

War & Genocide



Martin Shaw

War and Genocide

Organized Killing in Modern Society

MARTIN SHAW

polity

Copyright © Martin Shaw 2003

The right of Martin Shaw to be identified as Author of this Work has been asserted in accordance with the UK Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published in 2003 by Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Editorial office:

Polity Press
65 Bridge Street
Cambridge CB2 1UR, UK

Marketing and production:

Blackwell Publishing Ltd
108 Cowley Road
Oxford OX4 1JF, UK

Distributed in the USA by
Blackwell Publishing Inc.
350 Main Street
Malden, MA 02148, USA

All rights reserved. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purposes of criticism and review, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Shaw, Martin.

War and genocide: organized killing in modern society / Martin Shaw.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-7456-1906-1 (hb)—ISBN 0-7456-1907-X (pb)

1. War. 2. Genocide. 3. Military history, Modern—20th century.

I. Title.

U21.2.S523 2003

304.6'63—dc21

2002151767

Typeset in 10.5 on 12pt Palatino

by Kolam Information Services Pvt. Ltd, Pondicherry, India

Printed and bound in Great Britain by TJ International, Padstow, Cornwall.

For further information on Polity, visit our website: www.polity.co.uk

Contents

Boxes	ix
Tables	xi
Acknowledgements	xii
Introduction	1
The history of mass slaughter and its threat	2
Attitudes to war	3
The argument of this book	4
The organization of this book	7
Sources and resources	8
Episode 0 The trenches	10
I War and Slaughter	14
Mass killing	16
War	18
Degenerate war	23
Categories of violence	26
Revolution as war	28

Episode I The Armenian genocide	32
2 Genocide as a Form of War	34
Destruction	35
Intention	38
A form of war	41
On slaughter	49
Post-degenerate, anti-genocidal war?	50
Episode II Stalinism's mass murders	54
3 Organizing Violence	58
State power	58
Systems and politics	63
World war to world order?	66
Future wars	72
Episode III Nazism, war and the Holocaust	78
4 Producing Destruction	82
Industrialism and war	82
New technology, new war economy	91
Economy of slaughter zones	93
Episode IV Japan's genocidal wars	98
5 Thinking War	100
Ideologies of war and peace	101
Cultures of slaughter	109
Nations and nationalism	112

Race and gender	115
Media of war	118
Episode V Allied bombing in 1939–45	126
6 Killing Spaces	128
Historical battlefields	128
Modern killing spaces	131
Global era slaughter spaces	136
Media as battlespace	140
Episode VI Nuclear war preparation	145
7 Combatants and Participants	147
Combatants and non-combatants	147
Armed forces	149
New killing forces	153
Social groups and war participation	155
Episode VII The Cambodian genocide	166
8 Victims	168
Victimhood and its appropriation	169
From battlefield to civilian death	171
Military logic in genocide	175
Ethnic and cosmopolitan victims	176
Gendered violence	178
Irrationality of slaughter	181
Episode VIII Genocidal war in Yugoslavia	190

9 Movements	194
Resistance	195
Movement	197
Change	204
Episode IX War and genocide in Rwanda	211
10 Just Peace	214
Old thinking about war	215
War management	217
Demands for justice	220
From slaughter to safety	228
Peace and cosmopolitan democracy	232
Episode X The new Western way of war	238
Conclusion	241
Index	243

Boxes

0.1	The core of the argument	5
1.1	Natural versus social explanations of war	15
1.2	Clausewitz's theory of war	19
1.3	The face of battle	23
1.4	Guerrilla war	29
2.1	The definition of genocide	34
2.2	Famine and genocide	38
3.1	Theories of the state	59
3.2	International relations and war	60
3.3	War in the development of the state	64
3.4	Total war and totalitarianism	66
3.5	From bloc-state to Western-global conglomerate	68
3.6	State crisis, democratic movements and genocidal war in the non-Western world	71
3.7	A democratic peace?	74
4.1	Myths about 'economic factors' in wars	83
4.2	Industrialism, capitalism and militarism	86
4.3	Classical war economy	88
4.4	Robbery and genocide	93
4.5	New political economy of war	95
5.1	The just war tradition	102

