How the ideology and political structures of Nazi Germany enabled the Holocaust
A study in ideology and political structures

BA-Thesis
Student: Tjörvi Schiöth
Supervisor: Magnús Árni Skjöld Magnússon
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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents an analysis of the political and social structures of the Third Reich and how, informed by the ideology of Nazism, they enabled the Holocaust, from the two different political-scientific approaches of interpretivism and structuralism. The argument is that Nazi ideology informed the structures of the Third Reich in such a way, primarily through the concepts of ‘cumulative radicalization’ and ‘working towards the Führer,’ that the Holocaust unfolded in a haphazard ‘functionalist’ process, through ever fluctuating Nazi anti-Jewish policy, as to emerge in three primary stages and a further two phases. The final stage was the so-called ‘Final Solution’ as we know it – which unfolded in two phases, firstly the Shoah by bullets and secondly the Shoah by gas. This process is referred to by scholars as the ‘twisted road to Auschwitz.’

In this essay, the two primary historiographical approaches to the Holocaust, intentionalism and functionalism, will be synthesized and reconciled with the political-scientific approaches of interpretivism and structuralism. I argue that intentionalism is essentially synonymous with interpretivism, as an approach that looks at ideas as a primary motivating factor; and the same applies to functionalism and structuralism, as an approach that looks at the dynamic of the political/social structures of society, how they function and compete among each other to produce outcomes.

I argue that adopting only one of these approaches is insufficient. They have to be applied in unison to sufficiently explain the functioning of the Nazi Regime, and how the greatest genocide in all of human history unfolded.
This BA-thesis is written on the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War in 1918, and also the 80th anniversary of the Kristallnacht pogrom in Nazi Germany in 1938. While working on this project in November 2018, the anniversaries of these two events came up within three days of each other: firstly on 8th November, which was the 80th anniversary of the Kristallnacht; and secondly on 11th November, which was the 100th anniversary of the Armistice that ended the First World War. I couldn’t help but feel the significance of these two events, and the impact they had on so many lives and the course of human history.

The heinous ideology of Nazism, which served as the primary cause for the Second World War in Europe as well as for the Holocaust, was born out of the immediate aftermath of the end of the First World War. The Kristallnacht was a significant step in the ‘cumulative radicalization’ process that eventually led to the full-scale continent-wide mass murder of the Jews in the Holocaust, perpetrated by Nazi Germany and its collaborators. Exactly how this process evolved and took shape will be the topic of this essay. The concept of the ‘cumulative radicalization,’ as well as the so-called ‘working towards the Führer’ concept, are key in understanding this historical and political development. These concepts will be laid out and discussed within the scope of this study. As such, the structures of the Nazi Regime and its inner workings will also be delved into.

My fascination with this subject was initially born out my specific interest – as a ‘history buff’ – in the history of the Second World War, as well as in the peculiar phenomenon that was the Third Reich. Over the years I have amassed a personal library of books and scholarly literature on these topics, which I have read enthusiastically one after the other. I am also, as a student of political science, intrigued by political ideologies (as well as the history of intellectual thought), how they act as a motivating force in human history and society. I have particular interest in analyzing the history of Fascism, Nazism and racism, which will be among the topics of this essay.

Earlier this year, on my travels in Lithuania in September 2018, I visited the 9th Fort of Kaunas, which is a site of one of the massacres of Jews committed by the Einsatzgruppen death squads of Nazi Germany throughout the occupied Soviet Union.
during the Second World War. The 9th Fort of Kaunas was the site of many consecutive large massacres, where over 60,000 people in total were murdered in the years 1941-1943. This visit, as well as a visit to the Holocaust Exposition of the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum in ‘The Green House’ in Vilnius, served as an inspiration for me to write about this subject.

So it is at the centennial and eightieth anniversary of two monumental events in the 20th century, namely the First World War and the Kristallnacht, that I present here my BA-thesis. Both of these events can be viewed as causes for, or significant steps towards, the Holocaust, as part of the ‘twisted road to Auschwitz,’ which will be the subject of analysis in the following essay.

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My gratitude goes out to the friendly staff and tour guides at the 9th Fort museum in Kaunas, and the Holocaust Exposition of the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum in ‘The Green House’ in Vilnius, in Lithuania. These visits in September 2018 were truly a thought-provoking experience and inspired me to write about this subject.

Finally, I would like to give special thanks to the scholars Ian Kershaw, Laurence Rees and Antony Beevor, whose exemplary writings (counted among my favorite books) have served as an important inspiration for me.
NOTE ON THE TEXT

Since in this paper, an abundance of phrases and names that can be easily abbreviated will be used repeatedly throughout the text (especially names of institutions, organizations and events; e.g. NSDAP, RSHA, SS, WWII etc.), I will stick to using the simple abbreviations in every case, skipping the usual manner of spelling out the full unabbreviated name in the first instance of every chapter. A full list of abbreviations is found at the end of the essay, in Chapter 11.1 in the appendix.

Particular German words and phrases will be used regularly, especially German names of important concepts, such as Gleichschaltung and Machtergreifung etc. Within the text, I will use these words in the original German, but in italics. A complete list of concepts, including the German words, is found at the end of the essay in the glossary of terms in Chapter 11.2 (see also Chapter 11.3) of the appendix.

When it comes to personal names I will stick to always using the last name in case of certain notable persons, whose names are crucially important to the subject matter and will feature repeatedly throughout the text (especially the three H’s: Hitler, Himmler and Heydrich), skipping the custom of spelling out the full name in the first instance of every chapter. For reference, a full “List of notable historical persons featured in the text” is found in Chapter 11.4 of the appendix. For lesser known people who feature less prominently, and for the names of scholars and experts whose work is being referenced, I might use their full names. The names of the scholars and their works are found in the bibliography in Chapter 10.

Many and various names of different geographical places, e.g. cities, administrative regions and camps, feature prominently throughout the text. For a full “List of notable places features in the text” consult Chapter 11.5 in the appendix.
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1. INTRODUCTION

The following study presents a political-scientific approach to the ideology, institutions, political and social structures of the Third Reich, and how they enabled the greatest calamity in human history, namely the Holocaust, to take place. By analyzing the functioning of the Nazi state and how it was shaped by Nazi ideology, I intend to outline how this particular unique set of circumstances, individuals, institutions and ideological beliefs, paved the way for the greatest mass murder and genocide of all time. The main goal here is, firstly, to explain through the interpretive approach how Nazi ideology acted as a motivating factor and agency, and secondly, through the structural approach, to analyze how the political institutions and social structures of the Third Reich acted dynamically, informed by Nazi racial ideology, in such a way that they produced the outcome which was the Holocaust.

I believe this topic is of fundamental importance, especially now when we see the public’s memories and general knowledge of the history of Nazi crimes and the Holocaust starting to fade. One of the reasons for why this might be happening now, is because the generation that witnessed and lived through this time period is starting to die out. Few survivors and witnesses live to this day to tell the tale. Very soon there will be no one left and these historical events will completely vanish from living memory (as the events of the First World War did around a decade ago), only to be confined to the history books and the public consciousness of events past. This has coincided with a recent upsurge in far-right politics, which share an uncanny resemblance to some of the basic fascist and racist ideological tenets of Nazism, the very same system of beliefs that enabled the Holocaust. I believe it to be fundamentally important to understand this history and to learn from it, in order to prevent the same type of thinking from repeating itself, echoing George Santayana’s famous quote: “Those who don’t know history are doomed to repeat it.”
1.1 Thesis

The thesis of this essay is that the ideology of Nazism (1) informed the structures of the Third Reich in such a way (2), that this unique set of circumstances and motivations enabled the Holocaust.

The two different theoretical approaches of interpretivism/intentionalism (1) on one hand, and structuralism/functionalism (2) on the other, constitute the two premises of the argument for the thesis. The logical conclusion of these two approaches (acting as the premises of the argument) being applied in unison to the Nazi regime, is therefore the result, namely the Holocaust. The main goal of the thesis is to present and understand – in a concise and concentrated approach – the nuance of exactly how this process unfolded, through a political-scientific approach, informed by the historical literature.

The thesis and the methodology of this essay will be covered in more detail in Chapter 2: “Methodology,” where the different theoretical approaches will be laid out and explained.

1.2 Defining the Holocaust

First of all, a precise definition of the subject matter is required, due to the fact that varying and ambivalent interpretations are prevalent. According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), the Holocaust was the systematic mass murder of approx. 6 million European Jews, perpetrated by Nazi Germany and its collaborators (USHMM, n.d.). According to Ian Kershaw (2005): “In intent, planning, scale, and method, there has been no other genocide like it in history.” It was a “genocide such as the world had never previously witnessed (Kershaw, 1998, p. xx). Laurence Rees (2017, p. xv) calls it “the most infamous crime in the history of the world.” The term ‘Holocaust’ is often used interchangeably with the term ‘Final Solution’ (the Nazis’ own term for the genocide). The evolution of the concept of the ‘Final Solution’ will be explored in later chapters of this essay.

This study will mainly deal with the Shoah\(^1\) – the genocide of the European Jews, although the Nazi mass murder of other categories of people is inextricably related (Rees, 2017, p. 425), and will be partially touched upon as well. Depending on the victims concerned and the

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\(^1\) The term Shoah (see the glossary of terms) is a Hebrew biblical word meaning ‘destruction,’ used by Jews to refer specifically to the Nazi genocide of the Jews, in order to distinguish themselves from other victims of the Holocaust, acknowledging the fact that the Jews were especially singled out for destruction (Yad Vashem, 2018).
timeframe, the Holocaust can be defined in three main ways. Here, I will rely upon the three definitions provided by Timothy Snyder in *Bloodlands* (2010).

Firstly: “The final version of the ‘Final Solution,’ the German policy to eliminate the Jews of Europe by murdering them” (Snyder, 2010, p. 412) – beginning in summer 1941.

Secondly: “All German killing policies during the war” – Including towards Jews, Slavs (Poles, Russians, Serbs etc.), Soviet civilians and Soviet POWs, the Roma, people with disabilities, political prisoners (e.g. Communists, Socialists, Jehovah’s witnesses, Freemasons), and other undesirables (e.g. homosexuals and ‘asocials’).

And thirdly: “All oppression of Jews by the Nazi regime” (Snyder, 2010, p. 412) – covering the timeframe of 1933-1945, including pre-war Nazi persecution of Jews, such as the Nüremberg laws of 1935 and Kristallnacht pogrom of 1938.

According to the first definition of the Holocaust, covering only the Jewish victims, the death toll is approx. 6 million people. When all the victims of all of the Nazi German killing policies are combined according to the widest (second) definition, the victims total approx. 17 million according to the broadest estimate (Niewyk & Nicosia, 2000, p. 45). This death toll includes approx. 6 million Jews (USHMM, n.d.), 4.5 million Soviet civilians, 3.3 million Soviet POWs (Beevor, 2012, p. 225), 2 million Polish civilians, 200,000 Roma (Rees, 2017, p. 332), 70,000 disabled people, 10,000 homosexuals (Rees, 2017, pp. 127-8) and many other ‘undesirable’ categories of people. Some estimates also include the 300,000-500,000 Serbs killed by the Croatian Ustashe regime, which was a puppet state of Nazi Germany (Rees, 2017, pp. 202-3).

In this essay, when referring to the first definition, namely the genocide of the Jews, the Holocaust will be referred to as the *Shoah*. In discussing the development of the Holocaust, it would be impossible to entirely omit the Nazi German killings of certain groups of people other than Jews, or to overlook the period of discrimination (1933-1941) leading up to the onset of the explicit policy of organized mass killing during the war, beginning in the summer of 1941. Therefore, when referring to the ‘Holocaust,’ the term encompasses all of the three definitions, while acknowledging the uniqueness of the plight of the European Jews at the hands of the Nazi Regime, i.e. how they were depicted as the arch-enemy according to Nazi ideology and propaganda, and were singled out for genocide, constituting the largest group of victims of Nazi mass murder policies.
2. METHODOLOGY

This chapter will cover the different theoretical approaches that I will apply to the subject material, namely the Nazi Regime and the Holocaust, in order to argue for the thesis. First, a general outline of the historiographical approaches is necessary. This is the so-called ‘functionalism vs. intentionalism’ debate, which is the historiographical question of two different approaches among historians towards the Nazi Regime and the Holocaust. Next, I will lay down the theoretical approaches from political science and attempt to reconcile them with the previously discussed historiographical approaches. It is my argument that intentionalism and interpretivism on one hand, and functionalism and structuralism on the other, are essentially synonymous and constitute the same theoretical approach (intentionalism being synonymous with interpretivism, and functionalism being synonymous with structuralism). In that way I will attempt to reconcile the two academic fields, of history on one hand, and political science on the other. It is also my contention that in order to adequately explain the inner working of the Third Reich, as well as how the Holocaust unfolded, these two theoretical approaches of interpretivism/intentionalism and structuralism/functionalism have to be applied in unison. This was what I will attempt to do, in the analysis in the further chapters of this essay, and in arguing for the thesis.

2.1 The functionalism vs. intentionalism debate
- Historiographical approaches to the Holocaust

The main sources for the following chapter are Bessel (2003), Kershaw (2000b[1985], pp. 1-20, 93-133, 262-70) and Longerich (2010, pp. 1-3) which provide a comprehensive general outline of this topic.

The functionalism vs. intentionalism debate is a historiographical debate among historians and political scientists regarding the fundamental causes of – and responsibility for – the Holocaust specifically, but also the different approaches towards understanding the general inner workings of the Nazi Regime. This debate came to the forefront in the 1980s, and has largely been settled since in a general consensus among contemporary historians, with a synthesis of the two approaches, acknowledging the merits of both perspectives, although the ‘intentionalist’ approach has come to be redefined following research developments in the
1990s. This will be explained further along in this chapter, following first of all, a general definition of these two approaches.

Principally, the so-called ‘intentionalists’ maintain that there was a universal masterplan by Hitler since the beginning for the extermination of the Jews (essentially a top-down approach). While the ‘functionalists’\(^2\) argue that the Holocaust developed in stages and involved many spontaneous decisions and actions, resulting from local initiatives in conjunction with different orders from the top, and that there were many largely independent killing actions, not necessarily following a single unified blueprint (essentially a bottom-up approach).

The intentionalist approach was born out of the early writings on the Nazi Regime immediately following the end of WWII, especially scholarly publications in the 1950s-60s. These early writings were influenced by the German historicist tradition, which arguably has many similarities with the old and antiquated ‘great man theory’ of history, namely that history can be explained chiefly by the impact of a few highly influential great men, who constitute the key players in understanding almost all of human history.\(^3\)

Therefore, in these early publications on the Nazi regime, it was taken for granted that Hitler had been the key player in the Holocaust, and it was assumed (from his earlier writings in *Mein Kampf* and from his speeches before the war) that he had not only planned the extermination of the Jews all along, but had subsequently also personally masterminded the Holocaust. This ‘historicist approach’ is also largely synonymous with the so-called ‘biographical approach’, almost universally adopted by historians when writing biographies. According to this approach, chief agency over the course of history is applied to the person in question, who is the subject and primary concern of the biography. This approach stems primarily from the inherent nature of writing a biography, where the subject person comes first and the general circumstances of history second (in contrast, when analyzing external factors and social structures, authors don’t usually write biographies, but more general histories and analyses, such as ‘people’s histories’ and so forth). For this reason the early biographies of Hitler accounted to him the same agency that was ascribed by the historicist approach. Later, scholars writing about Nazism and defining it as ‘Hitlerism’ (see e.g. Bracher, 1973 and 1979, p. 198), came to lead the intentionalist school of thought. This approach to the Nazi regime regarded Nazism as a purely Hitler-centric

\(^2\) ‘Functionalism’ in this context is synonymous with ‘structuralism’ (Kershaw, 2008a, p. 12).

\(^3\) The ‘great man theory’ of history was put forward in the early 19th century. Its proponents pointed to the examples of Napoleon Bonaparte, Attila the Hun and Julius Caesar (among others) as being the great men who were the primary figures and agents responsible for the shaping of human history.
ideology, a one-man causality, dominated by the personality of Hitler,\(^4\) with the same implications for the causes of the Holocaust. WWII and the Holocaust were seen as ‘great accidents’ in history, caused by the most unfortunate coincidence of all time, namely that Hitler – the most radical and fanatical of all persons – above all others, came to be so influential.

The functionalist approach rose as a challenge to this school of thought. The first functionalists, Martin Broszat and Hans Mommsen, primarily writing in the 1970s, originally proposed that the Holocaust had developed purely from the bottom-up, as a result of spontaneous local initiatives by regional Nazi leaders in the occupied eastern territories, which were only subsequently sanctioned by Hitler and the higher leadership to become a state-run genocidal program for the extermination of the Jews (Kershaw, 2008a, p. 18). In other words, Hitler was no mastermind, the Holocaust emerged without his guiding hand, and he only gave his approval as the genocide was already taking place. Out of this school of thought rose the notion of the ‘twisted road to Auschwitz’ (see the title in Schleunes, 1970), which is indeed an encapsulating phrase when it comes to explaining the structuralist thesis of how the Holocaust emerged in incremental, even haphazard stages. Far from being a straight and obvious road as the intentionalists argued, the road to Auschwitz was a twisted and shady one.

