

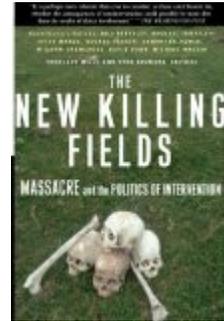
H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Michael Mann. *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. x + 529 pp. \$26.99 (paper), ISBN 978-0-521-53854-1.

Nicolaus Mills, Kira Brunner, eds. *The New Killing Fields: Massacre and the Politics of Intervention*. New York: Basic Books, 2001. xi + 264 pp. \$16.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-465-00804-9.

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The Ongoing Challenge to Genocide Scholarship

Despite the deaths of more than seventy thousand people from combat, disease, or starvation in Sudan's western province of Darfur, the international community has offered minimal commitment to stopping the systematic cleansing by the Sudanese government and its local allied militia, the *Janjaweed* or "evildoers on horseback." [1] Several scholars and experts urged global leaders, especially the United States, to initiate some forceful actions, such as military intervention, to significantly reduce or alleviate the region's massive human rights violations. [2] However, the global leaders' priorities seem different. Their central efforts are devoted to establishing peace between the North and the South by terminating the two-decade-long civil war in Sudan, while a few leaders continue to demonstrate their overt but limited concern about the seriousness of the situation in Darfur. [3]

Darfur's ongoing humanitarian crises, an outcome of inadequate policy, has very slowly garnered public attention while increasing the frustration of not only scholars and experts in genocide scholarship but also others from different disciplines. The situation in the Sudan clearly highlights that there are at least two major ongoing challenges to the success of genocide scholarship: How can we end the ongoing mass killings? [4] How can we prevent such genocidal crimes against humanity in the future? These questions are not new, but they do need new solutions and approaches. More importantly, there is still an extensive gap that should be bridged between

academic research and the policy community. Andrew Mack, former Director of Strategic Planning in the Executive Office of the Secretary General of the United Nations, states that "Policymakers confront political imperatives to 'do something' about violent conflict, but often have to act without really knowing what will or will not work." [5] Unfortunately, Mack's dilemma is repeated in policy on genocide or ethnic cleansing. Policymakers would be well served if they could ask scholars questions such as: What policy will work for preventing and alleviating ethnic cleansing/mass killing? What policy will not work? Why will some policies work for some cases but not for others? It appears that there is a dearth of practical and effective policy alternatives to rely on for policymaking. The demands of policymakers that in turn present challenges to genocide scholars could be the crucial message of the two works reviewed here: *The New Killing Fields*, edited by Nicolaus Mills and Kira Brunner and *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing*, by Michael Mann.

Using Darfur as an example, the first key question becomes why the majority of the international community is unwilling to use forceful action to stop the destruction in Darfur even though extended scholarly discourse exists to support the question of genocide. Is the international community that uninformed? Do they want to be labeled bystanders?

To answer these questions, a series of essays in *The New Killing Fields* highlights several dimensions of the theoretical problems of, and practical concerns about, humanitarian intervention and suggests some new directions for the future debate of international policies. The core statement of the book is that some type of forceful humanitarian commitments, including international intervention, are necessary to save the lives of actual and potential victims of ongoing mass killings, even though such commitments have up to now failed to achieve their main goal.

The book is organized into five parts. In part 1, “Accountability,” three contributors (Nicolaus Mills, “The Language of Slaughter”; Michael Walzer, “Arguing for Humanitarian Intervention”; and William Shawcross, “Lessons of Cambodia”) emphasize that the international community has the *duty* of (humanitarian) intervention in order to reduce the number of victims caused by systematic mass atrocities.[6] Their focus is whether or not we have a right and an obligation to intervene. Walzer, for example, argues that humanitarian intervention can be “call[ed] an imperfect duty” because “someone should stop the awfulness, but it isn’t possible to give that someone a proper name, to point a finger, say, at a particular country” (p. 25). On the other hand, “Nonintervention in the face of mass murder or ethnic cleansing is not the same as neutrality in time of war. The moral urgencies are different; we are usually unsure of the consequences of a war, but we know very well the consequence of a massacre” (pp. 25-26). Although the international community seemingly has the *moral duty* of humanitarian intervention, the practice of intervening as a meaningful and effective measure is still very much uncertain and politically it is extremely risky for policymakers. Even Walzer cautiously points out that “Interventions will rarely be successful unless there is a visible willingness to fight and to take casualties” (p. 29). Also, “intervening forces have to be prepared to use the weapons they carry, and they have to be prepared to stay what may be a long course” (p. 32). Moreover, Walzer states that “The international community needs to find ways of supporting these forces—and also since what they are doing is dangerous and won’t always be done well, of supervising, regulating and criticizing them” (p. 32). Whatever your stand on Walzer’s moral duty of humanitarian intervention, his discussions here clearly demonstrate that there are gaps between morality and reality creating dilemmas for policymakers both before and after intervention.