x Boxes

5.2	Perpetual peace and world government	103
5.3	Defining militarism	106
5.4	Varieties of pacifism	107
5.5	Christianity and war	109
5.6	Scientists and the bomb	112
5.7	States of denial	119
5.8	Television wars	123
6.1	Sieges, ancient and modern	129
6.2	Slaughter in total conquest	132
6.3	Concentration and death camps	133
6.4	Sanctions: war by other means	139
6.5	Global media war	141
7.1	Paramilitaries and warlords	154
7.2	Class war	157
7.3	Feminism and militarism	159
7.4	Post-military mobilization	163
8.1	A Holocaust industry?	170
8.2	Direct and indirect casualties of Western war	173
8.3	What gender tells us about genocide	178
8.4	Truth, justice and denial in the Yugoslav wars	185
8.5	Cult of the pure victim	187
9.1	Non-violence	196
9.2	Soldiers avoiding slaughter	198
9.3	A fulcrum of revolution?	199
9.4	Conscientious objection	200
9.5	The anti-Vietnam War movement	202
9.6	From the Western peace movements to 1989	204
9.7	The transformation of armed struggle	207
10.1	A future for interstate conflict?	217
10.2	Humanitarian intervention	218
10.3	The laws of war after 1945	221

	Boxes	xi
10.4	The new global justice	225
10.5	Truth, reconciliation and justice	227
10.6	Globalization, war and peace	231
10.7	From the UN to cosmopolitan democracy	234

Tables

2.1	The context of war in selected genocidal episodes of the twentieth century	42
2.2	Genocide as a type of war	45

Acknowledgements

I gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Leverhulme Trust, who granted me a Research Fellowship in 2000, in order to research and write this book, as well as of the University of Sussex, for a term's study leave in 1999–2000. At Polity, Tony Giddens pushed me to write this book in the first place, and the comments of my editor, Rachel Kerr, and three anonymous reviewers were both encouraging and helpful. I wish to express my gratitude to colleagues and students at Sussex with whom I have tested these ideas over the last few years. Many intellectual debts are, I hope, apparent in the pages that follow.

I broke a leg badly at a crucial stage in the preparation of the book, and I appreciated enormously the skill and care of National Health Service medical staff at the Royal Sussex County Hospital, Brighton, in helping me make a full recovery. This experience of accidental harm made me realize even more how terrible it is that people cause deliberate physical harm to others in war – and that so many victims lack the care that I received for my injury. I was enormously fortunate in having the loving support of my family throughout this difficult time, and during the writing of this book. What I owe to Annabel cannot be measured.

Martin Shaw, Brighton, 2002

Introduction

In the twentieth century, human beings killed each other on a horrendous scale. They did it most obviously in wars, including two 'world wars'. They also did it in politically motivated slaughter that came to be known (from mid-century on) as 'genocide'. This kind of killing was not new, of course, but it did have terrible new characteristics that made people think differently about it – and so led to this new label. This book is about the relationships between these two kinds of killing, war and genocide, and about how both are produced by and affect modern society.

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, many people in the Western world thought that they had left these kinds of slaughter behind. Others, aware that mass killing of civilians was still part of war in other regions of the world, hoped that international institutions would gradually develop ways of dealing with these problems. But few expected that mass killing would be brought home to the advanced West, as it was to New York and Washington, DC, on 11 September 2001. At the beginning of a new century, this shocking terrorist massacre reminded us that slaughter remains a fundamental problem for the entire world.

This book starts from the assumption that one of the most urgent problems of humankind is to prevent things like this being done to anyone, anywhere, by states as much as by terrorists. In order to prevent slaughter, however, we need to understand its roots in politics and society: to understand war and genocide historically and sociologically. To grasp the 'new' dangers in the emerging global world, we need to know where we have come from – to look again at the last century of extraordinary violence which some hoped we had escaped.

