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THESIS

THE UTILITY OF MASS VIOLENCE

by

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September 2009

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THE UTILITY OF MASS VIOLENCE

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Violence: the word itself has a distinctly negative connotation. It seems as though our entire society is fixated on preventing violence. Despite our keen desires to repel violence in all of its forms, we are still enthralled by it. Perhaps our fascination with violence is much more than a simple manifestation of the deviant within. Could it be that our violent tendencies are not necessarily all bad? This is precisely the topic we will explore. Using the events of The Great Jewish Revolt against the Romans in 66 AD and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising during the Holocaust, we will strive to answer the question: what is the utility of mass violence? As we address this question, several central themes will emerge. The utility of mass violence is proportional to the perpetrator's ability (or willingness) to employ violence absolutely. In other words, in order for mass violence to serve a useful purpose, it must be used without significant restraint. Nonetheless, in the majority of our examples, we will find that mass violence is only effective in the short term. Eventually, even the most definitive acts spawn further violence. Thus, in terms of long-term conflict resolution, less violent options are actually more efficient.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Violence: the word itself has a distinctly negative connotation. It seems as though our entire society is fixated on preventing violence. The perpetrators of extreme violence are rightfully sealed off from the rest of the world with bars and barbed wire fences. In our classrooms, we study the violence committed by the tyrants of the past so we can carefully guard against this type of behavior in the future. Despite our keen desires to repel violence in all of its forms, we are still fascinated by it. We bombard ourselves with violent television shows and videogames. We bask in the warm glow of an explosive Hollywood action sequence, as if these fiery detonations somehow pierce our very souls. Couple revenge and justice with a few exploding helicopters, and you are guaranteed a blockbuster box office success. After school, hoards of students gather to witness a rumble between two rival gangs, and tales of the battle echo through the hallways for months to come. All the while, concerned parents shake their heads: “What is it with kids these days and their fascination with violence?” Yet, they too are compelled to slow down and gawk at the wreckage from a large automobile accident on the side of the road—to the detriment of normal traffic flow. The larger the scale of the violence act, the more hypnotizing the effects become. Perhaps our fascination with violence is much more than a simple manifestation of the deviant within. Could it be that our violent tendencies are not necessarily all bad? This is precisely the question we will explore.

A. METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

To this end, we will examine several historical case studies of mass violence. The circumstances of the cases will differ greatly, but each case will illustrate a unique facet of the utility or disutility of mass violence. We will begin our analysis on a macro level, with a discussion of the role of war making in nation-state formation, and the role the great powers and the United Nations have played in delegitimizing this type of violence. We will then shift our focus to

the early Romans and their actions against the Jews during the first Jewish-Roman War (66–73 AD), specifically the events of the Great Revolt. In this conflict, both the Romans and Jews displayed a remarkable commitment to complete brutality. Almost 2,000 years later, the Nazis replicated this cruelty against the Jews in World War II. The Jews eventually mounted an insurgency from the slums of Poland in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The events leading to the uprising, along with their horrific conclusion will serve as the next stop in our case study analysis. The Great Revolt and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising are uniquely related, as the actions of the Jews against the Romans later served as the inspiration for the Jewish revolt against the Nazis. While the methods of the Romans and Nazis were strikingly similar, the conditions under which they employed their methods were enormously different. Our contrast of the two cases will highlight several changes in the world's view of mass violence that have occurred in the past century.

Of course, violence comes in many forms. On the extreme end of the spectrum, we find the most obvious form—the unjustified murder of innocents. On the opposite end, we find verbal assaults, and other forms of non-physical violence. For our purposes, we are interested in the motivations and effects of violence on both ends of the spectrum, and everything in between; however, our primary focus will be on acts of violence committed on a large scale.

B. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND CENTRAL THEMES

Ultimately, the central questions of this study are simple. What is the utility of mass violence? When is mass violence productive and when is it merely destructive? As we address these questions, several central themes will emerge. The utility of mass violence is proportional to the perpetrator's ability (or willingness) to employ violence absolutely. In other words, in order for mass violence to serve a useful purpose, it must be used without significant restraint. Nonetheless, in the majority of our examples, we will find that mass violence is only effective in the short term. Eventually, even the most definitive acts spawn

further violence. Thus, in terms of long-term conflict resolution, less violent options are actually more efficient. These themes will not apply perfectly in all cases, but they will serve to help us draw some general (and presumably useful) conclusions from our analysis. Ultimately, our intent is not to predict human behavior, but to better understand the consequences of large-scale violent acts.

C. THE CONCEPT OF UTILITY

Measuring the utility of violence is not an easy task. Whether or not an act of mass violence is useful is largely based on one's point of view. The atomic weapons dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima were hardly useful in the eyes of the Japanese Empire, yet from the United States' perspective, the attacks ultimately saved many American lives that might have been lost had the war continued. Thus, we cannot answer the question of utility in absolute terms. The violence that is useful to one party will almost always come at the cost of another. In order to be fair in our assessments, as we step through each of our case studies, we will tackle the issue of utility from both sides of the conflict. In adopting this approach, we may seem to be attempting to skirt the larger moral questions presented by many of these violent acts; however, our assessment of utility will not be bound by morality. We will uncover several instances where violence was arguably amoral, yet quite useful. Christianity is the perfect example to illustrate this concept. Jesus Christ suffered innocently for the sins of the world and was sacrificed to complete the Atonement of mankind. The acts of the men who condemned, tortured, and killed Him were contemptible. Yet, through His death, Christians believe Death itself was conquered. In this case, violence was not only useful; it was absolutely essential. Without it, through the eyes of the Christian world, humanity would be lost.

Before we delve into our case studies, we will begin with a discussion of mass violence from a broader perspective. Using a conceptual approach, we will introduce some important historical benefits of large-scale warfare. Further, we will illustrate why the mechanisms of warfare are no longer useful in our world today.

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II. WAR AS A VEHICLE FOR NATION BUILDING

Clostridium Difficile, commonly referred to as C-dif, is a type of bacteria in our intestines. Under a microscope, C-dif looks harmless enough, but make no mistake, these tiny stick-shaped bacilli are among the worst kinds of microorganisms. Fortunately, they are kept in check by other good types of bacteria in the body. As humans take antibiotics in excess, the levels of both good and bad bacteria are drastically reduced. This artificial management of bacteria levels can throw the entire system out of balance. Occasionally, following antibiotic treatment, the C-dif bacteria will overpopulate and overrun the intestines and colon. This infestation causes weakness, dehydration, fever, nausea, vomiting, and in severe cases, death (“C. Difficile Colitis,” 2002). The C-dif invasion is almost entirely a result of the over application of an artificial means of control. Thus, excessive anti-biotic treatments can actually present a greater risk to the patient in the long run. Along the same vein, in this chapter we will describe two types of violence. The first type, unfettered warfare, is generally useful. The second counterproductive type is the unintended result of warfare that is prematurely smothered. This violence manifests in the form of weak and failing states, which fester and breed further instability. Similar to the human body, we will see that the introduction of an artificial means of control throws the system out of balance to the detriment of the long-term stability of the world.

The period between the 16th and 19th centuries was marred with bloody conflicts. Yet, through the process of eliminating or neutralizing rivals, extracting resources, and expanding conquests—the modern nation-state emerged. This process of warfare was the vehicle through which states gained power and built the inner-state infrastructures, which guaranteed them longevity. As Bruce Porter (1994) stated:

War itself is a powerful catalyst of nationalism. It infuses the collective consciousness of peoples with a sense of their national identity, while simultaneously linking that identity closely with the

fate of the state itself. Nationalism in turn magnifies the unifying effect of wars, promotes a sense of shared destiny, and strengthens political bonds that might otherwise suffer centrifugal failure. (p.19)

One theme emerges central to Porter's argument: through the process of warmaking *and winning*, states developed administrative structures, along with systems of taxation that made them capable of giving something meaningful back to their populations. The process fed upon itself. As states repeatedly waged warfare successfully, their infrastructures flourished, and their ability to project power (to defeat or absorb other states) was magnified. There were certainly cases where war-making/state-making mechanisms failed. Brian D. Taylor and Roxana Botea (2008) noted, "war in Afghanistan was state destroying . . . in some ways this was no different from the European experience, in which many more potential states were destroyed in the crucible of war than the handful that succeeded" (p. 48). Nevertheless, a common item on almost every successful state's resume was sustained victory on the fields of battle. Although the great European powers were fortified by the dynamics that Porter described, they sought to "interrupt the dynamic interaction of war and state building" in the rest of the world (Lustick, 1997, p. 665). They squelched the very force that had given them their own strength. This pathway of peace yielded some unexpected and unfortunate consequences.

