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Framing Genocide as Revenge and Self-Defense

The Function, Use and Effect of Self-Victimization in the Context of Genocide and Mass Killing

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Abstract

This thesis examines the phenomenon of self-victimization in the context of genocide and mass killing, defining it as the attempt by the (becoming) perpetrator collective to portray itself as a past, present and likely future victim of the (becoming) victim collective. Observing it as a seemingly recurrent phenomenon in different cases of genocide and mass killing, this multidisciplinary study makes use of (evolutionary and social) psychology, sociology, anthropology, criminology, political sciences and (pre-)history in order to explore its important aspects from different angles. To provide a theoretical framework, it examines the relevant underlying, ultimate psychological influences, the most important historical developments that altered the manifestation of these influences, the emotions that self-victimization evokes and more concretely the effects of self-victimization in contexts of genocide and mass killing. It then tests the established theoretical framework in two case studies, on Democratic Kampuchea and Nazi Germany respectively. The observations thereby gained show that self-victimization in practice can manifest itself in different ways, however, the underlying functions and effects are similar in different cases. The thesis thus suggests that appearances of self-victimization be regarded as one of the "warning signals" used in genocide prevention.

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0. Introduction

Genocide does not simply "happen". There is a multitude of factors and aspects that contributes to a situation that can lead to genocide. As each genocide has a unique context, so does every genocide require an individual explanation. Simply put, mono-causal explanations of single genocides or genocide in general are impossible to give. The existence of the research field "genocide studies" alone can be taken as exemplifying of this.

This is even more the case when examining individual perpetrator motivation. A number of scholars have developed different models explaining various types of perpetrator motivation; e.g., the sociologist Michael Mann suggests a quite comprehensive typology of nine main types of perpetrators, amongst them the ideological, the materialist, the comradely and the careerist perpetrators.[1] This serves to show the complexity and multitude of factors when it comes to the individual level.

However, when comparing different genocides and other mass killings, certain recurring aspects can be identified. These aspects may manifest themselves in different ways, according to time and space, and may thus vary in their exact appearance and importance according to the context of the case at hand. However, at their core, as to why they function as they do, they show similarities. Developing that thought further, it can be argued that understanding these aspects might be central in preventing genocides and other mass atrocities in the future, since they could be identified as "warning signals".

One such aspect, as this thesis argues, is *self-victimization*. Some genocide scholars have identified what they call *past victimization* in their studies. For example, Alex Alvarez defines it as an "ideological theme that is a common element for many genocidal crimes". By "glorify[ing] a history of victimhood", ideologies that incorporate that theme facilitate "persecution of those defined as the former victimizers", as the perpetrator group can feel "wronged and injured".[2] Ervin Staub argues that "[u]nhealed wounds in a group owing to past victimization, which lead members of the group to feel easily threatened and respond with what they see as defensive aggression, make it more likely that such a genocidal process unfolds in response to instigation."[3]

[1] As referenced by A. Alvarez, *Genocidal Crimes*, London and New York, Routledge, 2010, p. 105-112.
[2] Alvarez 2010, p. 64.
[3] E. Staub, 'Individual and Group Identities in Genocide and Mass Killing', in D. Wilder, L. J. Jussim, R. D. Ashmore (eds.) *Social Identity, Intergroup Conflict, and Conflict Reduction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 162.

However, when examining the phenomenon more closely, it becomes clear that it is not only the perception of a *past* victimization that can drive a collective to resort to violence, but also the fear of *future* victimization. As Evelin G. Lindner argues, "a fear of imagined future destitution, and of humiliating subjugation at another's hands, figured as a core justification for genocidal killing."[4]

Yet, these two notions go hand in hand. Through pointing to alleged victimization in the past and/or present, the supposed "perpetrators" are also accused of planning to inflict harm again in the (imminent) future. In Rwanda, the Hutu government pointed to past discrimination and suffering at the hands of the Tutsi and accused them of planning to reinstate that hegemony and even to exterminate the Hutu.[5] In Germany, the Nazis pointed to alleged Jewish dominance, control and exploitation in the past and present, causing Germany to lose World War I, and claimed this to be part of an elaborate Jewish plan to enslave and finally annihilate the German "race".[6] In Democratic Kampuchea, the Khmer Rouge accused the "class enemies" of oppressing and exploiting the rural peasant population, blamed them for the devastating and deadly US bombings and alleged that they were undermining the revolution, trying to reestablish the oppressive system and cooperating with the "expansionist Vietnamese enemy".[7]

01 Definitions

Thus, to emphasize this connection of past, present and future, this thesis uses the term *self-victimization* to describe the examined phenomenon. The working definition reads as follows:

Self-victimization in the context of genocide and mass killing is the attempt by the (becoming) perpetrator collective to portray itself as a past, present and likely future victim of the (becoming) victim collective.

[4] E. G. Lindner, 'Genocide, Humiliation, and Inferiority. An Interdisciplinary Perspective', in A. Jones, N. A. Robins (eds.), *Genocides by the Oppressed: Subaltern Genocide in Theory and Practice*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2009, p. 140.
[5] A. Jones, N. A. Robins (eds.), *Genocides by the Oppressed: Subaltern Genocide in Theory and Practice*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2009, p. 7.
[6] See Chapter 03 in this thesis
[7] See Chapter 02 in this thesis

The connection past-present-future in this definition also points to one of the limits of the phenomenon. There are cases of genocide and mass killing where a victimized past at the hands of the becoming victim group is almost impossible to establish, as for example in genocides committed against indigenous peoples during colonialism.

Despite – or maybe because of – the huge amount of genocide research, there still seems to be no consensus on an academic definition of "genocide". Thus, genocide scholar Adam Jones argues that for "students of the subject, […] it is reasonable to cultivate a personal/individual understanding of genocide (or to adopt someone else's […])".[8]

The legal definition offered by the UN Genocide Convention has substantial shortcomings, such as the omission of political groups as a possible target group.[9] Using this definition would therefore render one of the two genocides examined as case studies in this thesis – Democratic Kampuchea – outside the genocide definition. And since this thesis includes no legal analysis, there is no pressing need to use this definition.

As will be elaborated below it can be argued that *any* kind of collective can become a target for genocide. Since new groups and collectives emerge at different times in different contexts, listing all possible target groups in a genocide definition is arguably risky, as it always might "forget" a group. The definition used for this thesis thus borrows Helen Fein's definition, adjusting it slightly:

"Genocide is sustained purposeful action by a perpetrator to physically destroy a collectivity, *in whole or in substantial part*, directly or indirectly, through interdiction of the biological and social reproduction of group members, sustained regardless of the surrender or lack of threat offered by the victim."[10] [added part emphasized]

Fein's definition was chosen because it includes the notion of intent ("purposeful"); it does not limit the perpetrator to being a state actor; it includes the necessity of *physical* destruction; its wording makes sure that no possible collective is left out; and it emphasizes the lack of threat offered by the victim, thus excluding e.g. soldiers killed during combat; the phrase "in whole or in substantial part" was added to emphasize that *complete* destruction of the

[8] A. Jones, *Genocide: a comprehensive introduction*, 3rd edn., Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY, Routledge, 2016, p. 45. Note: When research for this thesis was started, access was only available to the first edition of Jones' book. Many references are thus to the first edition, others to the third.
[9] See e.g. Jones 2016, p. 18-21.
[10] H. Fein as quoted in Jones 2016, p. 26.

collective is not required, neither in intent, nor in outcome; however, *substantial* was added to exclude cases of "smaller" killings where e.g. "some people in a group are killed […] to intimidate the whole group"[11].

Ervin Staub, who similarly criticizes the words "in part" in the definition offered by the UN Genocide Convention, argues to call instances of mass killing that would not meet the criteria for genocide for just that, "mass killing". "However, genocide and mass killing have similar origins and prevention requires similar actions." [12] This thesis follows this argumentation, which is why "…and mass killing" is part of the title.

0.2 Lead questions, methodology and structure

Coming back to the topic of this thesis, the starting point is the hypothesis that self-victimization can be an important tool to facilitate genocide and other mass killing. Based on this general hypothesis, two questions have to be examined, namely that after reason for the functioning of self-victimization and that after the effects on the perpetrators, in other words:

- Why does self-victimization work?
- How does self-victimization work, i.e. what effects does it have on the perpetrators?

The first chapter of this thesis is aimed at examining these two questions. It will have a look at humans' innate psychological predispositions that self-victimization connects to; examine the most relevant developments in history to consider the impact and manifestations these dispositions have in modern societies; describe the emotions that self-victimization evokes; and will more concretely examine the effects of self-victimization in contexts of genocide and mass killing.

The second and third chapters will consist of case studies of Democratic Kampuchea and Nazi Germany, respectively, and explore the role and effects of self-victimization in each of them. These chapters thus also serve for testing the general hypothesis.

In regards to methodology, for chapter one a multidisciplinary approach was taken, reviewing secondary literature from (evolutionary and social) psychology, sociology, anthropology,

[11] Staub 2001, p. 159.
[12] Staub 2001, p. 159.

criminology, political sciences and (pre-)history. For chapters two and three, secondary literature was reviewed, and historical sources were examined using hermeneutic text analysis as described by e.g. Früh.[13]

One last thing that needs to be kept in mind, is what this thesis does *not* do – namely, trying to explain genocide and mass killing as a whole. As stated in the beginning, there is a wide array of factors, all of which require and deserve attention. This thesis is focused on the aspect of self-victimization only, and in order to examine it thoroughly within the limitations of a master's thesis, it does not analyze other factors. This is not to be misunderstood as an attempt to explain genocide and mass killing monocausally.

[13] W.Früh, *Inhaltsanalyse: Theorie und Praxis*, 5th edn., Stuttgart, UVK-Verl.-Ges. 2004, p. 48.

1. Chapter One – The Humanity Behind the Inhumanity

1.1 Introduction

This chapter tries to establish a theoretical framework for understanding how self-victimization works. It considers the following questions:

1) *What are human beings' innate, evolutionary psychological predispositions that self-victimization speaks to?*
2) *How do these predispositions appear in modern human societies? Which further developments in human history are most relevant?*
3) *Through which channels do pictures of self-victimization reach people?*
4) *Which emotions does self-victimization evoke in people?*
5) *What are the effects of self-victimization in the genocidal context?*

To provide an examination of these questions, this thesis draws from the perspectives of various academic disciplines: (evolutionary and social) psychology, sociology, anthropology, criminology, political sciences and (pre-)history.

More concretely, this chapter will at first look at the predispositions of human nature which enable human beings to become perpetrators of mass atrocities. Then the link to modern times is made, showing how these predispositions translate into modern societies. Next, the emotions that self-victimization evokes are examined. Lastly, a closer look on self-victimization is taken.

1.2 The Nature of Human Nature (Cite?) – Evolutionary Psychology

This part is largely based on professor of Holocaust and genocide studies at Keene State College James Waller's 2002 book "Becoming Evil. How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing."[14] Waller makes use of evolutionary psychology to examine the "nature of

[14] Oxford University Press 2002. Note: When research for this thesis was started, access was only available to the first edition of Waller's book. Many references are thus to the first edition, others to the second.

human nature."[15] He defines evolutionary psychology as "a multidisciplinary approach within the Darwinian paradigm that seeks to apply theories of evolutionary biology in order to understand human psychology."[16] It looks for psychological mechanisms which give rise to our natural tendencies and instincts, thereby going to the bottom of human nature. In that way, evolutionary psychology is not a field within psychology, but rather "a different way of thinking about the *entire* field of psychology [emphasis in original], a way of thinking in which knowledge and principles from evolutionary biology are put to use in research on the structure of the human mind."[17] Referring to two pioneers of evolutionary psychology, John Tooby and Leda Cosmides[18], Waller states that "human behavior is driven by a set of *universal reasoning circuits* that were *designed by natural selection* to solve *adaptive problems* faced by our *hunter-gatherer ancestors* [emphasis in original]."[19]

The point Waller – and evolutionary psychology in general – is making, is not to justify or excuse what he calls "extraordinary evil", nor does he say that human beings would be "slaves to an unyielding genetic leash; rather, our genes endow us with a capacity to learn and to adapt to life in a variety of environments. EP [Evolutionary psychology] emphasizes the uniqueness of humans as flexible animals with a vast range of potential behaviors."[20] Evolutionary psychology is thus not trying to put nature before nurture, but sees them as inseparable. The predispositions defined are not "immutable genetic programs", but rather "predispositions to learn." There is thus certainly no "gene for genocide",[21] but there are tendencies within human beings that enable them to commit such atrocities. "In other words, we should not mistake enablement for causation."[22] One could also define these tendencies as a ""developmental spec sheet," given us by nature, which includes innate capacities that can be activated by proximate cultural, psychological, and social constructions to influence our immediate behavior."[23]

Evolutionary adaptions to problems take a very long time to develop. For well over 99% of the human species' evolutionary history, modern humans' ancestors were living as hunter-gatherers in small nomadic bands of a few dozen individuals. Also, there are big lags in time

[15] Waller 2002, p. 136-168
[16] Waller 2002, p. 145
[17] Waller 2007**,** p**.** 149
[18] L. Cosmides, J. Tooby, *Evolutionary Psychology: A Primer*, [website], 1997, http://www.cep.ucsb.edu/primer.html (accessed 14 July 2017)
[19] Waller 2002, p. 145
[20] Waller 2002, p. 163
[21] Waller 2002, p. 163; see also E. O. Smith, 'Evolution, Primates, and Subaltern Genocide', in Jones, Robins 2009, p. 178
[22] Waller 2002, p. 163
[23] Waller 2007, p. 139

before a new adaptive problem is met by an evolutionary mechanism to solve it. Consequently, the time since human beings have ceased to be hunter-gatherers has simply been too short for substantial evolution in human nature. Agriculture and sedentary living and thereby societal and demographic changes first appeared around 10-12.000 years ago, but even 5.000 years ago only about half the world's human population was living this lifestyle. This is just "a blink of an eye in evolutionary terms"[24] compared to the 10 million years modern humans' ancestors lived as nomadic hunter-gatherer bands. To put it simply, "our modern skulls house a stone age mind."[25]

While this entails "a universal, evolved psychological architecture" shared by all human beings, "*a* human nature [emphasis in original]", this is not to be understood as a "central general-purpose reasoning machine", but rather as "a massive collection of special-purpose modules, each one designed to solve a specific adaptive problem." [26] All of these modules were ultimately designed to facilitate the survival and reproduction of the individual. Since they developed in its hunter-gatherer past, they are also not necessarily adaptive to humanity's modern way of living; sometimes they may even lead to maladaptive behavior in that context.[27]

Competition is what lies at the heart of natural selection designing these modules. However, when it comes to humans, it is not only individuals that compete within the same group, but also groups competing with other groups.[28] This is where evolutionary psychology becomes most relevant for the questions posed by genocide studies and this thesis. Humans' ancestors were living a mobile life, which meant that from time to time they would encounter other groups of human beings, with whom they competed (fiercely) for scarce resources. The "winners" of this competition would not only gain material benefits, but, in some cases, would even get rid of their competitors. This meant that hurting individuals of other groups at times solved adaptive problems faced by (the individuals of) the own group and was thus selectively advantageous. "In short, competition – often escalating into intergroup conflict – was a major fact of life for many of our ancestors." Since in a sense all of modern humans owe their existence to having such "winners" as ancestors, also they are designed to compete in groups, at least in some circumstances.[29]

[24] Waller 2002, 148
[25] Cosmides, Tooby 1997
[26] Waller 2002, 149
[27] Waller 2002, 149
[28] Waller 2002, 149
[29] Waller 2002, 150

As human beings' survival depended on the group, they developed psychological adaptions towards group life, a phenomenon called "group selection." This led to predispositions at behavioral level that evolved to benefit the group. Some of these developed traits are prosocial, such as "love, friendship, cooperativeness, nurturance, communication, a sense of fairness and, even, self-sacrifice – the things that hold society together."[30] Whether this is only "apparent" or "genuine" altruism towards other group members is being debated.[31] However, it is important to remember that these prosocial traits evolved for the good of a particular group and even a particular individual of that group – not for the whole species. Furthermore, as much as group selection evolved in-group "niceness" it also evolved between-group "nastiness", as hurting other groups' individuals could prove advantageous at times.[32]

Waller describes three "innate, evolution-produced tendencies of human nature that are most relevant to understanding our capacity for extraordinary evil", namely ethnocentrism, xenophobia, and the desire for social dominance.[33]

Ethnocentrism refers to our tendency to see one's own group as the "right" one, the superior one, and as the center of everything. It is also a "universal characteristic of human social life and, as often as not, it is fairly harmless."[34] To define who is part of the in-group, it is equally important to determine who is *not* part of it and rather a part of an/the out-group. Thus, the human mind is "compelled to define the limits of the tribe."[35] This "tendency to divide the world into 'us' and 'them'" is "one of the few true human universals",[36] which can be observed in all human societies. Seen from an evolutionary point of view, it can be advantageous to reinforce communal identity as it strengthens in-group bonds. This tendencies and loyalties can be seen from the earliest stages in a human life, starting with the caretaker-infant bonds.[37]

Hand in hand with ethnocentrism goes its complementary partner, xenophobia – the tendency to fear strangers or outsiders. This, too, can already be observed in infants who often show anxiety reactions to strangers. Since we "cooperate to compete", there can be no "'us' without

[30] Waller 2002, 152
[31] Waller 2002, 151
[32] Waller 2002, 152
[33] Waller 2002, 153
[34] Waller 2002, 154
[35] Waller 2002, 153
[36] Waller 2002, 154
[37] Waller 2002, 154f

a corresponding 'them' to oppose."[38] Over two hundred social psychological experiments have confirmed this tendency.[39] Since hunter-gatherer groups competed with each other over (scarce) resources, perceiving and fearing an out-group as a threat was adaptive and fitness-enhancing.[40] "In short, we have an innate, evolution-produced tendency to seek proximity to familiar faces because what is unfamiliar is probably dangerous and should be avoided."[41]

Humans' desire for social dominance is attributed to the fact that dominance hierarchies within a group prevent unnecessary fighting and waste of energy when it comes to the distribution of resources. To achieve social dominance within a group and thus gain individual advantage, individuals need to make use of different means; these can be prosocial, as in making use of friendships and coalitions to gain power; however, at other times it might involve the use of aggression and violence to raise the cost for another individual to gain a contested resource. Thus, the human desire for social dominance can lead to aggression and the use of violence.[42]

To summarize: human beings and their ancestors have at times resorted to killing and fighting each other in groups for millions of years in order to increase their chances to survive and reproduce. To this end, evolution provided them, amongst others, with ethnocentrism, xenophobia and a desire for social dominance which leave them with "the capacity to perpetrate extraordinary evil against each other."[43]

However, this capacity is only that – a capacity, not a determination, and also only *one* capacity. As stated above, human beings have the capacity for prosocial behavior as well, reflected also in the fact that despite many ordinary human beings having perpetrated extraordinary evil, the majority has not. Furthermore, the massive collection of special-purpose modules the human brain possesses is "too diffuse to tell us everything we need to know about the direction, form, and targets of our violent behavior."[44] We thus need to turn our heads toward the factors that build upon and enhance different parts of our capacities –

[38] Waller 2002, 155
[39] Waller 2002, 156
[40] Smith 2009, p. 174
[41] Waller 2002, 156
[42] Waller 2002, p. 156-158.
[43] Waller 2002, p. 160.
[44] Waller 2002, p. 177.

the *proximate* factors that influence our *ultimate* predispositions, as defined by Steven Pinker.[45]

This is where culture and ideology enter as such proximate influences. In Waller's model there are three main proximate influences: 1) cultural construction of worldview, 2) psychological construction of the "other" and 3) social construction of cruelty. Self-victimization as the topic of this thesis is to be located in 2), which deals with how us-them thinking, moral disengagement and blaming the victims reduces the victims of genocide and other mass violence to "objects" of the perpetrators' actions.[46] Despite being only one amongst many factors enabling genocide and other mass atrocities, it is certainly an important one; according to psychologist Ervin Staub of the University of Massachusetts Amherst, "the way the "other" is seen" is even "[p]erhaps the most important source of evil."[47]

Before getting to these components, however, there will first be an examination of how human groups and collectives – and thus, us-them thinking – evolved and what consequences these changes brought along.

