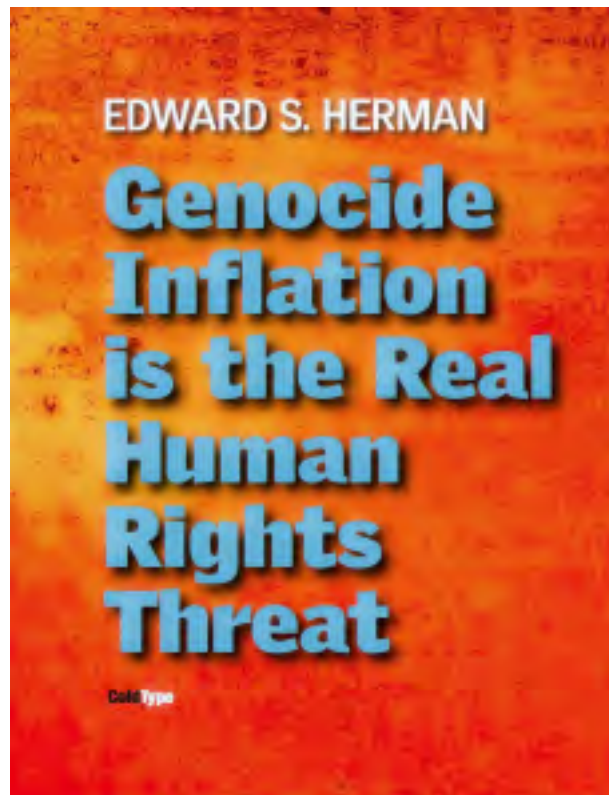


EDWARD S. HERMAN

**Genocide
Inflation
is the Real
Human
Rights
Threat**

ColdType



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W **E** **HAVE** all heard about “genocide denial” and “holocaust denial” as very bad happenings that have focused attention, indignation, and concern to the point of laws passed to criminalize such behavior in Austria, Belgium, France, and elsewhere. But very little attention has been paid to genocide inflation, where killings are wildly exaggerated and claims of genocide are

made based on hearsay, rumor, knowing lies, and otherwise problematic “information.” No indignation has been expressed even over its more egregious illustrations, and no laws have been proposed or passed to punish its practitioners. This is because the focus on denial has been useful to powerful groups and countries in the West, whereas the critics and victims of genocide inflation have been weak and with no political or media leverage. It will be shown below, however, that this pattern not only fails to protect anybody’s human rights, but instead allows the powerful to kill and violate human rights more easily.

GENOCIDE DENIAL

Genocide denial has received its greatest attention in relation to the occasional questioning of the Nazi destruction of the Jews during World War II. Those denying this horrendous set of real events have almost always been powerless eccentrics who posed no threat to existing Jewish populations, and in fact the outcries against them have gotten louder as real antisemitism has declined (although hostility to Israeli policy has increased). This was surely true in the famous case of Robert Faurisson in France, where his denial in the late 1970s, which aroused great indignation, led to legal action, and elicited great publicity, occurred in a country where antisemitism had demonstrably fallen sharply.^[1] A powerless indi-

vidual, he and his crank opinions posed no threat whatsoever to French Jews. It was pointed out at the time that similar crank views by the U.S. academic Arthur Butz had simply been ignored, and in consequence he was unknown here and completely lacking in influence. Why did the French (mainly Jewish) activists give Faurisson such free publicity? They talked about “insults” and “honor,” but one thing they omitted: that Israel was being increasingly criticized for its intensifying ethnic cleansing programs involving Palestinians, and bringing attention once again to the Nazi Holocaust would deflect attention from the ugly present in which Jews were victimizers to the time when they were massive victims.