Consequentially, the initial criticisms directed towards the structuralists were on moral grounds, reprimanding them for downplaying the role of Hitler and diminishing his responsibility. But they never explicitly diminished his responsibility for the Holocaust in their writings. This moral criticism rose as a response to the perceived attempt of the structuralists to ‘trivialize’ this most singular and abhorrent of atrocities, namely the Holocaust, which due to its moral repercussions and uniqueness, cannot be trivialized. The structuralist position was however, more convincingly backed up by the evidence, as there is no conclusive indication that Hitler had formulated a blueprint for the Holocaust from before the war broke out. This left the intentionalists only with Hitler’s obsessive and virulent hatred of the Jews, apparent in his speeches, proclamations and writings, where he had made horrible and apocalyptic – although vague and hyperbolic – statements about the destruction of the Jews. The structuralist approach was also more convincing because it became clear that the Holocaust was never a single unified operation, but a collection of separate killing operations, carried out in different countries by

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\(^4\) This approach undeniably has some merit, as the person of Hitler was central to Nazism, but it falls short as an explanatory approach when it comes to analyzing the causes of WWII and the Holocaust, as well as the inner workings of the Third Reich.
different agencies (as will be explained in detail in Chapters 5 and 6). The criticism on moral grounds toward the structuralist approach, which persists to this day, seems to stem from the fact that, as Laurence Rees points out:

From quite early in my interaction with this history I had seen how some people had decided that, because the crime of the extermination of the Jews was so horrendous, it must have been orchestrated and planned at one monumental moment. But it seemed to me that this was a mistaken leap...

Over time, fewer and fewer serious historians took [adopted] the intentionalist position and the debate shifted among the functionalists… I was never convinced by the intentionalist argument (Rees, 2017, p. 429).

Antony Beevor also concurs that “although Hitler never wavered in his obsessive hatred of the Jews, the industrial genocide which began in 1942 had not always been part of the plan” (2012, p. 25).

These two approaches, functionalism vs. intentionalism, which were initially regarded as irreconcilable polar opposites, have in recent years grown closer and come to be combined and synthesized. Especially following further research published after the end of the Cold War, with the collapse of the Soviet Bloc and opening up of the Soviet archives. As such, the focus of the intentionalist approach has shifted (from the perceived requirement of Hitler having planned the Holocaust from beforehand and having had a guiding hand in it) to the agency of the pervasive racial and anti-semitic ideology of Hitler and the Nazis, which underlined the genocidal policies of the racial war (Rassenkrieg) and ‘war of annihilation’ in the east.

The historian primarily responsible for the synthesis of the two approaches came to be Ian Kershaw, who started to gain prominence in the 1980s, and published his most accomplished works in the 1990s. He had attended the famous Cumberland Lodge Conference of historians in 1979, where the phraseology of the ‘functionalism vs. intentionalism debate’ had originally been formulated, following years of dispute between the two opposing camps throughout the 1970s (Bessel, 2003; Kershaw, 1998, pp. xi-xii; 2008a, p. 12). Kershaw, who was only a junior scholar at the time and wasn’t yet regarded as an authority on the issue, had (naively, as seen

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3 For example, the Einsatzgruppen killing operations in the occupied USSR in 1941 were separate from Operation Reinhard in occupied Poland in 1942-1943, which was separate from Adolf Eichmann’s deportations of the Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1944.
by the other attendees) proposed for a synthesis of the two approaches, only to be dismissed out of hand by the fierce disputes that followed throughout the conference.

His subsequent publication in 1985 of the 1st ed. of The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation was a well-reasoned and “judicious” assessment of the historiography (according to Bessel, 2003, p. 15), which had by the 4th ed. in 2000, in addition to Kershaw’s two volume biography of Hitler (1998; 2000a), authoritatively achieved the successful synthesis of the two approaches. By that time, the fiery debates of the 1970s-80s – including the so-called Historikerstreit (“historians’ dispute”) among German historians – had abated and the combined intentionalist-structuralist approach to the Holocaust had become the scholarly consensus, as Bessel (2003) and Paxton (2004, pp. 158, 291n) confirm. Kershaw’s noteworthy contribution was – writing as a self-described “structuralist historian” (Kershaw, 1998, pp. xi-xiii) – a biography of Hitler which adopted not the traditional ‘biographical’ and ‘great man theory’ approaches to history, but sought to analyze the social and political structures of the Third Reich, as well as external factors and circumstances which influenced and enabled Hitler, his rise to power, his reign and his effect on human history.

As Kershaw notes, the synthesis of the two approaches also happened significantly due to the opening up of the archives in the Eastern Bloc, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which shifted the main concentration of research “from Germany itself to the epicentre of the Holocaust – [occupied] Poland and the Soviet Union” (Kershaw, 2000b[1985], p 269), what Timothy Snyder would refer to as the ‘Bloodlands’ (2010). The focus therefore shifted more towards analyzing the atrocities themselves, placing them as the starting point of the research, and subsequently seeking to explain how and why they could have happened.

This led to the emerging significance of Nazi racial ideology as a motivating force of action, according to the concept of ‘cumulative radicalization’6 (Kershaw, 2000b[1985], pp. 263-264). Such an approach highlights the pervasive racial and anti-semitic ideology of Hitler and the Nazis, which formed the backdrop to their racial war (Rassenkrieg) and ‘war of annihilation’ in the east, as well as their grandiose plans for the restructuring of Europe based purely on race.

The old intentionalist assumptions of Hitler’s personal agency came to be replaced by this new approach, as Kershaw explains:

6 See Chapter 3.2: “Cumulative radicalization.”
The type of reductionism that looked almost exclusively to Hitler’s ideological ‘intentions’ as the explanation of the Third Reich’s drive to war and genocide has patently been displaced. The complexity of the processes involved cannot be captured by simple ‘intentionalist’ arguments (Kershaw, 2000b[1985], pp. 264-5).

Instead, racial ideology came to be regarded as a chief agency in itself, replacing the former notions of the older school of intentionalists, and now convincingly placed the primary responsibility for the Holocaust squarely on the shoulders of Hitler himself and his obsession with the Jews (without the need to point to a masterplan for the Holocaust laid down by Hitler from before the war). Hitler’s underlings had competed to ‘work towards the Führer,’ implementing the vision of his outlook on the world by their own initiative and with his approval. As such, his rampantly racist and anti-Semitic Weltanschauung served as the main catalyst for the genocidal plans of conquest in the east in the first place. Without such an ideological backdrop provided by Hitler, the Holocaust could hardly have taken place, as Kershaw states simply: “No Hitler: no Holocaust” (Kershaw, 2005 and 2008a, p. 348).

But the racial ideology of Hitler and the Nazis is still not a sufficient explanation in itself. When looking at the inner workings of the Nazi Regime, it is clear that the ‘twisted road to Auschwitz’ (Schleunes, 1970) developed in incremental stages as previously explained. For this reason, the structural approach is also vital for understanding the Holocaust, especially how the different killing actions were carried out, their relationships to the different structures of the Third Reich and between themselves.

Therefore, to conclude this analysis of the functionalism vs. intentionalism debate, the fusion of these two approaches; on one hand an approach accounting for racial ideology as a motivating factor; and the structural approach on the other; serves as the cornerstone in the methodology of this thesis. In the next sub-chapter, these two historiographical approaches will be reconciled with two corresponding theoretical approaches from political science, to form a solid theoretical basis for the premise of the argument put forward as the thesis. Subsequently, the analysis and conclusion will follow in the later chapters.

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7 See Chapter 3.1: “The ‘working towards the Führer’ concept.”
2.2 Theoretical approaches within the fields of political science and comparative politics

In this study there are two main systems of concepts to analyze; firstly ideological beliefs (1) and secondly; social/political structures (2). Two different theoretical approaches, from the academic disciplines of political science and comparative politics, will be adopted and utilized in unison.

Firstly, to analyze ideology (1) and the capacity of ideas to act as causal factors (i.e. agency), I will apply the so-called ‘interpretive approach’ (also called ‘interpretivism’); while secondly, to analyze social and political structures (2) and their agency, I will apply the ‘structural approach’ (also called ‘structuralism’).

2.2.1 The interpretive approach

The interpretive approach, as per Hague & Harrop (2013, pp. 88-90), is the political-scientific framework which accepts that ideas in themselves, form and are an independent influence on the political world, shaping how political actors define their interests, goals, allies and enemies. The political actors act as they do because of how they view the world, and if their perspective differed, so would their actions (p. 88). This approach is useful to understand how the racial ideology and Weltanschauung of Hitler and the Nazis, served to influence the real world and was translated into action during the years of the Third Reich. In the following paragraph, I will provide and outline an example of the explanatory capacity of this approach when it comes to the topic of the Holocaust.

The very fact of the staggering atrocity of the greatest genocide of all time (namely the Holocaust), is commonly thought to belie genuine intent of the Nazis. The argument goes that they had to have been acting contrary to their own self-interests when they carried out the full-scale genocide and killing actions, committing as they did important manpower and resources to the operation while at the same time, that said manpower and resources would have been better used on the Eastern Front fighting the Red Army, as the war became more and more hopelessly lost. To explain this paradox, certain observers often ascribe some form of morbid or irrational reasoning to the Nazis’ intentions behind the Holocaust. For example, that what they did was entirely irrational, caused by some bestial or even demonic tendencies for destruction, or simply by the delusional whims of the madman at the helm who hypnotized the nation, namely Hitler. Suffice it to say that this form of reasoning doesn’t present a satisfactory
account of why the Nazis carried out the genocide (reducing it to an overly simplistic, crude and inadequate explanation). Therefore an improved and more comprehensive approach is required. Dismissing this said line of reasoning is not to say that many of the perpetrators of these crimes were not misanthropic or sadistic and acting irrationally, there are certainly plenty of individual examples. But the problem with this kind of reasoning is that it ignores the fact that the Nazis could, according to the logic of their ideological creeds, have believed that the mass murder of the Jews was in their best interest, and regarded the ‘Final Solution to the Jewish Question’ as an important part of their war effort, despite the obvious military setbacks on the front lines and the overall dire military situation. This seeming logical paradox can be explained convincingly by adopting the interpretive approach, which is a testament to its usefulness in the analysis of this essay. According to the framework of this approach, interests in-themselves are constructed through ideas (Finnemore, 1996, p. 2), and “there is no intrinsic reason why individuals and states must act in pursuit of their own narrow[ly defined] self-interests” (Hague & Harrop, 2013, p. 88), because said actors define their own interests according to their ideas and beliefs. As such, the Nazis rationalized the killing of the Jews as being a necessity, even to the point of being an important part of their war effort.  

Moving on from this example of defining the interests of the actors according to the ideas they hold onto – another useful insight into how the interpretive approach can be applied to explain ideas as causal factors, and how genocide and mass killings can be rationalized and regarded as a means to serving the self-defined interests of a particular group of people or a state, is Benjamin Valentino’s (2004) study into genocide and mass killings in the 20th century. According to Valentino:

Mass killing occurs when powerful groups come to believe it is the best available means to accomplish certain radical goals, counter specific types of threat or solve difficult military problems (Valentino, 2004, p. 66).

We will uncover plenty of examples where this applies appropriately to the subject matter, in the following analysis of this essay. The historian Laurence Rees makes a key insight on this note, based on his analysis of interviews which he conducted with perpetrators from the SS and Nazi German military, who committed atrocities on the Eastern Front. In explaining the:

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8 For example, the killings of Jews in the occupied Soviet Union by the Einsatzgruppen death squads was justified on the pretext of anti-partisan warfare.
“…reasoning process that Heinrich Himmler, Reichsführer-SS, used in order to justify the killing of Jewish children. In essence it amounts to: ‘The threat to our society from these people in the future is so great that in this case the end justifies the means.’ By such reasoning do intelligent people justify their most bestial acts. It shows that sophistication and culture are no bar to atrocity – indeed, they can be an aid, for once the intelligent mind devices a justification, there is no limit to the consequent brutality (Rees, 1999, p. 32).

As such, these ideas of Nazi ideology, and this sort of reasoning process, was used to justify atrocities and genocide, and consequently brought them into action. Mark Mazower, in his study of the history of the 20th century, also adopts the approach that human ideas are the primary agency of action: “Ideologies matter, not so much as a guide to history, but as vehicles for belief and political action” (1998, p. xii). Another useful insight from Valentino (2004) on this note is that: “Mass killing is an instrumental policy designed to accomplish leaders’ most important ideological and political objectives” (p. 67). The task of explanation according to the interpretive approach is, therefore, that of identifying the idea which itself helps to define action (Hague & Harrop, 2013, p. 89). Applying this to the context of this essay, the Holocaust can be seen as an instrumental policy of fulfilling the ideological goals of Hitler’s social-Darwinist Weltanschauung, as well as the more general anti-Semitic and racial ideas espoused by the Nazi Party.

2.2.2 The structural approach

The structural approach, as per Hague & Harrop (2013, pp. 82-84), is synonymous with the ‘functionalist’ approach as outlined in the previous chapter (Kershaw, 2008a, p. 12), and also with ‘Comparative Historical Analysis’ (Kershaw, 2000b[1985]; Mahoney & Rueschmeyer, 2003).

This approach is based on analyzing the different social/political structures of society and how they compete amongst themselves to produce specific outcomes. Ian Kershaw (1998; 2000a; 2008c[1993]) has demonstrated this approach excellently when it comes to the Third Reich, in the utilization of two key concepts, namely the ‘working towards the Führer’ concept (see Chapter 3.1) and ‘cumulative radicalization’ (see Chapter 3.2). I will use insights from his works to inform the methodology of this essay, as well as cite his conclusions.

When defining political/social structures, a particular structure can be a political institution (such as the Führer’s Chancellery), a political party (such as the NSDAP), the military and/or
security forces (e.g. the Wehrmacht, the SS etc.), administrative divisions (such as the Warthegau region under Gauleiter Arthur Greiser, or the General Government zone of occupied Poland under Governor-General Hans Frank) and so forth.

I will analyze how these different structures, especially the different levels of government, administrative divisions and the different military and security police organizations, competed amongst themselves to produce specific outcomes, in this case the genocidal mass killing actions that we call the Holocaust. An outline (as well as an analysis) of the structures of the Third Reich will be presented in Chapter 4 and will subsequently be utilized in the analysis of the implementation of the Holocaust in Chapters 5 and 6.

2.2.3 Towards a synthesis of the two approaches

In order to argue for the thesis convincingly, I believe it is necessary to apply the two approaches of interpretivism (1) and structuralism (2) in unison. A key insight here is to understand how the social and political structures of the Third Reich were motivated and informed by an ideological agenda (e.g. racial purification). Hence, the ideology of Nazism (1) informed the structures of the Third Reich (2) in such a way, that they competed among themselves and produced their specific outcomes, leading to the Holocaust.

The synthesis of the two political-scientific approaches of interpretivism and structuralism, is essentially synonymous with the combined approach of the intentionalist and functionalist schools of thought among historians, as was laid out previously in Chapter 2.1. There, I argued for the synthesis of the two approaches from the historical literature, as has become the consensus among historians in approaching the Nazi Regime, Hitler, the ‘Final Solution’ and the Holocaust.

Therefore, in order to reach the conclusion of this essay, the thesis that I posit is that Nazi ideology (according to the interpretive/intentionalist approach) acted in unison with the political/social structures of the Third Reich (according to the functionalist/structural approach) in such a way – chiefly through the concepts of ‘working towards the Führer’ and ‘cumulative radicalization’ – that the Holocaust developed incrementally in three over-arching stages, preceded by the evolution of Nazi anti-semitic policy, to result in the final stage that was the Nazis’ ‘Final Solution,’ namely the physical extermination of the Jews, which unfolded in two main phases (the Shoah by bullets and the Shoah by gas) and a further two sub-phases (Operation Reinhard and the ‘Final Solution’ of European Jewry), loosely connected but largely
separate. An outline and analysis of this framework (of phases and stages of the Holocaust) will be the subject of Chapter 5.1.
3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In this chapter we will look at two key concepts pertinent to the thesis. When explaining the inner workings of the Third Reich and the development of the Holocaust from the interpretive and structural approaches, two concepts in particular are key. They are the ‘working towards the Führer’ and ‘cumulative radicalization’ concepts, which serve as the cornerstones in the argument for the thesis. They explain how the structures of the Third Reich, informed by Nazi ideology (according to the interpretive approach), enabled the Holocaust (according to the structural approach). The first is essential in explaining how the Nazi Regime functioned, the second in explaining how Nazi policy radicalized in such a way as to eventually lead to all-out genocide.

3.1 The ‘working towards the Führer’ concept

A key insight in understanding the inner workings of the Nazi Regime is the ‘working towards the Führer’ concept. This concept was first postulated and later extensively theorized by Ian Kershaw in his numerous publications on the subject (see notably Kershaw, 1998, pp. 529-531 and 2008c[1993]). The phrase refers to speech delivered by a Nazi functionary in 1934, where he said that the primary goal of every follower of Nazism, as well as active participants in the Third Reich, should be to "work towards the Führer," meaning towards his vision and goals (and also as it turned out, to gain his personal favor). This concept is also utilized by Laurence Rees (2005a[1997], pp. 53-5) in his analysis.

The way the Nazi Regime functioned stems from the overly personalized rule of the Führer Adolf Hitler. Hitler’s role in the Nazi state is among the clearest examples of Max Weber’s ‘charismatic authority’ (1978[1922] and 1998[1923]), whereby a leader rules through his charisma and personal authority, as opposed to by tradition or legal institutions. Hitler’s personal power was such that it eroded the legal and administrative structure of the German state (Kershaw, 1998, p. xiii; 2008c[1993], p. 37; Rees, 2012, pp. 2-3), as Kershaw explains: “Hitler’s personalized power was able to free itself from all institutional constraints and become absolute” (Kershaw, 1998, p. 531).

This, in addition to how the racial ideology of Nazism and the Weltanschauung of Hitler came to define all the goals of and inform the structures and institutions of the Third Reich, led
Nazi functionaries to compete among themselves to fulfill his vision and gain the Führer’s favor, i.e. to ‘work toward the Führer.’

