Research Agenda

Three projects are currently under way, and they stem from previously published work. The first is an examination of the relationship between rational choice and genocide. This hypothesis was first raised in *The Killing Trap: Genocide in the Twentieth Century*. Is it rational for governmental leaders to physically eliminate populations that are deemed to be undesirable ethnically and/or politically? Do the outcomes of genocide justify the assumption of rationality? Aggregate data on post-Holocaust genocides are being used to test this proposition.

The second project derives from the *Origins of Political Extremism: Mass Violence in the 20th Century and Beyond*. It is an experimental examination of the theory of the ephemeral gain that was confirmed historically as a progenitor of political extremism, but not at the individual level. Several experiments are being designed around elements of the theory itself, as well as comparisons of its explanatory power with cognate theories such as mortality salience, and prospect theory.

A third project consists of an elaboration on a theme explored initially in a forthcoming invited article in the *International Studies Review*, “The Sources of Intrastate Violence: Rationality and Emotion.” How far does the rational choice paradigm extend in its explanatory range? And if the domain of explanation is large, are there lacunae within it that require studies of the emotions for completeness of explanation? Mass violence may be one such lacuna. Historical evidence is used in this study.