

# Modernity and Twentieth Century holocausts

## Empire-building and mass murder

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### Introduction

Holocausts involve large-scale, systematic state-sponsored extermination of large number of civilian non-combatants over an extended time period based on their ethnic, racial, class or religious identity. All the holocausts of the Twentieth and Twenty-first centuries were preceded by state or civil society violence against the victimized peoples. In general, prior to the execution of the holocausts, important sectors of the state and civil society opposed violence directed against the victimized population. However once the perpetrators of the holocausts gained state power they were able to neutralize, silence, repress or co-opt previous oppositionists.

A number of theorists have attempted to explain holocaust(s) by focusing exclusively on a single case – Nazi Germany’s extermination of large sectors of the Jewish communities in Western, Central and Eastern Europe. Methodologically this focus on a single case involving only European Jews fails the empirical test: it cannot explain previous, contemporary and subsequent holocausts affecting other European, Asian and Latin America victims.

The claims by mainly, but not exclusively, Jewish scholars of the “uniqueness” of the Jewish-Nazi victims flies in the face of vast historical data and in fact serves as a justification for continued large-scale monetary compensation (1) and for the exercise of colonial expansion in Palestine and elsewhere in the Middle East, using the same techniques as were practiced by their Nazi oppressors (practices of collective guilt, racially based legislation, legalized mass torture, and ethnic cleansing).

### Critique of the ‘Uniqueness’ of Nazi-Jewish Holocaust

Modern holocausts did not begin in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, nineteenth century English, US and Belgian genocidal practices in India, the US West and the Congo attest to its pre-modern roots (2). While there are important differences between nineteenth century and twentieth and twenty-first century holocausts, they have one common underlying driving force – they are all linked to empire building or a response to challenges to empire.

The claims of the “uniqueness” of the “Jewish-Nazi holocaust (JNH) rest on several dubious arguments, which can be quickly and easily disposed.

Proponents of the JNH argue in terms of quantity of killings: 6 million Jews (3). Yet during the exact same period the Nazis and their allies systematically slaughtered 20 million Soviet civilians – the majority Russians (4). Likewise upward of 10 million Chinese were killed by the Japanese between 1937-1942 (5). In both Indo-China (6) and Korea (7), civilian deaths numbered close to 3-4 million each during US massive bombing and occupation. The argument for superior victimhood and thus the “uniqueness” of the “Jewish Holocaust” based on the number of victims has no validity.

The second claim for the thesis of the uniqueness of the JNH is the role of the state in systematically exterminating its Jewish victims. This argument also lacks historical validity. The

Young Turks in the declining years of the Ottoman empire, developed a systematic extermination policy leading to the genocide of the Armenian people 1915-1917, and over 1.5 million deaths (8). Likewise under US “counter-insurgency” policy of carpet bombings (Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia) over 4 million civilians were killed. US-directed scorched earth policies in Central America during the 1980’s led to the systematic killing of over 200,000 Mayan Indians and the destruction of over 250 village communities (9). Likewise the US scientifically planned embargo against Iraq (1991-2003) and the ongoing invasion and occupation (March 2003 to present) led to over 500,000 infant deaths (1991-2002) and over 200,000 civilian killings since the US invasion (10).

Other claimants for JNH uniqueness cite the racist-extremist ideology – forgetting the deeply embedded racial basis of Japanese genocidal policies versus the Chinese, the Central American puppet regimes virulent racist anti-Mayan extermination campaigns to cite only two graphic examples.

Some Jewish historians, such as Goldhagen, borrowing Nazi historiographic methods claim the ‘uniqueness’ thesis on the basis of the culpability of the entire German people and their history (11). This propaganda rant by a tenured Harvard professor overlooks the fact that the Nazi’s only secured 37.3% of the German vote in July 1932 and fell to about one-third of the electorate in November 1932 before assuming power (12). Goldhagen overlooks the fact that more than one-third of Germans (especially workers) voted for the Socialist-Communist candidates who were fiercely anti-Nazi and supportive of Jewish rights (13). Historically the argument is even weaker – the overt anti-Semitic movements, opinion leaders and politicians were marginal to German political life before the late 1920’s. And, of course, it ignores the German ‘high culture’ based on the enlightenment, which included many Jews and contributed to a grand cultural heritage in music, sciences, literature and philosophy. Finally the notion of collective guilt of entire civil society refuses to recognize that the Nazis’ first major political round-up involved tens of thousands of Germans – mostly Communists, trade unionists and militant anti-fascists who were exterminated in the first concentration camps including Buchenwald and Baden-Baden. The post-facto argument that there was little overt German resistance once the totalitarian terrorist regime had consolidated power, had little to do with German ‘acquiescence’ with anti-Semitism and more to do with the effectiveness of state repression.

In any case, assuming that perhaps nearly 50% of German civil society acquiesced or even supported (the more dubious assumption) state genocide, this was not unique to the JNH; the same proportion supported the extermination of three times as many Slavs (described by Nazi racial hygiene ‘scientists’ as beastlike sub-‘Untermenschen’ destined to be worked to death). Substantial sectors of Turkish and Kurdish civil society participated in the killing and plundering of Armenians. US civil society in its majority re-elected Reagan following his public support for the Guatemalan dictator Rios Mont – who exterminated Mayan people. The overwhelming majority of Israeli ‘civil’ society finances and serves in the military colonization and dispossession of 4 million Palestinians in the Israeli-Palestinian Holocaust (14). Japanese civil society by and large endorsed the Nanking massacre and its aftermath.

