Can There Be a Political Science of the Holocaust?

Charles King

The substantial literature on mass violence, from ethnic cleansing to civil wars, has paid surprisingly little attention to the largest instance of mass violence in human history: the Holocaust. When political scientists have approached the subject, the trend has been to treat the Holocaust as a single case, comparing it—sometimes controversially—with other instances of genocide such as Rwanda or Cambodia. But historically grounded work on the destruction of European Jewry can help illuminate the microfoundations of violent politics, unpack the relationship between a ubiquitous violence-inducing ideology (antisemitism) and highly variable murder, and recast old questions about the origins and evolution of the Holocaust itself. After reviewing new trends in history-writing, I highlight opportunities for social-scientifically oriented research centered on the interaction of state power, local communities, and violent mobilization in five areas: military occupation, repertoires of violence, alliance politics, genocidal policymaking, and resistance. My conclusion addresses thorny issues of comparison, morality, and memory.

It is an odd fact that the twentieth century's most infamous instance of state-led political and social violence—the Holocaust—has remained largely peripheral to political science. Over the last two decades, the politics of mass killing has become a vital research field in international relations, comparative politics, and security studies. Scholars have ranged from micropolitical to structural explanations in investigating the onset of mass killing, the role of states and non-state actors, insurgent recruitment, memorialization, intergenerational narratives of violence, and other themes. Hypotheses are sharper, datasets more capacious, ethnographies more fine-grained, and conclusions more amenable to replication.[1]

Yet despite an enormous archival fund in many languages, comprising everything from oral testimonies to state-level paper trails, as well as a vast secondary literature in history and the cross-disciplinary field of Holocaust studies, the Holocaust has been outside the normal purview of political science. At worst, the approaches and aspirations of historians and political scientists are sometimes pitched as fundamentally at odds. Two of the most ambitious comparative treatments of genocide in recent years—Christian Gerlach's historically oriented *Extremely Violent Societies* and Manus Midlarsky's social-scientifically informed *The Killing Trap*—braid the Holocaust into a number of other cases.[2] But both also begin their theory-building with the observation that genocide studies has heretofore been unhelpfully dominated by either historians or political scientists—propositions that cannot be simultaneously true. Four intellectual reasons for this standoffishness suggest themselves. First is the vexed issue of the Holocaust's uniqueness. Historians, theologians, and scholars of Jewish studies continue to debate the nature of the Holocaust experience; explanations for the destruction of European Jewry have included a uniquely German form of antisemitism, antisemitism in general, modernity, and other causes.[3] The high-stakes nature of these conversations has made political scientists—like the public at large—rightly cautious about treating the Holocaust as just another data-generating event.[4] When they have tackled Holocaust-related themes, until very recently the trend among political scientists has been to replay the uniqueness debate using the language of social science rather than asking what this particular episode might reveal about mass killing in general or vice versa.[5]

Second is the privileged place of memory in Holocaust discourse, a way of speaking and thinking that still provides a sense of meaning to individual survivors as well as a foundation narrative for a modern state, Israel.[6] The

Charles King is Professor of International Affairs and Government at Georgetown University (kingch@georgetown.edu). He is the author of five books, most recently Extreme Politics: Nationalism, Violence, and the End of Eastern Europe *(Oxford, 2010) and* Odessa: Genius and Death in a City of Dreams *(W. W. Norton, 2011), which received the National Jewish Book Award.* *For comments and insights, thanks go to Ariel Ahram, Jessica Allina-Pisano, Daniel Byman, Evgeny Finkel, Lee Ann Fujii, Jeffrey Kopstein, Eric Langenbacher, Robert Lieber, Harris Mylonas, Margaret Paxson, Zak Taylor, participants in the Postcommunist Politics Seminar at George Washington University and the joint GUITARS/CRITICS seminar at Georgetown University (organized by Henry Hale, James Vreeland, and Desha Girod), three anonymous reviewers for this journal, and Jeffrey Isaac.*

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sheer scale of Holocaust victimhood, its direct link to the long history of European antisemitism, and the memorialization of both in museums, monuments, and popular culture, have given rise to a lattice-work of "public memory" that can present a challenge to scholars seeking to analyze events in a new light. How does one deal analytically with an event of world-historical suffering, and what is the appropriate moral stance of the scholar whose analysis might run counter to deeply held narratives? This problem exists for historians, of course, but it is especially acute in the social sciences, where comparison and generalization are inherent parts of the scholarly enterprise.

Third is a coding issue—a problem that exists for most studies of large-scale violence, in fact.[7] Is the Holocaust a single event or many, and if the latter, how ought these to be translated into meaningful dependent variables? Nazi Germany's policy of the "Final Solution to the Jewish Question," the German-run system of concentration camps and killing centers, the atrocities committed by SS units (*Einsatzgruppen*) during their advance into Poland and the Soviet Union, the actions of Germany's allies such as Romania, Hungary, Vichy France, Italy, and Croatia, and the town- and village-level elimination of Jews and other minorities, sometimes at the hands of their neighbors, are all part of the Holocaust experience. Perhaps more than in other instances of genocide, even bracketing the Holocaust in time depends on how one defines it: 1941–45 if the task is to explain industrial killing as state policy, 1941–42 if the focus is the major informal killing operations of the SS and Wehrmacht, 1933–45 if the theme is the evolution of anti-Jewish policy overall, or at least 1920 forward if the issue is the origins of the Nazis' racist ideology. Precisely because each of these subjects has been the basis of massive historical research, political scientists face the challenge of classifying events in ways that accord with a contentious and multifaceted historiography.[8] This conundrum has tended to reproduce itself in the growing field of genocide studies, of which Holocaust studies might be seen as a special part. By reifying a particular episode as a distinct, self-evident, and bounded event—the Armenian genocide, the Cambodian genocide, the Bosnian genocide—scholars have tended to predetermine the unit of analysis, rather than thinking of macrohistory as a cluster of non-case-specific phenomena more amenable to comparative analysis. Moreover, since the case population in comparative genocide studies normally consists of macrohistorical events identified ex ante as "genocide," discrete acts of mass violence outside of genocidal contexts—such as lynchings or pogroms—rarely feature into the analysis. For these reasons, genocide studies and the literature on substate violence are at best estranged cousins, especially when it comes to the Second World War.[9]

Finally, the study of the Holocaust has long been tied to the temporality and geography of the events themselves. For historians a key part of the explanation for the Holocaust is that it happened in a particular place and at a particular time: mainly—in terms of the sites of death of the largest number of victims—the German-occupied borderlands of Poland, Belarus, Lithuania, and Ukraine following the rise of the Nazi Party in Germany. For historians chronology and space are often privileged avenues of causation. The macrohistorical explanations that flow from them are well-known: German and European antisemitism, the perils of modernity in central Europe, the ruthless efficiency and bungling callousness of Nazi bureaucracy. This disciplinary predisposition also accords with the commonsense view that the Holocaust is in some fundamental sense a German story, from Adolf Hitler to Oskar Schindler.

However, for political science time and place are variables to be tested rather than starting points for analysis. Whether historical context or geographic location matter at all in explaining a particular phenomenon is itself a subject of inquiry, not an assumption structuring the research design. This scholarly difference means that political science approaches to the Holocaust must begin by reframing some of the basic questions posed by the historical scholarship. It also pushes social scientists in general to regard with skepticism the causal robustness of the work of generations of talented historians. All this, to say the least, takes *chutzpah*.

If historians believe that political scientists play fast and loose with the facts, and political scientists complain that historians have been equally cavalier about causality, there is probably considerable room for cooperation. I highlight the opportunities for social-scientifically oriented research on the Second World War and argue specifically for the development of a new political science of the Holocaust. I show how historically grounded work can help illuminate the microfoundations of violent politics, unpack the relationship between a ubiquitous violence-inducing ideology (antisemitism) and highly variable murder, and recast old questions about the origins and evolution of the Holocaust itself.

Yet what is the value in revisiting an event whose macrolevel causes seem settled? To frame the problem this way is like asking for a political scientist to explain the Renaissance. The macrohistorical phenomenon is so large and multilayered that a social science of it seems meaningless, or perhaps too meaningful. However, recent work within Holocaust studies has revealed a vast field of variation—from the identity of perpetrators, to the possibility of resistance and survivorship, to the evolution of mass killing as state policy. While political scientists might not be in the best position to gainsay the ideographic work of Holocaust scholars, they are well placed to map and explain patterned variation in group behavior. The Holocaust is thus best seen not as a single "case" but as a macrohistorical matrix of highly variable forms of mass killing, resistance, and survival. In seeking to understand one of the

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most atrocious forms of political behavior—the purposive annihilation of an entire people—political scientists have barely begun to explore the galaxy lying at the center of the twentieth-century experience.