Regarding how this translated into Nazi policy towards the Jews, eventually culminating in the Holocaust, Antony Beevor explains:

Nazi Policy on the ‘Jewish Question’ had fluctuated. In fact the very term ‘policy’ is misleading when one considers the institutional disorder of the Third Reich. Hitler’s dismissive attitude towards administration permitted an extraordinary proliferation of competing departments and ministries. Their rivalries, especially between those of the Gauleiters and other Nazi Party officials, the SS, and the army, produced an astonishingly wasteful lack of cohesion which was totally at variance with the regime’s image of ruthless efficiency. Seizing on a random comment from the Führer, or trying to second guess his wishes, competitors for his favour would initiate programmes without consulting other interested organizations (Beevor, 2012, p. 45).

Such initiatives by local Nazi leaders in ‘working towards the Führer’ led to the first locally implemented genocides perpetrated in occupied Poland (Kershaw, 2008b[1992]). This aspect of the Holocaust is crucial to the structuralist account, and will be further explored in Chapter 6.

Hannah Arendt (2006[1963]), in her analysis of the inner workings of the Nazi Regime, referred to this concept as the “categorical imperative” of the Third Reich (alluding to Immanuel Kant’s categorical imperative), quoting the writings of Hans Frank (the Governor-General of the General Government) for illustration: “Act in such a way that the Führer, if he knew your action, would approve it” (quoted in Arendt, 2006[1963], p. 136).

3.2 ‘Cumulative radicalization’

Now that we have a working theory of how the Nazi Regime functioned, the next framework that is needed, is to explain the radicalization of Nazi policy and how it eventually culminated in genocide. The key concept here, in understanding how Nazi anti-Jewish policy evolved and how the Holocaust developed in incremental stages, is that of ‘cumulative radicalization.’

This concept was originally coined by Hans Mommsen (1976 and 1997) and was later picked up by Ian Kershaw, who would utilize it extensively and popularize it through his writings (see e.g. Kershaw, 2000b[1985], p. 77).
The main premise of the concept is grounded in the dynamism of the Nazi state. With all the over-lapping departments, ministries and other structures, competing to ‘work towards the Führer’ and his vision, the system possessed an innate tendency towards ever accumulating radicalization. Local Nazi leaders would act on their own initiative on a radical new policy or solution, which would subsequently be sanctioned from above. Once a certain threshold was passed, there was no going back. Policy could only ever become more radical, not the reverse, as it was contrary to the very essence of the system to rein in the radical tendencies and settle into some form of conservative *status quo*. De-escalation was contrary to the very essence of the structure of the Nazi Regime, while cumulative radicalization was dynamically built into its core (Kershaw, 1998; 2000a; 2000b[1985], pp. 263-264; 2008d[2006], pp. 92-4).

Laurence Rees outlines the process of cumulative radicalization and how it culminated in the Holocaust succinctly:

In the context of the Holocaust, Hitler’s primary role was to set a vision. That vision was relatively consistent from the moment he entered politics at the end of the First World War. He hated the Jews with a passion that was almost overwhelming. They were to blame for Germany’s misfortune. They needed – somehow or other – to be neutralized… how that goal should be accomplished varied from time to time, determined largely by what Hitler thought was politically acceptable at any given moment. There were thus many different milestones on the journey to the Holocaust. Some of the most crucial along the way were: the invasion of the Soviet Union; Hitler’s decision to send the Jews from the Old Reich and Protectorate to the east in the autumn of 1941; his response to the entry of the United States into the war a few months later; and the order to kill the Jews of the General Government in the summer of 1942. The most appalling atrocity in history was thus caused not by one single, monumental moment of decision, but by a series of moments of escalation, which cumulatively built into the catastrophe we call the Holocaust (Rees, 2017, p. 422).

Crucially, Rees adds that: “The structure of the Nazi state also played a part in the way the Holocaust developed” (Rees, 2017, p. 422). This will be the focus of analysis in Chapter 6. Furthermore, the crucial steps in the cumulative radicalization process of Nazi anti-Jewish policy are exemplified in the stages and phases of the Holocaust (outlined in this essay in Chapter 5.1), and how the Holocaust itself unfolded in incremental steps.
4. THE MACHINERY OF DESTRUCTION
   – The structures of the Third Reich

When approaching the Third Reich and the Holocaust from a structural approach, it is essential to look at how the structures of the regime were formed, shaped and put in place, and the dynamism of these structures as they came to function during the war.

In this chapter an outline and a brief analysis of the political and social structures of the Third Reich, in peacetime and wartime (1933-1945), will be presented. Raul Hilberg (1985[1961]) used the term “Machinery of Destruction” to refer to the structures of the Third Reich in *The Destruction of the European Jews*. This term encapsulates the substance of this chapter. To understand how the Holocaust unfolded, it is vital to understand the basic layout of the structures of the Third Reich, for example the complicated system of regional governance, but especially that of the military and police forces and the SS, the primary perpetrators of the genocide of the Jews. This framework of the structures and terror apparatuses of the Nazi Regime will be presented here, and subsequently will be utilized in the analysis of the implementation of the Holocaust in Chapters 5 and 6.

Hilberg outlined the overall governmental structures of the Third Reich as follows:

The German administrative apparatus consisted of a Führer (Adolf Hitler) and four distinct hierarchical groups: the ministerial bureaucracy [the civil service], the armed forces [Wehrmacht], industry [business], and the party [the Nazi Party and its organizations, the regional districts and the SS] (Hilberg, 1985[1961], vol. 1, p. 56).

Crucially, when it eventually came to the ‘Final Solution,’ all of these four groups of structures would coalesce and fuse “into a machinery of destruction” (Hilberg, 1985[1961], vol. 1, p. 56).

4.1 The Party apparatus and Gau system

During the early years of the Third Reich, immediately following the *Machtergreifung* in 1933 and as part of the ensuing *Gleichschaltung* process, the federal states of Germany were *de facto* abolished, superseded by the administrative divisions and regional governance of the Nazi Party itself. The *Gauleiters*, the regional leaders of the administrative regions that superseded the *Länder*, were appointed by, and directly responsible to the Führer, bypassing all others checks and balances on their power.
In essence, this system of regional governance is analogous to feudal monarchy, where Hitler had the role of the king and his regional governors that of vassals, due to their considerable autonomy and freedom in carrying out their tasks (Rees, 2005a[1997]). According to Kershaw “bonds of personal loyalty” were more important than “functional position and status” (Kershaw, 2008c[1993], p. 32), in a clear demonstration of Max Weber’s concept of ‘charismatic authority.’ As such, the regional governors would act on their own initiative according to the ‘working towards the Führer’ concept.

Hitler also (perhaps due to his fanatical belief in social-Darwinism and the ‘survival of the fittest’) deliberately created a Darwinian environment within his Party administration. Functionaries would have overlapping tasks and compete with each other to come out on top, in implementing the Führer’s will and gaining his favor (Kershaw, 2008c[1993], p. 35; Rees, 2005a[1997]). From this observation, Kershaw remarks that the Third Reich was a “Darwinist jungle:”

In the Darwinist jungle of the Third Reich, the way to power and advancement was through anticipating the ‘Führer will,’ and, without waiting for directives, taking initiatives to promote what were presumed to be Hitler’s aims and wishes (Kershaw, 1998, p. 530).

This is an illustration of the ‘working towards the Führer’ concept in effect.

### 4.2 The SS and concentration camp system (1933-1939)

The SS started out as a small paramilitary formation of the Nazi Party, but would rapidly expand to run the concentration camp system of the Nazi Regime (as well as eventually its entire police forces). The first concentration camp to be constructed was Dachau outside München (the city which happened to be the cradle of Nazism), and would subsequently become the model for the later concentration camps.

Shortly after coming to power in 1933, the Nazis began to set up a series of concentration camps across Germany. These were mostly local initiatives: facilities that the SA, SS, and police established on an ad hoc basis, where they would detain and abuse real and imagined enemies of the regime. By the end of the year, there were over 100 of these early camps in operation (Megargee, 2009, p. xxxiii).

The Nazi state terror apparatus was in the beginning geared towards terrorizing the political opposition and imprisoning political opponents in the concentration camps. Jews wouldn’t become the primary victims until later, especially after the outbreak of war.
As Eric Lichtblau concludes from the recent study of researchers from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM):

As early as 1933, at the start of Hitler’s reign, the Third Reich established about 110 camps specifically designed to imprison some 10,000 political opponents and others, the researchers found. As Germany invaded and began occupying European neighbors, the use of camps and ghettos was expanded to confine and sometimes kill not only Jews but also homosexuals, Gypsies, Poles, Russians and many other ethnic groups in Eastern Europe. The camps and ghettos varied enormously in their mission, organization and size, depending on the Nazis’ needs, the researchers have found.” (Lichtblau, 2013).

Here a crucial distinction needs to be made between concentration camps, labor camps and death camps (extermination camps). No death camps were constructed until later during the war, beginning in late 1941. Concentration camps existed within Germany, however all the death camps would be located in the occupied eastern territories (especially Poland). The concentration camp system would also be expanded into occupied Poland, and notable death camps, especially Auschwitz-Birkenau but also Majdanek, were initially constructed as POW camps and would later serve the combined function of a concentration camp and extermination facility. In addition the main concentration camps, there was a vast system of sub-camps, labor and transit camps, interlinked with the railway system for the transportations of inmates, and later for the deportations to the death camps (Rees, 2005b and 2017).

### 4.3 Administration of occupied Poland (1939-1945)

Following the invasion and occupation of Poland in September-October 1939, the Nazi authorities split Poland into different occupational zones. An expanded version of the territory that had been ceded by Germany to Poland according to the Versailles Treaty of 1919, was annexed and re-incorporated into the Reich. These territories became parts of two pre-existing Gaue; East Prussia and Upper Silesia, while two entire new Reichsgaue were created: Danzig-West Prussia and the Warthegau. This expanded territory served as the ‘Greater German Reich’ and the Nazis would refer to it as the Grossdeutsches Reich territory. The remaining central and south-eastern territory of Poland which had not been incorporated, stretching along the new border with the Soviet Union (according to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact) and containing the former capital Warsaw, remained a zone of occupation and was named the General Government area, headed by Governor-General Hans Frank (Beevor, 2012, p. 43; Rees, 2017, p. 154). Later,
following Operation Barbarossa in 1941, the General Government territory would be expanded to include the new District of Galicia, which included the city of Lwów.

Complete ‘Germanization’ and ethnic cleansing was planned for the ‘incorporated eastern territories’ (the territories annexed into the Reich), serving as expanded Lebensraum for ethnic Germans, while the General Government would serve as the new effective occupied zone of Poland, reserved for the Poles, Jews and other undesirables (Mazower, 1998), what was referred to in Nazi slang as the “dustbin” of the Reich (Rees, 2017, p. 154).

4.4 Administration of the occupied eastern territories (1941-1945)

Following Nazi Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, those areas recently conquered were put under the military administration of one of the corresponding three Army Groups of the Wehrmacht, called the ‘Army Group Rear Area Command.’ In those regions Soviet civilians would be subject to systematic deprivation and starvation, as part of the Wehrmacht’s Hunger Plan. As a result, approx. 4.5 million Soviet civilians were killed as part of the Wehrmacht campaign of deliberate starvation of the population (Beevor, 2012; Rees, 1999).

After the whole of the Baltic countries, Belarus and Ukraine had been conquered a few months after the invasion commenced, these newly occupied territories of the Soviet Union were organized into zones of quasi-colonial civil administrations, called Reichskommissariats, under the auspices of the newly created ‘Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories’ (also called Ostministerium), headed by ‘Reich Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories’ Alfred Rosenberg, one of the chief ideologues of the Nazi Party. The three Baltic countries, and most of Belarus, were organized into Reichskommissariat Ostland headed by Reich Commissioner (Reichskommissar) Hinrich Lohse, while Ukraine was organized into Reichskommissariat Ukraine under Reich Commissioner Erich Koch, who also happened to be the Gauleiter of East Prussia (Beevor, 2012, p. 504; Rees, 1999).

As an illustration of the Darwinian nature of the Nazi Regime, the exact division of responsibilities and jurisdiction between these various administrations often came into conflict. For example, while the Reich Commissioners of the two colonial Reichskommissariat areas were supposed to have the highest authority in their regions, they had to go through Rosenberg’s ministry with all of their requests and demands. This was while the Gauleiters, on the other
hand, answered directly to Hitler, and could bypass Rosenberg’s ministry entirely. This was notably the case with Koch, who was both Gauleiter of East Prussia and Reich Commissioner of Ukraine (Rees, 1999, pp. 60, 89-90). As Antony Beevor explains, offering an insight into the competing structures of the Third Reich:

The chaotic rivalry between Hitler’s satraps in the east exceeded even that in Germany itself, between the Nazi Party and different organs of government. Alfred Rosenberg was appointed minister for the eastern territories, but he was thwarted at every turn. His Ostministerium was derided, partly because Rosenberg was one of the few civilian officials who wanted to involve former Soviet nationalities in the war against Bolshevism. Göring, in charge of the war economy, simply wanted to strip the occupied areas and starve their populations, while Himmler wanted to cleanse them by mass murder to prepare for German colonization. Rosenberg thus had no control over security, food supply or the economy, which meant no control at all. He even had no authority over Erich Koch, the Reichskommissar for Ukraine as well as Gauleiter of East Prussia (Beevor, 2012, p. 504).

As will be elaborated in Chapter 6, how these different administrative divisions competed amongst themselves was a crucial element in how the Holocaust developed.

4.5 Himmler’s wartime SS empire and the death camps (1939-1945)

Throughout the years of the Third Reich, Heinrich Himmler’s SS state terror apparatus continued to expand since the Machtergreifung and Gleichschaltung in 1933-1934. By the war in 1939-1945, it had grown into a massive empire under the leadership of the Reichsführer-SS, with hundreds of thousands of active service members, as well as a vast network of thousands of concentration and labor camps, and the notorious death camps in the occupied eastern territories. Comparing it to The Gulag Archipelago (Solzhenitsyn, 1974), Antony Beevor refers to it as the “SS archipelago” (Beevor, 2012, pp. 352-361).

At the start of the war in September 1939, the general German police forces of the Interior Ministry had been amalgamated with the SS (Hilberg, 1985[1961], vol. 1, p. 62). Himmler had already been head of both the SS and German police forces since 1936, in his capacity as Reichsführer-SS and Chief of the German Police, although the two apparatuses had remained separate. However, the SS and German police were officially merged in 1939, resulting in the formation of the Reich Main Security Office (Reichssicherheitshauptamt or RSHA), headed by
Reinhard Heydrich until his assassination in June 1942 and thereafter by Ernst Kaltenbrunner (Arendt, 2006[1963], pp. 68-71). As Hannah Arendt explains:

> All officials of the police received SS titles corresponding to their previous ranks… and this meant that in the space of a day a most important part of the old civil services was incorporated into the most radical section of the Nazi hierarchy (Arendt, 2006[1963], p. 70).

As part of this merger, the Gestapo (headed by Heinrich Müller), Criminal Police (Kripo), Order Policer (Orpo) as well as the SS-Sicherheitsdienst (SD), were incorporated into the RSHA, becoming one of a number of its seven sub-offices or Amts (Arendt, 2006[1963], pp. 36, 68-71). As such, all the police and security forces of the Nazi regime were now concentrated and subordinated to the Reich Main Security Office (RSHA), which by 1942 was one of the 12 Main Offices (Hauptamts) of the SS, under which all of its activities were managed. Adolf Eichmann, the principal organizer of the deportations scheme of the Holocaust, was the head of a sub-department (B4) of Amt IV (the Gestapo) of the RSHA, dealing with ‘Jewish affairs.’ Amts IV and V together constituted the former SiPo.

Of the 12 Main Offices (Hauptamts) of the SS, two are most important in relation to the Holocaust. In addition to the RSHA (with its 7 sub-offices) there was the WVHA (SS-Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt or SS-Main Economic and Administrative Office), headed by Oswald Pohl, which organized and administered the concentration camp system.

In addition to the 12 Main Offices of the SS (the most notable of which were the RSHA and WVHA), there was also a system of regional ‘Higher SS and Police Leaders,’ who were directly responsible to the Reichsführer-SS. Therefore, as part of the complicated web of the SS-hierarchy and command-structures, there existed two parallel chains of command, each of which was ultimately directly responsible to Himmler (Krausnick et al. 1968; Hilberg, 1985[1961]), and consecutively Himmler answered directly to the Führer. The Higher SS and Police Leaders were most the time among the highest ranks of the SS, and directly oversaw most of the massacres, extermination sites and death camps, within their local districts in the eastern occupied territories.

There would be 6 main death camps – Auschwitz-Birkenau, Chelmno, Bełżec, Sobibór, Treblinka and Majdanek, staffed by the SS-Totenkopfverbände (‘Death’s Head units’). There was a crucial difference between the death camps of Operation Reinhard and those which combined the function of a concentration and labor camp, such as Auschwitz-Birkenau and
Majdanek. The latter were under the administration of the SS-WVHA headed by Pohl. While the Reinhard death camps in the General Government were under the administration of the regional Higher SS and Police Leader Odilo Globočnik and Inspector of the Reinhard camps Christian Wirth, with Globočnik answering directly to Himmler. The commandants of concentration camps such as Auschwitz-Birkenau (Rudolf Höss) and Majdanek, answered directly to Pohl, (of the SS-WVHA), who was then responsible to Himmler. Another crucial feature of the Reinhard camps, as opposed to the SS-WVHA concentration camps, was that they employed Ukrainian auxiliaries of the SS; the so-called ‘Trawniki men’ – Hiwi (Hilfswilliger) collaborators recruited from former POWs (also called ‘Hiwi Wachmänner’). The Ukrainians were especially chosen for their collaborationist tendencies (Beevor, 2012; Rees, 2005b and 2017).

