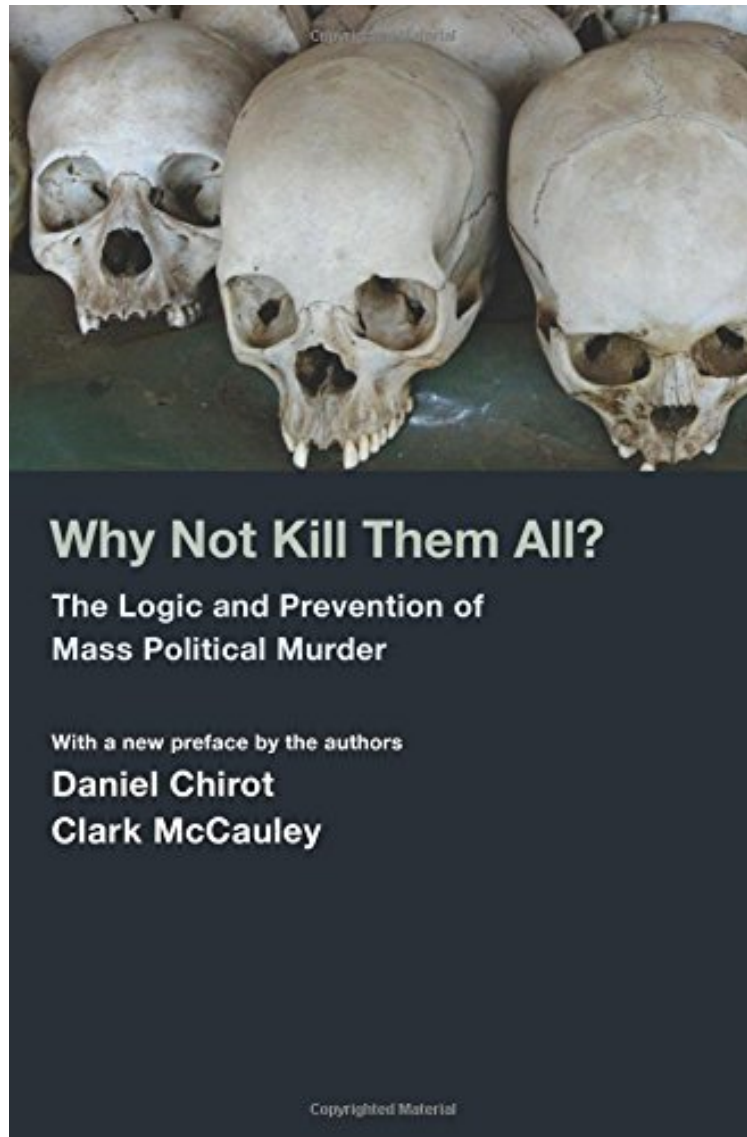


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Why Not Kill Them All?: The Logic and Prevention of Mass Political Murder

Daniel Chirot, Clark McCauley
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Daniel Chirot, Clark McCauley : Why Not Kill Them All?: The Logic and Prevention of Mass Political Murder
before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Why Not Kill Them All?: The Logic and Prevention of Mass Political Murder:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. worth readingBy AI This is a well-researched book: there are 30 pages of references, and the authors, Daniel Chirot and Clark McCauley, use them effectively. Basically, Chirot and