Moreover, in the last two decades, a new generation of research on ethnic war, territorial conflict, and mass killing has largely proceeded by bracketing the Holocaust. This body of work has rarely drawn on the "index case"[10] of twentieth-century political and social violence. Yet just as a theory of revolution ought to reveal something important about 1789 and a theory of democratization ought to illuminate the causes of the "third wave," so too our theories of how small numbers of people are able to kill a great many others ought to be able to speak to the specific causes of Holocaust-era death. Until we delve more deeply into the gigantic array of sources presented by the Holocaust, we will continue to build theories of violence that, however elegant or falsifiable, speak only indirectly to a set of cases that tragically defined the modern human condition.

On the face of things, the Holocaust may well reconfirm some of what we believe about violence in general. The intensely local logics of killing as well as the relationship between selective violence and territorial control, both stressed in the work of Stathis Kalyvas, seem to map reasonably well the reciprocal horrors committed by Nazi and Soviet forces during their sequential occupations of eastern Europe.[11] That model is particularly apposite in a context where local grievances interacted with a Kalyvasian "master narrative" par excellence: deeply rooted antisemitism. But other aspects of the Holocaust are likely to challenge the findings drawn from different times and places. Why were the moral and emotional imperatives that pushed *campesinos* in El Salvador to transform themselves into insurgents so remarkably weak among Jewish communities in parts of occupied eastern Europe?[12] Why were the availability of state-supported thugs or the strategic calculations of war-time belligerents—common causal themes in the literature on massacres and genocide—imperfect predictors of the specific patterns of death across Eastern Europe?[13] And if the fear and greed prompted by state breakdown and civil war are such powerful motivators for mass killing, as they seemed to be in Rwanda, why did so many Jews die in conditions that were by comparison stable, secure, and orderly?[14]

Indeed, several puzzles at the heart of the study of mass violence appear nowhere in starker relief than in the context of the Holocaust:

- Where, why, and how does military occupation enable mass killing?
- Do genocidal perpetrators teach local collaborators how to kill, or do they learn it from them along the way?
- Under what conditions do allies of genocidal regimes cooperate in a high-cost policy—the mass murder of civilians?
- What are the institutional mechanics behind a state policy of mass death?
- In conditions of large-scale violence, why and how do civilians mobilize against it, either by taking up arms themselves or by engaging in collective action to shield intended victims?

The answers to these questions may appear profoundly overdetermined. Everything from cultural antisemitism to the maniacal ravings of Adolf Hitler pointed toward the systematic destruction of European Jews, the enthusiastic participation of Nazi-allied governments and civilians, and a pattern of rescue and resistance that owed more to individual heroism than social structure. However, even in this likeliest of environments, death, collaboration, and survivorship took on patterns that were unexpected and confounding.

Drawing on emerging trends within history-writing and historically-informed social science, I first survey contemporary changes in scholarly agendas and approaches to the Holocaust. I then identify some of the major questions in the field and sketch a research program for political science centered on the interaction of state power, local communities, and violent mobilization in five areas: military occupation, repertoires of violence, alliance politics, genocidal policymaking, and resistance. Just as social-scientifically oriented research can enrich Holocaust studies, Holocaust-era violence has the potential to refine our understanding of the perennial self-destructiveness of states and societies—a problem that attended the wars in Yugoslavia and the Caucasus, the genocide in Rwanda, and the collapse of countries from Somalia to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I offer five specific preliminary findings that challenge and recast some of what we believe about mass killing, from the role of states as makers of genocide to the determinants of resistance. I conclude by addressing issues of comparison, morality, and memory—especially the question of the uniqueness of the Holocaust and the ethical imperative to acknowledge human suffering.

Beyond Auschwitz

How one answers questions about the Holocaust has always been a function of when one asks them. After 1945 in the West the term "holocaust" (with lower-case "h") usually referred to the atomic blasts over Hiroshima and Nagasaki or the dire prospect of nuclear war between the superpowers. In the Soviet Union and communist Europe, Jewish victims were rarely named as such, with monuments erected instead to "peaceful citizens" who had perished at the hands of Nazi invaders.

Despite a string of war crimes trials overseen by Allied and other officials and running from the initial Nuremberg judgments through the Adolf Eichmann affair of 1961 and beyond, public perception of the Holocaust as a

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single, bounded event grew gradually over time. Anne Frank's diary was published in 1947, translated into English in 1952, and made into a film in 1959. Hannah Arendt's dispatches from the Eichmann trial exposed the mind of a perpetrator to public scrutiny.[15] In 1985 Claude Lanzmann's monumental film *Shoah* portrayed Jewish suffering through the lives of real survivors, witnesses, and killers, all with harrowing testimonies.

Scholarship, too, took time to ramp up, as well as to enshrine certain key themes as central to Holocaust studies. Hugh Trevor-Roper's influential *The Last Days of Hitler* contained only three references to Jews, two of them quoting Hitler himself.[16] William Shirer's bestselling *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* did give serious attention to Nazi anti-Jewish policies (although it did not contain the word "Holocaust").[17] Still, Shirer's treatment of the mass killing of civilians was secondary to other concerns, such as diplomatic wrangling, the movement of frontlines, and the military turning points at Stalingrad and El Alamein. It was only with the pioneering research of Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews* that the Holocaust began to be seen as a major and essential component of the war.[18] Earlier historians had painstakingly documented the origins and development of the Final Solution, but Hilberg—a political scientist by training and departmental affiliation—emphasized the bureaucratic dimensions of German policy rather than the machinations of a small group of Nazi sadists. That approach opened up new avenues into the interaction of state and society in Germany, its partner countries, and occupied Europe.

Research expanded rapidly from the 1960s forward. The structure of Nazi decision-making and bureaucracy, the Holocaust's relationship to European modernity, the intricacies of Nazi ideology and racial "science," Germany's colonial plans for the Slavic lands to the east, the nature of everyday life in the Third Reich, and the particular role of women, camp guards, business elites, and cultural figures in Germany and its occupied lands came to feature prominently in a vast field of study.[19] If the Normandy landings of June 6, 1944, became the popular symbol of the war in the West—however skewed that image might be—the Holocaust now took on an even greater mantle: as the representative experience of the cataclysmic twentieth century overall.

Precisely because of the rapid growth of Holocaust scholarship over the past half century, it is tempting to believe that the study of it is an over-plowed field. Indeed, as early as the 1950s, reviewers of Hilberg's manuscript of *The Destruction of the European Jews* were already complaining that it simply remapped well-known territory.[20] However, in the 1990s the opening of archives in the former communist world presented an unimaginable wealth of new information to scholars. That archival base, coupled with the emergence of a younger generation of historians trained in the relevant regional languages (in addition to German) and predisposed to view history in a comparative and transnational frame, has injected new life into the field. The result is that scholars are now beginning to understand how little was actually known about the Holocaust writ large, beyond the details of German policy formulation, antisemitic legislation, and the horrors of the camp system. Four trends are particularly meaningful to social scientists.

Disaggregating the Holocaust

Rather than one big thing, the Holocaust might now be described as an array of event categories. In Christopher Browning's terms, the Holocaust involved three separate "clusters of genocidal projects": euthanasia and "racial purification" directed against the disabled and Sinti and Roma (Gypsies) within the Third Reich; the removal of primarily Slavic populations to Germany's east; and the Final Solution proper, that is, the attempted mass murder of every Jew residing anywhere within Germany's sphere of influence.[21] (The list of persecuted groups—those targeted by the Nazis in ways short of genocide—would of course be longer.) Pulling apart the many threads of the Holocaust allows scholars to understand the origins and evolution of policy and practice in ways that thinking of it as a single happening does not.

This trend has entailed de-centering the concentration camp as the quintessential experience. The camp system—especially the labor and death facility at Auschwitz but also killing centers such as Chelmno, Treblinka, Sobibor, Majdanek, and Belzec, all in Poland—was a crucial element in the Nazi plan for exterminating Europe's Jews. Because of the horrors of life and death in the Nazi-run facilities, the camp experience has long been central to Holocaust studies and popular memory. The architecture of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington, DC, reflects the industrial aesthetic of train depots and detention facilities, in everything from the lobby décor to the interior design of elevators. The camps are thus representative of the Holocaust in two ways: in the loose sense of standing in for the Holocaust overall in public discourse and in the more scholarly sense of typifying the way in which most killings occurred.

