

Cultural Death

Destruction of a People in Whole or In Part

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ABSTRACT

Genocide is a term now commonly used to refer to the mass murder of a group resulting in their destruction in whole or in part. The inventor of the word “genocide” did not originally conceive the concept in narrow terms but in broad and inclusive terms. Mass murder as a crime is a narrow reading of the term that prevents state-based legal and political institutions from holding perpetrators accountable for the destruction of indigenous peoples. The phrase “cultural genocide” was initially contemplated as one of three forms of genocide by the drafters of the 1948 state-based International Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. When the United Nations finally adopted the new Convention that came into force in 1951, the phrase “cultural genocide” was not included. Cultural genocide means “cultural death” for millions of individuals, their families, and their communities in the Fourth World. Rafaël Lemkin, his legal colleagues, United Nations diplomats, and political leaders decided instead of including cultural genocide in the Convention, they would view violations of culture as a matter of “human rights” to be appropriately discussed, evaluated, and remedied as a policy within and under domestic state laws. The decision directly prevented Fourth World peoples from being considered and understood as a distinct subject of international law when their cultures were violated. In this essay, we consider the meaning of “cultural death” and the decisions that led to Fourth World peoples becoming dismissed as populations to be ignored as targets of genocide.

Keywords: Culture, Cultural Genocide, Historical Trauma, Rafaël Lemkin

Fourth World peoples worldwide are under intense social, economic, political, and cultural pressures to assimilate into state populations and abandon their cultures. The result is that the dominant Fourth World peoples are made to become indistinguishable from the dominant

population. State, business, and religious-sponsored educational systems and public propaganda coercively undermine the distinct cultural societies’ values, ideas, behaviours, and economic and social practices against the will of Fourth World communities. The process of

coercive assimilation can occur over generations leading to a point where a Fourth World society can completely disappear—Cultural Death.

What do we mean by the word “culture?” Culture is the dynamic and evolving relationship between a people, the land, and the cosmos.¹ The common Fourth World definition of “culture” is *cult-worship* of the *ure-earth*. When the relationship between a people, the land, and the cosmos lived over many generations is destroyed (replaced) by coercive assimilation, the people individually and collectively experience “cultural death”—a trauma that carries forward for generations. Dr. Rafaël Lemkin recognized this essential reality when he wrote in his 1944 book:

This trend is quite natural, when we conceive that nations are essential elements of the world community. The world represents only so much culture and intellectual vigour as are created by its component national groups. Essentially the idea of a nation signifies constructive cooperation and original contributions, based upon genuine traditions, genuine culture, and a well-developed national psychology. The destruction of a nation, therefore, results in the loss of its future contributions to the world. Moreover, such destruction offends our feelings of morality and justice in much the same way as does the criminal killing of a human being: the crime in one case as in the other is murder, though on a vastly greater scale. Among the basic features which have marked progress in civilization are the respect for and

appreciation of the national characteristics and qualities contributed to world culture by the different nations - characteristics and qualities which, as illustrated in the contributions made by nations weak in defence and poor in economic resources, are not to be measured in terms of national power and wealth.²

When you are forced not to speak the language of your ancestors and tell your family’s stories, wear your people’s clothes, eat foods like your relatives, or have your hair braided like your aunts or uncles, you are experiencing “cultural death.” Denied your identity when you are forcibly separated from family and your ancestral homeland and punished for practising spiritual rituals taught by the *sagamores* you are a victim of “cultural death.” Native peoples living on every continent and island, children, and adults, know with a sense of profound loss some or all these acts perpetrated against whole groups and individuals—resulting in the death of their culture. Suffering from the trauma of “cultural death” can and does continue to disable individuals and their communities for generations.

¹ Ryser, RC., Gilio-Whitaker, D. and Bruce, HG. (2017) “Fourth World Theory and Methods of Inquiry.” In Handbook of Research on Theoretical Perspectives on Indigenous Knowledge System in Developing Countries. Edited by Dr. Patrick Ngulube (University of South Africa, South Africa) DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-0833-5 Page 35. <https://www.igi-global.com/chapter/fourth-world-theory-and-methods-of-inquiry/165739>

² Lemkin, E. (1944) Chapter IX: “Genocide.” in Axis Rule in Occupied Europe, Laws of Occupation Analysis of Government Proposals for Redress. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. p. 79-51

After an alien people invades and occupies the ancestral territories of a people originating in that territory, imposing foreign policies and practices intended to dominate or replace a people's way of life, is that destructive of the original people?