Next, the book is devoted to a series of field reports

on the massive human destructions of the 1990s: Yugoslavia (part 2), Rwanda (part 3), and East Timor (part 4). Each section consists of a witness perspective and three field reports by a journalist or a humanitarian aid worker. The voice of each witness painfully articulates the immense threats to their daily lives, the realities of what they saw in their homes, on their streets or neighborhoods. Following the witnesses’ vigorous fear, the field reports clearly demonstrated the variety of atrocities they faced or witnessed at each field of ethnic cleansing/mass killing. Each report resonates with their anger, sadness, and frustration, often shocking us out of our complacency. We are repeatedly reminded that there is no easy or generalized approach to dealing with ongoing, large-scale killing without a strong will. Furthermore, there is a crucial message that the international community should seek as its meaningful policy at least to rescue the people who are at threat by their own (former) country.

The last section—part 5, “No Longer Bystanders”—contains two essays, one by Michael Ignatieff (“Intervention and State Failure”) and the other by Samantha Power (“Raising the Cost of Genocide”). These bring our attention back to politics and several remaining considerations about international–humanitarian–intervention. Ignatieff’s essay highlights how the actual and vital issues are found at the intersection between intervention and nation- (or state-) building of the failed state.[7] As Ignatieff also points out, since failed states with a weak or collapsed political structure tend to commit massive human rights violations against their own citizens, such as intensive and frequent armed repression, their issues become a vital international agenda. Furthermore, these issues are linked to security threats to the international community—for example, transnational terrorism. On the other hand, the support necessary to resolve failed states’ problems have created new dilemmas for policy leaders between the action of intervention and the reestablishment of a nation-state with legitimate sovereignty. Ignatieff concludes that “state order can be successfully rebuilt if wealthy and powerful states are prepared to invest the time and money” (p. 244). Further, Ignatieff concludes his essay by stating that “Moral perfectionism is always the enemy of the possible and the practical. Doing the right thing appears to require the tenacity to do it when half the world thinks you are wrong” (p. 244). Ignatieff’s discussion is quite optimistic, unlike others. On the other hand, his arguments suggest that there are numerous considerations for policymakers, and all options contain high risk and high cost, i.e.,

intervention without any meaningful support from other Western countries and his/her own constituency.

Following Ignatieff's concern, Power argues that it is the responsibility of the international community, especially the United States as the only superpower, to prevent mass killing by following through on their vow to never again allow genocide. According to Power, humans have a natural tendency to be bystanders when the violence is against an unknown people in an unknown field. Furthermore, "The real reason the United States and the European states did not do what they could and should have done to stop genocide was not a lack of knowledge or a lack of capacity, but a lack of willâ. [T]hey believe that genocide was wrong, but they were not prepared to invest the military, financial, diplomatic, or domestic political capital needed to stop it" (p. 256). In addition, there is society-wide silence in Western societies (p. 257), meaning that except for the executive branch the citizens in Western societies have been mute about ongoing atrocities against humanity beyond generalized sadness and minimal attention. Therefore, "officials at all levels of government calculated that the political costs of getting involved in genocide prevention far exceeded the costs of remaining uninvolved" (p. 257). Whatever our circumstances, Power alleges that we—the international community and its citizens—should no longer be bystanders of systematic human destruction, even though interventions, if measured by traditional means, are costly and quite ineffective. To escape from the trap of bystander, Power proposes that there are a variety of ways to alleviate or prevent ethnic cleansing/mass killing besides intervention. According to her, the international community could respond by "publicly identifying and threatening the perpetrators with prosecution, demanding the expulsion of representatives of genocidal regimes from international institutions such as the United Nations, closing the perpetrators' embassies in Western capitals, and calling upon countries aligned with the perpetrators to ask them to use their influence" (p. 263). She notes that Western policymakers could establish economic sanctions, freeze foreign assets, impose an arms embargo, etc. Furthermore, Western countries could "set up safe areas to house refugees and civilians, and enforce them with well-armed and robustly mandated peacekeepers, air power or both" (p. 263). At the same time, the citizens in Western countries should monitor their own policymakers and those of their allied states and enforce "short-term political costs for those who do nothing" (p. 264). Ultimately, Power's arguments are consistent with that of other specialists: that inter-

national efforts to alleviate mass killing should focus on opposing, restraining, or disarming the perpetrators by relying upon not one policy, but a set of various policy channels.

