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Promoting Resilience to Genocide: An Evidence-Based Approach

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Introduction

The Wannsee Conference Protocol is perhaps the last place one might look for lessons on preventing genocide. The Protocol, compiled by Adolf Eichmann following the Wannsee conference in January 1942, detailed the Nazi plan for the annihilation of European Jewry. After carefully documenting the countries where eleven million Jews targeted in the “Final Solution” were located, the Protocol outlined a range of specific plans.¹ The Jews “should be put to work in the East,” where “doubtless the large majority will be eliminated by natural causes.”² The “final remnant,” it noted, “will have to be dealt with appropriately.”³ It was anticipated that in “occupied and unoccupied France,” these plans “will in all probability proceed without great difficulty.”⁴ Similarly, “no great difficulties” were foreseen for Southeast and Western Europe.⁵ In fact there was just one region where caution was advised. In “the Scandinavian states, difficulties will arise if this problem is dealt with thoroughly and that it will therefore be advisable to defer action,” the Protocol concluded.⁶ This exception raises an intriguing question, however. Just what made the Nazi regime, fiercely determined to exterminate the Jews and at the height of its power, decide to exclude a segment of them, even temporarily? I propose that within the answer lies a vital lesson for genocide prevention.

The central goal of this article is to identify evidence-based approaches to preventing genocide. The article commences with a consideration of current conceptualizations of risk and resilience in genocide studies. The foundational methodological approach has provided sound knowledge of the causes of genocide, but much less is known about factors that promote resilience in at-risk societies. This latter knowledge is increasingly important, however, as international efforts towards genocide and atrocity prevention have been prioritized in recent years. Researching factors that promote resilience to genocide offer a number of methodological challenges, but can yield unique insights into mitigating risk. Through careful identification of multiple case studies in which a clear risk of genocide can be identified, but in which genocide did not occur, cross-situational factors that have contributed to resilience can be identified. These provide insight into evidence-based measures for genocide prevention. After outlining this methodological approach, the article presents two case studies of resilience to genocide, those of Bulgaria and Denmark during the Holocaust. During World War II, the Jews in each country experienced severe risk of genocide, yet through a range of extraordinary circumstances, the vast majority of Jews in each country were able to survive. The article briefly outlines the historical context of each case study. It then presents an analysis of three key factors that contributed to resilience in each case. First, strong leadership from multiple sectors of society made a critical difference. Second, in each case strong and early condemnation of the persecution of the Jews changed the trajectory of that persecution in vital ways, ultimately

¹ Mark Roseman, “The Wannsee Protocol,” appendix in *The Wannsee Conference and the Final Solution: A Reconsideration* (New York: Picador, 2002), 157–172.

² *Ibid.*, 164.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

saving tens of thousands of lives. Third, the presence of discursive space that allowed for the presentation of diverse perspectives in each society played a vital role in enabling resilience. The article concludes with a discussion of how this knowledge can be utilized to inform evidence-based approaches to genocide prevention today.

Conceptualizing Risk and Resilience in Genocide Studies

Understanding Risk Factors

Great strides have been made in understanding the risk factors for genocide in recent decades. There is now widespread agreement around the foundational preconditions for genocide, which include:

- Societal divisions, including the presence of one or more outgroups, typically disadvantaged minorities that are subject to discrimination which may escalate to persecution⁷
- Some form of internal strife, such as economic or political crises, war, or other real or perceived challenges that substantially impact the at-risk nation⁸
- The development of a genocidal ideology⁹
- Hate speech, incitement and/or propaganda, that typically dehumanizes vulnerable group/s, and may promote violence targeting them¹⁰

Risk can also be exacerbated by numerous additional factors. For example, regimes with a high degree of centralization of power, such as dictatorships, are at increased risk.¹¹ Poor governance, weak state structures, a history of genocide or other gross human rights violations, formidable leaders and economic deterioration can also all be contributing factors. In many cases, conflict precedes genocide and renders it much more likely. Yet genocide can also occur absent a wider conflict. Recent models of the causes of genocide also recognize that in addition to the presence of risk factors, genocide is typically preceded by one or more triggering factors that serve as a catalyst.¹² Through both qualitative and quantitative research, scholars have developed a detailed understanding of the risk factors for genocide.

⁷ Leo Kuper, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 57–58; Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide: National Responses and Jewish Victimization During the Holocaust* (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 9; Florence Mazian, *Why Genocide? The Armenian and Jewish Experiences in Perspective* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990), ix; Gregory Stanton, “Could the Rwandan Genocide Have Been Prevented?” *Journal of Genocide Research* 6, no. 2 (2004), 213–214.

⁸ Fein, *Accounting for Genocide*, 9; Mazian, *Why Genocide?*, ix–x; Stanton, “Could the Rwandan Genocide,” 214–216; Ervin Staub, *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 17.

⁹ Kuper, *Genocide*, 84; Fein, *Accounting for Genocide*, 9; Mazian, *Why Genocide?*, ix–x; Stanton, *Could the Rwandan Genocide*, 214–216.

¹⁰ Kuper, *Genocide*, 84; Fein, *Accounting for Genocide*, 9; Mazian, *Why Genocide?*, ix–x; Stanton, *Could the Rwandan Genocide*, 214–216; Israel Charny, “Genocide Early Warning Systems (GEWS),” in *Encyclopedia of Genocide*, ed. Israel Charny (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1999), 257–259.

¹¹ Rudolph Rummel, *Death by Government: Genocide and Mass Murder since 1900* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1984).

¹² Deborah Mayersen, *On the Path to Genocide: Armenia and Rwanda Reexamined* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), 16.

Much of this knowledge has been gained through very similar methodological approaches.¹³ Scholars have typically identified historical cases of genocide, then examined those societies in the period preceding them. Whilst qualitative scholars have typically conducted detailed examinations of relatively small numbers of case studies, quantitative scholars have examined data from a larger number of case studies. Both approaches, nonetheless, have focused on pre-genocidal societies to identify cross-situational antecedents of genocide. Perhaps because this approach has been so effective in identifying preconditions, it has taken some time for its limitations to be recognized. Yet in many respects this methodology has both constrained and distorted our understanding of the processes that may culminate in genocide, due to its focus on risk factors at the expense of those that may promote resilience. By exclusively focusing on case studies that culminate in genocide, this approach limits analysis to cases in which risk factors dominated, and those that contribute to resilience—either stabilizing or reducing risk—were absent or ineffective. As a result, we know much more about risk and escalatory pathways than we do about resilience and risk mitigation.

