blank range.

Unfortunately, the idea that India hoped to “strangle” the new state of Pakistan developed a permanent hold over the consciousness of Pakistanis. It was no longer a suspicion held by top government officials but a widely held belief across class and occupational divides. This animosity and fear came out most clearly over the Kashmir question. By November 1949, UN mapmakers drew a ceasefire line in Kashmir that would eventually develop into the Line of Control that still stands. The idea that Pakistanis must defy their neighbor for the country’s survival became a national mission and, according to a visiting journalist, seemed to be the “cement that holds Pakistan together.”<sup>84</sup> Any compromise on Kashmir seemed impossible, and Nehru did not help

with compromise. He offered few concessions on Kashmir during his tenure as prime minister. This was not surprising, given Nehru’s strange and romantic obsession



Credit: Rich Clabaugh/Staff

Figure 10: Map of Pakistan/India border and Kashmir, showing the Line of Control

<sup>83</sup>Neena Vyas, “RSS Releases ‘proof’ of Its Innocence,” *The Hindu*, August 18, 2004, sec. NATIONAL, <https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/rss-releases-proof-of-its-innocence/article27655353.ece>. Exact dates of his membership are unknown.

<sup>84</sup>Hajari, *Midnight's Furies*, 256.

with Kashmir. In a letter to Edwina Mountbatten he described his feelings for Kashmir as “a mild intoxication.”<sup>85</sup> But Kashmir to India was much more than just one man’s dream. Kashmir became the stage for a powerful morality play. If the predominantly Muslim kingdom of Kashmir chose to join a predominantly Hindu nation, Nehru would be able to deal a fatal blow to Jinnah’s ideology. A victory in Kashmir was symbolic, it meant a national triumph of one sister state over another.

India could afford a stalemate—it started out on better footing and had a larger economy and more stable institutions. Nehru’s tenure in office for a decade and a half and his emphasis on centralized planning gave India a stability that Pakistan would never achieve after Jinnah’s death in 1948. After Jinnah’s death, a series of weak leaders took their turns trying to govern. All the troubles that Jinnah had brushed aside or held at bay flared up. This, in turn, led to more religious rhetoric. Unworthy political leaders, trying to restore their ability to govern and silence opposition, continued to push the idea that Islam was a threat.<sup>86</sup> Regional tensions, class resentments, various social and political divides stalled government progress and held the door wide open for the Pakistani army to walk in.

The military was by far the most powerful and competent institution in Pakistan, and the most well-funded. The military had been resentful over how the civilian government halted fighting in Kashmir and had been vying for control since 1951. Seven years later, a second attempt succeeded, this time led by General Ayub Khan. This marked the beginning of a long string of military leaders. The dominance of the army

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<sup>85</sup> Hajari, *Midnight's Furies*, 231.

<sup>86</sup>Hamza Alavi, “On Religion and Secularism in the Making of Pakistan” (Professor Karrar Memorial Lecture, Karachi, November 2002).

required a justification, and they kept trying to create one: incompetent civil leaders, ethnic strife, regional tensions. In the end, the most effective one was the Indian threat. The Pakistani army elevated the threat from their neighbor to explain the need for the military to lead. It led to a horrific cycle and a self-fulfilling prophecy. The army's misadventures led to heightened tensions with India, India would humiliate Pakistan on the battlefield, and the Pakistani army would then find more excuses to engage to regain national honor. Their string of losses meant that Pakistani leaders, once again turned to Islam as a rallying cry. Pakistan's secular elite struck a bargain with Pakistan's mullahs to promote religious fervor and antipathy towards India as a means to unite Pakistanis behind military leaders. In this way, in Pakistan's formative years, leaders from politicians to civil servants to the military, used Islam to define an identity for Pakistan. Even those who did not actively push this accepted Islam as a politico-military strategic doctrine.

### **Current Relevance: Legacy Formation as A Motivator for The Kashmir Conflict**

In the 1980s, this dynamic intensified under Dictator Zia ul-Haq. He embarked on a policy called Islamization, funding madrassas, regulating education to include more Islamic learning, and rewarding devout officers. He also began Pakistan's path of sponsoring extremist militants like the Afghan jihadists and the Lakshar-i-Taliban to conduct proxy wars in order to establish itself strategically on the world stage. The use of these unpredictable forces that Pakistan does not have to answer for have, unsurprisingly, soured relations even further with India. The extremist militants also very quickly spun out of Pakistan's control, developing into a considerable force in their own right, capable



of causing problems for Pakistan and the world at large. The tensions between India and Pakistan do nothing positive for either party, limiting trade and creating unnecessary military tensions, but both sides continue to stoke nationalist frenzy for political gain.

What the military has done in Pakistan, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh has done in India. The RSS is dedicated to the propagation of “Hindutva,” the idea that India is a nation for Hindus, above all else. While Nehru and Gandhi laid the groundwork of a nationalist Hindu ideology, they were still committed to a secular state. By 1947 standards, the RSS is an extremist party. It was popularized as the Nehru-Gandhi family dynasty and the Congress lost popularity and were cast as out of touch and nepotist. The RSS’s political branch, the Bharatiya Janata Party, or BJP, found support primarily through nationalist stunts to stir religious passions.<sup>87</sup> Even with the downfall of the Congress and the uptick in Hindu nationalism, the BJP did not quite grab the national spotlight until Narendra Modi became the central figure.<sup>88</sup>

Modi is, and always has been, explicitly and defiantly anti-Muslim. In 2002, when he was the Chief Minister of the Gujarati government, he did not stop the Gujarat Muslim massacres. In fact, as he received (limited) backlash, he led a Hindu pride march through Gujarat, calling the state’s Muslims schemers, and an obstacle to overcome.<sup>89</sup> Modi can play on the hateful legacy of Partition. Many believe that India’s Muslims are terrorists and want the downfall of the state—Modi became a hero for Indians who felt threatened.

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<sup>87</sup>“Tearing down the Babri Masjid,” December 5, 2002, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/2528025.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/2528025.stm).

<sup>88</sup>“Timeline of the Riots in Modi’s Gujarat,” *The New York Times*, April 6, 2014, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/04/06/world/asia/modi-gujarat-riots-timeline.html>, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/04/06/world/asia/modi-gujarat-riots-timeline.html>.

<sup>89</sup>Dexter Filkins, “Blood and Soil in Narendra Modi’s India,” *The New Yorker*, December 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/12/09/blood-and-soil-in-narendra-modis-india>.

Modi knew what all Indian leaders before him: the instrumentalization of “vicious sectarian rhetoric, the country’s leader could persuade Hindus to give him nearly unchecked power.”<sup>90</sup> Modi’s actions during the Gujarat massacres led him to the Prime Minister’s office. The riot’s victims were predominantly Muslim and led to Muslims being pushed into slums. Besides allowing the killings to continue, Modi also gained politically. He was able to tap into “historic resentments about the nation’s former Mughal rulers and prejudices harbored by many Hindus—namely, that Muslims receive special treatment and support terrorism.”<sup>91</sup> Modi’s popularity that won him the Prime Minister’s office was transparently because of, and on the backs of, dead Muslims.

Why does the legacy of Partition matter? The animosity that Partition created, that leaders have stoked and hardened, directly causes current violence throughout the subcontinent. Pakistan’s use of extremist militants has destabilized the country, which in turn destabilizes the region and the world, especially when considering Pakistan’s growing stockpile of nuclear weapons. Pakistan continues to fund and support the Lashkar-i-Taliban, even with the emergence of the Pakistani Taliban, a group dedicated to overthrowing the Pakistani government and that has successfully carried out terrorist attacks on army bases, Inter-Services Intelligence headquarters and airports. These terrorist forces, with and without government sanction, wage a proxy war in Kashmir, provoking Indian forces and an Indian government that does not need provocation to take extreme measures. Modi’s government, and its emphasis on Hindutva, allows Muslims to

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<sup>90</sup>Filkins, “Blood and Soil in Narendra Modi’s India.”

<sup>91</sup>Dexter Filkins, “Has Narendra Modi Finally Gone Too Far?,” *The New Yorker*, December 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/has-narendra-modi-finally-gone-too-far-india-protests>.

be killed by mobs all over the country, and in August 2019, revoked Article 370<sup>92</sup>, and occupied Kashmir. The Indian government deployed its forces on all street corners, shut down internet and telephone services, regional leaders were placed under house arrest, and tourists were told to leave.

In the same month, the government created a citizenship registry in Assam, rendering thousands of Muslims stateless, and announced a plan to open detention centers for Muslims. In December, the Indian government passed the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), a law that creates a path to citizenship for immigrants of different faiths except Muslims. The law, although unsurprising, marks an important legislative separation in the identities of “Indian” and “Muslim.” This is more deeply pernicious than many realize. A deeper look at the list of immigrants reveals the larger point Modi’s government is trying to



Credit: Adnan Abidi / Reuters

*Figure 11: Peaceful protesters against the new citizenship law are met with force in every case*

make. The bill pretends to support minorities from South Asia- but it only accepts minorities (except Muslims) from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. It is not open to immigrants from countries like Sri Lanka, China, and Myanmar, even though Sri Lanka has a large group of persecuted Hindus in need of protection (Tamils). Pakistan,

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<sup>92</sup>Article 370 of the Indian constitution gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir—conferring it with the power to have a separate constitution, a state flag and autonomy over the internal administration of the state.

Bangladesh, and Afghanistan are officially Muslim countries, while China, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar are not. In choosing which nationalities to allow, the Indian government has set up Islam as the oppressor. Only minorities from Muslim countries are in need of Indian support.<sup>93</sup> Unlike Indian actions in Kashmir and Assam, this led to widespread protests. Indians took to the streets to protest the legislation. The protests went on for months, and in February of 2020, protests over the CAA triggered mob violence across Delhi. Hindu mobs chanted “Jai Shri Ram,” a BJP slogan that translates as “Glory to Lord Ram,”<sup>94</sup> as they went on a rampage through Delhi, attacking and killing Muslims and destroying property. Police officers stood idly by, no doubt instructed not to intervene, and in many cases joined in. One video caught cops smashing CCTV cameras, while another showed them helping men gather stones to throw.<sup>95</sup> For context, when Muslim protesters at Jamia University got “unruly,” the police stormed the university and arrested students. The Delhi police are controlled by the Home Ministry, which is run by Amit Shah, Modi’s closest advisor and the second most powerful man in India. Shah has run into trouble in the past for ordering extra-judicial killings. His investigation, pushed by renowned Indian journalist Rana Ayyub,<sup>96</sup> came to a halt when a series of judges were pressured by the Modi government to drop the charges.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, “Uncovering the CAA’s Larger Stratagem,” *The Hindu*, December 31, 2019, sec. Comment, <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/uncovering-the-caas-larger-stratagem/article30436029.ece>.

<sup>94</sup> Snigdha Poonam, “The 3 Most Polarizing Words in India,” *Foreign Policy*, February 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/02/13/jai-shri-ram-india-hindi/>. This slogan has morphed from a Hindu greeting to being synonymous with Hindu nationalist language and anti-Muslim speech.

<sup>95</sup> Samanth Subramanian, “How the Indian Government Watched Delhi Burn,” *The New Yorker*, February 2020, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/dispatch/how-the-indian-government-watched-delhi-burn>.