A. THE SMOTHERING OF POTENTIAL GREAT POWERS

Author Ian Lustick (1997) expressed many hopes and expectations for the growth of the Middle East in the mid-1970s. After all, the size of the Middle East land mass was second only to the former Soviet Union, with larger populations at that time than either of the two superpowers. The deserts held vast oil reserves, which could provide enough capital to finance economic and social development. The region seemed to have all the ingredients necessary for success, yet these hopes never came to fruition (p. 664). As it turns out, one critical element has been absent across the centuries: unfettered *victory* in warfare. This is not to say

the region has been without conflict. Quite the opposite is true; however, war making in the Middle East was never allowed to reach its natural conclusion. The great powers of the day either defeated the rising Middle Eastern powers, or intervened before the mechanisms of warfare became productive. Lustick described this void in Middle Eastern state formation:

In sharp contrast to the war-lubricated Westphalian system – whose units expanded into great powers, sunk to middle or small power status, or disappeared altogether, as a result of wars waged at the highest levels of forces available at the time – the system of colonial subordination and externally enforced norms to which the nineteenth and twentieth century Middle East was subjected did not allow cross-border warfare by local rulers to effect substantial change in the number, size, or internal regimes of states. (p. 657)

Perhaps the most obvious example of this phenomenon is the rise and fall of the Ottoman Empire. At first glance, one might conclude that the Ottomans had the right formula to solidify their role as a great and lasting power. Their Empire endured from 1299–1923: almost 700 years. Frankly, the actions of the Ottomans in terms of expansion, trade, and even warfare were strikingly similar to the European powers; however, the Ottoman Empire's path to supremacy was stifled when the European powers intervened on several fronts. They curbed the Ottoman's trade monopoly and established their own naval routes to Asia. Vast imports of Spanish silver from the New World devastated the Ottoman currency. European alliances formed to challenge the strength of the Ottoman naval fleet in the Mediterranean Sea. Eventually, the Ottomans began to lag behind the Europeans in military technology, and gradually lost much of their military relevance. They faced defeat in almost all of their military confrontations with the Europeans. In the years of decline that followed, the Ottomans were actually forced to align with several European countries, to defend against foreign invasion and occupation. At its demise, the Empire was economically devastated, over extended and deeply fragmented ("Ottoman Empire," 2009). The Ottoman example highlights an important subtlety of warfare in nation-state formation. Only the winners truly benefit from this mechanism. The vanquished

simply become the proteins that fortify the nation-state muscles of the victors. The Ottomans did not win the wars they fought against the European powers, and the benefits they might have reaped from their other conquests were squelched by European intervention. Ultimately, the Ottoman Empire was not unlike the hundreds of other states that were either conquered or absorbed by the European powers. It just took 700 years for the process to reach a conclusion.

This pattern repeated itself in the early 19th century, with the rise of Egypt under the visionary charge of Muhammad Ali. Muhammad Ali was an Egyptian governor (under the dominion of the Ottoman sultan) who understood the power of conquest. Following the examples of the great European powers, he waged war to acquire slaves and captured vast resources of gold and silver. He occupied and annexed other countries and terrorized Mediterranean trade routes. Much like his modern-day professional boxing namesake, “he was the greatest” and was well on his way to leading Egypt to the heavyweight title of “great power.” Ali was rightfully concerned that the European powers would interfere with his quest for Middle East supremacy. In an attempt to prevent their interference, he penned the following letter to an Austrian diplomat.

I want nothing but Egypt. My wishes go no further. Egypt is a small country, but so productive that, without this war, it would have been a pearl. Ten years of peace and I will draw from it forty million talaris [riyals]. If they leave me to work, this country will be so transformed that beside the four great world powers, England, Russia, Austria, and France, Egypt by its money will be fifth. (Lustick, p. 665)

One might presume that the great powers would show a little clemency to their Egyptian pen pal. This was not the case. Instead, they slandered Ali as an Adriatic pirate. To add insult to injury, France, Austria and Britain joined forces and sank the entire Egyptian fleet at Navarino in October 1828 (Lustick, p. 665).

Ali's conquest could have ended right there, but like every great champion, the defeat only made him stronger. As the old adage goes, hell hath no fury than a *pen pal* scorned.

In 1973, the modern-day Muhammad Ali lost his heavyweight title to Ken Norton in a 12-round decision. Less than a year later, he regained his title by defeating George Foreman in one of the biggest upsets in boxing history ("Muhammad Ali," 2009). Likewise, following the annihilation of the Egyptian fleet, Ali the Egyptian governor was primed for an upset. He immediately constructed a new fleet and prepared his army for the conquest of Syria. His Egyptian armies handily sacked the Palestinian cities of Acre and Damascus, all but securing Ali's comeback. Unfortunately, the next round brought a surprising turn of events. In a stunning betrayal, the Ottoman sultan declared Ali an enemy of the empire. Eventually the sultan combined the Ottoman forces with Russia, Britain, and France. In a 12th round ploy of desperation Ali tried to float like a butterfly and sting like a bee. He announced he would secede from the Ottoman Empire and keep Syria under his control. Although the Ottoman sultan eventually embraced these terms, the great European powers summarily rejected the maneuver and demanded a complete surrender. With all options exhausted, Ali hung up his gloves and accepted defeat. "In addition to surrendering territories, military assets, and sovereign claims, Muhammad Ali was also compelled to accept capitulation treaties . . . The treaties doomed Egypt to a subordinate role in the world economy" (Lustick, p. 666).

The stories of many other potential Middle Eastern powers ended with similar outcomes. Thus, in our day this region so rich in resources lacks the presence of a great power. With this power void, the Middle East is a paragon of instability and fragmentation. Because of the actions of great powers across the centuries, the great powers of today are shackled with the difficult responsibility of building Middle Eastern states in their own image. Despite

recent progress in Iraq, the world seems intent on repeating the mistakes of the past. The prominence of the UN represents the next iteration of the same dysfunctional pattern.

B. BEGINNINGS OF THE UNITED NATIONS

With the emergence of nuclear and chemical weapons, warfare truly was a horrific means to achieve or maintain power. Perhaps Porter's principles still held true, but the world was no longer willing to pay the price. The League of Nations promptly emerged as the first institutionalized attempt to prevent warfare through global governance. Under the auspices of President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points for world peace, the organization was formally established through the Treaty of Versailles on January 10, 1920 (Wilson, 1923). Despite Wilson's support for the organization, the U.S. Senate voted against the ratification of the treaty, formally ending the prospects of U.S. participation in the League of Nations.

The league listed disarmament and preventing war through collective security among its broad objectives. Perhaps in the spirit of disarmament, it did not have its own military forces, and was forced to rely on other powers for military might to enforce sanctions (Bassett, 1930). Fatigued from the torments of World War I, pacifist attitudes and economic hardship prevailed among many of the member nations. Thus, the league was generally unwilling, or perhaps unable to enforce its resolutions. Observing this paralysis in the League of Nations, Benito Mussolini once said, "the league is very well when sparrows shout, but no good at all when eagles fall" ("About the United Nations," 2008). His words proved to be prophetic, as the world eventually plunged into the epic conflict of World War II.

C. THE UNITED NATIONS EMERGES

Having failed in its fundamental purpose to prevent war, the League of Nations was formally dissolved following the Second World War. Yet, from the ashes of the league rose the new champion of world peace through global

governance: the United Nations. The UN holds a remarkably similar charter to the League of Nations; however, it has adopted a few critical changes designed to prevent many of the league's shortcomings. Unlike the League of Nations, the UN does not require a unanimous decision in order to take action, but the five permanent members do retain veto authority on major resolutions. While UN Security Council decisions are binding on all members of the UN, in a sense the organization allows members nations to shield their vital interests from the effects of UN resolutions. This clause was intended to garner support from member nations that might otherwise stand against the resolutions ("About the United Nations," 2008). The unintended and unfortunate effect of this shield clause: many UN resolutions have a hint of favoritism, as they are not evenly applied to all nations. The ability to neglect certain premises of UN resolutions, under the veil of protecting "vital interests," has been widely abused and, in turn, greatly diluted the UN's global authority.

As we have discussed in previous examples, hundreds of years prior to the formation of the UN, the great powers of the day attempted to suppress uprisings of violence around the world. However, prior to the formation of the UN, war making, under the right circumstances, was still generally viewed as an internationally legitimate practice. The great powers of the day simply kept the majority of conflicts from escalating; however, the UN formally changed the rules of the game. Any actions that threatened the self-governance of a nation were declared illegitimate. The UN was convinced that the path to modernity, peace, and prosperity was through the peaceful establishment of nation-states. Why bleed your way to power? We will draw some borders on the map, hold an election, and presto—welcome to modernity!

After all, technological advances had exponentially increased the human cost of warfare. "Tools were now available to kill beyond the wildest thanatotic fantasies. Under such conditions, moderate war became a contradiction in terms. There were only two alternatives: no war, or war waged to its logical conclusion" (O'Connell, 1989, p. 269). After "an estimated fifty-five million people died

directly as a result of World War II,” it should come as no surprise that the world embraced, even demanded, a violence-free alternative (p. 270). Unfortunately, much like the actions of the great European powers in the previous centuries, the UN’s charter has produced some undesirable outcomes.