The Relationship Between Risk and Resilience

The depth of knowledge concerning risk and resilience factors has become of increasing importance in recent years, as a practitioner field in genocide prevention has emerged. Since the early 2000s, when the position of United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide was created, there has been a substantial increase in the dedicated capacity and resources available for prevention work. The UN now has an Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, and many regional organizations have some capacity in this area. The United States has elevated genocide and atrocity prevention to a core national security priority.¹⁴ Through its Atrocities Prevention Board, legislative requirements and dedicated capacity at the State Department, and even within the White House, it has adopted a “whole of government approach” to preventing genocide and mass atrocities.¹⁵ The United Kingdom has also recognized that preventing atrocities is not only morally right, but in the strategic interests of the country.¹⁶ Non-governmental organizations are increasingly active in genocide prevention efforts. Organizations such as the Auschwitz Institute for the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities, Peace Direct, the Aegis Trust, and many others have implemented a diversity of programs aimed at reducing the risk of atrocities. In the current international climate, such prevention work is particularly important. The increasing fractionalization in the international community has led to renewed gridlock in the UN Security Council. Strong and unified responses to the imminent threat or occurrence of genocide are increasingly unlikely, as recent cases in Xinjiang, China, and Tigray, Ethiopia, demonstrate. Effective prevention, therefore, is most likely to occur at earlier stages. Such prevention requires two core components: knowledge of where to target, and knowledge of the measures most likely reduce risk. The development of several risk assessment lists in recent years provides

¹³ This section draws from and builds on previous analysis in Stephen McLoughlin and Deborah Mayersen, “Reconsidering Root Causes: A New Framework for the Structural Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities,” in *Genocide: Risk and Resilience: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, ed. Bert Ingelaere et al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 49–67; Deborah Mayersen, “Deconstructing Risk and Developing Resilience: The Role of Inhibitory Factors in Genocide Prevention,” in *Reconstructing Atrocity Prevention*, ed. Sheri Rosenberg et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Deborah Mayersen and Stephen McLoughlin, “The Absence of Genocide in the Presence of Risk: When Genocide does not Occur,” in *Genocide: Key Themes*, ed. Donald Bloxham and A. Dirk Moses (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 77–80.

¹⁴ “2022 United States Strategy to Anticipate, Prevent, and Respond to Atrocities,” *United States Department of State*, July 15, 2022, accessed April 20, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/2022-united-states-strategy-to-anticipate-prevent-and-respond-to-atrocities/>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ United Kingdom House of Commons International Development Committee, “From Srebrenica to a Safer Tomorrow: Preventing Future Mass Atrocities around the World,” October 17, 2022, 3, accessed April 20, 2023, <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/30270/documents/175201/default/>.

some insight as to where early-stage prevention efforts could be beneficial.¹⁷ There is currently only a very thin evidence base with respect to knowledge of what measures are likely to be effective, however. Building knowledge of evidence-based measures for prevention is thus of great importance.

An evidence-based approach to genocide prevention demands much more than just an understanding of risk. It requires a reconceptualization of the preconditions for genocide, to incorporate equal focus on risk and resilience.¹⁸ A framework that incorporates both risk and resilience recognizes that genocide results not only from the accumulation of risk factors, but from the absence or ineffectiveness of factors that promote resilience. Through this lens, at-risk societies can be envisaged in new ways. Rather than perceiving a process of risk accumulation, focusing on factors such as societal divisions or economic deprivation, which can be deeply entrenched and difficult to dismantle, a more holistic perspective is warranted. A country's risk profile for genocide can be understood as a dynamic interaction of risk and resilience factors, fluctuating over time and in and out of equilibrium. For example, there may be demonstrable risk in a society through the presence of multiple outgroups, experiencing ongoing discrimination. This risk factor may be tempered, however, by a relatively strong rule of law that effectively prevents escalation of that discrimination. Similarly, hate speech perpetrated by a media outlet might be challenged by criticism from politicians, community groups, and/or other media. Reconceptualizing the preconditions for genocide to incorporate resilience facilitates analysis of factors that offset risk in many at-risk nations, often with great effectiveness. Most societies with some risk factors for genocide will not go on to experience it—genocide is a relatively rare outcome. Indeed, the dominant characteristic of most societies with some risk factors for genocide is stability.¹⁹ It is analysis of at-risk but not genocidal societies that can offer fresh insight into factors that promote resilience. Through an examination of these societies, cross-situational factors that function to stabilize or reduce risk can be identified. Knowledge of these factors is crucial for developing evidence-based approaches to genocide prevention.

Understanding Resilience

Studies that have focused on factors that promote resilience have yielded valuable findings. Manus Midlarsky's analysis of Finland and Bulgaria during World War II identified two cross-situational factors that promoted resilience in these at-risk but non-genocidal societies.²⁰ The first was an absence of territorial loss, and accompanying refugee influx. The second was an "affinity condition," whereby vulnerable populations may be protected by "large affine populations or governments (ethnoreligiously similar or ideologically sympathetic, frequently in neighboring countries) with substantial political and/or military influence."²¹ Multiple studies, including extensive work by Rudolph Rummel and the Political Instability Task Force,

¹⁷ For example, see Minority Rights Group International, "Results for Peoples Under Threat," accessed April 20, 2023, <https://peoplesunderthreat.org/>; Genocide Watch, "Genocide Alerts," accessed April 20, 2023, <https://www.genocidewatch.com/countries-at-risk>; Early Warning Project, "Countries at Risk for Mass Killing 2022-23: Early Warning Project Statistical Risk Assessment Results," *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, November 29, 2022, accessed April 20, 2023, <https://earlywarningproject.ushmm.org/reports/countries-at-risk-for-mass-killing-2022-23-early-warning-project-statistical-risk-assessment-results>; Australian National University School of Politics and International Relations, "The Forecasts: New Forecasts 2021-2023," accessed April 20, 2023, <https://politicsir.cass.anu.edu.au/research/projects/atrocity-forecasting/forecasts>.

¹⁸ See McLoughlin and Mayersen, *Reconsidering Root Causes*, 49–67 for a deeper discussion of this framework.

¹⁹ Mayersen and McLoughlin, *The Absence of Genocide*, 81–84.

²⁰ Manus Midlarsky, *The Killing Trap: Genocide in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

²¹ *Ibid.*, 328–329.

have demonstrated the key role of democracy in promoting resilience to genocide.²² Indigenous conflict resolution capacity has also been recognized as an important contributor to the structural, or early-stage, prevention of genocide. In Botswana, for example, it has contributed to keeping risk at low levels.²³ The case study of Côte D'Ivoire, which appeared at significant risk of genocide in 2004, has also attracted scholarly attention. There, a concerted international response, including a peacekeeping mission and arms embargo, helped stabilize the country and reduce the risk of genocide there. A focus on the need to curb hate speech was particularly effective.²⁴ Studies have also examined the case of Kenya, with an atrocity prevention lens. Following the violence associated with the 2007 election there, constitutional reform, electoral reforms, and concerted efforts to reduce hate speech and promote responsible journalism, contributed to preventing violence and atrocities in the subsequent election in 2013.²⁵ These studies, though a small minority of the scholarship, demonstrate the utility of a focus on factors that promote resilience to genocide.