<sup>96</sup> Saba Shah Khan, “Investigative Journalist Pays the Price for Expose in India,” *Voice of America*, August 2019, <https://www.voanews.com/south-central-asia/investigative-journalist-pays-price-expose-india>.

<sup>97</sup> Khan, “Investigative Journalist Pays the Price for Expose in India.”

Like in Gujarat in 2002, Modi watched as Delhi burned. As Hindu nationalists, many members of his party, killed Muslims and his police force did not stop them, Modi



Credit: Danish Siddiqui / Reuters

*Figure 12: People supporting the new citizenship law beat a Muslim man while police watch.*

served Donald Trump gold-leaf-crusted mandarin oranges at the Presidential Palace.<sup>98</sup> This was, however, unsurprising. Months of peaceful protests by Muslims were met with tear gas, house raids, arbitrary detentions, police brutality, and Internet shutdowns.

Modi's colleagues suggested in

speeches that the protesters should be shot. A BJP politician named Kapil Mishra gave an ultimatum to the police: clear the roads of protesters or allow his followers to do so. The BJP's party line, stoking ethnic animosity, calling for force, labeling opponents "traitors" gives Hindu nationalists the confidence to incite violence and the assurance that they will never be punished. And they are right to be assured, the Indian government has turned a blind eye to Muslim lynching for years. The pattern of political elites creating ideal conditions for violence has simply intensified in the twenty-first century. Nehru and Jinnah may be at blame for starting the trend, but they did not explicitly call for violence.

And it goes on, the Pakistani government makes questionable security decisions based on a historical insecurity, and the Indian government does not acknowledge Muslims as Indians. A pattern emerges. The spiral of historical animosity worsens and

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<sup>98</sup>Subramanian, "How the Indian Government Watched Delhi Burn."

intensifies. In India, the BJP have been rewriting school textbooks, erasing India's significant Islamic history. But even without a concerted effort to rewrite textbooks, Pakistan and India's students are not learning a similar history. History textbooks reflect national sentiments, with wars being blamed squarely on the other country and opposing views being villainized. Bollywood films are increasingly Islamophobic. Mughal history is villainized. There are calls to demolish the Taj Mahal.<sup>99</sup>

The history that the next generation of Pakistanis and Indians are learning reflects age old historical myths, and further reinforces the furies of Partition.<sup>100</sup> But even if education worked to uncover the truth, in countries with a majority of the population being illiterate, political elites can sell any story. This was made clear with Modi's reelection campaign, heavily reliant on fake stories and propaganda. In the same way that political elites in Pakistan and India have intentionally and historically worked to divide and win, it will take a few leaders to have the courage to bridge the divide. But political courage has been lacking for decades, and does not seem to be on the horizons, even as the subcontinent seems to be steadily moving towards a tipping point.

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<sup>99</sup> "Rana Ayyub: Reclaiming India from the Fascists," *Adi Magazine* (blog), accessed May 10, 2020, <https://adimagazine.com/articles/rana-ayyub-reclaiming-india-from-the-fascists/>.

<sup>100</sup> William Dalrymple, "The Mutual Genocide of Indian Partition," *The New Yorker*, June 2015, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/06/29/the-great-divide-books-dalrymple>.

## **Violence as a Result of Colonial Rule: Rwandan Genocide**

*“Where does evil come from?  
what do you mean “where”*

*from a human being  
always a human being  
and only a human being”*

“Unde malum?” by Joanna Trzeciak

### **Hutu Disenfranchisement and Group Fractures Under Belgian Rule**

On April 7, 1994, the Hutu majority of Rwanda turned on the Tutsi minority in a wave of violence that swept the country and left almost a million people dead. Lasting only about 100 days, the Rwandan genocide is one of the quickest and most unthinkable waves of violence in history. Within hours of the airplane carrying the Hutu president, Juvenal Habyarimana, being shot down, the killing had started. Elite government forces and the Hutu militia, the Interahamwe, rounded up Tutsi military and political leaders and executed them. Roadblocks were set up to identify Rwandans whose official IDs marked them as Tutsi (a policy introduced in the 1930s by the Belgian colonial authorities).<sup>101</sup> People were murdered enmasse in churches, homes, fields, and checkpoints. In rural areas, where Hutus and Tutsis were neighbors, friends, and inter-married, government propaganda was a call to arms.

What makes the Rwandan genocide so unthinkable is its popular and intimate nature. None of the other case studies constitute a genocide, they are massacres. Having a genocide be part of collective action, and civilian led, is far more confusing than pogroms

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<sup>101</sup> Alan Cowell, “Rwanda Marks 25 Years Since the Genocide. The Country Is Still Grappling with Its Legacy.” *The New York Times*, April 6, 2019, [www.nytimes.com/2019/04/06/world/africa/rwanda-genocide-25-years.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/06/world/africa/rwanda-genocide-25-years.html).



or massacres. A genocide is an attempt to wipe out a people. The Holocaust was conducted by a few people, even though many were complicit, and it was a form of institutionalized violence. The killing camps were relatively removed from the view of civilians, and Nazis often just had to press a button to operate gas chambers. The Rwandan genocide, by contrast, was carried out by friends and neighbors, and the most popular weapon was a machete. It takes several hacks of a machete to kill a person, perhaps one of the most “intimate” acts of violence possible. The Rwandan genocide would not have succeeded without hundreds of thousands of perpetrators, and millions of complicit witnesses. Long standing interethnic ties should limit, not facilitate, participation in mass violence, but the Rwandan genocide throws that theory to the wind.<sup>102</sup>

The violence of the genocide had to be the result of both planning and participation. The agenda was undoubtedly proposed from above, but deeply resonated with perspectives from below, and it was the combination that created the horrific



Credit: David Turnley/Corbis, via Getty Images

*Figure 13: Thousands of abandoned machetes at the border between Rwanda and Tanzania. Hutu refugees were allowed to cross on the condition they left behind their weapons.*

reality. The popular violence would have been sporadic and disjointed without guidance from above, and the call to violence from above would have gone unanswered without

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<sup>102</sup>Fuji, *Killing Neighbors*, 3.



the support from below. And it is the support from below, and its popularity, that is the disturbing part of the genocide. Similarly, to the Hindu/Muslim violence from the past chapter, the genocide was not just a state aspect. It tapped into real historical grievances. These historical grievances can be explained by exploring the legacy of colonialism and postcolonial politics.

The urge to destroy an enemy is understandable, but the question is: how does the enemy come to be defined? In the Rwandan context, the Tutsi minority came to be defined as alien. The Tutsi minority came to be seen as a settler population, almost analogous with the Belgian colonists. The elimination of the settlers by the natives, the Hutus, is easier to understand because it is a violence perpetrated by victims. Yesterday's victims become tomorrow's perpetrators. Frantz Fanon demonstrates this point in his suggestion that native violence as a response to prior violence, more as violence to end violence, rather than the perpetuation of a cycle of continued fresh violence.<sup>103</sup>

The key aspect of the Rwandan genocide (and the Holocaust) is race branding.<sup>104</sup> To explain this, Mahmood Mamdani's analysis is important. Race branding not only allows a population to easily define and "other" a population, but also to exterminate it with an easy conscience. To understand how this race branding came to be, it is crucial to think through the political systems that colonialism set up. Colonialism created a binary settler/native dynamic. The colonial context defined Tutsis as a group with a privileged relationship to power. The post-colonial political context then constructed them as a privileged alien settler presence through the revolution of 1959 and then through Hutu

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<sup>103</sup>Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth* (Grove Press, 1964), 42-45.

<sup>104</sup>Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism and Genocide in Rwanda*. Princeton University Press, 2001, Kindle Edition, 640.

Power propaganda after 1990.<sup>105</sup> Even though neighbors were killing neighbors, the genocide was constructed as a cleansing of foreigners rather than neighbors.

German rule began in 1898, and simultaneous to their entry was the entry of the Catholic Church. The White Fathers tried to establish good relations with the leadership, hoping that if they converted, the population would follow. Yuhi Musinga, the new mwami (king), was hostile to them and only granted them land under German pressure.<sup>106</sup> After Germany's defeat in World War I, the Belgians took over the region that includes modern day Rwanda and Burundi, and, unlike the Germans, immediately began exerting pressures on the mwami. They were highly impressed with the strict social hierarchy they found and began to take steps to make it into a clear political hierarchy. The mwami oscillated between being cooperative and hostile, and so the Belgians deposed him.

It was Belgian colonial reform from the mid-1920s to the mid-1930s that constructed Hutus as indigenous Bantu and Tutsi as alien Hamites. Part of this construction was the colonial discourse of the Hamitic hypothesis, which posits that all civilization in Africa is a foreign import. Mamdani argues that both Hutu and Tutsi are political identities.<sup>107</sup> If a person's inclusion in the state and their rights are dependent on their race or ethnicity, then their race or ethnicity is a central defining characteristic. In this way, race and ethnicity are also political identities.

Colonialism presents itself as a civilizing project, and with colonialism, civilizing means modernizing which means Westernizing. Tutsis, in line with the Hamitic hypothesis, were understood within this framework as more civilized, and the colonial

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<sup>105</sup>Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 669.

<sup>106</sup>Fuji, *Killing Neighbors*, 63.

<sup>107</sup>Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 838.

authorities cast them as more Westernized, which eventually led to them being considered more alien. The idea that the Tutsi were superior because they were alien, that there were racial differences between them and the local population, was a colonial implant. Belgians, Germans, and the English were convinced that wherever there was evidence of “civilized life,” the ruling groups could not have been indigenous. Scholars have largely disagreed on how best to categorize Hutu and Tutsi, but Mamdani argues that there is no single definition. Hutu and Tutsi, as primarily political identities, have shifted over the years just as state projects have. Yet across the colonial and postcolonial periods Tutsi and Hutu were set up as bipolar identities. The social degradation of the Hutu was partly to blame for this. The Tutsi identity often absorbed successful Hutu into their ranks. To be born Tutsi was to be either born into power or to be born power adjacent, whereas to be born Hutu became to be born more and more like a subjected underclass.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the identities had clearly become divided along political lines. And so, in precolonial Rwanda, Hutu/Tutsi was subject/power oriented, and then the colonial state racialized the difference to be indigenous/alien. Also, while Hutu continued to be disproportionately present at the lower levels of society, there was a new (but small) amount of social mobility, which would be important in the postcolonial context. Colonialism took an already skewed power dynamic and made it resonant with colonial power and subjugation, rather than just local dynamics.<sup>108</sup> This switch made the group relations more explosive than ever before.

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<sup>108</sup>Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 1966.

On some level, racialization was an intellectual construct, with very little basis in reality. However, the colonial authorities made efforts to establish it as an institutional construct as well. The institutional racial privilege reproduced the racial ideology. This joint intellectual and institutional process was conducted by the colonial state and the Catholic Church.<sup>109</sup> The Church, in 1902, hailed the Tutsi as “supreme humans,” and “a European under a black skin,” in 1917.<sup>110</sup> The difference was primarily institutionalized through a series of administrative reforms from 1927 to 1936. Key institutions, such as education, state administration, taxation, and the Church, were organized around an acknowledgement of different Rwandan identities. The reform was clinched with a census that classified the entire population as Tutsi, Hutu or Twa (indigenous Rwandan minority), and then each person was issued an identification card proclaiming their official identities. These cards would later be used to filter Tutsi and execute them.

