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The Distinction of Peace

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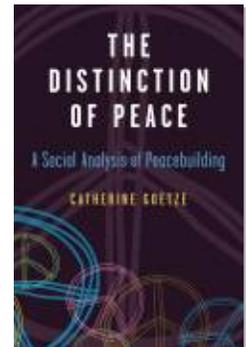
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The *Nomos* of the Field

The Fatalism of Saving Lives

Peacebuilders are moderate people, as the preceding chapters have shown. At the core of their political values are individual freedom, tolerance, and justice. They believe in elite government and social engineering. They don't believe in revolution, abolition of private property, or other radical alternatives. Peacebuilders are also well-mannered gentlemen (and women) and tradesmen (or women) of peace. Diplomacy is as much a norm of good behavior as it is a professional practice. Peacebuilders don't want to appear offensive, but they know what is right for the world and for ensuring peace. Their belief that their understanding of peace is the right one is so strong that one could call it the "fatalism of saving lives." Even if many (maybe even most) peacebuilders would agree that interventions do not always achieve what they promised, they do insist that, in any and all cases, interventions have stopped violence and saved lives. Intervention is presented as a nonchoice, a necessity, something that has to be done, or, at least that liberal peacebuilding is still the best way to save peace, and, if anything, needs to be expanded.[1]

Yet peacebuilding often does not bring peace, but only transforms violence.[2] Conflict resolution is, according to Tatiana Carayannis and her colleagues, "based on weak evidence and normative objectives," and makes "problematic assumptions with regard to the actors and conflict structures involved."[3] John Heathershaw speaks of "virtual peace,"[4] and

Berit Bliesemann de Guevara and Florian Kühn of an "illusion."[5] Alan Kuperman has investigated more deeply what he calls the "moral hazard" of interventions, and has come to the conclusion that interventions often might cost more lives than they save. [6] Early on, after the disappointments of the 1990s, David Rieff and Alex de Waal criticized humanitarian assistance, an important part of current peacebuilding practices, for incentivizing actors to perpetuate conflicts, and for not living up to the self-set expectations of humanitarian intervention.[7] Empirical evidence in fact sheds serious doubts on the claim that peacebuilding builds peace. Yet the questions and doubts about interventions at the core of the field are not concerned with fundamental justifications, nor even with the very crucial question of whether peacekeeping and peacebuilding really save lives, but only about their practicalities. It is the "doing well" that is questioned, not the "doing good."

The fatalism of saving lives is the most visible and articulate symptom of the peacebuilding field's closure. As peacebuilding continues as an international practice despite its apparent failures, this is because it is justified by another rationale than its success on the ground; it has, over the years, developed a dynamic of its own.[8] It relies on a deeply internalized narrative of what is right or wrong in peacebuilding—the *doxa*, as Bourdieu called it. The *doxa* is part of a wider *nomos*, a normative belief structure that ties the field together as a coherent space of action.[9] The *nomos* summarizes the constitutive and prescriptive norms that guide actions and thinking in the field, and synthesizes them into an undisputable moral claim.[10] In the case of peacebuilding, the *nomos* of the field can be described most aptly as the claim of "stopping violence and saving lives." Peacebuilding's ultimate justification lies in the unshakeable faith that both are possible, and that this is what peacebuilding eventually achieves.

The field's norms and practices, which translate the *nomos* into action, are rarely explicit or canonically laid down, and they remain open to debate in a limited sense, for they are interpreted and enacted differently by different actors in the field. In fact, the struggle over fixing the *nomos*'s meaning is the essential political struggle in the field. While the *doxa* defines the permissible practices—the language in which the field's norms are narrated—the *nomos* represents the deontology that morally justifies binding these norms together into a coherent and intelligible whole. Bourdieu calls the *nomos* the "principle of the right vision and division" in the field, that is, the overarching set of normative ideas that makes actors think that a specific discourse, idea, or behavior either

belongs rightly to the field or should be excluded from it.[11] By normatively defining what is right or wrong in a field, the *nomos* reflects relative power positions in the field.

The self-proclaimed *nomos* must therefore not be taken at face value. Underlying the claim of self-evidence is a struggle for symbolic dominance in the field. The stances actors take on the matter are not arbitrary and cannot be explained by the inherent values of the defended norms themselves. It is, rather, the capital that actors have at their disposition to reproduce *their* authority in the field that determines their standpoint on the field's norms. The norms discussed need to provide sufficient common ground for all actors to agree in order to claim a place in the peacebuilding field; otherwise, the field will cease to exist and either be turned entirely upside down, split into new fields, or fall into oblivion. At the same time, the norms need to be sufficiently vague and open to interpretation for actors to position themselves distinctly from each other. They also need to be compatible with overlapping fields (state civil services, NGOs, business, academia) due to the "convertibility" of capital forms. Finally, these ideas have to be normalized, that is, made to appear normal and commonsensical—this is the social sense of the fatalism of saving lives. Only if these norms appear to be common sense, and only if the belief in their veracity is fully interiorized, can they be practiced, that is, acted out in the field. Only then can they also become immune to questioning, and allow actors to fend off critics and declare them to be outsiders to the field.

The capital of prestige that needs to be mobilized in this struggle is particular to the peacebuilding field; it is "peace capital," so to speak. Peace capital is a specific form of political capital. It is generated by political actions, that is, effective interventions into the political life of a community, and by the actor's reputation. Bourdieu calls the power to gain from reputation and standing within the field "symbolic capital." A high accumulation of symbolic capital is the foundation of symbolic dominance in the field. In the case of peacebuilding, the first tier has accumulated the most peace capital and hence strongly defines the *nomos* of the field. Self-referential and horizontal networking further reinforces the upper tiers' symbolic power. The second tier commonly conforms to the *nomos*; in fact, the force of symbolic power is precisely its capacity to command adherence and respect.