The history of mass slaughter and its threat

In the twentieth century, the age of 'mass' society and industrial technology, killing became doubly democratic. Huge sections of society became involved in fighting, and even more in supplying the killing machines. At the same time, many sections of society became targets and victims. Civilians constituted the majority among the tens of millions who died in the biggest killing episode of human history to date, the Second World War. Today we are in danger of forgetting that even this slaughter threatened to be just a curtain-raiser. For most of the second half of the century there was a threat of worldwide nuclear war, in which hundreds of millions of people could have been killed and the very survival of human society could have been threatened. Despite the end of the Cold War, this kind of war could still be fought in the twenty-first century, as many states – and possibly other organizations – possess nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

Not surprisingly, the danger of nuclear war reinforced the lesson of actual slaughter earlier in the century: that war was a supremely inhuman activity. Many people came to question what had been taken for granted in earlier periods – that war was a legitimate way of pursuing political goals. At the beginning of our new century, however, this ultimate threat of global destruction appears to have receded. Although more states have nuclear weapons, the end of the Cold War seems to have lessened the danger of conflagration. The world is groping once more towards the global order that was glimpsed briefly when the United Nations Organization was established in 1945. But because war no longer appears directly threatening – its dangers either long ago or far away – Western governments have been followed by many among their peoples in seeing more limited forms of war as increasingly necessary and viable.

Yet slaughter is still near the forefront of all those minds, even in Western societies, which engage with larger historical questions. The quintessential genocide of the twentieth century, the Nazis' extermination of the Jews, which became known as the Holocaust, preoccupies Western society more than ever before as the new century begins. And contemporary slaughter is not so distant: even before 11 September 2001, it erupted on the edges of Europe (across former Soviet and Yugoslav territories) as well as in many regions of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. Wars of

the new era frequently involve – albeit on a smaller scale than during the world wars – deliberate mass killings of civilians. Thanks to television, even the most distant wars can come straight into the living rooms of comfortable Westerners. Through mass media, new victims of slaughter demand the same justice that is sought retrospectively for the victims of earlier periods.

Attitudes to war

How then should we think and read about war? Colossal literatures commemorate – even celebrate – the immense struggles of the last century, down to the last detail of each battle (not to mention tank and aircraft design). Every bookshop's history section is weighed down with apparently popular hardback tomes which, while often conveying the enormity of events, generally legitimate the practice of war by the 'good' in modern history. Similar literatures also celebrate the more recent efforts of Western armed forces in places like the Persian Gulf, Kosovo and Afghanistan.

Paradoxically, even the commemoration of the Holocaust often encourages a relatively positive attitude to war. On the one hand, it isolates the slaughter of the Jews as something utterly different from the rest of Second World War killing. On the other, it makes the Nazis uniquely evil and so justifies (implicitly) even the most extreme actions the Allies took to defeat them. This way of looking at modern history gives us a simple paradigm of good war that skirts difficult issues. To depart from it does not mean denying the particular horrors of Nazism and its victimization of the Jews. To examine the general murderousness of modern war, including the uncomfortable overlap between the evils of Allied bombing and genocidal extermination, does not take all moral meaning from the struggle to defeat specific evils. It does, however, point us towards a discussion in which war as such is deeply problematic.

In many ways, this has been the common sense of the longer period since 1918. The slaughter of the trenches produced a profound disillusion with war in Western society. From this point of view, it was the *re-legitimation* of war in 1939–45 that was exceptional. In this light, we could argue that awareness of the dangers of nuclear war only reinstated the earlier anti-war common sense. In this sense also, the evils of localized slaughter since 1989 have given new force, and maybe new dimensions, to what had already

become a dominant set of sceptical sentiments about warfare. But, at the same time, they have stimulated new ideas of possible 'good' wars – to halt genocide and punish the perpetrators of slaughter.

This chequered history suggests that a sceptical structure of feeling about war is never enough. Indeed, historically, moral sentiments of this kind have often been mobilized for new warlike ends once circumstances changed. Horror at the worst forms of war can easily lead to demands for action – that is, war – to stop it. It is fairly easy to get caught up in this kind of dynamic. We need to be aware of the inbuilt tensions in the ways we think about war, which can easily lead us to change our attitudes as the context of killing shifts. To get to the bottom of these tensions, we need to look at the complex roots of killing practices in our present world society.

The argument of this book

Thinking seriously about the sources of mass killing involves confronting realities that are deeply uncomfortable. Despite appearances in the more prosperous regions, the practice of slaughter is all too prevalent in today's world. Our 'peaceful' West is implicated, in many ways, in how killing comes about – and hence in demands to deal with it. Ways of organizing society and ways of thinking that we take for granted are parts of these processes. I shall try to explain in this book why, even though some areas of our world enjoy unprecedented 'peace', there is little room for complacency about many of our inherited ways of using violence.