However, as Timothy Snyder has pointed out, two features of the camp system raise questions about its place at the core of Holocaust studies.[22] First, a large proportion of victims did not perish in the archipelago of camps and death facilities. Instead, they died through mass executions, typically shootings over tank traps, ravines, and pits as the SS and Wehrmacht pushed eastward after the attack on the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. In all, nearly half of the roughly six million Jews shot, gassed, or starved during the war died without ever seeing a sealed train, a jackbooted camp guard, or the infamous "Arbeit macht

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frei" sign at the entrance to Auschwitz. In this sense, the "Holocaust by bullets," as it has been called, represented a major but largely silent dimension of the Final Solution. Documenting life in camps and ghettoes has been ongoing since the Second World War and is now the subject of a multivolume work coordinated by the USHMM.[23] Yet the systematic collection of micro-level information on killing actions by German and other forces in Poland and the Soviet Union has been, until recently, mainly the project of a single Catholic priest.[24]

Second, there is an analytical bias in the evidence related to the camps. We know of the terrible suffering endured inside the major Nazi concentration camps precisely because significant numbers of people survived. The most famous—the writers Primo Levi and Elie Wiesel, the psychiatrist Viktor Frankl—left essential testimonies of the abysmal conditions they endured.[25] Other witnesses—Anne Frank, the Protestant rescuer Corrie Ten Boom—told stories of evasion and resistance in occupied western Europe that still shape popular images of the Holocaust.[26] But the millions of Jews who perished in the death facilities of Poland and the killing fields of the Soviet Union left little record. Several of the mass killing events—usually called "actions" after the contemporary German term *Aktionen*—are well known to specialists, for example, the murder of 23,600 Jews at Kamenets-Podolsky in western Ukraine in August 1941, the killing of more than 33,000 Jews at Babi Yar in Kiev in September 1941, and the beating and shooting of 9,000 Jews in Kovno, Lithuania, in October 1941. Although these atrocities remain unfamiliar outside the Holocaust studies field, such mass killings throughout the eastern reaches of the Nazi empire were the way in which millions of Jews and other victims—as well as their tormentors—experienced the Holocaust.

In fact, the variation in experience across Europe was profound, with Jews being protected in some areas and persecuted in others, sometimes by the same government at the same time. Hungary guarded most of its Jews from deportation until late in the war and then, under German occupation, assisted in placing some 440,000 of its citizens on trains to Auschwitz.[27] Local antisemitism seemed to play an important role in some instances—such as the emergence of indigenous fascist parties in Hungary, Romania, and Croatia—while being largely absent in others, such as Bulgaria. Military occupation was the context for mass killing in some cases, such as in the western Soviet Union, yet it was ancillary to the anti-Jewish policies of other governments, such as Italy and Vichy France. Appreciating the multinational and pan-European nature of the Holocaust now opens up a range of questions that were difficult to ask so long as the Holocaust was perceived as a largely German story researchable using mainly German sources.

Over the past two decades, former communist countries in eastern Europe have mined their own pasts for evidence of either atrocities or heroic efforts to save Jews on their own soil. To some extent, these have been well-meaning efforts to rewrite histories long obscured by communist propaganda, but they were also tied to the expansion of the European Union. Being sorry for the Holocaust became one of the desiderata of Europeanness in the 1990s, and in the race to join the EU, countries sometimes competed for being sorrier than their neighbors—at least in the form of public memorials, official expressions of regret, and the issuance of governmental reports that created official narratives of the Holocaust on their territory.[28] Even older EU members have reevaluated their role in the war. France now features plaques on schools and other buildings from which Jews were deported by Vichy authorities. Public discussions in the Netherlands have begun to balance the narrative of resistance with tougher treatments of collaboration. "Coming to terms with the past" (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*) has been transformed from a uniquely German preoccupation to a pan-European, perhaps even essentially European, vocation.

Victims and Perpetrators

More than in other great tragedies, memory of the Holocaust has been dominated by personal testimonies of suffering. This was the predictable result of one of the world's most record-obsessed governments seeking to eliminate one of its most literate societies. While personal stories gave an immediacy to the horror of organized violence, they also made it difficult to think about collectivities of victims and to understand the Holocaust via the identities and locations of those who were silent. At the time Adolf Hitler became German chancellor, there were around half a million local Jews in Germany. By comparison, the Polish city of Warsaw alone had 375,000. The number of Jews deported from Vichy and German-occupied France—around 75,000 people—was roughly equivalent to the number removed from a single provincial Soviet city, Odessa. Nevertheless, the testimonies and experience of west European victims have long shaped the nature of Holocaust remembrance and research.

The fact that so much of the killing involved non-German Jews in non-German lands with the active participation of non-German murderers has prompted scholars to move away from the German-centered approach to the field, especially as regards perpetrators, victims, and the many categories in between. As Saul Friedländer wrote in the most influential rethinking of Holocaust scholarship in recent decades:

> At each step, in occupied Europe, the execution of German measures depended on the submissiveness of political authorities, the assistance of local police forces or other auxiliaries, and the passivity or support of the populations and mainly of the political and spiritual elites. It also depended on the willingness of the victims to follow orders in the hope of alleviating German strictures or gaining time and somehow escaping the inexorable tightening of the German vise.[29]

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The Second World War gave rise to a cascading form of victimhood. Poland was carved up between Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939. Ethnic Ukrainians in occupied Poland killed and drove out ethnic Poles in 1943. Poles in turn killed ethnic Ukrainians and then, in 1947, deported Ukrainian communities en masse. Besides fighting each other, Poles and Ukrainians also killed Jews.[30] The complexities of war, guerrilla resistance, ethnic cleansing, and mass killing are lost in accounts of the Second World War that concentrate on the tectonic workings of strategy and frontlines. Revealing the identities of the many groups and individuals involved—the victims, perpetrators, zealots, bureaucrats, resistors, rescuers, and bystanders—has been one of the most important and unsettling aspects of recent scholarship on the Second World War.[31]

Jan Gross's widely read book *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* launched a major debate about the complicity of local Poles in the elimination of nearby Jewish residents.[32] An archive-based reconstruction of events in the town of Jedwabne, Poland, in July 1941, *Neighbors* challenged not only the centrality of German perpetrators but also the comfortable narrative of Poland and the Poles as mainly victims of Nazi aggression. Given that it appeared only a few years after multicultural towns and neighborhoods had been destroyed in the Balkan wars, *Neighbors* also gave contemporary relevance to debates that had previously been limited to historians.

Similar reevaluations apply farther east as well. After June 1941, many of the anti-Jewish atrocities in the Soviet Union were carried out by one of four *Einsatzgruppen* whose explicit task was to work to the rear of the Wehrmacht and sweep up subversives, spies, insurgents, Communists, and Jews—categories that were considered to be overlapping or coterminous. While the *Einsatzgruppen* were under the operational control of the Waffen-SS, a number of other units were implicated in mass killings. The Hungarian and Romanian armies pushed columns of Jews eastward into German-held territory and at times actively assisted in the round-up and killing of civilians. After the initial Axis push into the Soviet Union, local ethnic Germans, grouped into militias under Nazi supervision, oversaw interned Jews and Gypsies. Local Ukrainians took part in pogroms and also served as guards at internment facilities run by Romania, while some Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian police officers pursued their activities with a zeal that shocked German military commanders.[33]

In each of these cases, we now know more than ever about the people who were holding the rifles. Christopher Browning's pathbreaking work charted the transformation of the middle-aged men of the German Order Police into efficient killers.[34] The antisemitic ideology of and murders perpetrated by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists—the anti-Soviet armed group active in western Ukraine—have darkened the army's hallowed place in the pantheon of fighters for Ukrainian independence.[35] The Parti Populaire Français and the *milice* in France; the Arrow Cross organization in Hungary; and local police recruits and self-protection detachments organized among Ukrainians, Belarusians, Lithuanians, Latvians, local ethnic Germans, and others all played roles in tormenting or murdering civilians.