A Fresh Methodological Approach

Research into at-risk but non-genocidal societies offers unique benefits, but requires a careful methodological approach to ensure its validity. In particular, case studies must exhibit clear and demonstrable risk of genocide in order to be suitable for analysis. For contemporary case studies, risk assessment lists can provide some indication of countries at risk.²⁶ Such risk lists have only been developed relatively recently, however, with the first data dating from the early 2000s. Most potential case studies, therefore, must be carefully reviewed on an individual basis to determine the presence of demonstrable risk of genocide. Here, insights from the scholarship into the preconditions for genocide prove vital. A determination of risk can be made from the presence of multiple risk factors for genocide, and other features typically present in at-risk societies. These include: a persecuted outgroup, internal strife, fears expressed by contemporary expert observers regarding the possible extermination of the group, outbreaks of limited targeted violence against the group (such as massacres), a genocide experienced by the group in the period prior to or subsequent to the period under examination, expressions of genocidal ideology, and/or the presence of propaganda or hate speech.²⁷ While case studies are unlikely to demonstrate all of these risk factors, the presence of multiple such factors provides sufficient indication of risk. In some respects, however, there is a paradox at the heart of this methodological approach. Societies exhibiting many of these factors provide the clearest indication of risk but are also at higher levels of risk. In these cases, some factors promoting resilience may already have failed or proven ineffective. Cases exhibiting relatively few risk factors potentially offer the greatest insights into factors that promote resilience, yet at the same time it may be more challenging to clearly identify these cases as at-risk societies.²⁸ Additionally, factors that promote resilience at lower levels of risk may be less effective, or ineffective, at higher levels of risk. Potentially, research may demonstrate that different factors are most

²² Rummel, *Death by Government*; Rudolph Rummel, "Democracy, Power, Genocide and Mass Murder," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 39, no. 1 (1995), 3–26; Jack Goldstone et. al, "State Failure Task Force Report: Phase III Findings," September 30, 2000, accessed April 20, 2023, <https://www.raulzelik.net/images/rztextarchiv/uniseminare/statefailure%20task%20force.pdf>.

²³ Deborah Mayersen and Stephen McLoughlin, "Risk and Resilience to Mass Atrocities in Africa: A Comparison of Rwanda and Botswana," *Journal of Genocide Research* 13, no. 3 (2011), 264.

²⁴ Payam Akhavan, "Preventing Genocide: Measuring Success by What Does Not Happen," *Criminal Law Forum* 22 (2011), 1–33, accessed April 20, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10609-011-9130-8>.

²⁵ Abdullahi Boru Halakhe, "'R2P in Practice': Ethnic Violence, Elections and Atrocity Prevention in Kenya," *Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect Occasional Paper Series* no. 4, December 2013, 16–17, accessed April 20, 2023, https://www.globalr2p.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Kenya_OccasionalPaper_Web.pdf.

²⁶ Deborah Mayersen, "Predicting Genocide and Mass Killing," *Journal of Genocide Research* 23, no. 1 (2021), 81–104; Ernesto Verdeja, "Predicting Genocide and Mass Atrocities," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 9, no. 3 (2016), 13–32.

²⁷ Mayersen, *Deconstructing Risk and Developing Resilience*, 284.

²⁸ Mayersen and McLoughlin, *The Absence of Genocide*, 84–87.

helpful at different points along the spectrum of risk. It is valuable, therefore, to consider case studies at a range of risk levels, despite the methodological challenges this may present.

To glean evidence-based measures for genocide prevention, it is also necessary to focus on societies specifically at risk of genocide, to the extent possible. Since the 2005, when the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle was agreed upon by UN member states, much of the conceptual focus has shifted towards atrocity prevention. This reflects the inclusion of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing—often collectively termed atrocities or mass atrocities—in the R2P principle. While there are many benefits to an inclusive approach to atrocity prevention, there are also some costs to this approach. In particular, the four crimes are often subsumed into the atrocities category, with the resulting atrocity prevention lacking adequate nuance to address specific risks associated with individual crimes. Yet genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing, are each very different, with potentially different causes and risk factors, and different factors likely to mitigate risk. The actions likely to reduce risk of war crimes in a conflict zone, for example, might be quite different to those required to ensure the safety of vulnerable populations deliberately targeted in genocide or ethnic cleansing. Similarly, the longer term actions required to address the risk of each in an at-risk society are likely to be quite different. The huge death tolls and multiple occurrences of genocide in past decades merit specific focus on identifying measures specifically targeted for genocide prevention.

The present study offers a comparative analysis of two cases in which there was a severe risk of genocide, but in which that risk did not materialize. Both Bulgaria and Denmark stand out as exceptional during the Holocaust, due to the survival of the vast majority of Jews in each country. In each case, the risk was clear. In Bulgaria, an ally of Nazi Germany, Nazi officials placed the government under great pressure to allow the deportation of Bulgarian Jewry.²⁹ So close were they to success that at one point cattle cars were dispatched in anticipation. In Denmark, the government and citizens conspired to ensure Nazi roundups were unsuccessful, and to help the Jewish population escape. With approximately six million Jews, or two-thirds of European Jewry, murdered in the Holocaust, the dire risk to these populations is readily apparent. Indeed, so exceptional was the situation in Denmark that Hannah Arendt suggested “this extraordinary story ... should be required reading in all political science courses which deal with the relations between power and violence.”³⁰ These cases offer examples of the possibility of resilience even in circumstances of grave risk. Yet they have only rarely been considered in this light. Moreover, they offer examples of resilience even in the absence of a concerted international response—an impossibility during World War II, and increasingly unlikely today. The cases of Bulgaria and Denmark during the Holocaust are thus well suited to offer timely insights into cross-situational factors that promote resilience to genocide, which can be of potential use in current at-risk societies. In the following section I briefly outline the historical context of each case, prior to examining three key factors that promoted resilience.

Historical Context

Bulgaria

At the outset of World War II Bulgaria declared neutrality. It had deep ties and a strong trade relationship with Nazi Germany, however, and in 1941 formally allied with the regime. Bulgaria did not have a strong history of antisemitism, and attempts to introduce “The Law for the Defence of the Nation” there, akin to the Nuremberg Laws, were met with strong opposition. The law was heavily criticized in Parliament and across broad sectors of society, as

²⁹ Deborah Mayersen, “Saving Bulgarian Jewry from the Holocaust: The Role of National Identity,” *Ethnopolitics*, published online 14 June 2023, 2, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2023.2216520>.