Another ongoing challenge to genocide scholars is to develop alternative theoretical frameworks to explain not only the cause, but also the reasons for escalations of ethnic cleansing/mass killing beyond the conceptual debates and traditional—sociological and psychological—explanations. Michael Mann's *The Dark Side of Democracy* is an excellent attempt to theorize the origins and escalation of ethnic cleansing by focusing on political power relations within a society.[8] According to Mann, ethnic cleansing is understood as "the outcome of four interrelated sets of power networks [ideological, economic, military, and political], all of which are necessary to its accomplishment, but one of which can be regarded as causally primary" (p. 30). Mann attempts to convince us that "Murderous cleansing is most likely to result where powerful groups within two ethnic groups aim at legitimate and achievable rival states 'in the name of the people' over the same territory, and the weaker is aided from outside" (p. 33). Furthermore, Mann keenly and cautiously emphasizes that "Murderous cleansing is modern, because it is the dark side of democracy" by conceding that "democracy has always carried with it the possibility that the majority might tyrannize minorities, and this possibility carries more ominous consequences in certain types of multiethnic environments" (p. 2).

In chapter 1, "The Argument," Mann sets up his causal model of murderous ethnic cleansing with his eight theoretical propositions derived from literature in the field. Mann argues that we need more adequate explanations for how and why some multi-ethnic relations become extremely murderous ethnic cleansings while others do not. Creating his own typology of three means of cleansing, Mann cautiously discriminates among different dimensions of cleansing processes associated with internal violence, and illustrates how some types of internal violence are more likely than others to escalate from ethnic confrontation to murderous cleansing (see Table 1.1, p. 12). Closely looking at Mann's typology, we learn that most of the cleansings are quite mild in form, while the more murderous cleansings are uncommon, relatively speaking. He also shows that many ethnic groups have avoided cleansing by assimilating into a so-called nation-state through a variety of historical paths. Thus, Mann limits his analytical focus of murderous ethnic cleansing as very rare events in our modern history, in order to answer the question: why did such cleansings occur?

Following his theoretical arguments, Mann shifts our attention to ethnic cleansing prior to the modern age (chapter 2, “Ethnic Cleansing in Former Times”) by conceding that “ethnic cleansing was uncommon since macro-ethnicity was also uncommon” (p. 54). Then, in chapter 3, Mann argues that two versions of the notion of “We, the People” have emerged in the age of modernity. According to Mann, one version of such a notion is based on liberalism and is correctly expressed in the Constitution of the United States; the other is an organic version highlighted in the notion of self-determination and “one nation, one state.” As Mann points out, the theoretical and practical gap between the liberal and organic versions of democracy is the origin of ethnic cleansings in the modern era. Chapters 4-15 are devoted to the synthesis of numerous interdisciplinary scholarly works that form an in-depth description of murderous cleansings (Armenia, Holocaust, Communist dissenters, Yugoslavia, Rwanda) as the outcome of his four interrelated sets of power networks (pp. 531-557).

Unlike the previous chapters, Chapter 16 presents two counterfactual cases describing and examining India and Indonesia as situations where ethnic cleansing did not escalate to murderous cleansing with serious ethnic tensions. He attempts to answer why recurrent violence initiated by ethnic groups does/did not escalate to murderous cleaning. Figure 16.1 illustrates the three phases of the escalation of ethnic conflict to murderous cleansing (p. 477). The first phase is called Communal Conflict, which only occurs if frequent ethnic conflict has become a cycle, such as in India. The second phase is the Escalation Phase, implying that the confrontation between ethnic group A (perpetrator)—by threatening external intervention(s)—and ethnic group B (victim)—through the support of external power(s)—tend to escalate to the danger zone of murderous cleansing. The last phase is Murderous Cleansing, meaning that the leaders of ethnic group A determine to begin “final solutions” against ethnic group B. According to Mann’s evaluation, “there are greater reasons for pessimism in Indonesia than in India” in the future, as long as “[t]here is no simple relationship in these two countries between democracy and ethnic cleansing” (p. 498). Mann’s description of the phase and process in each case seem to synthesize fairly other investigations and assessments, but more cautious in-depth studies are still required. In the end, re-evaluating his case studies of modern murderous ethnic cleansings in the previous sections, Mann sums up his argument as follows:

“Escalation is not endogenous to bi-ethnic societies.