1.3 Group Thinking Today – From the Band to the *Imagined Community* and its *Collective Memory*

How do the observations and findings of human nature and group thinking translate into modern societies? After all, living in nomadic bands competing for scarce resources has mostly disappeared from human life in recent and contemporary times.

As described in the previous section, however, human predispositions towards group thinking, including ethnocentrism and xenophobia, have developed during the hunter-gatherer past. The time that passed since the first alternative forms of societal organization emerged has simply been too short to alter these predispositions, leaving them intact and "valid" even today. Yet, the forms and consequences they enable and produce have changed drastically.

[45] J. Waller, *Becoming evil: how ordinary people commit genocide and mass killing*, 2nd edn., Oxford, Oxford Univ. Press 2007, p. 139.
[46] Ibid.
[47] E. Staub, 'The Roots of Evil: Social Conditions, Culture, Personality and Basic Human Needs', *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1999, p. 183.

As the first human beings started giving up the nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyle and slowly switched to sedentary living and agriculture during the Neolithic Transformation,[48] first starting about 10-12.000 years ago, the demographic and societal developments this brought about – e.g. larger groups, living in higher density, being more dependent on a specific territory[49] – drastically changed group and collective belonging. Humans' tendencies for group thinking stayed, but affiliations switched. "Kin" (immediate and extended family) and "neighbors" (members of a social group) as group identification continued, the latter though changing from the band members to people of the larger society one regularly had something to do with in one's daily life. Additionally, human beings now began adding layers of "fictive kin".[50]

During the process of the Neolithic Transformation, the now larger societies started building sacral monuments, such as in Göbekli Tepe in the tenth and ninth millennia BCE in today's border region between Turkey and Syria. It is assumed that these monuments were needed to keep the new forms of larger societies together. Group identity and belonging thus became defined via the sacral society.[51]

In a sense, it can be argued that this shift in group-belonging from band to larger societies marks the first appearance of what political scientist Benedict Anderson has defined as "imagined communities."[52] In his book of the same title, in which he tries to give explanations for the emergence and existence of nationalism, Anderson argues that nations are *imagined* communities (not to be confused with *imaginary*), because their members will never know most of their fellow members. They are also imagined as *limited*, since all nationalisms define boundaries, none of them equaling itself with all humankind.[53]

While Anderson particularly looks at the idea of nations/nationalism, explaining and distinguishing that idea from other (former) kinds of group identification, it can be argued that his central argument that nations are *imagined* communities is applicable to prior and other forms of group thinking as well. While Anderson's specific explanations distinguishing nationalism from other forms of group identification cannot be applied directly to other

[48] I prefer this definition over „Neolithic Revolution", since it was a process that took several thousand years, see U.B. Peter, *Europa - warum wir sind, was wir sind: die historische Ethnologie eines ungewöhnlichen Kontinents*, Gelnhausen, Wagner, 2011, p. 90.
[49] Peter 2011, p. 93.
[50] Shipman, P. 'On the nature of violence', *American Scientist*, vol. 89, no. 6, 2001, p. 488.
[51] Peter 2011, p. 72f
[52] B. Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, revised edn., London, New York, Verso, 2016.
[53] Anderson 2016, p. 6f.

imagined communities, the core aspect certainly can be. Anderson himself makes this implication when he argues that nationalism should rather be classified alongside "kinship" and "religion" than as an ideology such as "liberalism" and "fascism".[54] Furthermore, he argues that "[c]ommunities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined."[55] That this can be applied all the way back to the formation of societies larger than the band can be seen in his notion that, "all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined."[56] Therefore, sacral societies such as the above mentioned in Göbekli Tepe could be defined as one of the first forms of imagined communities.

Evolutionary anthropologist E. O. Smith of Emory University Atlanta, Georgia, explains how humans' natural predisposition of treating kin more positively and being xenophobic towards outsiders/non-kin is amplified and elaborated by culture when we imagine larger communities as a result of the societal and demographic changes resulting from the Neolithic Transformation. Essentially, culture is "tricking" us into perceiving and treating members of our group, imagined on whatever basis, as kin. This allowed us, as stated above, to form larger communities of unrelated individuals, in sizes that would have been impossible were they solely based on true kinship. The more this trickery is successful, i.e. "the greater the degree of kin recognition among members" of an (imagined) community, "the greater the tendency would be to fight in support of other group members" and "the greater the potential for intergroup aggression." [57] Recalling our tendency to xenophobia, however, this leads us to the conclusion that while "[o]ur xenophobic response to nongroup [sic] members was certainly adaptive during the course of our evolution" (see above), it became a highly maladaptive behavior for modern (imagined) societies, turning what was once "highly adapted […] quite costly in modern society."[58]

Thus, in other words, it can be stated that the combination of our hunter-gatherer minds with living in societies based on the sedentary and larger, imagined communities of the post-Neolithic Transformation era gave fruit to the potential of large scale violence all the way to what we today call genocide.

[54] Anderson 2016, p. 5.
[55] Anderson 2016, p. 6.
[56] Anderson 2016, p. 6.
[57] Smith 2009, p. 175.
[58] Smith 2009, p. 175 (see as well p. 177).

That this conclusion is not merely a hypothesis, but can be underpinned by empirical evidence, is shown by the following example:

In Europe, the Neolithic Transformation subsequently led to the emergence of the Linear Pottery Culture from around 5600 BCE. That this period in human history did not consist of pacifistic hippie camps, is on the one hand shown by the emergence of more and more safety measures built around villages, such as palisades and ditches, which were not only built to keep out wild, dangerous animals, but most likely also to shield the community from attacks from other communities.[59] Moreover, several identified mass graves show that intergroup violence, even amounting to massacres, was frequent, especially in the later Linear Pottery Culture.[60] As Meyer et al. suggest, "massacres were an inherent phenomenon of the later LBK [Linear Pottery Culture] and […] the destruction of complete communities as the result of collective lethal violence was indeed a relevant factor of Neolithic life, at least in some periods."[61]

In their study of a mass grave found in Schöneck-Kilianstädten in today's Germany, Meyer et al. found the remains of 26 massacred individuals – half of which are to be categorized as "subadults", of which ten were under the age of six years, the youngest a maximum of six months old. The male-female ratio was 4,5:1 among the adults. Many of the victims' limbs were mutilated, showing signs of torture.[62]

Connecting this massacre site with others, the authors of the paper describe situations that nowadays could possibly be described as acts of genocide: "almost indiscriminate massacres, the possible abduction of selected members, and the patterns of torture, mutilation, and careless disposal" of "particular LBK groups" who "were singled out for as yet unknown reasons, attacked with brute force, and annihilated by others, probably close neighbors and very likely other LBK groups of the wider region."[63] Determining the causes and exact (local) group affiliations of these collectives is almost impossible; however, during the time of the Linear Pottery Culture, despite appearing quite homogenous, recognizable boundaries did exist which "most probably were a result of the spread of different groups without close social

[59] Peter 2011, p. 98.
[60] C. Meyer et al., 'The massacre mass grave of Schöneck-Kilianstädten reveals new insights into collective violence in Early Neolithic Central Europe', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 112, no. 36, 2015, p. 11218
[61] Meyer et al., p.11218
[62] Meyer et al., p. 11219f
[63] Meyer et al., p. 11221

or biological kinship ties to one another who came in to [sic] close contact as a consequence of the LBK colonization pattern."[64]

The causes for violent conflict during that period certainly were multifactorial and complex, but "a significant increase in population followed by adverse climatic conditions (drought), possibly coupled with the inability of long-settled farmers to practice the avoidance behavior by which hunter-gatherers typically evade conflict", probably played an important role.[65]

That intergroup violence was not only the result of a fight over resources and territory by neighboring groups is shown by the fact that there is evidence of raids against groups living far too distant as that they could have been competitors for the same resources. A possible explanation for this is that the same groups might have fought over resources several generations earlier and have kept the "us versus them" attitude despite the fact that the scarcity had ended. A desire to take revenge for ancestral deaths may have driven such raids that seemed to have no rational explanation.[66]

This shows that even in the earliest stages of modern human societies, mass violence could erupt as a result of "imagined" group thinking that helped to keep larger communities together.

When societies subsequently became more complex in their composition, "the basis of agreement and the bonds of commonality" –the basis on which they are imagined – "are much less obvious requiring vast new efforts and conceptual frameworks."[67]A part of this conceptual framework is constituted by what is called "collective memory." Although different scholars point to the fact that there is no consensus on the exact definition of collective memory,[68] the *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (Second Edition, 2015) defines it as follows: "Collective memories are shared representations of a group's past based on a common identity. […]They are shaped by, and transmitted through, narratives."[69]

[64] Meyer et al., p. 11221
[65] Meyer et at., p. 11221
[66] S. LeBlanc, 'Why warfare? Lessons from the past', *Daedalus*, vol. 136, no. 1, 2007, p. 19
[67] J. K. Olick (ed.), *The collective memory reader*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, p.8.
[68] See e.g. J. Wertsch, *Voices of collective remembering*, Cambridge, U.K, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 171, and R. Garagozov, *Collective memory: how collective representations about the past are created, preserved and reproduced*, New York, Nova Publishers, 2015, p. 1
[69] L. Licata, A. Mercy, 'Collective Memory, Social Psychology of', *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*,2nd edn., 2015, p. 195

Collective memory plays a strong role for keeping more complex societies together,[70] because "[w]ithout shared stories about the past of the group, there would be no group identities, or at least they would be fleeting."[71] Similarly, sociocultural anthropologist James V. Wertsch of Washington University St. Louis argues that "collective remembering typically provides an essential basis for the creation and maintenance of groups – specifically, imagined communities."[72] According to Wertsch, textual resources play an essential role in the formation of a collective narrative of the past.[73] In contrast to (an idealized, "objective" form of) history, "[c]ollective memory tends to be impatient with ambiguity and to represent itself as representing an unchanging reality, so it provides a particular textual resource for creating a particular kind of community."[74] Despite its tendency to view the past in a stable picture, that picture itself is not stable, but active and is, according to Wertsch, "best understood as a form of action."[75] Collective memory is essential for the identity of all sorts of groups, whose members thus "make special efforts to promulgate their account of the past."[76] However, Wertsch attributes the strongest and most massive effort to actively create and control collective memory to modern states. [77]

To understand how and why a group's collective memory is changing, we can turn to Maurice Halbwachs, the founder of the field of collective memory research.[78] He asserted that a group's "conceptions of the past are affected by the mental images we employ to solve present problems, so that collective memory is essentially a reconstruction of the past in the light of the present."[79] In other words, groups reconstruct their past in order to solve problems of the present. This reconstruction is "an image of the past which is in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society."[80] Subsequently, as this image permeates the collective memory of a society, it "becomes an element of the society's system of ideas."[81]

Since this collective memory is mostly not a memory based on historical "facts", but more often a distortion of history,[82] it can be and is altered for purposes of the present. Schwartz et

[70] Olick 2011, p. 8
[71] Olick 2011, p.177
[72] Wertsch 2002, p. 67
[73] Wertsch 2002, p. 66
[74] Wertsch 2002, p. 66
[75] Wertsch 2002, p. 172
[76] Wertsch 2002, p. 68
[77] Wertsch 2002, p. 172
[78] Wertsch 2002, p. 34
[79] M. Halbwachs, Ed., transl., and with an introd. by Lewis A. Coser, *On collective memory*, 6th edn., Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2006, p. 34.
[80] Halbwachs, Coser 2006, p. 40.
[81] Halbwachs, Coser 2006, p. 188.
[82] Halbwachs, Coser, p. 183.

al.[83] give the example of the Jewish collective memorization of the battle of Masada between Jewish defenders and Roman conquerors: for almost two thousand years, this battle did not have a major impact on Jewish collective memory and thinking; but with the emergence of Zionism and the subsequent struggles it faced, this "heroic battle" became suddenly very popular in the Zionist narrative. However, later it lost its popularity again among self-confident, Israeli-born Jews.[84]

Group thinking and its consequences are not limited to societies and modern nation-states. Halbwachs himself did not restrict his ideas of collective memory to societies or groups based on the modern concepts of nation and ethnicity, but applied it to any group identity, e.g. also that of the "working class".[85] The contemporary popular understanding of "genocide" seems to put a big emphasis on the victim group as being defined by "ethnicity"/"peoplehood" etc. The term "genocide" itself, coined by Raphael Lemkin, comes from "Greek "genos", meaning race or tribe, and the Latin "cide", or killing."[86] Lemkin himself also defined "genocide" as the annihilation of an ethnic group or nation.[87] The UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide also defines "national, ethnical" and "racial" groups as targets, adding, however, "religious group[s]".[88] Other categories, such as political groups or social classes, were omitted from the convention for different reasons.[89]

Pointing to humans' psychological predispositions of us-them thinking explained above and below, it could be argued that *any* kind of group thinking, if taken to the extremes, in the "right circumstances", could lead to genocide and other mass atrocities.[90] This is exemplified by e.g. the Cambodian genocide (see chapter on Cambodia), the Stalinist purges,[91] the atrocities of the Christian crusades, such as the massacres of the Muslim and Jewish inhabitants of Jerusalem during the First Crusade,[92] the genocides of indigenous peoples around the world,[93] but also by the above mentioned massacres during the Linear Pottery Culture period in Europe, to name but a few examples where mass atrocities were committed

[83] Halbwachs, Coser, p. 32-34.
[84] Halbwachs, Coser, p. 32-34.
[85] Olick 2011, p. 177.
[86] Jones 2016, p. 15.
[87] Jones 2016, p. 15.
[88] UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/unts/volume%2078/volume-78-i-1021-english.pdf (accessed 14 July 2017)
[89] See e.g. Jones 2016, p. 18-21.
[90] See e.g. Jones 2016, p. xxxi.
[91] A. Jones *Genocide: a comprehensive introduction*, London, Routledge 2006, p. 129.
[92] R. Baumeister, *Evil. Inside Human Cruelty and Violence*, New York: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1997, p. 173.
[93] See e.g. Jones 2016, p. 147-199.

on (mostly) other grounds than "ethnicity", "peoplehood", "race", "nation" etc. As Ervin Staub argues, "Influences leading to genocide against political and other kinds of groups […] seem to be the same."[94]

Similarly, anthropologist Alexander Laban Hinton of Rutgers University, Newark, argues that "group boundaries are socially constructed across contexts and through time". Also borrowing Anderson's "imagined community" term and applying it to all kinds of groups, Hinton argues that no matter on what grounds the community is imagined, it is "a process of "othering" in which the boundaries of an imagined community are reshaped in such a manner that a previously "included" group (albeit often included only tangentially) is ideologically recast (almost always in dehumanizing rhetoric) as being outside the community, as a threatening and dangerous "other" […] that must be annihilated."[95]

Nevertheless, us-them thinking obviously does not automatically lead to genocide. However, as Waller argues, two factors can raise the possibility of aggression to out-groups: whether there is a predominant focus on individualism or collectivism within a culture, and how permeable and fixed group membership is. When a group, based on whatever grounds, has a culture strongly emphasizing collectivist values with group-based identity overshadowing the individual identity, and when group membership is defined as fixed and impermeable, "the potential to view other groups as perpetual threats is heightened."[96]

Thus, while nationalist and thinking in ethnicities is "arguably the dominant ideological impetus to conflict and genocide worldwide"[97], other definitions of groups bear a similar capacity, if the view of the out-group is taken to an extreme (see below).

To summarize: the Neolithic Transformation led to extraordinary societal and demographic changes, with people settling down to pursue agriculture, living in larger societies and being more dependent on a certain territory. To keep these larger collectives together, fictive layers of kin had to be "imagined", the first ones defined via sacrality, in the most recent past via the ideas of nationalism. Yet, human beings' psychological predispositions about group thinking, based on their nomadic hunter-gatherer past, stayed, however maladaptive they might be in modern societies. These predispositions, paired with the now larger groups and the sedentary

[94] Staub 2001, p. 159
[95] A. L. Hinton, *Annihilating Difference: The Anthropology of Genocide*. Berkeley, Cal., University of California Press, 2002, p. 5f.
[96] Waller 2007, p. 173f.
[97] Jones 2006, p. 291.

living style, which made it much harder to make use of humans' "old" way of evading violent conflict – fleeing to another place –, gave fruit to the potential of large-scale violence. Furthermore, as collectives grew in complexity, further mechanisms, such as an (adaptable) collective memory, were needed to keep them together. All kinds of groups can and do develop such collective memories, just as all kinds of group thinking bear the possibility to lead to large scale violence against one (or more) defined out-group(s).

Before finally getting to self-victimization and its functions, some of the most important underlying emotions it appeals to have to be examined.

1.4 Underlying Emotions – Humiliation, Fear, "Threatened Egotism"[98] and Desire for Revenge

Evelin Lindner, a social psychologist and social physician focused on interdisciplinary "Humiliation Studies"[99], identifies humiliation and fear of humiliation as "the nuclear bomb of emotions"[100], calling the humiliated mind "[t]he most potent weapon of mass destruction […] (whether the feeling of humiliation preexists or is manipulated)."[101] She defines humiliation as "enforced lowering of a person or group: a process of subjugation that damages or strips away pride, honor, and dignity."[102] Humiliation can be (simultaneously) a process, a feeling and an act which places people in an often very hurtful way and against their own will, in a situation which goes against their own sense of entitlement. At its core, the idea is to pin or put someone down, rendering the victim helpless and passive.[103] Which exact forms and consequences humiliation generates differs in space and time, since Lindner views humiliation as a "historical-cultural-social-emotional construct".[104] Generally, though, the reaction to humiliation can be seen in certain patterns; some people may turn anger against themselves, while others – and this is the more relevant reaction for this thesis – may become enraged, some of whom, consequently, may become "motivated by revenge" and "rise to

[98] R. Baumeister, 'The Holocaust and the Four Foots of Evil' in L. S. Newman, R. Erber (eds.): *Understanding Genocide: The Social Psychology of the Holocaust*, Oxford University Press 2002.
[99] Jones, Robins 2009, p. 210.
[100] Lindner 2009, p. 139.
[101] Lindner 2009, p. 141.
[102] Lindner 2009, p. 141.
[103] Lindner 2009, p. 141.
[104] Lindner 2009, p. 139f.

become leader of a movement that instigates mass violence—by forging narratives of humiliation, and inviting the masses to invest their grievances in those narratives."[105]

Lindner, having researched different cases of genocide (Rwanda, Somalia and Germany) by conducting over 200 qualitative interviews,[106] comes to the conclusion that humiliation played a key role in all of them, stating that "[i]n all cases, a fear of imagined future destitution, and of humiliating subjugation at another's hands, figured as a core justification for genocidal killing."[107] This fear of future humiliation is "based on an experience of past humiliations and habitual submission."[108] Lindner even goes so far as to dismissing other factors, such as "ethnic fault lines, dwindling resources, "rational" conflicts of interest, or any general "evil" of human nature or modernity" as root causes of genocide, and instead argues that it is humiliation that is to be seen as the "underlying dynamic" of genocide.[109] Although this to seems too narrow a view, arguing with Waller[110] and Alvarez[111] that single genocidal crimes cannot be reduced to a single cause, humiliation certainly is one important factor.