³⁰ Hannah Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgement* (New York: Schocken Books, 2003), 5–6.

unconstitutional and inimical to Bulgarian values.³¹ The Bulgarian Orthodox Church, with which the overwhelming majority of Bulgarians identified, expressed strong and sustained opposition.³² Nonetheless, the law was promulgated. Conditions for Jews in Bulgaria thereafter slowly deteriorated, with the imposition of onerous taxes and restrictions. Some of the worst impositions were tempered by public support for the Jews, however. In 1942, the country came under increasing pressure to deport the Jews, but the government prevaricated.³³ Germany responded by sending a special envoy to organize the deportations and, in early 1943, a secret agreement was reached. The Jews from Bulgarian-occupied Thrace and Macedonia—who had been denied Bulgarian citizenship when Bulgaria took control of the territories in 1941—were to be deported to Poland. The agreement specified 20,000 deportations, yet there were only 12,000 Jews in these areas, meaning that Jews from “old” Bulgaria would need to be included in the arrangements if the agreement was to be fulfilled.³⁴

In early March 1943, when news leaked of the imminent deportation of the entire Jewish population from the town of Kyustendil in southwest Bulgaria, community leaders rushed to the capital Sofia to protest.³⁵ There, they met with Deputy Speaker of the Parliament and Member for Kyustendil, Dimitar Peshev. Peshev was incensed to learn of the secret agreement. Amassing a group of supportive parliamentary colleagues, his dramatic intervention exposed the secret plan and forced its partial postponement. While the 12,000 Jews from Thrace and Macedonia were deported, with few survivors, those from Bulgaria itself were not.³⁶ The 48,000 or so Bulgarian Jews remained at risk, however, as the Prime Minister destroyed Peshev’s career in revenge, and concerted antisemites tried to reschedule the deportations at the earliest opportunity. In May, a second attempt at the deportations was again thwarted, due to massive public opposition. The Jews were nonetheless expelled from Sofia to the provinces. There they experienced great hardship, poverty, and forced labor, as they anxiously awaited developments. The turning tide of the war, however, rendered further attempts at deportation unfeasible.³⁷ Slowly, as 1943 drew to a close, tensions began to ease. As the allies grew closer to victory, the Bulgarian government came under increasing pressure to ameliorate the conditions of the Jews, and by mid-1944 it was clear that the risk had passed. Ultimately, not a single Bulgarian Jewish citizen was deported to the death camps.

Denmark

When Germany invaded Denmark on 9 April 1940, it arrived with an ultimatum. Denmark could accede to German occupation and retain some autonomy, or refuse and face certain defeat against the vastly superior German military. Within hours, a deal was reached. The Danish government reluctantly accepted the German presence, and in exchange, Germany agreed to respect Denmark’s neutrality, not to interfere with its territorial integrity or political

³¹ Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fragility of Goodness*, trans. Arthur Denner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Stephen Reicher et al., “Saving Bulgaria’s Jews: An Analysis of Social Identity and the Mobilisation of Social Solidarity,” *European Journal of Social Psychology* 36, (2006), 49–72.

³² Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, *The Power of Civil Society in a Time of Genocide: Proceedings of the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church on the Rescue of the Jews in Bulgaria 1940–1944* (Sofia: Sofia University Press St. Kliment Ohridski, 2005).

³³ Michael Bar-Zohar, *Beyond Hitler’s Grasp: The Historic Rescue of Bulgaria’s Jews* (Stoughton: Adams Media, 1998), 58–61.

³⁴ “The Dannecker-Belev Agreement,” Appendix II in *The Bulgarian Jews and the Final Solution 1940–1944*, Frederick Chary (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972), 208–210.

³⁵ Haim Oliver, *We Were Saved: How the Jews in Bulgaria Were Kept from the Death Camps* (Sofia: Sofia Press, 1978), 156–158; Asen Suichmezov, “Asen Suichmezov” in *The Fragility of Goodness*, Tzvetan Todorov, trans. Arthur Denner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 133.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁷ Chary, *The Bulgarian Jews*, 152.

independence, and not interfere in its internal affairs.³⁸ Denmark was to become a “model protectorate.”³⁹ This policy of accommodation required a level of cooperation with the Nazis with which many Danes grew increasingly uncomfortable.⁴⁰ From the outset, however, it was clear to the Germans that Danish cooperation was dependent on German restraint with respect to the Jewish population. Just six days after the occupation, the German plenipotentiary remarked in a report to the Foreign Ministry:

The Danish authorities are apprehensive as to whether we will ... take steps against Jews ... If we do anything more in this respect than is strictly necessary, this will cause paralysis of or serious disturbances in political and economic life. The importance of the problem should not therefore be underestimated.⁴¹

This state of affairs came to be recognized at the highest levels, as the Wannsee Protocol attests. The Danish King, Prime Minister, and population, were united in opposition to the persecution of Jews.⁴² Danish national identity emphasized democratic and humanitarian values, and there was a resurgence in patriotism in response to the occupation.⁴³ The church also took a strong and public stance against antisemitism from the earliest opportunity.⁴⁴ As the government came under increasing pressure from the Nazi occupation, it agreed on three core measures on which it would refuse to compromise: joining the Axis, dispatching the Danish army to the eastern front, and introducing anti-Jewish legislation.⁴⁵

Over the course of 1943, the policy of cooperation between Denmark and Nazi Germany became increasingly strained. The Nazis demanded ever more concessions, and the population was aggrieved by Germany’s economic exploitation of Denmark and by increasing reports of Nazi atrocities against the Jews elsewhere in Europe.⁴⁶ After a wave of strikes, on August 29, the German administration declared a state of emergency. The policy of cooperation was over. Almost immediately preparations commenced for the deportation of the Jews. A secret plan was developed to round up the Jews on the night of October 1–2, when they would be celebrating Jewish New Year. When news of the deportations leaked, however, Danes everywhere worked to protect and assist the Jews. At first, this consisted of hiding them during the roundup. So successful was this, that less than 300 of the 8,000 or so Jews in Denmark were

³⁸ Phil Giltner, “The Success of Collaboration: Denmark’s Self-Assessment of Its Economic Position after Five Years of Nazi Occupation,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 36, no. 3 (2001), 485; Steen Andersen, “A Mild Occupation? Denmark, 1940–1945,” in *Paying for Hitler’s War: The Consequences of Nazi Hegemony for Europe*, ed. Jonas Scherner and Eugene Nelson White (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 296.