The argument about the unique bonds between the Nazi state and civil society and the extermination of Jews is untenable once we look beyond the blinkered eyes of biased historiography. The evidence is so overwhelming and obvious that one needs to explore the “sociology of knowledge” of the advocates of Jewish holocaust uniqueness: What political and economic ends does it serve in terms of contemporary Israeli power enhancement? The use and abuse of history, particularly in the case of the uniqueness of the NJH, has highly prejudicial consequences especially in the perpetration of the Palestinian Holocaust. Manipulation of

holocaust victimhood has contributed to disproportional influence by pro-Israeli lobbies in securing US and EU funding of ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. The use of ethno-racial explanations of holocausts, including notions of “collective guilt” can spill over into forms of “collective punishment” of families, communities and peoples who have nothing to do with alleged offenses to unique victims turned regional powers. This is particularly evident in the thinking of many of contemporary Israeli and Jewish terror experts professing to be knowledgeable about “the Arab Mind”.

### Critique of Psycho-Cultural Explanations

Explanations of holocausts which focus on “irrational mass behavior” or more generally on “mass psychology” overlook the central importance of elite manipulation, anchored in the state, the economy and civil society. In none of the holocausts in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries were the “masses” in a position to initiate, organize and direct holocausts, though, certainly, sectors of the lower class carried out the policies, and in some cases benefited directly from the spoils of the killing fields. Holocausts in the first instance are state-centered activities, which exploit one of a myriad of contradictory attitudes among the general population (prejudice against the targeted group), and instrumentalize it to create cohesion around elite expansionist or more precisely imperialist policies.

The ruling classes which support state-sponsored holocausts do so, not so much because of irrational ethnic or class hatred, but because the holocaust provides the state a legitimating ideology for their uncontested dominance and a basis for undisputed economic exploitation in domestic and overseas markets. The cultural and psychological determinants of ‘holocausts’ are, in fact, based on the larger geo-political and economic imperial interests of the state. There is no ‘single’ cultural or psychological attribute embedded in any holocaust-inducing society. There are many competing and parallel cultures and diverse psychologies. Under the imperatives of the imperial state expansion, aided and abetted by state-influenced religious institutions, political parties and the mass media, the largely (but not exclusively) manipulated masses of the population take an active role in mass murder.

To point to cultural and psychological explanations of holocausts is to distract from the central role of imperial politics and the state. To focus exclusively on ideology is to overlook the social structural framework in which ‘genocidal’ ideology functions, is nurtured, financed and sustained. Take away the key political and economic foundations, the imperatives of imperial conquest and the need for internal cohesion, and projected holocausts fail to materialize. On the other hand, continuous imperial structures lead to the recurrence of holocausts, as is witnessed by four major 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century holocausts involving US imperialism: the killing of 4 million Koreans (1950-53); 4 million Indo-Chinese (1960-1975), 300,000 Mayans of Guatemala (1980-83), and hundreds of thousands of Iraqis (1991-2002) and (2003-present).

Holocaust elites, in pursuit of imperial conquest create stakeholders among specific social classes who directly benefit. Turkish and Kurdish landholders and peasants seized Armenian property. German doctors took over their murdered Jewish colleagues’ practices and university posts. Japanese business elites took over Manchurian mining companies. The US military pillaged priceless antiquities and the wealth from conquered Asia. Pillage and large-scale dispossession of victims creates vertical links between the imperial elite and its lowest echelons creating the transient reality of an imperial people engaged in collective genocide.

Holocausts are organized through the perpetrators’ recruitment of collaborators from among the targeted victims. The Germans formed “Jewish police (kapos)” and “councils” to prepare for the Jewish holocaust and Ukrainians and White Russian soldiers for the Russian holocaust. Japan formed “puppet regimes” while it killed tens of millions of Chinese. The US

puppet rulers, Sygman Rhee in Korea and Diem in Vietnam served as political facades while B52 bombers destroyed their countries with millions of tons of explosives, napalm and poisons like Agent Orange – killing and maiming millions. Holocausts are in some cases joint ventures between imperial elites and sectors of the upper classes that feel threatened by the victimized people. Hence in Guatemala, the US and Israeli specialists in mass murder joined with the White European-descended Guatemalan elites to massacre entire Indian populations, seizing and redistributing their lands as part of the holocaust process.

In summary, holocausts have deep structural roots; they are multi-layered and rooted in a multiplicity of collaborators, and low-level beneficiaries. They are top-down processes rather than society-wide events, in which the state plays a dominant role in order to secure internal cohesion for external expansion.

#### Alternative Explanations of Holocaust

Explanations of holocausts based on notions of “cultural collective guilt” and “psycho-social” phenomena are empirically unsubstantiated or at best largely derivative and partial explanations. Their greatest weakness is the lack of an understanding of the structural dynamics of imperialism.

What is common to all 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century holocausts is their deep and intimate relation to imperialism, whether in the form of outward conquest or in terms of creating “internal cohesion” to embark on empire-building. While not all holocausts are a result of imperialism (some result from ‘internal’ capital accumulations – Stalin’s forced collectivization – 1929-34), all imperialisms have resulted in holocausts, from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present.