Research on these groups has also allowed much more appreciation for the variability of Jewish victimhood and resistance, both over time and over space. Early in the war, Hungary deported Jews who were citizens of other states; some of these people were later massacred by SS units. But the remainder of Hungary's Jewish population, although molested by harsh antisemitic legislation, remained relatively safe until the German occupation of Hungary in 1944. In Romania Jews who lived in the two regions of Wallachia and Moldavia were, with some exceptions, protected by the authoritarian government throughout the war, a government that actively resisted German pressure to deport Jews to camps. Yet in the provinces of Bukovina and Bessarabia, Jews were systematically rounded up and pushed to the east, where they were placed in a Romanian-run string of camps and ghettoes.[36] While antisemitism was ubiquitous, death was not, nor did patterns of Jewish resistance—both armed and otherwise—match either the brutality or the consistency of persecution.

Shifts in the unit of analysis have also enabled more fine-grained pictures of victimhood and survivorship to emerge. Digging down to the city and neighborhood level, scholars are now better able to assess the interplay of ideology, neighborliness, and foreign occupation. The city of Thessaloniki in Greece had been a haven for Jews for centuries, yet a combination of military occupation and local collaboration destroyed its Jewish population.[37] The city of Łódź was home to Poland's second-largest Jewish population before the war, but its transformation into a "Jewish-free" model city under Nazi occupation was accomplished with the complicity of leading Jewish citizens.[38] The fate of Jews in the Bosnian city of Sarajevo derived from complex interactions among leaders of Orthodox Christian, Catholic, and Muslim communities, all within the context of German and Croatian occupations.[39]

The fate of non-Jewish victims has been a subject of research that has widened discussions about mass killing during the Second World War. About three million Soviet prisoners of war were in German hands by the end of 1941, and through mass shootings and starvation they became the single largest unarmed victim group in the early stages of the German-Soviet war.[40] These deaths had much to do with the victims' status as a particular type of racialized target: underlings destined for elimination in the Nazi drive to create an eastern frontier denuded of Slavs and ready for colonization by sedulous Germans. Similar views of purity and pollution surrounded the

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Gypsies.[41] Nazi demographic engineering targeted a range of categories within the Reich itself, such as homosexuals and the physically disabled, but the execution of Gypsies was a practice that reproduced itself well beyond German-held territories, at times linking up with indigenous prejudices and local plans for ethnic cleansing.

Sources of Data

The occupational hazard of political science is concluding too much from too little. The equivalent for historians is the fear that someone else will conclude it first. This disciplinary difference—the overstretching of evidence on the one hand and the jealous guarding of it on the other—can be particularly acute with respect to the Holocaust. Where political scientists might seek open and replicable data on massacres, the evolution of state policy, and the mindsets of key leaders, the careers of historians can be made or broken over a new document or interpretation. The reputation of the great British historian Hugh Trevor-Roper never quite recovered from his mistaken authentication of the "Hitler diaries" in the 1980s.[42] The scandal underscored both the high-stakes nature of new evidence related to the Holocaust as well as the constant search for the single piece of information that would overturn the field. Today, however, the richness of the evidence base is a boon for empirically oriented social scientists. The questions are now too numerous and the ways of answering them too varied for the field to fall into older traps of document-chasing and paradigm-busting.

Before 1989 the territory on which the Holocaust took place was largely coextensive with the territory controlled by Europe's most paranoid regimes. In this era of information scarcity, each scrap of evidence was golden. But with the end of one-party rule and the throwing open of archives across the former communist world, scholars now have the opportunity to know more about everything from high-level decision-making to grass-roots participation. They also have the ability to add multiple perspectives to a literature that, until recently, was dominated by the view from Berlin. For decades the USHMM, the Yad Vashem Archives in Jerusalem, and the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw have collected documents from around the world. To these resources can be added the massive oral history collection—the Spielberg Archive—and private collections of the USHMM; records from war crimes trials across Europe and beyond; and the first-hand testimonies collected by Soviet investigators from the middle of the war forward.[43] While many of these resources have been used by historians for half a century, few social scientists have mined them. For those who have, the result is a remarkably variegated account of killing, resistance, and complicity that mirrors the event datasets more commonly used in other episodes of genocidal violence.[44]

Contingency, Causality, and Chronology

It is fully possible to accept the uniqueness of the Holocaust as a world-historical event while also fruitfully comparing each of its myriad components with their cognates elsewhere: the relationship between ideology and purposeful killing; the origins of genocidal state policy; collaboration and denunciation; the politics of military occupation; rescue and resistance; the dehumanization of noncombatants; the political economy of violence; and survivorship and the politics of memory, among many others. If earlier historians had argued for why the Holocaust *had to* happen—given the peculiarities of everything from German culture to the psychology of Adolf Hitler—the newer historiography has begun to address why it actually *did* happen, with careful attention to problems of contingency, causality, and chronology.

Each of these issues is particularly meaningful for social scientists. Consider first the issue of contingency. In very general terms, macrohistorical debates about the Holocaust have involved two camps: the so-called intentionalists who see the destruction of European Jewry as stemming from the psychopathology of elites and long-term features of European (especially German) antisemitism, militaristic culture, and the legacy of the First World War; and the functionalists who stress the gradual evolution of state policy and the deadly bureaucratic politics of the Third Reich. However, one need not revisit these debates about macrohistory—now more than half a century old and still ongoing—to embrace the contingency of the Holocaust's many microhistories, that is, the patterns of deportation or killing in specific instances. Pogroms happened here and not there, in this year and not that one. Jews survived in this place but not in another. Uniformed soldiers were the perpetrators in this action, while neighbors in flannel trousers and shirtsleeves did the killing in another. At a higher level of resolution, it is possible to observe the patterned variation that is critical to developing any social scientific theory. In turn this variation must be contingent on discrete factors—structural, ideological, institutional, even environmental—that political scientists are in a good position to identify.

New history-writing also allows more careful attention to causality. The great contribution of Raul Hilberg's early work was to show that the extermination of Europe's Jews could be understood as well as mourned. His research involved the diligent amassing of government orders, communications records, train schedules, and other evidence to demonstrate the mechanics of killing by the Nazis and their allies. But Hilberg's barefoot empiricism also helped set Holocaust studies on a bifurcated course of development: on the one hand, scholars pursued ever more detailed studies of camp life, Nazi brutality, and miraculous survival; on the other, they plumbed the depths of psychology and German history to account for the root causes of Nazism and eliminationist antisemitism. These two tracks

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came together in Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners,* perhaps the most widely read and broadly controversial Holocaust book of the last two decades.[45] The "Goldhagen thesis" stressed the long-term and peculiarly German origins of Nazi ideology and behavior, a theme pursued through stories of average killers and accomplices. Yet *Hitler's Willing Executioners* was also in many ways a product of the twin arc of Holocaust scholarship: grounded empiricism tied to wobbly causality. It reconfirmed the idea of the Holocaust as, at base, a German phenomenon and one traceable to the peculiarities of German history, culture, and Judeophobia.

That is not, however, the mainstream view within the new scholarship. Indeed, recent work has stressed the particularist origins of anti-Jewish policies throughout Europe. Some work has even embedded antisemitism within the Nazis' broader commitment to a biologically pure state, rather than seeing it as the defining aspect of Nazi demographic policy overall.[46] Other studies have stressed the mutual influence of Nazi and Stalinist killing policies or the long-term patterns of violence across east-central Europe.[47] While the German and Nazi contexts were the sine qua non of the broad program of destroying Europe's Jews, saying as much does not get us very far in understanding the myriad differences in how mass killing played out on the ground.

Finally, careful attention to chronology has assumed an ever greater role in recent historiography. Rather than attributing the Final Solution solely, or even mainly, to the preformed plans of Hitler and his henchmen, more recent research has stressed the time-bound nature of state policy between the Anschluss with Austria in 1938 and the first camp-based gassing of civilians in 1942. The ideological intensification of the war prompted by the struggle with the Soviet Union; the iterated experience of on-the-ground killing in Poland, Ukraine, and Belarus; the failure of blitzkrieg on the eastern front by the autumn of 1941; the entry of the United States into a war that Germany increasingly saw as an all-out struggle for national survival; and the use of anti-Jewish policy as Germany's litmus test for the constancy of its allies all contributed to the formation of a state policy of genocide. As one recent survey of the literature concludes, "it is difficult to accept any longer the intentionalist premise that the unswerving goal of the Nazis from the outset was the immediate physical destruction of European Jews."[48] To use anachronistic language, the war years saw the slide from a massive plan for ethnic cleansing—itself genocidal according to postwar understandings of that term—toward a mandate for mass killing. Getting the terminology right is not just a matter of labeling. It enables scholars to ask questions in a way that situates the Holocaust in a path-dependent history, embeds the victims and perpetrators in their own (often the same) societies, and understands policy as a product of politics—all of which are orientations that fit naturally into a social science frame.