It is worth noting the unique nature of the Reinhard death camps. They were tiny compared to the vast concentration and labor camp complexes such as Auschwitz-Birkenau, the former covering just a few hectares whereas the latter covered a massive area of many square kilometers. The only function of the Reinhard death camps was purely to murder all the deportees immediately on arrival, as opposed to Auschwitz-Birkenau where a proportion of the arriving Jews were set aside for forced labor, as part of the ‘selection process.’ As such, the Reinhard death camps were much more secretive in nature, and were deliberately constructed at secluded locations, typically hidden in forests, in order to hide the crimes being committed there from public view. This was the case for the Reinhard camps, while the large concentration camp complexes such as Auschwitz-Birkenau were built close to – or even in the outskirts of – main cities (e.g. Majdanek in Lublin), and served as a form of intimidation towards the local population by the state terror apparatus. Once Operation Reinhard had been completed in late 1943, meaning the systematic ‘liquidation’ of the Jews of occupied Poland, all of the Reinhard camps would eventually be completely demolished and their traces hidden. Trees and vegetation were deliberately planted on the former sites in a cynical attempt to erase the crimes committed there from history (Rees, 2005b and 2017).

In total, the concentration camp network of Himmler’s SS empire was truly vast, dwarfing any other such enterprise in human history. According to Eric Lichtblau:

The researchers [for the USHMM] have cataloged some 42,500 Nazi ghettos and camps throughout Europe, spanning German-controlled areas from France to Russia and Germany itself, during Hitler’s reign of brutality from 1933 to 1945… The lead editors on the
project, Geoffrey Megargee and Martin Dean [see Megargee (2009 and 2012)], estimate that 15 million to 20 million people died or were imprisoned in the sites that they have identified as part of a multivolume encyclopedia… The numbers astound: 30,000 slave labor camps; 1,150 Jewish ghettos; 980 concentration camps; 1,000 prisoner-of-war camps… and thousands of other camps used for euthanizing the elderly and infirm, performing forced abortions, ‘Germanizing’ prisoners or transporting victims to killing centers (Lichtblau, 2013).

According to the Nüremberg trials after the war, the SS among its sub-organizations (such as the SD and Gestapo) were characterized as ‘criminal organizations.’ Therefore, according to these indictments of crimes against humanity, it is safe to say that Himmler’s SS empire was in effect a ‘terroristic police state’ (a term borrowed from Browning, 2013).
5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
   – Analysis of the stages and phases of the Holocaust

In this chapter the theoretical framework that will be used to approach the subject material will be presented and outlined. This framework will be utilized in the argumentation for the thesis, as well as in the analysis of the following chapters and in the conclusion.

5.1 Stages and phases of the Holocaust

For the purpose of analyzing the Holocaust from a political-scientific and theoretical perspective, I have presented a framework of stages and phases of the Holocaust in order to assist in better understanding, and to compartmentalize, a very complicated and nuanced phenomenon in history.

First of all, are the stages that constitute the different ‘solutions’ to the ‘Jewish Question,’ which were considered and implemented by the Nazi authorities at certain periods in time. These are the stages in the destruction process leading up to the final stage which was the ‘Final Solution,’ namely the genocidal decision to completely exterminate all the Jews of Europe.

- **Stage 1** – The first ‘solution:’ Expulsion (forced emigration) 1933-1939

  The policy of forced emigration (i.e. “expulsion” according to Arendt, 2006[1963], p. 43) was the active policy of discriminating against the Jews, judicially (e.g. by the Nuremberg laws, stripping them of their citizenship) and in every aspect of life (e.g. state-sponsored boycotts of Jewish businesses, harassment by SA thugs etc.), to such an extent as to make life for them so unbearable as to force them to emigrate from the Reich by their own initiative. The most significant outburst of violence against the Jews during this stage was the *Kristallnacht* pogrom of 9-10th November 1938, which is sometimes regarded as the beginning of the Holocaust.

Regarding the first stage, Antony Beevor explains:

> Although Hitler never wavered in his hatred of the Jews, the industrial genocide which began in 1942 had not always been part of his plan. He exulted in his obsessive anti-semitism and established the Nazi mindset that Europe had to be ‘cleansed’ of all Jewish influence. But his plans before the war had not included a murderous annihilation. They

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9 For more details about the Nazi term ‘Jewish Question,’ consult the glossary of terms in the appendix.
had concentrated on creating an unbearable oppression which would force the Jews to emigrate (Beevor, 2012, p. 45).

- **Stage 2** – The second ‘solution:’ Concentration (the ‘territorial solution’) 1939-1941

  After the war broke out in 1939 and forced emigration was no longer possible (due to wartime closed borders and naval blockades), territorial solutions were proposed and considered. These involved forced deportations to concentration camps and ghettos, with the eventual goal of finally resettling the Jewish population in a certain designated territory, which would be a Reich-occupied semi-autonomous protectorate, under the administration of an SS police chief. There were primarily three such ‘territorial solutions,’ which were proposed and seriously considered at a certain periods in time, but were never realized. Some of them were partially implemented, but all of them eventually came to be scrapped. The first was the so-called Nisko-Lublin Plan (October 1939 to early 1940), the second the Madagascar Plan (June 1940 to late 1940); and the third an ambiguous plan to deport the Jews to the furthest extremities of the Soviet Union after it would be conquered (from December 1940 to late 1941). In reality these plans were never within the realm of success, and thus imprisoning the Jews in ghettos (within the main cities of occupied Poland and close to important railway connections) and concentration camps became an end in itself, until a more suitable ‘solution’ could be found (Browning, 2013; Longerich 2010).

- **Stage 3** – The ‘Final Solution:’ Physical extermination (systematic mass killing) 1941-1945

  Developed in different phases and was applied to different groups of Jews in different countries and occupied territories. Operation Barbarossa in June 1941 was the main catalyst. The intensification of the racial war (Rassenkrieg) contributed to an escalation in radical policy. In addition to the pervasive Nazi racial ideology, systematic mass killing actions were largely the result of ‘working towards the Führer’ and the ‘cumulative radicalization’ of anti-Jewish policy (see Chapter 3), as well as local initiatives (see Chapter 6).

This framework of dividing the Holocaust into three stages corresponding to the different steps towards the ‘Final Solution,’ was first utilized and outlined by Raul Hilberg in his seminal study *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1985[1961], vol. 1, pp. 53-62), and also notably used

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10 The invasion of the Soviet Union. Consult the glossary of terms.
by Hannah Arendt in her analysis of the Holocaust in *Eichmann in Jerusalem: The Banality of Evil* (2006[1963]). It has subsequently become customary in the writings of leading Holocaust historians.

Furthermore, I have divided the final stage, namely the ‘Final Solution,’ into a further two phases. There is a crucial distinction between the two.

- **Phase 1** – The *Shoah* by bullets

  Involved the mobile killing operations the *Einsatzgruppen*\(^{11}\) death squads, in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union (the Baltic countries, Belarus, Ukraine and Russia)\(^{12}\) following Operation Barbarossa in June 1941. These death squads and their auxiliaries (including Orpo police forces, other SS and military units as well as local collaborators) operated behind the front lines, rounding up Jews and political opponents. 2 million people, including 1.3 million Jews (Hilberg, 1985[1961]), were killed in mass shootings by the *Einsatzgruppen* and other death squads in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union in the time period 1941-1943.

  As opposed to the *Shoah* by gas, the killers moved to their victims, where they were rounded up and killed in mass shootings, typically in open ditches, ravines or mass graves, not far from their own homes.

- **Phase 2** – The *Shoah* by gas

  The industrialized mass killing of Jews in occupied Poland and from all over Europe, in fixed gas chamber/crematoria installations at designated extermination facilities in death camps in occupied Poland. This program had its origins in the *Aktion T4* euthanasia program, where the technology for mass murder in gas chambers had been developed for killing the disabled. The *Shoah* by gas was mostly organized and carried out by the RSHA, the SS concentration camp system (run by the SS-WVHA, manned by the SS-*Totenkopfverbände*) and also the local Higher SS and Police Leaders.\(^{13}\) It involved a significant proportion of the governmental ministries, public institutions and state bureaucracy of Nazi Germany, e.g. the *Deutsche Reichsbann*, the Ministry of


\(^{12}\) The Estonian SSR, Latvian SSR, Lithuanian SSR, Byelorussian SSR, Ukrainian SSR and Russian SFSR. Henceforth referred to simply as Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia.

\(^{13}\) For a more detailed description of the anatomy of the complicated SS-organizations and their chain of command, see Chapter 4 in the main text and also Chapter 11.3 in the appendix.
Transportation, the Treasury and the *Reichsbank* (for the plundering of the victim’s currency and properties).

The *Shoah* by gas unfolded in a further two sub-phases: Firstly Operation Reinhard, which was the operation to murder all the Polish Jews in the so-called Reinhard death camps in occupied Poland (Bielżec, Sobibór and Treblinka), mostly in the General Government; and secondly the ‘Final Solution’ of the rest of European Jewry, an operation which was formally organized at the Wannsee conference in January 1942, whereby Jews from all over Europe were deported and transported to the death camps in occupied Poland, primarily Auschwitz-Birkenau.

As opposed to the *Shoah* by bullets, the victims were brought to their killers, by means of forced deportation and transportation by railway over vast distances in horrible conditions, in what has come to be known as the notorious Holocaust trains (cattle cars and goods wagons).

This distinction of the *Shoah* into these two phases was first formulated by Jewish-Ukrainian-Russian writer and journalist Vasily Grossman in his writings immediately after the war (see Grossman, 2009, p. 60; quoted in Beevor, 2012, p. 253). It has come to be accepted and widely used among scholars of the Holocaust ever since (notably in Beevor, 2012). During the war, Grossman had served as war correspondent for the Red Army, covering stories from the front line, and whose family had been killed in the *Shoah* by bullets in Ukraine. Learning about the massacre where his mother had been murdered, and visiting many of the Nazi camps shortly after their liberation, documenting interviews with the survivors (notably of Treblinka), Grossman noticed the crucial distinction between these two phases of the Holocaust. These were largely separate actions, taking place in different geographical locations, initiated by separate orders (although mostly originating from the same people; Hitler, Himmler and Heydrich) and carried out by different institutions, organizations and authorities, even within the SS. For example, the German army was actively involved in the *Shoah* by bullets, but not to the same extent in the *Shoah* by gas.

The further division of the second phase, namely the *Shoah* by gas, into a further two sub-phases, firstly Operation Reinhard and secondly the ‘Final Solution’ of all European Jewry, is noted in Browning (2004), Kershaw (2000b[1985]) and Rees (2005b and 2017).

This framework of stages and phases of the Holocaust is important within the context of the thesis. According to the latest historical research, and particularly the sources and citations upon
which the facts and theoretical approaches in this essay are based (notably Kershaw and Rees), the Holocaust was hardly ever a uniform plan across the whole Nazi empire and the territories within its sphere of influence. But it was rather a collection of different killing actions, performed by different units with different ‘orders and initiatives.’ The vast number of different killing units and their command structures (the SS, police forces, the army, auxiliaries, local collaborators etc.), concentration and death camps (from transit camps in France to Maly Trostsenets death camp in Belarus), killing sites and original places of deportation from all over Europe (from the British Channel Islands to Russia; from Norway to Italy and North Africa; from Estonia to Greece and more) testify to the wide scope of the subject, as well as to its vastness and complexity.

Rather than being implemented according to a universal masterplan laid down in blueprint by Hitler, the Holocaust developed in a way that was far from being uniform and straightforward. It took place in incremental stages, as a mix of spontaneous initiatives taken ‘on the ground’ by local Nazi functionaries (corresponding to different administrative divisions and structures within the Nazi state, competing amongst each other to both ‘work towards the Führer’ and also to solve what was seen as their own local problems), and reactions to unexpected circumstances (external and internal). These incremental stages evolved so that the mass killing actions that resulted from these cumulative radical developments, emerged initially in an ad hoc way – one might even call it haphazard.

All of this was set against the general backdrop of the vicious racial ideology of the Nazis; their racial war (Rassenkrieg) and ‘war of annihilation’ against Slavdom and ‘Jewish Bolshevism’ (Beevor, 2012; Rees, 1999 and 2017), as well as their ambitious plans for the social restructuring of Europe based on race (Mazower, 1998). This genocidal intent was prevalent since the beginning, and it served to set the climate for the mass killing actions which subsequently developed quasi-spontaneously in the eastern occupied territories, resulting from a “myriad of local initiatives” and “however falteringly at first, decisive steps were taken at the centre to co-ordinate measures for total extermination.” – according to Kershaw (2000b[1985], p. 132). He further adds: “Such central direction appears for the most part to have come from the RSHA” under the command of Reinhard Heydrich, “though undoubtedly the important steps had Hitler’s approval and sanction” (Kershaw, 2000b[1985], p. 132).

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14 A phrase borrowed from the name of Chapter 2: “Orders and initiatives” in Rees (2005b, pp. 91-149).
This relates to the so-called ‘functionalism vs. intentionalism’ debate, which is integral to the methodology of the thesis. This discussion was previously covered in Chapter 2.1. There, I argued for the synthesis of the two different historiographical approaches, and how they correspond to the theoretical approaches from political science, namely interpretivism and structuralism.

5.2 Nazi categorization of Jews according to their persecution

In addition to constructing a theoretical framework of the Holocaust from the perspective of chronology (time) and the structures of the Third Reich (the perpetrators), looking at which killing operations took place at what time and according to which initiatives (which I have done previously with the framework of stages of phases), it is also possible to do the same from the point of view of the Jewish victims and geographical location. The latter framework will also be utilized in the analysis to argue for thesis.

The following is a presentation of how the Jews of Europe were subjected to the Nazi genocide, according to which category of people was concerned, based on geographical location and historical background.

The Jewish victims of Nazi genocide were, according to how they were perceived and persecuted, broadly categorized into three categories by the Nazis (Arendt, 2006[1963]; Rees, 2017). A crucial distinction was made between German (as well as Western and Central European) integrated Jews on one hand, and ‘Eastern Jews’ (Ostjuden) on the other. The latter were deemed to conform much more to the anti-semitic caricatures depicted in Nazi propaganda (Beevor, 2012, p. 36).

- **Category 1** – The German Jews of the Old Reich and Western or Central European Jews (of Austria, Netherlands, France, Hungary etc.).

  In general relatively wealthy (compared to Eastern Jews), mostly assimilated and ‘civilized’ (according to the Nazis). Spoke the local language of the country where they lived.

  Most of them were killed in the Shoah by gas, forcibly rounded up from their homes and deported primarily to Auschwitz-Birkenau (but also to some of the other death camps in occupied Poland). Some were sent directly to killing sites in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union (notably Kaunas, Minsk and Riga), where they were killed in mass shootings by the Einsatzgruppen death squads.
• **Category 2** – The Slavic Jews of Poland (*Ostjuden*)

  Regarded by the Nazis as ‘uncivilized’ Slavic ‘subhumans.’ Non-integrated, living in separate communities, wearing different clothing and having different customs to the native population, speaking a different language (predominantly Yiddish).

  Following the invasion of Poland in 1939, the Polish Jews were confined and imprisoned in Ghettos, established in most of the major cities (e.g. Warsaw, Łódź, Lublin and Kraków). They were subsequently mostly victim to the *Shoah* by gas. In addition to the Chelmo killing site in the Warthegau (where gas vans were used as the method of killing), they were mostly killed in Operation Reinhard (1942-1943), which was the largely independent program of exterminating all the Jews in the General Government. The ghettos were systematically ‘liquidated’ and their Jewish population forcibly deported to the extermination sites of the Reinhard camps (predominantly Bełżec, Sobibór and Treblinka, but also Majdanek). Some were killed in mass shootings (as part of Operation Reinhard).

• **Category 3** – The ‘bolshevized’ Slavic Jews of the Soviet Union (*Ostjuden*)

  Regarded by the Nazis as the most dangerous of them all. So dangerous that they had to be eliminated immediately by summary execution. They were targeted through the Barbarossa Decree and Commissar Order (of Operation Barbarossa) as well as Himmler’s and Heydrich’s orders and instructions to the *Einsatzgruppen* death squads. They were targeted on the pretext of anti-partisan warfare where Jews in general were equated with partisans, as their proximity to the front lines was regarded as hazardous to the war effort.

  They were overwhelmingly the victims of the *Shoah* by bullets. In total 1.3 million Jews were killed by Nazi mobile killing squads (the *Einsatzgruppen*, police and military forces, auxiliaries and local collaborators) in countless massacres throughout the Baltic countries, Belarus, Ukraine and Russia, out of a total 2 million summarily executed by the death squads, including non-Jews (Hilberg, 1985[1961]). Some estimates are even higher (Snyder, 2010; 2015).

As such, these three categories of Jews were ranked by the Nazis in an order of perceived dangerousness (Kershaw, 2000b[1985], p. 110; Rees, 2017, p. 343).

As an example, the General Commissar (*Generalkommissar*) of the General District of Belarus (*Generalbezirk Weissruthenien in Reichskommissariat Ostland*) Wilhelm Kube, who
was closely involved in killing actions in and around Minsk in 1941-1943, wrote in a complaint to his superiors:

> I am certainly tough and I am ready to help solve the Jewish Question, but people who come from our own cultural background are certainly something else than the native animalized hordes (quoted in Arendt, 2006[1963], p. 96; Longerich, 2010, p. 298).

Here he was protesting at the fact that the German Jews deported from the Old Reich were receiving the same ‘special treatment’ as the “bolshevized,” “uncivilized” and “animalized” Slavic Jews of the Soviet Union.

