Are there common circumstances underlying genocides?

Supporting Questions

1. Who were the groups targeted in five major genocides in the 20th century, and what were the relative sizes of those groups within their country?

2. What were the economic conditions in each of the five countries where genocide occurred in the 20th century?

3. What were the political contexts in each of the five countries leading up to the genocides?

[Image: https://www.flickr.com/photos/13476480@N07/1610550..]
Are there common circumstances underlying genocides?

Inquiry Standard
WH.H.7 - Understand how national, regional, and ethnic interests have contributed to conflict among groups and nations in the modern era.

Staging the Compelling Question
Brainstorm different times when large groups of people have been prejudiced against others.

Supporting Question 1
Who were the groups targeted in five major genocides in the 20th century, and what were the relative sizes of those groups within their country?

Formative Performance Task
List the groups targeted in the five major genocides in the 20th century, the perpetrating groups, and the sizes of those groups.

Featured Sources
Source A: Past Genocides and Mass Atrocities
Source B: Late Ottoman Population and its Ethnic Distribution
Source C: Jewish Population of Europe in 1933
Source D: Ethnic Groups of Cambodia (1967)
Source E: Genocide in Rwanda

Supporting Question 2
What were the economic conditions in each of the five countries where genocide occurred in the 20th century?

Formative Performance Task
Create a chart comparing and rating the economic stability of the five countries. Discuss your ratings with the class.

Featured Sources
Source A: GDP Graphs of the Five Countries Where Genocide Occurred in the 20th Century

Supporting Question 3
What were the political contexts in each of the five countries leading up to the genocides?

Formative Performance Task
Create a timeline for each country that includes 3-5 political events or changes.

Featured Sources
Source A: Political context in the Ottoman Empire preceding the Armenian genocide
Source B: Political context in Germany preceding the Holocaust
Source C: Political context in Cambodia preceding genocide
Source D: Political context in Yugoslavia preceding the Bosnian genocide
Source E: Political context in Rwanda preceding genocide

ARGUMENT
Construct an argument in the form of an essay that addresses the compelling question Are there common circumstances underlying genocides? using specific claims and relevant evidence from the featured sources while acknowledging competing views.

EXTENSION
Create a visual representation of the contexts of genocide using evidence from the formative tasks.

UNDERSTAND
Research a country currently experiencing ethnic conflict.

ASSESS
Compare the demographic, economic, and political status of that country to those of the countries featured in this inquiry, and determine whether there are common circumstances.

ACTION
Write a letter to the U.S. State Department about the country you researched, advising whether you think the ethnic conflict is likely to escalate based on the country's demographic, economic, and political context.
Overview

Inquiry Description

The purpose of this inquiry is to draw connections in the hopes of discovering possible factors, not proven causes, for genocide. This inquiry focuses on five different instances of genocide as well as more generally with concepts of genocide and war crimes, war and ethnic conflict, demographics, GDP, political centralization, and changes of power.

Introduce the idea of genocide and its history. Give a brief overview of the Armenian genocide, the Holocaust, the Cambodian genocide, the Rwandan genocide, and the Bosnian genocide. Explain that, while each of these genocides is different and has its own unique causes, there are some similarities among the circumstances surrounding the genocides. While many countries have groups of people who are prejudiced against other groups, this prejudice only culminates in genocide in a few extreme cases. Then, tell them they are going to look at the populations, economics, and politics of five countries before the genocides to see if they can find any patterns that might help explain why genocide occurred. These five countries include: Ottoman Empire (present-day Turkey), Germany, Cambodia, Rwanda, and Yugoslavia (present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina). Introduce or review necessary vocabulary, such as terms like demographics, majority, minority, simple majority, absolute majority, GDP, and centralization.

Structure

The formative tasks in this inquiry deal with the demographic, economic, and political contexts of genocide. In the first formative task, students will be presented with the concept of demographics and the nature of demographic minorities. They will explore whether the size of minority populations correlates with the persecution of those minorities. The second formative task will ask students to examine more advanced economic data and look at the concept of economic instability. The data will require students to draw on economic concepts like GDP to evaluate the economic stability of the five countries. They will evaluate the potential of economic instability to influence ethnic tensions. Finally, in the third formative task, students will evaluate the political stability of the five countries. After completing the formative tasks, students will have a body of evidence and some initial analysis to prepare them to do the summative work of building that evidence into an argument about common factors of genocide.
Staging the compelling question

Students will brainstorm instances of large-scale (sometimes even government-sanctioned) prejudice and discrimination, which may also lead into discussion of mass violence, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. The purpose of this staging task is to initiate discussion among students in a manner that is accessible and relevant, while also getting a sense of what they already know or do not know about genocides throughout history.
This supporting question discusses the topic of demographics, emphasizing the concepts of majorities and minorities. Students will analyze population data for the five different countries of interest. This will give students the opportunity to learn more about these countries and demographics in general, while also allowing them to develop and practice the skills of data and demographic analysis.