The *nomos* deployed in these stories founds and normalizes the specific morality of peacebuilding in order to present it, in fatalistic fashion, as indisputable. Critiques of peacebuilding are rebuffed most effectively

when they can be accused of being not only wrong but also immoral and irresponsible. The fatalism of saving lives depends particularly on the capacity to claim exclusive morality because the question of peace is, indeed, a matter of life and death. The rightness of peacebuilding has to be internalized at a fundamental level in order for its necessity to be reasonably and emotionally indisputable. The authority to decree and act out peacebuilding depends crucially on actors' capacity to make others in the field accept and internalize their respective claims to legitimacy.

In peacebuilding, the *nomos* is commonly transmitted in emblematic stories that are constructed around categorical terms like "nonviolence" or "justice." The stories are often highly stylized in order to reduce the complexity and ambiguity that normative ideas carry. The analysis of the *nomos* thus requires a deconstruction of these stories and a contextualization of the categorical terms in which key normative beliefs are expressed, and this is what will be done in this chapter. Such emblematic stories are told about personalities like Nelson Mandela and historical events like the Holocaust. The stories grow more ritualized and normalized as one approaches the core of the field, and comparatively more critically disputed the further away one moves from this core.

Icons of Peace

Both surveys for this book, conducted in 2008 and 2012, asked peacebuilders about their heroes, that is, political personalities past and present whom they admired for their achievements. The question was open-ended and respondents could give multiple answers. While a substantial proportion answered that they had no heroes, or that they admired ordinary people who did extraordinary things, a quite large number of respondents had personal heroes. The word cloud generated (figure 12) with the responses shows the frequency of names mentioned: Nelson Mandela stands out, followed by Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King (MLKing in the word cloud) as well as the already mentioned answers "none" or "ordinary people."

When queried in interviews why they chose Mandela, Gandhi, or King, respondents pointed to their nonviolent strategies. All three are official icons of the UN. The UN has declared an International Day of Non-Violence every October 2nd, Gandhi's birthday,[12] and an International Nelson Mandela Day for Freedom, Justice and Democracy every July 18th, Mandela's birthday.[13] The UN has not yet declared a Martin
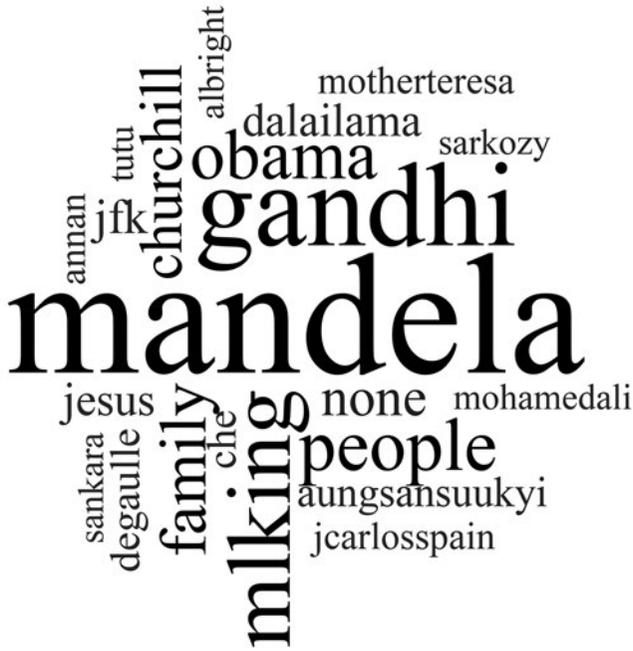
Fig. 12. Word cloud of "heroes" most often mentioned

Luther King day, contrary to the United States where King's birthday on January 20 is a federal holiday; but the UN has honored King in other ways: it has issued stamps with his profile, dedicated a page on its external communication webpage to him, and King quotes are conventional baggage of every other UN speech on justice, nonviolence, or peace.

The iconization of the three is founded on a very simplistic, some would say whitewashed,[14] reading of their lives and political ideas as it is reflected in many Western mainstream media.[15] Gandhi, Mandela, and King are all presented as lone leaders. *Time* magazine structured its special edition of August 2013, celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the March on Washington in 1963, into subsections: "One Man, One March, One Speech, One Dream"—one, one, one, one Martin Luther King, and nobody else. Of the thirty-six photos accompanying the articles, nineteen are directly related to the March, and of these twelve are focused on King; another six are zoomed into the image in a way to make King clearly stand out. Two photos show King in the midst of his

family, yet both are framed in a way that King is set apart from other family members.[16]

Biographies of the three greatly outnumber books on their respective movements. Their iconization has led to the vanishing of others from the picture (quite literally so, as many photos represent others only at the edge of the photo's frame, blurred in the background, or not at all). Names like John Lewis might be known to a politically informed American public as belonging to the representative from Georgia and a key organizer of the 1963 March on Washington. Outside Georgia, however, the name is barely known. Bayard Rustin's absence from many depictions of the civil rights movement or diminished representation of his extraordinary role has, ironically, even caught the attention of the media itself, as *Time* magazine titled an article in his honor: "The Invisible Man, Why Bayard Rustin Is the Unknown Hero of the Civil Rights Movement."[17]

At Mandela's death in December 2013, news covers usually represented him alone, for instance by putting the photo of his Nobel Peace Prize at center stage. *Time* magazine published a series of sixteen photos about Mandela's life. Two of these show him among fellow ANC members, yet none of them is identified. The *Economist* put up a cover in which the elder statesman Mandela sits alone on a chair against a black background, presumably cut out of a larger context, and looking up to the skies. The legend accompanying the photo is the last verse of William Ernest Henley's "Invictus": "It matters not how strait the gate / How charged with punishments the scroll / I am the master of my fate: / I am the captain of my soul." According to his biographer, Elleke Boehmer, Mandela had the habit of reciting this verse to his fellow prisoners on Robben Island, and by "espousing this poem . . . assum[ed] a Victorian persona."[18]