The facts speak for themselves. There are currently 192 nations holding membership in the UN (“About the United Nations”, 2008). Of these 192 member nations, the Fund for Peace—Failed States Index (2008) lists 35 in critical danger of failure. One of the UN’s most prominent activities, nation-state formation, is precisely the source of the current crisis of the nation-state system. The UN derived nation-state system promised a peaceful path to stability. Yet, this same system gave rise to an astounding number of weak states. Ironically, the primary culprit of contemporary civil war “is the weak state, unable to provide basic services to its population, unable to police its peripheries, and unable to distinguish law abiders from lawbreakers” (Laitin, 2007, p. 21).

D. GLOBALIZATION—THE WAY AHEAD

The pattern is difficult to deny. Well-intended efforts to suppress violence across the world have yielded more violence in the long term. On the other hand, nuclear weapons and to some extent the global economy, make it impractical to return to war-making/state-making mechanisms. Yet, we cannot ignore the potential for global violence under a system that systematically produces failing states. Perhaps the process of warfare may still have the capability to foster a strong state; however, the forces of globalization and nuclear proliferation simply make this manner of cultivation impractical. The good news: the state itself may no longer be essential.

While the nation-state as the vehicle for stability and prosperity was successful to some extent in the past, the dynamics of the world have changed dramatically. We are understandably reluctant to let go of these antiquated ideals. President Bush attempted to articulate the qualities of the modern nation-state in a speech on June 8, 2005; “The way to defeat terrorists is to spread

freedom. You see, the best way to defeat a society that is—doesn't have hope, a society where people become angry they're willing to become suiciders, is to spread freedom, is to spread democracy" ("Bushspeak," 2005). The point he was attempting to make in that unfortunate discourse: spread freedom and we can end terrorism. It works in America, so surely it will work everywhere else. Our current struggles in the Long War, and the crisis of the nation-state system prove the emptiness of such broad statements. We can no longer afford to force simplistic "cook-book" solutions on remarkably complex problems. We must shift "the focus from quantitative approaches, which either ignore the wider historical context or assume that the 'right' set of state-building strategies can succeed without reference to the specificity of the local, regional and global context" (Berger, 2006, p. 21). Clearly, we must embrace the reality that the increasingly complex problems of the world will require creative and often complicated solutions.

If this is indeed the case, Strobe Talbot's (2008) predictions for the future of global governance may prove to be accurate:

Of course nations in the traditional sense of that word will exist far into the future, with their own territories and borders . . . But as the problems requiring multilateral solutions grow in magnitude and complexity, there is reason to hope—and also to predict—that individual states will increasingly see it in their interest to form an international system that is far more cohesive, far more empowered by its members, and therefore far more effective than the one we have today. (p.126)

Globalization is the force that will make Talbot's predictions a reality. Professor Marcos Berger (2008) summarized the power of globalization. The future path to prosperity and stability will not be a direct function of the activities of the states. Instead, the new path will be based on how well the entity can capitalize on globalization. In a sense, this will lower the expectation we place on nation states. They will no longer be the solutions the world will depend upon to cultivate stability. Instead, they will simply become "nodes" of globalization.

Under the conventional nation-state system, the state focuses inwards by building infrastructures and industrial bases that produce the means to sustain and stabilize the population (Berger, 2008). In a globalized economy, a state will no longer need to exhaust its resources to develop this internal industrial base. The fruits of this industrial base can now be obtained at a dramatically reduced cost from another country. From this type of basic interaction, a global economic interdependence is born. Of course, dramatic advances in computer and communications technology only serve to increase the power and efficiency of this global force. Interdependence is certainly not without its downsides. The hurricane on the other side of the world now impacts economies thousands of miles away. Likewise, the vast oil deposits in a Middle Eastern desert make a small Arab country worthy of invasion. In a sense, our shared interests force us to face our problems together. This is precisely the reality Talbot was describing.

Of course, we cannot forget about the UN. All the evidence we have discussed indicates it has outlived its usefulness as a meaningful form of global governance. Yet, the organization continues to thrive. Admittedly, its humanitarian and human rights efforts may be worthy of survival. Perhaps we can compare our old friend the UN to Rocky Balboa. Rocky takes more punches than any other fighter and continues to win victories against impossible odds. Americans nod in approval with a hint of glassiness in their eyes as Rocky raises his arms in victory. Rocky and the UN are both fighters, but perhaps more importantly, they are symbols of ideals we hold sacred. But then Sylvester Stallone makes one too many movies, and the UN makes one more empty resolution, or recognizes a new nation that is doomed to failure. Gradually, the world grows tired of the same old formula. It just does not work anymore. Maybe the UN will exist beyond the screening of Rocky 10. However, in both cases, whether Rocky wins his next fight or the UN makes another resolution, few people will be watching.

E. THE UTILITY OF VIOLENCE

Violence was at the heart of the evolution that has brought us to our current state of affairs. War making was useful in strong nation-state building, but the costs forced the world to seek more peaceful options. These pacifist alternatives had unexpected consequences in stifling the formation of other great powers, and ultimately yielded a counterproductive uprising of violence in the form of weak, fragmented, and failing states. Even if the world had recognized the benefits of allowing warfare to reach its natural conclusion, globalization, coupled with the proliferation of nuclear weapons made this option impractical. The consequences of unfettered warfare today would be disastrous; we possess the power to annihilate our entire civilization, and even a regionalized conflict has the potential to decimate the global economy.

In a speech delivered in Prague in April of 2009, President Barack Obama outlined his vision for a world free of nuclear weapons, “The basic bargain is sound: countries with nuclear weapons will move towards disarmament, countries without nuclear weapons will not acquire them, and all the countries can access peaceful nuclear energy” (qtd. in “Remarks by President Barack Obama,” 2009). Ironically, shortly before his speech, North Korea launched a ballistic missile in clear defiance of UN resolutions. However, if Obama’s vision somehow comes to fruition, much like the meddling of the great powers of the past, the world might face some unfortunate consequences. “To the extent that the U.S. has maintained a large and credible nuclear arsenal, it has prevented war, defeated the Soviet Union, shored up our alliances and created an umbrella that persuaded other nations that they don’t need a bomb to defend themselves” (“The Nuclear Illusionist,” 2009). In this context, the utility of violence takes on a different dynamic. The *threat* of global violence forces us to come together in ways we might not have imagined. We are now compelled to unite, because the consequences of remaining divided are unthinkable. It is unrealistic to presume we could rid the world entirely of nuclear weapons. Thus, if these weapons are always going to be a part of our world, they need to be present in sufficient

quantities to guarantee the futility of a first-strike attempt. If any nation were to gain a viable first-strike option, the nuclear stalemate would be broken, and the nuclear holocaust that for now is unthinkable, might actually manifest itself (O'Connell, 2008). "The way to win an atomic war is to make certain it never starts" (Bradley, 1948). Ironically, it can be argued that the most destructive force known to mankind, properly balanced, promotes peace and ultimately brings the world together: a useful outcome that is entirely contingent upon mass violence.

III. THE FIRST JEWISH–ROMAN WAR (THE GREAT REVOLT)

Ludaeus catervim adgredior! (The Jews are attacking!)

Unknown Roman Soldier, Jerusalem, 66 AD

The preceding pages have been dedicated to a broader more conceptual study of the utility of mass violence. We will now narrow our scope to the dynamics of violence at the basic levels of conflict. The canvas for the next segment of our examination is the Jews' Great Revolt against Rome in 66 AD. It is a tale of oppression, cruelty, revenge, and faith. Like a boulder hurdling down a mountain, the violence built momentum beyond a threshold that could be controlled. The dreadful result was one of the greatest catastrophes in the history of the Jewish people. As we summarize the events of The Great Revolt, we will come to the realization that much of this could have been avoided. Unfortunately, the compulsions of the main characters never allowed the cycle of violence to be broken. Thus, the span of this tragedy is not only measured in the number of lives that were lost, but in the realization that many of the deaths were entirely unnecessary. Our story begins with the Roman occupation of Israel, and ends on the cliffs of Masada.

A. THE OCCUPATION

The Romans began their formal occupation of Israel in 63 BC. To feed the substantial and persistent financial appetites of the Roman Empire, they levied absurdly high levels of taxation on the Jewish people. The Roman procurators (province governors) were allowed to keep funds that were raised beyond the quotas set by the Empire, which further fueled the practice. Rome also assumed the responsibility of appointing the High Priest, "a turn of events that the ancient Jews appreciated as much as modern Catholics would have appreciated Mussolini appointing the popes" (Telushkin, 1991). The Jews held the responsibilities of the High Priest sacred. He served as a holy mediator,

representing them before their God in sacred rituals. The sacred mantle of the High Priest was corrupted, as appointees were only considered from a candidate pool of Roman collaborators (Telushkin, 1991).

B. ENTER THE ZEALOTS

The callous actions of the Romans spurred a group of Jewish insurgents known as the Zealots to action. The Zealots were a devout group of Jews who adopted a strict creed against the Romans. This creed was comprised of four main tenets. “First, God alone was to be served. Second, God alone was their ruler. Neither Rome nor Herod Antipas was a legitimate authority. Third, they believed taxes were to be paid only to God. And finally . . . Zealots taught that all foreign rule over the Jews was unscriptural. Serving Rome, whether by choice or as a slave, violated God’s supreme authority” (“Zealots,” 2009). This last tenet was the inspiration and justification for the substantial chain of violence that followed.