**Formative Performance Task**

In this formative task, students will analyze demographic data for all five countries as presented in sources B-F and list the groups targeted, the perpetrating group, and the sizes of those groups. They may also work collaboratively to generate graphs/maps representing the populations, or they may create a chart/table either individually, in small groups, or as a class. The first source presents background information on the five countries being investigated, and it may be helpful for students who need an introduction to the groups involved in these genocides.
Excerpt

This website provides an overview of genocides in Armenia, Germany, Cambodia, Rwanda, and Bosnia:

http://endgenocide.org/learn/past-genocides/

Source:
United to End Genocide - http://endgenocide.org/
### Table IV. Census and Corrected Population Distributions in 1914 by Principal Ethnic Groups within the Approximate Present Borders of Turkey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Muslims</th>
<th>Greeks(^b)</th>
<th>Armenians(^c)</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I POPULATION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) C(^d)</td>
<td>12,966,843</td>
<td>1,529,170</td>
<td>1,266,458</td>
<td>242,632</td>
<td>16,005,103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) M5(^e)</td>
<td>15,174,224</td>
<td>1,749,793</td>
<td>1,596,417</td>
<td>285,711</td>
<td>18,806,145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) M8(^f)</td>
<td>15,817,786</td>
<td>1,811,816</td>
<td>1,667,228</td>
<td>298,965</td>
<td>19,595,795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II. DISTRIBUTION (%)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) C</td>
<td>81.02</td>
<td>9.55</td>
<td>7.91</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) M5</td>
<td>80.69</td>
<td>9.30</td>
<td>8.49</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) M8</td>
<td>80.72</td>
<td>9.25</td>
<td>8.51</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTES: a) Excludes Dimetoko district of Edirne Vilayet and Kars, Artvin and Ardahan which were then under Russian occupation. Includes Iskenderun, and Antalya kazas and Ayintab Sandjack of Halep Vilayet. Also see note a under Table I.
b) Includes Orthodox and Greek Catholics.
c) Includes Gregorians, Catholic Armenians and Protestants. Some Protestants may not have been Armenian.
d) Census.
e) Mortality level 5, Gross Reproduction Rate (GRR) = 3.00.
f) Mortality level 8, GRR = 3.00.
DATA SOURCES: For the census population: Karpat (1985, pp. 170- 89), for the distribution of model population by age groups with various mortality levels and GRR= 3: Coale and Demeny (1966).

**Source:**
"In 1933, approximately 9.5 million Jews lived in Europe, comprising 1.7% of the total European population. This number represented more than 60 percent of the world’s Jewish population at that time, estimated at 15.3 million...In prewar central Europe, the largest Jewish community was in Germany, with about 525,000 members (0.75% of the total German population). This was followed by Hungary with 445,000 (5.1%), Czechoslovakia with 357,000 (2.4%), and Austria with 191,000, most of whom resided in the capital city of Vienna (2.8%)."

Source:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Alternative Names</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Khmer</td>
<td>Cambodian, Kampuchean</td>
<td>3,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Han, Sino-Kampuchean</td>
<td>435,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Annamite, Annamese, Yueh, Kinh</td>
<td>400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Stieng</td>
<td>Xtieng, Sa Tieng, Ta Mun, Steang</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>French</td>
<td></td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Brao</td>
<td>Brau, Brou, Proue, Love, Lave, Laveh</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sauch</td>
<td>Sauch, Sauch, Sauch</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Cham</td>
<td>Tjam, Chiem, Cam, Khmer Islam</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Chong</td>
<td>Chawng, Shong, Xong, Jian, Chheng</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Jamai</td>
<td>Jrai, Gia Rai, Gia Rai, Zrai, Cho Rai</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Kui</td>
<td>Kuy, Kuoy, Sunt, Sooi, Souei, Suei</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Pec</td>
<td>Bahr, Pohr, Porto, Por, Puar, Puahr</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Khade</td>
<td>Ede, Edeh, Radeh, Rade, Anak</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>Central Thai, Siamese, Thai Noi</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) The names of the ethnic groups are recorded as they are given.
2) Selected alternative names by author.

