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INTERSECTIONALITY AND GENOCIDE: CONTRIBUTIONS FROM CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

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Abstract: In the wake of the passage of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the United Nations and global powers have been unable to prevent dozens of genocides. The failure to prevent these horrible acts of mass violence is now a major concern for the foreign policy team of President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. American presidential recognition of genocides serves as a promising sign for a future of human rights-centered diplomacy. Scholarship concerning state violence has not adequately addressed the role of intersectionality in genocide and other identity-based massacres. The current definition of “genocide” in the Convention lacks significant protections for identity groups whose inclusion is essential to effectively prosecute crimes and eliminate political violence in the twenty-first century. Through an analysis of the underlying ideological and practical systems that support this cycle of violence, and by offering a theologically premised denunciation of genocide based upon Catholic Social Teaching and the work of David Hollenbach, S.J., this article argues for a three-part action plan to address the crisis of genocide gripping the world. This article also serves as a call to action for the Biden Administration which should continue to recognize genocides and offer support in multilateral interventions.

Introduction

Genocides are one of the most horrible phenomena of human history. The contemporary term “genocide” is often used, however, without much concern for its actual definition. Some argue that the Nanjing Massacre in 1937 was a genocide, as well as the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, European colonialism in Africa and Asia, and slavery in the United States. Still, others like William Schabas argue the opposite: that only the massacres in Armenia, The Holocaust, and Rwanda can truly be categorized “genocides.” Regardless of varying personal opinions on what events ought to be defined as genocide, the intensity of debate reflects the likelihood that a change in the legal and practical definition of the term may be necessary in order to create clarity and provide a means of real moral response. How ought we categorize genocide (and state

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violence as a whole) so that we can most effectively respond to it? If defining an action is the first step towards prosecuting it, then surely labeling an action correctly is critical.

The failure to prevent genocide will likely persist unless significant changes are made. There is a troubling lack of intersectionality in the current United Nations definition of genocide, even though genocides cut across more identities than are legally protected in most jurisdictions. This deficiency prevents a holistic and intersectional response. The issues with successfully defining and prosecuting genocide are supported by ideologies that maintain the power of current leaders and regimes. While the international community is unlikely to completely erase the threat of genocide in the near future, this paper offers a few possible steps that the Biden Administration and other non-government organizations in the United States could take to progress toward goal. The current definition and guidelines around genocide are problematic in their lack of intersectional attention to state violence, including in their narrow focus on specific individuals targeted by identity-based violence.

Description of the Problem

“In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: [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 measures intended to prevent births within the group; [5] Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”²

A word to describe the mass execution of a group of people by the state or de facto power was first coined by Raphael Lemkin in his 1944 book “Axis Rule in Occupied Europe.” The first part, “genos-,” is Greek for race or tribe, and the suffix “-cide” is Latin for killing.³ Thus, a genocide, in essence, is the destruction of a group of people because of some part of their identity. The term became used internationally in the post-War era. The Holocaust, or *Shoah*, catalyzed the Allies-led international community to charge the Nazis with a new type of crime. The goal? “Never again” would another Holocaust take place.

² United Nations, “Definitions: Genocide,” <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide.shtml>.

³ United Nations, “Definitions: Genocide,” <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide.shtml>.

Despite global efforts since the Second World War to prevent genocide, they have continued to take place across the globe. Similarly, the Convention's definition has been useful in prosecuting criminals, but only in limited circumstances.⁴ Despite the promise to prevent future wholesale slaughter extermination campaigns by states, dozens of genocides have taken place since the initial signing of the Convention in 1948. The delayed adoption of the Convention by the United Kingdom (1970), China (1983), and the United States (1988) stymied the advent of any serious judicial processes for decades. Only three genocides since 1988 have been subject to internationally backed criminal trials: Cambodia, Bosnia & Herzegovina (Srebrenica), and Rwanda. The international community rarely engages directly with genocides, typically only acting in the aftermath when the weakened government welcomes international assistance. Political leaders are disincentivized from labeling another country's actions as a genocide because there is a public misconception that such a declaration would necessitate an intervening obligation. With the establishment of the International Criminal Court in 2002, there was hope of prosecuting future cases, but the trials in Cambodia, Rwanda, and the former Yugoslavia show how difficult it is to convict individuals on charges of genocide, much less enact punishments that fit the scope of the crimes.

While the present definition of "genocide" encompasses most identity-motivated acts of mass violence, it operates from a narrow perspective. Currently, only four identity-based groups are protected: nationality, ethnicity, race, and religion. Political violence and marginalization, nevertheless, impact more intersectional groups than just these four. Gender, sexuality, spoken languages, class or profession, political affiliation, age, social status, physical appearance, and disability are all identities targeted by systems of oppression.⁵ This becomes clearer when genocides are framed as "group building" instead of "group excluding."