#### Holocaust, Cohesion and Imperialism

The JNH is an example of the ruling elite victimizing a minority population to create cross class cohesion, diverting the masses from internal labor-capital conflicts and the real or potential costs of the imperialist policies. Instead of focusing on capitalist exploitation, the ruling elite directed worker and middle class discontent to Jewish bankers and capitalists. This propaganda was especially effective in professions like medicine and retail trade in which competition for positions and market shares between Jews and non-Jews was especially intense. The passing from intensified exclusion and ethnic discrimination to the practice of genocide coincided with the massive military, economic and political expansion and conquest of the late 1930’s and early 1940’s. As the costs of empire-building increased, so did the need to distract the population by perpetuating mass murder. Parallel to the JNH, the imperial conquest of great swaths of Eastern Europe and especially Russia led to an even greater holocaust, the killing of 30 million Slavs and the enslavement of many millions more to the imperial –capital war machine.

Holocaust accompanied Japanese imperialist conquests and colonial rule in China from the late 1930’s to 1945. The large-scale systematic murder of millions of Chinese peasants, shopkeepers, workers, teachers, in fact all but the highest elite collaborator classes, was an extreme form of colonial dispossession of property and life to fuel empire-building and to subsidize and retain loyalty among the Japanese masses at home (15).

Holocausts occurred as a result of mass revolutionary challenges to unpopular puppet rulers, undermining pretensions of invincible imperial dominance. The US military intervention and occupation of Korea and Indo-China to prop up failed regimes led to the killing of eight million civilian victims, the total destruction of wide areas of the economy through genocidal carpet-bombing and chemical warfare leaving the industrial sectors in rubble, decimating farmland and causing long-term genetic damage to subsequent generations. The scale and scope

of the imperial killing fields however failed to defeat the popular national liberation armies. Internal cohesion especially during the US-Korean holocaust was accompanied by a deep political purge of US dissidents in civil society and public employment. However the high human costs in terms of US imperial soldiers lost and the spiraling financial expenditures (if not the holocaust itself) forced the imperial rulers to sign an armistice (16).

The greater the size, effectiveness and popularity of national liberation movements, the bigger the threat to an imperial puppet rulers, the more likely that imperial powers will resort to mass systematic killings and total warfare. As imperial policy-makers develop integrated strategic views, in which the entire empire is seen as dependent on the security of each puppet ruler in each nation, the more likely they pursue the strategy of 'total war' in which the lines between civilians and combatants, private and public, life-sustaining economies and war industries are obliterated (17).

Empires are built around networks, of supply chains, raw material and labor exploitation, military outposts, puppet rulers. They are sustained by the imperial armies and their domestic supporters on the basis of the superiority complex of the 'dominant people' over their colonial subjects. Imperial holocausts are a result of threats to these 'global networks' and not always directly related to any immediate economic gain in a particular site of execution. That is why holocausts cannot be explained by a simple cost-benefit analysis of economic gains and losses. For example, all imperial powers engage in what they describe as exemplary mass killings of civilians to induce surrender, submission, dispossession and obedience to imperial rule. The US massive military assault on Iraqi cities was appropriately called "shock and awe". The Nazis pursued "scorched earth" policies in Russia. The US-backed client ruler Rios Mont obliterated hundreds of Mayan Indian villages in Guatemala. Israeli exemplary killings of Palestinians succeeded in driving millions from the lands to be occupied and exploited (18).

When imperial powers engage in the horrors of holocausts, they justify their crimes in the name of a 'sacred cause' based on the 'highest and most noble historical mission'. Otherwise the repugnancy of their acts might cast some doubts within the imperial armies. The JNH was seen as 'liberating' the German people from the tentacles of a 'Jewish conspiracy'; the conquest of Russia and its holocaust was seen as 'creating living space for the German free spirit'. The US holocaust in Asia was presented as 'freeing the people from the yoke of totalitarianism'. The Israeli holocaust of Palestinians was and is described as 'delivering the Jewish people to their Promised Land'. All imperial holocausts are described and justified in the name of a phony 'national liberation' in which the imperial rulers assume their mantle of 'chosen people', by God, History or Genetics.

Holocausts result from the disintegration of empires. They are instruments of "national reconstruction" intent on providing "new blood" to sweep away decadent rulers and "privileged" minorities. The Turkish genocide (1915-1917) of the Armenians, authored by the 'Young Turks' is a prime example of "national revitalization" of a decaying empire via holocaust of suspected "separatists". Likewise the JNH was in part a result of the defeat and dismemberment of the German Empire and the Nazi attempt to blame internal ('Jewish') betrayals.

In summary imperialism is based on domestic consensus and social cohesion in order to mobilize the entire nation for external wars and conquest, especially where there are sharp class cleavages. A war or 'holocaust' against internal ethnic minorities serves to displace discontent from class struggles to ethnic and imperial wars. Holocausts are always infused with an ideology of 'moral regeneration' and the mass slaughter of subject peoples serves to heighten the sense of 'moral people' punishing 'degenerate' or inferior people. Mythologies of exclusive claims based

on ‘folk’ religions or ‘historic imperative’ are instrumentalized in the service of modern empire building.