The school system was a space in which the perpetuation of the racial ideology became a priority. The Western-style schools that opened in Rwanda were primarily administered by the Church—the objective was to turn the Tutsi into an elite population capable of being auxiliaries to the Church and the colonial administration. The schools tended to restrict education to mainly Tutsi, and when both Tutsi and Hutu were admitted, there was a very different education given to each. The Tutsi were given a superior education, usually in French, and this assimilationist approach prepared them for administrative positions, and more generally, for their citizenship. The Hutu were taught in Kiswahili and this underlined the fact that educated Hutu were not destined for

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<sup>109</sup>Fuji, *Killing Neighbors*, 62.

<sup>110</sup>Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 2237.

common citizenship. Tutsi supremacy was not only established in the colonial hierarchy, but also Christianized. Access to Church positions were restricted to the Tutsi elite, even while the evangelism was directed mainly at the Hutu peasantry. While schools pushed a racial ideology, state administration racialized local authorities. Again, the Church pushed for Tutsi supremacy in local administration. The reforms of the 1920s saw the Tutsification of the chiefship as an institution. Local Hutu chiefs were systematically deposed and replaced by Tutsi chiefs that had gone to schools for the sons of Tutsi chiefs. These new chiefs had been educated on the basis of Hamitic supremacy, and felt it was their birthright. Their chiefships were further strengthened by judicial reforms in 1936 that further centralized their power. The judicial reforms meant that chiefs were often able to sit in judgement of themselves, effectively creating local despots.

Even though the Hutu peasantry was primarily involved in agriculture and the Belgian colonial government made a lot of agrarian reforms, the Hutu peasantry experienced a harsh Belgian rule. This was partly due to the aforementioned Tutsification of local authorities. Tutsi chiefs were able to simply appropriate the wages of their laborers, while those laborers were still responsible for paying their monetary taxes. The colonial administration also instituted arbitrary exactions that it mandated, and the punishments for reneging on these requirements (forced labor/crops), was getting hit repeatedly with a cane. Forced labor, particularly, was a key mode of exploitation. The colonial authorities would pass on every developmental requirement, like the upkeep of infrastructure, to chiefs, who would use their authority to force the Hutu peasantry to perform the task without payment. The regime of forced labor continued to expand—chiefs began to demand more and more days of forced and unpaid labor as a “land tax,”

and soon began to add requirements like the free construction of their houses. While the Tutsi were undoubtedly complicit in a multilayered system of Hutu oppression, the Belgians enforced the system. Tutsi authorities were often forced to whip the Hutu and force them to work, under the threat of getting whipped themselves. Even then, Tutsi chiefs had significant agency and were in a profitable partnership, able to exact additional resources from the Hutu to line their pockets.

All these measures depend on the classification of Hutu and Tutsi, and the Belgians achieved this rigid classification with the census of 1933. The criteria are widely debated—one measure was to categorize those with more than ten cows as Tutsi and those with less as Hutu. It is impossible that this was applied in every case, not only because it is mathematically improbable, but also because not all Tutsi owned more than ten cows. Mamdani argues that the ten cow rule was probably used more to identify Hutu, and not Tutsi.<sup>111</sup> This meant that rich Hutu were, once again, somewhat absorbed into the ranks of the Tutsi. The administration also relied on the Church for demographic information, and the Church differentiated between Hutu and Tutsi based on physical measurement and ownership of a large herd of cows. The Church had the opportunity to institutionalize the Hamitic hypothesis and the Belgian administration the opportunity to take a real socioeconomic distinction and racialize it.

Once they became legal identities the past social rise from Hutu to Tutsi or fall from Tutsi to Hutu was no longer possible. For the first time, these categories became permanent identities. This system was upheld by a regime of Tutsi privilege. The administrative regime was Tutsi dominated. Poor Tutsi were exempt from the unfair

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<sup>111</sup>Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 2496.

exaction regime, and rich Tutsi explicitly profited off it, cementing the idea that to be born Tutsi was to be associated with power. And so, in summary: Tutsi was first cast as an identity of power through the ennoblement of prosperous individuals through marriage. Then, colonial rule doubled down on the power/subject dynamic framed by the Hamitic hypothesis. The Belgian authorities and the Church racialized the divide, making it into a settler/native dynamic in which Tutsi were made to be a nonindigenous identity.

### **The Legacy of the Victim/Perpetrator Cycle**

In the post-colonial phase, the fortunes of the Tutsi changed. Because the Hutu and Tutsi had become synonymous with an indigenous majority and alien minority under colonial rule, the decolonization movement relied on the empowerment of the indigenous majority against the alien minority. The main causes of the 1959 Revolution had their roots in colonial changes. The Belgian move not only made the Tutsi a nonindigenous identity, it also definitively consolidated Tutsi privilege in a way that led Tutsi of all socioeconomic levels to absorb privilege. This meant that the Tutsi embraced their identity as nonindigenous—their position as nonindigenous Hamites was the foundation of their privileged positions. Even while colonial rule made the state apparatus increasingly rigid by reducing social mobility, its introduction of a monetized economy and school-based education eventually led to the creation of a Hutu elite. This meant that there was an educated elite that felt permanently trapped in a subordinate legal status and so developed into a powerful political counter elite, committed to the overthrow of the current social order. The Hutu counter elite was perfectly positioned to tap into the frustrations of the Hutu peasantry over local despotism and coerced labor.

Hutu labor migrants, to escape coerced labor, often found themselves in the Congo and Uganda. Both destinations had new thriving postwar markets for minerals, coffee, and sugar.<sup>112</sup> These migrants often experienced a new social order, leading them to the fresh realization that the Tutsi despotism in Rwanda was unjust. Many of the early protest leaders were former migrant workers, who now had economic security and a social network, making it easy to politically organize and mobilize. This, coupled with the rise of the school-based Western education system, led to the erosion of the social supremacy of the Tutsi, even though the political supremacy was left intact. The cattle based wealth of the Tutsi elite was still untouched, but the Belgians encouraged Hutus to grow crops for export, giving them access to the money economy via their cash crops, weakening the colonial bonds of pastoral servitude. In this context, education had a charged impact on the Hutu that were able to access it. The school system's merit based system led to the foundation of egalitarian ideas. It was still, however, heavily based on the Hamitic hypothesis and the school system still operated by giving Tutsi access to a French education and Hutu access to the Kiswahili education. While very few Hutu managed to access secondary education, the ones that did were struck by the injustice of the political and economic monopoly of the Tutsi. Therefore, the push to break this monopoly became the central aim of the Hutu intellectual elite during the revolution. Former Hutu priests were also increasingly a part of the Hutu counter elite. While studying for the priesthood and attempting to climb the Church hierarchy, the Tutsi monopoly on the Church was abundantly clear. Even though the Church laid the

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<sup>112</sup>Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 2696.



foundations of the Hamitic hypothesis, Christian ideology espoused egalitarianism and became a powerful motivator for Hutu priests.

The 1961 elections were the context in which the Hutu counter elite created a popular nationalism from below that clashed with the Tutsi nationalism from above. Both decried the “racial tension” at the core of their problems—one focused on the foreign black versus white dynamic and one on the local Hamite versus Bantu (Hutu) dynamic.<sup>113</sup>

This caused the Hutu counter elite to articulate their hostility against the Hutu elite. The clash signaled a contrast

between Tutsi power and

Hutu lack of power, and the

characterization of Tutsi

power as foreign. The

confluence of a popular

movement of frustrated Hutu

peasants and the emergence

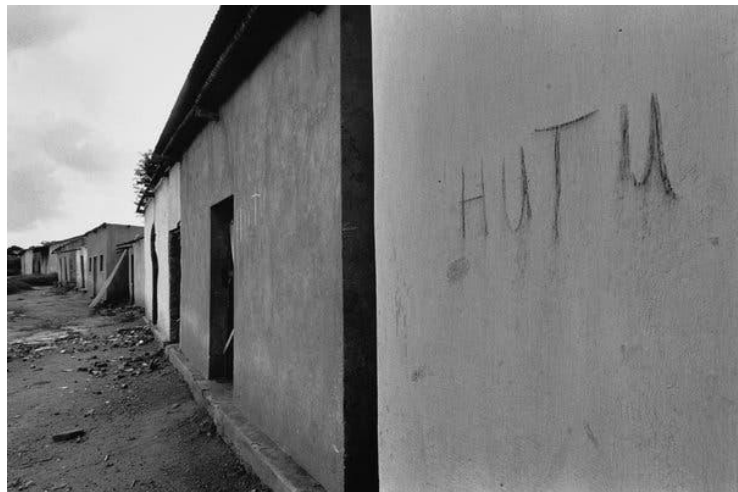
of a Hutu counter elite

created a moment in which

the Hutu could overcome their identity as subordinate and seize power. And so, became

the rallying cry: Hutu Power!

The assertiveness of the Hutu Power movement only led to a distressed and outraged push back from the Tutsi, who had been fed a steady diet of the Hamitic hypothesis and Tutsi supremacy. They were committed to defending colonial privilege



Credit: Gilles Peress/Magnum Photos

*Figure 14: Hutus living in this house scrawled their ethnicity on the wall to prevent looting. They fled to escape the advance of the rebel forces.*

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<sup>113</sup>Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 2874.

and equating it with custom and privilege. This reaction only strengthened the Hutu political cause. The claim that Tutsi power needed to be restored only further strengthened the Hutu movement while discrediting the Tutsi one. The growing Hutu counter elite brought Tutsi unity under pressure and expanded the political arena, eventually bringing around two rival political parties: Union Nationale Rwandaise (UNAR), conservative, and Rassemblement Democratique Rwandais (RADER), reformist, in competition with the conservative Parti du Mouvement de l'Emancipation Hutu, PARMEHUTU, and the moderate Association Pour la Promotion Sociale de la Masse (APROMOSA). These were the limited choices that the Rwandan people faced before the election.

The elections were marked with UNAR/PARMEHUTU militant clashes and revolts throughout the country. The focus of the revolts were Tutsi chiefs who were killed or forced to resign. The visiting UN Mission estimated the dead at over 200 people and Belgium placed Rwanda in a state of emergency at the concern that Tutsi chiefs might begin full scale Hutu repression. Before the violence could swing from anti-Tutsi to anti-Hutu, emergency military action by Belgium intervened with the command of Colonel B.E.M. Guy Logiest. Arguing that Tutsi chiefs were threatening the public order, he began to replace them with Hutu chiefs, and so began the overthrow against the colonial power's own local authorities. The state hierarchy suddenly became a Hutu hierarchy. There was significant external influence in this "revolution." European clergy acted as a backup force for the Hutu counter elite, writing manifestos and UN petitions.<sup>114</sup> The colonial government handed over power to the insurgent force. And this support was

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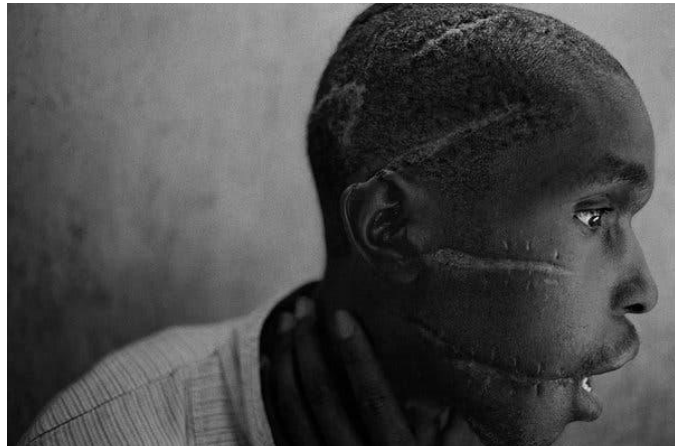
<sup>114</sup>Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 3054.

critical, without the significant external support, it is not clear that the Hutu counter elite would have been able to stage a revolution.