The highest priority was given to eradicating the lowest category, namely the Jews of the occupied territories of the Soviet Union. The Einsatzgruppen went almost straight into action killing these Jews by mass shooting, following in the wake of the invading Wehrmacht in June 1941. At first, only male Jews of military age were killed. Within a few weeks, this was expanded to include not just all male Jews, but also women and children. The entire Jewish populations of certain towns and cities were massacred. This constituted the first phase (of the final stage) of the Holocaust, namely the Shoah by bullets. The largest and most concentrated massacres in all of human history were committed as part of this operation, e.g. at Babi Yar in Kiev, Ponary in Vilnius, the Kaunas 9th Fort, Okruh and Vinnitsya in Ukraine and at Odessa (in co-operation with Romanian troops), and many more. At the most over 30,000 Jews were shot in one day (in the bloodiest single-day massacre in history). The bodies were buried in mass graves, or in open trenches and ravines (such as Babi Yar ravine outside Kiev). Later, some of the bodies would be exhumed and burned in open pyres, as part of an effort to conceal the evidence for the crime (Beevor, 2012; Rees, 2017).

Meanwhile, in the summer and autumn of 1941, the Jews of Poland were imprisoned and confined in ghettos. Despite their appalling conditions and many dying from starvation and disease, the organized killing actions of Operation Reinhard didn’t begin until months after the mass shootings were already taking place in occupied Soviet Union. The systemic mass deportations of Jews from all over Europe to the death camps didn’t begin until the next year, in 1942.
6. Case Studies – Local Initiatives in the Development of the ‘Final Solution’

A crucial factor in how ‘Final Solution’ developed was also, undeniably, the local initiatives for genocide that developed in occupied Poland in late 1941. These initiatives preceded the systematic and industrialized genocide of the Jews that would be applied to the whole of Europe the following year, in 1942. This also forms the fundamental argument for the structuralist account of how the Holocaust developed (Kershaw, 2008b[1992]). This analysis demonstrates that the interpretive/intentionalist approach, looking solely at ideas as motivating factors, is insufficient when trying to account for the onset of the Holocaust. The structural approach is also required.

In the following chapter we will look at a few case studies. The first case is the third of the so-called ‘territorial solutions’ (of the second stage of the Holocaust), the plan to deport the Jews to the farthest extremities of the Soviet Union once it would be conquered (6.1); and secondly, directly related to the first and as a part of this plan, were the first deportations from the Reich to the killing centers in the east (6.2), which began in October 1941 while the war was still ongoing; thirdly we will look at the improvised genocide in the Warthegau (6.3), which developed under the auspices of Gauleiter Arthur Greiser in late 1941; and fourthly, the beginning of Operation Reinhard in the General Government (6.4), which began as a local initiative with the construction of the first death camp of Belżec in November 1941.

6.1 The plan to deport Jews to the farthest extremities of the Soviet Union (the third ‘territorial solution’)

After the failure of Nazi Germany to subjugate the UK in the (aerial) Battle of Britain in the fall of 1940, the Nazis’ plans for conducting the war shifted towards the east. With preparations for Operation Barbarossa in full swing from December 1940 onwards, the third and final ‘territorial solution to the Jewish Question’ came to be considered as part of the plans for the attack on the Soviet Union. Infused with ‘victory euphoria’ following the swift fall of France in 1940, the Soviet Union was expected to be defeated in one fell Blitzkrieg swoop, before the end of the year 1941. Following its swift and decisive defeat, the ‘solution to the Jewish Question’ would present itself to deport all the Jews to the furthest extremities of the Soviet Union. Even Siberia, the Arctic, as well as the already present Gulag camps in the USSR, were
considered as potential destinations for the Jews. It was an entirely contingent and ambiguous (as well as overly ambitious) plan from the start, but it was seriously considered, as Heydrich’s RSHA made extensive preparations for it (Browning, 2004; Kershaw, 2000b[1985], pp. 112-13). According to instructions from Heydrich, following the occupation of Poland, the Polish Jews had initially been ghettoized in the main cities, close to good railway links, as a part of a temporary and preliminary measure for a future ‘territorial solution,’ which by now (following the scrapped Nisko-Lublin and Madagascar Plans) was the plan to “dump” them in the wilderness of the Soviet Union. Soon the railway connections, next to which the ghettos had been purposefully set up, would be put into use.

As Operation Barbarossa commenced in June 1941, the Shoah by bullets (amounting to the ‘Final Solution’ of Soviet Jewry), effectively began in the occupied territories of the USSR, marking the first phase of (the final stage) the Holocaust. Meanwhile the ‘Final Solution’ of the Jews in rest of Europe was still developing. While Jewish men, women and children were already being killed en masse in the genocidal campaign of the Einsatzgruppen death squads (from August 1941 onward), a ‘territorial solution’ for the Western and Central European Jews was still being considered.

Following the swift victories in the early months of the military campaign, which astounded even the Nazis themselves, another phase of ‘victory euphoria’ set in, and in October 1941, Hitler considered the war as good as won. For some time now, Goebbels – in his capacity as Gauleiter of Berlin – had been repeatedly sending requests to the Führer for starting the deportations of the German Jews to the east, in order to make the Reich Judenrein. Hitler was fundamentally in favor of cleansing the Reich of the Jews, but at that time the military priorities had been on the top of his mind. Goebbels, in competing with other Nazi leaders, was eager to be the first to make his own city Judenfrei, and so he, among others, kept insisting to Hitler grant the green light for starting the deportations, even though the war was still ongoing. And so in October 1941, when Hitler now considered the war as good as won, following weeks of ongoing requests, he agreed (Browning, 2004 and 2013; Longerich, 2010; Rees, 2017).

6.2 The first deportations from the Reich to killing centers in the east

Deportations from the Reich began in October 1941, while the war was still ongoing, and the Soviet Union was still far from being defeated. The first transports were directed to the Łódź
ghetto in the Warthegau, leading to extensive overcrowding, to the great annoyance of Arthur Greiser, the Gauleiter of the region. He would resort to radical solutions to solve the Nazis’ self-generated ‘Jewish problem.’

The next wave of transports from the Reich was directed to the main cities and headquarters of the Reichskommissariat Ostland; Kaunas, Minsk and Riga. No sufficient arrangements had been made for accommodating the deported Reich Jews in these destinations. Ghettos had already been set up in Kaunas and Minsk, but they were relatively small and filled to capacity, and in Riga a concentration camp was under construction, although it was unfinished and not ready to accommodate the thousands of incoming Jews from the transports. So these measures were hardly sufficient. It turned out that almost all of the deportees were shot immediately on arrival by the Einsatzgruppen in great massacres, in the 9th Fort of Kaunas and Rumbula in Riga. The deportees to Minsk had initially been accommodated in the Minsk ghetto, but later they were also rounded up and shot (Longerich, 2010, pp. 297-300; Rees, 2017, pp. 234-5). These massacres of German Jews from the Reich (among others) marked a significant step in the escalation of the Holocaust. While the fate of Soviet Jewry had already been sealed, the fate of the Jews in the rest of Europe still hung in the balance. For the first time now, German Jews including women and children were being massacred.

The significance of this step is reflected in the reactions of many Nazi leaders. Some Nazi commanders initially expressed shock that ‘civilized’ German and Western Jews from the Reich were being massacred in the same manner as the ‘Bolshevized’ Slavic Jews. As an example (and noted previously in Chapter 5.2), the General Commissar (Generalkommissar) of the General District of Belarus (Generalbezirk Weissruthenien) within the Ostland, Wilhelm Kube, complained to his superior Hinrich Lohse, the Reich Commissioner of the Ostland, about the killing of “people who come from our own cultural background,” as opposed to the “native animalized hordes” (quoted in Longerich, 2010, p. 298).

Regarding these early deportations of the Reich Jews to the Ostland in late 1941, Peter Longerich notes:

There is some reason to believe that the rapid deportations to Riga, like those to Lódź and Minsk, were deliberately used to create ‘intolerable situations’ as a way of effectively forcing the local authorities to find more radical ‘solutions’ (Longerich, 2010, p. 299).
Here is a clear example of the cumulative radicalization process. It demonstrates that at the time no clear instructions had been given to the regional leaders to kill the Jews immediately on arrival. Certain guidelines had been laid down by Himmler and the RSHA, but the regional leaders; the Higher SS and Police Leader of the region, the civilian Reich Commissioner (Reichskommissar) for the Ostland Lohse, as well as the local district General Commissars (Generalkommissars), had considerable autonomy regarding their actions (Longerich, 2010, pp. 297-300).

As such, the transports of Reich Jews sent to the killing centers in the east (Kaunas, Minsk and Riga) resulted in the local commanders – whose instructions from Himmler regarding what to do with the Jews had been ambiguous – resorting to handing these thousands of Jews over to the Einsatzgruppen death squads to be shot immediately in great massacres, e.g. at the 9th Fort of Kaunas. Some of the local Nazi leaders initially protested at this action (because of the handling of the German Jews in the same way as the “local animalized hordes”), and it was most likely due to these protests and disputes that Himmler temporarily suspended the deportations the next month in November 1941, although this didn’t prevent the transports that were already underway from being ‘liquidated’ upon arrival, despite the fact that the words of his order had been: “Judentransport aus Berlin, keine liquidierung” or “transport of Jews from Berlin, no liquidation” (Longerich, 2010). Also, one of the reasons Heydrich called for the Wannsee conference on 29th November (which would subsequently be held in January 1942), was to discuss the unclear situations of these chaotic initial deportations from the Reich to the east (Browning, 2004).

These early deportations of Reich Jews to the killing centers in the occupied USSR had been planned as part of the ‘victory euphoria’ of the early stages of the invasion (Browning, 2004 and 2013). Once it became clear that the war would not be won quickly (especially following the Soviet counter-attack in the Battle of Moscow in December 1941 and the entry of the United States into the war later the same month) and would most likely be drawn out in a long struggle of attrition, the plan for the deportation of the Jews to the farthest eastern extremities of the Soviet Union, which had been tenuous from the start, became upset. This served to bring an effective end to the proposed ‘territorial solutions to the Jewish Question’ (which marked the second stage of the Holocaust), serving as the crucial step towards the third and final stage. This realization resulted in a significant change in policy, which by the end of the year 1941 would eventually lead to the ‘Final Solution.’
Organized mass killings of Jews had already begun in the occupied USSR since August 1941 with the Einsatzgruppen, while some of the transports of Jews that had been sent from the rest of Europe starting in October (while the others were sent to the ghettos in occupied Poland), were being killed on arrival in the killing centers in the east. The latter was clearly a haphazard development, as the decision to ‘liquidate’ these transports of Reich Jews was taken on the spot by the local SS and military commanders (Arendt, 2006[1963]), with the complicity of the civilian regional leaders in Reichskommissariat Ostland, even though this was perhaps done as a measure from the higher leadership to encourage more radical ‘solutions’ to be adopted locally (Longerich, 2010).

6.3 Improvised genocide in the Warthegau

The first deportations from the Reich that began October 1941, were initially directed to the Łódź ghetto in the Warthegau, while the second wave of transports had been directed to the killing centers in the east. As part of this haphazard development, while the transports were being sent, the fate of the Jewish victims onboard had not been finally decided. While the second wave had been directed to the killing centers in the east (which we already covered), the first wave had been directed to the Łódź ghetto, which resulted in extensive overcrowding, to the great annoyance of the local Gauleiter Arthur Greiser (who ran the ghetto for his own profit, using the Jewish inmates as slave labor). As a result, he began to consider radical solutions, i.e. “thinning out” the “useless eaters” of the ghetto (e.g. children and the elderly, those unable to work) by means of killing (Kershaw, 2008b[1992]).

Hitler wasn’t directly concerned with the exact minutiae of how his genocidal programs for ethnic cleansing and ‘Germanization’ should be achieved in the occupied eastern territories. He expected the local Nazi bosses, the Gauleiters and other regional leaders, to figure this out for themselves in a ‘working towards the Führer’ fashion.15 Hitler had remarked that he would “ask no questions” regarding how the local Nazi leaders would achieve the goal of “Germanizing” their provinces, only that they would achieve this goal within 10 years using whatever methods they deemed necessary (quoted in Rees, 2005a[1997], p. 112). “Germanizing” the provinces crucially meant ridding them of Jews. Tellingly, Greiser himself wrote in a letter:

15 During the war Hitler was primarily concerned with military affairs, personally directing most of the military campaigns, and didn’t get much involved in internal affairs.
I, for my part, do not believe that the Führer needs to be consulted yet again on this matter, particularly in view of the fact that it was only recently during our discussion concerning the Jews that he told me I could proceed with them according to my own discretion (quoted in Rees, 2005a[1997], p. 112)

It was in this way that the Gauleiters and other local Nazi bosses competed among themselves towards implementing the vision of the Führer, as well as gaining his favor, as Arendt (2006[1963]) notes: “The Gauleiters, the regional leaders, each of whom wanted to be the first to declare his territory Judenrein, and who occasionally started deportation procedures on their own” (Arendt, 2006[1963], p. 152).

This was especially the case with Greiser (the Gaulaiter of the Warthegau), but also Erich Koch (the Gauleiter of East Prussia and Reich Commissioner of Reichskommissariat Ukraine). Beginning almost immediately after the occupation of Poland in 1939, Greiser and Koch regularly initiated deportations from their respective realms into the General Government. So did Heinrich Himmler (in his capacity as ‘Reich Commissioner for the Strengthening of the German Nationhood’) and Adolf Eichmann (on orders from Gestapo chief Heinrich Müller), who initiated deportations from the Old Reich, Austria and the Protectorate.

As a result, the first mass gassing of Jews took place at the Chelmno extermination site in the Warthegau in late 1941, using gas vans as the method of killing (developed in the Aktion T4 euthanasia program), as part of a “thinning out” action of the ghetto to make more space for incoming arrivals of Jews deported from the Old Reich, who would be put to work as slave labor in the ghetto, and make further profit for Greiser (Kershaw, 2008b[1992]).

Regarding these local initiatives, leading to what Kershaw refers to as “improvised genocide,” he explains:

With a plainly genocidal policy operating in the occupied parts of the Soviet Union, killing the Jews deported into their areas was increasingly seen by local police chiefs and party leaders as the solution. Some developed local extermination programmes: the beginning of construction in November of the extermination camp in Belżec in the Lublin District of the General Government (the province of Higher SS and Police Chief Odilo Globočnik) started out as one such initiative. Another was the killing of Jews in gas vans at the beginning of December at Chelmno in the Warthegau… the domain of Gauleiter Arthur Greiser and Police Chief Wilhelm Koppe. These local genocides, however, did not yet form a part of a comprehensive programme… Nazi anti-Jewish policy was still evolving, still transitional.
The step into outright genocide had been taken in some areas, though there was as yet no co-ordinating programme to link together the various killing actions (Kershaw, 2000b[1985], p. 122).

6.4 The beginning of Operation Reinhard in the General Government

As explained previously, haphazard deportations from the Reich to the General Government area had begun as early as 1939, organized by Greiser, Koch as well as Himmler and Eichmann. The first of the so-called ‘territorial solutions to the Jewish Question’ (in conjunction with the Nisko-Lublin Plan) had been to simply “dump” the Jews into the residual area of the newly occupied eastern territories, which was the rump General Government zone of Hans Frank.

Regarding this development from the second stage of the Holocaust to the final killing stage, Antony Beevor explains:

Hans Frank, the overbearing and corrupt Nazi bully who ran the General Government for his own profit from the royal castle in Kraków, was angry when told to prepare for the reception of several hundred thousand Jews as well as displaced Poles. No plans had been made to house or feed the victims of this forced migration, and nobody had thought what to do with them. In theory, those Jews fit enough would be used for forced labor. The rest would be confined in temporary ghettos in the larger cities until they could be resettled. Jews trapped in the ghettos, deprived of money and with little food, were in many cases left to die of starvation and disease. Although not yet a programme of outright annihilation, it represented an important step in that direction. And as the difficulties of resettling Jews in an as yet undesignated ‘colony’ proved greater than imagined, the idea soon began to grow that killing them might be easier than moving them around (Beevor, 2012, p. 46).

When the ‘territorial solution’ had shifted in 1941 towards the plan to deport to the Jews to the farthest extremities of the Soviet Union: “For Hans Frank, the regent of the General Government, the invasion promised the opportunity to deport all the Jews who had been dumped in his territory” (Beevor, 2012, p. 254).

Soon however, the realization came that this plan had been a dead end, especially by December 1941 when it became clear that the Soviet Union would not be defeated swiftly, and the war would be drawn out into a long struggle of attrition. This time period in late 1941 was the pivotal moment when the local Nazi bosses resorted to locally implemented genocide.
Following the end of the *Aktion T4* euthanasia program, which had been abruptly ended in August 1941, the killing experts who had been employed in the program in Germany, were now put to work in the occupied eastern territories. Many of them would become commandants of the death camps and key figures in Operation Reinhard (Rees, 2017, pp. 213-14). As Hannah Arendt explains:

The gassing in the east – or, to use the language of the Nazis, “the humane way” of killing “by granting people a mercy death” – began almost the very day when the gassing in Germany was stopped. The men who had been employed in the euthanasia program in Germany were now sent east to build the new installations for the extermination of the whole peoples – and these men came either from Hitler’s Chancellery or from the Reich Health Department and were only now put under the administrative authority of Himmler.

As such, the *Aktion T4* program evolved directly into the mass killings of Jews in gas chambers, even with the same rationale and justification, as the first gassings of Jews from the Łódź ghetto at Chelmno extermination camp in the Warthegau, as ordered by Gauleiter Greiser, constituted ‘thinning out’ actions where those deemed unfit for work were selected and granted a ‘mercy death,’ firstly as a grotesquely cynical method of saving them from starving to death, and secondly to free up more space in the ghetto. The Łódź ghetto wouldn’t be ‘liquidated’ until 1944 (the last of the ghettos in occupied Poland to be ‘liquidated’), when all of the remaining Jews of the ghetto were sent to Chelmno and Auschwitz-Birkenau to be gassed (Kershaw, 2008b[1992]).