Sometimes, a group is purposefully dehumanized and scapegoated, explicitly targeted by the state. In other cases, however, a government or population constructs an idealized version of a perfect group member, and proceeds to exclude any individual who

⁴ Currently, 152 countries have signed the Genocide Convention. "The Genocide Convention," <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide-convention.shtml>.

⁵ Mehmet Orhan, "The Intersectional Dynamics of Political Violence and Gender in the Kurdish Conflict," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 19, no. 3 (December 2019): 270.

does not fit this narrow standard, a “core-group frame.” Often, these processes work at the same time. For instance, an exclusionist framework in the United States might specifically target the Black population or the LGBTQ population for oppressive measures. The “core-group frame” is the opposite and supplementary focus of catering instead to White, cisgender men at the expense of all other demographics.

If political power means the ability to legitimately use force within state boundaries, when considering the future of a nation-state, we must also ask: “Who is this vision for?” Indeed, the ability to protect one group against “others” by means of control of the police or military necessarily reflects the vision of a political community, or at least its leaders. As long as a state’s self-definition remains capacious and facilitates, in some instances, the commission of violence against so many identity-based groups, an intersectional response is the only way to achieve true justice.

There are some terms in academia used to describe identity-based mass killings that might ordinarily supplement the UN definition of genocide, but they lack either international legal force or specificity as to the role of the state.⁶ Take, for example, “classicide” (killing of a group based on economic status or social standing)⁷ and gendercide (the systematic elimination of a group based on gender).⁸ This latter term is sometimes subdivided further, with “femicide” focusing on violence directed at women (most often by male perpetrators) and the male-centered “androcide.”⁹

Additionally, there are aspects of identity that do not have any widely-used single term: violence based on a group’s sexuality, disability, and spoken language. Brief summaries of three well-documented twentieth-century genocides—the Holocaust/*Shoah*, the Cambodian Genocide, and the genocide at Srebrenica—all show how identities outside of those outlined in the Convention have been largely ignored and thus need to be subject to more sustained attention:

⁶ Political and social protections were initially considered in the drafting of the Convention, but were downvoted by multiple countries in the UN, notably Stalin’s USSR.

⁷ Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 21.

⁸ Ervin Staub, “Genocide, Mass Killing, and Violent Conflict: Prevention and Reconciliation,” *Political Psychology* 21, no. 2 (2000): 369.

⁹ There is also scholarly disagreement as to whether there should be two separate definitions for the current phenomenon of femicide: one for state-sponsored killings, and another for domestic violence. In this article I discuss primarily state-centered androcide and femicide. For transgender and nonbinary persons, I discuss below the term “queericide.”

While the Jewish population was the most prominent target of hatred by the Nazis during the Holocaust, many other groups were oppressed. Indeed, Hitler's vision of a Third Reich called for the purification of the Aryan (Nordic) race. Achieving this goal thus required the mass-killing of Roma, Black Germans, Jehovah's Witnesses, Soviets, Poles, repeat criminal offenders, the disabled, and LGBTQ+ persons. Accounting for all of these people, some of which lie outside the categories outlined in the formal definition of genocide, drastically changes the final death toll scholars often reach.¹⁰

In the Cambodian Genocide, an estimated 1.5-2 million people were killed by Pol Pot's regime between 1975 and 1979, roughly a quarter of the country's population. In an anti-colonial and communist state-building struggle, the government defined intellectuals (those with secondary school educations) and French speakers as enemies.¹¹ The regime also sought to entirely destroy ethnic minorities and Buddhist monks; this decision meant that many ethnic and religious groups were rounded up and executed in the Killing Fields alongside those targeted in the classicide.¹² The state plan "purified" Cambodia through political, social, and class lines, along with ethnic and religious massacres.

Of the 8,000+ Bosnian Muslims killed in July of 1995 by the Republika Srpska, the vast majority were men and boys. Once the Serbian forces, under the control of Ratko Mladić, had seized control of the Bosnian refugee centers, the military executed all men of fighting age, citing strategic concerns. The women and girls that were transferred out of the region were raped and sexually abused by their soldier-captors, possibly as a form of gender-based warfare.¹³

In all three genocides, intersectionality is important for analyzing both the dehumanization underlying these acts and the mechanisms by which these groups were removed from certain populations. The list of examples does not stop with these three, however.¹⁴ Because the beneficiaries of an outdated and limited definition of genocide are

¹⁰ "Documenting Numbers of Victims of the Holocaust and Nazi Persecution," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/documenting-numbers-of-victims-of-the-holocaust-and-nazi-persecution>.

¹¹ Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 2013), 119.

¹² Power, *A Problem from Hell*, 119.

¹³ Power, *A Problem from Hell*, 403-404.

¹⁴ For example, I have also not discussed politicides, which often rival genocides in scope. Examples of politicides include the Indonesian Massacre, the Dirty War in Argentina, and Stalinist Purges. Many of these incidents, as well, function as cover-ups for concentrated genocidal movements.

the true perpetrators, and even the criminal punishments for genocides are relatively meager, a definitional change, followed by a restructuring of international genocide response, is essential.