With their political power significantly reversed, the Tutsi elite splintered, some went into political exile, some stayed home. The few left began to try to push for power again, but the Hutu political elite was determined that the new political community exclude Tutsi. Many believe that the beginning of the genocidal tendencies of 1994 began in 1959. While the revolution was a bloodbath, the attempted repression that followed, politically, gave the upper hand to the Hutu power tendency. After the revolution, the Hutu claimed that the government represented the whole nation. But of course, in a primarily Hutu government, the nation represented was also Hutu, which meant that the Tutsi were disenfranchised civically. The Tutsi were removed from the political arena, although they continued to be present in business, education, and the Church, because they were alien. In the view of the new era, the Tutsi were not only alien, but they were also a minority, meaning that representation for them did not matter. In addition to just being a minority, they were a historically privileged minority—which meant that justice in a Hutu nation looked like fixing Tutsi dominated institutions like the Church, education, and employment to be Hutu spheres of power. The Second Republic failed to integrate, or even try to integrate, the Tutsi diaspora into the postcolonial reality. This integration would assume that the Tutsi were as much a part of the political community as the Hutu.

This cycle of victims becoming perpetrators happened again with the civil war and the Rwandan Patriotic Front's invasion in October 1990. The RPF went in as an army looking to liberate a people and came out of it as an army of occupation. The

Habyarimana regime entered the war pledged to ethnic reconciliation, but exited the war pledged to uphold Hutu Power. As Hutu Power was threatened with the RPF invasion, a genocidal tendency was born in its defense. For the first time in decades, the danger of Tutsi



Credit: James Nachtwey Archive, Hood Museum

*Figure 15: A Hutu man whose face was mutilated by the Hutu Interahamwe militia, who suspected him of sympathizing with the Tutsi rebels.*

Power was back, thanks to the RPF invasion. This was, at least, how the Rwandan government explained the invasion to the Rwandan population and foreign media. They were once again at risk of being oppressed, and so returned Hutu Power to the forefront of politics. The threat of Tutsi Power led to a string of massacres and random killing and pillaging of Tutsis. The enemy was initially just the political enemy that was the Tutsi, but soon Hutu who were branded accomplices of the RPF were also targeted. In this explosive situation, we also must remember that the war disrupted agricultural production and the economy as a whole. This, in addition to the Arusha Accords<sup>115</sup>, resulted in a completely polarized situation. The UN mandated that the government must implement the Arusha Agreement, or it would be forced to pull out, isolating the Kigali government.

It was in this context that Habyarima's plane was shot down. The murder of their president seemed like a sign that without Hutu Power, there would only be Hutu

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<sup>115</sup> The Arusha Accords, officially the peace talks between the Government of the Republic of Rwanda and the Rwandan Patriotic Front, were signed in Arusha, Tanzania on 4 August 1993, to end a three-year Rwandan Civil War.

servitude. And so, it became the time for Hutu to choose between power and servitude. President Habyarima and his prime minister, Agathe Uwilingiyimana, represented the middle ground of ethnic reconciliation, even as they supported Hutu Power, which had served to obstruct those with genocidal tendencies. The genocidal tendency now had free reign, beginning yet another cycle of victims turned perpetrators.

### **Current Relevance: Gacaca As the Key to Reconciliation**

To break the cycle, historical memory becomes key. The genocide claimed more than half a million lives and murdered approximately three quarters of Rwanda's Tutsi population in just three months. Also, as many as 250,000 women were raped, leaving the country's population traumatized and its infrastructure decimated. In this context, any form of justice post-genocide seemed near impossible. But justice is what was needed to create reconciliation between two polarized groups. Rwanda lacked not only the infrastructure to take on the massive commitment of prosecuting the murderers, but also lacked the lawyers and judges, as they had either been killed or fled the country. And, given the popular nature of the genocide, there were a lot of people to prosecute. Rwanda presents an interesting case study, especially in the context of this thesis, because the state took a very active role in creating a legacy and reconciliation. While it was far from perfect, it was extraordinary given the circumstances.

The main concept that is important to post-genocide justice in Rwanda is transitional justice. Transitional justice is rooted in accountability. By putting victims and their dignity first, it signals the way forward for a renewed commitment to make sure ordinary citizens are safe in their own countries. Mass atrocities and systematic abuses

devastate societies and their legacy is likely to make conditions of the country fragile: political and legal institutions are weak, unstable, politicized, and under-resourced.<sup>116</sup> However, while justice was an important commitment, Rwanda also had to find a way to move forward as a united nation. Because of the unprecedented scale of civilian-on-civilian violence that had occurred, there were far more people implicated in crimes than could be prosecuted officially.

Rwanda found a way to focus on both reconciliation and justice. Justice was pursued in the way of gacaca courts, and through the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda<sup>117</sup> and extradition. Justice in Rwanda was a highly controversial process, as was inevitable considering the task the government was given.<sup>118</sup> The new government, headed by the RPF, adopted a stance of maximal prosecution. Each participant in the genocide was to be prosecuted.<sup>119</sup> This included the central planners, the coerced civilian population, and those who were opportunistic throughout the process. They would all be prosecuted and punished for their crimes. Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide outlined five acts that constituted genocidal acts: (1) killing members of the group; (2) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (3) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (4) imposing

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<sup>116</sup> "What Is Transitional Justice? | ICTJ." *International Center for Transitional Justice*, 24 May 2018, [www.ictj.org/about/transitional-justice](http://www.ictj.org/about/transitional-justice).

<sup>117</sup> The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda was an international court established in November 1994 by the United Nations Security Council in Resolution 955 in order to judge people responsible for perpetrating the genocide.

<sup>118</sup> "Justice Compromised | The Legacy of Rwanda's Community-Based Gacaca Courts." Human Rights Watch, 19 Oct. 2015, [www.hrw.org/report/2011/05/31/justice-compromised/legacy-rwandas-community-based-gacaca-courts#page](http://www.hrw.org/report/2011/05/31/justice-compromised/legacy-rwandas-community-based-gacaca-courts#page).

<sup>119</sup> The RPF came to power in July 1994, when it seized power while liberating the Tutsi population

measures intended to prevent births within the group; (5) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.<sup>120</sup> The Rwandan genocide code of 1996 outlined four categories of responsibility in the genocide: (1) “planners, organizers, instigators, supervisors and leaders of the crime of genocide or of a crime against humanity,” persons in positions of authority in the government or political parties, “notorious murderers,” and “persons who committed acts of sexual torture”; (2) perpetrators or “conspirators of accomplices” of intentional homicide or physical assault causing death; (3) persons guilty of “serious assaults against the person”; and (4) persons who committed crimes against property.<sup>121</sup>

On an international level, the UN Security Council created the ICTR. Its mandate was to prosecute persons responsible for genocide and other serious violations of international humanitarian law committed between January 1, 1994, and December 31, 1994, in Rwanda or in neighboring states. The ICTR was expected to enable the prosecution of the genocide planners who had fled the country, acknowledge the international scope of the crimes committed in Rwanda, establish a significant repository of testimony and evidence about the 1994 genocide, and help seek justice for genocide survivors. The ICTR lived up to these expectations to some degree but was not an unquestionable success. Many Rwandans felt marginalized by the ICTR in the beginning because they were not able to access information about the proceedings. However, by the late 1990s and early 2000s, Rwandans were able to follow the trials due to public information campaigns. They largely followed the high profile trials, such as trials in

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<sup>120</sup>UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, [www.hrweb.org/legal/genocide.html](http://www.hrweb.org/legal/genocide.html).

<sup>121</sup>Alexander Laban Hinton, *Transitional Justice Global Mechanisms and Local Realities after Genocide and Mass Violence* (Rutgers University Press, 2011), 97.

which owners of the extremist, anti-Tutsi propaganda newspapers and radio were prosecuted, and the military trials, in which several highly placed officers were prosecuted. Many Rwandans view the institution as unjust since people prosecuted before the ICTR face lesser penalties than those tried inside Rwanda and enjoy comparatively luxurious prison conditions. In addition, the vast resources invested in the ICTR and its slow progress encouraged additional criticism, and the Rwandan government did, when politically expedient, encourage negative sentiment toward the ICTR.<sup>122</sup>

Under the principle of universal jurisdiction, several foreign governments were involved in prosecuting Rwandans for genocide-related crimes.<sup>123</sup> One of the important examples was the trial of a National University of Rwanda professor and four Roman Catholic nuns in Belgium in 2001.<sup>124</sup> According to Human Rights Watch, the defendants were charged with violations of humanitarian law under the Geneva Conventions and the Belgian penal code. All were found guilty and sentenced to imprisonment. The second trial was in Canada. Canada prosecuted Desiré Munyaneza under the domestic Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Act, passed in 2000.<sup>125</sup> Munyaneza was the son of a wealthy Hutu shopkeeper in Butare and fled to Canada in around 1996. In 2005, he was arrested and charged with genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. His trial began in March 2007 and lasted over two years and cost the Canadian government

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<sup>122</sup> "Slow Progress at Rwandan Tribunal." *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, [iwpr.net/global-voices/slow-progress-rwandan-tribunal](http://iwpr.net/global-voices/slow-progress-rwandan-tribunal).

<sup>123</sup> "Universal Jurisdiction." *International Justice Resource Center*, 4 Feb. 2017, [ijrcenter.org/cases-before-national-courts/domestic-exercise-of-universal-jurisdiction/](http://ijrcenter.org/cases-before-national-courts/domestic-exercise-of-universal-jurisdiction/).

<sup>124</sup> "Belgian Jury to Decide Case Concerning Rwandan Genocide." *The US-EU Banana Dispute / ASIL*, 25 May 2001, [www.asil.org/insights/volume/6/issue/13/belgian-jury-decide-case-concerning-rwandan-genocide](http://www.asil.org/insights/volume/6/issue/13/belgian-jury-decide-case-concerning-rwandan-genocide).

<sup>125</sup> Legislative Services Branch. "Consolidated Federal Laws of Canada, Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Act." *Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations*, 3 Dec. 2018, [laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-45.9/](http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-45.9/)



millions of dollars.<sup>126</sup> On the 29th of October 2009, he was sentenced to life in prison with no chance of parole for at least 25 years. Prosecutions of other genocide suspects continued before several European courts and the Rwandan government investigated suspects who fled and began living abroad to request their extradition.