Lindner argues that at the core of modern concepts of (collective) humiliation lie the societal and demographic changes caused by the Neolithic Transformation. Although her depiction of the process of the Neolithic Transformation seems rather simplistic and partly doubtful,[112] her reasoning as regards the consequences of the Neolithic Transformation is persuasive: the possession and dependence on pieces of land rendered human beings more vulnerable to attacks from other communities, furthermore leading to the evolution of stronger hierarchies, which in turn led to human worthiness becoming "ranked, with different degrees of honor attached to each stratum."[113] This new cultural context favored war; however, since the time passing since that change has been too short for genetic adaptions, humans still cannot kill "easily" and thus have to be trained to do so – humiliation being an important driving force.[114]

In the case of the genocide against the Armenians, humiliation provided an important "backdrop for anti-Armenian sentiments." The loss of 70% of its population in Europe and 85% of its European territory, together with an increase in "power and influence of Christian minorities" in the Ottoman Empire were "felt as an intolerable blow to Turkish honor and

[105] Lindner 2009, p. 141.
[106] Lindner 2009, p. 140.
[107] Lindner 2009, p. 140.
[108] Lindner 2009, p. 138.
[109] Lindner 2009, p. 138.
[110] Waller 2007, p. 137f.
[111] Alvarez 2010, p. 124.
[112] See Lindner 2009, p. 143 and compare to Peter 2011.
[113] Lindner 2009, p. 143.
[114] Lindner 2009, p. 153.

pride". "[T]he Young Turk government that initiated the genocide against the Armenians felt keenly the loss of power and historic superiority they had once enjoyed over the Christians".[115]

Pivotal to the feelings of humiliation is fear, as political scientist Adam Jones of the University of British Columbia Okanagan ârgues.[116] Also going back to our evolutionary past, he distinguishes between *mortal terror* and *existential dread*.[117]

The former stems, according to Jones, from humans' pre-historic, terrifying encounters with predatory beasts; in that sense, Jones argues that these predators might even have formed the "original Other", the out-group, which later was also applied to human out-groups, against both of which collective self-defense gave support to the individuals of the in-group.[118] Jones identifies as one such (modern) mortal terror the fear of contamination and pollution of the in-group through the members of the out-group, stating that "the quest for purity through extermination of an impure Other, one who threatens the physical existence and solidaristic bonds of the perpetrator's own community, is lodged deep in the human psyche and human societies."[119]

The latter, existential dread, "revolves around a sense of personal identity, destiny, and social place. It evokes, or threatens to evoke, feelings of shame, dishonor, and humiliation – of ego extinction."[120] Despite maybe appearing subordinate to mortal terror as one's own annihilation is not impending, existential dread is just as mortifying as mortal terror[121] and in fact poses a great potential for violence, since "[g]roup identity is so supreme a value that many individuals will sacrifice their lives to defend it. Likewise, people will often choose physical death over existential shame, dishonor, or loss of status […]."[122]

Social psychologist Roy F. Baumeister of University of Queensland, Australia, goes into a similar direction as Lindner. Examining the Holocaust and genocide in general, he defined as one of the "Four Roots of Evil" what he calls "threatened egotism".[123] Linking humiliation to people's perception of themselves, he uses this term to describe "favorable views of self that

[115] Alvarez 2010, p. 123.
[116] Jones 2016, p. 539.
[117] Jones 2016, p. 534.
[118] Jones 2016, p. 534.
[119] Jones 2016, p. 536.
[120] Jones 2016, p. 534.
[121] Jones 2016, p. 534.
[122] Jones 2016, p. 539.
[123] Baumeister 2002, p. 241-258, esp. 248-252 and Baumeister 1997, p. 97-248, esp. 128-168.

have been disputed or impugned by others."[124] Humans, both as individuals, as well as in groups, "have a tendency to attack others who insult or humiliate them."[125]

Criticizing the seemingly widely accepted notion that it is people with low self-esteem who engage in aggressive and violent behavior, Baumeister et al. state that it is a subgroup of people with high self-esteem, namely those with unstable high self-esteem and narcissism, who are actually most prone to violent acts.[126]

Whilst much of Baumeister's studies focused on individuals, he also states that certain "tentative generalizations [about groups] can be warranted", as groups sometimes act "just like more extreme versions of individuals."[127] Furthermore, he (et al.) found that the pattern they observed, i.e. that "[v]iolence resulted most commonly from feeling that one's superiority was somehow being undermined, jeopardized, or contradicted by current circumstances", did apply equally to individuals, small and medium groups, as well as to huge nationalities.[128]

As an example, Baumeister argues that Nazi ideology and the Nazis as a collective showed traits of narcissism in e.g. viewing Germans as the "master race", aiming for continental/world dominance, seeing themselves as successors to the Holy Roman Empire and waging a war essentially impossible to win against the US, Great Britain and the Soviet Union. The for narcissist typical notion of entitlement can especially be seen in the Nazis' view of Poland and Eastern Europe as "Lebensraum" (living space) for the German people.[129] "Thus, it is not difficult to discern the essential features of narcissism in the attitudes of the Nazis."[130]

Baumeister continues to argue that the outcome of World War one was a very humiliating experience for Germans – their great army had surrendered, their emperor abdicated and then there was the humiliating and exploitative Treaty of Versaille. "In short, within a few years Germany was transformed from a proud leader of nations into a helpless and pitiful failure."[131] Explaining why as a reaction to this failure, to put it very simply, animosity was directed against the Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals and others, Baumeister cites old and new

[124] Baumeister 2002, p. 248.
[125] Baumeister 2002, p. 248.
[126] Baumeister 2002, p. 248f, and Baumeister et al., 'Relation of Threatened Egotism to Violence and Aggression: The Dark Side of High Self-Esteem.' *Psychological Review*, vol. 103, no. 1, 1996, p. 26
[127] Baumeister 2002, p. 250.
[128] Baumeister et al. 1996, p. 26.
[129] Baumeister 2002, p. 250.
[130] Baumeister 2002, p. 251.
[131] Baumeister 2002, p. 252.

anti-Semitic perceptions, such as the *Dolchstoßlegende* ("stab in the back", more on this see chapter three).

Summing up, Baumeister thus concludes that threatened egotism was one of the two major roots of the four roots of the Holocaust (the other one being idealism). In other words, "Nazi Germany held a narcissistically inflated view of itself and considered the events of previous decades to have been a shocking humiliation that required aggressive revenge."[132] This revenge was mainly directed against the Jews, who were wrongly blamed for this humiliation.[133]

To turn to the fourth underlying emotion, revenge, as Baumeister argues, "is based on some concept of equity."[134] However, it is basically impossible to act out "exact" fairness in social transactions, even if it were applied by the most objective, disinterested of judges. When fairness is applied by emotionally affected people, it is even more elusive. There thus appears the problem of disproportionate revenge, with retaliations tending to exceed, often by a great deal, the original transgression.[135]

This problem of disproportionate revenge is exacerbated in the case of threatened egotism, where it becomes even harder to keep a somewhat rational mind when committing retaliatory acts. "A blow to one's pride produces anger, rage, and other emotions that are not conducive to thoughtful assessments of fairness."[136] It is when humiliation is brought by the original offense that violent retaliatory responses are produced.[137]

This view is shared by many different scholars who have studied violence and crime in different circumstances. The argument is that "the root cause of most violence is shame."[138] This view goes along with Lindner's mentioned above. However, Lindner distinguishes shame from humiliation, arguing that while shame only becomes salient when we accept it, humiliation "is an assault that we typically seek to repulse and which enrages us."[139] In whatever way one defines it, groups, as individuals, in order to overcome this negative emotion which attacks their self-esteem, can and may respond to it with violence. This

[132] Baumeister 2002, p. 256.
[133] Baumeister 2002, p. 253.
[134] Baumeister 1997, p. 156.
[135] Baumeister 1997, p. 157.
[136] Baumeister 1997, p. 158f.
[137] Baumeister 1997, p. 162.
[138] Alvarez 2010, p. 122.
[139] Lindner 2009, p. 142.

violence becomes the vehicle "through which these feelings of shame, humiliation, and frustration are replaced by pride and respect."[140]

At its center, the logical structure of revenge reverses the roles of who is the victim and who is the perpetrator. "The victim becomes the perpetrator, striking back for what he or she has suffered."[141] Victims, moreover, have a tendency to exaggerate the offense in their perception, maximizing the suffering they experienced, whereas perpetrators will minimize – in their own perception – the harm they inflicted. [142]

Another important factor when it comes to revenge is the "myth of pure evil." Victims, or whoever perceive themselves as victims, tend to see the aggressors as "evil", at times even as people gaining sadistic pleasure out of the harm they are inflicting. Since they are dealing with an "evil" character, it is thus appropriate for the victims to respond with zeal, going beyond the own suffering they experienced. "There is no sense in practicing forbearance, restraint, or mercy" when dealing with truly evil people.[143]

The immediate goal of revenge is not to recoup losses, but often rather to teach the offenders a lesson. Since this is a very vague concept, "this attitude also may promote extreme measures, because people believe that vivid and dramatic lessons are more likely to be learned than subtle ones."[144]

Revenge, to finalize, "can contribute to violence and cruelty because the avenger, who is perpetrating harm, acts with the clear conscience and self-righteous zeal of the victim. If you are only striking back, you seem to have a right to do so, and so you do not blame yourself for your actions."[145] Much to the revenge's victim's misfortune, the "whole point of revenge is to make the other person suffer", making it unlikely that the victim will get away lightly. "The avenger's experience is similar to the sadist's in that harm is done to bring pleasant, positive, satisfying feelings to the perpetrator."[146] Since it is hardly possible for the victim to suffer enough to bring the avenger satisfaction and "[b]ecause victims suffer more than perpetrators gain, the victim of revenge will probably have to suffer far more than the perpetrator realizes."[147]

[140] Alvarez 2010, p. 122.
[141] Baumeister 1997, p. 160.
[142] Baumeister 1997, p. 160.
[143] Baumeister 1997, p. 161.
[144] Baumeister 1997, p. 161.
[145] Baumeister 1997, p. 162.
[146] Baumeister 1997, p. 162.
[147] Baumeister 1997, p. 162.

To summarize, this subchapter presented four psychological emotions as being of important relevance to this thesis' topic, all of which apply to groups just as much as to individuals. The feeling of humiliation, leading people to feel anger and wanting to inflict revenge on the ones perceived as having caused that humiliation; fear, appearing both as mortal terror and existential dread, being able to lead people to resort to violence to defend themselves against the perceived threats; threatened egotism, being closely connected to humiliation, describes how a group's favorable self-evaluation, when being questioned, can lead to violent reactions; and finally, in their desire for revenge, the perpetrators see themselves as rightful avengers who only strike back, and although being based on a concept of equity, revenge usually leads to disproportionate use of violence, especially when viewing the other as purely "evil".

Having established the most important underlying emotions, the role and effects of self-victimization in the genocidal context can be examined.

1.5 The Role of Self-Victimization

Recalling Waller's model of the proximate influences on our ultimate human nature, self-victimization is to be located within the "psychological construction of the "Other."".[148] Since there pro-social components in human nature as well, and since people furthermore usually "refrain from behaving in ways that violate their moral standards"[149] which often enough stem from "thousands of years of social morality and ethics"[150], there is need to disengage these moral standards by placing the victim collective "outside the boundary in which moral values, rules, and considerations of fairness apply" [151] – in short, outside the "realm of morality". Most crimes in human history therefore appear in a moralistic dress,[152] thus allowing perpetrators to "believe in the rightness and necessity of their actions."[153] As criminologist Alex Alvarez of Northern Arizona University puts it, "It is important to remember that the legitimacy or illegitimacy of any particular act lies not in any intrinsic quality of the act itself,

[148] Waller 2007, p. 138f.
[149] Waller 2002, p. 185.
[150] Waller 2002, p. 186.
[151] Waller 2002, p. 186.
[152] Waller 2002, p. 186.
[153] Alvarez 2010, p. 59.

but rather in its definition."[154] The perpetrators need not find their acts enjoyable, they may even find them unpleasant – as long as they consider their acts a necessity.[155]

There are a lot of different ways to morally justify mass atrocities against a victim group, such as dehumanization, scapegoating, utopianism and absolutist worldviews,[156] to name but a few. All of these play essential roles, however, as stated in the introduction, for this thesis *self-victimization* is the sole focus.

Recalling the psychological factors described in the previous subchapter, the results of victimhood/victimization are often "feelings of shame, vulnerability, inadequacy, anger, distrust and hostility to the outside world."[157] This applies to both individuals and groups and can have impacts lasting for years, if not for lifetimes. In groups, these feelings may become embedded in the collective's culture, their collective memory, and even last for generations. Members of such a "victimized" culture might thus be "more highly sensitive to perceived slights and injustices" and more "susceptible to leaders promising to protect them and to redress any wrongs." [158]

Such groups who have been, or believe to have been, victimized in the past are more likely to resort to aggression and violence when confronted with a (perceived or real) threat, framing and claiming their aggression as self-defensive action.[159] This belief can go as far as deeming the killing of members of the out-group, in the worst case even the killing of the whole group, necessary for the safety and security of the own group, especially when the out-group is accused of having genocidal plans against the in-group. The mortal terror (see previous section) that this can elicit "also contains a strong element of psychological *projection* [emphasis in original]. One justifies genocidal design by imputing such designs to perceived opponents."[160] In that way, the committed atrocities become not only morally justified, but even an "outright moral imperative."[161] This moral imperative is seen as essential to the group's "self-defense – to protect the cherished values of their community, fight ruthless oppressors, preserve peace and stability, save humanity from subjugation, or honor their national commitments."[162]

[154] Alvarez 2010, p. 59.
[155] Waller 2002, p. 186.
[156] Alvarez 2010, p. viii.
[157] Alvarez 2010, p. 66.
[158] Alvarez 2010, p. 66, see also Staub 2001, p. 162.
[159] Waller 2007, p. 203.
[160] Jones 2006, 267.
[161] Waller 2002, p. 186.
[162] Waller 2002, p. 186.

The Hutu majority in Rwanda had long been disadvantaged by Tutsi domination. However, when the genocide against the Tutsis and moderate Hutus began in 1994, Rwanda had been independent and dominated by Hutus for 35 years already. Nevertheless, the subaltern status of Hutu still lingered in the population, images of the powerful Tutsi prevailed, as did their actual dominance in neighboring Burundi, where they committed a genocide against the Hutu elites in 1972. The "Rwandan Patriotic Front", a Tutsi rebel force that invaded Rwanda from Uganda in 1990, seemingly encapsulated all of this and was depicted as wanting to reestablish Tutsi hegemony or even exterminate the Hutu.[163] This allowed the Hutu perpetrators to frame their mass violence as necessary self-defense. As one perpetrator put it, "I defended the members of my tribe against the Tutsi."[164]

Just as James Waller,[165] Alex Alvarez asserts that evolutionary adaptions provide human beings with the potential to commit violence, but – again, similar to Waller – also points to the fact that most people, at least initially, "often have a fairly strong resistance to engaging in violence."[166] While once having started, participation in violent behavior becomes easier and easier for the perpetrators, this initial unwillingness has to be overcome first. Alvarez refers to philosopher David Livingstone Smith and explains this reluctance also with the social past of human ancestors, where killing in-group members was highly disadvantageous, since a high level of solidarity and cohesion within the group was needed to be able to present a united front against possible enemies.[167] This helps to explain why, in cases of genocide, there is so much effort placed to differentiate the in-group from the out-group[168] – essentially speaking to and trying to enhance the perpetrators' ethnocentric, xenophobic and violent over their prosocial predispositions.

Creating a strong, exclusive in-group that looks down upon an out-group seems to be an easy task, as human beings possess the universal ability to *socially categorize*. Social categorization is the "behavioral manifestation" of humans' "tendencies of ethnocentrism and xenophobia"[169] explained earlier in this thesis. What *kind* of categories people use differs in time, place and culture, but "the *process* [emphasis in original] of social categorization is universal and pervasive across mankind."[170] Having identified who belongs to the in-group

[163] Jones, Robins 2009, p. 7f, 11.
[164] As quoted by Alvarez 2010, p. 59.
[165] Waller 2002, p. 177.
[166] Alvarez 2010, p. 113.
[167] Alvarez 2010, p. 113.
[168] Alvarez 2010, p. 113.
[169] Waller 2002, p. 239.
[170] Waller 2002, p. 239.

and who does not, human beings tend to perceive the members of their in-group as being more similar to each other than to the members of the out-group, known as the "assumed similarity effect".[171] The out-group members are perceived as all alike in what is called the "out-group homogeneity effect." "So, as cognitive misers, if we know something about one out-group member, we are likely to feel that we know something about all of them."[172] In what is known as the "accentuation effect", the differences between Us and Them are exaggerated, which "leaves us biased toward information that enhances the differences between social categories and less attentive" to similarities.[173] Finally, this categorization and differentiation of Us and Them seldom appears in a neutral form, since human beings generally like people who they perceive as similar more than those they perceive as different; this is called the "in-group bias."[174]

Different social psychological experiments, such as the ones conducted by British social psychologist Henri Tajfel and his colleagues[175] or by social psychologist Muzafer Sherif and his colleagues,[176] show that it does not take a long history of collectivity for these behavioral manifestations to appear. Even completely arbitrarily assigned groups of strangers quickly showed the above described effects and acted with bias and discrimination in favor of their in-group.

It is thus not hard to understand that effective propaganda by genocidally inclined actors can lead to extreme us-them thinking, especially when evoking feelings of humiliation, fear, threatened egotism and revenge by portraying their in-group as victims of past, present and (imminent) future oppression, exploitation and maybe even destruction at the hands of the out-group. When a group's vital interests are involved, us-them thinking quickly becomes solemnly dualistic, leaving no room for judgement in between the "good us" and the "bad them": "Our cause is sacred; theirs is evil. We are righteous; they are wicked. We are innocent; they are guilty. *We are the victims; they are the victimizers* [emphasis added]. It is rarely *our* enemy or *an* enemy, but *the* enemy [emphasis in original] – a usage of the definite article that hints of something fixed and immutable, abstract and evil."[177]

[171] Waller 2002, p. 239.
[172] Waller 2002, p. 240.
[173] Waller 2002, p. 240.
[174] Waller 2002, p. 240f.
[175] Waller 2002, p. 241.
[176] Waller 2002, p. 238.
[177] Waller 2002, p. 243.