As such, the end of the *Aktion T4* euthanasia program specifically marks the tenuous beginning of Operation Reinhard (the operation to ‘liquidate’ all the ghettos and kill all the Jews of the General Government). Many of the killings experts involved in the *Aktion T4* program were later shipped to the east under Himmler’s authority, where they would construct and oversee the death camps of Operation Reinhard (Friedlander, 1995, pp. 190, 296-298).

It was as part of this development that the Higher SS and Police Leader of the Lublin District in the General Government Odilo Globočnik, began the construction of the first death camp of Belżec, in November 1941. He would be joined by Christian Wirth from the *Aktion T4* euthanasia program, who would serve as the Inspector of the Reinhard death camps. Belżec would be operational the following year in January 1942, the same month the Wannsee conference was held. Subsequently, the *Shoah* by gas went into full swing.
7. **THE END – DOWNFALL AND DEFEAT**

The Holocaust came to an end with German military defeat. After the loss at the Battle of Stalingrad in February 1943 the war turned decidedly against Nazi Germany. By the beginning of the year 1945, mass murder in gas chamber had stopped, although countless inmates of concentration camps were by then killed in forced death marches, mass shootings and from being left to die from starvation and disease. The camps were liberated by the Allies one after the other. Some were captured intact (including the survivors) while others had been emptied and demolished (Rees, 2017).

As the Red Army closed in on Berlin in April 1945, Hitler was in his *Führerbunker* beneath the Reich Chancellery, dictating his Last Will and Political Testament. In it, he not only blamed the Jews for having started the war in the first place, but also for why he was losing it now. As the Soviet artillery and *Katyusha* rockets rained down on the city in vengeful fury, the death and destruction that Hitler had brought into the world finally came to envelop him. He committed suicide on April 30th, and subsequently many of his followers met the same fate. As a result the implosion of the Nazi regime, which had already begun, rapidly accelerated into total collapse. Germany surrendered on 8th May 1945 and the Second World War in Europe finally came to an end. The Nazi dictatorship had surpassed all others in infamy, criminality and barbarity. Regarding the violence and destruction, Hitler “had done more than almost anyone else in history to promote it” (according to Beevor, 2012, p. 353). He left behind the legacy of not just having caused and resided over the most destructive conflict of all time, but also the greatest genocide and most atrocious crimes against humanity in all of human history.

For their ashes are piled up on the hills of Auschwitz and the fields of Treblinka, and are strewn in the forests of Poland. Their graves are scattered throughout the length and breadth of Europe. Their blood cries out… (Hausner, 1962).

6 million killed – shot dead, buried alive, suffocated by gas in special vehicles and gas chambers, tortured to death in concentration camps. Their only ‘fault’ was that they were Jews! …Today we continue to ask: how could this happen? (Mark Dvorzhetski, 1948; quoted in Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum, 2011).
8. CONCLUSION

Now we come to the conclusion of the analysis presented in this study. In the following chapter I will proceed to argue concisely for the thesis as presented at the beginning of the text, utilizing the theoretical framework and analysis as laid out in the previous chapters.

In the beginning I argued for the synthesis of the historiographical approaches of intentionalism and functionalism, and reconciled them with the two theoretical approaches of political science, namely interpretivism and structuralism. On one hand, the interpretive approach (intentionalism) explains how Hitler’s anti-semitic Weltanschauung and Nazi racial ideology acted as motivating factors, while on the other, the structuralist approach is key to understanding and explaining the gradual development and onset of the Holocaust through the structures of the Third Reich.

According to this combined theoretical approach of intentionalism/interpretivism and functionalism/structuralism, the conclusion is that the structures of the Third Reich, enabled and motivated by the pervasive racial ideology of Nazism and the apocalyptic world-view of the Führer Adolf Hitler, acted in such a way, according to the ‘working towards the Führer’ and ‘cumulative radicalization’ concepts, that radical Nazi policy towards the Jews evolved and developed, leading to the Holocaust emerging in incremental stages and phases, what has been called “the twisted road to Auschwitz” (the title in Schleunes, 1970).

For this theoretical approach to the Third Reich and the Holocaust, Ian Kershaw is the main historian and structuralist theoretician (influenced by Martin Broszat and Hans Mommsen). He has also provided an excellent analysis of Hitler’s world-view and Nazi racial ideology. Laurence Rees’ many books on the Nazis and the Holocaust, informed by Kershaw’s structuralist theories, are also very insightful when it comes to this approach, and are among my main sources for this essay. The framework of dividing the Holocaust into three main stages derives from Raul Hilberg (1985[1961]) and Hannah Arendt (2006[1963]). Antony Beevor’s (2012) analysis of the Second World War serves as my main source for the historical details of the war, and his concise analysis of the Holocaust is also excellent, laying out the division of the final stage of the Holocaust into the two phases of the Shoah by bullets and Shoah by gas. For my analysis of the genesis of the ‘Final Solution,’ Browning (2004), Gerlach (1998) and Longerich’s (2010) works are the main sources.
The framework I have presented, of the three stages and two phases of the Holocaust, is useful for understanding and explaining how it developed and unfolded. To conclude the analysis of this framework here, it is as follows:

The three stages comprise the different proposed ‘solutions’ of the Nazi Regime towards the ‘Jewish Question,’ the first being the expulsion or forced emigration of the Jews from the Reich in peacetime (1933-1939). The second being concentration (1939-1941), beginning following the outbreak of war and the occupation of Poland, through indefinite ghettoization of the Jews and incarceration in concentration camps, as a preliminary measure towards the various ‘territorial solutions’ proposed and considered by the political institutions of the Third Reich (especially Heinrich’s Himmler’s SS and within it Reinhard Heydrich’s RSHA). These were chiefly the so-called Nisko-Lublin Plan (October 1939 to early 1940), the Madagascar Plan (June 1940 to late 1940), and as part of the preparations for the attack against the Soviet Union (from December 1940 to late 1941) an ambiguous and ambitious plan for deporting the Jews to the farthest extremities of the Soviet Union once it had been conquered. And finally, the third and final stage of the Holocaust being the ‘Final Solution’ as we know it, namely the physical extermination of European Jewry. The last stage unfolded in two main phases, the first phase being the Shoah by bullets, amounting the ‘Final Solution’ of Soviet Jewry, which began shortly after Operation Barbarossa was launched in June 1941, where the Einsatzgruppen death squads committed countless massacres of Jews by means of mass shooting. The second phase was the Shoah by gas, which unfolded in a further two sub-phases, firstly Operation Reinhard (1942-1943) which was the operation to kill all the Jews of occupied Poland, through systematically ‘liquidating’ the ghettos and deporting them to the gas chamber extermination facilities in the Reinhard death camps (Belżec, Sobibór and Treblinka); and secondly the ‘Final Solution’ of the rest of European Jewry (1942-1945), which was formally organized and coordinated at the Wannsee conference in January 1942 by Heydrich, with special authorization from Hermann Göring (and acting on behalf of Himmler), and comprised the systematic deportations of Jews from all over Europe (organized by Adolf Eichmann as head of the sub-office IV B4 of the Gestapo concerned with ‘Jewish affairs’) to the industrialized killing centers at the death camps in occupied Poland, primarily Auschwitz-Birkenau, which became the largest killing site following the end of Operation Reinhard in late 1943, reaching its peak with the deportations of the Hungarian Jews in 1944. In total over 1 million Jews (in addition to
thousands of other non-Jewish victims, including Poles and Roma) would be killed at Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest killing site in human history.

The two concepts of ‘working towards the Führer’ and ‘cumulative radicalization,’ acting as structural theories taking into account ideological agency, explain how the structures of the Third Reich were informed by Hitler’s Weltanschauung and radical Nazi ideology in such a way, as to act and compete among themselves to produce the specific outcomes that they did; their dynamism leading them to gravitate towards ever more radical policy, eventually culminating in all-out mass murder, which came to be sanctioned from the top, co-ordinated and planned more centrally, amounting to the greatest and most thoroughly planned and implemented genocide in history.

It is this process, of how the Holocaust developed incrementally, which necessitates the inclusion of the structural approach to this analysis. The interpretive approach alone, looking solely at ideas as the primary factors of agency, would be insufficient for this reason. Therefore, in the following I present examples of structural dynamism, where the interpretive/intentionalist approach (Hitler’s world-view and Nazi ideology) is insufficient to explain the development of the Holocaust. The structural approach is here required and is more useful in explaining these developments. To argue for this approach, the following points are examples of instances of the incremental development of the Holocaust, through local initiatives and structural dynamism, whereby the structural approach is necessary.

- The overall chaotic and haphazard development of Nazi anti-Jewish policy through locally implemented ad hoc measures, in combination with ambiguous schemes and directives from the top.

- The haphazard deportations from the Reich and its incorporated territories to the General Government, to the great annoyance of regional governor Hans Frank (1939-1941). Heinrich Himmler and Adolf Eichmann, as well as Gauleiters Arthur Greiser and Eric Koch in addition to others, quasi-randomly organize deportations to “dump” Jews in the General Government area, with no coordination with the concerned Nazi leader and his administration (Frank). These deportations for the most part lack any centralized organization or overall plan from the top-down. They are a clear example of different structures (the different administrative divisions, Party organizations and offices of the SS) competing among each other to fulfill the Führer’s vision of ‘Germanization’ and ethnic
cleansing of the recently incorporated eastern territories, the implementation of which they had been granted *carte blanche*.

- The temporary (and for the time being indefinite) ghettoization of the Jews in occupied Poland (1939-1941), organized by Heydrich, as a preliminary measure for further deportations in the future to a ‘Jewish reservation’ as part of a ‘territorial solution,’ resulting in the over-crowding of the ghettos and subsequently thousands dying from starvation and disease.

- The different proposed ‘territorial solutions,’ one after the other (1939-1941). A clear example of improvisation, lacking a more general over-arching blueprint or ‘masterplan’ for action. All of them were seriously considered at a point in time, but all were eventually cancelled. Some were partially implemented (with disastrous consequences for the victims), with the exception of the Madagascar Plan, which never went beyond the drawing board (despite being seriously considered).

- The *Shoah* by bullets in Soviet Union began with anti-partisan warfare according to the Barbarossa Decree, the Commissar Order and instructions from Himmler and Heydrich to the *Einsatzgruppen* death squads, as part of the preparations for Operation Barbarossa, and spiraled into all-out genocide of the Soviet Jews. The local commanders had considerable autonomy in the interpretation and implementation of their instructions. They began by with encouraging local pogroms (according to Heydrich’s instructions to “secretly encourage” local violent outbursts) and only killing Jewish able-bodied men of military age. Later, a sudden drastic change in policy occurred, whereby women and children came to be included in the massacres (beginning late July 1941 and coming into full swing in August). The intensity of the massacres, which began with (“secretly encouraged”) local outburst of violence and selected killings, justified on the pretext of anti-partisan warfare, spiraled into all-out genocide.

- The initial decision to deport the German (as well as Czech and Austrian) Jews from the Reich in October 1941. The decision was made during a phase of ‘victory euphoria’ (anticipating the imminent defeat of the USSR) and not fully thought out. Formed part of the partial implementation of the ‘territorial solution’ of deporting the Jews to the farthest extremities Soviet Union. After weeks of never-ending requests from local Nazi leaders,
chief among them Goebbels, eager to be the first to make his city *Judenrein* (as *Gauleiter* of Berlin), Hitler gave the green light. This decision curiously coincided with Allied bombing of German cities. Some local Nazi leaders (notably the *Gauleiter* of Hamburg) had requested to begin the deportations to make space for ethnic Germans who had lost their homes in bombing raids. The first were transports directed to the Łódź ghetto in the Warthegau, leading to over-crowding and further problems, to the great annoyance of *Gauleiter* Arthur Greiser. He eventually resorted to locally implemented genocide (at Chelmno extermination site). The second wave of transports were directed to the main cities of *Reichskommissariat Ostland*; Kaunas, Minsk and Riga, where the local commanders took the decision on the spot to kill all the deportees immediately on arrival in mass shootings. This constituted the first organized mass killings of German (and Austrian and Czech) Jews.

- The locally improvised genocides in the Warthegau under *Gauleiter* Arthur Greiser, and in the Lublin District of the General Government under Hans Frank and Higher SS and Police Leader Odilo Globočnik. At the extermination site of Chelmno in the Warthegau, gas vans (modelled after the ones used in the *Aktion T4* euthanasia program) were used to ‘thin out’ the Łódź ghetto to make space for more arrivals. The Łódź ghetto became the first to deport Jews to be gassed, but paradoxically became the last to be ‘liquidated’ (in late 1944). Globočnik oversaw the construction of the first death camp (Bełżec) as a local initiative in the Lublin District, in November 1941, two months before the Wannsee conference in January 1942. He employed the killing experts from the *Aktion T4* euthanasia program who had recently become available, following the suspension of the program in August 1941.

- The *Aktion T4* euthanasia program in Germany came to an abrupt end in August 1941, following public protests. Gas chambers and the technology for industrialized mass murder had been developed as part of this program to mass murder the disabled and handicapped. Many key employees in *Aktion T4* were later sent to the east, where they became leading figures in Operation Reinhard, among them Christian Wirth who became Inspector of the Reinhard camps, and many others becoming commandants of Bełżec, Sobibór and Treblinka.

- Himmler, after visiting the site of a massacre of Soviet Jews taking place in Minsk on 15th August 1941, was not satisfied with mass shooting as an effective method of killing. From that time forward, he sought a more efficient and easier killing method to streamline the
process and cause less negative psychological trauma for his men (as well as requiring less manpower). Despite this, massacres by mass shooting continued in the occupied USSR, and even two years later in 1943, some of the greatest ‘actions’ are committed.

- Around the same time, the commandant of Auschwitz, Rudolf Höss, along with his deputy Karl Fritzch, conducted the first gas chamber experiments using the Zyklon-B pesticide, on Soviet POWs in Auschwitz main camp. This would lead to the development of blueprints for the massive gas chamber/crematoria complexes of Auschwitz-Birkenau, but they wouldn’t be constructed until years later (in 1943 onwards). During the deportations of Slovakian Jews to Auschwitz in 1942, improvised gas chambers such as the ‘red house’ and ‘white house’ were used.

- Following the Shoah by bullets, the Shoah by gas unfolded in a further two sub-phases, which constitute, although connected, two organizationally different operations. Firstly Operation Reinhard, the mass murder of the Polish Jews in the Reinhard death camps of the General Government, and secondly with the Wannsee conference in January 1942 (organized by Heydrich of the RSHA) where cooperation of all the different levels of government was co-ordinated and the ‘Final Solution’ was extended to all of Europe. While local SS leaders in occupied Poland were in charge of Operation Reinhard, Eichmann (of the Gestapo, subordinate to the RSHA) organized the deportations from outside Poland, primarily to Auschwitz-Birkenau, which later became the main killing center, reaching its peak in 1944, after Operation Reinhard was completed (1942-1943), the Reinhard camps destroyed and their traces erased.

- Browning (2004 and 2013) argues that the Shoah by gas emerged as a merging of three separate programs: Aktion T4, the SS-concentration camp system (under Pohl’s SS-WVHA) and Eichmann’s deportation programs (under Heydrich’s RSHA). These developments cannot be explained purely through the interpretive approach, looking solely at ideas as the motivating factor, but are adequately explained by the ‘cumulative radicalization’ and the ‘working towards the Führer concepts – both of which are essentially structuralist concepts, but also take ideological motivations into account.

As such, all of these developments unfolded with the overall backdrop of Nazi racial ideology and Hitler’s obsessively anti-semitic Weltanschauung. They arose from the Nazi’s grandiose but ambivalent schemes for the restructuring of Europe based on race (throughout all
their occupied territories and spheres of influence), as well as a result of the genocidal racial war (*Rassenkrieg*) and ‘war of annihilation’ against the USSR. These plans were the ideological obsession of Hitler. With his almost unlimited power as Führer, head-of-state and government, and commander-in-chief of the armed forces, he personally gave the orders and instructions (as well as declaring his wishes orally through speeches and proclamations) for many of these plans and operations (including the racial war, the ‘war of annihilation,’ the ethnic cleansing of the occupied territories and the *Aktion T4* euthanasia program). Then his underlings strove to work towards the Führer’s vision and fulfill his chimeric dreams. As such, while Himmler and Heydrich were the main architects of the Holocaust, and Eichmann\(^\mathrm{16}\) organized the deportations, there can be no doubt that the primary culprit was the Führer Adolf Hitler.

\(^{16}\) Adolf Eichmann is sometimes mistakenly referred to as the “chief architect” of the Holocaust, which is a somewhat misleading title, as his superiors Himmler and Heydrich were clearly the chief architects (although admittedly Eichmann was intimately involved in the planning process with his superior Heydrich).
9. POSTSCRIPT

It is the writer's duty to tell the terrible truth, and it is a reader's civic duty to learn this truth. To turn away, to close one's eyes and walk past is to insult the memory of those who have perished (Grossman; quoted in Beevor, 2012).

These are truly inspiring words by Vasily Grossman. I have taken them to heart.

Writing this paper was no easy task. The subject matter is distressful and never ceases to cause shock and sadness, no matter how many books I read about it. But there is something about it that gives me a purpose. Fills me with the need to understand – to explain and to answer. I hope that in reading this essay you will have found it informative and learned something to help further your understanding, to help you answer the simple but yet so complicated questions: How and why?

Far from trivializing this tragic history, I believe it does a service to analyze it further from a theoretical perspective, as I have done in this essay. Echoing Grossman’s words, it is our duty to learn and understand this history. Both to honor the memory of the dead and to pay our respects to history (according to Grossman) and also to prevent history from repeating itself in the future, according to the wise words of George Santayana, which I quoted in the introduction of this text.