Before the outbreak of physical violence, the Romans committed several additional acts, which emboldened the Zealots and further heightened the resentment of the general Jewish population. In the year 39 AD, the Roman emperor Caligula elevated himself to the status of deity and commanded that a statue of his likeness be placed within the walls of every Jewish temple in the Roman Empire. Over the decades, this pattern of continual Roman contempt for Judaism and heavy taxation primed the Jewish population for revolt. In 66 AD, a group of Greeks performed bird sacrifices in front of a synagogue in Jerusalem: an act highly offensive to Jews, as they believed it rendered the building unclean for rituals. The sacrifices were witnessed by a Roman garrison, which did nothing to prevent the obvious desecration. In the same year, the Roman procurator, Gessius Florus, stole large quantities of silver from the Temple. Together, these events served as a catalyst to violent uprising (Telushkin, 1991).

In response, the Jewish population rioted and slaughtered the small Roman garrison stationed in Jerusalem. The Roman general in Syria

immediately deployed additional forces to Jerusalem; however, the Jews easily routed these reinforcements. This victory was a tremendous source of inspiration to the Jewish revolutionaries, perceiving that the Romans had been made to pay for decades of religious persecution. Bolstered by the ease of their triumph, the Jews became convinced they had the capacity to defeat Rome itself, and the ranks of the Zealots grew exponentially. The fallacy of this hubris would be quickly revealed (Telushkin, 1991).

C. THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

The Romans returned in force with 60,000 well-trained and heavily armed troops and easily trounced the most radicalized faction of Jews in the northern city of Galilee. At the end of this conquest, 100,000 Jews were either killed or sold into slavery. Meanwhile, the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem did almost nothing to aid their besieged brethren. Apparently, after the initial Jewish uprising these moderates had quickly recognized the futility of waging war against the Romans. Rather than join a hopeless campaign, they chose a path they believed would minimize Jewish deaths. In a sense, the radicals in the north would be sacrificed, so the Jewish stronghold in Jerusalem could endure. However, the few radicals that survived Galilee fled to Jerusalem. There, they avenged this betrayal by the moderate Jewish leadership. The leaders that had stood idly by as the Romans butchered the Jews in Galilee, were themselves butchered. By 68 AD, all of the moderate leaders who headed the Jewish government were dead—“and not one died at the hand of a Roman. All were killed by fellow Jews” (Telushkin, 1991). The Zealot extremists, who believed that anything short of a full assault on the Roman Empire violated God’s will, were now the masters of the Jewish destiny.

D. THE FINAL SIEGE

In 69 AD, the Romans mounted forces outside the walls of Jerusalem in preparation for the final siege. Initially, the Romans were unable to penetrate the city’s defenses. As they continued to fortify their forces, they dug a trench and

erected a dirt wall around the entire circumference of Jerusalem. Any Jews attempting escape were crucified and mounted on top of the wall. By the end of the siege, tens of thousands of crucified Jews surrounded Jerusalem. Meanwhile, within the city a civil war raged. The moderates still recognized that a confrontation with the Romans was suicidal, while the radicals violently coerced the entire Jewish population to repel the impending Roman attack. The Jews had gathered a vast supply of dry food, which would have sustained the city for several years. However, one of the Zealot factions torched the entire stockpile, presuming this would compel the population to participate in the fight against the Romans. This act condemned thousands to death by starvation. The infighting only ceased once it became evident that the Romans would penetrate Jerusalem's defenses. In 70 AD, the Romans finally breached the walls of Jerusalem and laid waste to the entire city. In the final and most devastating blow to Judea, the Romans destroyed the Jewish Temple (Telushkin, 1991). Thus, the revolt, which was spawned, at least in part, by the defamation of the temple, ultimately led to its destruction.

E. ANALYSIS OF THE UTILITY OF MASS VIOLENCE

As we review the events of the Great Revolt with its civil wars, siege after siege, and nearly 1 million Jewish deaths, it is difficult to make sense of it all. Could any of this violence actually be viewed as useful? To answer this question, we will take a closer look at some of the main events of the conflict, and contrast these episodes with some contemporary parallels. Through this lens, we will gain a better understanding of the motivations of people that lived and died more than 2,000 years ago. Let us begin with the actions of the Romans at the onset of the occupation.

1. The Seeds of the Revolt

The conditions that ultimately sparked the uprising could have easily been averted, if the Romans had been more tolerant and delicate in their treatment of Judaism. Yet, the picture we have already painted shows the Romans

repeatedly assaulting every facet of the religion. This hardly seems to be a useful course of action, which begs the question, why would the Romans rule so thoughtlessly? Many of the procurators were so selfishly motivated and corrupt, they simply dismissed the consequences their actions might have on the overall efforts of the Roman Empire. For the procurator Gessius Florus, the ruler chiefly responsible for sparking the Great Revolt, this was precisely the case. Flavius Josephus (circa 80 AD/1981) described the tyranny of Florus:

He boasted of the wrongs he did to the nation and, as if sent as public executioners to punish condemned criminals, indulged in every kind of robbery and violence. When pitiable things happened, he showed himself the most heartless of men; when disgraceful things, the most disgusting. No one ever had less use for truth or thought out more subtle methods of crime . . . he stripped whole cities, ruined complete communities, and virtually announced to the entire country that everyone might be a bandit if he chose, so long as he himself received a rake-off. (p. 149)

Eventually Cestius Gallus, the Roman legate (general) who commanded the legions of Roman forces that secured the powers of the procurators, appeared in Jerusalem. On the eve of the Passover, 3,000,000 Jews rallied to petition Gallus, “imploing him to pity the nation in its distress and shouting against Florus, the ruin of their country” (Josephus, circa 80 AD/1981, p. 150). Florus himself stood by Gallus’ side, mocking the protests. Gallus calmed the Jews, promising he would compel Florus to be a kinder and gentler procurator. However, Florus quickly defied Gallus in a sinister conspiracy for power. As it turns out, Florus was convinced that if peace were to prevail in the region, Caesar would eventually notice his crimes. Thus, he sought to make war on the nation, to insight the Jews to revolt. He hoped this “greater outrage would forestall an enquiry into [his] lesser ones. So, to ensure a nation-wide revolt, he daily added to the general distress” (Josephus, circa 80 AD/1981, p. 150). This turn of events bears an interesting resemblance to the political maneuvers, which spurred the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor in World War II.

In his article “From Deterrence to Coercion to War: The Road to Pearl Harbor,” Scott D. Sagan (1994) dispelled the notion that Japan suddenly attacked the United States without provocation. In reality, Japan attacked because through the eyes of the empire, a future war with the United States was unavoidable. U.S. deterrence actions (oil embargo) were not seen as acts of deterrence at all. Rather, the actions were taken as undeniable evidence that the United States intended to weaken and then attack Japan. In the mind of the Japanese, they were faced with only two options. Either attack the United States now with a small chance of victory, or wait for the United States to attack and face certain defeat. In contrast, the United States assumed Japan would never attack, since such an action would be futile. False perceptions and assumptions from both sides drove Japan to drastic and tragic action. As it turns out, the execution of the oil embargo was quite contrary to the policies of President Franklin Roosevelt.

Much like Cestius Gallus presumed Florus would follow his decree, Roosevelt was confident his staff would follow his guidance when he authorized a more regulated approach to “limit” U.S. oil exports to Japan. However, “the authority to release, or not release, funds was given to Dean Acheson, the assistant secretary of state. Acheson was a self-proclaimed ‘hawk’ who was battling the ‘doves’ in the State Department who opposed economic sanctions against Japan” (Sagan, 1994, p. 69). While Roosevelt was away on a secret meeting with Prime Minister Winston Churchill, Acheson undermined the President’s original intent and effectively transitioned the policy to a complete oil embargo against Japan (p. 70). In both cases, it was the deviations of disloyal minions, who willfully defied their superiors, which spawned the conflicts. Although their motivations were different, the epic tragedies that followed might have been averted, if Dean Acheson and Gessius Florus had simply followed the directives of their leaders.

From a perspective of utility, the violence perpetrated by Florus served only his purposes and was entirely counterproductive to the overall efforts of the

Roman Empire. Ultimately, even Florus failed to benefit from the violence. The uprising he caused, which he hoped would shield his crimes from the eyes of Caesar, spun out of control—revealing his own incompetence. Florus was removed from his position as procurator immediately following the first Jewish uprising, but the damage was already done (Telushkin, 1991). This uprising, which was intended to be a simple decoy, became the inspiration for the entire Jewish rebellion. For this reason, this small Jewish victory was the antithesis of utility. Frankly, the insurrection itself might have been useful had the Jews simply recognized a larger campaign against Rome was futile. Florus' crimes could have been exposed, and the promises of Cestius Gallus for a more empathetic procurator may have been realized. As we will see in later paragraphs, there were instances where Rome was willing to relent in order to end the violence. Thus, the task of the next portion of our analysis is to understand why a local uprising escalated to a regional frenzy of violence.