### Why Imperialism Leads to Holocausts

By its nature imperialism involves dispossession and acquisition of economic resources, labor, political and economic dominance and/or territory (19). Empire-building is a process which entails mass killings as well as ‘diplomacy’ to secure international and elite acquiescence. Internal holocausts can be seen as a kind of ‘primitive accumulation of capital’ seizing the economic resources of a victimized minority and their transfer to the elites which direct imperial conquests. In the case of overseas imperial holocausts, the seizure of assets, territories and the pillage of agricultural, mineral and industrial goods leads to general impoverishment, refugees, a massive ‘surplus labor force’ and potential enemies. The holocaust decisions are aimed at reducing the surplus population created by economic requisitions and pillage by physically annihilating real and potential guerrilla recruits among the uprooted.

In this context imperialism faces a major contradiction. On the one hand it engages in a holocaust in order to dispossess millions, on the other it needs to exploit labor to provide the sepoy who service and labor to sustain the imperial occupation armies. This contradiction is resolved by exploiting conquered peoples as slaves, or cheap labor and killing the non-working ‘excess’ population. In most cases the ‘holocaust’ is a parallel process of mass extermination and forced labor. In cases where holocaust activity has depleted local labor or where mass resistance has emerged, it is common for the imperial-colonial power to import labor, forcibly or otherwise, from other conquered low-wage regions.

### Holocausts as Case Studies in Modernization and Empire-Building

From the very first holocaust of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (The Turkish Armenian Genocide) the process of mass killing was seen as part of the modernization and unification of a nation based on state-centered violence. The subsequent ‘ethnic cleansing’ of all minorities of the former Ottoman empire followed a secular republican logic in which the military assumed the role of defender of the ‘modernist’ ethos against ‘imagined’ enemies clothed in minority guises (20).

The foundation myth and justification for the State of Israel was the claim that Palestine was a “land without people” and the Jews were a “people without land” – a myth which became a self-fulfilling prophesy (and self-serving justification) as Israeli Jews proceeded to forcibly eject millions of Palestinian Arabs from the occupied lands (21).

The Israeli-Palestinian holocaust continues to be justified by the existence of a modern democratic, albeit exclusivist, Jewish state, with exceptional links to a worldwide network of exceptionally wealthy, financially successful modern elites (22). The interaction of Holocaust behavior and modernity embedded in dense global networks has powerful resonance among imperial elites bent on reconstructing Mid-Eastern empires, especially among civilian militarists in the US.

The JNH was another manifestation of dynamic industrial modernity harnessed to imperial conquest: the superior German technology and advanced scientific achievements were based on the internal cohesion fostered by anti-Semitism internally and anti-Slavism externally. The result was a ‘double holocaust’: Jewish and Russian-Slav extermination campaigns. A basic precondition for the entire Nazi expansionist-holocaust dynamic was the historic and irreversible destruction of the Left and all its mass organizations.

Late imperialists, like Germany, Japan and the US, all exhibit the same historic tendencies toward genocidal wars and holocaust-scale extermination campaigns of conquest.

With the exception of Japan – an ethnically homogenous society – late imperialist states engaged in large-scale genocidal extermination campaigns against diverse internal minorities (Indians, Afro-Americans in the US, Jews in Germany) creating the domestic cohesion and racist superiority complex necessary for imperialist conquests and holocausts (Germany versus the Slavs, the US versus Asians and Central American Indians).

The Japanese-Chinese holocaust (JCH) reached its pinnacle in the infamous ‘Rape of Nanking’ when over 300,000 Chinese were raped and slaughtered in a matter of days in 1938, immediately preceded and followed by state-planned, systematic extermination of over 7 million Chinese civilians of all ages and classes. Lacking a powerful holocaust lobby in the West, and given the Cold War realignment of the West and Japan against the People’s Republic of China, no monuments, foundations, billion dollar compensation have commemorated the JCH, despite the fact that far more Chinese civilians were murdered than Jews. No doubt the self-serving claims of Jewish publicists of the ‘uniqueness’ of the JNH has contributed to collective amnesia.

The ascendancy of the US to the position of dominant imperialist power was directly related to tri-continental Holocausts, or multiple holocausts, in Asia, the US-Korean (1950-53) and the US-Indochinese (1961-1975); in Africa the proxy holocausts in Southern Africa (Angola, Mozambique, Congo (Zaire) (1961-1990’s); Central America (1979-1990) and the Middle East (Iraq 1991-2006) (23). For methodological reasons we have excluded the state-directed extermination via the atomic bombing of Japanese cities (Hiroshima/Nagasaki) and the US directed proxy extermination campaign in Indonesia in 1966 resulting in the killing of over 1 million unarmed suspected trade unionists and communist party members or affiliates and family members. The death count resulting from the extermination campaign of ‘late US imperialism’ are comparable to the Japanese and German predecessors: four million each in Indo-China and Korea, uncounted millions in the holocaust of Southern Africa, over 300,000 in the proxy holocausts of Central America (200,000 Mayans in Guatemala, 75,000 in El Salvador, 50,000 in Nicaragua and 10,000 each in Honduras and Panama, (the latter inflicted by a direct military invasion) and Iraq – over 700,000 and growing. The total war strategies employed by US imperialism leads directly to holocaust-scale killing fields because the distinction between civilian and military targets are obliterated. Particularly because the resistance to US Empire is built on deeply held and widely based beliefs, imperialist conquest deliberately seeks to decimate the huge reservoir of resistance supporters, recruits and suppliers of food and intelligence.