I am reminded of the warning uttered at the end of The World at War episode covering the Holocaust, from the classic BBC documentary (1973), about how the ruins of the past serve as a reminder today – how the fundamental causes of the greatest calamity in human history, namely racism and oppressive political ideology, still persist to this day. How the proponents of such views have completely failed to learn from the lessons of history, will never cease to astound me:

The ruins of Auschwitz are more than a memorial. As long as there is political intolerance, religious bigotry, racial prejudice – they are a warning. A warning that we all have responsibility to see that no one builds another Auschwitz (The World at War, 1973).

I will conclude this text with the thought-provoking reminder from Timothy Snyder:

The history of the Holocaust is not over. Its precedent is eternal, and its lessons have not yet been learned (Snyder, 2015, p. xiv).
10. BIBLIOGRAPHY

10.1 References


10.2 Further reading


11. APPENDIX

11.1 Glossary of abbreviations

ed. - edition
Gestapo - Geheime Staatspolizei (Secret State Police)
Hipo - Hilfspolizei (auxiliary police)
Hiwi - Hilfswilliger (auxiliary forces)
OKH - Oberkommando des Heeres (High command of the Army)
OKW - Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (High Command of the Wehrmacht)
Orpo - Ordnungspolizei
NSDAP - Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Workers’ Party or simply Nazi Party)
POW - Prisoner of war
Kripo - Kriminalpolizei
SFSR - Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (the Russian SFSR or simply Russia)
RSHA - Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Reich Main Security Office)
SA - Sturmbteilung
SD - Sicherheitsdienst
SiPo - Sicherheitspolizei
SS - Schutzstaffel
SSR - Soviet Socialist Republic (Republics of the Soviet Union)
UK - United Kingdom
US - The United States of America, referred to throughout the text as “the US”
USHMM - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
USSR - Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
vs. - versus
WWI - First World War, also known as the Great War
WWII - Second World War
WVHA - SS-Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt (SS-Economic and Administrative Office)

11.2 Glossary of terms

Aktion Reinhard - see Operation Reinhard
Aktion T4 - Hitler’s adult euthanasia program. Organized by the Führer’s Chancellery. Killing of Lebensunwertes Leben, primarily in gas chambers in Germany, and by gas vans in occupied Poland. As part of the secrecy of the program, it was named T4 after the address of the headquarters of the scheme, Tiergartenstrasse 4 in Berlin (Rees, 2017, p. 165).
Anschluss - Nazi Germany’s annexation of Austria in 1938.
Anti-communism - A political philosophy or movement grounded in rigid opposition to Communism (especially Russian Bolshevism).
Anti-semitism - Prejudice and hostility towards Jews.
Apartheid - An oppressive policy of segregating people based on race and ethnicity.
**Arbeitsscheu** - Meaning “work-shy.” See ‘Asocial’

**Armistice** - The Armistice of 11th November 1918 signed between Germany and the Allied Powers marking the defeat of Germany and the end of WWI.

**Aryanization** - Part of a general Nazi policy of expulsion of non-Aryans, specifically concerns the confiscation of Jewish businesses and property. Jewish businesses would be confiscated by the state and handed to Aryan (ethnic German) owners, thus ‘Aryanizing’ the business and the economy.

**‘Asocial’** - Nazi term for a group of undesirables, a wide category of people generally regarded as non-conformists. Applied especially to the “work-shy” (the continually unemployed and people refusing to work), the homeless, people accused of Rassenschande, criminals, etc. Asocial inmates of the concentration camp system were marked with black triangle. Homosexual females were marked with the black triangle while homosexual males were marked with the pink triangle. As such, lesbians were regarded as “asocial” while gay men were regarded as a distinct category of homosexuals. The latter category also included bisexual men, transgender women and sexual offenders.

**Barbarossa Decree** - The decree issued by Hitler on 30th March 1941 as part of the preparations for Operation Barbarossa. Stipulated that the international rules of war were to be ignored and that partisans should be summarily executed. The definition of “partisans” was later extended to Jews.

**Beer Hall Putsch** - Also known as the Hitler Putsch or Münich Putsch. Failed coup attempt and national revolution, staged by Hitler and the Nazis in München in November 1923, along with Erich Ludendorff.

**Blitzkrieg** - “Lightning war.” A method of warfare, as a form of Bewegungskrieg (“war of movement”), whereby the tactics of combined arms, close air support, motorized and mechanized infantry, are used to a great extent to quickly break through enemy lines and overwhelm the enemy, chiefly through the tactics of encirclement battles.

**Blut und Boden** - “Blood and Soil.” A ruralist – and an appeal to nature – type of Nazi idea and slogan, connecting the racial elements of the Volk to the country (the soil). Positioned the traditionalist life of German Aryans versus the nomadism of especially Jews but also the Roma. Connected with the concept of Lebensraum.

**‘Bridging the Danzig Corridor’** - Reclaiming the territories lost by Germany to Poland, following its defeat in WWI and stipulated in the Treaty of Versailles. Connected with “righting the wrongs of Versailles.”

**Carbon monoxide** - Colorless, odorless and tasteless lethal gas that was initially used in the gas chambers of Aktion T4 and later in the first operational gas chambers of the Holocaust, notably in the Operation Reinhard death camps. Was largely succeeded by Zyklon-B as the preferred chemical for gassing.

**Commissar** - Political commissars in the Red Army of the Soviet Union.

**Commissar Order** - The criminal order issued by the OKW on 6th June 1941, in preparation for Operation Barbarossa, for the extrajudicial killings of Red Army political commissars.
Concentration camp - *Konzentrationslager*. A type of Nazi camp built for the purpose of concentration and imprisonment of inmates. Originally and most prominently political prisoners, but later expanded to include Jews in general and other undesirables (such as Roma, ‘asocials,’ homosexuals etc.). Often combined the functions of a labor camp, where inmates were subject to ‘extermination through labor.’ Not to be confused with a death camp, although some camps were hybrid and combined the functions of a concentration camp and a death camp, most notably Auschwitz-Birkenau and also Majdanek. A large concentration camp such as Auschwitz, would have many sub-camps serving the function of labor camps and transit camps.

Cumulative radicalization - see Chapter 3.2

Danzig Corridor - The strip of land ceded to Poland from Germany at the end of WWI, separating the mainland of the German Reich from East Prussia.

Death camp - see Extermination camp

*Deutsche Reichsbahn* - The German National Railway system (1920-1949). Under the Third Reich it was the largest state-run industry behind the *Wehrmacht*, in terms of budget and employees. Played an important role in the logistics and extermination machinery of the Holocaust, serving most of the deportations of Jews from all over Europe in the so-called Holocaust trains.

Death squad - A mobile killing squad, often a paramilitary or a security police formation, which is involved in perpetrating purges and massacres of the civilian population, mostly by means of mass shooting. The *Einsatzgruppen* of the *Shoah* by bullets are the primary example.

*Dolchstoßlegende* - see the Stab-in-the-back myth

*Endlösung der Judenfrage* - “The Final solution of the Jewish Question.” See ‘Final Solution.’

Ethnic cleansing - The systematic forced removal of ethnic or racial groups from a particular territory, in an effort to make it more homogenous (e.g. ‘Germanization’).

Extermination camp - A particular type of Nazi camp with specific mass killing installations, such as gas chambers, gas vans and/or crematoria. Some death camps were hybrid, combining the functions of concentration camps and a death camps (most notably Auschwitz-Birkenau). However, in the case of the Reinhard death camps, there were camps which purely served the purpose of mass killing. These types of camps were typically very small in size (compared to labor camps), covering an area of only a few hectares, and lacking the barracks and other necessary buildings to house thousands of inmates, as most of them were killed immediately upon arrival. The Reinhard death camps were responsible for the highest combined death toll of Jews during the Holocaust (approx. 2 million), surpassing Auschwitz-Birkenau.

‘Extermination through labor’ - Also called ‘working to death.’ The deliberate killing method employed by the Nazis in concentration and labor camps, where prisoners (especially Jews and Soviet POWs) were forced to carry out physically demanding work in unbearable conditions, without adequate sustenance or medical care. With a grotesquely high mortality rate, a
typical inmate would only survive for a couple of months. In the Shoah by gas, those selected not to be sent directly to the gas chambers, were sentenced to the ‘worked to death.’

‘Final Solution’ - The Nazi term for the genocide of the Jews. Comprised various proposed ‘solutions’ to the ‘Jewish Question,’ a policy which evolved over the years until eventually culminating the decision to physically exterminate the Jews of Europe.

Functionalism - The functionalist approach among historians to the Third Reich and the Holocaust, which argues that the Holocaust emerged from a combination of local initiatives and the structures of the Third Reich competing among themselves (a bottom-up approach). This approach is synonymous with the structural approach.

Gau - Originally the administrative regions of the NSDAP structure, later served to supersede the pre-existing German constituent states (Länder) and provinces of Prussia, becoming the de facto administrative divisions of Nazi Germany. The formations of new administrative regions from annexed territory, starting with the Anschluss of Austria in 1938 and continuing throughout the war, were referred to as Reichsgau.

Gauleiter - Meaning “Gau leader.” Regional governor of a Gau or Reichsgau, directly responsible to the Führer, as part of the NSDAP Gau system. Second highest NSDAP rank behind Reichsleiter.

General Commissar - In German Generalkommissar, the leaders of the administrative districts (Generalbezirk) of the Reichskommissariats.

General Government - A central and south-eastern territory of Nazi occupied Poland, including the former capital Warsaw, which was not annexed into the Reich. Home to the largest Jewish population in Europe.

Generalplan Ost - “The General Plan for the East.” The Nazi envisaged massive reorganization plan for Eastern Europe based on race. The local Slavic population would be systematically enslaved or starved to death, while the lands would be colonized by ethnic Germans.

Genocide - The term coined by Raphael Lemkin in 1944, meaning “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group.”

Gleichschaltung - German term literally translating to “co-ordination.” Refers to the Nazification of society and consolidation of power in Germany by the Nazi Party, as well as “co-ordination” actions, following the Machtergreifung in 1933.

Grosdeutches Reich - The official name for Nazi Germany from 1943.

Great War - The First World War

Gulag - The Soviet labor camp system.

Heim ins Reich - Pan-Germanist Nazi concept and slogan of unifying all ethnic German in a single-nation state. Called for ethnic Germans living abroad to “return home to the Reich.” Connected with the Blut und Boden concept.

Holocaust - Also called Shoah. The Nazi destruction of the Jews in Europe. See Chapter 1.2: “Defining the Holocaust” for a detailed definition.
Holocaust trains - The trains, mostly supplied by the Deutsche Reichsbahn, for the deportations of the Jews from all over Europe to the ghettos, concentration and death camps in the Nazi-occupied eastern territories. Were mostly freight wagons and cattle cars, which offered horrible conditions for the passengers. Overcrowded and lacking proper space, seating and ventilation, in addition to being exposed to the elements, many died from suffocation, exposure and starvation on their way to the destinations. In certain cases 3rd class passenger carriages were used to deport wealthy Jews, especially from Netherlands to the Reinhard death camps. This was part of the ruse of hiding the true intentions of the deportations, deceiving the deportees in such a way that they believed they were being resettled in the east. In certain cases the Holocaust trains were used as a killing method in themselves. The trains would run for weeks until all the passengers imprisoned within the wagons had died.

Hunger Plan - A part of Generalplan Ost. The Wehrmacht plan to feed the Germany army, “live off the land” and starve over 30 million people of the Soviet Union following Operation Barbarossa.

‘Incorporated eastern territories’ - The former territories of Poland annexed by Nazi Germany during the war (Danzig-West Prussia and the Warthegau, as well as territory added to East Prussia and Upper Silesia).

Intentionalism - The intentionalist approach among historians to the Third Reich and the Holocaust, which argues that Hitler’s intent and Nazi ideology acted as primary causal factors (a top-down approach). I argue that this approach is synonymous with the interpretive approach from political science.

Interpretivism - The political-scientific theoretical approach which accepts that ideas in themselves act as primary factors for motivation translated into action. I argue that this approach is synonymous with the historiographical intentionalist approach towards the Third Reich and the Holocaust.

‘Jewish Bolshevism’ - Also called ‘Judeo-Bolshevism.’ The Nazi conspiracy theory that linked Jews with Russian Bolshevism. Marxist Communism was said to be the invention of Jews plotting to destroy Western civilization, and the notion was that Jews had taken power in Soviet Russia following the Bolshevik revolution in 1917.

‘Jewish Question’ - In German Judenfrage. The issue of what to do with the Jewish population in an effort to solve what was seen as the ‘Jewish problem,’ whether to emancipate them, segregate or assimilate, or remove them by other means. The Nazis eventually settled on the ‘Final Solution to the Jewish Question,’ which was the decision to physically exterminate all the Jews of Europe.

Judenfrage - see ‘Jewish Question’

Judenfrei - German term meaning “free of Jews.” As part of efforts to solve the ‘Jewish Question,’ the Nazis strove to make their occupied regions “free of Jews.”
### Judenrein
- German term meaning “cleansed” or “purged of Jews.” Once the entire Jewish population of a given region had been expelled, killed or gotten rid of by other means, it was said to have been “cleansed of Jewish presence, i.e. Judenrein. The term has (anti-semitic) racial and hygienic connotations, towards the idea of ‘racial hygiene’ and ‘purity.’

### Kommissarbefehl
- see Commissar Order

### Konzentrationslager
- see Concentration camp

### Kristallnacht
- The nationwide state-sponsored pogrom on 9-10th November 1938. Hundreds of Jews were killed and approx. 30,000 Jewish men arrested and incarcerated in concentration camps. 267 synagogues were burned and destroyed and over 7,000 Jewish businesses were damaged or destroyed, throughout Germany, Austria and the Sudetenland. Mostly carried out by the SA as well as other civilian perpetrators. The pretext was the murder of a German diplomat in Paris by a Polish Jew. Occurred shortly after the Polenaktion.

### Labor camp
- Typically also a concentration camp. A type of Nazi camp where inmates were housed for extended periods of time (as opposed to immediate death) and used for forced labor, typically as a method of ‘extermination through labor,’ in which case the average lifespan of inmates was typically only a couple of months.

### Länder
- The federal constituent states of Imperial Germany, the Weimar Republic and later the current Federal Republic of Germany (Bundesrepublik Deutschland). Were superseded by the Gau system of Nazi Germany following the Gleichschaltung.

### Lebensraum
- see “Living space”

### Lebensunwertes Lebens
- see “Life unworthy of life.” Closely related to “useless eaters.”

‘Life unworthy of life’
- A concept similar to “useless eaters.” A designation for part of the population that doesn’t deserve to live, and therefore should be granted a “mercy death.” Typically applied to the chronically ill, the clinically insane, the disabled and children with birth defects.

‘Liquidation’
- Nazi euphemism for killing.

‘Living space’
- Nazi social-Darwinian concept for the necessary expansion of territory in order for the people, race and nation to thrive. Applies especially to territorial expansion in the east, into the lands of Poland and the Soviet Union. Connected with the Blut und Boden concept.

### Machtergreifung
- The Nazis’ “takeover of power” in Germany in 1933.

### Master race
- In German: Herrenvolk or Herrenrasse. The racist concept, prominent in Nazi ideology, that the Aryan (especially Germanic-Nordic) race was the highest in the racial hierarchy and superior to all other races, destined to subjugate and rule over the lesser races (especially Jews and Slavs). In this context, an allusion was often made (erroneously) to Friedrich Nietzsche’s concept of the Übermensch as being based on race, although Nietzsche originally based it on the ideal of spiritual enlightenment.

‘Mercy death’
- Killing of Lebensunwertes Lebens and “useless eaters,” preferably by gassing, was regarded by the Nazis as a just solution to end the
suffering of ‘unnecessary life.’ Gassing was regarded as a more ‘humane’ form of execution, as opposed to a shooting which was regarded as more brutal. In reality, it generally took the victims of a gas chamber approx. 20 min. to die, and the noise generated from the screams of the victims had sometimes to be drowned out by revving automobile engines, in order to maintain secrecy (Rees, 2017).

Mobile killing squad
- see Death squad. Especially applies to the Einsatzgruppen and Einsatzkommando.

Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact
- The Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact of 1939-1941. A secret protocol of the Pact included the division of Europe between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union into spheres of influence. Poland was split in half between the two great powers.

‘Night of the long knives’
- Nacht der langen Messer. See Röhm purge.

November 1918
- The armistice of 11th November 1918 and the defeat of Germany in WWI. The source of the stab-in-the-back myth among the Nazis and the so-called ‘November criminals.’

‘November criminals’
- The supposed Jewish and Communist betrayers of the German people who signed the armistice of 11th November 1918, caused the defeat of Germany in WWI, founded the Weimar Republic and signed the Treaty of Versailles.

Old Reich
- A term used to differentiate between the territory of the German Reich, prior to the annexation and occupation of territory from Eastern Europe (especially Poland), i.e. the old territory vs. the newly-acquired territory.

Operation Barbarossa
- The 22nd June 1941 Nazi German invasion of the Soviet Union with their Axis partners. The largest military operation in history.

Operation Reinhard
- Also called Aktion Reinhard. The operation to exterminate the Polish Jews in the General Government area of occupied Poland, during the years 1942-1943. Constitutes the first sub-phase of the Shoah by gas. The Nazi ghettos of occupied Poland were systematically ‘liquidated’ and their Jewish populations deported to the Reinhard death camps.

Ostjuden
- Eastern Slavic Jews. Regarded by the Nazis as “uncivilized” and subhuman.

Ostministerium
- The ‘Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories,’ headed by the ‘Reich Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories’ Alfred Rosenberg.

Pan-Germanism
- A pan-nationalist political idea and movement, advocating for the unification of all ethnic Germans into a single nation-state, especially the unification of Germany and Austria, creating a “Greater Germany” (Grossdeutschland or Grossdeutches Reich). Exemplified in the Nazi motto “ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer.” Connected with the Blut und Boden concept and Heims ins Reich.