³⁹ Andersen, *A Mild Occupation?*, 296.

⁴⁰ Leni Yahil, *The Rescue of Danish Jewry: Test of a Democracy*, trans. Morris Gradel (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969), 33.

⁴¹ Quoted in *ibid.*, 42.

⁴² Bo Lidegaard, *Countrymen* (London: Atlantic Books, 2014), 19–20.

⁴³ Steven Borish, “Hal Koch, Grundtvig and the Rescue of the Danish Jews: A Case Study in the Democratic Mobilisation for Non-Violent Resistance,” *Grundtvig-Studier* 60, no. 1 (2009), 86–119; Andrew Buckser, “Rescue and Cultural Context During the Holocaust: Grundtvigian Nationalism and the Rescue of the Danish Jews,” *Shofar* 19, no. 2 (2001), 1–25.

⁴⁴ Johan Snoek, *The Grey Book: A Collection of Protests against Anti-Semitism and the Persecution of Jews issued by Non-Roman Catholic Churches and Church Leaders during Hitler’s Rule* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1969), 57, 162–163.

⁴⁵ Yahil, *The Rescue*, 49.

⁴⁶ Myrna Goodman, “Foundations of Resistance in German-Occupied Denmark,” in *Resisting the Holocaust*, ed. Ruby Rohrlich (Oxford: Berg, 1998), 218; Bob Moore, *Survivors: Jewish Self-Help and Rescue in Nazi-Occupied Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 88.

captured.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, it was quickly recognized that hiding only offered temporary respite. While there were very low numbers of collaborators in Denmark, they nevertheless imperiled the Jewish population.⁴⁸ For most Jews, therefore, the only real option became escape to neighboring Sweden. Extraordinarily, as the crisis erupted, Sweden offered sanctuary to all Danish Jews able to reach it—a move unprecedented in Europe since Adolf Hitler took power.⁴⁹ Immediately following the Swedish announcement, Jews began trying to find safe passage there. Doing so required crossing the Sound, the strait between Denmark and Sweden, by boat. Many Danes began assisting Jews to find passage across the Strait, and within days the resistance helped organize these efforts. In a period of just weeks, 7,220 Jews were able to escape to Sweden, although many paid huge fares for their safe passage.⁵⁰ Along with other measures, this led to the vast majority of Denmark's Jews surviving the Holocaust.

Factors Promoting Resilience to Genocide

To identify the factors that contributed to Bulgaria and Denmark's resilience to genocide, a detailed examination of each case study was undertaken. For each, this included careful process tracing, to identify the causal factors propelling events at critical junctures. Additionally, primary documents, written by protagonists as events unfolded, were analyzed using critical discourse analysis.⁵¹ This provided insight into the thinking and motivations that drove key actors as they sought to prevent genocide. The findings revealed that in both Bulgaria and Denmark, there were a multiplicity of factors that contributed to each country's resilience to genocide. Some were unique to each country, and others unique to the context of the Holocaust. Below, the article presents three crucial factors that contributed to each country's resilience. Each of these factors was operable in both contexts, and each of these cross-situational factors has the potential to be adapted for prospective use. Collectively, they offer fresh insight into potential evidence-based approaches to genocide prevention in societies currently at risk of mass atrocities.

Leadership

Strong leadership in multiple sectors and levels of society emerges as a key factor that promoted resilience to genocide in both Bulgaria and Denmark. Political leadership in opposition to the genocide played a vital role. In Bulgaria, Peshev's intervention was critical. He acted on the very eve of the proposed deportations, as cattle cars stood waiting at the train station in Kyustendil to deport the local Jewish population.⁵² After learning of the situation, he first gathered a group of colleagues around him, before meeting with the Interior Minister. A tense discussion resulted, with the Minister first attempting to deny the accusations. It was only following hours of debate, threats to raise the matter in the National Assembly, and the involvement of the Prime Minister (and possibly the King) that the deportation orders were temporarily postponed.⁵³ Peshev recognized more was needed, however. He gathered the signatures of 42 of his colleagues on a letter to the Prime Minister declaring the deportation

⁴⁷ Yahil, *The Rescue*, 186; Richard Petrow, *The Bitter Years: The Invasion and Occupation of Denmark and Norway, April 1940–May 1945* (New York: William Morrow, 1974), 213.

⁴⁸ Silvia Fracapane, *The Jews of Denmark in the Holocaust: Life and Death in Theresienstadt Ghetto* (London: Routledge, 2020), 55–56, 71.

⁴⁹ Paul Levine, "Sweden's Complicated Neutrality and the Rescue of Danish Jewry," in *The Routledge History of the Holocaust*, ed. Jonathan Friedman (London: Routledge, 2011), 305.

⁵⁰ Michael Mogensen, "October 1943—The Rescue of the Danish Jews," in *Denmark and the Holocaust*, ed. Mette Jensen and Steven Jensen (Copenhagen: Institute for International Studies, Department for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, 2003), 33–61; Yahil, *The Rescue*, 263.

⁵¹ See also Mayersen, *Saving Bulgarian Jewry*.

⁵² Suichmezov, *Asen Suichmezov*, 133.

⁵³ Dimitar Peshev, "Dimitar Peshev," in *The Fragility of Goodness*, Tzvetan Todorov, trans. Arthur Denner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 160–161; Chary, *The Bulgarian Jews*, 95.

plans “unacceptable,” and that taking such action would be “disastrous.”⁵⁴ The extraordinary leadership displayed by Peshev and his fellow deputies, at risk to their careers (indeed, Peshev’s stance destroyed his career), proved instrumental in saving the Jews. In Denmark, political leadership also proved vital. There was concerted and sustained opposition to the persecution of the Jews from the King, Prime Minister, and government. King Christian X made clear to the Danish Prime Minister his opposition to the Nazi persecution of the Jews, and the importance of the issue.⁵⁵ They were in agreement that there could be no compromise. The King’s public behavior quietly demonstrated his support for the Jews. Indeed, his dismissive response to a telegram from Hitler provoked a crisis between the two countries. The Danish government also firmly opposed antisemitism, passing a law in 1939 making it illegal to incite hatred against a religious group, and continuing to enforce it even under the occupation.⁵⁶ This political leadership placed barriers in the way of Nazi attempts to persecute the Jews, and for politicians who may have been willing to support such attempts.