One explanation for the multiplication of holocausts under ‘late imperialism’ is that it takes place in a historic context more resistant to a revival of colonial-imperial domination. More specifically, nations resulting from mass anti-colonial movements which earlier swept aside European and Japanese imperialism are better prepared socially, politically and militarily to resist the new US imperialist encroachments. The high levels of anti-imperialist and nationalist ideology and culture embedded in post-colonial nations from the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century onward are in sharp contrast to the feudal-mercantile societies conquered by European imperialist powers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. To dispossess and disarticulate highly mobilized nationalist and/or socialist societies requires greater and wider use of holocaust methods. Murdering or exiling a few thousand leaders is no longer sufficient. Whole populations must be made ‘examples’, or as the Israeli genocide mongers argue in the case of the Palestinians after they democratically elected the Hamas government, ‘they must assume the costs’, namely daily military assaults and killing of civilians and a systematic blockade of food and medicine, resulting in widespread malnutrition (24).

Technological advances in the machinery of mass extermination do not determine the frequency or occurrences of holocausts, but they certainly expedite the proceedings. Labor-intensive holocausts – like the JCH in Nanking – can be just as deadly as the capital-intensive

high-tech gas chambers of Nazi Germany or the US carpet bombing of cities in Korea, Indochina and Iraq. Nevertheless it is certain that high technology accelerates the process of extermination and lessens the possibility that human frailty (like pity or bad conscience) will weaken the drive toward execution. Holocausts provide incentives for testing, experimenting and applying, in real time situations, new extermination processes. For example, the US has experimented with battle-field nuclear weapons in the form of depleted uranium during the two Gulf Wars and in the Balkans.

The Israeli-Palestinian Holocaust (IPH) has all the substantive features of previously mentioned holocausts: long-term, large-scale use of state terror; dispossession of over 4 million Palestinians; forcing over 3 millions Palestinians in ghettos; racial ethnic segregation and separation in all spheres of justice, property ownership, transportation and geographical movement; citizen rights based on 'blood ties' (maternal lineage); legalized and quasi-legalized torture and systematic use of collective punishment; a highly militarized society given to perpetual military assaults on neighboring Palestinian communities and other Arab states; unilateral extra-territorial, extra-judicial assassinations; chronic and systematic rejection of international law; an ideology of permanent warfare and international paranoia ('anti-Semitism' is everywhere) and an ideology of ethnic superiority (the 'Chosen People') (25).

Both in the practice of mass state terror and in its legal-ideological justifications of assassinations of oppositionists, mass dispossession, and claims of Israel Laws' superiority over international norms, the Israeli state possesses all the qualifications that exemplify a holocaust perpetrator. The Palestinian ghetto, the concentration camps for thousands of suspected 'militants', the destruction of the economic base of everyday life, the forced massive evictions, systematic ethnic cleansing – all conform to the pattern of past and present holocausts.

The US/Iraqi Holocaust (UIH), an ongoing process spanning the last 16 years (1990-2006) provides us with a striking example of state-planned systematic extermination, torture and physical destruction designed to de-modernize a secular developing society and revert it into a series of warring clan-tribal-clerical-ethnic based entities devoid of any national authority or viable economy.

The scale and scope of the US extermination policies in Iraq certainly warrant its classification as a Holocaust: 500,000 children died as a result of a murderous economic blockade during the Clinton Administration (1992-2000) and over 250,000 have died between 2003 to the present 2006 (26). The US holocaust policy was openly endorsed by the senior architect of the policy, Secretary of State Madeline Albright, who, when confronted by the scale and scope of the infant deaths during the devastating economic blockade (1991-2000), declared, "It was worth it". The indiscriminant bombing of civilian targets in both the first and especially second Gulf War – led to the total destruction of all civilian infrastructure. The widespread systematic use of depleted uranium coated shells has deadly consequences for millions in the future. The systematic use of torture and mass murder of hundreds of thousands of civilians has been fully documented and is justified by senior officials in the Bush regime and the majority of both parties in the Congress (27).

In its essentials nothing separates the US extermination campaign from earlier Holocausts, except that the whole world views it while it is happening. The UIH is a living Holocaust: taking place before the eyes and ears of billions of spectators. While worldwide repugnance to each revelation of particulars is common, so is the 'passive acceptance'. Holocaust activity is made routine: death squad mass murder fomented by imperial overseers...is reduced to a daily death toll – immunizing the world community from the horror of a living Holocaust.

Holocausts: Their Aftermaths and Dubious Legacies



With the exception of the JNH (Jewish-Nazi Holocaust) and possibly the JCH (Japanese-Chinese Holocaust), none of the rest of the perpetrators has faced international criminal proceedings. The different treatment and general impunity is a direct result of military outcomes and political power. The Nazi and Japanese holocaust regimes were defeated; the US, Turkey and Israel were not militarily defeated, or at least not to the point where an international court system could bring them to trial. Even in the case of the Nazis, apart from a few top leaders of the Nazi regime, almost all middle rank and below were eventually exonerated; many later pursued successful careers in business and politics. Not a few Nazi scientists and other professionals were actually recruited by the US and West German governments in a variety of strategic positions. In the case of Japan, a similar process of prosecution and then restoration of holocaust executives to positions of power took place, especially after the US and its allies launched the global counter-revolutionary policies, embodied in the 'Cold War', a total misnomer given the US military attacks on Korea and Indochina. In fact Japanese holocaust perpetrators played a major role in support of two post-World War II US holocausts in Korea and Indochina by offering military bases, supplies and logistical support.