2. The Uprising

It is not difficult to appreciate why the initial uprising occurred. Excessive taxation, religious oppression, and continual torment are prime ingredients in the cookbook for revolution. Nevertheless, we have a more complicated question to answer. After the Jews defeated the small Roman garrison in Jerusalem and the reinforcements that followed, why did they presume they suddenly had the ability to defeat an entire empire? The answer to this question, at least in part, stems from the tenets of the Zealots. The Zealots believed that serving Rome (or any foreign rule), whether by choice or as a slave, violated the supreme authority and will of God. The only legitimate ruler was God Himself. The natural extension of this tenet was a powerful, even violent determination to expel the illegitimate Roman power. The faithful Zealots probably believed that God would eventually hear their cries and unleash His wrath upon the Romans for the oppression of His people and the desecration of His temple. Their decisive victory over the small garrison of Romans in the initial uprising naturally seemed like an

answered prayer. It is also reasonable to presume the Zealots justified their violent methods with their interpretation of the sacred texts. On a similar topic, John J. Collins (2004) wrote:

When it became clear that the terrorists of September 11, 2001, saw or imagined their grievances in religious terms, any reader of the Bible should have had a flash of recognition. The Muslim extremists drew their inspiration from the Qur'an rather than the Bible, but both Scriptures draw from the same wellspring of ancient Near Eastern religion. (p. 1)

The Tanakh, the Bible used in Judaism, is comparable to the Christian Old Testament. These Scriptures are filled with passages that could be interpreted to endorse violence. A few examples: Judges 5:23 in the Tanakh and Old Testament reads, "Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of HaShem [the Lord], curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of HaShem, to the help of HaShem against the mighty." The basic sentiment of this verse is that the Israelites were expected to help the Lord in battle, and they were cursed if they shunned this responsibility (Collins, p. 4). Also from the Tanakh and Old Testament: "The Lord is a warrior" (Exodus, 15:3). Whether the violence of the Zealots was scripturally justifiable is beyond the scope of this study. It is possible that the Zealot actions were simply "a case of the devil citing scripture for his purpose. It is also true that the devil does not have to work very hard to find biblical precedents for the legitimating of violence" (Collins, p. 1). While we may not agree with the Zealot methods, we can at least understand the factors that might have motivated them to violence.

The moderate Jews in Jerusalem did not necessarily prescribe to all of the Zealot tenets, but at the same time, they detested the Romans. Many of the moderates would have preferred to negotiate peace, even if it cost them their freedom, rather than face the hoards of Roman garrisons in a hopeless contest. However, the Zealots promised death to any Jew who dared submit to the Romans. Early in the revolt, Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, a Roman general, offered a viable truce to the Jewish revolutionaries:

Agrippa, seeing that not even a Roman army was safe when such a huge enemy force occupied the hills around, decided to try an appeal to the Jews—either he would persuade them all to cease hostilities or he would detach the peace party from their opponents. (Josephus, circa 80 AD/1981, p. 175)

Agrippa hoped to either negotiate an armistice, or at least allow the moderate Jews to remove themselves from the battle. He chose two men from his staff that were well known to the Jews “and sent them to promise that Cestius would grant them a treaty, and to guarantee that the Romans would overlook their offenses if they threw away their arms and made their submission” (Josephus, circa 80 AD/1981, p. 175). However, the Zealots, fearing the masses would surrender, violently assaulted the Roman messengers before the terms were delivered. This was one of the last times the Roman forces would show any semblance of mercy.

Returning to the topic of utility, from a pragmatic standpoint, the unyielding tenets of the Zealots produced two unfortunate results. First, their beliefs drove them to embrace an impossible conflict, and second, these same beliefs compelled them to reject every possible peaceful outcome. There would be no compromise. The Zealots dealt almost exclusively in absolutes. The moderate Jews were snared on the horn of a dilemma between the Roman occupiers and their radical brethren. This dilemma fractured the Jews into a catastrophic civil conflict. Our next charge is to grasp the utility, and perhaps futility of these civil wars.

3. The Civil Wars

For the sake of simplification, we have divided the Jews into two general categories: either Zealot radicals, or moderates. In reality, the division lines in the Jewish population were significantly more complex. Within the ranks of the Zealots, there were several warring factions competing for the power to impose God’s will on the Jewish people. However, for our purposes, we will continue to consider this problem in terms of Zealots and moderates.

Professor Gordon McCormick (2008) described the dynamics, which govern the rise and fall of insurgencies in his model: the Mystic Diamond. In essence, the model describes a contest between an insurgency and an incumbent power, both competing to control the population. Each party has a specific advantage. The incumbent power holds a force advantage, the insurgency—an information advantage. In the context of our discussion, the moderate Jews in Jerusalem were the population of interest. The Zealots were the insurgents, and while they lacked the military might of the Romans (the incumbents), they had a distinct advantage in their knowledge of the population. The Zealots were directly linked to the Jewish people; they knew who among the moderates might be sympathetic to their cause, and they understood the motivations of the people around them. The Zealots also possessed an information advantage in terms of their ability to identify and target the Romans, as the occupying force wore uniforms and often marched in formation. The Romans, on the other hand, did not have this kind of information. The Zealots did not wear uniforms, and they looked like any other member of the Jewish population. For all practical purposes, the Zealots were invisible. Thus, the Romans lacked the ability to identify and *discriminately* target the radicals scattered within the Jewish populace. They needed to either build a connection with the population to gain the information they required to find the insurgents, or hope the insurgents would reveal themselves in a conventional attack.

To better illustrate how the model might be applied to the civil wars within the Great Revolt, let us presume both the Romans and the Zealots are following the courses of action recommended by the Mystic Diamond. In general terms, the winner of this contest would be the group that first exploits their advantage and overcomes their disadvantage to control the Jewish moderates. The Romans would focus on building a connection with the population to cultivate information, while the Zealots would recruit moderates to increase their military strength.

There is another unfortunate option: the Romans could simply kill or enslave everyone, which is the option they eventually chose. This highlights another theme of McCormick's (2008) theories. Proper application of the Mystic Diamond in population control leads to the most *efficient* victory. There are certainly other ways to win, as the Romans proved; but they are always less efficient, either in terms of the time it takes to achieve the victory, or the number of lives sacrificed. In the years that followed, the Romans faced countless additional uprisings from the Jews: another inefficiency that might have been prevented with a less violent approach. We will revisit a portion of the Mystic Diamond later in our analysis, but first let us turn to a modern day conflict.

This Great Revolt and the motivations behind Zealot violence share some unique parallels to recent events in Iraq. In 2006 Osama bin Laden condemned the U.S. occupation of Iraq and issued a call to arms:

The gravest of them all is the attack against our religion, our prophet and our Sharia tenets. The epicenter of these wars is Baghdad, the seat of the caliphate rule. They keep reiterating that success in Baghdad will be success for the U.S., failure in Iraq the failure of the U.S. . . . It is the duty for the Umma with all its categories, men, women and youths, to give away themselves, their money, experiences and all types of material support, enough to establish jihad in the fields of jihad particularly Iraq . . . Jihad today is an imperative for every Muslim. The Umma will commit sin if it did not provide adequate material support for jihad. ("Bin Laden accuses West", 2006)

His call was answered as jihadists flooded into Iraq to battle the U.S. occupying force. Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) became a ferocious reality. Much like the Zealots in Jerusalem, AQI used indiscriminate violence against both Sunni and Shia to intimidate, coerce and control the population. In response to AQI's atrocities, Sunni tribes turned against the jihadis and began to cooperate with U.S. forces. The tribes formed the Al Anbar Salvation Council and sought to expel the Al Qaeda extremists from their midst (Gastal, 2008, p. 82).

Prior to the emergence of AQI, infighting between Iraqi Shia and the Sunni had heightened. Under Saddam's iron fist, the Shia majority had been firmly

oppressed by the Sunni minority. Saddam's departure left a power void, which both parties struggled to exploit for their own benefits. AQI sought to take advantage of this division and stir up sectarian violence between the Sunni and Shia. However, the Sunni militias, which were formed at Al Anbar to expunge AQI, did not attack their Shia neighbors. This diffused the Sunni-Shia strife to some extent, and undercut the designs of AQI (Gastal, 2008, p 83).

Despite the many similarities between Iraq and Jerusalem, there are several critical differences. The most obvious difference is the outcome. In one case (Jerusalem), an entire population was nearly wiped out. In the other (Iraq), there is cause to hope for a far more peaceful resolution. These different outcomes stem from the connection the U.S. forces fostered with the Iraqi population. To highlight the importance of this connection, let us first look back at the final weeks of the Great Revolt. The civil war between the Zealots and the moderates raged, as the Romans were poised to breach Jerusalem. Even if the moderates had desired to assist the Romans, or simply escape the conflict—this was no longer an option. The Romans crucified or enslaved the Jews that attempted escape from Jerusalem, while the Zealots killed Jews that refused to fight the Romans. The only possible course of survival for the moderates was to fight. Neither the Romans nor the Zealots gave the moderates another feasible option. Let us contrast this to Iraq.