Yet it was not just political leadership that contributed to resilience to genocide. In both Bulgaria and Denmark, the Church played an important role in opposition to the persecution of the Jews. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church took an activist approach. When the Law for the Defence of the Nation was proposed, for example, the Church wrote to the Prime Minister, demanding major changes to ensure “no actions shall be taken against the Jews as a national minority.”⁵⁷ The letter was followed up with meetings on the issue with the Speaker of the National Assembly and the Prime Minister.⁵⁸ Following the failed deportation attempt in March 1943, the church campaigned vigorously to the government on behalf of the Jews, and did so even more vigorously during the second deportation attempt in May.⁵⁹ In Denmark, the Danish Lutheran Church also stood steadfast in its condemnation of Jewish persecution. The day following the roundup of the Jews, for example, a protest letter sent to the Nazis was read from the pulpit of every church, stating “Wherever Jews are persecuted because of their religion or race it is the duty of the Christian Church to protest against such persecution.”⁶⁰ Leadership from the wider community also played a key role. In Bulgaria, for example, it was a delegation of local community leaders in Kyustendil—horrified at the impending deportations—that travelled to Sofia to alert Peshev of the situation. In Denmark, the resistance played a key role in hiding Jews and organizing the boats that enabled their escape to Sweden. Leadership by political, religious, and community figures had a major impact on resilience to genocide.

Leaders felt compelled to act to prevent genocide due to their underlying values. In both Bulgaria and Denmark, these values included an inclusive, civic conception of national identity, and moral imperatives. In Bulgaria, for example, most of the population viewed Jews as members of the Bulgarian people, entitled to the same rights and protections as all other Bulgarians (as stipulated in the Bulgarian constitution).⁶¹ The prevailing propaganda was unsuccessful in shifting this perception, and Bulgarian leaders such as Peshev thus felt the treatment of the Jews was a matter of grave national consequence. Similarly, Danish national

⁵⁴ Dimitar Peshev et al., “Protest Letter by the Vice-Chairman of the 25th Session of the National Assembly, Dimitar Peshev, and Forty-two Other Deputies,” 17 March 1943, in *The Fragility of Goodness*, Tzvetan Todorov, trans. Arthur Denner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 79.

⁵⁵ Lidegaard, *Countrymen*, 19–20.

⁵⁶ Jørgen Hæstrup, “The Danish Jews and the German Occupation,” in *The Rescue of the Danish Jews: Moral Courage Under Stress*, ed. Leo Goldberger (New York: New York University Press, 1987), 32.

⁵⁷ Tzvetan Todorov, “Statement by the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church to the Prime Minister,” in *The Fragility of Goodness*, trans. Arthur Denner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 56.

⁵⁸ Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, “Excerpts from Minutes #14 of the Session on 19 November 1940 of the All-member Meeting of the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church,” in *The Power of Civil Society*, 72.

⁵⁹ Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, *The Power of Civil Society*.

⁶⁰ Goodman, “Foundations of Resistance,” 229; Samuel Abrahamsen, “The Rescue of Denmark’s Jews,” in *The Rescue*, ed. Goldberger, 6–7.

⁶¹ Todorov, *The Fragility of Goodness*; Reicher et al., *Saving Bulgaria’s Jews*, 49–72.

identity embraced inclusive and democratic values.⁶² For political and church leaders in both countries, a strong commitment to morality also underpinned their behavior. The importance of individual and national values contributes to explaining the emergence of leadership from unexpected places at times. Peshev, for example, was a senior member of the Nazi-allied Bulgarian government, who had not strongly opposed earlier persecution of the Jews. In Denmark, two sequential Nazi plenipotentiaries were so convinced of the Danish opposition to Jewish persecution that each worked actively to prevent such persecution, an extraordinary turn of events given their roles.⁶³ Additionally, for many of the leaders that worked to prevent genocide in Bulgaria and Denmark, initial small acts or expressions of support expanded over time into much more consequential and risky actions. These findings provide insight into what makes strong leaders willing to act to prevent genocide.

Early and Robust Condemnation of Persecution

A key finding of this analysis is the role of early and robust condemnation of the persecution in contributing to resilience to genocide. Well before the risk of genocide was imminent, this robust condemnation changed the trajectory of the crisis in each nation, in ways that proved critical to ultimately preventing genocide. In Denmark, this is readily apparent at multiple stages. From the outset, Danish opposition to Jewish persecution was clear and influenced Nazi policy in the country. Following the occupation, German plenipotentiary Cecil von Renthe-Fink repeatedly advocated for a soft approach to the “Jewish question.” Importantly, he was able to convince German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop that it was in Germany’s best interests to postpone any action in Denmark, in order to maintain the cooperative relationship.⁶⁴ This proved crucial when Ribbentrop, in turn, instructed his undersecretary, Martin Luther, to proceed accordingly at the Wannsee Conference.⁶⁵ Following the crisis in Danish-German relations in October 1942, however, Renthe-Fink was replaced with Werner Best, as Hitler sought a stronger Nazi influence. Yet Best continued with the same cautious approach. A few months after taking office, he advised Ribbentrop that Danish support for their Jewish brethren made action against them inadvisable; furthermore, it would likely lead to the resignation of the Danish Prime Minister.⁶⁶ Even when Hitler pressed—through Ribbentrop—for more information on what action could be taken against the Jews without precipitating a crisis, Best was not forthcoming.⁶⁷ These actions brought crucial time for the Jews. By the time the Nazis eventually did attempt to deport the Jews in October 1943, the tide of the war had already turned, influencing Sweden’s decision to open its borders to Jewish refugees. Sweden’s policy towards Nazi Germany closely followed the trajectory of the war, however, and it is very unlikely the country would have made such a decision earlier.⁶⁸ The early and strong Danish stance against Jewish persecution thus made a critical difference.

In Bulgaria, public opposition to the persecution of the Jews similarly shaped the trajectory of their treatment. The widespread and sustained opposition to the Law for the Defence of the Nation was surprising and unexpected to the government.⁶⁹ While the law was eventually promulgated, after some delay, the strong opposition influenced the government’s position on the issue. Initially, its implementation was lax, and numerous exceptions created. In 1942, the measure by which the Jews were required to wear the Jewish star on their clothing was effectively stymied by the lack of sufficient stars to distribute. While ostensibly “electricity

⁶² Lidegaard, *Countrymen*, 15.

⁶³ Yahil, *The Rescue*, 51–61; Petrow, *The Bitter Years*, 198–199.

⁶⁴ Yahil, *The Rescue*, 51–61.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 57–58.

⁶⁶ Petrow, *The Bitter Years*, 198–199.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 199.

⁶⁸ Age Trommer, “Scandinavia and the Turn of the Tide,” in *Scandinavia during the Second World War*, ed. Henrik Nissen (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 268.