Joachim Schliesinger - Ethnic Groups of Cambodia Vol 1: Introduction and Overview
Supporting Question 1

Featured Source E  Genocide in Rwanda

Excerpt

"In 1994, Rwanda’s population of seven million was composed of three ethnic groups: Hutu (approximately 85%), Tutsi (14%) and Twa (1%). In the early 1990s, Hutu extremists within Rwanda’s political elite blamed the entire Tutsi minority population for the country’s increasing social, economic, and political pressures. Tutsi civilians were also accused of supporting a Tutsi-dominated rebel group, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). Through the use of propaganda and constant political maneuvering, Habyarimana, who was the president at the time, and his group increased divisions between Hutu and Tutsi by the end of 1992. The Hutu remembered past years of oppressive Tutsi rule, and many of them not only resented but also feared the minority."

Source:
This map shows ethnic groups in the former Yugoslavia based on data from the 1991 census. Focus on the central province of Bosnia and the pie chart in analyzing demographic data for the formative task.

Supporting Question 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporting Question</th>
<th>What were the economic conditions in each of the five countries where genocide occurred in the 20th century?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formative Performance Task</td>
<td>Create a chart comparing and rating the economic stability of the five countries. Discuss your ratings with the class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Featured Sources</td>
<td>● Source A: GDP Graphs of the Five Countries Where Genocide Occurred in the 20th Century</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This supporting question introduces the topic of economic instability by presenting the economic conditions in the five countries before the genocides. Students will develop their understanding of GDP and practice analyzing it as a marker of economic stability or instability. The question also introduces possible motives that can lead groups of people to become perpetrators of genocide.

Formative Performance Task

In this formative task, students will analyze the economic data of the five countries being investigated (using the GDP graphs in the featured source). They will create a chart that includes the name of the country, the date(s) of genocide, as well as the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the countries before, during, and after the genocide. Lastly, the chart should also include student ratings of the economic stability of the countries on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being the least stable. Students will share their ratings with the class.
This graph depicts the GDP of Turkey before and after the Armenian genocide. Note that there is no GDP data available for 1871-1912 as well as 1914-1922 (during the genocide).

The x-axis displays the year and the y-axis displays the number of 1990 International Geary-Khamis dollars in millions. The Geary-Khamis dollar (international dollar) is "a hypothetical unit of currency that has the same purchasing power parity that the U.S. dollar had in the United States at a given point in time. It is widely used in economics" (Wikipedia entry on Geary-Khamis dollar).

The full data set is available at this website:  
http://www.worldeconomics.com/Data/MadisonHistoric..  

This graph depicts the GDP of Germany before, during, and after the Holocaust.

The x-axis displays the year and the y-axis displays the number of 1990 International Geary-Khamis dollars in millions. The Geary-Khamis dollar (international dollar) is "a hypothetical unit of currency that has the same purchasing power parity that the U.S. dollar had in the United States at a given point in time. It is widely used in economics" (Wikipedia entry on Geary-Khamis dollar).

The full data set is available at this website:  
http://www.worldeconomics.com/Data/MadisonHistoric..
This graph depicts the GDP of Cambodia before, during, and after the genocide. The x-axis displays the year and the y-axis displays the number of 1990 International Geary-Khamis dollars in millions. The Geary-Khamis dollar (international dollar) is "a hypothetical unit of currency that has the same purchasing power parity that the U.S. dollar had in the United States at a given point in time. It is widely used in economics" (Wikipedia entry on Geary-Khamis dollar).

The full data set is available at this website: http://www.worldeconomics.com/Data/MadisonHistoric..

This graph depicts the GDP of Rwanda before, during, and after the genocide. The x-axis displays the year and the y-axis displays the number of 1990 International Geary-Khamis dollars in millions. The Geary-Khamis dollar (international dollar) is "a hypothetical unit of currency that has the same purchasing power parity that the U.S. dollar had in the United States at a given point in time. It is widely used in economics" (Wikipedia entry on Geary-Khamis dollar).

The full data set is available at this website: http://www.worldeconomics.com/Data/MadisonHistoric..
This graph depicts the GDP of Yugoslavia before, during, and after the genocide in Bosnia. The data included after 1991 likely represents the combined GDP of the former Yugoslavian provinces (after they became independent countries). The x-axis displays the year and the y-axis displays the number of 1990 International Geary-Khamis dollars in millions. The Geary-Khamis dollar (international dollar) is "a hypothetical unit of currency that has the same purchasing power parity that the U.S. dollar had in the United States at a given point in time. It is widely used in economics" (Wikipedia entry on Geary-Khamis dollar).