McCauley examine why genocide happens and suggest ways it can be prevented. They are very pessimistic: they rate the chances of more genocide in the future as likely, because the reasons genocide happens are still operative. One of their main points is the process they call "essentializing." They don't define it, so here's a dictionary definition: "essential: adj. 1) absolutely necessary; indispensable. 2) fundamental (essential principles). 3) of or constituting the essence of a person or thing. 4) (of an amino acid or a fatty acid) required by a living organism for normal growth, but not produced by the organism and therefore required in the diet. n. (esp. in pl.) a basic or indispensable element or thing. essentiality n. essentially adv." also: "essentialism n. the belief that things have a set of characteristics which make them what they are, and that the task of science and philosophy is their discovery and expression. essentialist n. adj." So, I take that all to mean that Chirot and McCauley are using "essentializing" as meaning becoming prejudiced (against a particular group); ascribing particular, unflattering, qualities to all members of that group. "essentializing ... says that "they" are all alike and must be treated as a single entity." p. 206. One of the authors, Chirot, went to Ivory Coast in April, 2003, and interviewed people about the conflict there between Northerners and Southerners. About the Northerners' views of Southerners, he says, "[I]t combines a mythologized history of the past full of resentment about various injustices with a demeaning, essentializing description of whole ethnic, religious, and regional groups who are deemed to be enemies. Needless to say, the southern view is the exact mirror image of the northern one." p. 204. Interestingly enough, the authors found that "an ethnographic comparative study found that the higher the level of exchange between groups, whether in trade goods or intermarriage, the higher the incidence of war (Tefft and Reinhart 1974). So, increased contact doesn't prevent genocide. Familiarity breeds contempt; or envy: referring to Jews in Poland and Chinese in Malaysia and Indonesia, they say, "A minority doing better than the majority may be a particularly inflammable situation (Chua 2003). They do, however, maintain that learning about other cultures and ethnic groups will lessen the chances of genocide. One reason for genocide, according to the authors, is the quest for purity. Referring to the Taiping Rebellion, Stalin, Hitler, and Pol Pot, they say, "Perfect purity imposed by force on a less than perfect world is an invitation to genocidal mass murder." p. 146. So what is the answer? Chirot and McCauley's major answer seems to be the ideals of the Enlightenment: "The modern world... has been retribalized, but on a larger scale than before. This is why the Enlightenment's glorification of the individual and individual rights is more important than ever, and necessary to restrain genocidal impulses." p. 142. "To combat [essentializing] requires a special ideology that has become widespread only in political cultures suffused with Enlightenment values. That ideology recognizes that individuals are in a real sense more important than communities. Not only do individuals have rights, but they are to be judged as individuals responsible for their actions, not as members of any group. As human beings find it easy to essentialize groups, to lump individuals into communities, and to judge the group as a whole, making individual distinctions in difficult times of inter-communal competition is a rare accomplishment." p. 206. John Weiss, in his 1996 book, *Ideology of Death: Why the Holocaust Happened in Germany*, explores the idea that Germany was not affected by the Enlightenment to nearly the extent that France and Britain were, by the 1930's, and claims that's a major reason why the Holocaust happened in Germany. Chirot and McCauley cite his book as a reference. *Ideology of Death: Why the Holocaust Happened in Germany* The authors say "If ...some.. skepticism and willingness to question and test received facts were to become more widespread, there would be fewer intellectual and political leaders wedded to communal myths about "our" purity and perfectly just cause. Some leaders who can balance the need to mobilize support for just causes while avoiding deadly essentializing of enemies occasionally do emerge, and we tend to remember the most famous ones as exceptional heroes. The Abraham Lincolns, Jawaharlal Nehrus, and Nelson Mandelas of this world are rare. But educating substantial numbers of young potential elites about history in this manner would certainly increase the likelihood that there will be more, and at many different levels of leadership. It may seem utopian to even mention such a long-term project, but that, after all, is one of the functions of higher education. In a world that seems to be going in the opposite direction, that is something worth considering." p. 210. 4 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A scary and depressing view of human behavior By Jill Malter This book tells us plenty about mass murder. Of course, as the authors say, there are plenty of reasons not to "kill them all." Namely, they are like us. And, I might add that what goes around can come around. But there are instances of mass murder as well as smaller incidents that have the same sorts of causes. We see how fear and other elements can lead to a desire to murder. We see that many soldiers in wartime can express a desire to kill enemy civilians as a matter of policy. We see how people can overcome their rather natural antipathy towards working as slaughterers. We see that many people can show a willingness to kill someone who merely makes them angry (as long as they only need to push a button or turn a knob to do it and feel that they have the authority to do so). We see the sort of propaganda that can be used to demean and dehumanize those who are intended victims. It is clear that all sorts of people can support mass murder, out of some sort of rather basic instincts, even if they do not think of themselves as having any special overall loyalties or prejudices. One can use one's ability to reason to find excuses for one's behavior rather than to take some other course of action. And it is very common for people to refuse to even consider changing their stances on the basis of facts or logic. Well, how does one oppose such behavior? Chirot and McCauley have some comments on this, but they are not wildly hopeful. And I tend to agree, even though mass murder is counterproductive and unnecessary. Any group that has the ability to commit mass murder can almost always do something less extreme

that has lesser long-term negative consequences for both sides. But will intelligent people agree to take facts and logic seriously? The authors imply that many won't do so and that they'll have to be restrained by outsiders. My reaction is that outsiders may be unreasonable as well: we've seen mass murders in the last couple of decades in spite of the purported attempts of "outsiders" to stop them. I think this book is interesting, and I recommend it. 14 of 18 people found the following review helpful. I fear my own species