⁶⁹ Bar-Zohar, *Beyond Hitler’s Grasp*, 31.

shortages” shut down the factory producing them, Nazi intelligence recognized this as a “pretext.”⁷⁰ Moreover, public sympathy for the Jews meant the stars did not have the desired discriminatory effect.⁷¹ Nazi intelligence also complained about numerous cases in which King Boris personally intervened to assist Jews in various matters.⁷² In 1942, the Bulgarian Prime Minister, despite his antisemitic leanings, resisted increasing Nazi pressure to deport the Jews. A pressing need for Jewish forced labour, he claimed, meant that no deportation arrangements could be made.⁷³ Bulgarian reluctance delayed the persecution of the Jews, and then their proposed deportation, by a substantial period. As in Denmark, this barrier brought crucial time for the Jews. Political and public opposition derailed the first and second deportation attempts, in March and May 1943. Undoubtedly, however, the forced relocation of the Jews to the Bulgarian provinces in May, to locations conveniently close to railways and ports, left them deeply vulnerable to a third attempt. The progress of the war, however, meant that by August 1943 further attempts were no longer politically viable. Just as in Denmark, the early and robust condemnation of the persecution changed the trajectory of the crisis in key ways that ultimately prevented genocide.

Discursive Space

The presence of discursive space in both Bulgaria and Denmark also played a vital role in facilitating resilience to genocide. In Bulgaria there remained public space for the expression of differing viewpoints throughout the war. Despite Bulgaria’s status as a dictatorship, there was a parliament, a vigorous opposition party, and an ongoing ability to speak out in the National Assembly. Opposition members heavily criticized the proposed “Law for the Defence of the Nation” in the National Assembly, for example, with one commenting “[i]f not for foreign propaganda, it would never have occurred to anyone to take such draconian and retrograde measures.”⁷⁴ The Bulgarian Lawyers’ Union was free to publicly protest that “the Bulgarian Constitution expressly forbids the separation of Bulgarian citizens into inferior and superior categories ... approval of the bill would be a violation of our Constitution.”⁷⁵ Attempts by the Bulgarian government to portray the Jews as a threat to country were openly derided.⁷⁶ A narrative of the Jews as a threatening other simply never took hold. In March 1943, as Peshev and his colleagues desperately sought to have the deportations cancelled, they were able to threaten speaking out about them in the National Assembly.⁷⁷ In May, public protests played an instrumental role in thwarting the second deportation attempt. Following a demonstration organized by the Jews, the Bulgarian police chief reported: “the native Bulgarian population expresses its complete solidarity with the Jews and is taking part in their actions. Every attempt to deport the Jews has met with not only the peoples’ indignation, but also with their resistance. We are forced to give up our plan to resettle the Jews in Poland.”⁷⁸ The presence of discursive space in Bulgaria ensured that opposition to the persecution of the Jews could be clearly

⁷⁰ Ethan Hollander, “The Final Solution in Bulgaria and Romania: A Comparative Perspective,” *East European Politics and Societies* 22, no. 2 (2008), 218.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Bar-Zohar, *Beyond Hitler’s Grasp*, 58–61.

⁷⁴ Tzvetan Todorov “Todor Polyakov’s Speech in the National Assembly, 20 December 1940,” in *The Fragility of Goodness*, trans. Arthur Denner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 68.

⁷⁵ Tzvetan Todorov, “Statement by the Governing Board of the Bulgarian Lawyers’ Union,” in *The Fragility of Goodness*, trans. Arthur Denner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 49.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 47; Tzvetan Todorov, “Open Letter from Christo Pudev to the National Assembly Deputies,” in *The Fragility of Goodness*, trans. Arthur Denner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 51; Tzvetan Todorov, “Petko Stainov’s Speech,” in *The Fragility of Goodness*, trans. Arthur Denner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 63.

⁷⁷ Chary, *The Bulgarian Jews*, 95.

⁷⁸ Rueben Ainsztein, *Jewish Resistance in Nazi-Occupied Eastern Europe: With a Historical Survey of the Jew as Fighter and Soldier in the Diaspora* (London: Paul Elek, 1974), xxi.

expressed, that exclusionary and genocidal ideologies could not gain precedence, and that the government remained at least somewhat beholden to the will of the population.

In Denmark, the presence of discursive space even under the occupation also proved crucial to the Danish determination to protect the Jews. Following the occupation, a resurgence of Danish patriotism emphasized democratic and humanitarian values as core to Danish national identity. The preservation of Danish honor was perceived as crucial to enduring the occupation, and these concepts were reinforced with lectures, study circles, youth movements, and sermons. The church's opposition to antisemitism was publicized in the church press, even during the occupation. For example, an article in the Church gazette of Sonderbourg remarked: "We will not lend our support to the introduction of anti-Jewish laws; Jew hatred is an infectious disease, to which the innate sense of justice of the Danish people will not permit them to succumb."⁷⁹ A vibrant underground press played an important role in ensuring Danes could access the opinions of their leaders and fellow Danes on issues such as the occupation and Jewish question. By 1943, there were more than 100 underground newspapers.⁸⁰ They communicated more reliable information as to the progress of the war than that available in German-controlled publications, they provided news as to the plight of Jews in other Nazi-occupied countries and they discussed and criticized official policies.⁸¹ Through its presentation of public opinion in Denmark, the underground press undercut Nazi antisemitic propaganda. It also helped shape the political climate around opposition to the occupation and the persecution of the Jews. Such discursive space ensured that the Danish people were able to maintain and nurture their humanitarian values despite the occupation. It enabled widespread rejection of antisemitism. When the Nazi roundup took place, the prevalence of these values meant that thousands of ordinary Danes were willing to shelter and hide the Jews, and then help them escape to Sweden. This was critical to preventing genocide in Denmark.

An Evidence-Based Approach to Genocide Prevention

The cross-situational factors that promoted resilience to genocide in Bulgaria and Denmark offer unique insights for an evidence-based approach to genocide prevention. These are factors that have been effective in promoting resilience to genocide on multiple occasions in the past and are therefore highly likely to be similarly effective in the future. Most importantly, they are readily translatable for implementation in societies currently at risk of genocide. While it is tempting to dismiss the context of the Holocaust as "too different" to offer insights relevant for today, that is far from the case. There are many parallels between the Holocaust and more recent genocides such as in Rwanda, Darfur, and against the Yazidis in Iraq, such as the targeting of vulnerable ethnic and religious minorities and concerted efforts toward the dehumanization of these groups. In all of these cases, genocidal ideologies emerged from the fringes of society to pose an existential threat to vulnerable groups. In the case of the Yazidis in Iraq, we also see how the rapid geographical advance of a genocidal power can lead to an extremely dynamic situation of risk escalation for a vulnerable group—a situation not dissimilar to the way in which the geographical advance of the Nazis rendered European Jews vulnerable to genocide. Additionally, the case studies of Denmark and Bulgaria offer rare insight into how factors promoting resilience to genocide can make a crucial difference even in circumstances of dire risk. Knowledge of these factors can aid policymakers to make better-informed decisions, and to advocate for policies more likely to be effective in preventing genocide.