Returning to Alvarez, in explaining how to overcome the above mentioned initial resistance to violent behavior, he draws from criminologists Sykes and Matza, adapting their five "Techniques of Neutralization", initially used for explaining individual criminal behavior by young persons, and applies them to acts of genocide.[178] The third of these five techniques is the one that best helps understand what self-victimization accomplishes. In this technique which is called "Denial of Victim" and which according to Alvarez "is of central importance in facilitating mass murder"[179], "[t]he delinquent maintains that the victim is to blame for the victimization. This definitional reversal turns the roles around – the perpetrator's from that of criminal or delinquent to that of justified avenger and the victim's from aggrieved innocent to someone whose own actions, beliefs, background, or race brought on the victimization."[180] In asserting "that the victims have caused their own victimization and deserve whatever happens to them", the perpetrators make it easier for themselves to murder. [181] This changing of roles makes it possible for the perpetrator group to define the killings as self-defense – an excuse for violence that is nearly universally accepted[182] – allegedly protecting itself from the very treatment they are inflicting on their victims.[183]

One more effect of this form of othering by blaming the victim is the "just-world phenomenon."[184] This phenomenon describes humans' tendency to believe in a just and fair world in which everyone gets "what they deserve and deserve what they get. In other words, victims have earned their suffering by their actions or character."[185] This innate belief, enhanced by socialization, serves as a self-protective tool. People are terrified when they see violence and suffering, because they remind them of their own fragile existence. If they can convince themselves that the victims deserved what they are getting, they can remain safe in their own minds, because they "would always behave more cautiously or wisely" than the victims.[186] Thus, "the just-world phenomenon allows us to be indifferent to extraordinary evil", because we do not see evil, but only just and deserved suffering.[187]

Having established that the feeling of being/having been and the fear of becoming a victim of the out-group can play an essential part in making genocide possible, the question remains if

[178] Alvarez 1997, p. 152.
[179] Alvarez 1997, p. 162.
[180] Alvarez 1997, p. 152.
[181] Alvarez 1997, p. 162.
[182] Alvarez 2010, p. 64.
[183] Waller 2002, p. 257.
[184] Waller 2002, p. 250.
[185] Waller 2002, p. 250.
[186] Waller 2002, p. 255.
[187] Waller 2002, p. 256.

it makes a difference whether this picture has merits in facts or not. In other words, does it matter if the becoming perpetrators actually are/have been or are to become the victims of their victims?

As hinted through formulations used in this thesis so far, the argument here is that, no, it does not make a difference. Adam Jones and Nicholas A. Robins, in their book "Genocides by the Oppressed. Subaltern Genocide in Theory and Praxis"[188], ask that question as well: "One of the greatest difficulties in exploring subaltern genocide is differentiating between objective subaltern status and subjective perceptions of that status."[189] Jones and Robins argue that an "objective" subaltern status can be defined and name several factors according to which that can be done.[190] However, they too have to admit that there is a difficulty in answering the question, insofar as that "genocidal perpetrators rarely perceive themselves in a position of unchallenged dominance" and "usually feel—or claim to feel—vulnerable and under imminent threat of destruction. Paranoia, after all, is almost a universal feature among elites who inflict genocide."[191]

James Waller reflects this too, when he argues that, "[i]n some cases, perpetrators' sense of vulnerability in the world is actually based in the reality of their past victimization."[192] However, in most cases the "perpetrators' sense of vulnerability is a self-justifying mental gymnastic – not accurately reflecting reality – that comes easily from the part of our psyche that wants to view ourselves as victims or potential victims."[193] Similarly, Jones and Robins, while pointing to actual subaltern perpetrators of genocide, conclude that in other cases where this status is claimed, there is no "objective relationship of exploitation or oppression" and the supposed oppressor group rather becomes the scapegoat of the "false consciousness" of the supposed subaltern/victim group.[194]

As will become clear in the case studies, whether this past of victimhood is factually true, partly true, misleading or even downright false is irrelevant – it does, in any case, "provide a justification for violence against a group in the present and contribute to genocide."[195]

[188] Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009
[189] Jones, Robins 2009, p. 10
[190] Jones, Robins 2009, p. 10f
[191] Jones, Robins 2009, p. 10
[192] Waller 2002, p. 186f.
[193] Waller 2002, p. 187.
[194] Jones, Robin 2009, p. 11f.
[195] Alvarez 2010, p. 66.

To understand this, one more sociological theory shall be brought in, the *Thomas-Theorem*. William I. Thomas and Dorothy S. Thomas described with a single sentence how it is people's *perception* of a situation, whether factually right or not, that is decisive for their subsequent acts, thus leading to real consequences out of a factually potentially wrong understanding of a situation: "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences."[196] The easiest example to understand this is the end of the story of Romeo and Juliet. Following the wrong understanding of a situation, namely that Juliet is dead, Romeo takes the very real consequence of killing himself.

This theorem, which led other sociologists to further important theories of sociology (such as Robert K. Merton's "self-fulfilling prophecy")[197], can be recognized in collectives as well. If we recall how collective memory works (see above), namely painting pictures of the past which mostly distort history to serve purposes of the present, we can easily conclude that even a collective will act upon its perception of a situation. In this study's case, a collective memory shaped by a perceived past/present victimization and fear of victimization in the imminent future.

The Serbian collective memory of the battle of Kosovo Polje 1389 serves as an example for this. Although the historical evidence points to a complicated situation with many Serbs even fighting on the Ottoman side, an unclear outcome of the battle and an independent Serbian state lasting "on and off for another 70 years before finally succumbing to the Ottoman Empire", the Serbian myth and legends around the battle tell a different, simpler story: the Serbs were defeated, resulting "in an era of victimization, oppression, and slavery". In these myths, which became "enshrined in the nationalistic ideological framework of Serbian national identity and culture", is where the actual and lasting legacy of the battle lies.[198] Bosnian Serb propaganda "reminded Serbs of their victimization at the hands of the Ottoman Turks in 1389 and by the Croats during the Second World War", which enabled Serbian perpetrators of ethnic cleansing as claiming to having "defended Europe from Islam six hundred years ago […] We are defending Europe again […] from Islamic fundamentalism."[199] In the case of Kosovo, the "Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts" was drawing a picture of recent Serbian victimhood in Kosovo when

[196] Thomas, Thomas as quoted in S. Neckel et al., *Sternstunden der Soziologie: Wegweisene Theoriemodelle des soziologischen Denkens.* Frankfurt, New York, Campus Verlag, 2010, p. 21
[197] Mijic in Neckel 2010, p. 24
[198] Alvarez 2010, p. 65
[199] As quoted in Alvarez 2010, p. 66

condemning the alleged "physical, political, judicial and cultural genocide of the Serbian population in Kosovo."[200]

To summarize, self-victimization of a collective's past, present and future at the hands of the defined out-group ("*the* enemy") evokes feelings of humiliation, fear, threatened egotism and revenge. This also helps establish a purely dualistic "good us" vs. "bad them" thinking. Both in turn help overcome innate and morally established reluctance to use violence by enhancing ethnocentric, xenophobic and violent predispositions and by placing the out-group outside of the realm of morality, framing the massive violence directed against it as self-defense. Furthermore, it also allows people to continue their belief in a just world, where people only get what they deserve. Whether the (becoming) perpetrator group's status as a past, present or future victim has grounds in reality is irrelevant for these effects, as long as the status is widely perceived and accepted.

1.6 Conclusion

To make sense of the previous parts and turn these multidisciplinary ingredients into a digestible soup, this conclusion shall connect them.

To recall, the questions this chapter examined were:

1) *What are human beings' innate, evolutionary psychological predispositions that self-victimization evokes and enhances?*
2) *How do these predispositions appear in modern human societies? Which further developments in human history are most relevant?*
3) *Through which channels do pictures of self-victimization reach people?*
4) *Which emotions does self-victimization evoke in people?*
5) *What are the effects of self-victimization in the genocidal context?*

Ad 1): Evolution during its nomadic hunter-gatherer past equipped humanity with the adaptive predisposition to be able to think and live in groups. While this included the capacity for prosocial behavior, it also included ethnocentrism and xenophobia for the well-being of an

[200] As quoted in Alvarez 2010, p. 117.

individual's own group, as well as a desire for social dominance, all of which gave human beings the capacity to resort to violence and commit "evil". This is the basis for the human ability to commit mass atrocities in modern times, because…

Ad 2)…humanity's way of living drastically changed during the Neolithic Transformation. New, sedentary and larger "imagined communities" developed, while the stone-age mind remains unchanged. Since humans are easily and quickly able to identify with groups, these communities could and can be imagined on all kinds of factors. Us-them thinking thus became grounded on such imagined factors, who nevertheless can be enhanced to regard out-groups as the "evil Other". Paired with the disappearance of the usual way humans evaded violent conflicts through fleeing and with growth in population, this made possible and led to mass violence. As communities grew more complex in nature they developed…

Ad 3)…collective memories to keep them together. Far from being "objective" pictures of the past, collective memories are simplified such pictures that can and are being reconstructed and altered to serve to solve problems of the present. It is these collective memories that genocidally inclined actors are trying to alter and manipulate. While they are not creating ideas out of thin air, they are enhancing and exaggerating negative pictures of the target group that may have existed before, turning them into perpetrators of alleged past, humiliating injustices. Whether these pictures have grounds in reality is irrelevant, as long as the perpetrators define these pictures as real. Genocidal actors are not only evoking…

Ad 4)…emotions of past and present humiliation, but also fear of future humiliation and victimization. This threatens the egotism of the in-group, blames the out-group for past injustices and insinuates it would be committing present/plotting future injustices, potentially even genocide. This evokes both fear and a desire for revenge in the collective, strong emotions which make it easier for perpetrators to…

Ad 5)…overcome their initial reluctance to use violence by enabling themselves to frame and see themselves as avengers and self-defenders, rather than as perpetrators of mass violence. The out-group becomes the opposing "evil Other" and is placed outside the realm of morality; in completely turning the roles around, annihilating the out-group may even become the moral imperative. This also enables the perpetrators to retain their belief in a just world.

Having established the theoretical background to why and how self-victimization functions, the next two chapters will comprise of two case studies to examine how self-victimization was used and how it worked in genocidal contexts.

2. Chapter Two – Democratic Kampuchea and the *Kum-monuss*

2.1 Introduction

The general question posed in this chapter is, "What was the role of the aspect of self-victimization in the Cambodian genocide?"

Consequently, several sub-questions have to be considered:

1) *What is the relevant historical background for self-victimization in the Cambodian context? Why could people feel suppressed, humiliated and enraged?*
2) *What role did self-victimization play for leading actors in Cambodia?*
3) *How was the out-group defined by the Khmer Rouge regime?*
4) *What role did self-victimization play in that definition?*
5) *What role do Cambodian cultural models play in this regard?*
6) *How did self-victimization manifest in Khmer Rouge crimes?*

The examination of these questions starts with a very short historical background to the genocide, focusing on relevant aspects; general knowledge of the genocide is presupposed. This is followed by a part describing the defining of the "other" and the role self-victimization played therein. Then, the relevant cultural models and their effects are described, including examples from survivors of the genocide. Finally, the conclusion connects the parts in a comprehensive manner.

2.2 Background

The pre-revolutionary Cambodia of the mid-twentieth presented itself as a relative homogenous country compared to its neighbors Thailand and Vietnam. Seemingly "a society resistant to transformation" in which 80% of the population were peasants, 80% were ethnic Khmer and 80% were Buddhist, "it was geographically compact, demographically dispersed, linguistically unified, ethnically homogeneous, socially undifferentiated, culturally uniform, administratively unitary, politically undeveloped, economically undiversified, and educationally deprived. "[201]

[201] B. Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime. Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-1979*, 3rd edn., New Haven, Yale University Press 2008, p. 4f.

The overwhelmingly rural economy was dominated by subsistence rice cultivation and was thus largely uninvolved in any international economy. The only ones who partly were, were the about 10% of the population who were garden farmers and the 15% who lived in towns. "Therefore Cambodia nearly comprised two separate societies, with little exchange between them: one rural, producing for subsistence, the other largely urban, producing a few goods for the world market and consuming mostly international commodities." While the rural rice farmers did provide food for the inhabitants of the cities, little goods made their way the other way around towards rural consumption. The cities distinguished themselves from the countryside in another manner: while the latter was ethnically quite homogenous, Chinese and Vietnamese minorities were dominant in the cities. [202]

The core of traditional peasant life was the nuclear family, which together engaged in the production and consumption of daily goods. The village, composing of relatives and friends, gave people a certain identity and were assisting one another in certain aspects of daily life.[203] The majority of these peasants were small landowners, but quite poor. Only a small minority was landless; however, their share increased from 4%-20% between 1950 and 1970 and increased even more greatly as a result of the civil war and US bombings. Despite probably never being in the majority, the landless peasants were nevertheless enough to constitute a fertile recruitment basis for the Khmer Rouge, who actively targeted them.[204]

When asked about the time of the Khmer Rouge regime, many Cambodians start with the March 18, 1970 overthrow of ruler Prince Sihanouk, who had been in power since 1953, the year he had led Cambodia to independence from French colonial rule. The leader of the coup was Sihanouk's former general Lon Nol, who was supported by many urbanites, especially "the middle class, the educated, traders, and merchants. Sihanouk stayed very popular among the peasantry, which is why his support of the Khmer Rouge in the civil war following the coup led many of them to join the Khmer Rouge.[205]

That civil war raged fiercely for around five years, with the US backing the Lon Nol regime, while China and initially also North Vietnam supported the Khmer Rouge.[206] To secure his

[202] Kiernan 2008, p. 5
[203] A. L. Hinton, *Why did they kill? Cambodia in the shadow of genocide*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2005, p. 9f.
[204] Kiernan 2008, p. 6f.
[205] Hinton 2005, p. 7f.
[206] Hinton 2005, p. 8.

power, the Lon Nol regime resorted to secret purges and executions, which nevertheless left the countryside, which was mainly in the hands of the insurgents, largely untouched.[207]

What did touch the countryside, however, and quite fiercely so, was the war in neighboring Vietnam. Already in the years up to 1970, around 1,800 US ground missions made their way over the border from Vietnam, placing mines up to about 30km inside Cambodian territory, killing and wounding an unknown number of people.[208] But the biggest destruction of the Cambodian countryside came from the sky: although estimates vary from author to author (due to the fact that still not all relevant US documents are reviewable), Ben Kiernan and Taylor Owen, basing their number on the newest available documents, estimate over 2.7 million tons of bombs having been dropped on Cambodia by the US Air Force. Half of those were dropped in the last six months of the campaign alone, amounting to 3600 tons per day in March 1973. [209]

The goal of the US had initially been to support its secret ground incursions, later to keep away enemy forces – by carpet bombing – so that the US could withdraw from Vietnam and to support the Lon Nol regime. "The result was that Cambodians essentially became cannon fodder to protect American lives."[210] When the bombings were halted by the US Congress in 1973, the damage done had already been enormous.[211]

Given the new numbers placing the total amount of bombs dropped on Cambodia five times higher than previous estimates, the number of civilian deaths in Cambodia they caused is probably higher than previous estimates as well, who lie at 50-150.000.[212] Additionally, hundreds of thousands of Cambodians from rural areas fled to the cities, leading the capital Phnom Penh with its pre-war population of roughly 600.000 to housing about two million refugees by the end of the civil war.[213] This would proof doubly devastating for these refugees, as they, too, were later considered to be urbanites and thus "new people" (in contrast to the "old people", the countryside peasants, who would be treated better in the farming cooperatives) by the Khmer Rouge regime.[214]

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[207] Kiernan 2008, p. 16.
[208] Kiernan 2008, p. 18.
[209] B. Kiernan, T. Owen, 'Bombs over Cambodia. New Information reveals that Cambodia was bombed far more heavily than previously believed', *The Walrus*, October 2006, p. 2 http://migs.concordia.ca/links/documents/Bombs_over_Cambodia_Kiernan.pdf (accessed 14 July 2017)
[210] Kiernan, Taylor 2006, p. 5f.
[211] Kiernan, Taylor 2006, p. 8.
[212] Kiernan, Taylor 2006, p. 7.
[213] Hinton 2005, p. 8.
[214] Hinton 2005, p. 9.

The bombing also had profound impact on the Cambodian civil war. Despite parts of it being aimed at securing the Lon Nol regime, it tipped the balance of factions within the Khmer Rouge towards future dictator Pol Pot's and in the Khmer Rouge's favor in general.[215] As it caused "enormous suffering, impoverishment, displacement" and the abovementioned death toll on the local level,[216] it led the rural population to join the Khmer Rouge in much greater numbers than before. Consisting in the beginning of fewer than five thousand poorly armed troops, by 1973, the Khmer Rouge had grown to two hundred thousand troops and militia forces, enabling them to win the civil war two years later.[217] Thus, the carpet bombing of the Cambodian countryside by the US Air Force can probably be seen as "the most important single factor in Pol Pot's rise."[218]

The Khmer Rouge did not only profit passively, but made active use of the rage and fear the US bombing caused among the rural Cambodian population. Charles Meyer, former advisor to Prince Sihanouk, captured this rage when he observed, "According to direct testimonies, peasants are taking refuge in forest encampments and are maintaining their smiles and their humour, but one might add that it is difficult to imagine the intensity of their hatred towards those who are destroying their villages and their property. Perhaps we should remember that the Cambodians have the deserved reputation for being the most spiteful and vindictive people in all Southeast Asia […]."[219] As former Khmer Rouge officer Chhit Do explains, the Khmer Rouge would take people to show them the craters and scorched earth caused by bombings. "The ordinary people sometimes literally shit in their pants when the big bombs and shells came. Their minds just froze up and they would wander around mute for three or four days. Terrified and half crazy, the people were ready to believe what they were told."[220]

What the Khmer Rouge told the young peasant victims was who was to be blamed for their suffering. The perpetrators, the "killing birds," did, according to the Khmer Rouge, not come from Guam, but from Phnom Penh. The popular outrage was thus directed at the whole population of Phnom Penh, which proved to be as fatal for them as for the Lon Nol regime and moderate Khmer Rouge.[221]

[215] Kiernan 2008, p. 22.
[216] Hinton 2005, p. 8.
[217] Kiernan, Taylor 2006, p 7f.
[218] Kiernan 2008, p. 16.
[219] Meyers as quoted by Kiernan 2008, p. 20.
[220] Chhit Do as quoted by Kiernan, Taylor 2006, p. 7f.
[221] Kiernan 2008, p. 25.

When the Khmer Rouge stood victorious at the end of the civil war in April 1975, around 600.000 Cambodians had lost their lives (including the victims of the US bombings).[222] From the first days of the new regime, the Khmer Rouge set out to achieve what they called a ""“super great leap forward” into socialism that would be unprecedented and would supposedly create, as a May 1975 radio broadcast announced, “the cleanest, most fair society ever known in our history.””[223] Despite a claimed uniqueness of the Cambodian revolution, it was very much inspired by models from the Soviet Union, North Vietnam, Thailand and especially Mao, with collectivization and the forming of cooperatives on the countryside.[224]

What that meant in practice was evacuating all cities, clearing hospitals, closing schools, emptying factories, abolishing money, shutting monasteries, scattering libraries and ending freedom of press, movement, worship, organization and association. For the next four years, all discussion disappeared, as did everyday family life. “A whole nation was kidnapped and then besieged from within.”[225]

The Khmer Rouge thus turned Cambodia, now called “Democratic Kampuchea”, into “a prison camp state, and the eight million prisoners served most of their time in solitary confinement.”[226] In what is now regarded as one of the 20th century’s big genocides, “1.5 million of the inmates were worked, starved, and beaten to death.”[227]

2.3 Self-Victimization in the Defining of the Other

How did the Khmer Rouge define the “Other” who had to be destroyed? What motivated the killers to commit their mass atrocities? And what role did self-victimization play in that definition?

In Khmer Rouge ideology, “race” certainly played a central role, as Ben Kiernan argues. According to him, “race” was one of the two most important themes of the Khmer Rouge regime. Membership of the Khmer “race” was thus a condition for belonging to the in-group, but it alone was not sufficient. As the Khmer Rouge struggled for “central control” – the

[222] Hinton 2005, p. 8.
[223] Hinton 2005, p. 8.
[224] Hinton 2005, p. 9.
[225] Kiernan 2008, p. 8.
[226] Kiernan 2008, p. 9.
[227] Kiernan 2008, p. 9.

second of the two themes – they needed to have control in every corner of the society. "Enemies were thus, by definition, everywhere."[228]

The race-factor was fostered by French scholars and "their "discovery" of Angkor Wat", which "provided the Khmer with an enduring ethnohistorical past, culminating in the Angkorean empire. During the "decline" that followed this period of grandeur, Khmer were portrayed as continuously threatened by evil others who schemed to "swallow" Cambodian land and destroy the country and its people."[229] The Khmer Rouge leadership would make use of such nationalist themes in their ideology and propaganda.[230] In other words, it can be stated that they developed a collective memory of a past of grandeur, followed by demise and humiliation at the hands of others. Those "others" would subsequently be defined as "imperialists", "capitalists" and, as before, "expansionist, annexationist Vietnamese".[231]

One consequence of the Khmer Rouge's sense of Khmer superiority, supported by a collective memory of grandeur, was their belief in being able to completely achieve their goals without any help from outside and much faster than any other revolution before them.[232] This can be interpreted as resulting from a highly favorable self-evaluation, egotism, which was threatened by others (see above).