Pseudo-scientific racism
- Also called ‘biological racism’ and more recently ‘race realism.’ Racism based on pseudo-scientific and empirical reasoning for justification of racial superiority and discrimination based on race. Rooted in 19th century anthropology, where many prominent anthropologists wrote extensively about race, categorized the human
species into separate races and tried to justify the supremacy of the white Aryan race over others. Jews were classified as a race (as opposed to an ethno-religious group) according to these pseudo-scientific principles.

**Phoney War**
- An eight month period during WWII in 1939-1940 when there were no significant military operations between Nazi Germany and the Allies on the Western Front.

**Physical extermination**
- Mass killing, either by mass shooting at killing sites, or by gassing in gas chambers at extermination camps. Bodies are disposed of either in mass graves, buried in trenches or ravines, or cremated in crematoria.

**Polenaktion**
- The October 1938 peacetime deportations of approx. 17,000 foreign Polish Jews from Nazi Germany to be dumped at the Polish border. Occurred shortly before the Kristallnacht.

**Racial purity**
- Also called ‘Racial hygiene.’ A racial idea implemented in Nazi eugenics policy, based upon the assumption that miscegenation (Rassenschande), or the blood-mixing of races, would result in the corruption of the racial stock.

**Racial hygiene**
- see Racial purity

**Racism**
- see Pseudo-scientific racism

**Rassenkrieg**
- “Racial war.” A war fought for the supremacy of one race over others, especially the crusade of the Germanic Aryan race against the Jews, Slavs and Bolshevism.

**Rassenschande**
- Nazi concept of miscegenation, i.e. ‘blood-mixing’ of the races.

**Reich**
- A German word for ‘realm’ or ‘state.’ Usually refers to the German state between 1871 and 1945, during which time it was called the German Reich.

**Reichsbank**
- The central bank of Germany (1876-1945).

**Reich Commissioner**
- In German Reichskommissar. Governor of the quasi-colonial Reichskommissariat civilian administrative areas of the occupied territories of the Soviet Union.

**Reichsdeutsche**
- A civilian with German citizenship.

**Reichsgau**
- The new form of civil administrative division established from the annexed territories of Nazi Germany, starting with the 1938 Anschluss of Austria and continuing throughout the war, e.g. with Reichsgaue Danzig-West Prussia and the Warthegau.

**Reichskommissariat**
- The quasi-colonial administrative regions created by the Nazi Regime in the occupied eastern territories, headed by a civilian government under the governorship of a Reichskommissar.

**Reichsleiter**
- Highest NSDAP rank apart from the Führer. Reichsleiters typically held high civilian offices, as opposed to governorship, military or police offices.

**Reichstag**
- The German parliament building

**Reinhard camps**
- The death camps of Operation Reinhard, namely Belżec, Sobibór, Treblinka and Majdanek.

‘Resettlement in the east’
- A Nazi euphemism for deporting Jews to extermination camps or killing sites.
“Righting the wrongs of Versailles”

- The advocacy for overturning the Treaty of Versailles, the advancement of which usually implicitly involved the dismantling of the Weimar Republic, forming a “Third Reich,” reclaiming lost German territories, bridging the Danzig Corridor and re-establishing Germany’s status as a great power. As well as reclaiming Germany’s lost ambitions following the defeat in WWI, for imperialism and military dominance over the European continent.

Social-Darwinism

- The pseudo-scientific and evolutionary idea (and world-view) that nations and races exist in a struggle with one another. A nation or a race acts like an organic whole, needing space (Lebensraum) and sustenance for survival. One most triumph over the other according to the principle of the ‘survival of the fittest.’

Shoah

- Hebrew for “Holocaust.” A biblical term meaning “destruction.” Specifically refers to the Nazi genocide of the Jews (as opposed to the Nazi genocide of other categories of people).

Shoah by bullets

- The first phase of (the final stage of) the Holocaust in the occupied Soviet Union, beginning following Operation Barbarossa in June 1941, perpetrated by the Einsatzgruppen death squads and their auxiliaries, rounding up and killing Jews in massacres by mass shooting.

Shoah by gas

- The second phase of (the final stage of) the Holocaust, coming into full swing in 1942, whereby Jews from all over Europe were deported and murdered in gas chambers in the death camps in Nazi occupied Poland.

Sitzkrieg

- see Phoney War

Sonderbehandlung

- A euphemism (“special treatment”) for the killing of Jews in gas chambers or by mass shooting.

Stab-in-the-back myth

- Dolchstoßlegenden. The notion and conspiracy theory, prevalent in nationalist right-wing circles following the end of WWI in Germany, that the defeat had been causes by Jews and Marxists – the “November Criminals” – who had betrayed the German people, and the soldiers at the front, at home. Connected with the ‘Jewish Bolshevism’ conspiracy theory. One of the foundational tenets of Nazi ideology.

Structuralism

- The historical and political-scientific approach that looks at the social and political structures of society, how they act and compete among themselves to produce specific outcomes. When approaching the Nazi Regime and the Holocaust, this approach is synonymous with the functionalist approach of historians.

‘Subhuman’

- A racial designation for those considered racially inferior, typically Jews, the Roma and Slavs, as opposed to Aryans – the master race. Among the Nazis, it was common to refer to especially Jews and Slavs as simply ‘subhuman.’

Third Reich

- Drittes Reich. Alternative name for Nazi Germany 1933-1945. Was conceived of and promulgated prior to the Machtergreifung. Comprises the authoritarian nationalist idea that the Weimar Republic was illegitimate. The Holy Roman Empire was the ‘First Reich,’ the German Empire the ‘Second Reich,’ and a through a national
revolution and overturning of Versailles, a new ‘Third Reich’ would emerge to replace the Weimar Republic with an authoritarian form of government.

Treaty of Versailles - The WWI peace treaty that placed the blame for the war upon Germany, stripped Germany of many of its territories, imposed war reparations and was a cause for national humiliation and resentment for Germans.

Unnütze Esser - see ‘Useless eaters’

Untermensch - see ‘Subhuman’

‘Useless eaters’ - A concept similar to ‘life unworthy of life.’ A designation typically for Jews who were sick or unable to work. They would be prioritized for killing operations. The ‘thinning out’ of the Nazi ghettos typically involved selecting ‘useless eaters,’ as opposed those able to work, who would be worked to death (‘extermination through labor’).

Vernichtungskrieg - see ‘War of annihilation’

Versailles - see Treaty of Versailles

Volk - A German concept for the synthesis of a people, race and a nation.

Völkisch movement - German nationalist movement originating in the 19th century. Most of its core tenets were incorporated into Nazi ideology. Had a strong emphasis on the connection of the Volk with race and soil. Connected with the Blut und Boden concept.

Volksdeutsche - Ethnic Germans.

Volksgemeinschaft - The Nazi concept of a “people’s community.”

Wannsee Conference - A conference called by Reinhard Heydrich of the RSHA to coordinate the implementation of the ‘Final Solution’ across Europe, among the different governmental ministries and the bureaucracy of the Nazi regime. Initially planned for December 1941, delayed by the battle of Moscow on 5th December, the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor on 7th December, the outbreak of global war on 11th December. Subsequently held in January 1942.

‘War of annihilation’ - Vernichtungskrieg – The Nazis’ war against the Soviet Union, starting with Operation Barbarossa. Involved the total neglect for the international rules of war and the Geneva Convention. An aggressive waging of war that seeks the total destruction of the enemy, without any thought for compromise or negotiating peace. Results in deliberate targeting of civilians, mass killings and atrocities.

Weimar Republic - Germany in the time period when it was a Republic on the basis of the Weimar constitution, in the time period 1919-1933.

Weltanschauung - “Outlook on the world” or simply “world-view.” A political ideology incorporating a natural philosophical outlook on the world (in the Nazis’ case, social-Darwinism and racism), rooted in deep emotional and personal convictions. The Nazis defined the NSDAP as a “Weltanschauung’s Party.”

‘Working towards the Führer’ - see Chapter 3.1

Zyklon-B - Cyanide-based pesticide gas crystals, used by the SS to kill Jews and other undesirables in gas chambers at the extermination camps. First
tested and used at Auschwitz. Succeeded Carbon monoxide as the preferred method of gassing.

### 11.3 Anatomy of the military and security forces of the Nazi Regime

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Allegemeine-SS</strong></th>
<th>- The regular SS-units managed by the SS Main Office, as opposed to the Waffen-SS and SS-Totenkopfverbände.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Einsatzgruppen</strong></td>
<td>- The SS-battalions that acted as mobile killing squads carrying out purges and massacres in the occupied eastern territories in the wake of the German army. Primary perpetrators of the <em>Shoah</em> by bullets. Subordinate to the RSHA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Einsatzkommando</strong></td>
<td>- The units into which the <em>Einsatzgruppen</em> battalions were subdivided, along with <em>Sonderkommando.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gestapo</strong></td>
<td>- The official secret police of Nazi Germany. Founded by Göring in 1933 in his capacity as Interior Minister of Prussia. Subordinated to Himmler in 1934 in his capacity as Chief of German Police (1936). Became a national state agency as a sub-office of the SiPo. Following the start of WWII in September 1939, it was wholly incorporated into the SS as a sub-office of the RSHA and a sister agency to the SD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Heer</strong></td>
<td>- The land force of the <em>Wehrmacht.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Higher SS and Police leader’</td>
<td>- Regional SS-leaders, directly responsible to the <em>Reichsführer-SS</em> Heinrich Himmler, who served as the primary overseers of the operations of the SS in their given administrative regions and districts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hilfspolizei</strong> (Hipo)</td>
<td>- Various paramilitary and auxiliary police forces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hilfswilliger</strong> (Hiwi)</td>
<td>- Auxiliary forces of the <em>Wehrmacht</em> and SS, recruited from volunteers and conscripts from Soviet POWs and the general Soviet population. Included the <em>Trawniki men</em>), Ukrainian auxiliary guards employed at the Reinhard death camps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kriegsmarine</strong></td>
<td>- The navy of the <em>Wehrmacht.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kriminalpolizei</strong> (Kripo)</td>
<td>- The Criminal Police of Nazi Germany. Subordinated to the SS in 1939.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Luftwaffe</strong></td>
<td>- The air force of the <em>Wehrmacht.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oberkommando des Heeres</strong></td>
<td>- OKH – High Command of the Army.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oberkommando der Wehrmacht</strong></td>
<td>- OKW – High Command of the Armed Forces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ordnungspolizei</strong> (Orpo)</td>
<td>- auxiliary German police formations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA)</strong></td>
<td>- Reich Main Security Office. One of the 12 Main Offices of the SS. Most of the police activities were subordinated to the RSHA, constituting one of its 7 sub-offices, including the Gestapo and SD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Schutzmannschaft</strong></td>
<td>- Local auxiliary police. Included Belarusian Auxiliary Police, Estonian Auxiliary Police, Latvian Auxiliary Police, Lithuanian Auxiliary Police and Ukrainian Auxiliary Police (Dean, 2003, p. 69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sicherheitsdienst (SD)</strong></td>
<td>- The intelligence agency of the SS and Nazi Party. Sister organization of the Gestapo. Incorporated into the RSHA in 1939.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sicherheitspolizei (SiPo)</strong></td>
<td>- The security police of Nazi Germany. Incorporated into the RSHA in 1939.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Selbstschutz</strong></td>
<td>- Ethnic German militia.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sonderkommando - The units into which the Einsatzgruppen battalions were subdivided, along with Einsatzkommando.

Schutzstaffel (SS) - The paramilitary arm of the Nazi Party.

Totenkopfverbände - The ‘death’s head’ units of the SS, employed in the administration of the SS concentration camp system.

Volksdeutscher Selbstschutz - “Ethnic German Self-Defense militias.” Operating during the invasion of Poland in cooperation with the Einsatzgruppen.

Waffen-SS - The armed military wing of the SS. Subordinated to the OKW.

Wehrmacht - Literally “defense force.” The armed forces of Nazi Germany. Included the Heer (Army), Kriegsmarine (Navy) and Luftwaffe (Air force).

WVHA - The Economic and Administration Office (Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt) of the SS, headed by Oswald Pohl.

11.4 List of notable historical persons featured in the text

The following names are ordered alphabetically according to the last name of the person

Adolf Eichmann - Head of the B4 sub-office of the Gestapo (Amt IV within the RSHA) concerned with ‘Jewish affairs.’ Organized the deportations of Jews from outside occupied Poland to the death camps.

Albert Forster - Gauleiter of Danzig-West Prussia

Hans Frank - Governor-General of the General Government and Hitler’s personal lawyer

Karl Fritzch - Deputy to Rudolf Höss (the commandant of Auschwitz concentration camp).

Odilo Globočnik - SS-Gruppenführer (Lieutenant General) and Higher SS and Police Leader of the Lublin District in the General Government. Leader of Operation Reinhard and overseer of the Reinhard death camps in occupied Poland.

Joseph Goebbels - Reich Minister of Propaganda and Gauleiter of Berlin

Hermann Göring - Reichsmarschall, Commander-in-chief of the Luftwaffe, Minister President of Prussia and Plenipotentiary for the Four Year Plan. The second most powerful figure in Nazi Germany (after the Führer) until superseded by Heinrich Himmler in 1942.

Arthur Greiser - Gauleiter of Reichsgau Wartheland (the Warthegau).

Reinhard Heydrich - Head of the RSHA, Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia, chief architect of the Holocaust.

Heinrich Himmler - Reichsführer-SS (head of the SS) and Chief of German Police, chief architect of the Holocaust. The second most powerful figure in Nazi Germany (after the Führer) from 1942-1945.

Adolf Hitler - Führer and Reich Chancellor, head-of-state and government, leader of the NSDAP, commander-in-chief of the armed forces, chief culprit of the Holocaust.

Rudolf Höss - Commandant of Auschwitz concentration and extermination camp, subordinate to Oswald Pohl.
Ernst Kaltenbrunner - Head of the RSHA following the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich.

Erich Koch - Gauleiter of East Prussia and Reich Commissioner of Reichskommissariat Ukraine.

Wilhelm Koppe - Higher SS and Police Leader in the Warthegau.
Wilhelm Kube - General Commissar of the General District of Belarus in Reichskommissariat Ostland.

Hinrich Lohse - Reich Commissioner of Reichskommissariat Ostland.
Heinrich Müller - Head of the Gestapo, subordinate to Heydrich.
Oswald Pohl - Head of the SS-WVHA, responsible for the organization and administration of the concentration camp system. Responsible to the Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler.

Alfred Rosenberg - One of the chief ideologues of the Nazi Party, Reich Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories.

Christian Wirth - Police and SS officer, Inspector of the Reinhard camps (the death camps of Operation Reinhard), primary overseer of Operation Reinhard along with Odilo Globočnik. Previously served in the Aktion T4 euthanasia program.

11.5 List of notable places featured in the text

Auschwitz-Birkenau - Concentration and extermination camp in the Upper Silesia region of occupied Poland.
Belżec - One of the Reinhard death camps in the General Government area of occupied Poland
Chelmno - Small town in the Warthegau area of occupied Poland. Site of Chelmno extermination site (where gas vans were used as the method of killing).
Danzig - German city in East Prussia, and later part of Poland as Gdańsk. Became the ‘Free city of Danzig’ during the inter-war era, adjacent to the Danzig Corridor.
Danzig-West Prussia - Reichsgau administrative region of the Nazi Party and Nazi Germany, created from the ‘incorporated eastern territories’ of occupied Poland.
Dachau - Concentration camp outside München.
General Government - The region of Nazi occupied Poland that was not annexed into the German Reich. Constituted a ‘rump’ state. Headed by Governor General Hans Frank. The capital was Kraków.
Kiev - Capital city of Ukraine.
Kraków - Major city in Poland.
Lublin - Major city in Poland.
Minsk - Capital city of Belarus.
Lublin District - The south-easternmost of the districts of the General Government area of Nazi occupied Poland, bordering the Soviet Union (1939-1941), with Lublin as the main city.
Lwów - City in the General Government area of occupied Poland (1941-1945) and today in Ukraine (Lviv).
Majdanek - Concentration and death camp in the Lublin District of the General Government area of occupied Poland

Ostland - Reichskommissariat Ostland

Pearl Harbor - The US navy base in the Hawaiian Islands, attacked by the Imperial Japanese Navy on 7th December 1941, marking the beginning of the Pacific War and the transformation of WWII into a true global conflict.

Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia - The protectorate of Nazi Germany comprising the former territory of Czechoslovakia.

Reichskommissariat Ostland - One of the Nazi German quasi-colonial civilian administrations of the occupied territories of the Soviet Union, comprising Belarus, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, headed by Reich Commissioner Hinrich Lohse.

Reichskommissariat Ukraine - One of the Nazi German quasi-colonial civilian administrations of the occupied territories of the Soviet Union, comprising Ukraine, headed by Reich Commissioner Erich Koch.

Riga - Capital city of Latvia

Sobibór - Operation Reinhard death camp in the General Government zone of occupied Poland

Sudetenland - The region of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and later Czechoslovakia that was inhabited by a significant German-speaking proportion of the population, known as the Sudeten Germans. Annexed by Nazi Germany as part of the Münich Agreement in September 1938.

Treblinka - One of the Reinhard death camp in the General Government zone of occupied Poland

Upper Silesia - Gau administrative region of the Nazi Party and Nazi Germany.

Vilnius - Also called Vilno in Polish. Major city and later capital of Lithuania (1939-present)

Warsaw - Capital city of Poland

Warthegau - The Reichsgau Wartheland administrative region of Nazi Germany, composed of territory annexed from Poland. Part of the ‘incorporated eastern territories.’