If one Googles the word "Gandhi," the first two pages of images all represent Gandhi alone, the same as for Mandela and King. Many photos of Gandhi were staged, and particularly those that have iconic status, like Gandhi standing alone at the beach of Dandi during the Salt March and holding up his fist in defiance; in fact, thousands had accompanied Gandhi on his way to Dandi.[19] The staging and representation of the three as single leaders epitomizes the emphasis on leadership. On one of the covers of *Time* magazine (on whose covers he appears four times in his life) Mandela's name is explicitly associated with leadership under the heading: "Mandela at 90/ The Secrets of Leadership. Eight Lessons from One of History's Icons."[20]

Nonviolence

The carefully crafted icons translate several fundamental norms and narratives of peacebuilding, and most notably the normative idea of peace as a sphere of nonviolence. Hammarskjöld originally set nonviolence as a normative standard for UN action when creating the first peacekeeping mission. The key idea of "neutrality" was that the UN, although the sole legitimate user of violence in the international system, must not use violence because it is the most inappropriate conflict resolution tool. Dialogue and diplomacy should be used in its stead. Hammarskjöld argued from an international law point of view, as well as giving a moralistic reading of recent history where the suffering of the two world wars only confirmed the disastrous effects of the use of violence. Regarding the Congo, for instance, Hammarskjöld's discourse of nonviolence was aimed at keeping the superpowers out, and allowed the UN to distance itself from the anticolonial nationalist movements of Africa, which he and his collaborators considered to be protofascist.[21] The demand for nonviolence was repeated again and again in all interventions and non-interventions. The 1990s adage that the UN could deploy peacekeeping only "where there was a peace to keep" was a reformulation of Hammarskjöld's nonviolence doctrine.

The vision of peace encapsulated by nonviolence builds on the dialectical pairing of violence with "evil" and, hence, nonviolence with "good." Whether in Gandhi's terms or in the more tactically minded nonviolent strategies of King or Mandela, the main argument for nonviolence postulates that the use of violence will create more evil and harm than any nonviolent strategy can do, just as Hammarskjöld argued.[22]

All these narratives diminish the historical situatedness of nonviolent strategies, and in particular how these allowed Gandhi, King, and Mandela to position themselves in their movement's internal struggles. The narratives essentialize nonviolence. In the reductionist version, for instance, of Gandhi's nonviolent doctrine his political strategy in the Indian competition over leadership is conveniently set aside. However, historical evidence shows that Gandhi for all intents and purposes was first of all a nationalist who did not, initially, reject violence as a revolutionary means, but simply saw nonviolence as a more effective strategy.[23] There also remains a debate over how much Gandhism has inspired or been co-opted into present-day Hindu nationalist politics, with all the violence this has generated.[24]

The Western narrative of Gandhism often argues that the nonviolent

principles and movement in India were an inspiration for the American civil rights movement. According to this narrative, Gandhi particularly stressed the notion of evil, as he saw the use of violence for national independence as inviting a violent future for the Indian state. His vision implied that deep inside, under the cover of colonialism, racial segregation, and apartheid politics, all human beings share a common humanity that nonviolence preserves. It is this common humanity that represents the highest moral good in the world. Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence was based on the priority of ascetic norms, according to which no other worldly good could rival the value of humanity.[25] No other worldly good can therefore justify the use of violence, that is, the destruction of human lives.

Dag Hammarskjöld fully ascribed to this view, although he preferred the more mystical expression by Buber of the principle of dialogue and understanding (see chapter 5), and the belief that conflicts among humans are temporary and superficial, and can be—should be—overcome. Love, and reaching out your hand, are not only the best means to create communion, they are also the "true" means, as they are in themselves acts of love and able to overcome even deep, ongoing conflicts.

Similarly, King also referred to Buber's dialogical principle to argue that segregation was unjust. In his "Letter from Birmingham Jail" in 1963 he wrote:

> Segregation, to use the terminology of the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, substitutes an "I-it" relationship for an "I-thou" relationship and ends up relegating persons to the status of things. Hence segregation is not only politically, economically and sociologically unsound, it is morally wrong and sinful.[26]

King not only argued that unjust laws have to be resisted but he also pointed out that the injustice of these laws is morally corrupting in general. Injustice can lead the oppressed to revolt violently and extremely; and it leads the other, the adversary, to cherish laws for the law's sake and not for justice, even if she or he is sympathetic (what he called "the white moderate"). Only by understanding each other and "being extremists for love," as King called it, can such kinds of oppositions and negations be overcome.[27]

The argument that the use of violence is by itself corrupting humanity and impeding the authentic communion of humans has been made equally (and still is being made) by Anabaptist movements such as the

Mennonites, who, as revealed in chapter 4, occupy a large space in the scholarly field that overlaps the peacebuilding field. As in the Gandhian idea of the dialectics of violence/evil vs. nonviolence/good, the ethics of the Anabaptists postulate that violence is anathema to God's Creation and, at the same time, the foremost test of the sincere believer. Nonviolence is a way of worshiping God and saving humankind from its innate sinfulness.[28] A true Christian needs to imitate Jesus and overcome his or her fear of death and misery—engaging in nonviolence is exactly the way to do this:

> It is the power that comes when defenses fall, when fear of being hurt or killed disappears, when one is no longer interested in defending oneself, but in doing God's will. When we no longer seek to protect or defend ourselves, when we make ourselves vulnerable, we are free. Of course we can be killed. But nothing can deter us from doing or saying what we believe is true. When we accept vulnerability, literally nothing has power over us.[29]

This credo of defending one's true self, of being authentic in one's beliefs and values, is not exclusive to Anabaptists, but forms an essential part of the West's culture of individuality. In secular terms, Rousseau's moral philosophy of self-determination, autonomy, and individuality is probably the earliest secular expression of the ideal of authenticity. Charles Taylor revives Rousseau's ideal in an attempt to save authenticity of the "Self" from the distortions of modern consumerism and hedonism. The key method to restore authenticity, he argues, is through dialogue and exchange based on empathy and nonviolence. In Taylor's philosophy, the Self is redeemed as authentic through the renunciation of the other's destruction and negation; by recognizing myself in the other I affirm my own self.[30] His argument is strikingly similar to Gandhi's argument of gaining spiritual power through nonviolence, or the Anabaptist argument of overcoming fear (and embracing the afterlife) through the courage that is needed to resist violence.