Normative Analysis: Politics, Sociology, Ideology

While academic debates on the root causes of genocide and state violence are ongoing, some general trends have emerged. To understand the current lack of intersectional protections for human persons irrespective of their geographic location, the foundational practices guiding genocide itself must first be analyzed. The ideology of scapegoating, aided by the politics of nationalism and Westphalian sovereignty, appears to be a fundamental cause. Furthermore, intersectional progress is also hindered by a lack of regimes that opt-in to international human rights agreements.

To kill another group of people in a genocidal manner, one must be convinced that the targets are less than human (e.g., subhuman) and unworthy of life. Dehumanization, as Gregory Stanton outlines in the “Ten Stages of Genocide,” is the fourth stage. This stage is crucial because “[d]ehumanization overcomes the normal human revulsion against murder ... [the population is] indoctrinated to believe that ‘[w]e are better off without them.’”¹⁵ In order to physically mobilize to plan, concentrate, and exterminate, perpetrators must first be mentally trained and primed. Considering Stanton’s formulation, we are thus prompted to ask: Through what steps can a group be made to seem “other,” or, in the case of Nazi Germany, a disease in the body of the nation? To answer this question, I (as others) propose we turn to “scapegoating,” blaming a specific group for the problems of the whole society.¹⁶ An “other” takes the blame for the sufferings and sins of the group, and is either physically removed from the group or killed.

Pinning the blame on a minority group is convenient politically and psychologically, especially as a tool to unite a majority against a common enemy. Scapegoating provides a simple, visible solution to the complex problem of governance and societal wellbeing, one that does not fault the masses.¹⁷ However, as effective as scapegoating is for those in power,

¹⁵ Gregory H. Stanton, “10 Stages of Genocide,” <http://genocidewatch.net/genocide-2/8-stages-of-genocide/>.

¹⁶ “Antisemitism.” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/antisemitism-1>.

¹⁷ Consider, for example, the modern example of anti-Asian xenophobia as the coronavirus pandemic swept across the United States.

it is horribly dangerous for the groups it targets. In fact, the next “logical” step is their removal. In interwar Germany, for example, due to the success of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*, the Nazis tapped into longstanding European anti-Semitism to single out the Jewish population as the cause for the German defeat in World War I and ongoing economic ills. Most pointedly, Hitler posited, “If at the beginning of the War and during the War twelve or fifteen thousand of these Hebrew corrupters of the people had been held under poison gas, as happened to hundreds of thousands of our very best German workers in the field, the sacrifice of millions at the front would not have been in vain.”¹⁸ Following Hitler’s ascension to the Chancellorship, German Jews fell victim to the Nuremberg Race Laws of 1935, the *Kristallnacht* attacks in 1938, and ultimately extermination in concentration camps during the Holocaust. Scapegoating and “other-ing” serves as both an ideology and a practice. It seeks to remove a dehumanized (“problematic”) section of the population and unite the larger whole around a shared hatred.

The desire for nationally homogeneous states has gained momentum over the last 500 years, culminating in increased focus on the use of violent force to craft an “ideal” country. Sovereignty, the practice in which “each would acknowledge the domestic structures and religious vocations of its fellow states and refrain from challenging their existence,” is often closely tied to nationalism, which attaches a cultural (and often ethnic) identity to the political power of the political state.¹⁹ Leaders and governments often pervert these interconnected ideologies to generate violent systems of power. As modern militaries and emerging technologies render states more centralized and more powerful, charismatic leaders are able to wield these forces to realize the nations they imagine. In interwar Germany, Hitler’s vision of a perfect society was a homogeneous German state led by those of the Aryan race whom he praises in *Mein Kampf* as “the Prometheus of mankind from whose bright forehead the divine sparks of genius has sprung at all times.”²⁰

Respecting total sovereignty in the Westphalian fashion has historically meant ignoring human rights violations in other jurisdictions, which can be seen in historical responses to genocide. It is politically and financially costly to challenge vestiges of this

¹⁸ Adolf Hitler. *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (London: Pimlico, 1994), 679.

¹⁹ Henry Kissinger, *World Order* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014), 3.

²⁰ Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 290.

form of tacit sovereignty. Few states are willing to shoulder the cost of sending their own soldiers to war if it is not clearly in their strategic interest. While the concept of an international governing body (e.g., the UN) helps to mediate some conflicts regarding who should engage in direct intervention, and when a country has broken the rules, political leaders must voluntarily sign international agreements that would limit their own autonomy. This is, not surprisingly, infrequent.

Despite its relative novelty, intersectional thinking and scholarship is essential in unpacking the ideology of scapegoating. The term “intersectionality,” describing how victims of interlocking systems of oppression must be studied along their multiple identities, has only been in use for a few decades, dating first to Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw’s use of the term in “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex.”²¹ While originally used by Black feminists to describe their individual experiences apart from Black men or White women, the term now encompasses a broader understanding of mixed-identity individuals and groups, including those targeted by political violence and genocide. While women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and other oppressed groups have gained some political foothold in just the past few decades, specific protections from state violence remain unfortunately difficult to enact. The lack of intersectional international political representation—caused by ongoing sexism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, and other oppressive ideologies—prevents significant human rights progress. Efforts to prevent genocide cannot have any real impact until the intersectional ideologies that shape mass violence are addressed.