The full data set is available at this website:
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### Supporting Question 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporting Question</th>
<th>What were the political contexts in each of the five countries leading up to the genocides?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formative Performance Task</td>
<td>Create a timeline for each country that includes 3-5 political events or changes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Featured Sources

- **Source A**: Political context in the Ottoman Empire preceding the Armenian genocide
- **Source B**: Political context in Germany preceding the Holocaust
- **Source C**: Political context in Cambodia preceding genocide
- **Source D**: Political context in Yugoslavia preceding the Bosnian genocide
- **Source E**: Political context in Rwanda preceding genocide

This supporting question explores the concept of political instability as it applies to the five countries in this inquiry. Students will read about the political situation of each of the five countries leading up to the genocides, and they will become familiar with the concepts of political centralization and changes of power.

#### Formative Performance Task

In this formative task, students will create timelines of 3-5 political events in each of the five countries. To support students in creating the timelines, they should read the information presented in the sources discussing the political situation of the five countries before the genocides. In small groups or as a whole class, students may then explain why each of the five countries was politically stable or unstable before the genocide.
Supporting Question 3

**Featured Source A**

Political context in the Ottoman Empire preceding the Armenian genocide

**Excerpt**

This website gives a brief overview of the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the political context surrounding the Armenian genocide:


**Source:**
Excerpt

This website gives a brief overview of the political context in Germany in the years leading up to the Holocaust:

http://www.history.co.uk/study-topics/history-of-w..

Source:
The History Channel (UK) - http://www.history.co.uk/
Excerpt

This website provides a brief overview of the political situation in Cambodia in the years leading up to the genocide:


Source:
This website provides a brief overview of the political context of Bosnia (in former Yugoslavia) in the years leading up to the genocide:


Source:
This website provides a brief overview of the political context in Rwanda in the years leading up to the genocide:


Source:
Summative Performance Task

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compelling Question</th>
<th>Are there common circumstances underlying genocides?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argument</td>
<td>Construct an argument in the form of an essay that addresses the compelling question <em>Are there common circumstances underlying genocides?</em> using specific claims and relevant evidence from the featured sources while acknowledging competing views.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension</td>
<td>Create a visual representation of the contexts of genocide using evidence from the formative tasks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Argument**

Students will write an argumentative essay about possible common factors for genocide. They will argue whether or not there are common demographic, economic, and political contexts among the genocides presented in this inquiry. Students will use their work from the three formative tasks as evidence. The essay should conclude with an explanation of whether or not these contexts contribute to the escalation of prejudice into genocide. For demographic contexts, students may argue that target populations are usually the same size because most of the genocides discussed targeted small minorities. Other students may argue that population size does not affect whether a group becomes a target because in some cases the target population was not a minority or was not always a small minority. For economic contexts, students may argue that economic instability is a common link because of declining GDP in most of the countries. Others may argue that economic instability is not necessarily a precursor to genocide since not all the countries suffered dramatic losses in GDP. For political contexts, students may argue that political instability is a common precursor to genocide. Other students may argue that political instability is not a common factor because the political situation in each of the countries was so different. Students may have a number of other arguments and may use any combination of the above arguments to make their larger argument about possible common circumstances underlying genocide. In terms of evaluation, any number of interpretations can earn a perfect score as long as the interpretation is supported with evidence from the formative tasks. If students are trained in proper citation, this should be included in scoring. For students less experienced with citations, they should be guided in this process and citation should play a smaller part in grading if it factors in at all. The bulk of scoring should center on constructing an argument, supporting it with evidence, and organizing it clearly.

**Extension**

Students will create a visual representation of the contexts of genocide, which should have three sections, including one for the demographic contexts, one for the economic contexts, and one for the political contexts. They may include maps, charts, and/or pictures with evidence from the three formative tasks.
The purpose of this taking informed action task is to connect the study of genocides throughout history to instances of modern-day ethnic conflict and genocide. This helps students understand the purpose and usefulness of the inquiry as a whole as they come to recognize the issues presented in the inquiry are enduring. Since the inquiry already spans about 80 years of history, it is a logical conclusion to extend the study to the modern day. Additionally, analyzing a modern-day conflict for potential risk factors will help students to see possible applications for what they learned in the inquiry.