Discourses of Peace beyond the Religion-Secularism Divide

The doctrine of nonviolence is quite obviously nourished by religious and spiritual considerations for which Mandela, Gandhi, and King are exemplars. Photographs often show them preacher-like in front of mass-

es. Such photos are taken from a low angle to make them appear larger than life and overbearing.[31] They are also often depicted using large arm and hand gestures, embracing the crowds or pointing to the future. The religious and mostly Christian elements of the heroic iconography of the three men can hardly be ignored. The perception of all three men as modern heroes is deeply steeped in religious, and in particular Christian, terms. These images clearly have parallels to representations of priests and saints.

For King, these quite obviously go hand in hand with his personality and training as a Baptist minister. The success of his speech at the March on Washington more than fifty years ago is, among other things, associated with his capacity to preach, and the strength of the religious rhetoric employed in the speech. King himself used numerous religious allegories in his speeches, most notably comparing the civil rights movement to Moses leading the chosen people out of Egypt.[32]

Gandhi, being a devout Hindu, drew parallels between his Hindu religious and spiritual ideas and Jesus. His interpretation of Jesus's life and words focused on the renunciation of worldly pleasures and his politics of reconciliation, just as he himself saw the essence of his *satyagraha* not in political effects alone, but also in the spirituality of renunciation, sacrifice, and—even though it was a word and concept he did not use—redemption. Gandhi was throughout his life engaged in Hindu-Christian dialogue, and he wrote frequently about the ethical example Jesus set for spiritual communion and for communities.[33] His attire alluded to representations of Christ, and it would be underestimating Gandhi's self-aware sense of staging to a Christian audience to assume that this was pure coincidence. Indeed, Western friends and acquaintances often reported that his behavior and appearance reminded them of Jesus.[34]

Mandela represented less obvious allusions to Christianity. Yet, although it seems he was not himself a religious person, Mandela was closely associated with religious personalities after his release from prison in 1990, most particularly with Bishop Desmond Tutu. He is also frequently referred to in religious terms when he is called, just like King or Gandhi, a saint or a savior.[35]

All three icons transcend the religion-secularism divide that is said to be characteristic of Western modernity. Their images, and the often simplistic rendering of their thought, fuse religious and secular discursive elements. Unsurprisingly, the wide variety of interpretations of their lives and teachings mean that references to them can be found in new age spiritualism as well as in predominantly atheist social movements. They represent,

one could say, white canvasses on which almost any spiritual movement that seeks to justify nonviolence can paint their normative vision.

In the peacebuilding *nomos*—"stopping violence and saving lives"— Protestant and liberal-humanist ethics both provide a particularly large share of the discursive repertoire of justification and shape peacebuilding habitus in practice. The urge to be efficient, to make productive use of time, to be dedicated to the task, to fulfill the task dutifully . . . all the good qualities of a peacebuilder that have been discussed in the preceding chapters are also the qualities that Mandela, King, and Gandhi personify. Never were they caught idle; even in prison, in the forced situation of a castaway, Mandela kept himself busy, if only by reciting Victorian poetry—again, an exercise to keep the spirit alive, to further the intellect and the productivity of the mind.[36]

But also, beyond their individual qualities, the three icons of peace epitomize a comfortable synthesis of liberalism and Protestantism, for their political engagement never shook the foundations of the existing liberal order against which they railed. Obviously, their political agitation brought about radical changes in the legal constitution of their respective countries, but it hardly touched the socioeconomic basis of private property and capitalist production on which segregation and colonialism were built; neither did the respective political changes dislodge their countries' bourgeois culture. The canon of Protestant-liberal values discussed in chapter 5—hard work and merit, self-organization and autonomy, duty and efficiency—were, in fact, reproduced and reclaimed by these movements, and were anything but deconstructed, criticized, or replaced with an alternative. In retrospect, it appears that the struggle was more over the question of who should benefit from the spoils of radical political change, and not so much over the economic, social, and, in this respect, cultural production structures of colonialism, apartheid, or racial segregation. The Marikana massacre in 2012, in which forty-four striking miners were killed, and which was preceded by a constant erosion of workers' and unions' rights in democratic rainbow South Africa, is but one example of how little the changes induced by the end of apartheid questioned fundamental structures of exploitation.[37]

The Holocaust Narrative as Passe-Partout Justification

The heroification of Mandela, King, and Gandhi suits perfectly well the "saving lives" *nomos* of the field. By claiming their legacy (albeit con-

sciously admitting the utopian nature of the hope of an entirely peaceful world) peacebuilders place themselves on the side of those who are nonviolent. The insistence on the futility and social harmfulness of violence depoliticizes and culturalizes situations of violent conflict and makes them simply problems of deviant antisocial behavior to solve. Conflict is not about political or economic antagonism, which might be solvable only by an ultimate, and therefore deadly, power game.[38] Rather, conflicts arise out of a lack of communication and dialogue, simply because the protagonists do not understand each other. The fact that heroes of nonviolence come from all over the world and do not solely represent white Westerners is taken as proof that humanity's resistance to violent politics is universal. It is taken for granted that the wish to save lives is what every rational and sensible actor would want; understanding each other is thus eventually possible; anything else must be deviant behavior.