Politics and Mass Killing in the Holocaust

Pogroms, forced migration, interethnic violence, insurgency, and counterinsurgency were all components of Holocaust suffering. Each of these themes has a substantial body of research in the social sciences, yet there has so far been little connection between these literatures and the many cases contained within the macrohistorical phenomenon of the Holocaust. The project of connecting up these lines of research must begin with several assumptions about the rise of Nazi Germany, the military occupations and alliance politics of western and central Europe, the attack on the Soviet Union, and the mass killing of Jews and other targeted groups during the Second World War.

These assumptions are drawn from well-established findings in a now massive research base on genocide, civil war, ethnic conflict, and non-traditional warfare. They weave together important perspectives on state power, local communities, and violent mobilization:

1. Mass killing is variable. Even within a macrohistorical context of widespread violence, population movements, and death, mass killing occurs in some places but not in others, at some times but not at others, with shifting intensity, zeal, and completeness.
2. Mass killing is a social act. It derives from the complex interplay of ideology and power in and among human groups, not solely—perhaps not even mainly—from the individual psychology or megalomaniacal ravings of elites. Although the actual trigger-pullers may be few in number, killing a group requires some degree of collective action on the part of some other group.
3. Mass killing is local. Large-scale violence is never the straightforward result of direct orders implemented by unquestioning automatons, although individual killing actions might at times lean in this direction. It depends on a distinct set of relationships between institutions and individuals, commanders and subordinates, perpetrators and victims, enablers and onlookers. Violence takes place on a specific piece of real estate and at the hands of identifiable individuals who are embedded in a web of power and influence with formal and informal institutions.
4. A state policy of mass killing is developed over time. The roots of any governmental action might lie in the distant past, in the childhood of a key leader, or in deep cultural predispositions. But there is no prima facie reason to believe that even the most abhorrent form of public policy—the decision to liquidate an entire category of person—proceeds in ways appreciably different from its more benign counterparts.

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Each of these points is a disciplinary predisposition rather than a hypothesis. As such they are crucial to developing a social science of the Holocaust and, in turn, to transferring the lessons of Holocaust scholarship to other fields. They allow the elaboration of research directions that are explicitly comparative, theoretically informed, hypothesis-generating, and amenable to empirical testing.

The subsections below outline five areas of research in Holocaust studies that proceed from the assumptions above and speak to pressing concerns in political science. Some are already the subject of a small but high-quality literature in the discipline. Others have barely been addressed. Yet the theoretical possibilities and empirical evidence for investigating them are rich.

The Politics of Occupation

One of the most robust findings in the study of mass violence is the connection between insurgent resistance, occupation, and attacks on civilians.[49] The overwhelming majority of large-scale civilian deaths occur within the context of internal war and regime instability. In no society do citizens wake up one day and decide to systematically dispense with their neighbors. Doing so requires solving a special collective action problem: getting people to act together in ways that are—at least for non-sociopaths—inherently difficult and gruesome. The Holocaust provides telling examples of the way in which this dynamic played itself out on the ground.

The single largest massacre committed during the Holocaust was, from the perspective of the perpetrators, an act of reprisal. Beginning on September 20, 1941, Soviet partisans detonated a series of bombs that leveled the German military headquarters and other buildings in occupied Kiev, the capital of Soviet Ukraine. A week later, SS battalions and Ukrainian police rounded up Kiev's Jews, who were thought to be harboring Soviet agents or actively working against the occupation. Over the course of two days, at least 33,771 Jews were shot at Babi Yar, a ravine near the city center.[50] Lesser Babi Yars and the actions that enabled them were a common feature of the Holocaust. The idea of exacting retribution and uncovering subversives played crucial roles in motivating behavior, from shootings by German police battalions in Poland, to round-ups by French police in Vichy, to denunciations of neighbors in occupied Ukraine. These local narratives also linked up with one of the principal Nazi meta-narratives in the war: that Jewry and Bolshevism were twin existential threats to the German nation. All this is revealed by one astonishing fact: that between June and December 1941, as the Wehrmacht made its initial push against the Red Army, the death toll among Jewish civilians was higher than among Soviet soldiers.[51]

Until the beginning of mass transport to Nazi killing facilities, most murders took place where most Jews actually lived: in the Polish and Soviet countryside. Stathis Kalyvas has called attention to the "urban bias" in research on civil wars, that is, the tendency of scholars to privilege written sources over oral ones; to stress the role of elite action, ideology, unchanging identities, and cultural causes; and to draw artificial lines between victims and victimized.[52] The Holocaust offers opportunities for dissecting these issues. Relations between Jews and rural Poles, Ukrainians, Russians, Romanians, and others; the enhanced opportunities for evasion and rescue; and the long-term origins of state evasion in rural contexts all find expression in grass-roots behavior during the Holocaust. Rurality is itself part of the explanation. The primary killing fields of eastern Europe were also inhospitable terrain—the Pripyat marshes, the woodlands of Belarus, the rolling hills and proto-steppe of western Ukraine. As we learn more about Soviet partisan activity in the early stages of the war, environment may turn out to be one part of a causal chain: landscape facilitated evasion; evasion enhanced retribution; retribution required local knowledge; and local knowledge came from indigenous informants. While ideology and zeal undoubtedly played a role, one can construct a convincing—and comparatively robust—explanation for this particular type of Holocaust violence without reference to long-term causes or macrohistory.

More detailed study of the Holocaust can address other central questions about mass killing and counter-insurgency as well. For example, Benjamin Valentino found that mass killing "tends to be a policy of desperation, employed only when leaders believe their central interests or survival is at stake, and only after other means have failed."[53] That is certainly true of the Nazis' ramping up the use of death facilities toward the end of the Second World War. But it is not the case for the major informal killing actions of the Holocaust: the SS-led massacres that attended the invasion of the Soviet Union. Most of these occurred during a period when the Nazis clearly believed that they were winning what would amount to a very short war. That behavior might be attributed to some degree to ideology; after all, Germans were clearing the ground for what Hitler called the new "Garden of Eden"—a vast region west of the Ural Mountains that would be cleansed of undesirable indigenes and readied for German colonization. But the constancy of ideology cannot account for the variable timing, pace, and completeness of mass murder during Germany's most "optimistic" phase of the war on the eastern front.

Each of these features played themselves out in various ways in different non-German contexts. Consider two cases of occupation with different outcomes. Bulgaria tended to shelter its own Jews, but during its occupation of Thrace and Macedonia, Bulgarian soldiers deported thousands of Jews from these territories; most later perished in German death facilities.[54] Italy made important distinctions between "home" Jews and foreign Jews residing temporarily on Italian soil; thousands of Jewish non-citizens were sent to

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a string of internment facilities in southern Italy. Yet when Italy occupied a sliver of southeastern France in 1940, that territory became a refuge for persecuted Jews from Vichy and occupied France—a rare instance of an occupying power acting more beneficently abroad than at home.[55] The fact that multiple countries behaved differently at home and as occupying powers points toward the powerful effects of territory, foreignness, and counterinsurgency. Simply put, where prejudice and counterinsurgency intersected, Jews were likely to die, regardless of whether Nazis or others were in charge. It was the targeting and thoroughness of the Nazis' behavior—not their tactics as such—that sets this aspect of the Holocaust apart from other instances of military occupation and insurgent war.[56]

Repertoires of Violence and Cooperation

When German soldiers and Nazi administrators swept eastward in June 1941, they were moving into a part of the world that many considered wholly alien. Propaganda had fed the notion that both the armed Slavic enemy and unarmed Jewish civilians were subhuman. There was even a German term for the otherworldly feeling that death, inhumanity, and foreignness could produce—*Ostrausch,* literally "getting high on the east." Killing actions were not uniform, however. The patterned variation suggests that factors were at work beyond the zeal of ideologically-motivated SS units and propaganda-fed soldiers.