Ethical Argumentation: Learnings from Catholic Social Teaching

The framework of Catholic Social Teaching (CST), particularly its principles of Life and Dignity of the Human Person, Rights and Responsibilities, and Solidarity, challenge the injustices driving genocide and political violence attacking multiple identities. Founded on the teachings of Saint Aquinas, CST was brought to the forefront of modern theology with the publication of Pope Leo XIII’s landmark social encyclical *Rerum novarum* (c. 1891). It “can be seen in a sense as the Church’s doctrinal pedagogical response to that evolving

²¹ Kimberle Crenshaw. “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics,” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1 (1989): 139-167.

cupido for radical change constantly felt in the world since the Reformation.”²² Thomas Shannon has written that *Rerum novarum*, a document focusing on the rights and responsibilities of the working class, came as “a crystallization of many of these ideas and thus initiated the body of papal encyclicals referred to as social teaching.”²³ Additionally, *Gaudium et Spes* serves as “a major new contribution to modern Catholic social teaching by presenting more explicitly developed theological grounds ... concerned with all human struggles for life and dignity, with building up the solidarity of the human community, and with the humanization of all human activity and work.”²⁴

Pope Francis’s most recent encyclical, *Fratelli tutti* (c. 2020), points to continued emphasis within the Church on fraternity and community-building. Over the past 140 years, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has drawn on social encyclicals like *Rerum novarum* and *Fratelli tutti* to develop seven universal principles of American economic and social justice.

Catholic Social Teaching is uniquely Christian in that it is rooted in Holy Scripture and the teachings of Jesus Christ, yet it remains universal as it has been used as a successful basis for interreligious dialogue. In practice, CST strongly opposes the ideological and political structures discussed in the above section. Thus, CST’s providing of a theology of human rights offers both a theoretical framework and a physical action plan to challenge oppression, especially in Christian-majority states.

The principle of Life and Dignity of the Person explains that human life itself is sacred, and that society should be structured around valuing the human persons. Theologians extrapolate this fundamental value to the prevention of war, explaining that civilian and soldier deaths might be prevented through peacemaking efforts.²⁵ Genesis 1:27 provides guidance, describing the particularly sacred nature of human life: “God created humankind

²² Gerard V. Bradley and E. Christian Brugger, *Catholic Social Teaching: A Volume of Scholarly Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 2.

²³ Thomas Shannon, “Commentary on *Rerum Novarum* (The Condition of Labor),” in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth R. Himes, et al. (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2018), 127.

²⁴ David Hollenbach, “Commentary on *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World),” in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretations*, ed. Kenneth R. Himes, et al. (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2018), 267.

²⁵ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching,” <https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/catholic-social-teaching/seven-themes-of-catholic-social-teaching>.

in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” An injustice against someone made in the image of God is a sin against God. In 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, Paul moreover offers insight into this *imago Dei* tradition in writing: “Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.” This verse serves as a reminder that the Holy Spirit exists in all creation, and in all people.

Evaluating a society based on the extent to which it values life creates space to challenge leaders and systems that disregard the humanity of individuals and groups of human persons. According to CST, murder is damaging to the sacredness of human life because it actively severs a part of God from God's self. War not only costs lives but also reduces a human being to the object of a political motive. If life is valued above all else, war should be unthinkable for every moral leader. In the extreme, a genocide separates an entire population from God. When a state eliminates a group of people, it actively extinguishes a part of God's own being, a uniquely crucial part of God's glorious vision. On an ideological level, to believe that a person is not actually human is to reject the gift of God's creation, and to doubt the omnipotent God's statement that all people are made in God's image. Someone who looks at the “other” and disregards their humanity purposefully turns from God towards the sins of violence and alienation.

The principle of Rights and Responsibilities resembles that of Life and Dignity in its respect for human beings. This principle states that a society can be healthy only when it protects and meets the needs of its people. Here, human dignity and the physical life of a person are directly connected to human rights.²⁶ It is also the duty of the whole community to challenge individuals who refuse to protect the marginalized and the poor. The Gospels demonstrate an orientation towards protecting society's oppressed. The fifth chapter of the Book of Matthew especially emphasizes this commitment in the Beatitudes (5:3-12) and in the following warning (5:19): “[W]hoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.”

In the midst of political violence, it is crucial to protect basic rights through intersectional and multi-identity action. Much like comparable American anti-racist activism in recent years, CST emphasizes thoughtful and intentional action over passivity.

²⁶ USCCB, “Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching.”