The book has two aims: to *introduce* the study of war and genocide, and to make an *argument* about the connections between them. Readers should be aware that I am not simply conveying an established consensus, but reinterpreting war, genocide and the connections between them in a way that challenges dominant understandings. Conventionally, war and genocide are seen as being categorically distinct. War is a social practice that has possessed high legitimacy historically, however compromised this has become over the last hundred years. Genocide on the other hand, is killing that is, by definition, illegitimate – indeed criminal. Nevertheless, this book aims to show how what many regard as the deeply necessary, even noble, social institution of warfare has tended to produce its apparent opposite, genocide. Conversely, it aims to show how genocide utilizes the ideas as well as the ma-

chinery of war in distinctive ways. Hence I argue that genocide can be regarded as a particular form of modern warfare, and an extension of the more common form of *degenerate war*. The outlines of my argument are summarized in box 0.1.

Box 0.1 The core of the argument

In this book I make a distinctive case about war and genocide. Here I summarize the main points that are explored in subsequent chapters:

- 1 War is the clash of two organized armed forces that seek to destroy each other's power and especially their will to resist, principally by killing members of the opposing force. War has long been a legitimate practice within human societies, but as organized killing has always involved moral tensions with the general prohibitions on killing. Because of these tensions, legitimate killing is generally restricted to combatants, and even then is qualified by rules of war.
- 2 Real war has always tended, however, to surpass its legitimate limits, involving killing of non-combatants and of combatants beyond the scope of military necessity. In modern war, the tendency for war to involve slaughter of civilians – as well as of combatants in new ways and on an unprecedented scale – has been magnified. In particular, civilian populations have been systematically targeted as part of the enemy, leading to a rise of civilian mass death.
- 3 I call this form of war *degenerate war*, because it involves the deliberate and systematic extension of war against an organized armed enemy to war against a largely unarmed civilian population. Degenerate war can be seen both in the armed conquests and aerial bombing of great powers and in guerrilla and counter-insurgency wars. Degenerate war has brought to the fore the fundamentally problematic nature of war itself in late-modern and global society, leading to widespread questioning of its legitimacy.
- 4 Genocide is the destruction by an organized armed force of a largely unarmed civilian group (or groups) principally by killing members of the group(s). In genocide, therefore, civilian groups are enemies as such, or in themselves, and not merely through their relationship to an armed enemy, for the organized armed power that attacks them. Genocide can therefore be distinguished in principle from other forms of war.
- 5 However, in its definition of civilian groups as enemies to be destroyed, genocide utilizes the logic of war and can be seen as an extension of degenerate war. Historically, genocide has occurred mostly in the context of war, and in practice it is intertwined with other forms of war. Therefore the best way of making sense of genocide is to see it as *a distinctive form of war*.

6 Introduction

- 6 War arises from the contradictions that surround state power, and is extensively produced within modern society, through state power, economic organization, military and general social ideologies and the mobilization and participation of whole populations. Genocide mobilizes these same forces, but the difference between the legitimacy of war and genocide has a marked bearing on how these social institutions are utilized.
- 7 Genocide exhibits the same tension between *discriminate* targeting and *indiscriminate* results that we find in war, especially degenerate war. Targeted attacks on specified groups lead to 'senseless' violence being experienced by victims. Thus the experience of the victims of war and genocide diverges radically from the aims of practitioners and perpetrators: this must also be seen as part of what war and genocide are.
- 8 Because the trends towards degeneracy in modern war are structural, the legitimacy of armed force remains fundamentally in question. The appropriate response to the prevalence of organized killing in modern society is a *historical pacifism* that recognizes the underlying trend towards the delegitimation of war as a social practice. There should therefore be a presumption against forcible responses, which can be justified only as exceptional, not normal, acts. Moreover, the general answer to the problems of war and genocide is not only peace but *justice*. Addressing the grievances of victims, of war and genocide as well as underlying political, social and economic inequalities, is the more profound answer to problems posed by organized killing. In the global era, there are important trends that give new hope for just peace.
- 9 Yet, because genocide is a form of war, usually in the context of wider war, the immediate means of halting or defeating genocide, once it is under way, are usually through the use of armed force. War is being renewed in new ways in the global era partly because it seems to answer such demands. However, many forms of war that are utilized against genocide may also be degenerate in their killing of civilians, so that it is not clear that war can be a general answer to genocide. A key issue is whether the new Western way of war in the twenty-first century, which I call *risk-transfer war*, really manages to escape the degeneracy of earlier modes of war. Is it part of a solution, or does it merely reproduce the problem of war?