On a national level, the first genocide trials began in Rwanda's Belgian-style courts in December of 1996. The Rwandan justice system was destroyed in the genocide and its personnel, including lawyers and judges killed, was overwhelmed and trials moved forward at an extremely slow pace. As of March 2001, the national courts had tried around 5,310 people.<sup>127</sup> In the late 1990s, prison and local jail populations in Rwanda soared to over 130,000,<sup>128</sup> almost all prisoners were held on charges of genocide. Any country would have struggled under the problem of trying to organize fair trials for that many genocide suspects. Under pressure from the international community to solve the problem, the Rwandan government turned to gacaca.

Gacaca courts have been framed as local justice, transitional justice, and reconciliation. Gacaca's role in the reconciliation process is controversial, but the Rwandan government additionally pursued other means of reconciliation. The reconciliation process in Rwanda focused on reconstructing the Rwandan identity, as well as balancing justice, truth, peace, and security.<sup>129</sup> The Constitution now states that every Rwandan share equal rights with their fellow countrymen. Laws have been passed to

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<sup>126</sup> "Desire Munyaneza." *TRIAL International*, [trialinternational.org/latest-post/desire-munyaneza/](http://trialinternational.org/latest-post/desire-munyaneza/).

<sup>127</sup> "Africa Overview." *Human Rights Watch*, [www.hrw.org/legacy/wr2k2/africa](http://www.hrw.org/legacy/wr2k2/africa)

<sup>128</sup> "Law and Reality | Progress in Judicial Reform in Rwanda." *Human Rights Watch*, 29 Apr. 2015, [www.hrw.org/report/2008/07/25/law-and-reality/progress-judicial-reform-rwanda](http://www.hrw.org/report/2008/07/25/law-and-reality/progress-judicial-reform-rwanda).

<sup>129</sup> "Rwanda, Genocide, Hutu, Tutsi, Mass Execution, Ethnic Cleansing, Massacre, Human Rights, Victim Remembrance, Education, Africa." *United Nations*, United Nations, [www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/about/bgjustice.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/about/bgjustice.shtml).

fight discrimination and divisive genocide ideology. The Rwandan government established the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) in 1999 and has contributed substantially to reconciliation efforts in Rwanda. The NURC has organized many conferences that aim to help people understand the roots of genocide, and how to proceed with life in the aftermath of genocide. The NURC also organizes conferences to bring people together to share their grievances. It was in these settings that the government realized that making education free up till high school and abolishing official discrimination were crucial steps to take.

It is important to understand what the main aims of transitional justice were. Some scholars argue that there were six main aims: truth, justice, peace, healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation.<sup>130</sup> The question of the success of transitional justice lies in how well gacaca courts did on these six counts. Furthermore, gacaca was tasked with processing the massive backlog of genocide cases, improving living conditions in the jails, and facilitating economic development. Although, to be clear, the government of Rwanda did not choose gacaca courts because they felt that it was the most efficient mechanism to realize their objectives, but because there was a dearth of good options from which to choose.

The government believed that gacaca would overcome future minor conflicts and create a sense of unity.<sup>131</sup> A lot of the government's faith in gacaca's ability to build peace assumed that there would be future conflicts. The government expected gacaca to create civic virtues in the population that would not only allow them to deal with the

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<sup>130</sup> Philip Clark, *The Gacaca Courts, Post-Genocide Justice and Reconciliation in Rwanda: Justice without Lawyers* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1.

<sup>131</sup> Based on Philip Clark's interview with James Tayebwa, 30 January 2003.

conflicts of the past, but also encourage peaceful deliberation in the future. The population was divided on how to interpret the role of gacaca in the peacebuilding process. Peace was difficult to discuss when the wounds of the civil war were so fresh, and when there was such intense and deep rooted animosity. Relations between survivors and convicted criminals or suspects were often strained. Gacaca suspects often emphasized that gacaca helped to create negative peace, because they feared that they would be the victims of violent reprisals when they returned to their communities.<sup>132</sup> These suspects believed that without gacaca giving them the opportunity to express remorse for their crimes and ask for forgiveness, their communities would act against them. However, research indicates that only a minority of suspects showed remorse for their crimes or asked for forgiveness.<sup>133</sup> Survivors tended to interpret gacaca as contributing to positive peace, by creating a difficult but necessary dialogue. However, many members of the community also believed that gacaca exacerbated conflicts within the community by raising tensions. The NURC surveyed the public about gacaca and the results showed that most Rwandans expected an initial increase in instability during hearings. According to this survey, 49 percent of the general population and 74 percent of survivors believed that gacaca testimonies exacerbated tensions amongst families.<sup>134</sup> However, the consensus amongst the population seems to be that, beyond initial confrontation, gacaca did contribute to positive peace. Arguably, the initial tensions

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<sup>132</sup> Defined as an absence from violence, rather than positive peace, which refers to justice for all.

<sup>133</sup> Jean Hatzfeld and Susan Sontag. *A Time for Machetes the Rwandan Genocide - the Killers Speak* (Serpent's Tail, 2008), 148-55.

<sup>134</sup> NURC, 'Opinion Survey on Participation in Gacaca', Annex 4.

added to the peacebuilding process because they directed tensions into engagement at the courts.

Healing differs from reconciliation in the sense that it refers more to an individual's post-genocide trauma than to a communal healing. One way in which gacaca contributed to healing was by freeing many survivors of certain sources of mental anguish, such as not knowing what happened to their loved ones during the genocide. Some survivors also articulated that they felt more whole because they felt more connected to their community after gacaca. The processes in the gacaca that affected individuals overlaps with the processes that helped determine the truth after the genocide. Survivors and suspects often found personal redemption through the truth. Gacaca allows survivors to use storytelling as a mechanism to reintegrate themselves into their community.<sup>135</sup> They were able to externalize their trauma in front of an empathetic audience and hear similar stories and overcome feelings of social isolation. Memorialization is extremely important for survivors because they often did not get to bury their loved ones. However, not all survivors believed that gacaca contributed to healing. The same NURC survey as quoted above showed that 91 percent of survivors believed that gacaca would intensify suffering and trauma.<sup>136</sup>

Suspects often expressed that they, like survivors, were looking to find peace of mind from gacaca. Perhaps more so than survivors, suspects express that gacaca is a necessary step to redeem themselves to reenter society. Those who confessed to

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<sup>135</sup> Joanna Quinn, *Reconciliation(s): Transitional Justice in Post conflict Societies* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014)

<sup>136</sup> NURC, 'Opinion Survey on Participation in Gacaca', Annex 3.

committing crimes expressed that gacaca acted as a process of redemption and atonement for them, and those who believe they were innocent only felt at peace when they were able to refute the allegations made against them in court. Academic commenters and NGO workers were critical of healing within gacaca as they believed that it did not contribute to the healing process sufficiently. Many believed that counselling sessions and workshops were necessary for survivors to work through their trauma, and that the open-air style of gacaca would aggravate trauma and a feeling of vulnerability and isolation. Additionally, while gacaca may begin the process of healing, it is a long process and all participants require ongoing assistance. Many participants believed that it is the community engagement that gacaca provides that is most valuable in their healing process.

The concept of forgiveness is a relatively new one in transitional justice, and a very controversial one. Many critics have argued that including forgiveness in the discussion surrounding transitional justice pushes transitional justice further from retributive and deterrent justice.<sup>137</sup> They believe that forgiveness entails a contrived forgetting of crimes on the part of victims and relinquishes the principles of accountability and redress for victims that are so core to transitional justice. However, Hannah Arendt has argued that forgiveness is a key process for post atrocity justice because it is the exact opposite of revenge. She believes that vengeance only fuels the cycle of violence.<sup>138</sup> Forgiveness in transitional justice does not refer to ignoring the

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<sup>137</sup> Neelke Doorn, "Forgiveness and Reconciliation in Transitional Justice Practices," *Centre for Ethics*, 2008.

<sup>138</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition: A Study of the Central Dilemmas Facing Modern Man* (Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959), 241.

crimes committed or intending to forget them, but rather, actively acknowledging them. Forgiveness does not close off the possibility that someone might seek redress. This is also where forgiveness differs from reconciliation, because while forgiveness suggests there would be a new relationship between the perpetrator and the survivor, nothing in the concept of forgiveness suggests that the two parties must reconcile. There are three main ways to explore forgiveness: what form forgiveness should take; by what processes it occurs through gacaca; and what motivates survivors to forgive.

Survivors were more hesitant about accepting the concept of forgiveness than suspects. As explained earlier, many suspects believe gacaca helped them redeem themselves and atone for their crimes. It was largely the suspects who believe that forgiveness is possible after the genocide. A minority of survivors agree, but the vast majority believe that they will never be able to forgive perpetrators. Some survivors agree that forgiveness is necessary, but believe that it is not a priority, compared with other concerns such as the truth. Forgiveness as a process is typically separated into categories of interpersonal, forgetting, and forgiveness from God.<sup>139</sup> Interpersonal includes individual to individual, and individual to group, in which suspects ask their community for forgiveness. The processes through which forgiveness takes place is typically during gacaca hearings. The process is a two way interaction which requires the active involvement of the survivor and the suspect. It involves the suspect confessing, apologizing and then requesting forgiveness. The survivor decides whether to forgive them based on the level of remorse and regret expressed. The emphasis on forgiveness

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<sup>139</sup>Clark, *The Gacaca Courts*, 26.

often simply means survivors accept the contrition of perpetrators and decide not to pursue any revenge or retribution against them. Academics have pointed out that there



Credit: Marco Longari/Agence France-Presse — Getty Images

*Figure 16: A Rwandan confronting an inmate in a session for detainees who were accused of crimes committed during the genocide.*

was a lot of discussion about how survivors have a right to retribution, based on the trauma they have endured.<sup>140</sup> Forgiveness means survivors allow perpetrators to rejoin their communities. However, like healing, it is clear that the

process of forgiveness may begin at gacaca, but it is a long process that requires continued dialogue.

The pursuit of truth in a post-conflict society is often framed as one that sacrifices the pursuit of justice. Policy makers often must decide between establishing a judicial institution that tries an individual without full knowledge of the truth, or some form of truth commission, which involves the promise of amnesty for the full disclosure of the truth. Scholars typically separate “legal truth” and “therapeutic truth,” when discussing post-conflict societies because some testimonies are given for a personal or emotional reason, rather than to achieve a pragmatic objective. Academics also set apart three processes through which the truth is found: truth telling, truth hearing, and truth

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<sup>140</sup>Clark, *The Gacaca Courts*, 43.

shaping.<sup>141</sup> Truth telling is the process through which participants detail their personal experiences. Truth hearing is the process by which participants internalize and react to that truth. Truth shaping is the process by which external parties interpret and repeat the testimony to achieve a secondary function. Some Rwandan commenters believe that the truth telling process was critical for people to confront the ethnic hatreds that led to the genocide. Non-Rwandan commenters usually strongly disagree that the truth telling process had any merits and argue that the truth telling at gacaca was primarily a ‘top-down’ process, by which the government imposed a series of legal and historical truths upon an unwilling population to encourage punitiveness against the Hutu; and second, that public testimony opposes a pervasive Rwandan culture of silence and secrecy and thus violates embedded social norms.<sup>142</sup> Furthermore, while most commenters and academics agree that gacaca facilitated the pursuit of truth far more than any other institution could have, there are many flaws with the system. One is that, since there was such a demand for the truth and such a focus on confessions as a path to forgiveness, a great deal of suspects confessed to crimes less severe than they committed. Some communities have organized and abide by a code of silence before the gacaca courts. Because of this, many survivors believed that truth would not be restored to them by gacaca. The accused and their families were also distrustful of the gacaca process. They believed that the testimonies would be used for something other than to serve justice for the genocide. This was not an unfounded concern. In some communities, genocide

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<sup>141</sup> Clark, *The Gacaca Courts*, 188.