When a state establishes in its law that children of a people must be forced to be schooled in a language, culture, and social system alien to the language, culture, and social system of their native culture, is that destructive of a people? When a state employs its military to force different peoples to leave their ancestral territories and concentrate their communities in a smaller and non-productive land. Is that destructive of a people? When state-created businesses or corporations establish their enterprise in the ancestral territory of a people to extract raw materials for the benefit of their profits resulting in the forced removal of people from their communities, is that destructive of a people? Moreover, if those corporations and businesses provide resources that permit commercial enterprises to profit from products manufactured from those raw materials, is that destructive of a people? Furthermore, when investors receive financial returns from corporations extracting raw materials from ancestral territories that result in disrupted biodiversity and climate change, is that destructive of a people? If a state accepts taxes or officials accept bribes resulting from this economic activity and extraction, is that activity destructive "of a people" in those territories?

All these actions have been or are now forced upon Fourth World peoples. Acts of progressively

created cultural death are currently occurring in many peoples' ancestral territories, communities, and families worldwide. Indigenous peoples consider these actions "destructive of their people in whole or in part." Nevertheless, state-based international law fails to recognize any of these acts as a violation of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide adopted by the fifty-eight-member United Nations General Assembly³ on 9 December 1948.

The States Move to Adopt a Genocide Convention

If many countries promote policies and practices that have the effect of cultural death for indigenous peoples, why are these policies and practices not prosecuted as crimes of genocide? A brief review of the actions taken at the United Nations leading up to the state-based Genocide Convention that does not consider cultural genocide is in order.

The UN General Assembly adopted Resolution E/734 on 3 March 1948 to establish an Ad Hoc Committee on Genocide with representatives from China, France, Lebanon, Poland, the United States of America, the Union of Soviet Socialist

³ Members of the UN in 1948 included 58 members: Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Burma, Bolivia, Brazil, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, France, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Iceland, India, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Liberia, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Philippine Republic, Poland, Saudi Arabia, Siam, Syria, Sweden, Turkey, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of South Africa, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yemen, Yugoslavia.

Republics, and Venezuela. The Ad Hoc Committee discussed the inclusion of “cultural genocide”⁴ as a crime and the UN Secretariat’s 1947 draft. The Secretariat and Ad Hoc Committee listed three acts⁵ in Article I of the draft that would qualify as genocide:

1. Physical genocide – causing the death of members of a group or injuring their health or physical integrity.
2. Biological genocide – Restricting births by way of sterilization and or compulsory abortion, segregation of the sexes, or obstacles to marriage.
3. Cultural genocide – Destroying the specific characteristics of the group by forcible transfer of children to another human group; or forced and systematic exile of individuals representing the culture of a group; or prohibition of the use of the national language even in private intercourse; or the systematic destruction of books printed in the national

language or of religious works or prohibition of new publications; or the systematic destruction of historical or religious monuments or their diversion to alien uses, destruction or dispersion of documents and objects of historical, artistic, or religious value and objects used in religious worship.

The authors⁶ of the Convention on Genocide introduced the destruction of culture as a crime based on Lemkin’s original arguments that the crime of cultural genocide would be essential in a new Convention. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics Ad Hoc Committee member Platon D. Morzov urged the UN Convention on Genocide drafting Committee to include cultural genocide as an essential concept in principle in the draft convention. France’s representative Pierre Ordonneau argued that the definition of genocide needed to include all violent measures used to destroy the cultural elements of a group. The United States delegate objected to the inclusion of references to the prohibited use of “language and

