

The Refugee Crisis and the Genocidal Nature of US-NATO Interventions

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[On Genocide](#)

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The world has suddenly realised that there is a “refugee crisis”. There are more refugees now than at any time since World War II. The number has grown three-fold since the end of 2001. The problem is treated as if it arose just recently, but it has been a long time coming. The pressure has been building and building until it has burst the dams of wilful ignorance.

Death and despair has migrated to the doorsteps of Europe. But people do not simply abandon home and native land for an insecure dangerous future of desperate struggle. The forces that have created this crisis are massive and historic in scale. People are now confronted with a tiny fraction of the horrors that have been visited upon millions and millions in the last 14 years. The refugee crisis is merely a symptom of the far greater and far more brutal reality. This is not just a “current crisis” to last a dozen news cycles, and it will not be resolved by humanitarian support.

The current crisis is similar in magnitude to that of World War II because the events causing it are nearly as epochal and momentous as a World War. Those who leave their homelands now face much greater peril of death than asylum seekers faced 20 years ago, yet despite this their numbers have swollen to the tens of millions.

The crisis has been caused by a new Holocaust, but it is one we refuse to acknowledge. The facts of the mass violence and mass destruction are not hidden. We can see the destruction and death that follows Western intervention, but we have been living in wilful ignorance and denial, just as the Germans denied the obvious fact and nature of German genocide. We don't want to understand. However, like the Germans under Nazism, our self-serving ignorance is nurtured and magnified by a propaganda discourse that is in our news and entertainment media, and also in our halls of education and the halls of power.

We do not understand the genocidal nature of US-led Western interventions because we do not understand the nature of genocide. We have allowed Zionist and US imperialist elites to dictate that genocide be understood through a lens of Holocaust exceptionalism. But genocide was never meant to be specifically Nazi nor anti-Semitic in nature. The word “genocide” was coined by a Jew, Raphael Lemkin, but was never intended to apply specifically to Jews. It was meant to describe a strategy of deliberately visiting violence and destruction on “nations and peoples” as opposed to visiting it on armies. Lemkin wrote a great deal about genocide against the native people's of the Americas, but that work went unpublished.

The truth is that there is widespread genocide in the Middle East, Africa and Central Asia. A

new Holocaust is upon us and the refugee numbers are the just tip of a genocidal iceberg. By bombing, invading, destabilising, subverting, Balkanising, sanctioning, corrupting, indebting, debasing, destroying, assassinating, immiserating and even enraging, the US has led “a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups....” That is where tens of millions of refugees have come from, but we refuse to see the fact of coordination. We blind ourselves to clear indications of Western agency and intentionality. We twist ourselves in knots to avoid seeing coherence or any pattern in US foreign policy. We are blinded by nonsense from pundits about party-political rhetoric and power struggles in DC, and we ignore the monolithic elephant of coherent imperial strategy that is threatening to crash through the floor and destroy the room altogether.

Westerners don’t want to face the truth of what their governments are doing – particularly NATO governments, and the US government most of all. The millions who died in Iraq were victims of a genocide that was intended to kill Iraqis in such numbers. The victims were not incidental to some other project. The same was true in Viet Nam, but it is also true in Syria, in Libya, in Yemen, in Somalia, in the DR Congo, and in many other places. The destruction, the death, the misery and the chaos are not “failures” of “ill-advised” policy. This is not even some sort of “Plan-B” where the US creates failed states when it cannot install the regime it wants. This is Plan-A and it is becoming harder and harder to deny the fact.

Wars no longer end. We cannot simply pretend that there is no reason for that. Wars no longer end because instability and conflict are the deliberate means of attacking the people – the means of destroying their nations as such. That is what “genocide” means, and that is why we avoid the knowledge. This knowledge will destroy comforting delusions and reveal the cowardly false critiques of those who think that the US government is “misguided” in its attempts to bring stability. The US doesn’t bring stability, it doesn’t seek to bring stability. It destabilises one country after another. It infects entire regions with a disease of acute or chronic destruction, dysfunction and death.

This is a Neo-Holocaust. It slowly builds and grinds. It is the gradual, frog-boiling way to commit genocide. And, like the dullard masses of a dystopian satire, we keep adjusting every time it presents us with a new “normal”. It is a postmodern, neocolonial Holocaust of mass death and mass deprivation. It rises and falls in intensity, but will not end until the entire world awakes and ends it in revulsion.

“Crisis”

There are now more refugees than at any time since World War II. It bears repeating. The numbers have tripled since 9/11 and the launch of what has been labelled the “Global War on Terror” and the “Long War”. The situation has become akin to that in World War II, but we seem to be quite comfortable treating it as if it wasn’t a response to a single phenomenon. In WWII it was self-evident that people were fleeing war and genocide, but we apparently accept the tripling of refugee numbers now as resulting from all sorts of different causes. The only factor we are supposed to perceive as linking these crises appears to be Islamist terrorism, even though in the most prominent cases the terrorism arrives after the Western intervention and conflict.