Democratic principles, founded upon key historical and philosophical teachings from the Greeks and Enlightenment thinkers, require that the primary concern of the state be to enable human flourishing. A society governed by its people, prioritizing all of the necessary protections for the minority, ought to be purposefully welfare-focused. Sovereignty can still exist so long as the basic rights of citizens are protected. In this way, CST's first two pillars outline how a government ought to treat its citizens, providing theological support for regimes that aim to protect human rights and do not pervert 'human flourishing' to mean not only mere bodily safety, but this and more.

Finally, the principle of Solidarity—the idea of being one worldwide family across any differences—helps to expand the principles of dignity, life, and rights offered by the other pillars of CST. 1 Corinthians further encapsulates the idea that CST and its embrace of intersectionality and encouragement of universal solidarity are meaningful ways of dismantling mass violence and genocide. The Apostle Paul posits that “there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it” (1 Corinthians 12:25). Solidarity must move beyond national boundaries, calling for a recognition of a wider shared community that does not fall under a specific jurisdiction.²⁷ This international society, however, is distinct from a globalized hegemonic system that eliminates diversity and forcibly assimilates the “other.” By emphasizing respect for the human person, solidarity aims to celebrate an overarching human race that is both united and diverse, one people with many unique cultures. This noble cause of acting as individual states on behalf of the whole human community is essentially the broadest form of collective action possible. This action requires states to accept responsibility for holding each other accountable for violence committed against their own people and to uproot extraterritorial injustice by a collective show of power on behalf of the marginalized.

CST demonstrates theology, and specifically Catholic theology, can guide national and international decision-making in intervention and crisis-response. Additionally, the pillars of CST are readily complemented by an intersectional framework, just as they, I think, necessitate such a framework. The intersectionally marginalized in society are deserving of dignity, rights, and an international order ready to protect them. Genocide and other forms

²⁷ USCCB, “Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching.”

of identity-based state violence attack the sacredness of the human being as the image of God. Yet still, the task remains to determine how CST, a theological framework, can initiate active and concrete anti-genocide practice.

David Hollenbach and the Common Good

Since his ordination in 1971, Jesuit priest David Hollenbach has been a leading scholar of CST in the realms of human rights and solidarity. He has facilitated advocacy and peacemaking efforts through Jesuit Refugee Services, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and his many teaching positions. Notably, Hollenbach applies CST to ongoing political and social issues, demonstrating his ideas' practical efficacy. In his 2002 monograph *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, Hollenbach analyzes structural challenges in modern political economics, human rights, and foreign policy by demonstrating the usefulness of a dialogue-centered theological approach to solidarity. His practical approach allows for pivotal breakthroughs in policy.²⁸

Hollenbach's CST-informed approach to modern social and political issues focuses on the "common good," placing this concept in conversation with everyday relationships in order to highlight the importance of a human rights framework for international relations. In his review of Hollenbach's book, David Craig summarizes Hollenbach's understanding of the common good: "The common good exists between people. It shows in what people have, use, and need with others ... they depend on networks of human interaction structured in large part by rights and institutions."²⁹ Hollenbach views globalization as an invitation to identify the common good in general economic and strategic interdependence, especially insofar as he has identified serious issues in the current state of human rights: "[T]ransnational issues that go beyond obvious interests of individual citizens, such as protection of human rights in other countries and assistance to poor nations, still receive low public support."³⁰

In many cases, "globalization" is used exclusively to describe economic developments or social assimilation, rather than to envision a united world. It is difficult to

²⁸ See David Hollenbach, S.J., *The Common and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

²⁹ David M. Craig, review of *The Common Good and Christian Ethics* by David Hollenbach, S.J., *The Journal of Religion* 84, no. 1 (January 2004): 140.

³⁰ Hollenbach. *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, 51.

predict how emphasizing human rights within one country impacts others, but some level of impact is inevitable because societies depend on others for ideas, protection, and solidarity. Refusing to actively advocate for justice destroys communication and goodwill between involved countries. Furthermore, Hollenbach posits that human rights and development are heavily linked to CST: “In short, a social vision that does not regard human connection as central to the attainment of well-being lacks the conceptual tools needed to think through these new issues raised by globalization.”³¹ Additionally, Hollenbach states that “the protection of human rights is part of the common good, not an individualistic alternative to the common good. That protection also suggests that a universalist human rights ethic is required by a Christian commitment to solidarity.”³² Those who commit genocide break this solidarity, undermining the common good of the world and ultimately causing far more universal devastation than a domestic mass killing might appear to have.

Hollenbach’s framework, while distinctly Catholic and Christian, is translatable through dialogue and positive action with regions that are not predominantly Christian or monotheistic. In enacting the theory of the “common good” as an anti-genocide practice, Hollenbach acknowledges the role of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 in prompting strong international solidarity and challenging the most destructive aspects of sovereignty:

The Universal Declaration has become the charter document of an international human rights regime composed of overlapping global, regional, national, and non-governmental institutions ... these institutions, often working together, have raised increasingly strong challenges to the sovereignty of states by seeking to hold them accountable to norms that reach well beyond their national interests as traditionally understood. Such challenges were evident in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda’s first-ever genocide conviction in September 1998 and again when Slobodan Milošević was handed over to The Hague in 2001 to be tried for crimes against humanity during the horrors that occurred in Bosnia.³³

Hollenbach approaches the challenges of a just intervention in a globalized world. Although preferable, it is not necessarily likely that states will hold themselves accountable. Solidarity bridges that gap between the problem of self-interested foreign policy and globalized human rights. Particularly in the African context, instances of American and

³¹ Hollenbach. *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, 58.