Another consequence of the race-factor was the exclusion, persecution and destruction of Cambodia's ethnic minorities. The fate of the Vietnamese minority serves as an example: While a historic animosity against the Vietnamese had been present for some time in Khmer nationalist thinking, already the Lon Nol regime stepped up the rhetoric against Vietnam, even calling for a "(Buddhist) holy war" against them. This already led to the exodus of over 300.000 of the Vietnamese minority of roughly 450.000 in Cambodia.[233] By September 1975, the Khmer Rouge, in a campaign of ethnic cleansing, expelled another around 150.000 Vietnamese, leaving only about 10.000 in the country – almost all of which were subsequently annihilated.[234]

Humiliation, suppression, fear and a status of victimhood at the hands of the Vietnamese played an essential role in this Khmer nationalistic thinking. This is illustrated in a legend about the digging of the Vinh Te canal in the early 19th century. There, Vietnamese allegedly

[228] Kiernan 2008, p. 26f.
[229] Hinton 2005, p. 215.
[230] Hinton 2005, p. 215.
[231] Hinton 2005, p. 215.
[232] Hinton 2005, p. 51f.
[233] Hinton 2005, p. 217.
[234] Hinton 2005, p. 219.

would bury Khmer workers up until their heads and would use them as a stand for a stove to boil their master's tea. Besides showing the Vietnamese' evilness and attitude towards the Cambodians, it also symbolizes "the Khmer's historical loss of "face", […] Cambodia's victim status (being enslaved and abused)" and the emotions of rage and shame this status generated.[235] The Khmer Rouge made use of such themes, for example by incorporating this legend into their 1978 publication of the "Black Paper," a propaganda paper consisting of "Facts and Evidence of the Acts of Aggression and Annexation of Vietnam Against Kampuchea." [236]

The second main aspect argued by Kiernan – the struggle for "central control" – proves to provide an out-group that is more vaguely defined and more "flexible" and permeable than the absolute concept of "race." This enemy, roughly defined as the "oppressor classes", included abstract definitions such as "feudalists", "capitalists" and "imperialists."[237] In speeches and party documents, those definitions were more refined: "feudalists (royalty, former ministers, provincial governors, high-ranking Lon Nol military officials), capitalists (businessmen, particularly those with foreign trading connections), petty capitalists (high civil servants, "intellectuals", teachers, hairdressers, tailors, craftsmen, small businessmen, low-ranking civil servants, employees, clergy), landowners (rich peasants who used modern equipment and employed laborers and upper-middle peasants who hired laborers to do over 60 percent of their work)."[238] In practice, this basically targeted "the Lon Nol regime, the urban population it controlled, and the capitalists and imperialists with which it was allied."[239]

Unlike in the cases of Rwanda, Nazi Germany and Armenia, this out-group was not defined along "the lines of preexisting communal divisions". As Khmer were killing Khmer, the term "autogenocide" is occasionally used. Thus, as Alexander Laban Hinton argues, the effort the Khmer Rouge leadership had to make to "manufacture difference" was even greater than in other cases of genocide, "since the political and class differences it asserted were often quite difficult to discern on the local level."[240]

An illustrative radio broadcast of April 1978, when the purges were in full swing, is therefore pretty straightforward in explaining who "we" are, and who "the enemy" is:

[235] Hinton 2005, p. 216.
[236] Hinton 2005, p. 216.
[237] Hinton 2005, p. 59.
[238] Hinton 2005, p. 213.
[239] Hinton 2005, p. 59; see also Jones, Robins 2009, p. 6.
[240] Hinton 2005, p. 15.

It is necessary to draw a clear line between us and the enemy and stand on our side to make the revolution. First of all, let us determine who we are. "We" means our nation, people, worker-peasant class, revolution, collective system of the proletariat, cooperatives, trade unions, Revolutionary Army and KCP. The "enemy" includes imperialist aggressors and lackeys of all stripes; the enemy has the intention of annexing and swallowing our territory; the enemy which is planted within our revolutionary ranks; the enemy in the for[m] of the feudal-capitalist and landowner classes and other oppressor classes; the enemy in the form of private and individualist system; and particularly, the expansionist, annexationist Vietnamese enemy.[241]

This broadcasts shows the essential features that define the in-group ("we"): there is the "race" aspect ("nation, people"), and the class aspects; the out-group bears several aspects: the wording "*the* enemy" hints of "something fixed and immutable, abstract and evil"[242]; at the same time, the wording is very vague and malleable ("lackeys of all stripes", "other oppressor classes"), leaving even the possibility to persecute people within the Khmer Rouge ("the enemy which is planted within our revolutionary ranks"); there is again a "race" aspect, playing on older nationalist themes (the "Vietnamese enemy"); it also explains the aims of the enemy ("annexing and swallowing our territory"), evoking fear of future/imminent oppression, humiliation, aggression and injustice.

Since the out-group is that vague, leaving even the definition of the in-group in an uncertain state (since defining who is not part of the in-group is essential to the definition of the in-group, see above), other party documents were listing more exactly who belongs to the "Other" (see above), enabling party cadres to check local register in order to determine who belonged to "the enemy."[243] Nevertheless, these definitions left it impossible for anyone to feel safely part of the in-group in Democratic Kampuchea, leading to tens of thousands of the Khmer Rouge's own cadres to get arrested, tortured and killed, accusing them of economic sabotage, being part of traitorous networks and, especially after escalating tension with Vietnam after 1976, ties to that old enemy.[244]

To enable these killings, as well as killings of former friends, identities had to be changed. The perpetrators' identity, parts of which formally were given by their village,[245] was shifted

[241] As quoted in Hinton 2005, p. 211.
[242] Waller 2002, p. 243.
[243] Hinton 2005, p. 213.
[244] Hinton 2005, p. 11.
[245] Hinton 2005, p. 9.

to the political identity the Khmer Rouge idealized. Parts of this identity included "a profound revolutionary sentiment toward the oppressed classes; a powerful love for the nation, revolution, collective system and party."[246] The strong notion of blood in Khmer Rouge propaganda and ideology also "implied there was a kinship-like bond between the revolutionaries […]."[247] Recalling the arguments brought forward in chapter one, this can be seen as an example of a "fictive layer of kin" added to imagine the new community.

The theme of "oppression" and a sense of victimhood, both in the past and as a threat in the imminent future, played a big role in defining the out-group in Democratic Kampuchea. This can already be seen in the ideological transformation of Pol Pot and the other members of the Khmer Rouge main cadres. Themselves by far not being part of the "oppressed" class and being able to study in Paris, "many became members of the French Communist Party, which had strong Stalinist, anti-American, and anti-colonial streaks."[248] Having grown up during a time of protest and indignation against French colonial rule and perceiving Cambodians as having been oppressed for a hundred years, they were enthusiastic about the ideology expressed by their French communist friends. Adding to this feeling of oppression and inferiority were the French reconstructions of the greatness during the Angkorean era in the Cambodian past mentioned above, leading Pol Pot and his comrades to long to surpass those times and build an even greater future.[249]

Another central figure for whom humiliation played a big role was Prince Sihanouk. After the overthrow by his general Lon Nol, he held a personal grudge against him and his aides, as Sihanouk openly admitted: ""I want to avenge myself for having been slandered, cursed and humiliated in such a cowardly, low and wicked fashion by my enemies of the extreme right."[250] As mentioned above, his subsequent siding with the Khmer Rouge made a lot of people join their ranks.

Pol Pot and his cadres thus developed a party line which should provide "the means of helping the masses see the [class] "contradictions" and the ways in which they were oppressed" in order to make them feel rage and hate towards their "oppressors".[251] Their arguments fell on fertile ground, as there were multiple factors that made the rural population feel humiliated, fearsome and enraged and develop a desire for revenge. Such factors included

[246] Hinton 2005, p 214.
[247] Hinton 2005, p. 85.
[248] Hinton 2005, p 49.
[249] Hinton 2005, p. 50.
[250] Hinton 2005, p. 58.
[251] Hinton 2005, p. 52.

"poverty, landlessness, civil war, U.S. bombing, disrespect [by the urbanites towards the rural population], foreign invasion, the destruction of their homes and death of loved ones, economic turmoil, and Sihanouk's overthrow."[252]

The Khmer Rouge addressed these "oppressing" factors, offered a new, utopian society and also provided the receptive population with a target who was to blame for the "oppression" – the "oppressing classes". Telling them "that the suffering of the poor (*vonnah âtun*) was due to the exploitation (*karchih choan*) of the oppressor classes—an enemy that abstractly included "imperialists," "feudalists," and "capitalists," and more concretely comprised the Lon Nol regime, the urban population it controlled, and the capitalists and imperialists with which it was allied."[253] Thus, "[b]y giving preexisting resentments a focus and target and attempting to transform these feelings into a "burning force," the Khmer Rouge effectively encouraged people to hold a class grudge (*kumnum vonnah*) against their "oppressors.""[254]

The first manifestation of "the enemy" was the Lon Nol regime and their "lackeys".[255] Also motivated by crimes committed by that regime, many Khmer Rouge would take revenge for loved ones killed by Lon Nol's forces. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the Khmer Rouge successfully convinced the population who had lost land, property, their income and relatives, friends and neighbors to US bombing, that that bombing was coming from the Lon Nol Regime in Phnom Penh. Thus, many people from that area just waited to be able to take revenge on the city dwellers.[256] Later on, when the members of the Lon Nol regime had been dealt with, the Khmer Rouge aimed to "keep the "burning rage" of its soldiers and cadres inflamed" and direct it towards other "class enemies".[257]

The discourse against the urbanites, now called "new people," went so far as it constructed them to being "different sorts of beings" than peasants[258] and "not quite "real Khmer […]."[259] Building upon a longer held disconnection by the rural towards the city population, the Khmer Rouge depicted the latter "as corrupt beings who lived in luxury and sin […] while the masses were exploited and suffered."[260] Sayings like "trees in the country, fruit in the

[252] Hinton 2005, p. 59.
[253] Hinton 2005, p. 59.
[254] Hinton 2005, p. 74.
[255] Hinton 2005, p. 32.
[256] Hinton 2005, p. 46.
[257] Hinton 2005, p. 32.
[258] Hinton 2005, p. 78.
[259] Hinton 2005, p. 79.
[260] Hinton 2005, p. 78.

town" made the peasants feel that the urbanites lived their comfortable, corrupt lives by oppressing and exploiting the rural population, who had to suffer a life of poverty.[261]

Repeating such messages over and over again convinced the peasants "that eliminating the [urbanites] was within their rights—better still, an imperative of their culture."[262] Thus, the Khmer Rouge had successfully placed the out-group outside the realm of morality and even made it a moral imperative to kill its members.

But not only the blame for past injustices was put on these "enemies," they were made responsible for new failures as well. When plans of the party failed and led to suffering – e.g. unachievable rice quotas leading to rice being sent to Phnom Penh that was supposed to be used for consumption – the party leadership "decided that subversion was to blame", talking of "hidden enemies" seeking to deprive the people of food.[263]

Reviewing Khmer Rouge ideology and propaganda, Alexander Laban Hinton concludes, "Perhaps the most basic ideological concept, and one that could in some sense be understood by almost all of the Khmer Rouge's followers, was the notion of oppression."[264]

2.4 Revenge in Cambodian Culture – "A Head for an Eye"[265]

As Hinton argues, genocidal regimes usually make use of preexisting cultural knowledge and models and dress "it up in new ideological guises that maintain familiar and compelling resonances […]."[266] In the Cambodian case, the "cultural models related to revenge, power, patronage, status, face, and honor"[267] of which the Khmer Rouge made use of, played a big role as a driving factor for many perpetrators.

This cultural model is one of disproportionate revenge, summarized by Hinton as ""a head for an eye," since disproportionate revenge is usually linked to issues of face, and sometimes even decapitation. In an extreme situation like DK [Democratic Kampuchea],

[261] Hinton 2005, p. 79.
[262] Hinton 2005, p. 78.
[263] Hinton 2005, p. 11.
[264] Hinton 2005, p.59; see also Staub 1999, p. 181.
[265] Hinton 2005.
[266] Hinton 2005, p. 29.
[267] Hinton 2005, p. 31.

disproportionate revenge could involve an attempt to kill a foe or even his or her entire family."[268]

In Cambodian culture, returning (positive) favors is of central importance, and in many contexts, returning "disproportionately" is common. When it comes to revenge, this logic is applied as well; the Khmer word for revenge (*karsângsoek*) even includes the word *sâng*, which refers to that obligation to return, pay back or pay for damage. [269] Thus, "[j]ust as a person should return a good deed, so too should they repay a bad deed, ideally in a disproportionate manner that "defeats" the offender and elevates one's honor (which was diminished by the instigating offence)."[270]

Underlying this is one of the ways Cambodians manage anger – namely by harboring a "grudge" (*kum*). The grudge is harbored until the holder can take revenge, ideally disproportionately. When a person perceives that another person/group has done something "bad", be it against them personally or against their own group (e.g. killing a family member), they might harbor that grudge and prepare vengeance, especially if the original offense makes them lose power or "face", leading to "a degree of anger, shame, and the desire to "defeat"" the other through disproportionate revenge.[271]

The desired effect of the disproportionate revenge is to "defeat" the foe who has gained superiority through his offense. The offended one aims to restore their honor and elevate their standing, which cannot be achieved by merely repaying the offense, but only through disproportionate revenge. In the worst case, this can lead to the perception that one must "completely defeat the enemy" in order to prevent the cycle from continuing by evoking fear or completely crushing the other. In its most extreme form, this can lead to killing the other and possibly their entire family.[272]

Hinton's argument that the Khmer Rouge made use of this cultural model in its most extreme form is illustrated by the example of "new person" Neari and her family. As Neari explained, the Khmer Rouge cadres held a grudge against her whole family, as they were petty bourgeoisie and because her father had been a strict and mean teacher. The hate was so strong that the cadres wanted to eliminate the whole family, a task they almost accomplished, had Neari and her younger sister not been able to escape. Her parents and seven others of her

[268] Hinton 2005, p. 47.
[269] Hinton 2005, p. 66.
[270] Hinton 2005, p. 68.
[271] Hinton 2005, p. 64.
[272] Hinton 2005, p. 69f.

siblings, however, were brutally murdered; her infant sister by having her head smashed against a tree stump. Many such family lines were destroyed under the Khmer Rouge, also in the hope by the cadres of not leaving anyone who could later seek revenge.[273]

To summarize Hinton's argument, it can be stated that the "Khmer Rouge leaders directly and indirectly called for their followers to take vengeance upon the "class enemies" who had formerly "oppressed" them."[274]

Other examples of how the Khmer Rouge's use of the cultural model of disproportionate revenge played out can be found in Haing Ngor's account of his survival of the genocide. Ngor later became famous for playing translator Dith Pran in the 1984 film "The Killing Fields", which earned him an academy award. In his own life, at the beginning of the civil war, Ngor was a young doctor in Phnom Penh, and as an urbanite became, together with his wife Huoy, a "new person," being forced to work on the countryside. Posing as a taxi driver in order to survive, he suffered incredible cruelty and hardship before finally managing to escape in 1979.[275]

Ngor's explanation of *kum*, "grudge", and disproportionate revenge reads slightly more straightforward than Hinton's: "If I hit you with my fist and you wait five years and then shoot me in the back one dark night, that is *kum*. […] Cambodians know all about *kum*. It is the infection that grows in our national soul."[276] During his years as a "new person", he had several experiences where manifestations of *kum* were visible in Khmer Rouge cadres' behavior.

In one of the what Ngor calls "brainwashing sessions" he and other "new people" had to attend, they were hearing, amongst others, rhetoric against capitalist "lifestyle" and professions, including e.g. the condemnation of wearing eyeglasses. Farm work and factory labor was glorified, in both speeches and dances, which were presented alternately. At the end of the last dance, the Khmer Rouge cadres were forming a line, shouting ""BLOOD AVENGES BLOOD!" [sic] at the top of their lungs,"[277] clinching their fists and pounding their chests – a performance that left the audience scared. As blood in the Khmer language also has the meaning of family or kinship, and the "new people" had been on the side of Lon Nol and the American bombs during the civil war that had killed a lot of "old people", the

[273] Hinton 2005, p. 90f and xx.
[274] Hinton 2005, p. 46.
[275] H. Ngor with R. Warner, *Survival in the killing fields*, London, Robinson, 2003, p. i.
[276] Ngor, Warner 2003, p. 10..
[277] Ngor, Warner 2003, p. 151.

message was clear: "You kill us, we kill you. […] Symbolically, the Khmer Rouge had just announced that they were going to take revenge."[278]

Ngor also tells of a conversation he had with another doctor, about whether the Khmer Rouge could be considered to be communists or not. Ngor denied it, and when the other doctor asked him what else they would be, he answered, "'*Kum-monuss,*'" a play on the Cambodian words *kum* ("grudge", as explained above) and *monuss* ("people"). ""That's what they are at the lower level," [Ngor] said, ""revenge-people."" [sic] All they know is that city people like us used to lord it over them and this is their chance to get back. That's what they are, communist at the top and *kum-monuss* at the bottom.""[279] That word and the feeling of being the target of revenge was also the only thing Ngor could think of when he was forced to draw a plough alongside an ox on a field.[280]

His memories of his old life in Phnom Penh were also illustrative of the actual differences between some of the urbanites and the rural population; he remembers it as being "relaxed and prosperous", without worries, only happiness.[281] In yet another propaganda meeting, however, his account bears witness to the way the Khmer Rouge tried to implement a narrative of oppression of the peasants and working class, which was ended by the new regime. He quotes the cadre as saying, ""'How lucky you are! […] Under the regime of the arch-fascist, arch-imperialist, arch-feudalist Lon Nol, you were oppressed! You never knew any happiness! You were not masters of your country then! You were slaves! Everywhere was corruption! The greedy merchants and the fascist military took over the land! Now under the glorious reign of Angka you are masters of your own destiny."[282]

Working on the fields, Ngor and his fellow "new people" had to listen to propaganda songs during the whole day. The national anthem was played especially often and is a comprehensive example of the topics the Khmer Rouge propaganda aimed at:

Bright red blood that covers towns and plains
Of Kampuchea, our motherland
Sublime blood of workers and peasants
Sublime blood of revolutionary men and women fighters!
The blood, changing into unrelenting hatred

[278] Ngor, Warner 2003, p. 152.
[279] Ngor, Warner 2003, p. 171.
[280] Ngor, Warner 2003, p. 178.
[281] Ngor, Warner 2003, p. 180.
[282] Ngor, Warner 2003, p. 213.

And resolute struggle

On April Seventeenth, under the flag of the revolution,

Frees us from slavery!

Long live, long live, Glorious April Seventeenth!

Glorious victory with greater significance

Than the age of Angkor Wat […][283]

The anthem covers some of the main topics of Khmer Rouge ideology, e.g. the "blood" in shaping new identity (see above), the hatred caused by oppression ("slavery"), the sense in the collective memory of a great past that had been destroyed and was to be restored and even excelled ("greater significance/Than the age of Angkor Wat").