By Stefan Isaksson

I only had to so much as glance on the title of this book, *Why Not Kill Them All?*, to decide that I had to read it, no matter what. The art of warfare and mankind's quite unbelievable skill and capacity to stubbornly refuse killing and slaughtering his fellow man has fascinated, as well as frightened me, as far back as I can remember. And even though I've tried, in so many different ways and for such a very long time, I still fail miserably trying to get a real sense of understanding of these people, how and what these men (and women and children) who are more than happy to go to war and kill whoever has been designated as the "enemy" actually think about their own actions. I've never killed anyone, let alone been in a fight, but yeah, of course I've wondered what it's like to take someone else's life. Just do the actual deed. Experience how it feels. And how you rationalize it. Because if you look at it in an extremely cynical and simplified way, this act - this deliberate eradication of the life of a dissident - is nothing but an act of supreme childishness and needlessness. To even begin to think how someone in a split second can be both willing and eager to take someone else's life as easy as snapping one's fingers truly boggles my mind again and again. How can this be? Is it too much to simply classify someone as mentally insane if he or she believes an act of murder (warfare included, which is really just legalized mass murder) can ever be justified and necessary? After all, there is no method of problem-solving as definitive as killing. And shouldn't *Homo sapiens*, the only animal with an awareness of the notion of how everything in the end must finally die, at this day and age be able to solve any problem whatsoever without resorting to killing? Well, apparently no. We're still dumb animals killing each other left and right, just like we've always done. It's just that these days the technology at hand makes it even easier to murder an even larger numbers of people even more effectively. And that's not a very encouraging thought, considering how we still refuse to learn from our mistakes. However, no matter how strongly I feel that modern man really "should" know better, professors Daniel Chirot and Clark McCauley demonstrates that no, I'm the one who should do some rethinking, because mankind's relationship to such things as life and death is an incredibly complicated issue. We react a lot stronger to violence and death happening to people we can relate to (neighbors, fellow citizens, et cetera), compared to when it happens to equally innocent people on the other side of the world. Even the most devoted and cold-blooded of killers are often able to show enormous amounts of love and compassion towards people he or she finds acceptable, and the feelings we all have regarding other individuals on this planet can, Chirot and McCauley explains, be close to impossible to change: "Once we strongly identify with a group, to the point of loving or hating it, changing our minds for instrumental reason is rare." (pg.77) The authors demonstrate, quite convincingly, how anyone might be capable of murdering and participating in ethnic cleansings and similar exterminations. That is, as long as the circumstances are right, and throughout *Why Not Kill Them All?*, these circumstances are investigated very thoroughly. Many factors must come together for a group of people to decide to wipe out another group, but it has happened again and again throughout history and we all know it's not going to come to an end. And no matter how horrible and unfair these crimes appear to the outsider; to the perpetrators they appear just as natural and understandable. That's why it rarely matters how furiously the rest of the world reacts: "There is no evidence that international discussion and exposure of abuses on ethnic, religious, or political grounds has much effect on governments that engage in such behavior. The most brutal regimes, in fact, are the ones least likely to be swayed by moral arguments." (pg.172) The descriptions and explanations of various political mass murder clearly is what the majority of the book is about, but the reader also finds lots of war history throughout the text. Fortunately, because if you're interested in political mass murder you're quite likely to be interested in war and warfare, too. But in case you're not, then it's still fortunate that these sections have been included, since an increased awareness of warfare throughout history most definitely will result in an increased understanding of the human animal and her creepy tendencies to use extreme violence to solve her conflicts. *Why Not Kill Them All?* is a book that really does manage to make something unpleasant and despicable appear most natural. Not surprisingly perhaps, because what the authors deal with are actions that, despite their creepiness, comes quite natural to the human race. At the end of the book several ideas and solutions as to how political mass murder might be stopped or at least fought are presented, and for the sake of our species we all better keep our fingers crossed and hope these ideas and solutions actually work if they're ever put to the test. If they don't, well, then there's no need to worry about a huge asteroid slamming into Earth sometime in the future and brutally eradicating the entire human species. Because we're quite capable of doing that ourselves.