³² Hollenbach. *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, 160.

³³ Hollenbach. *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, 217.

European intervention in weaker sovereign states are often interpreted as economic neo-colonialism. Hollenbach deduces that changes in global public opinion of governments, using new channels of communication, may find a solution without undermining governments by voting out or removing their violent leaders:

Incipient movement of public opinion toward a stronger sense of responsibility across international borders is evident on a variety of fronts. Instantaneous communication makes the territorial borders between nation-states almost entirely porous to the transmission of information about what is going on in the larger world. Governments have little control over the flow of politically relevant information. This information explosion opens extensive new possibilities for action by non-governmental organizations with grass-roots constituencies.³⁴

As non-government organizations increasingly support trans-national human rights, communication that lets us see the “other” more frequently begins to emerge, evidencing the positive aspects of globalization. In sum, the CST principles of Life and Dignity of the Human Person, Rights and Responsibilities, and Solidarity work together to dismantle the ideologies that perpetuate genocide. CST, moreover, can be applied on the international stage to analyze how countries respond to human rights violations. The current crisis can be solved by making theological and ethical principles practical.

The Practical Application of CST

Now that we have described the issue of genocide and analyzed it through a framework that addresses problematic ideologies, the final step is to ask how this theory can be put into practice. In this section, three points will be instrumental for identifying a solution: an expansion and reframing of the word “genocide,” a broad cultural and intellectual shift towards solidarity, and an international legal effort led by a new American presidential administration. While simply reopening an international political conversation about genocide is no easy feat, hope may lie in the potential for exceptional American leadership on the international stage.

Before engaging with international institutions, there must be new, clear definitions around genocide. While practical accommodations could be negotiated to ensure widespread adoption of the agreement, a strong initial statement of a solution to the problem of genocide is necessary to provide a foundation for international discussion. Previous iterations of an

³⁴ Hollenbach. *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*, 236.

international definition for genocide have failed to promote intersectionality and/or have been unclear about the role of the state. The option offered below attempts to address both the intersectionality of the victims as well as the role of the state in dehumanizing them.³⁵

I propose a tri-sectioned approach to highlight the many intersections of identities that are targeted by policies of dehumanization, persecution, and extermination. Politicide and classicide should be recognized alongside genocide as three types of state political violence. The first two are based on political and economic standing, respectively, whereas genocide is grounded in personal identity. Additions to the four groups already protected by genocide (race, ethnicity, nationality, and religion) would demonstrate an international resolve that they would be treated with equal respect. I offer the following as new definitions, using the Greek and Latin forms when possible:

Term	“[a]cts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a group based on _____”
Politicide	political belief or affiliation
Classicide	class or economic status
Genocide	nationality, ethnicity, race, or religion
Gendercide	gender
Femicide	gender (female)
Androicide	gender (male)
Queericide ³⁶	sexuality
Linguicide ³⁷	language spoken
Transcide	cisgender/transgender

³⁵ Rudolph Rummel, a former professor of political science at the University of Hawai’i, posited that “democide” would be a useful term for holding the state accountable for its violence. Democide, the killing of a person by their government, encompasses more of those who are killed than even the most expansive definitions of genocide. It is too broad a term for the phenomenon of genocide. In terms of identity, it would not speak to the particularity of any targeted groups or the specific hardships they faced. Additionally, the term would not likely be internationally popular for ratification, as most non-democratic nations (and quite a few that are) participate in extrajudicial killings.

³⁶ Queericide has been previously used in a handful of articles, notably in Abigail Morris’s “The Brutality of ‘Queericide’ in South Africa” and Patrick Vernon’s “Queering Genocide.” The term could alternatively encompass the entire LGBTQ+ population; in this article I include “transcide” as an addition to highlight the particular challenges facing trans people.

³⁷ Linguicide alternatively has meant the general extinction of a language. The purposeful elimination of people who speak certain languages may shed some light on the complexity of language death as a whole.

Potenscide	disability
Aeonicide	age

These terms, with similar phrasing to that of the Convention’s term for genocide, can help us better organize forms of violence that take place in any given war or macro-human rights violation situation. For example, understanding the atrocities at Srebrenica as a genocide (as it pertains to personal identities of an ethnic and religious group), with elements of gendicide (including androicide and femicide), is both more comprehensive and useful than a non-intersectional depiction. Describing the Cambodian Genocide as not only a genocide but also an act of politicide, classicide, and linguicide allows for a more nuanced understanding and a more widely-available justice-seeking program for victims. Even without using new definitions in justice-seeking, using them generally in conversation would help shift the academic perspective that drive political responses to genocidal crises.