This book has therefore two main concerns. My principal case is that organized mass killing, or slaughter, is a fundamental problem of modern society. I use these terms to indicate commonalities between war and genocide – and the thinness of the moral and explanatory lines generally drawn to separate them. I explain the reasoning behind this approach in chapters 1 and 2. Secondly, however, I am concerned with whether, to what extent, and how

such lines can still be drawn. Within a perspective on the problem of slaughter, I think it is still important to do two things: to examine the historical question – how the balance between legitimacy and illegitimacy of mass killing has come to change – and to address the contemporary dilemmas – how these issues are posed in practice in the relations of war and genocide today.

The organization of this book

This book examines the problem of slaughter from two main sides. It looks first at *how the organization of society produces mass killing*. Chapters 3–5 discuss the generation of slaughter in the relations of state, economic and ideological power. The book then looks at *how society is actually involved in war*. Chapters 6–8 deal with modern battlespaces, their combatants and victims. Finally, the book looks at *how society responds to war*. Chapters 9 and 10 discuss social movements relating to war, focusing especially on ideas of justice and peace and ways that people campaign for them.

These thematic discussions are necessarily quite abstract and general. The reader may legitimately wonder how far we can generalize about ‘unique’ historical events like wars and genocides. Generalization can appear to do violence – in the sense of inappropriate representation – to the particular characters of dramatic large-scale events, since these are not repeated in the way that smaller-scale, routine social actions appear to be. This issue is especially important in dealing with episodes of slaughter, which have huge emotional, moral and political significance. Yet we understand events through finding their common meaning. Uniqueness can be understood as the distinctive way in which generally intelligible features are combined in an individual case.

In this book I adopt two main devices to create interplay between generalization and particularity. I intersperse the main *thematic chapters* with short analytical summaries of the largest historical *episodes of slaughter*. These sections aim to suggest the specific dynamics of each set of events that involved large-scale killings. They thus show distinctive ways in which ‘war’ and ‘genocide’ have been linked historically. This method simultaneously defines the uniqueness of historical processes *and* enriches our understanding of the general connections that the book explores.

8 Introduction

The other device that I adopt is the box. I use boxes flexibly to provide various kinds of detailed backing for the contentions of the thematic chapters. Some are ideas boxes, in which I expand on key concepts and thinkers. Other, history boxes deal with particular events that illustrate my arguments, as well as providing closer insight into the experiences of people caught up – as participants and victims – in large-scale historical processes (which are summarized still quite abstractly in the ‘episodes’ sections).

These devices are not unusual in books intended, as this is, for intelligent general readers as well as students. Nevertheless, they have a specific advantage for my argument. One of my prime concerns is to criticize the idea that the concepts and narratives of war-makers and genocidists are sufficient to define war and genocide. Their accounts define more or less what they do, but they don’t define the whole phenomenon of slaughter. This is as much about the experiences and feelings of victims as it is about the intentions of perpetrators. In this book I develop a narrative of my own, strongly informed by victims’ points of view but trying to understand the relationships with those of the perpetrators.

I hope that my narrative enlightens, but by breaking it up – even though ‘episodes’ and ‘boxes’ are still my accounts – I want to suggest some of the discontinuities. I do not propose a post-modern argument, according to which it is impossible to develop a grand narrative of war and genocide. I do want to draw attention, however, to the difficulty of encompassing killing, the arbitrary ending of life stories, in an untroubled story peopled by grand concepts and designs.

Sources and resources

This book is an entry point to studying the problem of organized killing. Boxes are often used to point the reader towards important areas of study and their intellectual sources. They often contain short citations that can be checked with full references at the end of the chapter, where I present ‘Further reading’. In addition, because many sources of information are internet-based, I have developed a website linked to this book, www.martinshaw.org/warandgenocide. This site will lead you to many online study materials, including academic papers, and the websites of universities where you can study the issues raised in this book. This material will also be regularly

updated on the website. You can help me to keep this information up to date by contacting me through this site. You may also write to me about the issues raised in the book. My contention is that these are questions for us all, and so I welcome your views.