Several highly publicized unofficial tribunals have taken place, specifically the Bertrand Russell Tribunal over the US-Indochinese Holocaust. However their significance was symbolic as they lacked any mechanism for enforcing their guilty verdicts. None of these Tribunals received favorable treatment in the mass media or even the slightest admission of remorse or guilt from any of the perpetrating regimes, even after a change in the party in power. In other words, there is a continuing systematic consensus among the perpetrators that their actions are justified, making a shambles of any notion of the 'rule of law'.

In fact the United Nations is complicit: it was actively engaged in the US-Korean Holocaust, is incapable of intervening in the Israeli-Palestinian Holocaust and provides an institutional cover to the US-Iraq Holocaust. If the international judicial system has failed to bring to justice all but top Nazi holocausters, the record at the level of national relations is also appalling. The Japanese Koizumi Regime continues to pay homage to past war criminals (yearly trips by top officials to the Yoshikuni Shrine) and Japanese textbooks white wash war crimes. This holocaust nostalgia continues to poison bilateral relations with China, if only at the symbolic-diplomatic level since Chinese-Japanese economic relations continue to flourish.

Likewise, with the exception of France, no other Western country has officially condemned the Turkish-Armenian massacre or the Turkish denial of any responsibility for genocide. Israel, many of whose people were victims of the Nazi Holocaust, denies the Turkish-Armenian genocide and excludes any Armenian scholarly representations of their genocide at the lavishly funded Holocaust forums, conferences, publications or museums. This is especially galling since Jerusalem was once the home for many thousands of Armenian genocide survivors. In fact, Israel has a special strategic military pact with the Turkish genocide deniers. The same is true with regard to the United States support of Turkish deniers, where despite strong pressure from the Armenian-American community and even substantial Congressional backing, the Executive has blocked any official condemnation of the genocide.

With regard to US holocausts in Asia, Washington followed up by imposing a murderous economic blockade particularly on North Korea and Indochina, leading to 'forced self-reliance' and in the case of Cambodia, spurring the Khmer Rouge regime to engage in an irrational and deadly forced exodus from the urban centers, a case of a 'joint-holocaust' – Washington/Khmer Rouge. With the conversion of the Indochinese elites to capitalism and in the face of international impunity for US war crimes, US-Vietnamese reconciliation without justice became the norm. Ironically free-market policies have led to new imperial exploitation of cheap labor via the market instead of through military invasions.

With regard to the US-Central American holocaust, there has been no effort at international criminal proceedings. At most, former President Clinton expressed a 'pro-forma' apology for US 'support' of its local murderous puppet regime in Guatemala. The incumbent regimes, themselves US clients, are direct descendants and beneficiaries of the US-Central American holocausts. Having destroyed the fabric of society and undermined the local economy via war and free trade, having demobilized the guerrilla armies, Central America is a region of deracinated peasants, refugees turned international migrants and criminal gangs, ruled by kleptocratic politicians and business oligarchs. Central American survivors and relatives of the US holocaust victims finding no future in their devastated homeland, dispossessed of land and employment, flee to North America. In 2006 they face highly repressive anti-immigrant legislation, massive criminalization, dispossession, imprisonment and deportation.

The Israeli-Palestinian holocaust is a continuing process that gains momentum: daily military assaults, execution of leaders and murder of civilians, continued extension of colonies, non-recognition of elected Palestinian leaders and above all a total blockade of finances and basic food and medicine – a Nazi style 'encirclement of ghettos' and 'starvation to surrender' strategy. The powerful voice and influence of the Jewish Lobby in and out of the US government ensures Israeli impunity and US and European Union complicity (28).

Beginning with the US Indochinese holocaust and continuing to the present, the execution of Holocaust policies are visible via the media and internet to the public, despite official propaganda campaigns transmitted by the mass media. The complicity of sectors of civil society and the private media in upholding Holocaust regimes, in non-totalitarian political systems, requires a reconsideration of the relationship between dictatorships, electoral systems and holocausts.

### Conclusion

From our review of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century Holocausts, it is clear that great crimes against humanity for the most part do not lead to justice. On the contrary, the historical legacy is one of impunity and most likely recidivism. The record is clear: US impunity after the Korean holocaust led to the holocausts in Indochina, Central America and Iraq. The early Israeli ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in 1947-1950 led to new wars of conquest, land dispossession, settler occupation, ghettoization and progression toward a 'final solution' of total expulsion. Turkish-Armenian genocide denial encouraged the ethnic cleansing of Kurds throughout Anatolia. These crimes against humanity are not merely artifacts of psychopathic rulers, or derivatives from authoritarian traditions, because, as we have shown, there are competing traditions, diverse 'national psychologies' and countervailing ideologies.

What brings to the foreground holocaust behavior, the trigger and motor force, are imperialist drives for domestic cohesion and foreign conquest. It is precisely because imperial powers exercise the holocaust imperative that they are largely unpunished, and, in most cases, their crimes remain unrecognized to this very day. Lesser powers with lesser crimes, indeed, are condemned. In contrast, the bigger the empire and the greater its power, the more likely impunity and denial will become the rule.