In recent years as well, Israel has been subject to increasing criticism for its harsh and illegal treatment of its own *untermenschen*, and the response of many individual and organized Jewish groups in the United States and Europe has been once again to cry about genocide denial and an alleged increase in antisemitism (more and more identified with hostility to Israeli policies). This has been happening in a period where real antisemitism (as opposed to hostility to Israeli ethnic cleansing) and holocaust denial are at a low level, but where the power of Western Jewish elites and lobbying operations are unprecedentedly high.^[2] This has allowed them to get substantial but completely unwarranted publicity for their current victimization claims, including even the passage of laws outlawing Holocaust denial and legislative as well as private efforts to rein in critics of Israeli policy.^[3]

The human rights impact of this set of campaigns, including those featuring and trying to constrain Holocaust denial, has been negative. As Jews are not under threat in the West, the campaign does not help their human rights. On the other hand, by featuring Jewish victimization these campaigns build support for Israel and hence contribute to the astonishing willingness of the West not only to allow massive human rights violations of Palestinians and Lebanese by the Israeli Defense Forces and Israeli settlers but to actively support these by punishing the victims.^[4]

It has of course been argued that Iran President Mahmoud Ahmanidejad has posed an existential threat to Israel with his reservations about the Holocaust and alleged desire to “wipe Israel off the map.”^[5] But his Holocaust doubts prove nothing about prospective Iran policy, and his “wiping out” threat has been shown to have been a mistranslation of an expressed position favoring regime

change from racist to non-racist state. The most clear and direct threats involving Iran are those by the United States and Israel in favor of regime change in Iran itself, and with the use of force – even nuclear weapons – very much “on the table.” It can never be expressed in the Free Press, for not only does Iran lack a single nuclear weapon, but even if it had a few using them would be an act of national suicide. On the other hand, that would not be true if the United States or Israel used such weapons, and both are openly threatening a military attack on Iran. [6] It should also be noted that there is a systematic “genocide [or holocaust] denial” when it comes to treating Western-based genocidal operations, but this is invisible because the West does it. The most prominent illustration at present is the U.S. and “coalition of the willing” mass killing in Iraq. The million Iraqi deaths from the “sanctions of mass destruction” of the 1990s is unmentioned in Samantha Power’s ludicrous treatise on genocide (“A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide”), just as she fails to deal seriously with the Indonesian massacres in East Timor.[7] The U.S.-coalition invasion-occupation of Iraq from 2003 has added another million to the Iraqi toll, but the idea that this is “genocide” is inexpressible in the U.S. mainstream media, which is focused on the more politically convenient killings in Darfur – attributable to a Western target, the Arab government of the Sudan, hence subject to the invidious word genocidal. This is implicit but real denial, which follows from the political basis of naming and concern.

GENOCIDE INFLATION

Yugoslavia. All through the Yugoslavia wars of the 1990s there were cries of genocide – first in Bosnia, then in Kosovo, with the Serbs as villains and the Bosnian Muslims and then Kosovo Albanians as the victims. The numbers of Bosnian Muslim civilians allegedly killed by the Bosnian Serbs reached 250,000 or 300,000 by 1993, the source of this information being Bosnian Muslim officials who were both notorious liars and working as hard as they could to make a case for NATO armed intervention on their behalf. Throughout the period 1992-1995 propaganda claims of Serb massacres, death camps, and rape camps were profuse, pushed not only by Muslim and NATO officials but by an enthusiastically gullible Western media. [8] By 1995, war campaigner David Rieff was asserting that the “genocide” of Bosnian Muslims “is all but complete.”[9]

But awkwardly for Rieff and his fellow war campaigners and propagandists, in 2005 and 2007 two studies made their appearance, one by Ewa Tabeau and Jacob Bijak published in 2005 under the auspices of the Western-organized Yugoslavia Tribunal, the other in 2007 by the Bosnian Muslim lawyer Mirsad Tokaca and funded by the Norwegian government, both claiming that the total Bosnian war deaths on all sides, military and civilian, was in the order of 100,000, of which some 40-55,000 were civilians (including thousands of Serbs). These new values penetrated into mainstream reporting slowly and grudgingly, because the inflated numbers had fitted so well the needs of U.S. and NATO policy and the closely related biases of the Western media.^[10]

While the Bosnian “genocide” has taken a beating, the Srebrenica massacre of July 1995 has survived as a now institutionalized “genocide.” But it has done so in the face of intractable problems: the NATO-organized and compliant Yugoslav Tribunal identified it as such by finding that there could be genocide in one small town, where the genocidists had bussed to safety all the women and children of their target population, and where the claims of 8,000 executed have never been verified by forensic or credible witness evidence of anything like this scale of killing.^[11] It lives on by virtue of its political utility and aggressive challenges to its truthfulness as “revisionism” and “denial.”