The case studies demonstrate that the evidence for the importance of multi-sectoral leadership in contributing to genocide prevention is clear. This suggests the high value of engaging with leaders and emerging leaders in at-risk countries to promote human rights and

⁷⁹ Quoted in Snoek, *The Grey Book*, 162–163.

⁸⁰ Nathaniel Hong, *Sparks of Resistance: The Illegal Press in German-Occupied Denmark April 1940–August 1943* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1996), 218.

⁸¹ Hong, *Sparks of Resistance*; Jean Seaton, "The BBC and the Holocaust," *European Journal of Communication* 2, no. 1 (1987), 53–80.

inclusive values, and to ensure that they have sufficient knowledge and tools to be effective advocates for genocide prevention. Certainly not all leaders in at-risk countries will become such advocates, and indeed many will lack the political will to take a strong stance or be in favor of discriminatory policies. Yet engaging with leaders that promote human rights or have the potential to do so, and working with them to develop their skills, knowledge, networks, and support structures is a promising evidence-based approach. Facilitating strong leadership increases the likelihood of “upstanders” taking a principled and robust stance at key inflection points. Targeted educational programs have the potential to ensure that leaders who may be willing to take a stance in support of human rights are equipped and empowered to do so. Such programs might include knowledge about genocide and mass atrocities, risk factors for such crimes, the dangers of hate speech, and information about actions they can take to reduce risk. Leaders would benefit from knowledge of the actions of upstanding leaders in other situations of risk, and of programs that have proven effective in stabilizing or reducing risk in similar contexts to their own. Leadership training can help build networks of leaders committed to atrocity prevention. Such leaders are in excellent positions to promote inclusiveness and tolerance. Moreover, evidence indicates that leaders often first take small, relatively low-risk steps to protect vulnerable groups, which then facilitates further and more assertive responses. Leadership training can help guide leaders to these small actions, empowering individuals to progress along this pathway should it become necessary. The case studies also demonstrate the need for a breadth of focus in targeting leaders in at-risk societies. In each case, a multitude of leaders from political, religious, and community spheres contributed to resilience. Moreover, it is not necessarily foreseeable which leaders might play a central role in preventing a crisis, or effectively responding to it. Educating and working with a diversity of leaders, to ensure they are equipped with the knowledge and tools to contribute to genocide prevention, thus offers a powerful evidence-based approach.

An evidence-based approach to genocide prevention also demands early and robust condemnation of the persecution of vulnerable groups. This is a particularly important finding because it does not accord with the current policies adopted by many countries, intergovernmental organizations, and even nongovernmental organizations in responding to risk of genocide. The evidence from these case studies is clear. Early and robust condemnation of the persecution of the Jews in both Bulgaria and Denmark fundamentally shaped the trajectory of each crisis to delay and render less likely their deportation, ultimately preventing genocide in both cases. Even at the height of its power, and despite its extraordinary determination to exterminate the Jews, Nazi policies were influenced by this strong and public opposition in Bulgaria and Denmark. Had such opposition been more muted, or absent until deportation immediately threatened, it would not have been effective. This highlights the value of immediate, robust, and sustained responses to the persecution of vulnerable groups—well before that persecution threatens to escalate to genocide. Such condemnation is important at the local, national, and international levels. From a genocide prevention perspective, educating local and national leaders as to the positive impact of early and robust condemnation, and working with those leaders to promote such condemnation, has clear potential to promote resilience. Robust international condemnation provides crucial support and legitimization to local and national leaders attempting to counter persecution and inflammatory ideologies. Yet too often, such condemnation fails to materialize. The UN Security Council, Human Rights Council, and UN Secretariat may be swayed by political considerations, and regularly fail to robustly condemn the persecution of minorities. Key countries, such as the US, have also avoided robust condemnation of gross human rights violations in some cases, on the grounds that doing so allows space for dialogue and diplomacy. The evidence from these case studies, however, suggests that strong, public and sustained opposition to persecution of vulnerable groups—from the earliest stages—is vitally important to preventing genocide.

Finally, evidence-based approaches to genocide prevention demand protecting discursive space in at-risk societies and ensuring a multitude of perspectives can find expression. Protecting discursive space is vital at all levels of risk. In relatively stable societies

with the presence of some risk factors, such space can be found in community discussions, online locations and diverse media outlets. According these spaces protection, and providing sufficient funding to ensure their continuation if required, can help prevent a dominant narrative of exclusion and hatred from taking root. Measures such as ensuring legal protections for freedom of expression can also help promote resilience to genocide. As risk of genocide escalates, very often the space for free speech diminishes. Newspapers can be censored or shut down, protesters attacked and arrested, and outspoken advocates targeted. In such situations, strong international reactions can help ameliorate the targeting of free speech. Diplomatic efforts should incorporate a focus on the need for ongoing freedom of expression, recognizing its importance in resilience to genocide. In recent years, regimes perpetrating genocide and mass atrocities have increasingly taken to shutting down internet access in particular regions, or even nationally. Not only should such measures attract immediate international condemnation and sanction, but they should be actively combatted through the provision of satellite-based internet access wherever possible. Discursive space is essential for challenging genocidal narratives, and protecting such space offers an evidence-based measure to promote resilience to genocide.

Conclusion

The current geopolitical environment offers unprecedented opportunities, but also unique challenges, for genocide prevention. More resources and more capacity are being dedicated to genocide and atrocity prevention than ever before. The United States has demonstrated a commitment to prevention as a core national security policy, and countries such as the United Kingdom appear to be increasingly focused on prevention as well. A proliferation of civil society organizations are also working in the field to prevent genocide and mass atrocities. At the same time, growing tensions between Western powers and China and Russia mean the United Nations Security Council is increasingly gridlocked. Measures emanating from the Security Council, such as resolutions issuing condemnations, peacekeeping missions, and referrals to the International Criminal Court, are becoming much less likely. At this juncture, therefore, there is a need for approaches to genocide prevention that do not rely on international consensus. Evidence-based measures to promote resilience in at-risk societies, many of which can be implemented well before crisis points, offer a promising way forward. The three measures presented in this article—engaging with and empowering leaders, strong and robust condemnation of persecution and protecting discursive space—suggest the value and potential impact of evidence-based approaches that promote resilience. There is also scope for future studies, utilizing a diversity of case studies and methodologies, to further extend knowledge of the factors that promote resilience to genocide.

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