The experience which for Ngor best "explained the Khmer Rouge" took place in a medical clinic. There, he overheard "one nurse calling out to another, ''Have you fed the war slaves yet?' […] All the talk about being comrades in a classless society, building the nation with our bare hands and struggling to achieve independence-sovereignty didn't mean anything. The Khmer Rouge had beaten us in the civil war. We were their war slaves. That was all there was to it. They were taking revenge."[284]

That the Khmer Rouge were successful in placing the "new people" outside the realm of morality, outside humanity and could foster a moral imperative to kill, is mirrored in the observation by Ngor that "[t]o them [Khmer Rouge front-line leaders], though, we weren't quite people. We were lower forms of life, because we were enemies. Killing us was like swatting flies, a way to get rid of undesirables."[285]

2.5 Conclusion

The general question posed in the beginning of this chapter was, "What was the role of the aspect of self-victimization in the Cambodian genocide?"

To answer this, several sub questions had to be examined:

1) *What is the relevant historical background for self-victimization in the Cambodian context? Why could people feel suppressed, humiliated and enraged?*

[283] As quoted in Ngor, Warner 2003, p. 218.
[284] Ngor, Warner 2003, p. 216.
[285] Ngor, Warner 2003, p. 247.

2) *What role did self-victimization play for leading actors in Cambodia?*
3) *How was the out-group defined by the Khmer Rouge regime?*
4) *What role did self-victimization play in that definition?*
5) *What role do Cambodian cultural models play in this regard?*
6) *How did self-victimization manifest in Khmer Rouge crimes?*

Ad 1) When the Khmer Rouge took power in 1975, the country had been devastated by a five-year-long civil war. Adding to that internal devastation came the devastation brought from outside and above by the US Air Force, which, in aiming to go after North Vietnamese troops and protect US troops, as well as the Lon Nol regime, dropped over 2,7 million tons of bombs on the Cambodian countryside, leading to over 150.000 deaths and countless more refugees. The cities were mostly spared, adding to the alienation and contrasts between rural and urban populations that were already prevalent before the war. The bombings caused immense fear, suffering and desperation in the affected population, leading them to be very receptive to the Khmer Rouge leaders around Pol Pot, who…

Ad 2)…had developed their ideology in France in the 1950s. Growing up during the struggle for Cambodian independence, and under the influence of French communists and French historiography of Cambodia and especially the Chinese/Maoist interpretation of the socialist revolution, this ideology became one marked by "race" and "class". A collective memory of a Cambodian past of grandeur, followed by victimization causing humiliation and oppression, was constructed, leading to egotism, also expressed by a sense of racial superiority. Translated to the present, this resulted in seeing Cambodian peasantry as oppressed by…

Ad 3)…an out-group defined along racial and class lines. Vietnamese, Chinese, Thai and other minorities thus had no place in the in-group, as did more loosely defined "oppressor classes". "Feudalists", "(petty) capitalists", "imperialist" and "landowners" all were part of that definition. In practice, it meant e.g. urbanites in general, "intellectuals" (defined e.g. by speaking a foreign language or wearing eyeglasses), and members of the Lon Nol regime. Those people comprised "the enemy" threatening the revolution and transformation of society and which…

Ad 4)…was made responsible for the oppression, humiliation and exploitation felt (and enhanced by Khmer Rouge propaganda) by the rural population, just as that enemy was also blamed for the US bombings. The aforementioned nationalist theme was used to further

strengthen this narrative of oppression and victimization. At the same time, fear of future victimization was invoked. This led to the complete othering of the out-group, placing them outside of the realms of morality and making it a moral imperative to kill them. The fear and desire for revenge thusly invoked were strongly enhanced by…

Ad 5)…the Cambodian cultural model of disproportionate revenge. As with positive deeds, Cambodian society expects people to repay evil deeds disproportionately. "Grudges" can be developed and held following an offense, especially when that offense causes humiliation. To reverse the inferior stand, the offended has to take disproportionate revenge against the offender, in the worst case by eliminating their whole family to end the cycle of retaliation. The Khmer Rouge spoke directly and indirectly to that cultural model, making people take disproportionate revenge against those they defined as "oppressors". This resulted in…

Ad 6)…further othering of the out-group and killings of whole families. People were humiliated, brutalized and murdered in a lust for revenge.

In all, the Cambodian genocide provides a very good example of how self-victimization of a population, especially one recently traumatized, can help enabling mass atrocities. It also shows that cultural models regarding the handling of honor, status and humiliation, can be an enhancing factor of the effects of self-victimization, which can be made use of by genocidally inclined actors.

3. Chapter Three – Nazi Germany and the "Battle of Destiny for the German People"

3.1 Introduction

The question this chapter poses is, "What was the role of the aspect of self-victimization in the Nazi Holocaust?"

Subsequently, several sub questions have to be examined:

1) *Were there aspects of self-victimization in historic German anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism?*

2) *Why could Germans feel humiliated after World War I?*

3) *How did Hitler and the NSDAP translate this historical background into their political ideology? What were the aspects of self-victimization in that regard?*

4) *How did aspects of self-victimization play out in Nazi perpetrators' justification of the atrocities they committed?*

The examination of these questions starts with a brief historical background on aspects of self-victimization in German anti-Judaism, anti-Semitism, as well as in recent German history prior to the Nazi regime; general knowledge of the Holocaust and World War II is presupposed. The following part focuses on aspects of self-victimization in Nazi ideology by examining Adolf Hitler's book "Mein Kampf". Finally, such aspects are investigated in perpetrators' justifications of their atrocities.

A short note: this part only refers to "the Germans"/"the German population" etc. This is not to deny Austrians' equal involvement in the Nazi atrocities, but to avoid long and therefore more confusing structures of sentences. Thus, "Austrians" should be "added" in the readers' mind whenever they read "Germans" in the perpetrator part (less so in the recent German historical background, as the Austrian experience does differ from the German).

3.2 Background – Aspects of Self-Victimization in anti-Judaism, anti-Semitism and Recent German History Prior to the Nazi Regime

To fully examine and present the history of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism in terms of aspects of self-victimization would probably require the time and space of a doctoral thesis.[286] For the purpose of this thesis, a few illustrative examples are presented and examined.

With the spread of Christendom in German speaking territories, anti-Judaic sentiments became part of the popular piety. One of the central allegations was (and partly still is) that "the Jews" had murdered Jesus, the Christian messiah.[287] During the middle-ages, Jews were forced into, amongst others, petty trade and money lending, which was forbidden for Christians. Notwithstanding the high taxes they had to pay, often serving as a "cash cow" for the local lords, they were regarded as usurers, who were exploiting the local population. Other accusations, such as the blood libel – the allegation that Jews would kill Christian children in order to use their blood for religious rituals – or that Jews would poison wells, thus causing the Black Death in order to eradicate the non-Jewish population, involved pictures of Jews as perpetrators of atrocities and exploitation and were powerful perceptions that led to pogroms which actually eradicated whole Jewish communities in Germany and France.[288]

Martin Luther initially defended the Jews against such perceptions, e.g. in his 1523 writing "Dass Jesus ein geborner Jude sei" [That Jesus was a born Jew]. However, after a conversation with Rabbis in 1525/26, which he often referred to later on and in which the Rabbis did not agree with his old testamentary argumentation of Jesus being the promised Messiah, he appears to have changed his view. Additionally to that conversation, Luther might have been angered by the absence of large scale conversions of Jews after the reformation which he apparently expected. It can be speculated that this constituted a sort of theological humiliation of Luther, who subsequently released publications defaming Jews, such as the 1538 "Wider die Sabbather" [Against the Sabbaterians[289]]. In this scripture, Luther "proofs" that Jesus was the Messiah and argues that the Jews were being punished since they

[286] See e.g. the eight volumes of W. Benz (ed.), *Handbuch des Antisemitismus: Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Berlin, de Gruyter, 2008-2015, alone
[287] Benz 2008 (vol.1), p. 11
[288] Benz 2008 (vol.3), p. 85 and Benz 2008 (vol.. 3), p.335
[289] The „Sabbather" were a Christian movement, which had nothing to do with Judaism; however it was seen as having been influenced by Judaism and thus was seen as a "Judaized" form of Christianity. See Benz 2008, p. 503

rejected him. Luther now even made use of the very accusations – the blood libel and the well-poisoning – he earlier had countered.[290]

Luther's anti-Judaic work was positively received during the German Empire and during the Nazi regime, some church officials seeing the fulfilment of Luther's legacy in the regime's policy towards the Jews.[291] Adolf Hitler's continuous talk of Jews as "liars" can be seen in this tradition as well.[292]

During the 18th century, the majority of the German population rejected the emancipation of the Jews, as it saw every improvement of their position just as a further enhancement of what people perceived as an already "superior" and "overruling" status. That the Jews possessed a "corrupt national character" was commonly accepted even amongst enlighteners; however, some defended them by explaining that "character" with the discrimination the Jews had to suffer, while others argued that the discrimination was a result of the harmfulness of the Jews, against whom they wielded the anti-Semitic allegation of forming a "state within the state" and a "Jewish international".[293]

As a result of the "awakening" of a national consciousness following the Napoleonic Wars of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, "national differences" between "Germans" and "Jews" were constructed. For many, the Jewish religion was implying a claim to world domination, as well as intolerance and hate against Christians.[294] Many debates about the "Jewish question" were led; an influential publication was philosopher Bruno Bauer's 1843 "Die Judenfrage" (The Jewish Question) (to which Karl Marx answered with his famous "Zur Judenfrage" (On the Jewish Question)). Bauer argued that the Jews could not be emancipated because even their most enlightened groups with their alleged claim of exclusivity and chosenness would strive for autocracy.[295]

During the economic crisis of the 1870s, an anti-liberal change took place and "völkisch" (racial) ideologies became more widespread. The Jews were seen as "Reichsfeinde" (enemies of the empire) and were accused of economic exploitation, calling them "Börsen-Juden" (stock-exchange Jews) and making them responsible for economic liberalism.[296] Although not being a racial anti-Semite, the highly regarded historian Heinrich von Treitschke made anti-

[290] Benz 2008 (vol. 3), p. 503-505
[291] Benz 2008 (vol. 3), p. 505
[292] Hitler, Hartmann et al. 2016, p. 225, footnote 215
[293] Benz 2008 (vol. 1), p. 87
[294] Benz 2008 (vol. 1), p. 88
[295] Benz 2008 (vol. 1), p. 90
[296] Benz 2008 (vol. 1), p. 90

Semitism acceptable in educated circles with his 1879 essay "Unsere Aussichten" (Our Perspectives), in which he also popularized the phrase "Die Juden sind unser Unglück!" (The Jews are our misfortune), which later appeared on every issue of the Nazi newspaper "Der Stürmer".[297]

Anti-Semitism subsequently became a widely accepted world view in which the Jews had to function as a symbol for everything that was perceived as threatening – capitalism, socialism, democracy, atheism, materialism, cosmopolitanism etc.[298] After World War I, the Jews as profiteers of the war and crisis was added to the list. The view of the Jews as living off of the plight of others, which they first had caused and then exploited, became an elementary part of anti-Semitism.[299] The high inflation, widespread poverty, unemployment and hardship made people even more receptive for anti-Semitic ideologies.[300]

The outcome of World War I was a humiliating experience for Germans. From the late eighteenth century on, Germany had seen a rise "from a chaotic collection of quarreling localities to one of the world's greatest countries", including big "achievements in philosophy, music, literature, science, and technology" which "put it in the forefront of nations." Successful wars followed, the most important of which was the defeat of France in 1871. Subsequent national unification made Germany "one of the foremost military powers in the world." The expectation at the beginning of World War I was to be similarly successful.[301]

Since government-propaganda kept the belief in victory going for a long time, "[t]he abrupt series of collapses that followed must have seemed shocking and even inexplicable to the Germans." Their "winning" army had surrendered, the "proud emperor abdicated", the peace settlement in the Treaty of Versailles was not honorable, but humiliating and exploitative, the new form of government was incapable of "dealing with the escalating social problems" and quickly went bankrupt because of the war reparations it had to pay, leading to the "economy collaps[ing] to a degree that had never been seen before. In short, within a few years Germany was transformed from a proud leader of nations into a helpless and pitiful failure."[302]

The German military leadership quickly sought to acquit itself from all responsibility and constructed the narrative which became known as the "Dolchstoßlegende" (the legend of the stab in the back). According to this narrative, it was not mistakes done by the military

[297] Benz 2008 (vol. 1), p. 91
[298] Benz 2008 (vol. 1), p. 91
[299] Benz 2008 (vol. 1), p. 181
[300] Benz 2008 (vol. 1), p. 95f
[301] Baumeister 2002, p. 251; see also Staub 2001, p. 169
[302] Baumeister 2002 p. 252

leadership, exhaustion of the troops or the numerical superiority of the Entente which was to blame for the defeat, but rather left-wing forces back home that were supposedly corroding the fleet and army.[303] Anti-Semitic forces, not least Adolf Hitler and his party the NSDAP, made this a central aspect of their political programs and expanded the narrative, making "the Jews" responsible, since they were effectively controlling the Marxist movement (see below). This was, amongst others, combined with the anti-Semitic allegation that Jews had shirked their duty during the war. As they were allegedly striving for world domination, they were accused of having wanted and caused the defeat of Germany.[304] It was thus "the Jews" who had declared war on Germany.[305]

To summarize, as the examples given above illustrate, notions of "the Germans" (or, earlier, "the Christians") as the victims of "the Jews" have had a long tradition in German anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism. Medieval blood libels and allegations of well-poisoning turned "the Jews" into perpetrators of atrocities, even accusing them of planning to eradicate the whole non-Jewish population. Later, as anti-Judaism gave way for anti-Semitism around the end of the 18th century[306], Jews were seen as having a "corrupt national character" and would be striving for world domination by exploiting the population through their alleged control of the financial sector. With the development of racial ideologies, these views were further enhanced and "the Jews" were blamed to be – purposefully – behind everything that seemed threatening. As World War I transformed Germany "from a proud leader of nations into a helpless and pitiful failure", the now centuries-old perceptions of "the Jews" were used to alter the collective memory of the most recent past to fit the needs of the present, i.e. explain the failure and humiliation while keeping the positive self-evaluation. Therefore, "the Jews" were blamed to willingly having planed, caused and exploited Germany's defeat in the war.

Adolf Hitler thus had a "solid base" upon which he could build his world view, lied out in his book "Mein Kampf".

[303] Hartmann et al. 2016, p. 610, footnote 13
[304] Benz 2008 (vol. 3), p. 61.
[305] Benz 2008 (vol. 3), p. 335.
[306] Benz 2008 (Bd. 1), p. 247.

3.3 Aspects of Self-Victimization in Adolf Hitler's „Mein Kampf"

"Mein Kampf" was chosen for examination since it constitutes one of the central historical documents of the Nazi regime. It was the clearest and most detailed explanation of Hitler's thoughts and plans. Nazism, as Hartmann et al. argue, was a world view that did not possess a lot of theoretical background or specific political content. What was more important was a certain structure of political thinking, which is laid out in "Mein Kampf".[307]

While by far not being the only aspect, the perception of the "Aryan race" as a victim of "the Jew"/Jewry can be found throughout Hitler's programmatic work. For the purpose of this thesis, a number of illustrative examples of this notion shall be presented and reviewed.

Already in the beginning when talking about his place of birth, Braunau am Inn in Upper Austria, humiliation at the hands of enemies played a role for Hitler: he saw being born in this town as a "fortunate" result of "destiny" since it symbolized his "task" to "reunite" Austria with Germany, and because it had been the stage for a "a tragic calamity which affected the whole German nation […] [a]t the time of our Fatherland's deepest humiliation […]."[308] The "deepest humiliation" was the Napoleonic occupation in the early 19th century, the "tragic calamity" the shooting of Johann Phillipp Palm, a bookseller who had sold a publication ("Deutschland in seiner tiefen Erniedrigung" (Germany in its Deep Humiliation) which had called for resisting the French occupation. As Palm refused to give away the name of the anonymous author, he was sentenced to death and executed by the French authorities in Braunau. Palm's publication was widely used again during World War I and referenced by Hitler in several essays.[309]

In his second chapter (volume one), called "Years of Study and Suffering in Vienna", Hitler describes his years in the Habsburg Empire's capital and the development of his political views. During those years, his "eyes were opened to two perils, the names of which I scarcely knew hitherto and had no notion whatsoever of their terrible significance for the existence of the German people. These two perils were Marxism and Judaism."[310] However, according to his book, he did not arrive in Vienna with this view; he even writes that he, in the beginning,

[307] Hitler, Hartmann et al., 2016, p. 9f.
[308] A. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. J. Murphey, London, New York, Melbourne, Hurst and Blackett, 1939, p. 17.
[309] A. Hitler, *Mein Kampf: eine kritische Edition,* C. Hartmann et al. (eds.), München, Berlin, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, 2016, p. 94, footnote 7.
[310] Hitler 1939, p. 29.

questioned his developing anti-Semitism and was afraid of dealing with the question "unjustly".[311]

Hitler's doubts did not last long; his examination of Marxism and Social Democracy – which he saw as controlled and steered by "the Jews" – turned him "[f]rom being a soft-hearted cosmopolitan" to "an out-and-out anti-Semite."[312] He excused the German workers who followed Marxist movements by stating, "Considering the Satanic skill which these evil counsellors [the Jews leading the Social Democrats] displayed, how could their unfortunate victims be blamed?"[313], painting a picture of German workers as victims at the hands of their "evil" seducers, "the Jews".