This same inflation process occurred before and during NATO’s 78-day bombing war on Yugoslavia and takeover of Kosovo. The pre-bombing propaganda barrage claiming Serb misbehavior was massive, and then during the war itself there was a stream of hysterical claims of indiscriminate killing, official U.S. claims of Bosnian Muslim deaths reaching 500,000, with a very profuse use of the word “genocide.” After the war, the claimed deaths quickly fell to 11,000, and one of the greatest forensic body searches in history produced only 4,000 bodies (with some 2,000 still reportedly missing).^[12]

Needless to say, there has been no apology, or any call for reprimand let alone punishment, for participation in these processes of genocide inflation. But in contrast with the genocide denial cases mentioned earlier, these inflation processes had real and substantial negative human rights consequences. By helping demonize U.S.-NATO targets, they readied Western publics for a refusal to negotiate with the demons, helped bring about an ensuing burst of ethnic cleansing and eventually NATO military intervention, and they helped cover over the NATO

commission of war crimes. Michael Mandel made an excellent case that the main point of the Yugoslavia Tribunal's operations from its inception in 1993 was to demonize the NATO target (Serbia) and to allow the demand for "justice" to trump peace settlements, which the United States and its allies did trump from 1992 till the Dayton Accord in late 1995^[13] The genocide inflation helped to this end. The same was true in the Kosovo case, where the inflated claims of Serb violence against the Kosovo Albanians both before and during the bombing war – including the fabricated threat of a Serb mass ethnic cleansing under Operation Horseshoe – helped make publicly acceptable the carefully engineered avoidance of negotiations and plunge into a bombing war.

Rwanda. A less well-known and less well-understood case of genocide inflation – and possibly even more important, misapprehension of the true source and major direction of the killings – is that of Rwanda. In the establishment narrative, genocide erupted suddenly following the April 6, 1994 shooting down of a plane at the Kigali airport that killed the Hutu presidents of both Rwanda (Juvénal Habyarimana) and Burundi (Cyprien Ntaryamira). According to the narrative, the Hutu genocidaires and the Interahamwe militias unleashed a huge pre-planned killing spree against the minority Tutsi population that wiped out some 800,000 to 1.2 million people, mainly Tutsis. In the myth structure, Bill Clinton made a regrettable error in pressing for the withdrawal of UN forces that might have protected civilians, for which he apologized. In a major article of September 2001 in the Atlantic Monthly, Samantha Power and others dubbed the United States "bystanders to genocide," which is also a myth^[14]

Contrary to the establishment narrative:

1. The plane was shot down by Paul Kagame and his Tutsi associates,^[15] with active or tacit help from the Belgians, UN representative Romeo Dallaire,^[16] and possibly the CIA. This act was part of the Kagame-Tutsi final assault to seize power after a four-year war, with the assistance of the U.S.-sponsored Ugandan military. When the chief investigator for the Rwanda Tribunal, Australian Michael Hourigan, reported solid evidence on this locus of responsibility for the April 6th assassination to Chief Prosecutor Louise Arbour in 1997, she immediately closed down the investigation and ordered him to destroy his files. This finding, which does not comport with the idea of a pre-planned Hutu murder program, has been

suppressed in the Free Press. [17]

2. The two leaders whose plane was shot down on April 6, 1994, were Hutus. A third Hutu leader, Melchior Ndadaye, an earlier president of Burundi, was assassinated by his Tutsi military in October 1993, which was followed by an anti-Hutu pogrom that killed tens of thousands and drove hundreds of thousands of Burundian-Hutu refugees into Rwanda.

3. Clinton and his Western allies (UK, Belgium) sponsored the U.S.-trained Kagame, supported his invasions of Rwanda from Uganda and massive ethnic cleansing prior to April 1994, and via their control of the Security Council refused to allow additional UN troops into Rwanda in April 1994, in fact forcing a reduction of the UNIMIR contingent in Rwanda from 2,500 to 270, not because of caution but because Kagame didn't want them there to interfere with his conquest of Rwanda, which Clinton and his allies supported.

4. The Hutu authorities urged more UN troops – and in light of the Kagame/U.S. (etc.) opposition to such civilian-protective assistance, this once again calls into question who it was that did the main killing in Rwanda.

5. A suppressed 1994 UNCHR (Gersony) Report documented massacres of civilians in Kagame-controlled areas of Rwanda, which was confirmed by contemporaneous Amnesty and HRW reports.

