

In the 20th century, genocides and state mass murder have killed more people than have all wars.

Social Scientists' Definitions of Genocide

Social scientists have different definitions of genocide from each other and from the definition in international law (the UN Genocide Convention) following. These differences are both because of the differences between generic concepts and legal definition (legal definitions are more specific), differences in purpose of the definer, and because of the political and group processes involved in drawing up an international convention.

Definitions of social scientists and historians

Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn:

"Genocide is a form of one-sided mass killing in which a state or other authority intends to destroy a group, as that group and membership in it are defined by the perpetrator" (The History and Sociology of Genocide , 1990).

Israel W. Charny:

"Genocide in the generic sense is the mass killing of substantial numbers of human beings, when not in the course of military forces of an avowed enemy, under conditions of the essential defenselessness and helplessness of the victims". (in Genocide: Conceptual and Historical Dimensions ed. George Andreopoulos, 1994).

Helen Fein:

"Genocide is sustained purposeful action by a perpetrator to physically destroy a collectivity 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". (Genocide: A Sociological Perspective, 1993/1990).

Barbara Harff and Ted R. Gurr:

"By our definition, genocides and politicides are the promotion and execution of policies by a state or its agents which result in the deaths of a substantial portion of a group. The difference between genocides and politicides is in the characteristics by which members of the group are identified by the state. In genocides the victimized groups are defined primarily in terms of their communal characteristics, i.e., ethnicity, religion or nationality. In politicides the victim groups are defined primarily in terms of their

hierarchical position or political opposition to the regime and dominant groups" ("Toward empirical theory of genocides and politicides," *International Studies Quarterly* 37, 3 [1988]).

Steven T. Katz:

"the concept of genocide applies only when there is an actualized intent, however successfully carried out, to physically destroy an entire group (as such a group is defined by the perpetrators)" (*The Holocaust in Historical Perspective*, Vol. 1, 1994).

For an analysis of the commonalities (and differences) among social scientific definitions, see Figures 1-5 in the essay by David Sallach, "[Modelling Genocide](http://www.instituteforthestudyofgenocide.org/documents/modelGenocideCC.pdf)" (<http://www.instituteforthestudyofgenocide.org/documents/modelGenocideCC.pdf>).