Leaders are the product of their environments, education, and supporting population. A culture of solidarity is difficult to cultivate. Further, as Hollenbach has mentioned, preventing foreign human rights abuses is not usually a public priority. Some practical changes in fields and organizations that directly shape the political arena may create an environment of increased public interest.

A primary solution to the issue may come from redefining media coverage about state violence. To generate pressure for specific changes through public activism, the news media’s attention must be widespread and long-lasting. Continuous media coverage of ongoing events, rather than a sensationalist or headline-grabbing approach, is crucial. By literally showing the faces of the oppressed and sharing their stories, as Emmanuel Levinas describes, we are brought into a new emotional closeness with the victims.³⁸³⁹ The progression of the field of comparative human rights and social movements is also promising for bringing separate demographics together in solidarity. Notably, in her bestselling book

³⁸ Emmanuel Lévinas and Alphonso Lingis, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 207.

³⁹ The term “poverty porn” widely encompasses the phenomenon of media outlets, charities, or celebrities using the images of the marginalized groups for personal gain in the form of views or donations. However, carefully informing the public through storytelling, with consent and without self-interest, is necessary to generate social action and a culture of solidarity.

Caste: The Origins of our Discontents, Isabel Wilkerson highlights and examines the lives of African-Americans, Nazi Jews, and lower-caste Indians to highlight how American racism functions as a structural caste.⁴⁰ Would a groundbreaking book or documentary about police brutality in the U.S. on China, Sudan, or Myanmar lead to a culture of solidarity with the Uighurs, the Furs, or the Rohingya? It's certainly possible. As the field grows and becomes filled with important multinational works, a stronger consensus of universal human rights emerges.

Non-government organizations, including the Catholic Church, are often values-driven and have a missional pastoral goal to advocate through solidarity.⁴¹ Millions of followers listen to and reflect upon papal directorates. Nonprofits, religious denominations, and academic organizations are in a unique position of power as non-state advocates when actual governments might feel constrained by political repercussions. To encourage change in national government policy, these organizations must be able to place and sustain pressure over a long period of time, as well as to effectively mobilize grassroots public support, through values-based campaigns.

The United Nations is the most important international actor in the implementation of international legal reform. The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide is a product of early UN discussions. With 152-member parties, it has near-universal international approval and recognition. The goal behind the UN is to foster a sense of public collective action, where many countries signal their cooperation in the effort to promote the common good. A brief analysis of treaties in “Chapter 4: Human Rights” of the United Nations Treaty Collection yields promising results—multiple intersectional protection agreements have been adopted by the majority of countries. Considering that these treaties enforced infrequently, and primarily serve as guidelines, they have incentivized regimes to enter into international human rights agreements that may make them appear more democratic and free. More regimes are likely to join these international human rights

⁴⁰ Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* (New York: Random House, 2020).

⁴¹ It is important to note that all Christian churches must reflect and produce reparations for its own complicity in genocide. The forced conversion and “civilizing” of millions in the Americas, Africa, and Asia during the age of colonial expansion was founded upon a theology of white superiority. Upholding a post-colonial or decolonial Liberation Theology, if the Catholic Church means to seriously do so, necessitates purposefully seeking justice and accountability for crimes committed within and on behalf of the faith. In order for the Christian church in general, and the Catholic Church more specifically, to uphold its values of justice-seeking and peace-building, then it must reckon with and repair the damage caused by the institutions that have wielded the faith.

agreements and appear to be committed because lax enforcement minimizes the punishment.⁴²

The most prominent country that has not ratified many of these human rights agreements is the United States.⁴³ The concept of American Exceptionalism in this case illustrates how the U.S. government positions itself outside the very structures it championed in the creation of a new liberal world order. This historiographical myth signals an unwillingness to participate in the international justice-seeking effort. Additionally, the United States has not ratified the Rome Statute, which established the International Criminal Court (ICC), as the United States' signature was removed under the George W. Bush Administration. The ICC prosecuted cases of genocide in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, while aiding the ongoing cases relating to Cambodia. The courts may be slow, but without support from the leadership of the United States, they will truly never become an avenue for reparations.⁴⁴

In order to effectuate the intersectional protection amendments that this article has described, ones which would positively reflect the United States' foreign policy interests, American leaders must agree to sacrifice military power by agreeing to international human rights agreements. The Biden Administration has authority to sign international agreements prior to congressional ratification. Beyond the U.S., the signatories of the other global powers would serve as an extremely meaningful sign of solidarity. Again, the challenge is that regimes cannot be easily incentivized to accept such agreements, and that ratification in one country does not mean another has to abide by the agreement. The United States and other countries must therefore resort to coercion. Diplomatic and economic forms of coercion would be the most desirable potential avenues to encourage treaty agreement, such as removing embassies, enforcing sanctions, boycotting events, etc. Ongoing targeted pressure, especially when applied multilaterally (such as by a unified Security Council) could also influence weaker countries to support the humanitarian goals of these agreements.