6. A University of Maryland research team led by Christian Davenport and Allan Stam, sponsored by the Western-organized Rwanda Tribunal, initially found that only about 250,000 civilians had been killed in Rwanda and that two out of three victims were Hutus. This caused a great deal of dismay and the authors have been under attack and in retreat ever since. The 800,000 (and higher) figures have no basis in any other scientific studies but are essentially the Kagame regime's numbers.

To an amazing degree, the Western media and NGOs swallowed the propaganda line and lies on Rwanda that turned things upside down. They made the prime aggressors and genocidists, who were responsible for the dual assassination of April 6, 1994 that precipitated the mass killing, into heroic defenders against the de facto victims. The dictator Paul Kagame, one of the great mass murderers of our time, was made into an honored savior deserving and receiving strong Western support. Philip Gourevitch and the New Yorker whipped up sympathy

in the West by labeling the Tutsis the “Jews of Africa;” the label stuck, and it garnered even greater support for Western anti-“genocide” intervention.^[18] These big lies are now institutionalized and are part of the common (mis)understanding in the West.

Because the Western propaganda machine succeeded so well in making the Hutus the villains and killers, and Paul Kagame the defender/savior of Rwanda, this cleared the ground for Kagame and Yoweri Museveni – Kagame’s ally and fellow U.S. client and dictator (of Uganda) – to periodically invade and occupy the Eastern Congo (then Zaire) and beyond without “international community” opposition as they were allegedly cleaning out the genocidaires. The Pentagon very actively supported this on the ground, even more than it supported the Kagame machine’s drive in Kigali. This led to the killing of hundreds of thousands of civilian Hutu refugees in a series of mass slaughters, and also provided cover for a wider Kagame-Museveni assault in the Congo that has led to the deaths of literally millions.^[19] This was again compatible with Western interests and policy, as it all contributed to the replacement of Mobutu with the more amenable Kabila and the opening up of the Congo to a new surge of ruthless exploitation of its mineral resources by Western companies – a fine illustration of “shock therapy” with murderous human consequences but large gains to a small business and military elite.^[20]

In sum, Rwanda offers an outstanding illustration of how genocide inflation and lies can have immense, even catastrophic, human consequences. Thus, not only did the West fail to intervene to prevent “genocide,” it intervened both before April 6th and after to ensure that the right killers took over and in support of genocide. This also ensured preferential treatment in both Rwanda and the Congo for the killers’ sponsors in the West. This history also shows how magnificently the Western media and NGOs can adapt even in the grossest cases to serve Western political-economic interests. With media and NGO help, genocide claims now function as a tool of U.S. expansionism, appropriately labeled “genocidalism,”^[21] regularly applied to virtually any target and helping clear the ground for bombing attacks, invasions, occupations and regime change by the United States itself or one of its proxies or clients.

NOTES

1. This was the conclusion of a conference at Brandeis University in 1983 on “The Jews in Modern France” – see “Decline Seen in French Anti-Semitism,” Reuters, Boston Globe, April 20, 1983.
2. See John Mearsheimer and Stanley Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007); James Petras, *The Power of Israel in the United States* (Clarity Press, 2006; also Petras, <http://www.dissidentvoice.org/2007/05/the-pro-israel-lobby-and-us-middle-east-policy/>
3. For a discussion of the systematic attempts of pro-Israeli-occupation supporters to curb debate on the relevant issues, see, e.g., the audio-links of the presentations at the “In Defense of Academic Freedom” conference held in Chicago, October 12, 2007, <http://www.academicfreedomchicago.org/?q=node/32>.
4. “Ethnic Cleansing and the ‘Moral Instinct’,” Edward S. Herman, *Z Magazine*, March, 2006, <http://zmag.org/Mar2006/herman0306.html>.
5. Ahmadinejad’s remarks on the Holocaust have mainly been complaints that Europe has addressed the problem of the mistreatment of European Jews by imposing Israel on the Palestinians. He doesn’t deny that the Jews were targeted for expulsion and death by some of the European states. On his non-existent wipe-out line, see, e.g., Jonathan Steele, “Lost in Translation,” *The Guardian*, June 14, 2006, http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/jonathan_steele/2006/06/post_155.html; and Arash Norouzi, “Wiped Off the Map’ – The Rumor of the Century,” *DemocracyRising.US*, January 18, 2007, <http://democracyrising.us/content/view/736/164/>.
6. See, e.g., John M. Donnelly, “Item In War Request Stokes Fears Of Iran Strike,” *Congressional Quarterly Today*, October 23, 2007, <http://public.cq.com/docs/cqt/news110-000002611347.html>; and John H. Richardson, “The Secret History of the Impending War With Iran That the White House Doesn’t Want You to Know,” *Esquire*, October 18, 2007, http://www.truthout.org/docs_2006/102407B.shtml.
7. Edward S. Herman, “The Cruise Missile Left (part 5): Samantha Power And The Genocide Gambit,” *ZNet*, May 17, 2004, <http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?ItemID=5538>. . . .
8. Peter Brock, *Media Cleansing: Dirty Reporting – Journalism and Tragedy in Yugoslavia* (GMBooks, 2005)
9. David Rieff, *Slaughterhouse*, p. 17.
10. See Herman and Peterson, “The Dismantling of Yugoslavia: A Study in Inhumanitarian Intervention [and a Western Liberal-Left Intellectual and Moral Collapse],” *Monthly*