Book by Chirot, Daniel, McCauley, Clark

One of Choice's Outstanding Academic Titles for 2006 "What to do [about genocide]? Can we eliminate love, laughter, or any other human impulse as enduring as the hunger to kill all one's enemies? . . . Few university-press books organize a topic so persuasively that, in a just world, they should contribute to the founding of a discipline, or at least a staple course. *Why Not Kill Them All?* does just that. As the children of foreign elites attend our universities, the

thought that they might read this book, or take such a course, comforts. It does not completely reassure. Chirot and McCauley offer important wisdom--that is, when you think about mass murder rationally."--Carlin Romano, *Chronicle of Higher Education*"Daniel Chirot and Clark McCauley, in their superbly written book, rhetorically ask why a dominant group with overwhelming power would engage in genocide of its weaker rivals, and having established reasons for fratricidal frenzies, they proceed to lay out measures that could prevent such human rights catastrophes."--Dipak Gupta, *Political Science Quarterly*"Why Not Kill Them All? is an erudite intellectual achievement that synthesizes extant knowledge and adds to the surprisingly scarce literature on this topic. . . . [Chirot and McCauley] provide a breathtaking historical overview."--Juan Dez Medrano, *American Journal of Sociology*"The greatest strength of *Why Not Kill Them All?* is its broad historical literacy, drawing examples from the Bible, eleventh-century England, czarist Russia, nineteenth-century United States, and well-known cases from the last century. Chirot also displays deep personal knowledge of the violent, interethnic dynamics in the less bloody but more recent civil war in Ivory Coast."--Alan J. Kuperman, *Perspectives on Politics*"Daniel Chirot's professional role as a professor of sociology and international studies places him in an excellent position to examine the patterns of mass violence. Similarly, Clark McCauley's study of ethnic conflict and work as a psychology professor provide a necessary lens through which to view and analyze the prevention of mass murder. The perspectives of this book add pertinent insight to the existing literature on genocide."--Rachel Ray Steele, *International Journal on World Peace*"Well written, interesting, informative, and balanced. Students in an introductory course in ethnic conflict in sociology, political science, or social psychology will find it helpful."--Djordje Stefanovic, *Canadian Journal of Sociology*"Why Not Kill Them All? provides a valuable analysis of causes, conditions and strategies for the prevention of genocide and opens up an intriguing area for further work."--Benjamin Lieberman, *Patterns of Prejudice*"From the Inside Flap"Why Not Kill Them All? is an excellent book that adopts a fresh and complex approach to the problem of mass killings. In a study that ranges widely around the globe and through history, Chirot and McCauley demonstrate that genocides and other large-scale atrocities are relatively rare events. The human capacity for evil is deep-seated, the authors argue, but so is our inclination to settle conflicts amicably. The ties that bind us together are at least as strong as the forces that always threaten to rupture human connections. The challenge is to foster the social, cultural, and political tendencies that lead to cohesion rather than conflict. In their conclusion, the authors develop a set of powerful recommendations that students, policymakers, and concerned citizens will all want to consider."--Eric D. Weitz, Professor of History, University of Minnesota, author of *A Century of Genocide*"In recent years a parade of social commentators has grappled with the question of the causes of mass killing and genocide. But none of these researchers have brought the breadth of historical and sociological comparison to the issue that Chirot and McCauley do. None has delved as deeply into the social psychology that rationalizes violence. A brilliant synthesis of psychology and historical sociology, this book breaks new ground in the study of mass violence. Troubling and yet hopeful, the book will appeal to specialists as well as the general reader trying to make sense of one of the most morally perplexing issues of our age."--Robert Hefner, Professor of Anthropology, Boston University" In this wide-ranging book, Daniel Chirot and Clark McCauley make an important contribution to our understanding of genocide and other atrocities by seeking to explain why these tragic events are not more common. By posing this counterintuitive question the authors remind us that although genocide remains far more frequent than we might hope, it is in fact remarkably rare compared to the innumerable motives and opportunities that exist for violence between human social groups. In uncovering the mechanisms already in place in most societies that act to mitigate such violence, they help point the way to making genocide even less common in the future."--Ben Valentino, Dartmouth College, author of *Final Solutions: Mass Killing and Genocide in the Twentieth Century*"A magisterial achievement. This book shows in detail how institutions and policies explain the miraculous postwar recovery and the subsequent economic growth of Western Europe, how they flavored the economic experience of different countries, and how they determined and shaped the nature of coordination and cooperation among the European economies. It is deeply learned, using a huge variety of sources and data, always informed about the facts and at the same time based on sound economic analysis."--Joel Mokyr, Robert H. Strotz Professor of Arts and Sciences and Professor of Economics and History, Northwestern University, author of *The Gifts of Athena*"In their new book, Chirot and McCauley bring to bear on the issue of mass murder a rich ethnographic literature dealing with the ubiquitous subject of violence in society. In particular, they draw the attention of readers to various institutions and practices that emerged in collective life to control violence. *Why Not Kill Them All?* is bound to become a standard text in university classes addressing the subject of genocide and mass political murder."--Jan T. Gross, author of *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*"From the Back Cover"Why Not Kill Them All? is an excellent book that adopts a fresh and complex approach to the problem of mass killings. 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