⁴ Ad Hoc Committee on Genocide (1948) “Meeting Held on 3 May 1948. Portions of Report Adopted in First Reading.” United Nations Economic and Social Council (E/AC.25/Q.4). p. 9-10. The United States delegation made a declaration noted in the report on the matter of “cultural genocide”: “The prohibition of the use of language systematic destruction of books, and destruction and dispersion of documents and objects of historical or artistic value commonly known in this Convention to those who wish to include it as “cultural genocide” is a matter which certainly should not be included in this Convention. The act of creating the new international crime of genocide is one of extreme gravity and the United States feels that it would be confined to those barbarous acts directed against individuals which form the basic concept of public opinion on this subject. The acts provided for in these paragraphs are acts which should appropriately be dealt with in connection with the protection of minorities.” The Ad Hoc Committee accepted the inclusion of “cultural genocide” as a crime with a vote of five votes to two. The United States and France opposed it. On the second reading, the entire article was adopted by four votes to three abstentions, with Venezuela joining the US and France to abstain.

⁵ United Nations. (1947) “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide – the Secretariat and Ad Hoc Committee Drafts. First Draft of the Genocide Convention, Prepared by the UN Secretariat, May 1947. E/447.

⁶ Members of the Ad Hoc Committee were: Mr. John Maktos, Chairman (United States of America); Mr. Platon D. Morzov, Vice Chairman (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics); Mr. Karim Azkool, Rapporteur (Lebanon); Mr. Lin Mousheng, (China); Mr. Pierre Ordonneau, (France); Mr. Aleksander Rudzininski, (Poland); and Mr. Victor M. Perez Perozo, (Venezuela). The Committee conducted nine meetings for discussions and then proceeded to prepare the articles of the Convention. The government of PR China offered the Committee-adopted “basic text” (document E/AC.25/9) with submissions by the United States, France, and the UN Secretariat considered by the Committee as amendments. The Ad Hoc Committee considered the Convention draft over twelve subsequent meetings. At the twenty-fifth meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee, the Convention was adopted for submission to the UN General Assembly.

systematic destruction of books, and destruction and dispersion of documents and objects of historical or artistic value” in the description of cultural genocide.

The US delegate argued that the crime of genocide is one of extreme gravity and that the article should be confined to “barbarous acts” directed against individuals. The Committee voted 4 in favour and 3 abstentions, with the United States, Venezuela, and France voting to abstain on “cultural genocide.”⁷ The Ad Hoc Committee ultimately decided to retain the idea of “cultural genocide” in the Convention. However, due to objections by the United States Ad Hoc Committee member John Maktos said he could not commit his government beyond “conspiracy and incitement to commit genocide.”⁸ Depending on the United States officials’ reading of the United States Constitution and the expressed views of other UN delegations the definition of genocide was ultimately limited in the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide⁹ to recognized crimes:

1. Killing members of the group;
2. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
3. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
4. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
5. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

The specific acts identified as punishable in the Convention¹⁰ are limited to these listed crimes of genocide:

- a) Genocide;
- b) Conspiracy to commit genocide;
- c) Direct and public incitement to commit genocide;
- d) Attempt to commit genocide;
- e) Complicity in genocide.

The Genocide Convention also narrows punishment to individuals who are leaders or officials of a country, other public officials, or private individuals. States, corporations, militias, and organizations are not identified as potential perpetrators. Cultural Genocide, all forms of propaganda intended to promote genocide, and the execution of genocide as a political crime disappeared from the final Convention. What happened? A significant concern directly affecting the survival and existence of nations—of indigenous peoples—vanished.

In his drive to establish a Convention on Genocide, Raphaël Lemkin gradually compromised his broader, culture-inclusive

⁷ IBID. 9

⁸ Abtahi, H. and Web, P. (2008) *The Genocide Convention: The Travaux Préparatoires*. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers. P. 736 referencing E/AC.25/SR.5.

⁹ Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide – UN General Assembly resolution 260 A (III) of December 1948 – Article II

¹⁰ IBID. Article III

definition of genocide.¹¹ A Convention that had the potential to revolutionise international law proved to result in a “hollowed out international humanitarian treaty,” as Anton Weiss-Wendt observed. The new international law limited its focus to mass murder but left cultural, political, ecological, and biological crimes in empty space. Lemkin’s compromises initially eliminated political groups from the list of crimes against groups.¹² The removal of political groups from the Convention’s protection also proved influential when the United States made removal a condition for ratification.