We can no longer excuse the habit of treating each victim of US/NATO intervention as having separate endogenous sources of conflict. Yes, there are ethnic and religious fissures

in countries, and yes there are economic and environmental crises which create instability. But, when the opportunity arises weapons flood into these hotspots. There is always an influx of arms. It is the great constant. But many other things might also happen, particularly economic destabilisation and “democracy promotion”. There is no single playbook from which the US and its partners are making all their moves. There are major direct interventions, such as the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, the bombing of Libya, and the creation of South Sudan. There are proxy interventions such as the bombing of Yemen, incursions into DR Congo, and fomenting civil war in Syria. Add into this the continuous covert interventions, economic interventions, destabilisations, sanctions, coups, debt crises then you can see a differentiated complex of systematic genocide that very closely resembles the differentiated complex of systematic genocide initially described by Raphael Lemkin in 1944.

The tempo of violence that exists now does not even match that of the bombing during the Korean War, let alone the enormous scale of violence of World War II. However, the difference is that this violence never ends. It seems destined to continue for eternity and the scale of death continues to creep upwards. I cannot shake the feeling that if Germany had not been at war, Nazi genocide policies would have been enacted at the same slowly accumulating pace. The destruction and the violence are often meted out by enemies of the United States, but I think people are beginning to grasp that to some extent the US is often the creator and sponsor of these enemies. Moreover these enemies are often materially dependent on the US either directly or through allied regimes.

Cumulatively, this has still become an historic era of mass death that in some respects resembles the “hyperexploitation” and socio-economic destruction of “Scramble for Africa” and in other respects resembles German genocide policies in occupied Europe. In future, when people come to add up the human cost of this new Holocaust they won’t be trying to prove their credibility by being conservative. Conservatism in such matters is nothing but purposeful inaccuracy and bias. When they calculate all of the excess mortality that has resulted from military, proxy, covert and economic intervention by the West in the post-9/11 era it will be in the tens of millions. It is already of the same order of magnitude as the Nazi Holocaust, and it is far from over.

We see a drowned boy in on a beach and the suffering strikes home. That is a tragedy, but the obscenity is not in the death of a small child. The obscenity is in the fact that it was an act of murder by Western states. Now try to picture what that obscenity looks like multiplied, and multiplied, and multiplied until the boy, Aylan Kurdi, is just a grain of sand on that beach. It seems almost serene, but that is an illusion. We are socialised to lack what is called “statistical empathy” and that lack makes us irrational. Whenever we face the statistics of human pain and loss we must learn to counter this unnatural detachment by making ourselves face the full individual humanity of victims. The key to understanding the Holocaust is not to obsess about the evil Nazi race hatred and cruel machinery of death, it is to picture a child dying in agony in the dark of a crowded gas chamber and to juxtapose that with the callous indifference of Germans, of French, of English and of many others to the fate of that child at the time.

Without compassion, we are intellectually as well as morally stunted. Understanding the ongoing holocaust means you must picture a burned child dying slowly, crying for help that will never come, in the dark rubble of a shelled home next to the corpses of her mother and father. Now juxtapose that with the callous indifference we are induced to feel until we are told that it is officially a crime committed by villains rather than regrettable collateral

damage stemming from benignly intended Western acts. After the fact we care, but at that time of the Judeocide almost every country sent Jewish refugees back to certain death. People reacted with callousness and also vile contempt to Jewish refugees, almost exactly like the British tourists who have recently [wished](#) mass death on the “tides of filth” that are ruining their playground on the Greek isle of Kos.

To avoid the truth, we select only certain victims as being worthy and fully human. When it becomes officially correct to feel compassion, we create cartoon villains to blame who, by their very conception, are aberrations and departures from a systemic norm. It might be the Zionist lobby, or Netanyahu or Trump or the Kochs or the military-industrial complex, but it must be something other than business as usual. This thinking is cowardice. It is stupidity. It is self-serving. It is morally and intellectually bankrupt. There is a new Holocaust happening now and it is the logical outcome of US imperialism.

In the final analysis, the refugees are the result of years of conflict, destruction and suffering. The scariest thing is that we are incapable of stopping the progress of this plague because we will not face up to the principles behind it. It has become a one-way street. Areas that are lost to civil strife can never find peace. Cities reduced to rubble can never be rebuilt. Communities that are torn apart can never again knit together. Worse will come and it will not end until the US empire is destroyed. Please let us find a way to do that without another World War.

Kieran Kelly blogs at [On Genocide](#).

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