The failure of Western intellectuals to recognize the multiple holocausts of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries is not a result of the lack of accessible data, or due to the lack of knowledge of the facts, because the acts of genocide are public, the bodies are strewn in public spaces, the destruction surrounds any observer, the instruments of genocide are publicly funded. What is lacking is the willingness to face the reality that their governments, their states are responsible for the holocausts, that their elected regimes are engaged in mass terror, that their private mass media

systematically lie and cover up the acts of genocide, that important sectors of “civil society” are either impotent critics or complicit collaborators.

Most intellectuals embedded in imperial societies are incapable of comprehending the scope and depth of the crimes committed in their names. Instead they describe the holocausts as ‘wars between states’ referring to them as the ‘Korean War’, the ‘Indochinese War’, the ‘Iraq War’ or worse as ‘wars for democracy’ or other similar monstrous falsifications. Strange ‘wars’ in which all the civilians – millions by count – are on the other side, all the destruction takes place in the invaded country, all the dispossessed are the targets of the empire builders.

There is resistance, imperial soldiers are killed, puppet armies are attacked, instruments of war – helicopters and armored carriers -- are destroyed. In the Warsaw Ghetto the resistance fought and killed Nazi storm troopers. Vietnamese Liberation fighters inflicted 58,000 deaths and 500,000 casualties on the invaders. Fallujah (Iraq) resists, Jenin (Palestine) resists... Some Holocaust deniers point to these acts of heroic resistance and to survivors who crawl out of the rubble as evidence of their specious claims that the killing fields and ethnic cleansing do not amount to genocidal practices but rather to ‘acts of war’... But they forget to add that it is total war against a whole people!

What is clear from a review of 20/21<sup>st</sup> century holocausts is that they are not single unique events committed by a particular evil people or regime, but are repeated, common practices, which recur with periodic frequency. Holocaust impunity has become the norm, incorporated in the euphemistic vocabulary of mainstream and even revisionist historians as ‘wars’, ‘conflicts’, ‘crusades’ and ‘tragedies’ instead of recidivist criminality writ large. There is no effective international mechanisms to bring to justice holocaust elites; only tribunals organized by the imperial powers to try their defeated adversaries, as in the case of occupied Yugoslavia, Iraq and Panama.

New capitalist elites among the victimized people (as in Indochina) are more than willing to forgive and forget holocaust crimes in exchange for hard currency and a privileged place in the world market.

As long as international judicial processes are inoperative, only a series of sustained popular revolutions can bring to justice at least the puppets and collaborators of the Holocaust perpetrators. Only the final defeat of the imperial state will open the possibility of a truly international court of justice, which can make the holocaust perpetrators answer for their crimes.

### **Footnotes**

1. Finkelstein, Norman. The Holocaust Industry (London: Verso 2000)
2. Davis, Mike. Late Victorian Holocausts (London: Verso 2001)
3. Bauer, Yehuda. A History of the Holocaust (New York: Franklin Watts 1983; Bard, Mitchell. The Complete History of the Holocaust (California: Green Haven 2001)
4. Dallin, Alexander. German Rule in Russia, 1941-45 (London: MacMillan, 1957); Salisbury, Harrison. The 900 Days: The Seize of Leningrad (NY De Capo Press 1969); Mayer, Arno. Why Did the Heavens Not Darken: The Final Solution in History (NY: Pantheon Books 1988)
5. Fenby, James. Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-Shek and the China He Lost (London: Free Press 2003)

6. On Vietnam see Fitzgerald, Francis. Fire in the Lake: The Vietmanese and the Americans in Vietnam (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 1972); Herman, Edward. Atrocities in Vietnam: Myths and Realities (Pilgrim Press: 1971); Chomsky, Noam and Herman, Edward. The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism: The Political Economy (Boston: South End Press 1979), Ch. 5; Falk, Richard. Crimes of War (New York:RH Press 1971); The Dellums Committee Hearings on War Crimes in Vietnam, (NY: Vintage 1972); on Cambodia see Center for Genocide Studies (Yale Univeristy). The Web site states: *For US bombing points, attributes of a site's bombardment are displayed in tabular form, e.g. the date of the bombing, exact location, the number and type of aircraft in the sortie, bombing load and ordinance type, the nature of the intended target, and bomb damage assessment (BDA), (...on) Cambodia's 13,000 villages; the 115,000 sites targeted in 231,000 U.S. bombing sorties flown over Cambodia in 1965-75, dropping 2.75 million tons of munitions; 158 prisons run by Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge regime during 1975-1979, and 309 mass-grave sites with an estimated total of 19,000 grave pits; and 76 sites of post-1979 memorials to victims of the Khmer Rouge.* The director of the Genocide Center, Ben Kiernan, with a perversity seldom equaled in academia, fails to include the US murder and maiming of millions of Cambodians in his discussion of genocide – he focuses only on Pol Pot's regime. On the basis of that selective view of genocide, he secured a tenure position at Yale University, his center won a distinguished award and the generous financing of George Soros and Coca Cola Corporation.
1. On Korea see John Gittings and Martin Kettle, "US and S Korea Accused of War Atrocities", Guardian, January 18, 2000; Bruce Cummings, The Origins of the Korean War, Vol.I, Vol.II. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1981, 1990). According to figures published in the Soviet Union 11.1% of the total population of North Korea (1,130,000 people) were killed by US air and ground forces. In all of Korea, over 2,500,000-3,000,000 people were killed, more than 80% of the industrial and public facilities and transportation works, three quarters of the government offices and one-half of the houses were destroyed. Between June 1950 to May 1953, US Generals Eisenhower and McArthur, Presidents Truman and Eisenhower and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Military Command) considered or recommended the use of nuclear weapons against Korea. According to Gittings and Kettle, apart from the thousands of refugees murdered by US military officials, *"many more Korean civilians were killed by US bombing later in the war, particularly during the saturation bombing of Pyongyang (Capital of North Korea) in 1952."*
2. Richard Hovannisian (ed). The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, Ethics. (St. Martin's Press NY 1992); Richard Hovannisian, ed. Remembrance and Denial: The Case of the Armenian Genocide (Detroit: Wayne State University Press 1999)
3. Patrick Bell et al. State Violence in Guatemala 1960-96 (AAAS, Washington DC 1999); Amnesty International Report: Guatemala (1982, 1983, 1984 London); Thomas Melville, Through a Glass Darkly: US Holocaust in Central America (Xlibris Corporation 2005); Kent Ashabranner Children of Maya (NY Dodd Mead 1986). Guatemala Nunca Mas: 4 Tomos, Oficina de Derechos Humanos Arzpipado 1998.
4. Les Roberts, et al, 'Mortality before and after the 2003 invasion of Iraq: cluster sample survey. Lancet Vol. 364, no. 9445; Oct.31, 2004.
5. Daniel Goldhagan, Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust (New York, Knopf 1996)