Both the Sunni and Shia were in a similar dilemma to the Jewish moderates. AQI violently compelled them to fight each other and the U.S. forces. The critical difference: the Sunni and the Shia had the option to align with the U.S. forces to counter AQI. Perhaps, through the eyes of the Iraqis, the U.S. forces were not ideal cohorts, but they were certainly better than AQI. This precarious connection between the U.S. forces and the Iraqi population produced a far more constructive result. From the perspective of the Mystic Diamond, the U.S. overcame their information disadvantage as they aligned with the Iraqi population, and the contest, at least for now, was mitigated.

Looking back at the Great Revolt, there were several instances where the Romans might have been able to successfully cultivate a connection with the moderate population or at least curb some of the violence. In each instance, the Zealots spoiled the opportunity, and condemned the moderates to join them in their dreadful fate. Eventually, the sieges became personal vendettas for the Roman generals, who sought to avenge the losses they had suffered at the hands of the Zealots. The Zealot violence was harmful in every way. It eclipsed any opportunity for the moderates or the Romans to find a peaceable resolution. It bred the Roman thirst for vengeance, and destined Jerusalem and the Temple for destruction. The Zealots would flee the downward spiral of devastation they created to mount one final stand against the Romans. We now turn to last days of the Zealots.

F. EPILOGUE—MASADA

After the final siege, the few remaining Zealot survivors fled to the fortress of Masada, near the Dead Sea. The surrounding territory of Masada was difficult to penetrate as the fortress sits atop an enormous and quite isolated rock. The Zealots were able to survive and repel Roman attacks for nearly three years. Nestled defensively in the mountain fortress, the Zealots had cause to hope that the Romans might eventually give up their fruitless attacks and let them live in peace. Unfortunately, the Romans were acutely aware that the group of Zealots at Masada were the same Zealots that had slaughtered the Roman garrison in the Jewish uprising which began the Great Revolt. “The length and bitterness of their uprising probably accounts for Rome’s unwillingness to let Masada and its small group of defiant Jews alone” (Telushkin, 1991). Once it became apparent that Masada’s walls would be breached, Elazar ben Yair, leader of the Zealots, concluded that the 960 remaining Jewish defenders should commit suicide. His plea to the Zealots was uncharacteristically reflective, even penitent. He urged the people to take charge of their own destinies, to rob the Romans of the opportunity to spill any more Jewish blood. A woman who hid herself during

the fulfillment of the suicide pact recorded his remarkable oration. A portion of Elazar ben Yair's final speech is worthy of inclusion here:

My loyal followers, long ago we resolved to serve neither the Romans nor anyone else but only God, who alone is the true and righteous Lord of men: now the time has come that bids us prove our determination by our deeds. At such a time we must not disgrace ourselves; hitherto we have never submitted to slavery, even when it brought no danger with it: we must not choose slavery now, and with it penalties that will mean the end of everything if we fall alive into the hands of the Romans. For we were the first of all to revolt, and shall be the last to break off struggle. And I think it is God who has given us this privilege, that we can die nobly and as free men, unlike others who were unexpectedly defeated . . . The fire that was being carried into the enemy lines did not turn back of its own accord towards the wall we had built: these things are God's vengeance for the many wrongs that in our madness we dared to do to our own countrymen. For those wrongs let us pay the penalty not to our bitterest enemies, the Romans, but to God – by our own hands. It will be easier to bear. Let our wives die unabused, our children without knowledge of slavery: after that, let us do each other an ungrudging kindness, preserving our freedom as a glorious winding-sheet. (Josephus, circa 80 AD/1981, p. 398)

Masada was the tragic crescendo of the Great Revolt. Perhaps, the ill-fated Zealot leader, who recognized the horrific lives that lay ahead for his people at the hands of the Romans, best captured the utility of the mass suicide. They would face torture and slavery. Their precious wives and daughters would be sold into prostitution. The fortunate would face a quick death by Roman blade. The Zealots were no strangers to suffering. They bore the brunt of Roman brutality in Galilee at the beginning of the revolt and endured years of civil war. Yet, the suffering they faced in their bitter struggles with the Romans and the Jewish moderates had a purpose. At the end of it all, there was hope of a better life, a life of freedom where they could worship their God unmolested. Masada was different. Hope was lost. The Lord had turned against the Zealots, and for once, they finally began to comprehend the horror of what they had done. Somehow, the eternal scales of justice must be balanced, but senseless suffering at the hands of the Romans would not pay their debts. The only

acceptable ransom, at least through the eyes of Elazar ben Yair, was life itself. Josephus penned the final moments of Masada:

For at the very moment when with streaming eyes they embraced and caressed their wives, and taking their children in their arms pressed upon the last, lingering kisses, hands other than their own seemed to assist them and they carried out their purpose, the thought of the agonies which they would suffer at the hands of the enemy consoling them for the necessity of killing them. (p. 404)

History has transformed the word Zealot into a label for those that pursue their causes beyond the normal bound of reason. Josephus reminds us that whatever else the Zealots were—radicals or violent extremists—they were also families with fathers, mothers, daughters and sons.

Masada was all but forgotten in Jewish history. As Joseph Telushkin (1991) explained:

The rabbis still felt a lingering anger toward the extremist Zealots who died at Masada . . . Furthermore, at a time when the rabbis were desperately attempting to reconstruct a Judaism that could survive without a Temple and without a sovereign state, they hardly were interested in glorifying mass suicide of Jews who believed that life without sovereignty was not worth living.” (p. 142)

Conceivably, the entire episode would have been forgotten; however, in 1920, a Hebrew writer named Isaac Lamden scribed a poetic account of the final plight of the Zealots. This poem, more than any other writing, inspired a Jewish rebellion against the Nazis in World War II (Telushkin, 1991). Thus, much of the utility of Masada was concealed for nearly 2,000 years, until a simple poet transformed the tragedy into the inspiration for one of the most courageous revolts in modern history. This revolt, the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, is the next chapter of our analysis.

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IV. THE WARSAW GHETTO UPRISING

Juden haben Waffen! Juden haben Waffen! (The Jews have weapons!)

Unknown Nazi, Warsaw Ghetto, 19 April 1943

The characters we have discussed thus far were rather complex. Both the Zealots and Romans were certainly brutal, but in many cases, even if we did not agree with their actions, we could at least comprehend the motivations of their behavior. At times, the lines between good and evil were blurred, as each side committed its own fair share of violent acts. In most cases, these divisions will be far more distinct as we examine the events of the Holocaust. Hitler sought to eradicate the Jews, not only from Germany, but also from history itself. While plots of genocide have been perpetrated since then, none have reached the scale of Hitler's Final Solution, which killed an estimated 6 million Jews. This portion of our examination begins after the Nazi German occupation of Poland, and abruptly ends in the Warsaw ghetto.

A. THE WARSAW GHETTO

The Nazis employed several strategies to solve what they referred to as the "Jewish problem." Initially, they sought to deport Jews from Germany and its conquered lands. This approach was only marginally effective, as many countries refused to accept the Jewish refugees. As the next step towards Hitler's Final Solution, rather than compel the Jews to emigrate, the Nazis forced the Jews into camps and ghettos. "The Nazis hoped that the wretched ghetto conditions would deplete the Jewish populations quickly and naturally through starvation, disease, and cold. The ghetto also served as a holding area for eventual transport to the death camps for those who were able to survive" ("Ghettoization of European Jewry," 2009).

On October 2, 1940, the Nazis issued a decree requiring all Jews in the city of Warsaw, Poland to relocate to a Jewish quarter away from the rest of the

city. This type of ghettoization was not without historical precedence. Throughout the Middle Ages Jews had been compelled to live in such segregated societies; however, this ghetto went well beyond basic segregation. It was quite literally a prison. The Nazis promptly encircled the Jewish quarter with a ten-foot wall topped with barbed wire, isolating the Jews from the rest of the population. The ghetto was horribly congested as 30 percent of the Warsaw population was crammed into an area 2.4 percent the size of the city (“Ghettoization”). Thousands of deaths resulted from the dreadful conditions. Medicine was non-existent. There was scarcely enough food to sustain the inhabitants, who lived on rations of less than a quarter of those available to the Germans. The water supply was contaminated, and outbreaks of typhoid and tuberculosis ravaged the community. “Bodies of new victims piled up in the streets faster than they could be carted away . . . more than 700,000 died of exposure, disease, and starvation during the first two winters” (“Ghettoization”).

Despite the horrendous conditions of the ghetto, the Jews demonstrated a remarkable ability to survive. Their perseverance troubled the Nazis, who had hoped the Jews would wither away more rapidly. Gradually, the Nazis began to quietly deport portions of the population to death camps. At first, the deportations did not alarm the Jews. They presumed their people were simply being relocated to labor camps; however, in the summer of 1942, 300,000 Jews were deported from Warsaw to a Nazi extermination camp called Treblinka. Rumors of mass killings at the camp began to surface throughout the ghetto. Shortly thereafter, the Jews reached the frightening realization that the deportations were part of a vast extermination plot (“Ghettoization”). The only possible course for survival was to mount a resistance against the Nazis.