Hitler's perceived connection of "the Jews" and Marxism is laid out in greater detail in chapter eleven (volume one), "Race and People", which is one of the most known and widespread parts of "Mein Kampf". Being one of the central chapters of the book, a brochure including parts of the chapter was used in schools as an alternative to the full book.[314]

In the chapter, he tries to make the case that "the Jew" is "a parasite, a sponger who, like a pernicious bacillus, spreads over wider and wider areas according as some favourable area attracts him. The effect produced by his presence is also like that of the vampire; for wherever he establishes himself the people who grant him hospitality are bound to be bled to death sooner or later."[315]

Hitler then goes on to explain, step by step, the "road" which "the Jew" in his view has been taking in order to reach the just described effect when meeting with "Aryan peoples". In his argumentation, elements of self-victimization can be made out; e.g., Hitler writes that having achieved complete monopoly in finance and trade, "the Jew's" "extortionate tyranny" becomes "unbearable", making people unleash public anger against "him"; "Having come to know the Jew intimately through the course of centuries, in times of distress they looked upon his presence among them as a public danger comparable only to the plague."[316] This, however, would only "reveal his true character". By paying the courts, he would ingratiate himself with the lords even more and would "thus regularly [secure] for himself once again the privilege of exploiting his victim."[317] Subsequently, "the Jew" would ask for more rights

[311] Hitler 1939, p. 55.
[312] Hitler 1939, p. 61.
[313] Hitler 1939, p. 60.
[314] Hitler, Hartmann et al., p. 734.
[315] Hitler 1939, p. 238.
[316] Hitler 1939, p. 242.
[317] Hitler 1939, p. 242.

and "privileges", paying however much is needed; this money he would get back "with interest and compound interest. He is a real leech who clings to the body of his unfortunate victims and cannot be removed; […]".[318]

In later stages, as "the Jew" would not be able to gain more power without gaining citizenship rights, he would develop into the "national Jew". "He" would still remain "associated with persons in higher quarters" and push further into "inner circles of the ruling set", but other "representatives of his race" would be trying to get the favor of the masses.[319] "If we remember the crimes the Jew had committed against the masses of the people in the course of so many centuries, how repeatedly and ruthlessly he exploited them and how he sucked out even the very marrow of their substance, […] - then we may well understand how difficult the Jew must have found this final transformation."[320]

According to Hitler's "observations", "the Jew" would furthermore use liberalism, freemasonry and the press to achieve his goals. Making use of "that innate yearning for social justice which is a typical Aryan characteristic", "the Jew" would invent the Marxist doctrine to secure the favor of the masses by addressing economic developments that negatively affected the workers. "Thus arose a movement which was composed exclusively of manual workers under the leadership of Jews. To all external appearances, this movement strives to ameliorate the conditions under which the workers live; but in reality its aim is to enslave and thereby annihilate the non-Jewish races." [321]

In a final move to reach this aim, as Hitler concludes his description of the "road", the "great and final revolution" would begin. "The Jew" would drop all "veils which have hitherto helped to conceal his features. Out of the democratic Jew, the Jew of the People, arises the 'Jew of the Blood', the tyrant of the peoples." By exterminating the "national intelligence", "he" would fit the rest of the people "for their fate as slaves under a lasting despotism." [322] Hitler names the then recent revolution in Russia as "the most terrible example of such a slavery. In that country the Jew killed or starved thirty millions[323] of the people, in a bout of savage fanaticism and partly by the employment of inhuman torture. And he did this so that a

[318] Hitler 1939, p. 242.
[319] Hitler 1939, p. 244.
[320] Hitler 1939, p. 245.
[321] Hitler 1939, p. 250f.
[322] Hitler 1939, p. 255.
[323] Notwithstanding the absurd explanation, the number of the deaths caused by the Russian Revolution is highly exaggerated by Hitler; recent research puts the number of deaths caused by revolution, civil war, terror, starvation and epidemics to about ten million at the time. See Hitler, Hartmann et al., p. 852, footnote 236.

gang of Jewish literati and financial bandits should dominate over a great people."[324] The final consequence of "the Jew's" plot, however, would be "his" own end, as "[t]he death of the victim is followed sooner or later by that of the vampire."[325]

Summarizing and reviewing this section of "Mein Kampf", Hitler, when defining and describing "the Jew" and "his" alleged actions, uses words and phrases such as "bacillus", "vampire", "public danger", "tyrant", "leech", who commits "crimes", "exploits", "tortures", "enslaves", and even "exterminates" and "annihilates"; the Germans/"Aryans" and other "host people", on the other hand, are "the Jew's" "unfortunate victims" who would ultimately have to suffer annihilation at the perpetrators' hands.

As argued above in chapter one, the Nazis held inflated views of Germany and the Germans that could be called narcissistic.[326] This view is reflected in Hitler's "Mein Kampf". Exemplary for this is the beginning of chapter 10 (volume one), "Why the Second Reich Collapsed". There, Hitler states, "The depth of a fall is always measured by the difference between the level of the original position from which a body has fallen and that in which it is now found. The same holds good for Nations and States. The matter of greatest importance here is the height of the original level, or rather the greatest height that had been attained before the descent began." The height from which the German Empire had fallen "can hardly be imagined in these days of misery and humiliation." Hitler goes on to glorify the foundation and recent history of the German Empire by describing the circumstances of the founding as having been of "of such dazzling splendour that the whole nation had become entranced and exalted by it." Reason for this "dazzling splendour" was the fact that the founding had not been accomplished by "parliamentary debates" that Hitler despised so much, but by "nobler circumstances" – i.e. war. "[U]nparallaled series of victories" and the "thunder and boom of war along the battle front that encircled Paris" gave "unique birth and baptism of fire" to the German Empire, "with an aureole of historical splendour such as few of the older States could lay claim to."[327]

The following development of the Empire is seen in similarly grand ways by Hitler. Praising the increase in population and wealth, he also praised the military strength when writing, "The honour of the State and therewith the honour of the people as a whole were secured and protected by an army which was the most striking witness of the difference between this new

[324] Hitler 1939, p. 256.
[325] Hitler 1939, p. 256.
[326] Baumeister 2002, p. 256.
[327] Hitler 1939, p. 180.

Reich and the old German Confederation."[328] This military power, its organization and leadership, were also, according to Hitler, "the most mighty [sic] thing that the world has ever seen."[329]

The loss of World War I and the position it left Germany and its people in was, in Hitler's view, "so profound that they all seem to have been struck dumbfounded and rendered incapable of feeling the significance of this downfall or reflecting on it."[330] Since it could not have been the military's fault – a view widely held, as outlined in the background – "the question of why Germany really collapsed is one of the most urgent significance, especially for a political movement which aims at overcoming this disaster."[331]

Hitler devotes a whole chapter to explaining this "disaster" and "these days of misery and humiliation"[332], as he describes the situation of post-World War I Germany. The central importance of this topic for him and his party is also shown by a memorandum he wrote to the Bavarian ministry of justice in May 1923. In this memorandum, Hitler calls the removal of the causes that had led to the "collapse" of the "fatherland" even the "only goal" of the NSDAP.[333]

The aim of the chapter is to acquit the military and its leadership from their responsibility for the defeat in the war and rather seek explanation in the general wrongs in German society; and it is "the Jews" who are to be blamed for these wrongs.[334] It seems that Hitler took Paul Bangs 1919 pamphlet "Judas Schuldbuch" as a model for the chapter; in this pamphlet, Bang described Germany's defeat in World War I as a logical consequence of decades of a development of degeneration (*Entartungsentwicklung*). This development is to be seen as the "struggle of Judas against the last bulwark of true culture and freedom, and inner grandeur of spirit and purity of heart."[335]

Hitler similarly saw the outbreak of the war not as "deciding the destinies of Austria or Serbia", but as a "fight for freedom […] on an unparalleled scale in the history of the world", with "the very existence of the German nation itself […] at stake." For the young Hitler, "these hours came as a deliverance from the distress that had weighed upon [him] during the

[328] Hitler 1939, p. 180.
[329] Hitler 1939, p. 183.
[330] Hitler 1939, p. 183.
[331] Hitler 1939, p. 181.
[332] Hitler 1939, p. 180.
[333] Hitler, Hartmann et al., 2016, p. 601
[334] Hitler, Hartmann et al., 2016, p. 601
[335] As quoted by Hitler, Hartmann et al., 2016, p. 601. Translation by the author of this thesis.

days of [his] youth."[336] In line with Bang, Hitler describes the defeat in that struggle of "to-be-or-not-to-be" for the German nation[337] as a "result of other crimes" which led to a further "breakdown"[338].

Such crimes were e.g. the "internationalization" of the German economy. Albeit "German industrialists had made a determined attempt to avert the danger […],in the end they gave way before the united attacks of money-grabbing capitalism, which was assisted in this fight by its faithful henchmen in the Marxist movement."[339] This and the rest of his explanation follow more or less parts of the "road" Hitler lined out in his chapter 11 (volume one), as described above. E.g. he thus alleges the "so-called liberal" and the "lying Marxist Press" – both in the hands of "the Jews" – of "dig[ging] the grave for the German people and Reich", the sole aim of which "is to break the national backbone of the people, thus preparing the nation to become the slaves of international finance and its masters, the Jews."[340]

As the German government was unable to "defend" itself against the "Jew-controlled Press that was slowly corrupting the nation"[341], this "poison was allowed to enter the national bloodstream and infect public life", with no effectual measures against this "disease". This would be fatal, since "an institution practically surrenders its existence when it is no longer determined to defend itself with all the weapons at its command. [342]

Staying with the topic of "disease", Hitler goes on to name actual diseases, such as tuberculosis and especially syphilis, infecting and "attacking the public health of the people"[343] as a reason for the demise of Germany and subsequently for the defeat in the World War. Accountable for syphilis are, again, "the Jews", since it is them who are behind prostitution, a "moral havoc" that "would be sufficient to bring about the destruction of the nation, slowly but surely."[344]

Summarizing his "explanation", Hitler writes, "If we review all the causes which contributed to bring about the downfall of the German people we shall find that the most profound and decisive cause must be attributed to the lack of insight into the racial problem and especially

[336] Hitler 1939, p. 135.
[337] Hitler 1939, p. 135.
[338] As the1939 translation by James Murphy strongly differs from the original in this section, this quote is a translation by the author of this thesis of the original of 1925 (first edition), as printed in Hartmann et al. 2016, p. 611.
[339] Hitler 1939, p. 187.
[340] Hitler 1939, p. 192f.
[341] Hitler 1939, p. 193.
[342] Hitler 1939, p. 194.
[343] Hitler 1939, p. 195.
[344] Hitler 1939, p. 195.

in the failure to recognize the Jewish danger."[345] During the years leading to the war, in which this "danger" grew, it was not the Germans who were "fighting with steadfast perseverance", but only "the Jew". "Therefore it was not a solid [German] national phalanx that, of itself and out of its own feeling of solidarity, rushed to the battlefields in August 1914."[346]

Hitler also uses self-victimizing language when describing the policy and developments that followed the defeat in World War I in the very last chapter called "The Right to Self-Defence". This policy "was bound to lead gradually to our complete subjugation."[347] He cites military theorist Carl von Clausewitz, stating, "The stigma of shame incurred by a cowardly submission can never be effaced. The drop of poison which thus enters the blood of a nation will be transmitted to posterity. It will undermine and paralyse the strength of later generations."[348]

The direction Germany took after the war was "openly controlled by the Jews", as Hitler goes on to argue. This allegedly included the "voluntary submission" of the German state, intended to drive the German people to ruin. Hitler identifies the Locarno Treaties of 1925 as the "drop of poison" he earlier quoted from Clausewitz. Such "single impositions" would evade the danger of opposition from the Germans and "may become as a leaden weight around the nation's neck, which cannot be shaken off but which forces it to drag out its existence in slavery."[349]

To summarize Hitler's view and interpretation of the then recent history, it can first be concluded that he saw the foundation and development of the German Empire as one of grandeur and noblesse, brought about by "heroic" battles, giving Germany "uniqueness" and "historical splendour" that few others had achieved; this was further enhanced by its "most mighty" military, "unseen" in this world and Germany's demographic and economic development. In short, Germany was superior to everyone else. World War I was a "struggle of survival" and of "freedom" of the German nation, "unparalleled in history" – its defeat a "humiliation", a "disaster", "shame", what followed was "misery", "complete subjugation and submission" and "slavery".

[345] Hitler 1939, p. 256.
[346] Hitler 1939, p. 257.
[347] Hitler 1939, p. 510.
[348] Hitler 1939, p. 510.
[349] Hitler 1939, p. 511.

Secondly, in reviewing his explanation of Germany's defeat in the war, it is impossible not to point out how inherently contradictory it is to the picture he just had painted of Germany's recent past. He alleges that the nation had been "sick", "poisoned", brought about by "crimes" perpetrated by "the Jews" by ways of controlling the liberal and Marxist "lying press", "attacking" the German economy both as "money-grabbing capitalists" and by controlling the masses through the Marxist movement. Furthermore, "they" were spreading diseases like syphilis through prostitution. "The Jews" were thus in "complete control" of the German state, "digging the grave" of the German "Race", preparing it for "slavery", and, ultimately, "destruction". Having been blind to this "danger", Germany was destined to be defeated in the World War.

The narrative for the Nazis' collective memory Hitler built up was thus: a proud, strong, honorable, superior Germany, becomes a victim, infected, defeated, humiliated, exploited and enslaved by "the Jews", whose ultimate goal is world domination and the complete annihilation of the "Aryan race".

Yet, it seems that all was not lost according to Hitler, as he "optimistically" states that Germany can and "must necessarily win the position which belongs to it on this Earth", namely "ruler of the Earth ", if it, "in an epoch of racial adulteration, devotes itself to the duty of preserving the best elements of its racial stock".[350]

3.4 Self-Victimization, Revenge and Self-Defense in Nazi Perpetrators' Views and Justifications

After having examined notions of self-victimization in German and especially Nazi anti-Semitism and humiliation in German history, this part aims at finding such notions in the effect that background had, i.e. in the perpetrators of the Nazi atrocities. Again, a sample of examples shall serve to illustrate this aspect.

Rudolf Höß, born on November 25th, 1900, was equally enthusiastic about the outbreak of World War I as Hitler was. His enthusiasm was so strong, that he managed to find a way to become a soldier at only 15 years of age. Having fought in Iraq and Palestine against the British during World War I, he joined a "Freikorps" after the war and fought in the Baltic countries. Höß was hostile to the Weimar Republic and joined the NSDAP in November 1922. After serving four years of a ten year sentence for murder, he joined the racial anti-

[350] Hitler 1939, p. 525.

Semitic agrarian association "Artamanen". In 1933, he joined the SS and quickly made a career in the concentration camp system. From May 1940 to November 1943 he was commandant of Auschwitz. Höß was not a so-called "desktop perpetrator", on the contrary, as he e.g. often was present at the selection process and gassings.[351]

Höß was captured in 1946 and became a witness in the Nuremberg Trials. In 1946 he was extradited to Poland, where he was sentenced to death and subsequently hung in the former concentration camp Auschwitz on April 2nd, 1946. During his time awaiting trial he wrote his autobiography, which is regarded as authentic.[352]

Höß was, according to his autobiography, a fanatic, deeply convinced Nazi, believing that "our ideals would gradually be accepted and would prevail throughout the world", which would lead to the abolishment of "Jewish supremacy". However, he was opposed to "sensationalist" anti-Semitism such as was spread by the weekly Nazi newspaper "Der Stürmer" that would only appeal to people's "basest instincts". In Höß' opinion, the "cause of "anti-Semitism" was even "ill-served" by such publication, because one had to "combat Jewry spiritually" with better weapons, those weapons being "our ideas" which would prevail because they were "better and stronger". [353]

Höß claims that he "never personally hated the Jews." However, he "looked upon them as the enemies of our people."[354] Whether his claim of not having felt hatred is true or not, he clearly was convinced that the annihilation of the Jews was "necessary". This is shown by how he "reassured" his fellow SS-men in Auschwitz, many of whom, as Höß writes, were affected by their "work". They asked the same questions that Höß claims he asked himself – "is it necessary that we do all this? Is it necessary that hundreds of thousands of women and children be destroyed?" Höß' answer was "that this extermination of Jewry had to be, so that Germany and our posterity might be freed forever from their relentless adversaries."[355]

A strong aspect of self-victimization in form of a fear of becoming a victim in the future, can be found in the conversation between Höß and Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler, when the latter informed Höß of the order to the "final solution" in summer 1941. Höß cites Himmler as saying, "The Jews are the sworn enemies of the German people and must be eradicated. Every Jew that we can lay our hands on is to be destroyed now during the war, without exception. If

[351] Benzl 2008 (Bd.2/1), p. 374.
[352] R. Höß, *Commandant of* Auschwitz, trans. Broszat, New York, Popular Library, 1961, p. 8-10.
[353] Höß 1961, p. 121.
[354] Höß 1961, p. 122.
[355] Höß 1961, p. 143.

we cannot now obliterate the biological basis of Jewry, the Jews will one day destroy the German people."[356]

Höß remained convinced of the Nazi world view until the very end. In the end of his autobiography, he writes, "I also see now that the extermination of the Jews was fundamentally wrong."[357] This was, however, not due to a change of heart or view towards the Jews; nor was it a "confession" to minimize his role and show last-minute "remorse", as e.g. Adolf Eichmann tried in his trial – on the contrary, Höß, although claiming never to have been "cruel", nor to ever having "maltreated" anyone, clearly states that he, as commander was "*fully* responsible for *everything* [emphasis in original]" that happened in his sphere.[358] Höß remained, "as [he had] always been, a convinced National Socialist in [his] attitude to life."[359] The reason why he, in the end, saw the mass extermination of the Jews as wrong, was thus that because of it, "Germany has drawn upon herself the hatred of the entire world" and because this extermination "in no way served the cause of anti-Semitism, but on the contrary brought the Jews far closer to their ultimate objective."[360] As the Jews thus remained the complete "Other" and outside Höß' realm of morality, he could write that "he, too, had a heart and that he was not evil."[361] Consequently, sending hundreds of thousands of men, women and children into the gas chambers did not count as "cruel" or "maltreatment" to Höß.

Kurt Möbius, a former member of the SS camp staff at the extermination camp Chelmno, gave a testimony at a trial in 1961, which serves as an example of how Nazi ideology managed to turn around the victim-perpetrator roles and how its explanation of the defeat in World War I and its consequences worked. Möbius stated, "I do know that the police also have the task of protecting innocents, however, back then I was convinced that the Jewish people were not innocent, but guilty. I believed the propaganda that all Jews were criminals and sub-humans and that they were the cause for the demise of Germany after World War I."[362]

The men of the Einsatzgruppen, "the special SS units that followed the army [into newly conquered territories], charged with arresting and murdering political opponents and Jews", in

[356] Höß 1961, p. 173.
[357] Höß 1961, p. 168.
[358] Höß 1961, p. 169.
[359] Höß 1961, p. 166.
[360] Höß 1961, p. 168.
[361] Höß 1961, p. 171.
[362] As quoted in E. Klee et al., *"Schöne Zeiten": Judenmord aus der Sicht der Täter und Gaffer*, Frankfurt am Main, Fischer, 1988 p. 203. Translation by the author of this thesis.

other words, "the mobile arm of the German annihilation machinery"[363], can serve as an important example, since they were murdering their victims mainly by shooting them from close range. Many of these men were suffering from and reflecting their deeds, at least according to their own statements. However, none of them had to fear serious consequences from refusing to take part in the executions of the helpless Jewish men, women and children. Nevertheless, most of these SS-men did take part.[364]

That high political commitment to the Nazi "cause" played a central role in making these men murder is exemplified by a report of action and situation (Tätigkeits- und Lagebericht) of July 31st, 1941. The report talks about the "extreme mental efforts" required for the big amount of "liquidations." "Through permanent personal conversations pointing to the political necessity, spirit and composure could be kept awake."[365]

At times, the local population would encourage the German forces to take "retributive measures" for alleged crimes committed by "the Jews". As the notification of incident USSR 106 (Ereignismeldung UdSSR Nr. 106) of October 7th, 1941 on the executions at Babi Yar, reports, the local population was "expecting appropriate retributive measures" of the German authorities against the Jews, as they were generally accused of having a "better economic stance" and more immediately of having cooperated with the Soviet secret police and having set ablaze the major fire that had raged as a result of detonations. "For this reason", the German authorities gathered all of Kiev's Jews for "resettlement". Subsequently, 33.771 Jewish civilians were murdered on September 29th and 30th, 1941.[366]

Karl Kretschmer, SS-Obersturmführer of Sonderkommando 4a of Einsatzgruppe C, took part in the massacres at Babi Yar. The letters he wrote to his wife a year later – still in Eastern Europe with his Einsatzgruppe – provide a special insight into his thoughts, as they are very personal documents. On September 27th, 1942, Kretschmer wrote,

*"*The sight of the dead (amongst them women and children) is also not encouraging. *[…] But the bombings have shown what the enemy intends to do to us when he has the power to. […] My comrades and I are literally fighting for our people's existence. They do the same the enemy would do. I think you understand me. Since this war is, in our perspective, a Jewish*

[363] D. Dwork, R. J. van Pelt, *Holocaust: A history*, New York, Norton, 2003, p. 147.
[364] Klee et al. 1988, p.7.
[365] Nuremberg document NO-2651, as quoted in Klee et al. 1988, p. 65
[366] Ereignismeldung UdSSR Nr. 106, as quoted at http://www.ns-archiv.de/einsatzgruppen/babi-jar/ereignismeldung-106.php (accessed 10 July 1017)

war, it is the Jews who feel it foremost. There are in Russia, as far as the German soldier has come, no Jews left." [367] [emphasis in original, added by the police in Karlsruhe in 1945]

On October 19th, 1942, Kretschmer wrote,

"If I did not have those stupid thoughts about our tasks in this country, I could see my deployment here as wonderful […]. Since I already wrote to you that I deem right and support the last operation and the resulting consequences, the term "stupid thoughts" is actually not fitting. It is more of a weakness to not being able to see dead human beings, which is best overcome by going there more often. […] Because the more one thinks about it, the more one draws the conclusion that it is the only act for us that is absolutely necessary for the security of our people and our future." [368] [whole section emphasized by the police in Karlsruhe in 1945]

Returning to official documents, the "Reichenau-Befehl" (Reichenau Order) of October 10th, 1941 is an illustrative example of how the Nazi leadership appealed to soldiers' desire for revenge. Field marshal Walter von Reichenau, commander of the 6th German Army, gave this order to his troops during Operation Barbarossa (the invasion of the Soviet Union), telling them how to conduct themselves during that campaign. The order read,

"*Concerning: Conduct of the troops in the Eastern territories*

There is still a lack of clarity concerning the conduct of the troops towards the bolshevist system.