⁴² United Nations, "UN Treaty Depository," https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ParticipationStatus.aspx?clang=_en.

⁴³ The United States is only a signatory for Sections 8 & 15, meaning it does not consider them to be binding, and the ratification of the agreement on genocide was not until the late 1980s.

⁴⁴ Concerns surrounding ICC ratification could comprise another essay entirely. However, if presidential administrations are concerned about their own members being tried in international courts for war crimes, then deeper questions concerning American values and human rights must be probed.

To address the delayed interventions, the implementation of Genocide Watch’s “10 Stages of Genocide” warning system with UN peacekeeping forces would help create objective markers that necessitate certain forms of international response. Genocide Watch recommends intervention at “Stage 8: Persecution,” though the UN actually ought to seek intervention as soon as a country enters the “Stage 7: Planning” phase. When leaders begin planning, the population they control is already primed and expecting violence because the moral suasion exercised by political leaders in scapegoating a certain population is already well-underway. Placing foreign troops in friendly neighboring nations signals a resolve to intervene and could be effective deterrence for political leaders demonstrating disrespect for fundamental humanity. A decapitation strike, which removes hostile leadership without an invasion, is also possible if the regime is personalistic and has not set its plans in motion. If the actions do continue to escalate despite deterrence, then the required troops are available to prevent “Persecution” from becoming the “Stage 9: Extermination,” when the majority of killings take place.⁴⁵

While international peacekeeping missions have not been as effective as many had initially hoped, they still offer a stronger solution than alliance-based security. An organization like NATO might feel more fragile than the United Nations, but it has a military force built for rapid response. It is worth noting, however, that an organized unit of Western liberal democracies countries exerting its will on weaker governments seems far too much like neo-colonialism, even if interventions would be rare. Voluntary regional alliances that focus on international human rights guarantees would also be welcome (or perhaps additions to in-place ones like the Quadrilateral Security Alliance (QUAD) or Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), but having security silos worldwide is not an effective long-term plan. The United Nations, despite its flaws, is likely to remain the most optimal response tool.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to create a unified understanding of many different forms of identity-based state violence, demonstrating that more focused research into the categories

⁴⁵ Gregory H. Stanton, “10 Stages of Genocide,” Genocide Watch, 2016, <http://genocidewatch.net/genocide-2/8-stages-of-genocide/>.

of politicicide, classicide, and genocide are essential. The action plan offered in the final section will only become viable if more scholarship is devoted to the formulation of a practical strategy for the implementation of human rights agreements. Bringing the entire field of state violence studies towards an intersectional approach is necessary, however, for responding to these abominable events in the twenty-first century. The implications of such a shift cannot be understated in the analysis of international security and human rights. Only with comprehensive dialogue and a moral willingness to take action at the highest levels of political leadership can the plight intersectional genocides finally end. The ideal goal of ending all genocide, along with classicide and politicicide, will take years of concerted effort, along with major philosophical and structural changes in wider fields.

Christian churches, and particularly the Catholic Church, ought to seek common ground with President Biden to sponsor a new era of international human rights. Instead of focusing on wedge issues, these organizations should prioritize advocating for institutional and policy changes, in line with CST, that would appeal to the Biden Administration. With regards to human rights, Biden's team has already signaled a strong shift towards recognizing genocide⁴⁶ and other forms of state violence, a promising sign for future collaboration. Indeed, a push for solidarity and restorative justice might be well-received.

Without a serious and concerted effort to end the cycle of violence, it will continue to persist.⁴⁷ German pastor Martin Niemöller (d. 1984) well-described the essence of the need for solidarity to address genocides. The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum notes that, while Niemöller's famous early post-War quote has been rewritten by countless groups for their own movements, "his [original] point was that Germans had been complicit through their silence in the Nazi imprisonment, persecution, and murder of millions of people."⁴⁸

Genocide is a challenge for all humanity, and we must rise up as one people:

⁴⁶ In late April 2021, Biden has acknowledged that Turkey committed genocide in Armenia. It may seem hollow at first, being roughly 100 years late, but it is still promising. Turkey remains a NATO member and a crucial ally for the United States in creating and managing strategies against Russian and Middle Eastern threats, even as it drifts in an increasingly authoritarian direction. Multiple presidents have had the opportunity to make a formal recognition; the risks have not changed, but the prioritization of human rights diplomacy seemingly has.

⁴⁷ Genocide Watch contains a list of countries and regions in a current "emergency"; as of May 1st, 2021 there are a dozen: China, Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan), Syria, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Yemen, Iraq, Myanmar, Nigeria (Boko Haram), Central African Republic, Somalia, and Sudan. Experts can disagree on which of these should be considered official genocides, but evidence behind many of these is still damning, and the high count is startling.

⁴⁸ Martin Niemöller. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/martin-niemoller-first-they-came-for-the-socialists>

First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

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