We know surprisingly little about the micropolitics of local killing, denunciation, and collaboration during the Holocaust, however. This is not because those themes have gone unexplored. Indeed, almost from the moment of liberation, states set about mopping up remnants of Nazi-allied governments, exposing the enablers of the German occupation, and punishing those thought to have collaborated with the enemy. Rather, the real problem has been the paucity of work that places these dynamics in a comparative or longitudinal context. To begin with, especially on the eastern front, German military forces were operating in a region that had already experienced sustained social and political violence before the summer of 1941. The territory on which much of the Holocaust occurred had been the site of anti-Jewish pogroms in the Russian Empire from the 1870s forward. During the Polish-Bolshevik war (1919–21) and the Russian civil war (1917–23), forced migration and troop movements produced yet further massacres. Between September 1939 and June 1941, eastern Poland, eastern Romania, and the Baltic republics were overrun by the Red Army and ruthlessly governed by the Soviets, with the attendant massacres, civilian flight, and retributive attacks one would expect from sudden changes of borders and military control.

This history mattered, but not always in the ways one might expect. Violence was, to a degree, iterative. Victims during one period—Jews but also ethnic Poles and Ukrainians—were frequently targets in another. Yet levels of resistance, insurgent recruitment, and atrocities differed by geography. Why? Consider two hypotheses. First, spaces of violence and relative tranquility may align with previous patterns of education, nationalism, social integration, and governance before the war—although crucially not with ethnic balances or ideology.[57] In other words, in a region where indigenous antisemitism was nearly universal and violence already a recent experience, the patterning of mass killing seems to have reflected longer-term structures of local society.

Second, the shorter-term experience of prewar politics may have conditioned anti-Jewish behavior during the war, especially if we bracket killing actions organized by state institutions. For example, lands that had been controlled by Romania between the two world wars seem to have experienced more discrete incidents of antisemitic violence (beatings, theft, murder, rape) than did the Soviet territories that Romania came to control during the war. The nature of the pre-war regime—"nationalist" Romanian or "socialist" Soviet—affected rates of local participation in anti-Jewish violence: the former tended to increase it, the latter to decrease it. Even though Soviet territories were the site of the major state-led killing operations, it may have been harder to mobilize locals for participation there than in the non-Soviet zones. Soviet norms of interethnic cooperation and the rhetoric of "friendship among peoples" provided a relative buffer against mobilized killing when compared with zones that had experienced nationalistic propaganda before the war.[58] Patterns of Jewish rebellion in Polish ghettos as well as pogroms committed by ethnic Poles may also align with voting behavior and party politics in interwar Poland: where Jews were most politically mobilized before the war, they were most prone to being attacked but also most prone to take up arms in resistance.[59]

In both these lines of argument, place and the past overshadow identity—a finding that accords with what we know about conflict and killing in general. This suggests two further features regarding repertoires of violence and resistance during the Holocaust. First, the unit of analysis is critical. A good deal of research on the Holocaust still takes place within a national frame. Scholars ask how "the Ukrainians" or "the French" treated Jews during the war or puzzle over the exceptional behavior of governments that by and large resisted Nazi pressure, such as Denmark. But thinking of violence, collaboration, rescue, and resistance as "ethnic" or "national" phenomena puts the cart before the horse. It assumes, rather than demonstrates, that the relevant unit of social action was the cultural group. In no case did all members of a distinct ethnic population act in exactly the same way—a fact that suggests that group-level factors beyond ethnicity were the drivers of behavior. Although Jewish victims were clearly defined in ethnic—or "racial"—terms, the entrepreneurs

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of violence had mixed success in mirroring that definition among the perpetrators. Classifying victims by culture was relatively easy. Mobilizing their tormentors along similar ascriptive lines was much harder.

Second, identity did come into the picture when it intersected with a specific state policy of recruitment or coercion. With enough resources and determination, it was possible for an occupying power to mobilize communities along clearly sectarian lines. The most extreme case is Germany's policy toward ethnic Germans beyond the Reich, the so-called *Volksdeutsche*. Given Nazi racial theory, these communities were meant to be the vanguard of Germany's expansion, the agents of its colonization efforts in the Slavic east, and later the beneficiaries of "repatriation" to Germany where the state could harness their patriotism and productivity. Especially on the eastern front, these usually rural communities became some of the most-favored-killers in the Nazis' plan for eliminating local Jews and partisans.

The *Volksdeutsche* were a tiny percentage of the population in Ukraine, for example, and there is no reason to assume that their antisemitic commitment or imagined grievances outstripped those of local Slavs. Yet through a system of recruitment and rewards overseen by the German state, *Volksdeutsche* emerged as a disproportionately high percentage of activists in the "Holocaust by bullets."[60] Given that all Germany's allies were engaged in their own nationalizing projects in territories they occupied during the war—Hungary in northwestern Romania and eastern Czechoslovakia, Romania in western Ukraine, Bulgaria in Macedonia and Thrace, Croatia in Bosnia—cognates of Germany's *Volksdeutsche* policy existed for each state. Together they point toward the interplay of state policy, ethnicity, and recruitment for murder.

Alliance Politics

As Mark Mazower has argued, Hitler's "New Order"—the plan for reshaping politics and redrawing boundaries that was meant to accompany a German victory—is best seen as an imperial system.[61] It was an arrangement that bought off peripheral elites by promising a reworked map of Europe in which the territorial aspirations of Nazi-allied states would be fully realized.

Yet Hitler's Germany was also at the center of a complex and shifting network of independent states—an empire in Nazi-occupied areas but an alliance across much of the rest of Europe. The politics of ally-maintenance proved crucial to the pace and completeness of anti-Jewish activity.[62] Romania's wartime government was an enthusiastic endorser of Hitler's territorial plans yet balked when Nazi officials sought to interfere in Romania's domestic affairs. Successive Hungarian governments welcomed the German-sponsored reapportionment of territory in central Europe, which expanded Hungary's borders back toward their pre-First-World-War limits. Hungarians had deported Jewish non-citizens already in 1941, an action that led to the deaths of tens of thousands of people who fell into the hands of the SS. Yet it took the German military occupation of Hungary in 1944 to get local officials to acquiesce to the mass expulsion of Hungary's Jews. Germany's alliance partners were in fact oddly patriotic when it came to their own Jews: their own policy decisions were often murderous, but they objected when Berlin tried to step up the pace of the Final Solution inside a partner state.[63]

In this context, center-periphery relations, two-level games, and the inconstancy of strategic friends were probably as important in the elimination of Europe's Jews as in more benign spheres of alliance politics. The pursuit of local aims within the Nazi context reveals two key features of the international relations of mass killing. First, partner governments seemed to be active and enthusiastic participants so long as the alliance leader was capable of delivering alliance benefits. In other words, "burden-sharing" in the Holocaust was relatively easy for Germany to achieve in the early stages of the war—roughly from the signing of the Tripartite Pact in September 1940 until the stalling of the German-Soviet war by mid-autumn 1941. From that point forward, partner states evaluated their cooperation in mass killing in terms that were increasingly self-interested and wary.

Second, policymaking priorities evolved in divergent ways in Berlin and other Axis capitals. In the Nazi worldview, eliminating Jews was increasingly part of the state's overall survival strategy.[64] Bogged down on the eastern front, Berlin found that the only part of existing policy that could be pursued in the region was the clearing of territory for future colonization. Once the United States entered the war, the theory that world Jewry was rising to the aid of its own carried even greater weight. Yet for partner governments such as Hungary, Romania, and Italy, the intensification of mass killing practices in the German-administered lands—and enhanced pressure for the alliance members to act similarly at home—increased the price of pooling security. These governments were thinking forward to a possible future in which Germany might lose the war and in which non-German governments would be held responsible for their own actions. Genocide raised the cost of cooperation among governments that might ordinarily have bought into the same policy aims.

Death and Policymaking

For all the power of micropolitical perspectives on mass killing, they cannot get at the two recurring questions at the core of Holocaust scholarship: What were the origins of the German state policy of destroying Europe's Jews, and how did this policy intersect with other Nazi political and strategic aims? A little more than a decade ago, Christian Gerlach published an article that argued for seeing the Final Solution as an essentially "normal" political decision—that is, one that involved internal policy debate,

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improvisational adaptation to policy challenges, and finally a definitive decision by a key leader.[65] German policy, in other words, was *made*: it evolved from grand schemes for the forced deportation of Jews (to Madagascar, to Poland, to western Eurasia), became a practice of massacres-in-place, and ended as an array of permanent brick-and-mortar killing centers whose only purpose was to dispose of as many people as possible.

Gerlach's work was considered radically revisionist at the time since it seemed to treat the Final Solution as a policy like any other—a grotesque one, to be sure, but nevertheless a policy produced over time by people within institutions. However, the really surprising case would be a form of public policy conceived in the mind of a leader, bequeathed to a circle of like-minded subordinates, and implemented seamlessly through a vast network of civilian, paramilitary, and military institutions, both at home and in allied states, all of which produced an outcome identical to that envisioned by the originator.