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Review, Oct. 2007), pp. 22-26.

11. See Michael Mandel, *How America Gets Away With Murder*, 153-160.

12. Herman and Peterson, "Dismantling Yugoslavia," 27. See also, "Kosovo: ICRC publishes new edition of Book of the Missing," International Committee of the Red Cross, August 29, 2007,

<http://www.icrc.org/web/eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/kosovo-news-290807?opendocument>.

13. *How America Gets Away With Murder*, pp. 124-129.

14. Samantha Power, "Bystanders to Genocide," *Atlantic Monthly*, September, 2001,

<http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200109/power-genocide>.

15. On November 21, 2006, the French Judge Jean-Louis Bruguiere issued a lengthy report on his investigation into the April 6, 1994 shootdown of the aircraft carrying the Rwandan and Burundian presidents back to Kigali from their summit meeting earlier that day in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. More important, Judge Bruguiere called for arrest warrants to be issued for Rwanda President Paul Kagame and nine of his associate, on suspicion of masterminding the assassinations. To date, no arrests have been made. See Chris McGreal, "French judge accuses Rwandan president of assassination," *The Guardian*, November 22, 2006; and Fergal Keane, "Will we ever learn the truth about this genocide?" *The Independent*, November 22, 2006.

16. Dallaire, who has attained heroic status for allegedly "resisting" the genocide, and who has been a "fellow" of Harvard's Carr Center for Human Rights, was actually a virtual agent of the invading Kagame forces. He closed one axis of the Kagali airport runway to make the shootdown easier, refused to allow a nearby French investigative team to investigate the crime, failed to warn the Rwanda government of the military buildup of the Kagame forces, and was charged by his direct superior, Dr Jacques Roger Booh-Booh, with working in collaboration with the RPF and also taking orders from the US and Belgian embassies in Kigali (see his Dallaire's Boss Talks).

17. Some accessible basic sources supporting this analysis are Robin Philpot, *Rwanda 1994: Colonialism Dies Hard*, www.taylor-report.com/Rwanda_1994; Barrie Collins, "Rewriting Rwanda," <http://www.spiked-online.co.uk/Articles/0000000CA4BD.htm>; "Hotel Rwanda: Hollywood and the Holocaust in Central Africa,"

<http://www.allthingspass.com/uploads/html-135Hotel%20Rwanda%20Final%2010%20Jan%202006.htm>.)

18. On Gourevitch and other Western intellectual apologists for the Kagame assassinations and slaughterhouse, see Philpot, *Rwanda 1994*, Chapters 9-12.

19. *The Lancet Publishes IRC Mortality Study from DR Congo; 3.9 Million Have Died: 38,000 Die per Month*," News Release, International Rescue Committee, January, 2006; Simon Robinson and Vivienne Walt, "The Deadliest War in the World,"

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1198921,00.html>)

20. Steven Da Silva, "Revisiting the 'Rwanda Genocide',"

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<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=5848>; Michel Chossudovsky,
“The Geopolitics Behind the Rwanda Genocide”:

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=viewArticle&code=20061123&articleId=3958>

21. Aleksandar Jokic in “Genocidalism,” *Journal of Ethics*

8:251:297 (2004).



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