B. THE UPRISING

To counter the SS directives and halt the deportations, the Jews formed an underground resistance called *Zydowska Organizacja Bojowa* (ZOB) or Jewish Fighting Organization. The ZOB issued a call to resistance in the Warsaw ghetto:

Jews in your masses, the hour is near. You must be prepared to resist, not to give yourselves up like sheep to slaughter. Not even one Jew must go to the train. People who cannot resist actively must offer passive resistance, that is, by hiding . . . Now our slogan must be: Let everyone be ready to die like a man! (“Call to Resistance in the Warsaw Ghetto”, 1943)

Later that month, when Nazi troops entered the ghetto to round up the next wave of Jews for deportation, members of the ZOB attacked in full force. Using a small supply of smuggled weapons, the ZOB’s assault eventually forced the Nazis into a full retreat. At the end of the confrontation, 5,000 Jews were still deported; however, the Nazis had planned to round up 8,000. This small victory gave the inhabitants of the Warsaw ghetto cause to hope that the Nazi’s sinister plot might be thwarted. There were also reports of imminent German defeat in the East filtering through the ghetto. In the weeks that followed, the Jews vigorously prepared plans to further defend the ghetto. They conducted training, acquired additional weapons, and prepared hide sights for those that could not fight. The Nazis also carefully organized for the pending offensive. “On April 19, 1943, on the eve of the Passover, the police and SS auxiliary forces entered the ghetto planning to complete [the deportations] within three days; however, they suffered losses as they were repeatedly ambushed by Jewish insurgents” (“Warsaw Ghetto Uprising,” n.d.). As a result, Heinrich Himmler fired the incumbent chief of the SS and police in the Warsaw district and brought in a man with vast experience in countering partisans—General Jurgen Stroop (Bard, 2009).

Stroop promptly issued an ultimatum to the Jews: surrender immediately or be destroyed. When the ultimatum was rejected, Stroop commanded his forces to burn the ghetto to the ground. With flamethrowers and explosives, the Nazis systematically set fire to every building within the ghetto. They employed hunting dogs, smoke grenades, tear gas, and even poison gas to coerce the remaining Jews out of hiding. Those that were exposed were quickly exterminated. Many others were either burned alive, or died from smoke inhalation. On May 8, the Nazis surround the ZOB headquarters with nearly a

hundred fighters trapped inside. Recognizing they had no possibility of survival, many of the fighters followed the pattern of the Zealots at Masada, and committed suicide (Ayer, 1999, p. 52).

Surrounded by his guards, Stroop stood within the ghetto and watched the final remaining buildings burn (Bard, 2009). He then ordered the destruction of the Great Synagogue in Warsaw as a symbol that “the Jewish Quarter no longer exists . . . the Warsaw ghetto is no more” (“The Stroop Report,” 2009). Nearly 13,000 Jews were killed in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, and the remaining survivors were shipped to death camps (“Warsaw Ghetto Uprising,” n.d.). Perhaps the fate of the conflict was sealed before the uprising even began. Yet, in the face of overwhelming force, the Jewish resistance had thrived for 27 days (Bard, 2009). Their dramatic resistance inspired further Nazi resistant movements all across Europe.

C. ANALYSIS OF THE UTILITY OF MASS VIOLENCE

We will certainly not dispute the epic tragedy of the Holocaust, nor will we imply that there was anything useful about Hitler’s genocide. Rather, our analysis will show that Hitler’s propensity for mass violence was also detrimental to his own evil designs. For most of us, the story of the Holocaust is cast in very simple terms: Hitler was an evil, murderous, paranoid lunatic who conspired to exterminate the Jews and rule the world. That statement may be perfectly accurate; nevertheless, it does not explain his motivations or the environment that made his atrocities possible. Even the most motivated of tyrants could not carry out such an operation without some cooperation from the rest of the population. Surprisingly, as we dig a little deeper, we will find Nazi collaborators emerging from places we never expected. Following the pattern of our previous chapter, we will narrow our focus to several pertinent events and characters within the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising to analyze the utility of mass violence.

1. Hitler's Perspective

Anti-Jewish prejudices were not uncommon during Hitler's rise to power. On a very basic level, Christian religions blamed the Jews for the death of Jesus Christ. This notion "became an excuse to abuse the Jews for more than a thousand years" ("Roots of Hitler's and Nazi's Hatred of the Jews," 2009). Following World War I, the Treaty of Versailles imposed harsh penalties on Germany. The country was compelled to accept full responsibility for the outbreak of the war, and pay significant reparations to the Allies. These penalties decimated the German economy. In spite of this economic crisis, some Jews were quite successful and held positions of influence in Austria and Germany. Sentiments of jealousy and resentment were widespread among the Germans; many blamed the prosperous Jews for both the Treaty and their economic hardships ("Roots"). The Jews were an obvious target, because they were a "distinct, easily identifiable group, who refused to integrate" ("Roots"). The War crippled Germany's economic vitality, but more importantly, the aftermath of the conflict robbed the German people of their dignity.

Hitler did not attempt to mask his beliefs or his intentions. In fact, he shouted them to all who would listen. Yet, to a people who had been caught within what seemed to be an unending downward spiral, Hitler was a peculiar source of hope. His fiery rhetoric resonated deeply within the German population. He would make them strong again, and perhaps that promise was enticing enough to cause them to ignore his other eccentricities. Hitler fervently believed in Social Darwinism, "subscribing to the idea that nations, peoples, cultures, and individuals are subject to the same laws of natural selection as plants and animals. [He was convinced that] life is a perpetual struggle between individuals and nations for existence, with the survival of the stronger and more brutal and the elimination of the weaker and less fit" (Kimmel, 2009). He wrote extensively on this topic in his autobiography *Mein Kampf*.

Humanity will be compelled in consequence of the impossibility of making the fertility of the soil keep pace with the continuous increase of population, to halt the increase in the human race . . . Nature has not reserved soil for the future possession of any particular nation; but for the people that have the force to take it and the industry to cultivate it. (Hitler, 1925, p. 123)

Hitler's scheme was frighteningly complete. He defined the source of the problem (the Jews) and offered a clear solution. His twisted Darwinian view of humanity was sprinkled with enough scientific babble to make a certain horrific sense. Thus, he transformed the underlying anti-Semitism of the day into a powerful rallying force, and created the perfect scapegoats upon which all of society's problems could be blamed. "In anti-Semitism, Hitler found an explanation for his failures, a rationalization for his sufferings—the Jews and their conspiracy. The Jews were the single cause of his tensions and humiliation" (Kimmel, 2009). To a large extent, Hitler compelled the German population to reach the same conclusions. Not all Germans shared Hitler's enthusiasm for social Darwinism, nor were they as eager to embrace large-scale violence against the Jews; however, there was a general consensus that Hitler's more extreme designs could be kept in check, while his other talents served Germany's recovery (Tonry, 2006).

Thus, from Hitler's perspective, the utility of violence against the Jews was twofold. First, the creation of a common enemy united the German people behind him and the Nazi party. In many ways, the violence was the source of Hitler's power. Second, by persecuting and ultimately exterminating the Jews, he was fulfilling his own demented view of natural law, and masking his own inadequacies.

On the other hand, Hitler's propensity to take all of his actions to an extreme became problematic to his cause. As the Nazis transitioned from containment to extermination, the initial deportations were conducted on a smaller scale. For this reason, they did not meet any resistance. Perhaps many of the Jews welcomed an escape from the ghettos—unaware of what truly lay in

store for them outside the walls. However, prior to the mass deportation of 300,000 Jews, there was no significant Jewish resistance. The resistance only took shape after the Nazis rapidly expanded the operation and failed to control information. If the Nazis had been more discrete with the resettlement, and prevented the rumors of the death camps from spreading, the operation may have never faced any resistance. There was nothing subtle about Hitler's conduct. He was overconfident and reckless. He committed a similar error when he thrust Germany into a two-front war: a strategic error that ultimately led to Germany's defeat. Nevertheless, had Hitler been more prudent in his ambitions, the events of the Warsaw ghetto, and perhaps the war, might have taken a different, and perhaps even more tragic course.

To emphasize this point, let us briefly revisit Professor McCormick's (2008) Mystic Diamond model to determine how Hitler might have altered his strategy in the Warsaw ghetto. In the context of this discussion, the Jews within the ghetto were the population of interest. The ZOB fighters were the insurgents, and while they lacked the military firepower of the Nazis (the incumbents), they had a distinct advantage in their knowledge of the population. Obviously, the members of the ZOB were directly linked to the Jewish people. They also possessed an information advantage in terms of their ability to identify and target the uniformed Nazis. Since the Nazis were not linked to the Jewish population, they lacked the ability to identify and *discriminately* target the resistance scattered within the Jewish populace. They needed to either build a connection with the population to gain the information they required to find the resistance, or hope the insurgents would reveal themselves in a conventional attack. How could the Nazis possibly build a connection with a population that despised them? Surprisingly, this option was not so far fetched. All it took was a few collaborators: enter the Group 13 Network.

