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## **Book Review: War and Genocide: Organized Killing in Modern Society.**

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MARTIN SHAW, *War and Genocide: Organized Killing in Modern Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003, 257 pp., £16.99 (pbk).  
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In the first American Presidential debate on foreign policy between President George W. Bush and Democratic candidate, Senator John Kerry, each described the events in the Darfur region of Sudan as genocide. This acknowledgement raised further debate on the legitimacy of military intervention at a time when the US electorate was to select a president based in part on whether they regarded the invasion of Iraq as legitimate. The debate about employing war as a 'humanitarian' force in the prevention of genocide is a central international-political question of our time, raising the deeper question of how war is related to genocide. Few books today can claim to address such an important contemporary issue as Martin Shaw's book, *War and Genocide*.

From an author whose past work has displayed a cogent grasp of the complexities of contemporary warfare in a global setting, this is a well-written book that is accessible to academic and non-academic audiences alike. On one level, its structure is organized not unlike a textbook, with distinct sections introducing and examining a diverse array of topics from Clausewitz's theory of warfare and totalitarianism, to conscientious objection and humanitarian intervention. Likewise, the work discusses a broad scope of particular episodes of human atrocity from various periods of the 20th century. Unlike a textbook, however, the book contains a unique narrative regarding the relationship between war and genocide.

The book examines the problem of slaughter through addressing three central questions: how the organization of society produces mass killing; how society is actually involved in war; and how society responds to war. Chapters 3–5 examine the practice of warfare as embedded within organized social practices and historical patterns of thought, from the influence of state authority and the role of the mass media to industrialization and the geography of war. Chapters 6–8 deal with the second question involving modern battle spaces, their combatants and victims. These chapters address the expanding logic of violence that has involved communities and new geographical spaces. Shaw reveals that the modern battlefield has no potential boundaries, since the changing social structure supporting war has expanded, making, for example, industrial production and social morale legitimate targets of violence. This propensity to target civilian populations is not unconnected to globalization-driven social immiseration and inequality. For this reason, Shaw investigates how combatants are defined and recruited, through an examination of the social contexts of war, as influenced by class, the mass media, gender and post-military society. Victimhood is also examined in the context of inequalities of power and strategies of slaughter. Shaw conducts a careful examination of those killed in battle and highlights important processes within the military logic that account for their destruction. His investigation into the 'social structuring of victimhood' reveals, among many other important issues, the ways in

which women are targeted and how this scheme informs us about the nature of slaughter (p. 178).

In the latter part of the book Shaw discusses how social movements, in their methodology and in their usage of ideas of justice and peace, have influenced war (Chapter 9). In particular, the author confronts the paradox that the existence of mass slaughter is surrounded by widespread ideas and efforts for peace. These movements for non-violence are not autonomous occurrences, but are inspired by conflicts that transform the practices of war. Chapter 10 examines the issue of 'just peace' as an answer to the problem of war. As mass killings are recognized to be products of all kinds of conflicts, the endeavours for internal justice and an international just peace become interwoven issues that are shaped by international political institutions and our common experiences of war and genocide.

The book's central argument, articulated in Chapter 2, is that genocide and warfare share an intrinsic relationship despite the uncontested illegitimacy of genocide against the potential legitimacy of warfare. Shaw seeks to challenge the prevailing view that genocide and warfare are categorically distinct phenomena and contends that genocide should be viewed as a 'distinctive form of war' (p. 5). This entails situating genocide as a kind of conflict that involves three fundamental elements: (1) identification of a social group as an enemy; (2) intention to destroy the real or imputed power of this enemy; and (3) the use of lethal violence in service of these ends. The trait of conflict shared by war and genocide is thus an 'internal' connection 'in which social groups are the enemies' (pp. 44–5).