The depoliticization of violence naturally leads to its delegitimization. Inasmuch as violence is presented as being an inefficient, impractical, ineffective, and useless tool of politics, it is also nonpermissible. This discourse, which has been, in the UN context, constructed on the grounds of the Second World War and the nuclear extermination threat, has shifted in the past two decades to fit intrastate violent conflicts. Drawing on various sources, from revived theories of a just war to human rights, the dominant discourse stylizes any violent death as gratuitous, unnecessary, irrational, or simply "bad."[39] The event that most clearly symbolizes the horror of death for nothing, death as pure abnormality, is the Holocaust, and it comes as little surprise that most of the surveyees see the Holocaust in particular and genocide in general as the most horrible political event in recent history.[40]

The utter evilness of the Holocaust and genocide is presented as entirely self-evident and indisputable beyond any discussion of political and socioeconomic or military dynamics. The Holocaust and genocide are exclusively understood as deadly cultural conflicts. Francis Deng, who elaborated on several key legal concepts regarding the responsibility to protect doctrine, and who was special adviser to the Secretary-General on the prevention of genocide, argues:

> [W]hile the Holocaust has unique characteristics, genocide is a common human tragedy that has occurred far too many times in the past, and if the root causes are not well understood and addressed comprehensively, is almost certain to occur again in the future. . . . My first point is self-evident and does not need elaboration. . . . It is worth

Top answers to the question: what was, according to you, the most horrible event in recent history? (2008 and 2012 wave)
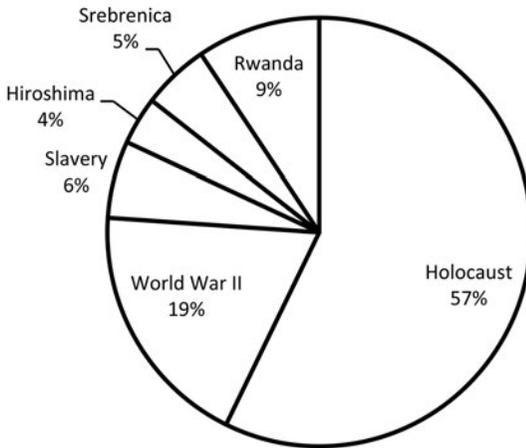
Srebrenica 5%

Hiroshima 4%

Slavery 6%

Rwanda 9%

World War II 19%

Holocaust 57%

Fig. 13. The most horrible event in recent world history

noting that whatever constitutes "genocide," it is the most extreme aspect of much larger identity conflicts or violence.[41]

Deng puts forward the contradictory but common claim that the Holocaust was unique and yet paradigmatic for other genocides to come. This contradictory claim represents the foundational dialectics of the Holocaust narrative that is characteristic of the explanations given for other cases of violence. The uniqueness of the Holocaust lies in its monstrosity, its immense scope not only in terms of the number of people killed but also in terms of the number and nature of all the people who participated directly and indirectly in this killing, and in terms of the bureaucratic, technological, and political sophistication of its event.[42] Yet, while the contingency and convergence of these complex and various causes of the real Holocaust make up its historical uniqueness, other violent situations of racial or ethnic conflict in the world most certainly display one or several of its aspects. It is in this sense that the Holocaust is also paradigmatic, as almost any racially, ethnically, or religiously discriminatory measure can be likened to a similar occasion in 1930s and 1940s Germany.

Its complexity made (and still makes) the Holocaust an ideal mobili-

zational rhetoric, which has been widely used by a large array of actors to frame injustices done to them as deadly threats and monstrous. A recent example of the versatility of the Holocaust as victimization discourse is certainly the wars in former Yugoslavia, where *all* sides claimed to be at risk of genocide by their respective adversaries.[43]

The multiple usages made of the Holocaust narrative epitomize its spread well beyond the historically concerned countries and populations. The diffusion of the Holocaust narrative, however, did not happen uniformly and evenly, as it has followed various paths and interests, and, hence, has produced a variety of versions, which emphasize different moral and political lessons to be drawn from this historical event.[44] Germany's left-wing public and parties (the Social Democrats and Green Party) undertook, for instance, an impressive U-turn in the 1990s using the Holocaust narrative. In the early 1990s they fiercely argued that the lessons of the Holocaust and Second World War, the "Never Again" mantra, should be that German troops must never again be deployed outside German territory. By 1999, the slogan "Never Again" had become the Social Democrat–Green government's main justification for having the Federal Army participate in the NATO bombings of Serbia, as it was argued that these served to prevent the genocide that the Serbian police and army were planning against Kosovo Albanians.[45]

Historical research on the causes of the Holocaust has not contributed to clarifying the question of what actually could or would effectively prevent genocide. Neither do the lessons drawn by historians like Jürgen Kocka, who emphasizes the Holocaust's uniqueness by arguing for a "German special path" to modernity,[46] nor Christopher Browning's verdict that everyone of us ordinary men (or women) could be a mass murderer,[47] nor Theodor Adorno's universalizing claim that the potentiality of mass murder is an inherent part of modernization,[48] constitute in any way a reference to the political discourses about the Holocaust. The minimal impact these "historian quarrels"[49] have on the political reality of the Holocaust narrative instead show that the Holocaust has been largely dissociated from its historical context and from the academic debates that reflect on its conditions of possibility.

