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Editor's Introduction

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Volume 7, issue 1 of *Genocide Studies and Prevention* continues the discussion of the state of the field of genocide studies that was initiated in volume 6, issue 3. Due to our (the editors') keen desire to include as many different voices and perspectives as possible, we reached out to old hands in the field, younger but well established scholars, and several scholars who recently completed their graduate studies but have already made an impact on the field.

The sequence of the articles over the two issues began with comprehensive treatments and then moved into articles with more specific focuses, grouped thematically where applicable. Through the entire sequence across these two issues of *GSP*, we hope that readers will gain a solid sense of the history of the field and insight into some of the perdurable issues that have been at the heart of the field since its inception and that they have opportunities to reflect on the host of issues and concerns raised by authors coming from different disciplines (e.g., history, political science, sociology, psychology, philosophy) with vastly different perspectives. When authors addressed similar, if not the same, issues and concerns, we placed them back to back. In certain of these cases, some authors corroborated their colleagues' takes on a situation, while others took an almost completely antithetical position. Be that as it may, this concluding set of articles, just as the first set, provides ample food for thought in regard to where the field has been, where it is today, and where it might need to go to become more robust.

Alex Hinton presents an important discussion of the concept of "critical genocide studies." He argues that the maturity of the field calls for a process of critical analysis of the approaches prevalent in the field such that genocide research becomes self-reflective. Through analyses of many issues in the field he illustrates the value of the approach and, in doing so, advances the critical genocide studies endeavor.

Sheri Rosenberg focuses on advancing the recognition of the concept of "genocide by attrition" as a contemporary method that has been used, for example, most recently in Darfur. She argues that this concept offers a way around legal impediments to intervention against genocide and against the view that only direct mass killing in a short amount of time is true genocide or worthy of intervention. She makes a compelling case that inclusion of genocide by attrition is both legitimate and crucial.

Jacques Semelin also focuses on the issue of intervention. After considering the various issues of inclusion and exclusion raised by the efforts to define genocide in the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (UNCG) and beyond, Semelin raises the question of whether the all-too-frequent failures to intervene against genocide might be better addressed not by continued debate over the precise meaning of genocide and attempts to stretch it to cover new cases but through the development of a UN convention on crimes against humanity that would take the UNCG as a model but have broader applicability. In this light, he discusses the new International Crimes Against Humanity project. Samuel Totten has addressed this issue in his article in the first part of this special issue but has also raised some serious concerns about such an approach.¹

Hannibal Travis's article is similarly concerned with intervention and prevention, but it maintains the view that the erosion of the centrality of the concept of genocide will not lead to better intervention and prevention. On the contrary, he argues that an

important part of the problem in applying the term “genocide” to the range of processes it rightly should fit is the tendency of certain scholars to misinterpret the UNCG definition of genocide in an excessively narrow manner. In the course of his compelling argument, he offers new insights into central debates in genocide studies, such as whether destruction must be biological and how “total” intent must be. His article also presents a critical evaluation of the approach advocated by Semelin.

Evgeny Finkel and Scott Straus’s article, Uğur Ümit Üngör’s article, and Ernesto Verdeja’s article cohere as a fascinating set of insights into methodologies used by scholars to undertake their research in the field of genocide studies. Finkel and Straus argue that the methodologies used for the study of genocide are often incommensurate with one another and have failed to be subjected to rigorous tests vis-à-vis their efficacy. They identify numerous problems that inhibit the scientific study of genocide and focus on the failure to research the complexities of apparently uniform genocidal events that are present at the meso and micro levels and the importance of doing so. Üngör also sees as crucial the move away from exclusively macro-level analyses to meso- and micro-level analyses, with the need for greater attention paid to the complex interrelations between the levels that are important features of any genocidal process. Deftly walking the narrow region just this side of relativism, Üngör looks at other methodological issues as well, including the imposition of crude moralism (uncomplicated and reductive notions of “good” and “evil,” for instance) and the impact of crude identity politics on genocide scholarship. Verdeja continues these powerful examinations of research methods to ask, how can one study genocide by studying only genocide? For him, an extreme limitation of the field in explaining why genocides occur—and thus how they can be prevented—is that comparative work is almost always among cases of genocide rather than between cases of genocide and cases in which similar situations of tension and violence did not result in genocide. He calls for situating genocide studies within the broader subject area of political violence to foster this necessary contrastive approach.

Elisa von Joeden-Forgey continues her groundbreaking work in the field with an overarching analysis of the importance of gender in understanding genocide. She demonstrates the centrality of gender relations in perpetrators’ genocidal methods, which ultimately target the life force of the victim group in an effort to destroy it. She illustrates the significant implications of her concept of “life force atrocities” not only for a scholarly study of genocide but also for prevention and intervention and the defeat of denial. As she points out, life force atrocities often begin occurring long before full-blown mass killing and yet reveal perpetrators’ intent to destroy the targeted group; attention to them provides early warning as well as a response to deniers.

Israel Charny, one of the founders of the field, offers both an account of the field’s early emergence and history and an analysis of numerous issues that he considers crucial for examination today. His article focuses on the core issues of intervention and prevention. In this regard, he reintroduces some of his and others’ important work on early warning systems and prevention organizations.

As some of the previous authors, Henry Therhault offers critical analyses of areas of concern in the field, including academic activism and gender violence. Like Totten and Charny, his ultimate focus is on prevention, but unlike Totten and Charny and consistent in some respects with other authors influenced by anti- and postcolonial theory, Therhault argues that genocide is deeply entrenched in the political and social institutions

and practices that have emerged over the past half millennium. He concludes that only through a deep reparative reworking of these institutions and practices can the global order become less genocidal.

In closing, we wish to give special thanks to the exceptional Journals crew at the University of Toronto Press, in particular Sylvia Hunter, Editorial Manager, Sheree Pell, Editorial Coordinator, and Antonia Pop, Production Coordinator. Without their skillful and committed support, patience, and keen editorial work, the large and complex set of articles spanning this and the previous issue would never have reached their final form as an important joint contribution to the study of genocide and broader issues of violence and domination.

Henry Theriault and Samuel Totten
GSP Co-editors

Note

1. Samuel Totten, "The State and Future of Genocide Studies and Prevention: An Overview and Analysis of Some Key Issues," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 6,3 (2011): 211–30, <http://dx.doi.org/10.3138/gsp.6.3.211>.