

Assignment 2 - HPHP4009 - Student Number 1902832

Q. What are the main characteristics that define “Genocide”? Your answer should play due attention to the Un Convention of 1948.

In this essay I will seek to identify the main characteristics that define “Genocide”, and the characteristics that separate Genocide from other crimes such as mass murder, crimes against humanity, war crimes and ethnic cleansing. I will look at the origin of the word as defined by Raphael Lemkin and look at the discourse of genocide and its definitions and relate this to the definition of Genocide as detailed in the UN Convention on the Prevention of Genocide in 1948.

In order to provide some clarity; as genocide is a contested word; I will base my argument around the Armenian Genocide 1914 to 1923, the Nazi Genocide of Gypsies and Jews and the Rwandan Genocide of 1994. In my essay I will draw heavily on the works of Destexhe and Naimark as they take differing views on the discourse of genocide. Destexhe (1995) states “there are only three examples of genocide during the course of the 20th century; that of the Armenians by the Turks in 1915, the Jews and Gypsies by the Nazis and in 1994 that of the theTutsis by Hutu racists”. Naimark (2017) takes a wider definition of genocide but both agree that these three instances are genocide.

The word genocide has entered our everyday vocabulary. In the past 7 days the BBC News (2020) have broadcast two separate news reports which mentioned the word genocide. Firstly on 4th of October 2020 which referenced “cultural genocide” in a report concerning the Uighurs in Xinjiang province in China. Secondly in an interview with the Armenian Prime Minister on the 7th of October 2020 in relation to the current conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan where the Prime Minister of Armenia stated “should the Azerbaijani Armed Forces succeed, it would mean genocide for the Armenians of Nagorno- Karabakh”. These examples demonstrate how the word genocide has entered our everyday discourse and vocabulary. Destexhe (1995) has argued “the term genocide has progressively lost its original meaning..... it is a victim of its own success”.

The word “genocide” was first used by Raphaël Lemkin in his book “Axis Rule in Occupied Europe” in 1944. It is made up of the Greek word for race or tribe, “*genos*” and the Latin word for killing, “*cide*”. He originated the word in response to the Nazi policies of extermination of the Jewish people and other historical instances of destruction of peoples and groups especially the “Armenian genocide” from 1914 to 1923.

Raphäel Lemkin Lobbied the United Nations extensively and it was a primarily a result of his lobbying that the United Nations passed the convention on the prevention of genocide in 1946.

The definition of a crime of genocide eventually adopted was a result of a process of negotiation and The convention reflects the compromise reached by the member states of the United Nations when the convention was being drafted and adopted.

“In the convention genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy in whole or in part a national ethnic racial or religious group as such.

- a. killing members of the group
- b. causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group.
- c. deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about it's physical destruction in whole or in part
- d. imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group.
- e. forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”

(United Nations 1948)

Article 1 of the convention established the Crime of Genocide could take place in the context of an armed conflict, international or national, but also in the context of a peaceful situation. It also established the obligation on signatories of the convention to prevent and punish the crime of genocide.

Lemkin had lobbied that political groups and systemic cultural destruction should also be included but these were not included in the convention. The convention therefore established a legal definition under international law that was narrower than Lemkin intended.

Ever since the adoption of the convention it has been criticised due to the difficulties of applying the convention to specific cases. Objections include, the convention is too narrow, it excludes targeted political and social groups, proving Intent is extremely difficult, the difficulty of measuring in part and establishing how many deaths equals genocide.

Consequently historians and others have put forward alternative definitions as well as the word developing its own colloquial meaning. Academics, historians and others have identified events from history and since 1948 that may be categorised as genocide. This has created an active discourse (especially since the Bosnian War and the Rwandan Genocide in the 1990s) as to what events from history and since 1948 are Genocide and what are the characteristics of genocide.

Although “there is no consensus”(Schaller 2011), this essay will be based on looking at the Armenian Genocide, the Jewish and Gypsy Genocide of the Nazis, and the Rwandan Genocide in 1994 as there is a general consensus that these three instances fall within the category of Genocide. I will therefore consider each of the characteristics in turn.

1. Intent. The genocide convention specifies “intend to destroy, in whole or in part” is necessary. This is a point which many people have criticised the convention due to the difficulty in proving Intent. For Destexhe (1995) the “specificity of genocide does not arise from the extent of a killings but solely from the intention of the destruction of a group” and states “that genocide can be distinguished from other crimes due to the motivation that lies behind it” (Destexhe 1995). In relation to the Nazis the Wannsee conference held in January 1942 discussed the final solution of the Jewish question, provides incontrovertible proof of Nazi Intent as well the construction and operation of the extermination camps themselves. Some historians have used the lack of a similar conference or documents in relation to Armenia as evidence for it not being genocide, “it seems reasonable to question the validity of the referring to the Armenian tragedy genocide” (Gunter 2013). both Destexhe and Naimark provide extensive evidence of intent as demonstrated by the participation of all levels of the state both in Armenia and in Rwanda and from primary sources from the time. In Rwanda “the intention was to systematically eliminate every single Tutsi” (Destexhe 1995).
2. Victims have to be part of an identified group. In all three genocides the Jews, Roma, Armenians, and Tutsis were all clearly part of an identified group. In Germany the Jewish community had largely integrated and assimilated into German society by 1933 (Naimark 2017). On the coming to power of the Nazis there was a systematic process of identifying people of Jewish and gypsy / Roma heritage and being subject to increasing draconian laws. In Armenia the Armenians were a distinct and separate group within the Ottoman Empire who had their own culture, customs, religion and language. In Rwanda Destexhe (1995) points out that Hutus and Tutsis had largely the same culture, language and traditions. It was German and then Belgian colonial policies following social darwinian theories of race that classified Rwandan’s as either Tutsi or Hutu and “by exaggerating such stereotypes and supporting one group against another that the colonizers reinforced, consolidated and ultimately exacerbated such categorising”. It was eventually the classification on identity cards (that acted as the signature on a death warrant” (Destexhe 1995).