In some instances, the Holocaust narrative has gained the quality of a foundational myth. With some delay this has been certainly the case for the self-definition of Israel as presented by its political and diplomatic elites.[50] But others, too, have recuperated the Holocaust narrative as a legitimizing discourse, for example, the European Union or the United States.[51] In the peacebuilding field, the Holocaust narrative has taken a

central role in the justification of intervention over the past two decades and through the active advocacy of a number of personalities who are part of the upper tier of the peacebuilding field. Prominent among them are the Nobel Peace Prize laureate Elie Wiesel, the Pulitzer Prize winner and current U.S. ambassador to the UN Samantha Power, and Michael Ignatieff, former leader of Canada's Liberal Party and currently Edward R. Murrow Professor of Practice at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, where Power, too, had held the same position before becoming adviser to President Barack Obama.

Wiesel's struggle to establish the Holocaust narrative as a narrative of absolute evil dates back to Israel's 1967 war and his defense of Israel's aggressive occupation policies as forms of self-defense and Israels' ultimate struggle for survival.[52] Power has come later to this narrative, and reformulated the already existing and vivid debate about humanitarian intervention and just war in terms of genocide prevention. Ignatieff has embedded the Holocaust narrative in his larger work as an advocate of human rights and humanitarian intervention. The Holocaust narrative feeds on and into larger debates in peacebuilding and adjacent fields about humanitarianism, intervention, and human rights. It draws on a powerful imagery that has been shaped by popular culture, for example, the Hollywood film *Schindler's List* by Steven Spielberg, as well as highbrow culture as the numerous literature Nobel prizes for authors who have written about the Holocaust show.[53]

Crucially, the Holocaust epitomizes the conundrum of the modern subject and its vulnerability.[54] It symbolizes antiliberalism at its worst: not only were those human beings who were imprisoned, tortured, and killed in concentration camps deprived of any opportunity to exercise choice and reason in their lives, they were held in this state of animality (rather than humanity) through violence and bodily injury. Yet, such de-subjectivization and dehumanization was produced with modern and, arguably, liberal technologies of collective governance and organization by the overbearing machines of a modern state. Hence, the state that produced extermination camps and conducted genocide— the Nazi state—also dehumanized the perpetrators by depriving them of individual agency and humanity. Worse than the worst nightmares of nineteenth-century liberal thinkers, the Nazi state not only impeded the free development of individual freedom, wealth, and happiness, it dehumanized individuals and fundamentally destroyed any free expression of subjectivity.[55]

This core tale of dehumanization serves as an essential conjunction

of the Holocaust narrative and other discourses, such as human rights, international justice, or reconciliation, as will be illustrated here with some of Ignatieff's writings. The anxious tale of tyranny's force of dehumanization introduces a justificatory consistency into the account of human rights according to which these rights have been steadily expanded since the Second World War, first as a response to the war and the Holocaust, and then as a universalized cosmopolitan response to injustice and dictatorship—a narrative particularly put forward by uncompromising advocates of the responsibility to protect doctrine.[56]

Cosmopolitanism posits that the universal individual is the primordial basis for any politics and, hence, that the protection of individuals is preeminent over the protection of other political actors, that is, the state and its sovereignty. In fact, the responsibility to protect doctrine allows redefining sovereignty as the protection of individuals, that is, that states enjoy the rights of sovereignty only for as long as they provide protection to individuals.[57] Cosmopolitanism draws particularly on the Holocaust and the specter of Nazism to argue for a universal responsibility to protect minimum human rights.[58] Today's responsibility to protect doctrine is considered to be the most recent step in a history of ethical progress in the form of globalizing and universalizing human rights since the Second World War.[59]

The intertwining of cosmopolitan theory and the Holocaust narrative provides the backdrop for a complex argument that links the protection of human rights with the justification of humanitarian interventions, or "just wars," and the establishment of institutions of transitional justice, such as criminal tribunals or truth and reconciliation commissions.[60] Human rights are defined in this context as minimum rights for protection, but not as maximum entitlements for citizenship and agency. The call issued to the international community is one to save individuals from cruelty and torture, but it is not necessarily a call to place power in their hands;[61] people need to be protected. Their rescue can, in the end, only be undertaken by third states, and by only such states whose actions are legitimate in the sense of just war theory.[62] In 2002, in his defense of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, Ignatieff unapologetically defended this imperialist reasoning:

> Imperialism used to be the white man's burden. This gave it a bad reputation. But imperialism doesn't stop being necessary just because it becomes politically incorrect. Nations sometimes fail, and when they do outside help—imperial power—can get them back on their

feet. Nation-building is the kind of imperialism you get in a human rights era, a time when great powers believe simultaneously in the right of small nations to govern themselves and their own right to rule the world.[63]

Yet the role of states needs to be restricted to not much more than this type of saving from violence; Ignatieff explicitly rejects any claims of collective human rights, and he does so most obviously in that he sees only the state as being capable of attending to such collective human rights; hence this opens the door to all forms of tyranny:

> Those who insist that civil and political rights need supplementing with social and economic ones make a claim that is true—that individual rights can only be exercised effectively within a framework of collective rights provision—but they may be obscuring the priority relation between the individual and the collective. Individual rights without collective rights may be difficult to exercise, but collective rights without individual ones means tyranny.[64]

Again, the specter of the dehumanizing state looms large. Ignatieff sees democratic institutions and constitutionalism as being the only forces capable of counterchecking potential tyranny, and therefore holds up particularly the United States for its history of defending human rights. Ignatieff considers himself a pragmatist insofar as he argues that human rights are, first of all, practical instruments for achieving individual freedom and for obtaining the benefits of freedom, such as wealth generated by market economies and justice produced by democratic institutions. The poor U.S. record of human rights protection and its ongoing imperialism are, therefore, simply lesser evils, as in the end they do serve to propagate democracy and market liberalism.[65]

This position—that U.S. intervention is necessary to prevent further genocide and so is the lesser evil—is equally defended by Elie Wiesel, who implored President Bill Clinton at the opening of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, in 1993:

> And we have learnt [from the Holocaust] that when people suffer we cannot remain indifferent. And Mr. President, I cannot not tell you something. I have been in former Yugoslavia, last fall. I cannot sleep since what I have seen. Something—it is true what I am saying— we must do something to stop the bloodshed in that country. People

fight each other and children die. Why? Something, anything must be done.[66]

However, advocating for U.S. intervention to save human lives has been marked in Power's writings, and most notably in her Pulitzer Prize–winning book *A Problem from Hell.*[67] In her book, Power takes as her starting point the Polish-Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin's battle to see the genocide recognized as a crime against humanity and for the establishment of an international convention that would allow circumventing sovereignty and international intervention in cases of genocide. From the perspective of the debates on intervention that raged in 1940s America, Power scrutinizes the U.S. engagement to prevent genocide or to save victims of genocide in the post–World War II period. She comes to the unsurprising conclusion that the United States "has consistently refused to take risks in order to suppress genocide."[68] Like Ignatieff and others, Power argues that the United States has a double responsibility to act in cases of genocide: as a democratic country that, according to Power, has a "tremendous normative impact," and as the state that "had the greatest potential to deter these crimes."[69]

Transitional Justice: Law and Reconciliation

Although the discourse that fuses American destiny with interventionism has lost some of its attractiveness since the war in Iraq (and regained traction with the election of Barack Obama, the interventions in Libya, and the calls for intervention in Syria),[70] the nomothetic connection between the Holocaust narrative and the fatalism of saving lives persists due to the continued presence of its advocates in the upper tier of the field, and due to the malleability with which it can be connected to other dominant discourses in other fields. The Holocaust narrative thus bridges the peacebuilding field with discourses on justice and reconciliation as they are presented in various forms in discourses on transitional justice.

Chapter 4 described how, in terms of personal networks and professional trajectories, the peacebuilding field overlaps with parts of the American academic fields of legal studies, but also of social sciences engaged in promoting humanitarian intervention. The flow of ideas and people is particularly intensive between the legal field and peacebuilding, populated with such prominent figures as Theodor Meron (Charles L. Denison chair of the New York University School of Law and president

of the International Criminal Tribunal on Former Yugoslavia, as well as presiding judge of the Appeals Chambers of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda); Cherif Bassiouni (emeritus professor of law at De Paul University and frequent adviser to the UN); José Moreno-Ocampo (first prosecutor of the International Criminal Court and professor at the University of Buenos Aires, Stanford, and Harvard Law School); and Ocampo's assistant José Alvarez (professor at the University of Michigan Law School, George Washington University, and Georgetown University), and other members of various UN human rights and legal commissions and legal advisers to the U.S. president.[71] The most influential research projects on transitional justice are based at American top-level universities, such as the Project on Justice in Times of Transition at Harvard University, which has recently merged into the Beyond Conflict think tank.[72]

American think tanks also play a crucial role as relays for ideas and pools of people who participate in the peacebuilding field; particularly specialized think tanks like the International Center for Transitional Justice, of which Ocampo is the honorary president, and which was founded in 2000 by Priscella Hayner and Alex Boraine, former deputy chair of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, professor of law at New York University Law School and the director of the New York University Law School's Justice in Transition program. Since 2006, the academia-practice nexus even has its own publication outlet in the *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, hosted by Cambridge University Press and edited by Laurel Fletcher, professor of international human rights law at the University of California at Berkeley.[73]

Although the field of practice is much more populated by American lawyers than by those of other nationalities, the concept of transitional justice has gained traction all over Europe and the Americas in the past decades. It is an area of legal development that allows for the merging of the politics of human rights, humanitarianism, and democratization with the expansion of a legalistic approach to world politics more generally.

As Catherine Turner argues, transitional justice has become a performative event within whose limits "all efforts of peace-making must play out."[74] Similar to the legalization of other domains of global governance, the discourse and practice of transitional justice allow for a depoliticization of fundamental antagonisms. The concept of transitional justice draws on the normative power of natural law to displace political debates over legal and constitutional issues in postconflict set-

tings and regime changes. From such a perspective, conflicts are not profoundly and essentially about differing views of social organization or politics, including the question of what kind of law should be constitutive of the political community, they are only violent expressions of varying interests in resources and stakes (power, posts, votes, and so forth). Due process, clarity of rules, and fairness of institutions of law—in short, the full array of legal instruments in the democratic and Western rule of law tradition—can be brought to bear on adjudicating such competitions of interest.

The concept of transitional justice thus remains vague, as it covers a wide range of very different activities, from international or transnational criminal tribunals and trials to locally rooted institutions and rituals of forgiveness and redemption. Classically, transitional justice is defined as "justice associated with periods of political change,"[75] whereby the often unspoken assumption is that this change goes from an authoritarian regime in which human rights violations took place, to a better, that is, democratic and liberal, regime where such human rights violations, by the very definition of democracy, do not take place. The law and the ideas of justice imposed by regimes of transitional justice, therefore, draw on two sources of supposedly intrinsic legitimacy: the promise of a brighter, more democratic, more liberal, and more just future, on the one hand, and the rightness of human rights norms, derived from natural law, on the other hand.[76] Both aspects are discursively emphasized through the Holocaust and genocide narrative.

Interviewed and surveyed peacebuilders definitively said they believed that liberal democracy is the normative and most desirable state of states. They strongly agreed with a number of statements that praise democracy in Winston Churchill's manner, that is, as a faulty system, yet one that is still better than any other. Consistently they refuted statements critical of democracy, for example, any describing it as inefficient or responsible for creating unruliness, disorder, and insecurity, or both. It is, however, symbolically most striking that they voted in significant numbers in agreement that the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of communism in Eastern Europe, as well as the end of apartheid, were the most remarkable historical events in the recent past.