The mere facts of the Final Solution's development suggest policy variation over time. A significant adjustment took place in early December 1941: before that point Germans and their accomplices killed Jews where they found them; after that point the perpetrators spent massive amounts of time and resources to move Jews thousands of miles to specially created camps and death facilities. The particular context of the Nazi state—totalitarian in aspiration but internally competitive in practice—created an environment in which policymaking flowed from an identifiable ideology as well as from institutional competition and careerist ambitions.[66] In the end, principal-agent problems, bureaucratic politics, improvisation, institutional learning, imperfect information, miscalculation, and decision-making blinders are as likely to be as present when states make evil as when they build roads and bridges.

Policy implementation was also more likely the product of variable state capacities than of differences in commitment or zeal. In Axis-occupied Ukraine, survival rates among Jews varied depending on the occupying forces in control of territory. Of all the areas of Soviet Ukraine seized by a foreign power during the war, districts administered by Romania were among the places where it was most likely for a Jew to survive.[67] The Romanian state was certainly no less committed in theory to removing Jews than were the Nazis. Romanian eugenicists and demographers were fully in line with German (and European) goals concerning national purity and the mobilization of the state to realize them.[68] In pre-war Romania, in fact, anti-semitic acts on a per capita basis had been far higher than in pre-war Germany.[69]

The difference had to do, in part, with state efficacy. As survivor testimonies confirm, Romanian occupiers were not necessarily less brutal than German ones, but they could be more easily bribed. Even in one of the most abhorrent moments of the Romanian-organized Holocaust—the brutal emptying of the ghetto in the Soviet city of Odessa between January and April 1942—Romanian officers themselves were worried about the ability of their subordinates to fulfill their tasks. Their solution is still present in the archives: a separate declaration signed by every Romanian soldier confirming his commitment to avoid fraternizing with Jews and to carry out orders.[70] Even in cases of mass killing, public policy is only as effective as the commitment and talent of those entrusted with implementing it.

Resistance

In a time of widespread violence, how does one explain two persistent forms of variation: places where massive attacks on civilians met with sustained armed resistance and places that managed to avoid violent mobilization altogether? Both outcomes are frequently attributed to heroism. The Bielski brothers sheltered more than a thousand Jews in their forest redoubt in German-occupied eastern Poland.[71] Protestant pastors secreted thousands of Jewish children in the upland villages of the French Massif Central.[72] Numbers alone point to the fact that resistance, in whatever form, was a deeply unusual response to Axis killing policies. For example, of the more than 1,100 ghettoes created by the Nazis, Jews took up arms in only thirty-one of them.[73]

Still, the extraordinary actions of individuals in each of these cases are not inconsistent with the basic enabling structures of opportunity, organization, and resources. As Evgeny Finkel has pointed out, Jewish armed resistance in Poland was more likely in those areas that had experienced Soviet occupation from 1939 to 1941, a phase of the war that preceded the massive German invasion of Soviet-held territories and the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941.[74] The Soviet occupation provided a kind of school for resistance: since non-communist organizations were pushed underground by Soviet occupiers, they acquired the habits of conspiracy and secrecy, as well as the technical skill-sets of guerrilla fighting, that could later be put to use against the far more lethal threat presented by the Nazis.

Similar arguments seem to hold, mutatis mutandis, for other forms of Jewish violent mobilization, such as armed resistance to pogroms in the decade preceding the First World War. The harsh but incomplete repression of Jewish social organizations, especially Zionist groups, sharpened the organizational and military skills of members who became practiced in resisting future attacks.[75] It is thus possible to explain the comparative rarity of Jewish armed resistance in ways that cast the phenomenon less as a mystery than as an outgrowth of organizational capacity.[76]

In this light, the most perplexing feature of the Holocaust experience—Why did German practice produce a rolling genocide without provoking a mass rebellion?—looks less extraordinary than it might seem. As work on

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cases as diverse as the French revolution and the Indian partition has shown, the mere presence of significant numbers of men with recent military experience is a robust explanation for the magnitude of violence in times of ubiquitous confrontation.[77] Resistance to violence may be a virtue, but it is also crucially a technology. These arguments point toward the darkest irony of the Holocaust in the borderlands between Germany and the Soviet Union. The areas that experienced the "double occupation" by first Soviet and then German armies were the most likely to see the mass murder of Jewish civilians. Yet they were also the places where—given the unusual combination of skill and opportunity—Jews were more prone to defy their would-be destroyers.

Conclusion

The social memory of mass killing usually begins with—and often returns at regular intervals to—accounts that are deterministic and culture-specific: "Those maniacs have always wanted to get rid of us." But as the personal memories of actual victims are transmogrified by the passage of time and as historians and social scientists enter the debate, explanations tend to incorporate more sophisticated, comparative, and robust ways of recalling an awful history. Research on the Armenian genocide, for example, is today a world away from the essentialism of the past.[78]

Until recently the burden of proof has been on those who claim that the Holocaust bears an important resemblance to other instances of mass killing. Indeed, historians of genocide who have dealt with the Holocaust in a comparative light have normally trodden carefully on this issue. But for social science, the burden of proof is on those who claim that a particular case is sui generis. The new historiography of the Holocaust helps disaggregate this gigantic and atrocious historical event. It provides social scientists with a route toward understanding the twentieth century's most infamous instance of mass killing, while also pointing toward an entire galaxy of cases rarely examined by researchers interested in broad theories of human behavior. Political scientists have a remarkable opportunity to use the work of historians in ways that come up to the highest standards of research on substate violence, alliance politics, and the policy process. More importantly, they have access to the same original sources as historians themselves: a larger, richer, and more carefully superintended empirical record than exists for any case of mass death in human history, all within a context in which most of the dependent variables of interest have too often been viewed as overdetermined.

Five preliminary conclusions emerge from the survey above:

- Military occupation may have facilitated mass killing, but the efficacy, pace, and variable completeness of anti-Jewish atrocities—especially in the second half of 1941—complicate the idea that state strategy is the critical component of genocidal violence. The slaughter that defined the early stages of the Holocaust in the occupied Soviet Union had much more in common with the one-sided, selective violence against civilians often found in civil wars. The Holocaust could thus be the key empirical field connecting the generally estranged literatures on genocide and on substate conflict.
- Even in a context where state policy privileged ethnic, racial, and religious categories, patterns of intergroup violence and collaboration rarely ran neatly along ascriptive boundaries. Indeed, the quality of being a perpetrator, victim, or resistor may have had longer-term sources, measurable in ways ranging from voting behavior in the 1920s and 1930s to literacy levels at the dawn of nationalist movements in the nineteenth century. While most of us are all good constructivists now—believing in the ephemeral nature of identities and convinced of their manipulability by states—we still engage in a reflexive "groupism"[79] when describing the behavior of "the Pashtuns," "the Sunnis," or other categories of people who have come to blows. In a time and place where the basic identity categories—Jew and non-Jew—were imagined as stark and the violence profoundly one-sided, patterns of mass murder still did not perfectly map the communities bequeathed by the master narrative of antisemitism.
- The Holocaust represented an unusual but not unique form of cooperative behavior among states: the shared effort by allied countries to eliminate all or part of a discrete civilian population, both within the foreign territories they occupied as well as within their own sovereign lands. The Holocaust experience points toward the ways in which even horrific acts of violence repeat, at a broad social level, the dynamics of more pedestrian forms of interstate cooperation. For pro-German governments such as Romania and Hungary, genocidal intentions were balanced against the price of pooling security; as the war wound on and the likelihood of a quick German victory appeared ever dimmer, governments increasingly balked at a policy that had meant more to the alliance leader than to the allies themselves. The Holocaust thus has much to say about the spread of violence across international frontiers. What we routinely label "contagion" more closely resembles the purposive working out of informal alliances among regimes and nonstate killers.
- Despite a sizeable literature on the emergence of selective violence and the genocidal targeting of noncombatants, we still know rather little about how a policy of mass killing works its way through formal and informal institutions. Explanations are often

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abstracted to the level of governments as unitary, self-interested actors or reduced to the micro-incentives and psychologies of individual *génocidaires*. Yet the Holocaust provides ample scope for understanding the meso-level actions of civilian bureaucracies, military units, paramilitary formations, transport departments, city councils, communal leaderships, and other state and para-state bodies. Indeed, from Raul Hilberg and Hannah Arendt forward, documenting the "banality of evil" has been central to Holocaust studies. The advantage for the comparative study of large-scale violence is clear: where we have the most data on the Holocaust—the everyday institutions that enable genocide, even within what appears from the outside to be utter state and societal collapse—is precisely where we understand mass killing in other contexts most dimly.