It is here, in my view, that lies the principal limitation of the work. This limitation presents itself in both dimensions surrounding acts of genocide, some empirical and some conceptual. For Shaw to view genocide as a form of warfare, where genocide 'is the attempt by an organized, armed force to destroy the power of a social group through killing' (p. 93), certain myths demand refutation and facts establishing. This is accomplished by dismissing, among other concepts, the 'cult of the pure victim' in acts of genocide (p. 187). Passive subjects of violence are, in Shaw's view, mythical and instead are viewed as pawns of *competing* organizational and social power, even though the subjects of genocide are themselves often mythical creations of the perpetrator's propaganda. Subjects are thus imbued with the potential for resistance, even though such actions are often futile.

In order for Shaw's argument about genocide to work effectively, it must not only diminish the passivity of victims (as with the concept above), but also rely on forms of conflict to substantiate his vision of genocide. This is an empirical misjudgment because it overlooks the fact that subjects of genocide often refuse to consider themselves engaged in social conflict against other groups. This accounts for the fact that subjects of genocide are almost *always politically and organizationally powerless*, yet imbued with a force to 'resist' or 'contaminate' by their killers prior to mass atrocities. Although Shaw does acknowledge this latter fact, it has little bearing upon an understanding of genocide as warfare. It is thus odd that Shaw should suggest that 'we should define genocide . . . by the experience of the victims as well as the mentality of the genocidists' (p. 40) when it is clear that most victims of modern total genocide do not share the perpetrators' competitive world-view, but are forced to contend with it.

The conceptual consequence of this definition is that the social scientist is now constructing a model of genocide legitimating the arena in which the discourse of the perpetrators function, all of who view 'History' (Stalinism), 'Nature' (Nazism) and 'Nationalism' (Miloševićs Serbia) as the environment of social competition and survival at any cost. The genocide in Rwanda was an example where the international community chose not to intervene because it viewed the conflict as a civil war between rival ethnic groups (see Gourevitch, 1998), thus validating, in part, the Hutu's

ideology of 'self-defense' (cf. Forges, 1999). I am *not* suggesting that this approach directly legitimates the discourse of these *génocidaires* – as in verifying the legitimacy of racist doctrines or other specific supremacist world-views. What I am suggesting is that what this approach does is to restate at the level of theory an instrumental recourse to conditions of conflict that has too often informed the discourse of the *génocidaires*. If lives are to be saved 'by military action against the perpetrators of genocide' (p. 242), as Shaw suggests, then it might be expedient to define genocide within a different framework than conflict.

Despite this concern, the central narrative of this work holds much promise. I would like to end, however, by pointing to a certain absence. Despite Shaw's claim that his intention is to 'challenge dominant understandings' (p. 4) of the literature on genocide, the dominant representatives of this literature are surprisingly absent. Shaw never addresses, for example, the empirical findings of R. J. Rummel (1995) who claimed that genocides are planned separately from wars and revolutions. Likewise, while Shaw's analysis of the overlapping conditions of genocide and warfare shares much with the work of Leo Kuper and Robert Melson, there is no attempt to probe the greater depths in which these authors explore this relationship. There is also no examination of any other authors in the tradition of genocide-cum-warfare that Shaw follows (Helen Fein to name one), the majority of who, nonetheless, hold often starkly different views from him. Such authors at best appear under 'further reading' at the end of Chapter 2. While this work is significant in its novel view of genocide as a form of war, and while it also has the potential to inspire debate, Shaw neglects the opportunity to establish his view of genocide at the juncture where competing insights would have demanded credible opposition.

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ALAIN POTTAGE AND MARTHA MUNDY (EDS), *Law, Anthropology, and the Constitution of the Social: Making Persons and Things*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 310 pp., £19.99 (pbk).  
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*Law, Anthropology, and the Constitution of the Social* is a carefully selected collection of interdisciplinary essays on or concerning law's modalities of intervention in social life. The categories of persons and things and techniques of personification and reification, disembedded from orthodox frames of modern law and considered in differing and specific contexts, provide the thematic tie. With issues of inheritance, ownership and exchange the subject matter of most of the essays, the volume represents a current interest in ensuring law's continued success in responding to proprietary claims raised by new technologies and a globalizing environment.