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of apartheid, as well as the end of the Latin American junta regimes, stand for paradigmatic transitions. They symbolize the bankruptcy of the two political regime types that competed most successfully with liberal democracy over the past

decades, namely discriminatory oligarchy (in Latin America and South Africa), on the one hand, and communism, on the other. Without necessarily sharing Francis Fukuyama's triumphalism that the ideological quarrel about the best form of government has ended, peacebuilders do think that the political, social, and economic changes in Latin America in the 1980s, in Eastern Europe and Russia in the 1990s, and in South Africa since then were a move to the better. Personalities like Nelson Mandela are admired for the part they played in these transitions.

The establishment of transitional justice as its own field of research and practice has allowed the integration of broader approaches than the hitherto narrow legalistic understanding. The field of religiously motivated conflict resolution, which promotes mainly Christian ideas of forgiveness, had been especially able to contribute successfully to the understanding of transitional justice.[77] Here, South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission is frequently regarded as an exemplary case of rendering justice in the aftermath of an unjust regime. This narrative is actively promoted by those who participated in the transitional regimes of the time, not least by Nelson Mandela himself, and the initiator of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its chair, Bishop Desmond Tutu, who is, as Mandela was, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate and a member of the Elders. Personalities like Alex Boraine, for instance, aforementioned cofounder of the International Institute for Transitional Justice, also have actively propagated the South African experience as a paradigm to be followed by other countries.

Conclusion

The *nomos* of a field is, according to Bourdieu, "the vision of the world [that] is the division of the world": the vision that creates a fundamental distinction between the inside of the field and its outside.[78] It presents itself as a consistent, inherently logical, and "natural" story because it pushes difference and dissent outside the field. The act of doing peacebuilding confers on peacebuilders the legitimacy and authority to speak about peacebuilding. Those who do not participate in the field can neither share its *nomos* nor practice peacebuilding in its authoring and authoritative form. To do is to know; and it is this distinguishing and excluding function of the *nomos* that Bunche was, for instance, invoking when in the early 1960s he consistently replied to any critique of the UN mission in Congo in the following manner:

The reports of the Secretary General to the Security Council which are public documents and which, I assure you, are truthful and objective, would correct misconceptions that you have of what the United Nations is doing in the Congo and particularly in Katanga.[79]

Whomever Bunche was addressing in this letter (and similar ones that he wrote), he was clearly rejecting the correspondent's authority to speak to the matter at all. The ultimate argument that only the UN, and in a wider sense today the peacebuilders, can know what needs to be done in peacebuilding is based on the seemingly undisputable claim that whatever peacebuilding does, it primarily saves lives that otherwise would have been wasted in, by definition, gratuitous death.

The *nomos* of the peacebuilding field posits that saving lives is the noblest ethical obligation, and that its pursuit allows for no critique or contradiction per se, as the report "The Responsibility to Protect" asserts:

The controversy [over the legitimacy of intervention] has laid bare basic divisions within the international community. In the interest of all those victims who suffer and die when leadership and institutions fail, it is crucial that these divisions be resolved.[80]

The claim that intervention is a priori necessary to save lives and avoid suffering and death is repeated all over in every foundational document of the peacebuilding field. It is also a claim that is constantly reiterated by key actors in the field, whether the United Nations Secretary-General or the NGOs that work in the field. It is the fundamental and foundational norm of the field.

This norm is approached and legitimized from various perspectives, depending on which adjacent fields actors come from. The stories told in justification of the *nomos*—the heroic figures of Mandela, Gandhi, and King, the Holocaust, the transition toward a better future—translate reputational capital from various neighboring fields such as law, business, or the NGO world into symbolic capital in the peacebuilding field.

These stories form an entirely consistent and thick variation of what Didier Fassin calls "humanitarian reason."[81] Humanitarian reason, an expression of modern humanism as much as of the modern politics of egalitarianism, not only posits that "being alive" is the most precious human good and goal, but it also creates the figure of the humanitarian, an active agent who can fight suffering and abolish gratuitous death.[82] Humanitarian reason is motivated not only by compassion, but inspires

the world far beyond simple acts of Good Samaritan charity; it confronts deep, fundamental questions about inequality and suffering, and consequently about the very foundations of the Enlightenment assumption that all human beings can be and are agents of their lives:

> In the face of violence, disasters, and epidemics, and also poverty, insecurity, and misfortune, what is intolerable is not only the presence of the tragic but the inequality in which it is embedded.[83]

It is the embeddedness of the peacebuilding field's *nomos* in a wider worldview of what human agency represents in our complex, differentiated, modern, and unjust societies, and of what human life is worth in such a world, that gives it its definite symbolic power. The stories told about Mandela, or nonviolence, or the Holocaust, and so on represent the *nomos* as a self-evident, natural, universal, and indubitable necessary logic. The fatalism of saving lives has no alternative and no antithesis. The only disputation of the fatalism of saving lives that would be possible is the acceptance of killing and death; yet such an argument disqualifies totally any such disposition and makes it effectively nondebatable.

The nomothetic stories are, however, not only superficial justificatory discourses. At the same time as they provide a universalizing legitimacy, the *nomos* eventually covers up its social conditions of existence and conceals its particularity and, in some cases, like those of warfare in Afghanistan or Iraq, its utterly violent distinction. The fact that the dispositions, sentiments, ideas, and normative aspirations expressed in the nomothetic stories are, in fact, the privilege of a few, and that they depend on the mastery of specific resources of power, is entirely concealed by the stories' universalist claims and the fatalistic exclusion of any counterdiscourse. The *nomos* not only operates an exclusion of topics and debates from the field, much more importantly it operates an exclusion of people from the field. It does so on the grounds of a social selection that is taking place through various institutions of socialization from families to universities, and on the grounds of its distinguished and distinguishing habitus.