Dropping “political groups” made it possible to take further steps to remove cultural genocide and narrow the Convention’s crimes to mass murder. Lemkin’s approach to each country while seeking approval for ratification further restricted the scope of the Convention to avoid opposition from governments that had recent violent histories that could open them to charges against them for one form or other of genocide. For example, Italy’s agreement to ratify hinged on an anti-colonial argument that concerned crimes committed by colonial powers against indigenous populations. In Italy’s case, the argument against colonialism was changed to express concerns about the safety of the Italian minority in the colony of Eritrea as Britain withdrew its troops.

The indigenous peoples of Africa were characterized as threats to the colonial occupants from Britain, Germany, Italy, and France. By way of this argument, these countries would be considered the victims or potential victims instead of the potential perpetrators of crimes. The US government feared the Soviet Union

charging the United States with the crime of genocide. Ratification of the Convention was cast in doubt, and Lemkin worked to promote further compromises to attract support from the US Congress. Arguing that genocide is what the Nazis did in Germany and the Soviet Union did during the war against peoples in Europe and Russia, Lemkin began to win the US government’s support for ratification. Lemkin characterized the United States’ racial segregation policies as a form of slander against the country since he suggested that the treatment of a “racial group of America” was different from annihilation.¹³ Lemkin’s effort to obtain the United States’ ratification of the Convention drove him to argue that the United States’ treatment of “negros” was a matter of civil rights. Lemkin’s evolved analysis of genocide turned from protecting political, biological, and cultural groups to stating that neither racial discrimination nor lynching constituted genocide and that ratification by UN member states was more important than including protection for indigenous peoples and political groups. The Genocide Convention of 1948 had become but a shadow and pretence, lacking the force to protect peoples from destruction in whole or in part. The

¹¹ Weiss-Wendt, (2019) “A. When the End Justifies the Means: Raphaël Lemkin and the Shaping of a Popular Discourse on Genocide.” *International Association of Genocide Scholars. Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* Vol. 13 Issue 1 Revisiting the Life and Work of Raphaël Lemkin. Article 15. P. 174.

¹² IBID. Removing “political groups” from the Convention resulted from Lemkin’s acceptance of the World Jewish Congress’ recommendation and his personal intervention in the UN Secretariat draft of the Genocide Convention to cast doubt on the need to include political groups. Lemkin, according to Weiss-Wendt, considered opposition also from Britain, Latin American countries, and the Soviet Union as powerfully influential in the striking of political groups from the groups.

¹³ IBID. 182.

license to commit cultural genocide—cultural death—has remained open and available.

Cultural Crime, Lemkin, and the Ad Hoc Committee

Language for the Convention was drafted initially in three steps: First three experts, Raphael Lemkin¹⁴, Vespasian Pella¹⁵, and Henri Donnedieu de Vabres¹⁶, prepared a compilation of principles and concepts intended to provide the UN General Assembly with guidance for the actual drafting. The second step required an Ad Hoc Committee on Genocide to work with the UN Secretariat to prepare a draft. Finally, the UN General Assembly considered the Draft and made revisions before the Convention was adopted.

Writing later, Lemkin argued that the Nuremberg trials decided a case against the “past Hitler” and not the possibility of “future Hitlers.” His thinking strongly influenced the development

of a United Nations-approved Convention on Genocide that would contain some but not all of his ideas about the commission of crimes against groups and not simply individuals. Lemkin later wrote, “Genocide is directed against the national group as an entity, and the actions involved are directed against individuals, not in their individual capacity, but as members of the national group.”¹⁷

Relying on the terms and experience of the Nuremberg Trial, Lemkin, Pella, and de Vabres considered it too limited in scope and encouraged the Ad Hoc Committee to take a broader perspective. In the end, the Committee¹⁸ its report on 30 April 1948, prepared by Rapporteur Karim Azkoul of Lebanon, containing five draft articles drafted by the U.S. representative John Maktos serving as the Committee Chair “with a few changes”¹⁹:

¹⁴ Raphael Lemkin originated the term “genocide,” having worked for decades to provide the rationale for the recognition of mass destruction of a people in whole or in part beginning when he was a student in the 1920s after he learned about the massacres of Armenians during World War I. He was horrified to learn that there was no international sanction to prosecute the Ottoman leaders or the Young Turks who, in 1914-1925, intentionally forced the removal and killing of more than 2 million Armenians, Yazidi, Christians, Assyrians, Roma, and other peoples living in their ancestral lands in what is now eastern Turkey and in Mesopotamia. As a Polish attorney, Lemkin suffered the murder of his family in the Holocaust. He was among many Jews to flee Europe to the United States in the face of Nazi civil and war atrocities. He authored the 1944 book “Axis rule in Occupied Europe, delivering a legal analysis of German rule in occupied countries and defining the term “genocide.” Lemkin served in 1944 as an advisor to Justice Robert H. Jackson, the lead prosecutor of the Nuremberg trials.

¹⁵ Vespasian Pella was a Romanian legal expert between the Great War and World War II, advocating the necessity for formalizing international criminal proceedings against heads of state found guilty of crimes against humanity in special international tribunals. He served as the President of the Committee on Legal Questions of the League of Nations and, in 1944, served as the Romanian Ambassador to Switzerland, actively engaged in the protection and saving of several Romanian Jews from being deported by the Nazis to occupied Poland. After working with the U.N. Genocide documents, he worked on proposals to establish an international criminal court.

¹⁶ Henri Donnedieu de Vabres was a French jurist who advocated establishing an International Criminal court while serving as a professor of Criminal Law at the University of Paris. As a participant in the Nuremberg trials, he objected to charges of “Conspiracy to Wage War” advanced by prosecutors against Nazi defendants. He considered the charge too general to effectively respond to crimes described in such a critical trial. He objected to the conviction of Colonel-General Alfred Jodi, who held no allegiance to Nazism. A Canadian legal scholar John Peters Humphrey (jurist and human rights advocate who became the principal author of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights first draft), was a consultant to Vabres.

¹⁷ Lemkin, R. (1944) *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress*. 2nd ed. Clark, Nj: Lawbook Exchange, 2008, 79.

¹⁸ U.N. Economic and Social Council. E/AC.25/W.4 2 May 1948 ENGLISH. Original FRENCH.

¹⁹ Maktos, J. (1973) Oral History Interview with John Maktos. Memoir memorandum concerning his work at the Department of State p. 2 of pp.1-16. Truman Library Washington, D.C. 28 May 1973.

Article 2: Physical Genocide

Article 3: Cultural Genocide

Article 4: Conspiracy, indictment, attempt, complicity

Article 5: Persons liable

Article 6: Obligation for contracting parties to harmonize their legislation with the Convention.

The Ad Hoc Committee voted on each article after a debate among the members. Bearing in mind that the draft articles produced by Maktos were based in the Nuremberg prosecutions and generally took into consideration comments and positions taken by members of the Ad Hoc Committee during their debate.

While Physical Genocide did not pose serious controversy among the Ad Hoc Committee members, the representatives of China and the Soviet Union objected to Article 2, which was initially drafted to define genocide as "... deliberate acts committed with the intention of destroying a national, racial, religious or political group, on grounds of national or racial origin, religious belief, or political opinion."²⁰ Mousheng of China expressed opposition and voted against Article 2 absent the description of the destruction of a group emphasizing "physical existence of such group, while Morzov of the Soviet Union objected he voted against Article 2 arguing that "it is a mistake to include political groups among the groups protected by the Convention on Genocide, just as it is a mistake to include political opinions among the grounds for perpetrating the

crime of genocide." Notably, the Soviet Union representative was particularly concerned that destroying a group for political differences should not be considered genocide. Such political groups, Morzov argued, should not be protected under the new Convention and that Article 2 should be drafted to state, "...genocide means any of the following acts aimed at the physical destruction of racial, national and religious groups and committed on grounds of racial, national or religious persecutions."²¹