<sup>142</sup> Bert Ingelaere, “Does the Truth Pass across the Fire without Burning?’ Locating the Short Circuit in Rwanda's Gacaca Courts.” *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 47, no. 04, Dec. 2009, p. 507., doi:10.1017/s0022278x0999005x.



survivors conspired to fabricate testimony against certain people. This was often motivated by a desire for revenge, in which they felt sure that certain people were involved and wanted to make sure they were punished, or to settle financial or land related disputes. These cases were problematic because they went against Gacaca Law, but it was very difficult to tell who was lying.<sup>143</sup>

Gacaca is generally said to have been successful at achieving a fair degree of justice in the communities affected. This is typically a form of restorative justice. While gacaca was largely successful in terms of addressing the genocide and the crimes committed, to the greatest extent that it was able to, Hutus were largely mistreated. There are three ways in which the gacaca courts failed to deliver justice: no accountability for RPF crimes, unfair trials, and inhumane treatment in prisons. Gacaca is often viewed as the victor's justice. The Gacaca Law states that gacaca only has jurisdiction over crimes related to the genocide, and therefore atrocities committed by the RPF were largely ignored. Several sources described indiscriminate killings by RPF soldiers, and summary executions of those suspected to have taken part in the genocide. This violates the UDHR's articles 10 and 11, the right to a fair trial and the right to be perceived as innocent until proven guilty. The RPF carried out tens of thousands of killings, and mostly without evidence. They believed that they were killing those responsible for the genocide, but it is clear that most of the Hutus that played a large part in organizing the

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<sup>143</sup> Article 10 of the 2004 Gacaca Law provides that judges cannot decide cases in which a "serious enmity" exists with the accused or where "any other relation [is] considered incompatible with the honest person's independence."

genocide had already fled by then. The RPF was largely murdering civilians who had been coerced or forced into the killings.

Gacaca also had several basic violations of the right to a fair trial.<sup>144</sup> The UDHR explains the right to a fair trial in Article 10, “Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.”<sup>145</sup> Some of the shortcomings of gacaca in terms of ensuring a fair trial include: limitations on an accused person's ability to effectively defend themselves; flawed decision-making leading to allegations of miscarriages of justice; cases based on what appeared to be trumped-up charges, linked, in some cases, to the government's wish to silence critics or to settle disputes between neighbors and even relatives; judges' or officials' intimidation of defense witnesses; corruption of judges to obtain the desired verdict; and other serious procedural irregularities.<sup>146</sup> Gacaca proceedings do not follow these laws and the accused have no right to counsel at any point through the proceedings. The government has strongly defended its decision by saying that the number of accused made counsel for all impossible, lawyers would bias untrained judges and the community-based system was enough to guarantee a fair trial. However, this was untrue—based on previous paragraphs which discussed the prevalence of lying in these courts. The government also could have guaranteed alternative forms of legal assistance to ensure a fair trial. There was

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<sup>144</sup> “Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” *United Nations*, United Nations, [www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/](http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/). (Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.)

<sup>145</sup> “Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” *United Nations*.

<sup>146</sup> Dennis B Klein, *Societies Emerging from Conflict: the Aftermath of Atrocity* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017) 100 and Rwandan Constitution, art. 18, articles 64 and 96; Genocide Law, art. 36. See also ICCPR, art. 14; ACHPR, art. 7.

significant international support for this notion, but the Rwandan government did not act. Additionally, the fundamental right of innocence until proven guilty was not always respected during gacaca proceedings.<sup>147</sup> Furthermore, the UN Human Rights Committee states that public bodies should not prejudge outcomes of trials.<sup>148</sup> This was largely ignored by the Rwandan government, that constantly announced names of people they believed to be guilty over the radio before their trial results were announced. Also, government officials often used accusations of “revisionism,” “negationism,” and “gross minimization of genocide,” all of which are proscribed by the Rwandan Constitution and a 2003 law punishing genocide—as tools to suppress independent opinion and criticism and pursue political opponents.<sup>149</sup> This often occurred in high profile cases, especially when those involved were government critics. This created an environment that biased the results of the trial.

Fair trial rights of an accused include the right to be informed of the accusations against him or her and the right to have sufficient time to prepare a defense.<sup>150</sup> In gacaca cases many of those accused learned the nature of the allegations against them during the trial. They did not receive the legally prescribed notice or were not given enough information about the charges pending against them to prepare an adequate defense. Furthermore, the gacaca jurisdiction must deliver a formal summons to any person asked

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<sup>147</sup> Rwandan Constitution, art. 19; Rwandan Code of Criminal Procedure, art. 44; ICCPR, art. 14; ACHPR, art. 7.

<sup>148</sup> UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment No.32, Article 14: Right to equality for courts and tribunals and to a fair trial.

<sup>149</sup> “Justice Compromised | The Legacy of Rwanda's Community-Based Gacaca Courts.” *Human Rights Watch*, 19 Oct. 2015, [www.hrw.org/report/2011/05/31/justice-compromised/legacy-rwandas-community-based-gacaca-courts#page](http://www.hrw.org/report/2011/05/31/justice-compromised/legacy-rwandas-community-based-gacaca-courts#page).

<sup>150</sup> Rwandan Constitution, art. 18; Rwandan Criminal Procedure Code, arts 64, 127-28; ICCPR, art. 14. The right to a defense is also declared in Article 7 of the ACHPR.

to appear at a trial.<sup>151</sup> Human Rights Watch documented many cases in which summonses were delivered less than seven days before the hearing, which prejudiced the ability of the accused to prepare a defense.<sup>152</sup> Summons were given late, or not delivered at all. Sometimes, those accused had no idea that they had a case pending against them, and in other instances they did not know the date of the trial and so were declared guilty by default. Often, they did not have adequate information about the charges against the accused and so the accused were not able to prepare a defense. In response to this, the accused often asked for trials to be postponed so they could gather documents and prepare their defense and were denied. If a defense was prepared, they were often not allowed to present one. The right to present a defense is implied in Rwandan law and exists in international law.<sup>153</sup> Witnesses were sometimes intimidated and prevented from showing up. Gacaca courts also sometimes did not allow the accused to confront or interact with witnesses that were accusing them of crimes.

The ICCPR guarantees an accused the right “not to be compelled to testify against himself or to confess guilt.”<sup>154</sup> The 2004 Gacaca Law does not guarantee this right, and its preamble states that all Rwandans have a legal duty to testify.<sup>155</sup> Article 29 goes on to say that “[a]ny person who omits or refuses to testify on what he/she has seen or on what he/she knows, as well as the one who makes a slanderous denunciation, shall be prosecuted by the Gacaca Court which makes the statement of it.” In this case, Gacaca

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<sup>151</sup> 2004 Gacaca Law, art. 82.

<sup>152</sup> “Justice Compromised” *Human Rights Watch*.

<sup>153</sup> Code of Criminal Procedure, arts. 54-63, 144, 146, 180, 205; ICCPR, art. 14; ACHPR, art. 7.

<sup>154</sup> ICCPR, Article 14 (3)(g). This right is not guaranteed by the ACHPR.

<sup>155</sup> 2004 Gacaca Law, preamble.

Law directly conflicts with international law. This is one of the conflicts between truth and justice. A body only committed to justice would not force participants to testify, but gacaca must balance the obligations of both. In addition, the UN Human Rights Committee has emphasized the right to be present at one's own trial.<sup>156</sup> Rwanda allowed trials in *absentia*.<sup>157</sup> These trials are not necessarily illegal. They are only problematic within the context that gacaca trials have failed to protect so many other basic human rights. Many of these trials have been politically motivated and designed to ensure that the accused are not present and so unable to defend themselves. Furthermore, Rwandan, and international law guarantees the right not to be arbitrarily arrested or detained.<sup>158</sup> Immediately following the genocide, tens of thousands of individuals were arrested on the basis of unconfirmed accusations and detained for prolonged periods without any form of due process. By 1998, the prison population reached around 130,000, with detainees held in life-threatening conditions. This is also inhumane and degrading treatment, which is illegal under many sources international law.<sup>159</sup> Furthermore, gacaca judges were not trained or qualified, and so their ability to carry out a fair trial vastly differs from judges in formal legal institutions.

The ability of gacaca to administer justice can largely be assessed based on the principle of a right to remedy.<sup>160</sup> This states that: "Everyone has the right to an effective

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<sup>156</sup> Human Rights Committee General Comments, art. 14, para. 11, [www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/0/bb722416a295f264c12563ed0049dfbd](http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/0/bb722416a295f264c12563ed0049dfbd) (accessed August 31, 2010). Article 14: "When exceptionally for justified reasons trials in *absentia* are held, strict observance of the rights of the defence is all the more necessary."

<sup>157</sup> Rwandan Code of Criminal Procedure, arts. 155-156.

<sup>158</sup> Rwandan Constitution, art. 18; ICCPR, art. 9; ACHPR, art. 5.

<sup>159</sup> ICCPR Article 7, 10 and The European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

<sup>160</sup> UDHR Article 8.

remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.” Gacaca certainly, to a great extent, allowed Tutsi participants to find justice. Of course, this varied from community to community, but by in large, Tutsi participants were positively affected by gacaca. The same cannot be said for Hutu participants. Unfortunately, gacaca was never built to find justice for its Hutu participants, and so by its own aims, succeeded in providing justice. However, by an international standard, the gacaca courts largely failed in terms of providing a right to effective remedy.

Reconciliation was interpreted by the Rwandan population in an individualistic fashion. The population articulated that reconciliation was about emotional and personal issues. It was largely face to face interactions, and gacaca facilitated this type of interaction. Furthermore, the earlier discussion of peace, healing and forgiveness all contribute to the concept of reconciliation. Personal healing and forgiveness between individuals contribute to a larger culture of reconciliation in Rwanda. Furthermore, gacaca punishments largely had the accused working in communities and working alongside survivors to build trust. This is a long process and could have only been started by gacaca courts.

The gacaca court system was successful in its pragmatic aims, processing the massive backlog of genocide cases, improving living conditions in the jails, and facilitating economic development. In terms of its six objectives of peace, healing, forgiveness, truth, justice, and reconciliation, gacaca failed to protect several basic rights along the way. The RPF can be held accountable for the violations of these rights because

it seemed that they could have been easily protected if it were politically advantageous to do so. The Gacaca Law mandate should have included crimes committed against the Hutu population to better facilitate justice and reconciliation. Furthermore, the RPF led government should have ensured that there were supplementary programs in place to facilitate healing and justice more effectively.