The most essential goal of the campaign against the Jewish-Bolshevist system is the complete destruction of their means of power and the extermination of Asiatic influences from European culture.

As a consequence, there are tasks for the troops that exceed the common, one-sided soldiering. The soldier in the Eastern territories is not only a fighter according to the rules of the art of war, but also the bearer of a ruthless racial idea and the avenger for all bestialities that have been inflicted upon German and racially related peoples.

[367] As quoted by Yad Vashem, https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/languages/dutch/pdf/briefe_kretschmer.pdf. (accessed 14 July 1017) Translation by the author of this thesis.
[368] As quoted by Yad Vashem, https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/languages/dutch/pdf/briefe_kretschmer.pdf. (accessed 14 July 1017)Translation by the author of this thesis.

This is why the soldier must show full understanding for the necessity of the hard, but just revenge on the Jewish sub-humanity. […]

Regardless of all future political considerations, the soldier has to fulfill two tasks:

1) the complete annihilation of the false Bolshevist doctrine, the Soviet state and its army;

2) the merciless extermination of racially foreign treachery and cruelty and thus securing the life of the German army in Russia.

This is the only way to fulfill our historic mission to free the German people from the Asiatic-Jewish threat once and for all.

Commander-in-chief: signed, v. Reichenau. Field Marshal"[369][emphasis in original]

Who was supposed to murder Jews, and who was not, was strictly regulated. However, some men took "initiative" on their own, as exemplified by SS-Untersturmführer Max Täubner. In the fall of 1941, Täubner decided to execute Jews without being ordered to, murdering, together with his men, 319 Jews in Novohrad-Volynskyi, 191 Jews in Sholokhov and 459 in Alexandrija. In their conduct, the men were exceptionally brutal, beating and abusing men, women and children. In Alexandrija, one reason for the massacre was that Täubner had heard rumors that the Jews still remaining in the town would be plotting to poison the wells. However, since Täubner and his troops had not been tasked with the executions and had acted on their own initiative, Täubner was brought before the Supreme SS- and Police Court in Munich. [370]

The court sentenced Täubner on different accounts, including five years imprisonment for the troops' conduct during the executions. However, in its judgment, the court states that Täubner is not to be punished for the executions per se, since "the Jews have to be annihilated, there was no harm done by killing any of the Jews." Täubner defended himself by claiming that his deeds were "only just retribution for the suffering that the Jews had inflicted upon the German people." The court believed Täubner and asserted that it was not "sadism" but "genuine hatred of Jews" that motivated him, yet found the brutality he and his troops engaged in as "unworthy of a German man and SS-leader". In total, Täubner was sentenced to ten years

[369] As replicated on http://www.ns-archiv.de/krieg/untermenschen/reichenau-befehl.php, translation by the author of this thesis.
[370] Judgment of the Oberstes SS- und Polizeigericht in München of May 25th, 1943, Az. St.L. 29/42, as quoted in Klee et al. 1988, p. 184. Translations by the author of this thesis.

imprisonment, was discharged from the SS and "lost his honor" for ten years. He was pardoned in December, 1944.[371]

A member of the criminal investigation staff at the border commissariat in Nowy Sącz also pointed to the aspect of revenge at executions when giving a testimony in 1963. He stated, "The members of the border commissariat were, apart from a few exceptions, more than willing to take part in executions of Jews. It was a party for them! They shouldn't talk like that today! Nobody was missing. […] I emphasize again that it is a wrong perception today, if you believe, the *Judenaktionen* were done reluctantly. The hate towards the Jews was great, it was revenge, and you wanted money and gold."[372]

To summarize, aspects of revenge for perceived past and present victimization and fear of future victimization can be found in the views and justifications of perpetrators from all ranks. High-ranking Nazis such as Rudolf Höß were, until the very end, convinced of the necessity to annihilate "the Jews", as it would otherwise be the Germans who would be destroyed. Hannah Arendt has identified this lie of "der Schicksalskampf des deutschen Volkes" (the battle of destiny for the German people) as the "most effective with the whole of the German people."[373] This is further illustrated by SS-men in the Einsatzgruppen and the concentration camps, who were similarly convinced of this "necessity" and saw "the Jews" as "criminals" and "sub-humans" that had caused Germany's demise in and after World War I, an "enemy" they had to annihilate in order for the German race to survive. Albeit having the possibility to refuse taking part in the executions, most did not make use of that possibility, many even participated enthusiastically in order to take "revenge".[374] Some SS men like Max Täubner took matters in their own hands and brutally murdered hundreds of Jews even without any command from higher levels, claiming to take revenge for "suffering" inflicted on the Germans by "the Jews". The whole 6th German army was ordered to forget the law of war when fighting in Eastern Europe and "free the German people from the Asiatic-Jewish threat

[371] Ibid., p. 187-192.
[372] Testimony of the staff member in Bornholt on September 10th, 1963, Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen zur Aufklärung nationalsozialistischer Gewaltverbrechen, Ludwigsburg, I. Befehlsnotstand – B 59 (Issue: April 1964), as quoted in Klee et al. 1988, p. 78. Translation by the author of this thesis.
[373] Hannah Arendt as quoted in R. Erber 'Perpetrators With a Clear Conscience. Lying Self-Deception and Belief Change'**.** Erber, Newman 2002, p. 290; see also Alvarez 1997, p. 163.
[374] See also Baumeister 2002, p. 252

once and for all." Fear of an imagined future "world dominated by Jews" "figured as a core justification for genocidal killing."[375]

3.5 Conclusion

The question this chapter posed was, "What was the role of the aspect of self-victimization in the Nazi Holocaust?"

Consequently, several sub questions had to be considered:

1) *Were there aspects of self-victimization in historic German anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism?*

2) *Why could Germans feel humiliated after World War I?*

3) *How did Hitler and the NSDAP translate this historical background into their political ideology? What were the aspects of self-victimization in that regard?*

4) *Did aspects of self-victimization play a role in Nazi perpetrators' justification of the atrocities they committed?*

Ad 1) Aspects of self-victimization can be found in anti-Judaic and anti-Semitic stereotypes and myths since many centuries. "The Jews" were accused of having killed Jesus, the Christian messiah. They were accused of exploiting the non-Jewish population through usury. They were accused of killing Christian children for their own religious rituals. They were accused of poisoning wells to destroy the whole non-Jewish population. Later, "the Jews'" were accused that their usury was part of their striving for world domination. With the appearance of racist theories, the German national community was imagined on highly impermeable "racial" terms, "the Jews" seen as a different, incompatible "race" and were accused of being behind everything that "went wrong", in order to "enslave" and finally "destroy" the German people – in short, the complete "evil Other". It is thus not surprising that "the Jews" were used for explaining…

Ad 2)…the humiliation Germany suffered in its defeat of World War I. Having become a proud and strong nation with big achievements in arts, sciences and technology and a strong

[375] Lindner 2009, p.140

military power, this defeat surprised Germans, who saw their country suddenly turning into a "pitiful failure". The Germans' egotism had become severely threatened. The German military leadership tried to acquit itself from all responsibility and blamed the alleged "stab in the back" by left-wing parties and groups at home for the defeat. Building on this legend, racial politicians such as…

Ad 3)…Adolf Hitler and his party, the NSDAP, expanded it and blamed "the Jews", since they saw them as controlling all Marxist movements. The German collective memory of the recent past was altered to fit the present's needs by using century old perceptions of "the Jews". As can be seen in Hitler's book "Mein Kampf", Hitler had an especially positive, arguably even narcissistic view of Germany, which explains his assessment of the outcome of World War I as a "humiliation", "disaster", "shame", "misery" and status of "complete subjugation" and "slavery". In his especially virulent anti-Semitism, Hitler argued that it was "the Jews" who had brought about Germany's demise, not only in the war, but already in the decades leading up to it. "They" had "sickened" and "poisoned" the nation through "crimes" committed both by attacking the German economy through their "control" of the financial sector and by "controlling" the masses through "controlling" the Marxist movement, all in order to completely annihilate the "Aryan race" and gain world domination. Hitler offered the prospect of a state that would put the "racial question" in the forefront and would once again put Germany at its rightful position, i.e. ruler of the Earth. That vision was readily picked up by…

4)…large parts of the German population, many of whom subsequently became more than willing perpetrators in the Nazi Holocaust. Being convinced that, just as they had done in the past, "the Jews" would perpetrate "crimes" against, even annihilate the German people if they were not annihilated first, exterminating the "Jewish threat" became a "necessity". Thus, the perpetrators could not only see themselves as "just avengers", Jews were also placed outside the realm of morality, killing them became the moral imperative to secure the Germans' own survival.

It can thus be concluded that perceived past and present self-victimization, as well as fear of future victimization including enslavement and annihilation, played an important motivational role for perpetrators of the Holocaust.

4. Conclusion

To understand the functionality of self-victimization, it is necessary to examine the underlying, ultimate influences it connects to, i.e. the evolutionary psychological predispositions of human nature. Evolution has led to the development of a large variety of universal reasoning circuits in the human brain, each developed through natural selection to solve specific adaptive problems faced by humanity's ancestors in their nomadic hunter-gatherer past. All of these modules were ultimately designed to facilitate the survival and reproduction of the individual.

These ancestors used to live in bands with each member being dependent on the others, which led to a range of such circuits evolving to benefit the own group. Some of the capacities these circuits enable are "pro-social", such as cooperativeness, a sense of fairness, friendship and self-sacrifice. Others appear rather "anti-social" such as the desire for social dominance, which evolved because hierarchies within a group and domination of that hierarchy proved advantageous. As one way of achieving that dominance was through the help of aggression, a capacity to use violence evolved. As hunter-gatherer bands at times competed with other such bands over the same (scarce) resources and hurting members of other groups proved to be advantageous in some of such instances, the human brain also evolved to include tendencies in this "anti-social" direction. Such tendencies include "ethnocentrism", which leads humans to see their own group as the "right" and superior one and to define who is part of the in-group and who is not. Complementary is "xenophobia", giving humans the tendency to fear strangers and perceive them as a threat.

These are the most relevant psychological predispositions which can be activated by self-victimization. However, important developments in human history altered the manifestations and adaptiveness of these tendencies. Starting with the Neolithic Transformation about 10-12.000 years ago, humans' way of living changed drastically. People slowly became sedentary and developed agriculture, making them more dependent on a certain territory, leaving former ways of evading violent conflicts through flight much less feasible. Furthermore, collectives became much larger, demanding new ways of identifying and keeping together the members of the in-group. Humans thus started "tricking" themselves by imagining communities on other grounds than real face-to-face contact, consequently also putting us-them thinking on new bases. As the time that has passed since the Neolithic Transformation is much too short in evolutionary terms for new adaptions to evolve, the "old"

ones are still valid, however maladaptive they might be in modern contexts. Arguably, it is this combination of larger, sedentary, imagined communities and the "stone-age mind" that enabled and led to mass group violence.

As communities grew more complex, the conceptual frameworks they were based on needed to be more complex as well. Collective memories of a group's past became an integral part of such frameworks. However, the narratives collective memories contain are not "objective" observations of the past, but often even distortions of history, since their actual purpose is to solve problems faced by the collective in the present. It is not just modern societies, but all kinds of collectives who develop collective memories.

It is the collective memory of an imagined community that genocidally inclined actors are trying to alter and manipulate by using self-victimization. A narrative of past victimization of the in-group at the hands of the out-group is constructed. Whether these narratives have grounds in reality is irrelevant as long as the in-group defines them as real. Furthermore, by pointing to the perceived past victimization, a threat of future victimization is framed.

This evokes different emotions in the (becoming) perpetrator collective. Humiliation, evoked by the perceived past victimization, is a very strong feeling that can lead to people longing for revenge, as well as being more sensitive to future threats. A sense of egotism, an inflated view of the in-group which many genocidal actors possess, enhances the intensity of the perceived humiliation, as the humiliation threatens the egotist self-perception. Members of the "victimized" collective may thus both long for revenge, as well as fear the repetition of the victimization, possibly in an even more devastating, at worst annihilating form. Both revenge and fear enable the (becoming) perpetrator collective to frame their aggressive and violent actions vis-à-vis the out-group in widely accepted concepts that justify violence – the "just avenger" and self-defense.

More concretely, in the genocidal context, self-victimization helps to overcome innate and morally established reluctance to use violence against other human beings. Not only do the emotions evoked by self-victimization facilitate the use of violence per se, they also lead to a strong amplification of our innate, violence-enabling tendency of us-them thinking. As the out-group is accused of purposefully and willingly having inflicted great harm on the in-group, as well as planning to inflict even greater harm on, in the worst case even annihilation of the in-group, they are seen as the completely opposing "evil other". This allows the perpetrator collective to place their victims outside the boundaries of moral values and rules that would usually prevent the perpetrators from using (massive) violence. What remains is

the “good us” that is justly avenging past victimization, and/or defends itself against the destructive plans of the “evil other”. In the most extreme form, annihilation of the out-group is seen as the only way to secure the in-group’s survival.

Having established this underlying theoretical framework of why and how self-victimization works, case studies provide insight into the concrete ways self-victimization can manifest itself in.

In the years prior to the Khmer Rouge regime, there were several reasons that could make Cambodians, especially rural ones, feel victimized, humiliated and devastated. Not only did a fierce civil war rage from 1970 to 1975, the US Air Force also dropped 2.7 million tons of bombs on Cambodian territory in the course of the Vietnam War, killing around 150.000 Cambodians. The civil war and especially the bombings caused immense fear, suffering and desperation in the affected population, leading them to be very receptive to the ideas expressed by the Khmer Rouge led by Pol Pot. Being able to build on a certain prior dichotomy between the poor peasantry and the middle-class, educated urbanites, the Khmer Rouge offered the former a group they could blame for their suffering in the latter. They offered a utopian, Maoist-inspired society of complete equality, paired with racist aspects of “Khmer superiority” and a distant past of grandeur that was victimized and humiliated by “enemies” such as Vietnam, but which also could be excelled. The peasants’ poverty and humiliated status was explained as being caused by exploitation and suppression at the hands of the “oppressor classes”, a vague term that in practice could include anyone who seemed “intellectual”. Together with people whose loyalty to “the revolution” was doubted, they were depicted as “the enemy”, also connecting them to the “annexationist Vietnamese enemy”.

Enhancing the rage of the “oppressed” population was the Cambodian cultural model of disproportionate revenge. As with positive deeds, Cambodian society expects people to repay maltreatment disproportionately. “Grudges” can be developed and held following an offense, especially when that offense causes humiliation. To reverse the inferior stand, the offended has to take disproportionate revenge against the offender, in the worst case by eliminating their whole family to end the cycle of retaliation. The Khmer Rouge referred directly and indirectly to that cultural model, making people take disproportionate revenge against those they defined as “oppressors”.

The effect this had was that many victims felt that the perpetrators were much more interested in taking revenge than in building the new society. People were humiliated, tortured and

murdered, at times whole families were killed, to take revenge as a result of the "class grudge" held by the formerly "oppressed".

In German culture, anti-Judaic and anti-Semitic beliefs have long portrayed Jews as exploitative and oppressive, accusing them of trying to kill non-Jews for e.g. rituals, and of striving for world domination. Given this "tradition" it becomes apparent that when after a recent history of success, Germany suffered a defeat in World War I which caused collective humiliation, blaming the Jews for the defeat was an easy task. Adolf Hitler and the NSDAP made the narrative of "the Jew" willingly and purposefully causing Germany's defeat in an endeavor to enslave and finally annihilate the Germans, to one of their ideology's central aspects. Harboring and propagating a highly inflated view of Germany and the "Aryan race", they enhanced the German population's feelings of humiliation, and, in picturing "the Jews" as a "racial other" ultimately striving for annihilation of the German people, gave them an "enemy" to blame for this humiliation, whose destruction would be essential to the survival of the nation. Hitler's "Mein Kampf" laid out that world view, and its effects resonated in the perpetrators, as is reflected in their justifications for the mass atrocities committed against Jews.

Comparing the cases of Democratic Kampuchea and Nazi Germany, certain similarities in the use and effect of self-victimization can be observed:

The Khmer Rouge imagined a community based on "race" and "class", enhanced a collective memory of a past of humiliation and oppression, but also of grandeur, which is even to be excelled by the utopian society they promised, built a narrative of poverty and the most recent suffering and humiliation as being caused by abstract "oppressor classes" who were to be considered "the enemy" of "the revolution", thereby evoking feelings of threatened egotism, humiliation and fear, allowing for "the oppressors" to be seen as the complete "evil other" for whom the common rules and values of morality did not apply and against whom taking culturally established disproportionate revenge was justified and necessary.

The Nazis imagined a community on "racial" grounds, enhanced a collective memory of grandeur, promising a utopian Germany as the natural "ruler of the Earth", altered the narrative of the recent past of humiliation to a plot by "the Jews" who were trying to enslave and ultimately annihilate the German people, thereby evoking feelings of threatened egotism, humiliation and fear, allowing for "the Jews" to be seen as the complete "evil other" for whom the common rules and values of morality did not apply and against whom revenge is justified and self-defense in form of annihilation is necessary and morally imperative.

However, the comparisons also allows for the observation of differences:

The Khmer Rouge focused more on the past victimization, as they could fall back on the cultural model of disproportionate revenge, which proved as a highly motivating factor for their cadres. This also shows the role and importance of culture for the effects and concrete manifestations of self-victimization. The Nazis on the other hand constructed a more continuous narrative leading from past victimization to annihilation in the imminent future. Thus, albeit notions of revenge seem to have motivated many perpetrators, the prospect of future victimization appears more salient in their justifications. Furthermore, the Nazis could build on perceptions of "the Jews" that had existed and developed for several centuries; in contrast, the Khmer Rouge had to invest considerably more effort into constructing "the enemy", as the concept of that "enemy" was much more vague and the dichotomy not as deeply rooted in Cambodian culture and history. That it worked nonetheless shows how seemingly easy it is, under the right circumstances, with the right instruments, to construct "the other".

To conclude, self-victimization is arguably a very powerful tool that can facilitate genocide and mass killing. Its concrete effects and manifestations vary according to time, space and culture. However, it is important to notice that it speaks to certain universal capacities of human beings. It can thus not only have effect on "monsters" among people, but on all of us because of who we are as human beings.

Finally, self-victimization can be seen as a recurring phenomenon. Considering it as a warning signal, detecting its appearance could help to recognize situations that have the potential to lead to violence, mass killing and genocide. Further studies of the phenomenon, including in-depth studies of other cases, could be an important contribution.

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