“Cultural Genocide” Appears and Disappears from the Genocide Convention

The Ad Hoc Committee on Genocide was formed in April 1948 and constituted seven members to prepare a draft Convention on the Crime of Genocide. The Committee was given a week and at most two weeks to prepare the draft and submit it to the UN Economic and Social Council at its session on 19 July 1948. The Ad Hoc Committee with representatives from China – Mr. Lin Mousheng, France – Mr. Pierre Ordonneau, Lebanon - Mr. Karim Azkoul (Rapporteur), Poland – Mr. Aleksander Rudzinski, the USSR – Mr. Platon D. Morzov (Vice Chair), USA – Mr. John Maktos (Chair)²²

²⁰ WUN Economic and Social Council. E/AC.25/W.4 2 May 1948 ENGLISH. Original FRENCH. Article 2. p. 4.

²¹ IBID. p.7.

²² John Maktos was the Chief of the legal office of the Division of International Organization Affairs, 1945-1947 of the US Department of State. He had served as the Assistant legal adviser in charge of international organization affairs. <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/oral-histories/maktosj>

and Venezuela – Mr. Victor M. Perez Perozo)²³ relied on a series of UN General Assembly resolutions²⁴ to prepare their draft for submission to the UN Economic and Social Council within two weeks. At the submission of the first report, the Ad Hoc Committee noted that “relatively few Governments have presented their comments on the question of genocide” and that with only seven members, the Committee thought it “advisable to follow the suggestion made in the Economic and Social Council to submit alternative texts and leave the final choice to the Economic and Social Council and General Assembly.”²⁵

The Cultural Trauma Spreads

Since the adoption of the state-based UN Convention on Genocide, more than 160 alleged genocides committed against Fourth World nations since 1945 perpetrated by governments, armed groups, business-supported militias, and mass violence by angry and religious motivated mobs just one tribunal has been convened to

hold perpetrators accountable. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, established in 1995, indicted 92 high-ranking Hutu military and other government officials, politicians, businesspeople, religious, militia, and media leaders. During 100 days of mass violence perpetrated in Rwanda in 1994, eight hundred thousand Tutsi, Twa, Hutu, and a minority of others were systematically massacred—a torrent of killing that was justified by the claims the Hutu President that the Tutsi had deliberately used rockets to shoot down the plane carrying Rwanda’s predecessor President. While it might be argued that the killing of the Hutu presidential predecessor, the reality is that what was declared the Rwanda Genocide in 1995 had begun as a “colonization genocide” perpetrated by the German government in 1894²⁶, succeeded by the Belgium government in 1918—two colonizing powers. The trauma of the late 19th century and early 20th century burst into mass violence in 1959 and then with greater virulence in 1995,

²³ UN Economic and Social Council. E/AC.25/W.4 2 May 1948 ENGLISH. Original FRENCH. p. 2.

²⁴ UN Economic and Social Council. E/AC.25/2 1 April 1948 ENGLISH. Original FRENCH.: GA Resolution No. 180 (III) of 21 November 1947 (reaffirming resolution 96(I) of 11 December 1946 on the crime of genocide; and the Economic and Social Council Resolution No. 117(VI) of 3 March 1928 (taking into consideration “in preparation of the draft convention, the draft convention prepared by the Secretary-General, the comments of the Member Governments on this draft convention and other drafts).

²⁵ IBID. page 6.

²⁶ Succeeding European imperial powers recognized the German East Africa Company that obtained an imperial charter in 1885. The German government subsequently declared the vast area of Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanzania as its protectorate. Germany’s semi-military administration of the colony was augmented by missionary schools that were encouraged to foster the development of a labour force working to produce rubber and cotton. World War I ended the German occupation, and Belgium was granted control over Rwanda/Burundi under the Treaty of Versailles, signed in June 1919. Under Belgium’s control, colonization meant the conversion of Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa into favoured and less favoured groups. Belgium’s colonial administration gave preference to the Hutu over the Tutsi. Indeed, this arrangement of Hutus over Tutsi reflected the system of monarchy that is recorded to have existed in the 15th century. European intervention in eastern Africa contributed to hostilities in Rwanda that eventually exploded with the killing of 20,000 Hutu in 1959. Ultimately the hostilities toward Tutsi, Twa, and others by Hutu perpetrators had deep colonial roots that continue to the present with mass violence in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, where Hutu refugees formerly involved in the mass killings fled after the 1995 mass violence in Rwanda.