But even with these shortcomings, the Rwandan government, by so actively pursuing the justice process, regardless of ulterior motives, in many ways broke the cycle of the victim/perpetrator. While Hutus should have been treated significantly better after the genocide, they were largely integrated back into their communities, except for those facing trial abroad. Had the RPF chosen to take military action against the Hutu, and follow a campaign of oppression, the legacy that formed would have been the one to always exist: victim turned perpetrators when politically expedient.

## **Conclusion: The Thematic Approach as It Relates to US Mass Shootings**

*"Memory, stay faithful to this moment, which will never return."*

Suji Kwock Kim

### **Disenfranchisement, Power Threat Theory, Political Elite Influence and “America As Enemy” in The Context of Mass Shootings**

Exploring the historical context of incidences of collective violence may allow us to prevent similar political crises and violence from breaking out in those regions, but the frameworks adopted here can also be applied more widely to other forms of collective violence. Because this approach does not take ethnicity or race to be the primary drivers of violence, it can be applied to many forms of violence that do not have a clear driver or do not isolate victims based on a specific identity group. For example, mass shootings in the US do not on the surface have many similarities to the case studies explored in the thesis. Mass shootings are not united by an ethnic or racial target, and unlike the case studies analyzed, are not conducted by a specific group, but rather by an individual acting on behalf of a group. The discourse around US mass shootings often point to the easy accessibility to guns as a primary motivator of mass shootings. However, this chapter’s analysis seeks to explain the cultural issues that lead to mass shootings, although the mass shooting rate is undoubtedly exacerbated by poor gun control.

The first framework, power/threat theory, applies well to mass shootings in the political and personal sense. The mass shooters often feel disenfranchised and on the fringes of society. The Violence Project developed a database of mass shooters and their life histories through interviews and social media and discovered that a vast majority of mass shooters experience childhood trauma, mental illness and then reach a crisis



point.<sup>161</sup> The childhood trauma was often a precursor to mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety, thought disorders or suicidality. Most shooters then reached a clear crisis point before the shooting – for workplace shooters it was often a change in job status, and for other shooters it was often personal rejection or change in a relationship status. These men clearly felt isolated and dejected. Politically, many shooters’ manifestos speak to the “great replacement” or “white genocide” theory. The great replacement theory was first coined by the French writer Renaud Camus.<sup>162</sup> The concern is that one people would be replaced by another. According to Camus, the identity of the new group is less important than the process of replacement. This idea of ‘replacement’ is similar to the power/threat framework: the concern that a marginalized population is gaining relative to and at the cost of the more powerful group. White mass shooters, like white Tulsans, worry that their position as part of a hegemonic power structure is under threat. Mass shooters obviously do not credit Camus with the idea, but his term has taken on a life of its own in the international white nationalist discourse. Of course, mass shooters rarely defend their ideas as in terms of a desire that their group maintain its hegemonic status. They talk about their whiteness as another type of diversity that must be protected – their racist ideology hidden within language of the progressive left.

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<sup>161</sup>“Mass Shooting Statistics Data,” The Violence Project, accessed May 10, 2020, <https://www.theviolenceproject.org/methodology/>. This database follows the Congressional Research Service definition: “a multiple homicide incident in which four or more victims are murdered with firearms—not including the offender(s)—within one event, and at least some of the murders occurred in a public location or locations in close geographical proximity (e.g., a workplace, school, restaurant, or other public settings), and the murders are not attributable to any other underlying criminal activity or commonplace circumstance (armed robbery, criminal competition, insurance fraud, argument, or romantic triangle).”

<sup>162</sup>Lauretta Charlton, “What Is the Great Replacement?,” *The New York Times*, August 6, 2019, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/06/us/politics/grand-replacement-explainer.html>.

The El Paso shooter's manifesto disparages both Republicans and Democrats.<sup>163</sup>

The manifesto attacks Democrats for the growing Hispanic population and for facilitating the great replacement. The author also worried that automation would limit job opportunities and believes that immigrants should not be allowed to enter the US while job opportunities are unstable. He criticizes Republicans for allowing corporate interests to control the government and worries that corporations are destroying the planet with their greed. The author clearly feels disenfranchised and voiceless in the political climate and sees threats on every side.<sup>164</sup> Many manifestos contain a similar language: they talk about ethnic replacement, obsess over white birth rates and a "Hispanic invasion" at the southern border.<sup>165</sup> These manifestos do not say as much about the individual shooters as they do about the culture that created them. In a climate in which white men feel disenfranchised and under threat of extinction, violence seems to be the only route by which to make an impact, and rhetoric from political elites emboldens them.

The ideologies mentioned in these manifestos are not new, but they have become mainstream ideas rather than a fringe ideology. Trump's administration has given a platform to anti-immigrant ideas and created a social and political environment in which ideas of white nationalism has institutional backing. Trump provides a platform to the more extreme of the ideas, with comments like "You had some very bad people in that group. But you also had people that were very fine people, on both sides," when asked about the presence of KKK and Nazi symbols in the Charlottesville riots, however, many

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<sup>163</sup>Tim Arango, Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs, and Katie Benner, "Minutes Before El Paso Killing, Hate-Filled Manifesto Appears Online," *The New York Times*, August 3, 2019, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/03/us/patrick-crusius-el-paso-shooter-manifesto.html>.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup>"Understanding The Statements Of Mass Shooters," NPR.org, accessed May 10, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2019/08/07/748972024/understanding-the-statements-of-mass-shooters>.

of these ideas pervade intellectual circles as well.<sup>166</sup> Concerns about the future of white America can be found in the pages of the New York times and in best-selling books. Charles Murray talks about how the new white ‘lower class’ is increasingly disenfranchised and disillusioned.<sup>167</sup> J.D. Vance explains the resurgence of outsider politics and the fears of the white underclass in *Hillbilly Elegy*.<sup>168</sup>

Even though the shooters seem to act alone, they are very much a part of a collective. In the 1980s and 1990s, before the internet solidified the movement, labels of ‘lone wolf’ made sense. Now, these far-right movements share ideas, leadership, and inspirations across new internet platforms.<sup>169</sup> The manifestos clearly suggest that they are playing off each other. The El Paso shooter referenced the New Zealand shooter. The Poway synagogue shooter drew inspiration from the New Zealand shooter and the Pittsburgh synagogue shooter.<sup>170</sup> A few decades ago, individuals were empowered to act on their own since there was not a centralized movement – but now, the internet has created a virtual world that gives the threat of a “transnational, global white-supremacist terrorist movement” a forum and a community.<sup>171</sup> Beyond the community, these shooters seek notoriety and build on each other’s actions. Each shooter seems to want to outdo the last. Christopher Picciolini, a reformed white nationalist who now works to de-radicalize

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<sup>166</sup>District of Columbia 1100 Connecticut Ave NW Suite 1300B Washington and Dc 20036, “PolitiFact - In Context: Donald Trump’s ‘Very Fine People on Both Sides’ Remarks (Transcript),” @politifact, accessed May 10, 2020, <https://www.politifact.com/article/2019/apr/26/context-trumps-very-fine-people-both-sides-remarks/>.

<sup>167</sup>Charles Murray, *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960-2010* (Crown Forum, 2012).

<sup>168</sup>J.D. Vance, *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and a Culture in Crisis* (Harper, 2016).

<sup>169</sup>Yara Bayoumy and Kathy Gilsinan, “A Reformed White Nationalist Says the Worst Is Yet to Come,” *The Atlantic*, August 6, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2019/08/conversation-christian-picciolini/595543/>.

<sup>170</sup>Arango, “Minutes Before El Paso Killing, Hate-Filled Manifesto Appears Online.”

<sup>171</sup> Bayoumy and Gilsinan, “A Reformed White Nationalist Says the Worst Is Yet to Come.”

extremists, explains that not only are they trying to outdo each other, but they are also trying to outdo Timothy McVeigh.<sup>172</sup> The Sandy Hook shooter had studied the Columbine massacre and many others. The shooter who killed 50 at the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Florida had studied a previous attack in San Bernardino, California – both shooters cited radical Islam as a justification. Psychologists argue that mass shooters often see themselves as a part of a brotherhood of resentful and isolated young men and previous terrorists are often idols.<sup>173</sup> The Columbine massacre, especially, acts as a blueprint for mass shooters.<sup>174</sup> It created an entire subculture of violent people infatuated with Columbine and shooters using it as a blueprint for their mass murder plans.<sup>175</sup>

The other collective at play is civilians and their collective sense of security. Mass shootings are terrorism, and terrorism relies on theater as a way of inciting fear. Terrorism hopes to create political change by creating an atmosphere of fear rather than causing material damage. Terrorists have neither military ability nor power but hope to affect the balance of power. As impossible of a mission as it seems, it is often successful, especially in the mass shooting context. By affecting civilians' sense of collective security, mass shootings erode American democracy. Terrorism targets public spaces. Mass shooters target malls, concerts, food festivals, bars, schools, and cinemas. By doing

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<sup>172</sup> Bayoumy and Gilsinan, "A Reformed White Nationalist Says the Worst Is Yet to Come."

<sup>173</sup> Benedict Carey, "What Experts Know About People Who Commit Mass Shootings," *The New York Times*, August 5, 2019, sec. Health, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/05/health/mass-shootings-mental-health.html>.

<sup>174</sup> Valerie Strauss, "Perspective | School Shootings Didn't Start in 1999 at Columbine. Here's Why That Disaster Became a Blueprint for Other Killers and Created the 'Columbine Generation'," *Washington Post*, April 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2019/04/18/school-shootings-didnt-start-columbine-heres-why-that-disaster-became-blueprint-other-killers-created-columbine-generation/>.

<sup>175</sup> Jenni Raitanen and Atte Oksanen, "Global Online Subculture Surrounding School Shootings," *American Behavioral Scientist*, January 30, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764218755835>.

this, they destroy civilians' sense of safety in public spaces and communal gatherings. Fundamental common experiences such as eating, socializing, or learning become experiences of panic and death.<sup>176</sup> When shootings take place at community events or within a neighborhood, they erode the sense of home. A democratic society does not function well with increased surveillance and security, and without spontaneous socialization and public gatherings.

### **Current Narratives as They Contribute to Legacy Formation**

Ensuring coverage of terrorism is a key part of the terrorist strategy because it allows them to broadcast terror far beyond their immediate victims. It is a mutually beneficial relationship; the media need drama and visuals and the terrorists need a platform. It is journalistically routine to name mass killers and often important in order to apprehend them. But once they are captured, many organizations argue that their identities should not be sensationalized. Since some attackers are motivated by a desire for notoriety, campaigns like "Don't Name Them"<sup>177</sup> and "No Notoriety"<sup>178</sup> push media outlets to avoid naming terrorists. These strategies are endorsed by the FBI, who argue that mass shootings have a contagion effect.<sup>179</sup> If the news cycle continues to immortalize mass shooters, the cycle of young isolated men idolizing them continues. By making sure these terrorists will not be famous, the media removes a powerful incentive. These campaigns also seek to focus coverage on victims and heroes. This makes sense as a

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<sup>176</sup>"Mass Shootings Are Destroying Our Sense of Public Space," The Trace, August 4, 2019, <https://www.thetrace.org/2019/08/mass-shootings-are-destroying-our-sense-of-public-space/>.