Instead, it results from political and geographical crises destabilizing the state, preventing decisive state repression of communal conflict—except by those radicalized by the crisis to seek murderous cleansing to attain organic sovereignty.... Without their combination, riot cycles ensue, not truly murderous cleansing.... It needs the transposition of these to rival nation-states, both domestically and geopolitically. For murderous ethnic cleansing is the dark side of the would-be democratic nation-state” (pp. 500-501).

In the final chapter (“Combating Ethnic Cleansing in the World Today”) Mann revisits and assesses his eight theses. Then, he presents his predictions and policy implications. As Mann keenly argues, “Modern ethnic cleansing is the dark side of democracy when ethnonationalist movements claim the state for their own *ethnos*, which they initially intend to constitute as a democracy, but they seek to exclude and cleanse others” (p. 502). Indeed, “ethnic cleansing diffuses along with the process of democratization” in many developing countries throughout the 1990s by destabilizing the state through external threats and regional fluctuations such as in the 1994 Rwandan genocide (p. 505). However, the trend might decline when solid institutionalized democracies are safely established within such states, although “[t]here are no general antidotes” to eliminate various obstacles in the process of the creation of a nation-state accompanied by a solid democratic institution (p. 525).

According to Mann’s eight ethnic theses of murderous cleansing, there are some essential features across the cases he observed. This might be the good news for those interested in developing and maintaining adequate early warning measures for the prevention of violent ethnic cleansing (some early warning indicators seem to work, but are not effective and reliable in helping policymakers in their decision-making process). Mann’s work is not directed explicitly to policymakers, but there is little doubt that he offers several inspirations for further research into the prevention and intervention policies of massive human destruction.

Both books reviewed above clearly show that there is no simple or unified approach to ending ethnic and mass violence. However, they also clarify that this violence contains certain consistent features as well as policy options that could help us escape the “bystander trap.” *The New Killing Fields*, edited by Nicolaus Mills and Kira Brunner, reveals the issues of intervention in terms of mass human destruction, while *The Dark Side of Democracy* by Michael Mann explores the causes and escalat-

ing process of murderous cleansing. They both offer excellent additions to the field. At the same time, both certainly indicate that there are numerous unanswered research agendas for genocide scholars, other relevant scholarship, and the creation of policy alternatives.

Notes

[1]. For example, see Hugo Slim, "Dithering over Darfur? A Preliminary Review of the International Response," *International Affairs* 80 (2005): pp. 811-833. Also see a series of essays and statements regarding the humanitarian crises in Sudan by Eric Reeves at <http://www.sudanreeves.org/>.

[2]. Matthew Krain's recent research shows that military interventions against specifically targeted perpetrators could effectively reduce the severity of genocides and politicides and save many lives. See Krain, "International Intervention and the Severity of Genocides and Politicides," *International Studies Quarterly* 49 (2005): pp. 363-387.

[3]. For a summary of civil war in Sudan and the Darfur humanitarian crises, see Robert Rotberg, "Sudan and the War in Darfur," *Great Decisions* (2005): pp. 57-67.

[4]. In this essay, I use the term "ethnic cleansing" and "mass killing" without any conceptual discussion. A good survey of various conceptual issues across genocide scholarship and the relevant literature, see Alexander Al-

varez, *Governments, Citizens, and Genocide: A Comparative and Interdisciplinary Approach* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), pp. 28-55; and Scott Straus, "Contested Meanings and Conflicting Imperatives: A Conceptual Analysis of Genocide," *Journal of Genocide Research* 3(2001): pp. 349-375.

[5]. Andrew Mack, "Civil War: Academic Research and Policy Community," *Journal of Peace Research* 39 (2002): p. 515.

[6]. For a collection of theoretical debates on this topic, see Tim Dunne and Nicholas J. Wheeler eds., *Human Rights in Global Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[7]. Regarding the definition of failed states and other issues, see Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2003); and Rotberg, ed., *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); and a series of in-depth reports by the State Failure Task Force led by Monty Marshall, Ted Robert Gurr, and Barbara Harff at the University of Maryland.

[8]. For another recent theoretical effort, see Benjamin Valentino, *Final Solutions: Mass Killing and Genocide in the Twentieth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

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