with social, cultural, and economic repercussions continuing to the present day with millions of people displaced and killed in Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda.²⁷

Other alleged crimes of genocide and mass violence have been recorded after the adoption of the Convention on Genocide. However, only the Rwanda Tribunal has tried and issued indictments of individuals committing crimes against indigenous peoples. However, it is essential to note that in the Rwanda Tribunal, culture was not a consideration, and efforts to destroy Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa communities and families were long carried out with impunity before the mass violence that saw 20,000 Hutu killed by Tutsi in 1959 and 800,000 Tutsi, Twa and their supporters killed in 1994. Indeed, as the killing goes on without external interventions inside the Democratic Republic of Congo, it is vital to consider the early signs of genocide that take the form of occupations, forced population removals, forced internments, and re-education programs. These factors must now be recognized, and interventions organized to prevent mass violence in numerous countries where Indigenous peoples are under threat. These factors directly promote “cultural death” and lead to mass violence against different peoples.²⁸

- Emergent Authoritarianism
- Extremism – propaganda, organized
- Breakdown of political and social institutions
- Breakdown of group and individual security

- Organized vilification, denigration, and character assassination of a group
- Presence of Non-state security forces committing abuses with impunity
- Non-state or state-led perpetration of mass destruction
- Competition between Political Factions
- Competition for wealth

The common feature joining these nine factors leading to cultural death is that they target the disruption of social, economic, political, and family bonds that define a society. Countries where indigenous peoples are at greatest risk of cultural death and eventual mass violence include Pakistan, where the Pashtun originated, and Saudi Arabian schooled Taliban (students)²⁹ actively impose their religious views on other Pashtuns, Balochs, and Hazaras, among many other peoples. In the Peoples’ Republic of China, the Han-dominated government and communist party the 12 million Uyghurs, along with other Muslim peoples, are forced into “mass internment camps, prisons and other penal institutions

²⁷ The trauma that is Rwanda continues to spread in east Africa—SEE <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13431486>

²⁸ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Countries at Risk for a New Mass Killing, 2022-23 Statistical Risk Assessment. <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/blog/countries-at-risk-for-mass-killing-2022-23> (Accessed 8 January 2023).

²⁹ Schooled in a brand of fundamentalist Islam in Islamic schools—madaris—sponsored by the Saudi government’s emphasis on Wahhabism—a Sunni Islamic revivalist and fundamentalist movement originating in the 18th century.

where they are subjected to psychological stress, torture, and, as recently reported by the BBC, systematic rape.”³⁰ The government of the People’s Republic of China is engaged in classical policies to promote “cultural death” of the Uyghurs—to make them disappear as a cultural identity.

In Burma (Myanmar), Rohingya people are denied their identity by the ruling military government³¹ that systematically seeks to force them outside the country. In addition, the military dictatorship has commandeered raw materials inside the traditional territories of the Karen, Shan, Kan, and Mo among the many peoples in Burma while engaging in efforts to force compliance with the dictatorship’s social, economic, and political policies.

Other countries that have fallen under dictatorships or command policies to change the cultures of indigenous nations include

Ethiopia, Nigeria, India, Sudan, Somalia, Syria, Iraq, the Central African Republic, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The countries of Canada, the United States, Guatemala, Russia, Azerbaijan, Indonesia, Australia, and Ecuador are also engaged in systematic re-education, propaganda, and cultural reconstruction efforts to absorb indigenous peoples under state control through integration programs—these are all forms of cultural death.

³⁰ Roberts, SR. (2021) “The Roots of Cultural Genocide in Xinjiang. China’s Imperial Past Hangs over the Uyghurs.” *Foreign Affairs*. February 10, 2021. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Countries at Risk for a New Mass Killing, 2022-23 Statistical Risk Assessment. <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/blog/countries-at-risk-for-mass-killing-2022-23> (Accessed 8 January 2023).

³¹ The Tatmadaw is the Burman-dominated military that overthrew the Myanmar government in February 2022 to establish a military dictatorship.

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