- Resistance to genocidal violence—whether by taking up arms against oppressors or by engaging in acts of rescue—is often heroic, but it is also dependent on discrete social technologies. Fighters need to know how to fight well. Rescuers need to know whom to trust and how to ferry the rescued to safety. Counterinsurgents understand this point implicitly, which is why they invest so much time in monitoring insurgent networks, mapping social terrains, and seeking to understand the capabilities and information flows among their enemies.[80] The makers of genocide are often in a similar position. They expend considerable effort to identify their targets, ensure their acquiescence, prevent retaliatory attacks, and cover up their crimes—while sometimes getting all these things wrong. The patterning of violence and resistance in the Holocaust illustrates the power of precisely these mechanisms, as well as the way in which the distinction between genocide and civil war may well turn on the technologies of resistance available to targeted populations.

Further research on Holocaust-era violence can thus help refine theories of mass violence in numerous ways. But there is a danger in this research program, and it lies in its own obviousness. Of course political scientists should incorporate the Holocaust into their models, the logic might go, since there is no necessary distinction between this episode of genocide and any other. That it happened to occur among a European, highly literate, memory-laden, and ultimately state-creating ethnoreligious minority gives the Holocaust a separate status when it comes to the sociology of knowledge, but not when it comes to its place in the universe of cases that scholars of large-scale violence might address. The problem with this view is that it too easily glides over the ethics of comparison, the morality of "modeling" human suffering, and the ultimate purposes for which scholars willingly delve into awfulness. After all, the comparison of discrete human experiences is never a cavalier exercise, especially in the realm of violence, loss, and death.

There is no necessary slide from the acknowledgment that parts of the Holocaust resembled the local-level massacres and civilian atrocities found in other times and places to the conclusion that it was, overall, a genocide just like any other. The systematic and thorough nature of Nazi practice still places the Holocaust in a peculiar moral category. Its scale was gargantuan. It involved the purposeful killing of millions of individuals as well as the extinguishing of an entire civilization—the culture of the east European borderlands rooted in Jewish religiosity and the Yiddish language. It flowed from an ideology that was not just distasteful but fundamentally abhorrent: one that marshaled science and history to condemn an entire human population to elimination. It produced social, political, cultural, and economic consequences that are still unparalleled. The sum of every massacre, pogrom, shooting, and gassing *within* the Holocaust does not quite *equal* the Holocaust.

Acknowledging this, however, is a good thing. Distinguishing morality from analysis ought to sharpen both perspectives. While the Holocaust as a world-historical phenomenon is more than an inventory of camps and atrocities, the local logics of death resemble those found in other times and places. Millions of Jewish men, women, and children died from a rifle or pistol shot, near their homes, in plain view of their neighbors. That fact gives the victims an essential kinship with the Tutsis whose bodies filled the church in Nyange and the Bosnian Muslims who lie buried at Srebrenica. The aspirational slogan "Never again" makes sense only because the Holocaust's many microhistories were not in fact unique, nor are the tools that social scientists can wield in trying to explain them.

Mass killing, eliminationist ideologies, and the willingness of humans to sell out their neighbors are enduring features of modern life. For that reason alone the Holocaust deserves to be understood in all its comparative horror. In the process, political scientists might be reminded of the fact that this type of violence involves real people and unimaginable pain. Doing original research in this field entails delving into archives, watching video testimony, reading the memoirs of perpetrators and victims, examining photographs of bystanders and onlookers, and listening to the dwindling number of survivors. Scholars cannot help but be confronted by the shocking immediacy of social violence—a sense of sympathetic terror and collective human responsibility that is, for better or worse, likely to be especially visceral to the North American and European academics who produce the theories that purport to explain the rest of the world's wickedness. This perspective—and its attendant sense of humility and incomprehension—should never be allowed to disappear inside a scholarly model of mass murder, even one that turns out to be grounded and falsifiable.

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Notes

1 For overviews see Sambanis 2002, 2004; King 2004; Straus 2007; Tarrow 2007.
2 Gerlach 2010; Midlarsky 2005.
3 Matthäus et al. 2011.
4 Bischoping and Kalmin 1999.
5 See for example *Annals* 1980, *Annals* 1996.
6 See Segev 1993.
7 See Sambanis 2004, Kalyvas 2003.
8 Lustick 1996; Lieberman 2010.
9 Desch 2004; Finkel and Straus, forthcoming.
10 I thank Jeffrey Kopstein for this formulation.
11 See Kalyvas 2006.
12 See Wood 2003.
13 See Valentino 2004a, Mueller 2004, Levene 2005. For the work of historians and others, see Naimark 2002, 2010; Weitz 2005; Chirot and McCauley 2006; Kiernan 2009; Snyder 2010.
14 See Straus 2006, Fujii 2009.
15 Arendt 2006 [1964].
16 Trevor-Roper 1947, 19, 193, 196.
17 Shirer 1960.
18 Hilberg 2003 [1961].
19 Orientations are provided by Marrus 1989; Berenbaum and Peck 1998; Bartov 2000 and 2008; and Stone 2010.
20 Hilberg 1996, 105–19.
21 Browning 2010, 407.
22 Snyder 2010, xii-xv.
23 United States Holocaust Memorial Museum 2009.
24 Desbois 2008.
25 Levi 1959; Wiesel 1960; Frankl 1962.
26 Frank 1952; Ten Boom et al. 1971.
27 See Braham 1994.
28 Judt 2005, 803.
29 Friedländer 2007, xv.
30 Gross 1988; Snyder 1999, 2008.
31 Hilberg 1992; Aly 2007.
32 Gross 2001.
33 Hilberg 1992, 87–102.
34 Browning 1998.
35 Berkhoff 2004; Lower 2005b.
36 Ioanid 2000; Deletant 2006; Case 2009; Solonari 2010.
37 Mazower 2005.
38 Horwitz, 2008.
39 Greble 2011.
40 Snyder 2010, 175–82.
41 Lewy 2000.
42 Harris 1986.
43 The reports of the "Extraordinary State Commission for Ascertaining and Investigating Crimes Perpetrated by German-Fascist Invaders and Their Accomplices"—generally known by the Russian initials ChGK—were used at Nuremberg and other postwar trials. The commission's working archive of testimonials and affidavits now forms part of the bedrock literature in Holocaust studies.
44 Kopstein and Wittenberg 2011a and b; Finkel 2011, 2012.
45 Goldhagen 1996.
46 Friedländer 1995; Aly 1999; Kay 2006; Rutherford 2007.
47 Snyder 2010; Prusin 2010; Dekel-Chen et al. 2011.
48 Fritzsche 2008, 595.
49 Licklider 1995; Harff 2003; Valentino 2004a; Kalyvas 2006.
50 Arad 2009, 173–76.
51 Fritzsche 2008, 600.
52 Kalyvas 2004.
53 Valentino 2004b, 211.
54 Todorov 2003; Chary 1972.
55 Marrus and Paxton 1981, 315–21.
56 See Valentino, Huth, and Balch-Lindsay 2004, Edelstein 2010.
57 Darden 2009.
58 Dumitru and Johnson 2011.
59 Kopstein and Wittenberg 2011a, 2011b; Finkel 2011, 2012.
60 Lumans 1993; Dean 2008; Lower 2005a.
61 Mazower 2008, 581–90.
62 Hollander 2006.
63 Case 2009.
64 Valentino 2004a.
65 Gerlach 1998.
66 Aly and Heim 2002.
67 Kruglov 2008, 272–90.
68 Bucur 2002; Solonari 2010.
69 Brustein and King 2004.
70 King 2011, 215.
71 Tec 2008.
72 Hallie 1994.
73 Finkel 2011.
74 See Finkel 2011.
75 Dekel-Chen et al. 2011.
76 On this point, see Weinstein 2007.
77 McDonald 1951; Jha and Wilkinson 2011.
78 Bloxham 2005; Akçam 2006; Suny, Göçek, and Naimark 2011.
79 Brubaker 2004.
80 See Nagl 2005; Kilcullen 2009, 2010.

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