6. See Thomas Childer, The Nazi Voter: The Social Foundations of Fascism in Germany 1919-1933 (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press 1983) especially pp 264-266.
7. In the November 1932 elections, the Nazis received 33.1% of the vote, the Communist and Socialists received 37.3%, Childer op cit
8. The Israeli-Palestinian Holocaust is well documented by Edward Said, Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination (NY Vintage 1995). Benny Morris, The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem: 1947-49 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1987). Felicia Langer, With My Own Eyes, (Ithaca: Ithaca Press 1975). Naseer Hasan Aruri, Palestinian Refugees (London: Pluto Press 2001); Ilan Pappé, Israel/Palestine Question: Rewriting History (London Rutledge 1999); Edward Said, The Question of Palestine (NY Vintage Press, 1979); Maxine Rodinson, Israel: A Colonial Settler State (Monad Press: NY 1973); Walid Khalidi, ed. All That Remains (Institute of Palestine Studies).
9. Iris Chang, The Rape of Nanking (London, Penguin 1997).
10. According to the US Pentagon, 54,246 US war deaths in the Korean War of which 33,686 were battle deaths and 8,142 US personnel listed as 'Missing in Action'.
11. During the Korean War, Douglas McArthur ordered the US Air Force to "destroy every means of communication, every installation, factory, city and village", south of the Yalu River boundary with China. Quoted in [www.brianwillson.com/awol/koreacl.html](http://www.brianwillson.com/awol/koreacl.html)
12. See Benny Morris op cit. According to Edward Said, op cit 4 million Palestinians have been turned into refugees and nearly 2 million are under Israeli military occupation. According to Palestinian Human Rights Monitors since the Second Intifada over 300 Israeli military assaults in the occupied territories occur weekly resulting in scores of killings, hundreds of injuries and prisoners and the demolition of over 10,000 homes and the destruction of thousands of acres of farm land. Subsequent to the democratic elections in Palestine in 2006, Israel imposed a total blockade of food, health and emergency goods on the occupied territories, jeopardizing the lives of over 2.5 million Palestinians.
13. James Petras, Henry Veltmeyer, Luciano Vasapollo and Mauro Casadio. Empire with Imperialism (London: Zed Press 2005)
14. Hovanassian, op sit
15. Said, op sit
16. James Petras. The Power of Israel over the United States (Atlanta: Clarity Press 2006)
17. On the US-Iraq Holocaust see the report by Johns Hopkins School of Public Health Epidemiologists Les Roberts et al, 'Mortality before and after the 2003 invasion of Iraq: cluster sample survey. Lancet Vol. 364, no. 9445; Oct.31, 2004.
18. See the Israeli English language daily Haaretz between February and June 2006 on the Israeli blockade policies and its catastrophic effects on Palestinian health and nutrition. The major Zionist lobbies in the US, The Presidents of the Major Jewish Organizations and AIPAC, are unconditional supporters of the Israeli-Palestinian Holocaust, totally back the blockade and the daily killings of Palestinian civilians by Israeli special forces.

19. see Ilan Pappé, Israel/Palestine Question: Rewriting History; E. Said, Politics of Dispossession. Op cit.
20. On the US-Iraq Holocaust see Lancet. Op cit; Anthony Arnove (ed), Iraq Under Siege: The Deadly Impact of Sanctions and War (Boston: South End Press 2002); Alex Cockburn and Jeffery St. Clair, Imperial Crusades (California: Counterpunch 2004).
21. Public knowledge throughout the world of US systematic use of torture and mass murder to conquer Iraq is a result of reporting by a vast network of web-sites and even some of the mass media. See, for example, the English language websites: informationclearinghouse.info; comondreams.org, counterpunch.org among others.
22. James Petras, The Power of Israel Over the United States, op cit.