<sup>177</sup> "The Reasons," DontNameThem.org, accessed May 5, 2020, <https://www.dontnamethem.org>.

<sup>178</sup>"<https://nonotoriety.com/>," NO NOTORIETY, accessed May 5, 2020, <https://nonotoriety.com/>.

<sup>179</sup>"Insights on School Shootings," FBI, accessed May 10, 2020, [https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2006/october/school\\_shoot100606](https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2006/october/school_shoot100606).

journalistic practice, but also from a historical lens. An important part of this thesis is the argument that historical memories should make sure victims of violence are not as marginalized historically as they were in their lifetimes. The current narratives surrounding mass shootings will create a legacy - the same way the coverage of the Columbine shooter created a legacy. Unlike the historical case studies in this thesis, mass shootings are an ongoing crisis. They are also motivated by historical myths and ideas that their identities are under threat, but rather than focusing on proper memorialization, we have an opportunity to change the course of the legacy of mass shootings to prevent current violence.

Racism, race-based islamophobia, and anti-immigrant sentiment is often a primary part of mass shooter's manifestos. But while these are foundational factors, we cannot assume that they are the main motivators. Many Americans harbor similar thoughts, and yet only a minority resort to violence. The same logic applies with gun control. While gun control would undoubtedly limit violence, it would not end it. Terrorists committed to violence find a way to carry out violence. Mass shooters are a group of isolated and angry young men who have no outlet for their frustrations beyond violence. Many factors play a role in this, from ethnic hatred and racism to mental illness and from political elites' rhetoric to popular polarization in the US, but many of these factors coalesce into a larger feeling of being at threat.

### **Overlooked Themes**

An important part of making sure that current narratives do not feed into future violence is making sure that these narratives do not overlook key factors. Out of the 171

mass shootings in the US since 1966, 3 have been conducted by women. Many of the men are described with similar language: isolated, troubled, angry.<sup>180</sup> There is no significant analysis of gender in the discourse of mass shootings. Democrats obsess over gun control, and Republicans obsess over mental health – but no one seems to focus on the third glaring commonality in mass shooters. Even the Violence Project, that analyzes a database of 171 mass shooters and discovers four commonalities, ignores gender as a factor. The four commonalities are childhood trauma, a crisis point, a script and access.<sup>181</sup> While mass shooters clearly feel threatened in terms of political disenfranchisement, it is important to note that their masculinity is often also at threat. Eric Madfis coined the term “triple privilege” to describe how mass shooters often share elements of white entitlement, toxic heterosexual masculinity and anxieties about middle-class instability.<sup>182</sup> All three of these identities concern privilege, and fit well into the power/threat framework because they are not at threat in absolute terms but other groups are relatively gaining. Madfis also argues that societal pressures lead to women internalizing anger while men are taught to externalize it through acts of aggression.

Masculinity plays a key role in violence. This thesis overlooked questions of gender in specific cases of violence for the sake of brevity, but it is important to have a gendered understanding of violence. Women are often relegated to the sides during

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<sup>180</sup>Monica Hesse, “Perspective | We Need to Talk about Why Mass Shooters Are Almost Always Men,” *Washington Post*, accessed May 10, 2020, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/we-need-to-talk-about-why-mass-shooters-are-almost-always-men/2019/08/05/dec0c624-b700-11e9-a091-6a96e67d9cce\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/we-need-to-talk-about-why-mass-shooters-are-almost-always-men/2019/08/05/dec0c624-b700-11e9-a091-6a96e67d9cce_story.html).

<sup>181</sup>“Mass Shooting Statistics Data,” The Violence Project, accessed May 10, 2020, <https://www.theviolenceproject.org/methodology/>.

<sup>182</sup> Eric Madfis, “Triple Entitlement and Homicidal Anger: An Exploration of the Intersectional Identities of American Mass Murderers,” *Men and Masculinities* 17 (March 2014), <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X14523432>.

studies of violence, or simply acknowledged as victims of sexual violence. But women cannot be pushed into the category of victims as men are acknowledged as fighters and politicians. Gender is also important to acknowledge because masculinity is often a crucial motivator of violence. Militarization often relies on men believing that they are defending their manhood.<sup>183</sup> Their masculinity becomes dependent on their performance as soldiers. Curiosity is an important part of this scholarship – soldiering and military activity is often discussed as a naturally manly activity, but, in fact, it takes significant mental energy to engage in the activity of constructing it as masculine. These persuasive strategies are explicit and often backed by coercion. In most wars, the government embarks on an intentional strategy to create gender roles. Huge marketing budgets are allocated to create a narrative of shaming men who do not want to be soldiers, and convincing women it is their maternal duty to support the men from home. Sexual violence often gets constructed as inevitable when it is also often a very intentional strategy by which to bring masculinity into play for militiamen.

Christopher Browning examines the role of comradeship and group dynamics in violence and how group pressures led men to kill defenseless Jewish people.<sup>184</sup> These ties of comradeship were heavily masculinized. The concern was that their fellow men would stop thinking that they were ‘tough.’ Nationalist propaganda was not enough to transform these men into killers, and neither was a culture of masculinity alone. It was an intensely purposeful strategy of building relationships infused with ideas of masculinity and tying

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<sup>183</sup> Cynthia Enloe, “The Curious Feminist: Searching for Women in a New Age of Empire,” in *The Curious Feminist: Searching for Women in a New Age of Empire* (University of California Press, 2004), 108.

<sup>184</sup> Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (Harper Perrenial, 1998), 185.



these men's ability to kill to the respect of their peers. Lee Ann Fuji examines how group ties convinced more Hutu to join killing bands on a local level because it was more difficult to defy the group than follow along. A lot of this was likely influenced by ethnic ties, and concerns over betraying their fellow Hutu, but how much of it became a question of toughness and masculinity?<sup>185</sup> During anti-Jewish pogroms, Nazis were often convinced to stop pogroms by Jewish women who gave them "soap and coffee" and then were "put to work."<sup>186</sup> In the Punjab massacres at the time of the Partition, tales of Hindu women being violated by Muslim men were a powerful motivator in pushing Hindu men to violence.<sup>187</sup> For Hindu men, their role was masculinized as they were cast as protectors of their religion while Hindu women were simultaneously not only cast as victims, but the weak link.

Gender thus plays a significant role in questions of ethnic nationalism.

Nationalism allows women to find a place in the public sphere, but nationalism also casts them as symbols of a violated nation. Clear from the example of Hindu women, ethnic nationalism often casts women as patriarchally constructed symbols. Women are rarely real participants of nationalist movements, partly because nationalism is a movement based on the idea of belonging, which automatically creates an insider/outsider dynamic. Nationalist movements are also typically conceived from masculinized memory.<sup>188</sup> Women are rarely looked on to understand the history of a colonized people, even though they experience multi-layered oppression.

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<sup>185</sup>Fuji, *Killing Neighbors*, 154.

<sup>186</sup>Kopstein and Wittenberg, *Intimate Violence*, 76.

<sup>187</sup>Hajari, *Midnight's Furies*, 58.

<sup>188</sup>Enloe, *The Curious Feminist*, 43.

Theology plays an important role in issues of collective violence as well. Violence, especially terrorist violence, requires a great deal of internal conviction and some legitimization from a respected authority. Often, this authority comes from political elites. But sometimes individuals look to God and theology for justifications for their violence. All religions have been used to justify violence in some ways and individuals are able to find theological justifications for their causes. In the case of Timothy McVeigh, he sought revenge against what he thought to be a tyrannical government. McVeigh saw around himself a world at war, and believed Christians have a moral duty to reassert the dominion of God over all things. This is another way in which religious terrorism is collective violence rather than an individual acting on their own. McVeigh saw himself as a soldier in a holy cosmic war.<sup>189</sup> He was simply making one move in a larger Christian war against a secular and tyrannical state. Islamic theological justifications operate along similar lines. It is a question of a cosmic fight against apostasy – and so one must use any means necessary.<sup>190</sup> With theological justifications, the argument depends on the idea that the religion or group is under threat. With Islamic justifications, the threat is often Western cultural imperialism. Like Timothy McVeigh and many mass shooters, some terrorists with Islamic theological justifications employ an ideology of “America as enemy.”<sup>191</sup> More than any other country, the US is often villainized as a foe. For domestic terrorists, this often means they target symbols of American culture or society – a culture and society they perceive to have manipulated the

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<sup>189</sup>Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 36.

<sup>190</sup>Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 82.

<sup>191</sup>Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God* 181.

history of their region. Terrorists from abroad often see the US's economic and political reach as an agent of colonialism, and so see their violence as a mechanism of self-defense.

Discussions of theology as it relates to collective violence also require a gendered lens. Movements that resort to religious terrorism tend to empower marginal men to carry out violence. The men are typically part of socially/economically unstable groups that need a sense of purpose. Men, more so than women, gain a sense of purpose and identity through their public personas and so fears of impending marginality generate more anxiety. Right wing religious movements often also rely on a crisis of sexuality to motivate young men. Women's liberty is seen as a threat to honor, a question of "sex out of place," and a loss of control.<sup>192</sup>

### **Future Study**

This thesis aimed to understand why civilians would take up arms against their friends and neighbors, and why violence of this nature seems to constantly repeat itself. It came from questions surrounding the ethics of remembrance and memorialization. It is not a complete analysis of the complex and nuanced motivators at play in moments of crisis and statelessness. Ideally, this analysis would include more theory on nationalism and colonialism and analyze theoretical frameworks of collective violence alongside questions of nationalism and colonialism, with a feminist lens. Further study on this topic would not only require a broader lens in terms of theory, but also a narrower lens for the case studies.

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<sup>192</sup>Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 194.

Ethnic violence and racial violence follow very different scripts, and to fully understand one, it needs to be explored in depth without the other. Furthermore, each case study would need a far more in depth analysis of geographic and spatial factors. Each case study mentioned in this chapter spans a geographic landscape, and three of them are moments of collective violence made up of many individual outbreaks of violence. The spatial dynamics at play in the urban landscape of Tulsa are different than the spatial dynamics of rural Rwanda. Perhaps the urban landscape motivated people towards vandalism and away from murder, whereas the rural Rwandan landscape did the opposite. There are also many questions that can only be answered by examining the minutiae of specific massacres. The Lviv pogrom was different than the Boryslav one, the Calcutta killings different from the Noakhali massacres.

In many ways, this thesis tries to step away from a bird's eye view of violence to better understand the dynamics at play. In some ways, it falls into a similar trap. Without examining specific and localized causes for violence and local politics as they affected group dynamics, it is not possible to fully explain how civilians were motivated towards violence. But in many other ways, it succeeds in its aim with its scope. Historical writing that presupposes events as inevitabilities misses how processes are intentionally constructed to marginalize and victimize certain people. Questions of inevitability often amount to lazy storytelling, allowing global systems like patriarchy or colonialism to become fixed, rather than acknowledging that they continuously evolve and modernize to adapt to oppress the same groups. Our remembrance affects whether these groups will continue to be marginalized, or not.

“What is a child?

A quiet between two bombardments.”

“Deaf Republic” by Ilya Kaminsky

“History is not the same thing as memory. Memory is the way we put history to rest,  
especially histories of suffering, trauma and victimization.”

Achilles Joseph Mbembe

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