3. part of a collective act. In all three instances the resulting genocide became a collective act of a part of the population. Arendt (2006) demonstrated in her book the banality of Evil that the genocide of the Jews was effected by the participation of Ordinary People. "It was bureaucrats who helped destroy the Jewish people" (Destexhe 1995). In Rwanda, school teachers killed their pupils, shop workers killed their employer, / co workers and neighbours killed neighbours. Similarly in Armenia the genocide would not have happened if it wasn't for the participation of large numbers of "Ordinary People".
4. Savage cruelty. All three genocides were marked by savage cruelty. "The killing of Tutsi men and women of all ages was vicious and thorough" (Naimark 2017). In Germany the Nazi regime practised killing on an industrial scale which are epitomised and ended in the gas chambers of Auschwitz.
5. international indifference. Destexhe (1995) makes the point that all three genocides were also marked by international indifference. In relation to Nazi Holocaust the allies were aware of the extermination camps and there were no modifications to any of the military objectives in order to save the Jews. The railway lines that were essential to running of the extermination camps were never targeted. (Destexhe 1995). In Rwanda there was a UN assistance mission in place at the start of the genocide consisting of 2500 troops and observers. Belgian and French paratroopers arrived in Kigali the capital to evacuate expatriates and subsequently the UN Force was reduced to 270 and its mandate redefined as the genocide proceeded. When the security council was alerted that Rwandan Tutsi "were being exterminated, the most powerful countries in the world went to extraordinary lengths to avoid acknowledging it" (Dallaire 2013). In Turkey British French and Russian governments were aware of the Armenian Genocide when it was taken place and there was a failure of international reaction at the time. (It is to be noted there was a similar failure of a UN peacekeeping force in the Bosnian War in Srebrenica in April 1993, where Dutch UN peacekeeping forces handed over civilians who were seeking safety in the Bosnian Wars who were subsequently massacred by Bosnian Serb forces. This episode was tried by an international Court and deemed to be genocide).
6. Underlying racism ideology. "Violent anti-semitism was integral to Nazi ideology from the very beginning" (Naimark 2017). In *Mein Kampf*, written by Hitler is littered with anti-semitic comments and accusations that Jews were; undermining the German people, stealing and taking their wealth and outlining a Jewish world conspiracy on controlling world capitalism. It also blamed Jews for the German defeat in World War 1 "the stab in the back". When the Nazis obtained power they increasingly carried out a systematic campaign against Jews. "oppression, oppression, oppression" (Klemperer in Naimark 2017). In Rwanda the ruling Hutu parties increasingly promoted a racist ideology. In Armenia the Young Turks who came to power

similarly promoted a Turkey and Muslim first ideology which further marginalised those of Armenian descent.

7. Use of propaganda / media. In all three genocides the use of Propaganda underpinned each genocide. In Germany the Jewish people were consistently portrayed in the newspapers and media as vermin, rats, subhuman, dehumanised and presented in a way to become "the other". They portrayed the German people as being a superior race, Teutonic knights, a greater Reich, need to reunite the German speaking peoples and promoted Eugenics and promoted irredentism and revanchism views.. Similarly in Turkey, Armenians were referred to as "tubercular microbes ... that needed to be dealt with" (Kiernan 2014) and were similarly presented and dehumanised in the media and in official proclamations to become "the other". As in Germany the government used the media to promote a greater Turkey / Turkistan and promoted Turkification and hark back to the past and presented irredentism and revanchism views. In Rwanda radio Mille Collines consistently played a central role in presenting the Tutsis as "the Other", as outsiders and promoting racial hatred: "The Cockroaches that have to be crushed", "The grave is half Full - who will help fill it": "By 5th May the country must be completely cleansed of Tutsis" "The children must be killed to" (Destexhe 1995). In all three genocides propaganda was an essential component in paving the way to genocide.
8. the machinery of government. In all three cases it was by bringing together the machinery of government that facilitated each genocide. In Germany "it depended for a success on the efficiency of the German Bureaucracy as a whole". (Destexhe 1995).
9. Political instability. In all three cases the government in charge prior to genocide followed a significant period of political instability. In Germany Hitler came to power after the German defeat in World War 1 and the consequential political instability in Germany. In Turkey "The Young Turks" came to power as the Ottoman Empire was in retreat and decay. In Rwanda the Hutu government came to power after a long period of instability following independence from Belgium. In Germany Hitler promoted a greater Germany. in Armenia The Young Turks promoted a new Turkey and in Rwanda the Hutu government promoted a Hutu first policy. In all three cases the Jews Armenians and Tutsis were portrayed as the enemy within and acted as convenient scapegoats.

in conclusion, genocide is seen as the Crime of crimes. In each of the three cases looked at in this essay; the Jews, Armenians and Tutsis were all targeted as a group. Individuals in each case were killed or exterminated because they were identified as being part of a specific group. The aim in all three cases was the extermination of each group and these represent the overriding characteristics of

genocide. However it was the other subsidiary characteristics as detailed in this essay that all contributed to make each genocide happen. It is noted that the three examples discussed have also been referred to in the literature as “total genocides”. This perhaps is a reminder that the discourse of language is never static and “the term genocide has progressively lost its initial meaning” (Destexhe 1995).

However Lemkin found a term for intentional mass murder that was powerful and resonant, effective and lasting. (Naimark 2017).

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