The Group 13 Network was established in December 1940 under Nazi supervision and placed under the command of a Jewish man named Abraham Gancwajch. Gancwajch was convinced that the German war effort would be

victorious. Thus, he believed that the only hope for Jewish survival after the war was to collaborate with the Nazis. He labored under the delusion that the Nazis would create an autonomous place of settlement for the Jews after the war (“Abraham Gancwajch,” 2009). Gancwajch was also highly corrupt. The Nazis charged him with the responsibility of countering black market operations within the Warsaw ghetto; however, he exploited this power and used the Group 13 Network to conduct a number of racketeering and blackmail operations. The group, also known as the Jewish Gestapo, had roughly 400 uniformed Jewish officers, who wore caps with green bands. The officers harassed and exploited the rest of the Jewish population, and even operated their own prison (“Group 13,” 2009).

The Holocaust was a singularly evil event, yet it is even more horrific to ponder how the events might have unfolded if Hitler had opted for a more cunning approach. Imagine if the Nazis had fostered a truly fruitful connection with opportunists like the Group 13 Network. The promise of a Jewish sanctuary after the war, coupled with stories of Germany’s dominance on the battlefields around the world might have pacified the masses. This promise could have been believable if the Nazis showed a little less apparent brutality. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising might have been prevented altogether, while the extermination plot quietly continued without additional resistance movements throughout Europe. In this light, it is fortunate that Hitler did not comprehend this more nuanced alternative.

Ultimately, the approach that General Stroop chose was strikingly similar to the Roman tactics employed in the Great Revolt, proving once again that there are other more violent ways to win. The important lesson to pull from both the Roman and Nazi actions is that their selection of mass violence over a more nuanced alternative only brought a decisive end to the *current* battle. Both examples were inefficient, as they cost many more lives and galvanized future resistance movements. Further, both cases illustrated the fact that mass violence lacked utility for both the victims *and* the perpetrators.

2. The Jewish Perspective

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising began with a small skirmish between the ZOB and the Nazis. As you may recall, the Great Revolt in Jerusalem also began with a small revolt. In both cases, these small uprisings inspired waves of confidence, which caused the Jews to enter into conflicts they had no possibility of winning. For this reason, we determined that the initial revolt in Jerusalem was not useful. Can we apply the same logic to the first confrontation between the ZOB and the Nazis? There comes a point where the parallels between the two cases break down. Remember, the Jews in Jerusalem were fighting for their rights and their religion. They were rebelling against oppression and Roman harassment; however, the Romans did not have any designs to annihilate the Jewish population. The Romans were brutal occupiers, but they only slaughtered the Jews when the Zealots gave them no other alternative. Were it not for the Zealots, the Jews could have continued in a relative peace under Roman occupation: an alternative that many moderates desired. Unlike the Jews in Jerusalem, the victims in the Warsaw ghetto did not have a choice. If they did nothing, they would be carted off to meet their demise in the gas chambers of the extermination camps. Rising up against the Nazis may have been futile, but it truly was their only possible course for survival. In the remaining days of World War II, the Nazis were plagued with continual uprisings from the populations they conquered. The dreadful results of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising clearly revealed the true designs of the Nazis. This realization coupled with the heroism of the resistance in Warsaw inspired the French, Belgian, Italian, and Polish resistance movements along with a number of other uprisings in Jewish ghettos throughout Europe.

Many decades later survivors of the Holocaust quietly tell us the stories of their fallen friends and families, and of the horrors of living through it all. Their stories have taught the world that this type of violence must never be allowed to manifest itself again. Gradually, the years take their toll and the survivors finally depart this life to be reunited with their lost loved ones, leaving only the memory

of their perseverance behind. From these memories rises the hope that the sacrifices of so many can have meaning in our lives today. On May 5, 1985, President Ronald Reagan travelled to Bergen-Belsen, a former Nazi concentration camp. To a gathering of world leaders, Germans, and Holocaust survivors, he delivered an address that perfectly captured these sentiments.

Here, death ruled, but we've learned something as well. Because of what happened, we found that death cannot rule forever, and that's why we're here today. We're here because humanity refuses to accept that freedom of the spirit of man can ever be extinguished . . . And then, rising above all this cruelty, out of this tragic and nightmarish time, beyond the anguish, the pain and the suffering for all time, we can and must pledge: Never again.

President Reagan was right; we have learned something, but these lessons have not been perfectly applied. Regrettably, there have been several examples of genocide since 1945. For example, in 1975 the Khmer Rouge executed a brutal campaign of mass murder, killing an estimated 1.7 million Cambodians. Fortunately, the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in 1979 put an end to the cruelty (Lamb, 2005). In 1993, Bosnian Serbs perpetrated large-scale acts of ethnic cleansing against Bosnian and Croatian Muslims seeking independence. “Over 200,000 Muslim civilians were systematically murdered, and 2 million became refugees” (Lamb, 2005). The world condemned these acts, and NATO promptly intervened to prevent similar atrocities from occurring in Kosovo (O’Connell, 2009). In 1994, “Hutus in Rwanda began a mobilized campaign of massacre against Tutsis and moderate Hutus that lasted 100 days and killed 800,000 people” (Lamb, 2005). The crisis caught the eye of the international community, and eventually these killings were also halted.

Based on these events, we might presume that the lessons of the Holocaust were forgotten; however, this assumption ignores the great strides the world has taken in defending innocent lives. In each of these examples, the world took action long before the episodes reached the scale of the Holocaust. Perhaps this is a small concession to those that lost their lives; however, we must also consider the countless lives that were saved because the world did

intervene. The cases of genocide since the Holocaust are examples of our failures, but they are also evidence of how far the world has come. From these vivid reminders, we learn that despite our improvements, there is still much work to be done, and Reagan's pledge of "never again" is still a promise worth striving for.

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V. CONCLUSION

We now return to where we began. Our initial theories rested on our assertion that in order for mass violence to serve a useful purpose, it had to be used without significant restraint. Further, we hypothesized that mass violence was only effective in the short term. Eventually, even the most definitive acts would spawn further violence. Thus, less violent options were actually more efficient in the long run.

We captured the importance of unrestrained mass violence when we described the mechanisms of warfare that gave rise to strong nation states. In this discussion, we found that warfare was only effective in fostering strong states when it was allowed to follow its natural course. If other powers intervened or prevented warfare, the benefits to strong-state formation were stifled. Victory was the most important ingredient to reap the benefits of warfare; however, with the proliferation of nuclear weapons, winning was no longer possible. Any nation that executed a nuclear strike would itself be destroyed by a nuclear retaliation. Thus, the world entered a relative nuclear stalemate. While mass violence in the form of warfare was no longer practical, the peril of nuclear violence compelled the world to cooperate in meaningful ways. In this sense, the *threat* of mass violence was quite useful.

As we turned to the events of The Great Revolt, we saw that mass violence could be brutally efficient in ending a conflict. Yet, the Roman victory was short-lived, as it produced further violence in the years that followed. This same phenomena was apparent in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, as groups throughout Europe mounted their own resistance efforts against the Nazis. In both cases, mass violence squelched one conflict, only to lead to many others. Thus, the most important point to pull from these examples is that mass violence is an inefficient means to achieve a *lasting* objective.

In the same vein, AQI's gratuitous use of violence ultimately led to their defeat in Iraq, and the terrorist attacks of September 11, much like Hitler's mass genocide, united the world against the perpetrators. Osama bin Laden and Hitler's dramatic acts of mass violence may have served their purposes in the short-term, but they were detrimental in the long-term. The Nazis were routed, and General Jurgen Stroop was sentenced to death by hanging on the site of the Warsaw ghetto. Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda terrorist network is now deeply fragmented, and it is doubtful that he is able to manage the organization on any sort of global scale. Perhaps, to these extremists, the sacrifices were worthwhile. Yet, conceptually, we can see that more nuanced strategies, like those derived from the Mystic Diamond, can be more productive over time.

Our examination spanned from the revolts of ancient Jerusalem, to the uprisings in the ghettos of Poland. We witnessed pools of blood trickling down the cliffs of Masada, and felt the heat of the flames that smoldered the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Ultimately, we began this examination to answer what appeared to be a simple question: what is the utility of mass violence? The answers were astonishingly complex. Undoubtedly, wars, revolts, uprisings, and a variety of other forms of mass violence can appear to be useful in the short-term. They can also be immoral, detrimental, and entirely inefficient in the long-term.

Ruthless tyrants, global terrorists, and democratically elected presidents will all continue to face highly complex problems in this world. Annihilating the problem's source may be a tempting alternative. Why haggle with the details, when a nuclear missile can wipe the problem away? Why build connections with populations to target insurgents, when a few air strikes or canisters of chemical weapons can eradicate the entire village? History has an answer to these questions. Clearly, solutions of mass violence are false shortcuts that will only cause additional problems in the future. Thus, the prudent tyrant, terrorist, or president will opt for a less violent, more thoughtful approach, and leave mass violence in the only place it is ultimately useful—an explosive action film.

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