

**Recognizing the Ukrainian Famine:
Politicization of the Term “Genocide” in the Case of Holodomor**

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Abstract

This thesis evaluates European political debates about the classification of the Ukrainian Famine of 1932-1933, also known as Holodomor, as a genocide. Holodomor is not a prototypical genocide—that is, it is not categorized by specific genocidal intent and direct, systematic killing. If it were to be recognized as a genocide, the famine would be considered non-prototypical, because Ukrainians who died in its course were killed indirectly through starvation. Two key issues in the Holodomor genocide debate are a) whether Holodomor was brought about by knowledge-based genocidal intent and b) the political motives of recognition. My guiding research question is: How do European political interests influence the decision-making process about whether or not to recognize non-prototypical genocides such as the Holodomor?

I examine official government statements related to Holodomor recognition to evaluate this question. In these documents, I found inconsistent legal arguments for recognition but explicit linkage of recognition with pro-Ukrainian and anti-Russian policies. These policies specifically legitimized national identity and condemned the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. I use tests of independence to reveal a correlation between NATO interest and Holodomor recognition among former Warsaw Pact members and increased financial aid for Ukraine. I also reject the correlation of Holodomor and bilateral financial aid to Ukraine by EU members.

This thesis concludes that international political interest is a primary determining factor for whether or not a sovereign, European state will recognize Holodomor as a genocide. This research does not necessarily uphold or deny Holodomor's genocide classification, but rather recognizes the key role of politics in the Holodomor genocide debate.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Genocide is a controversial concept in international affairs. The term was first coined by Raphael Lemkin during World War II to describe a campaign of ethnic extermination.¹ Based on Lemkin's definition, the United Nations (UN) criminalized genocide in the 1948 Genocide Convention.² Since then, the global community has developed an understanding of what a typical genocide looks like. This prototypical image of a genocide, of which the Holocaust is the "gold standard," includes purpose-based genocidal intent and direct, systematic killing.³

In addition to the model of a prototypical genocide, the concept of a non-prototypical genocide is presently arising in the field of international affairs. A non-prototypical genocide does not perfectly meet the UN's legal criteria or does not fit the prototypical genocide image. These events are considered genocides by some, but they are not widely recognized by states.

One example of a non-prototypical genocide is the Ukrainian Famine (1932-1933), also known as Holodomor (Ukrainian for hunger and death).⁴ It was not until decades after the famine that Holodomor began to receive recognition as a genocide by historians, the diaspora, and states. Although its genocide classification remains contested, almost three dozen states—mostly in Europe and the Americas—now recognize Holodomor as a genocide. Holodomor thus presents a case study for analysis of a non-prototypical genocide's shift into official recognition. If non-prototypical genocides are ambiguous and still recognized as genocides, we must better understand the legal reasoning and political circumstances leading to their recognition. My

¹ Samantha Power, *A Problem From Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 2013): 42-43.

² Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Dec. 9 1948, S. Exec. Doc.

³ Lucas Mazur and Johanna Vollhardt, "The prototypicality of genocide: implications for international intervention." *Anal. Soc. Issues Public Policy* 16 (2015): 296, 299.

⁴ Anne Applebaum, *Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2017), xxix.

guiding research question is: **How do European political interests influence the official decision whether or not to recognize non-prototypical genocides such as Holodomor?**

I argue that international political interests in relations with Ukraine and Russia are the primary determinant in the recognition of Holodomor by European states. Pro-Ukrainian and anti-Russia states are most likely to recognize Holodomor. Ultimately, I conclude that states may not pursue genocide recognition unless it is within their political interest, to the ultimate detriment of victims. This conclusion is not revolutionary per se. Even Lemkin acknowledged, “states would rarely pursue justice out of a commitment to justice alone.”⁵ However, through the Holodomor case study, I examine several methods to correlate genocide recognition and political interest. The implications of the study do not just affirm the role of politics in genocide recognition, but they provide insight into the limitations and merits of genocide politicization.

The History of Holodomor

In the 1920s, Vladimir Lenin offered a number of political concessions to minimize internal resistance to the new Soviet state. Two of these policies were the New Economic Policy (NEP) and indigenization. Lenin introduced NEP in 1921 in response to the Kronstadt Rebellion and discontent with the stringent measures of war communism.⁶ NEP reintroduced some free market mechanics to allow the economy to bounce back from war.⁷ Strong nationalism in the civil war, including Ukrainian nationalism, inspired Lenin’s indigenization policy in the early 1920s.⁸ This policy mitigated widespread nationalism by conceding autonomy through SSRs and

⁵ Power, *A Problem From Hell*, 19.

⁶ Oleg Khlevniuk, *Stalin: New Biography of a Dictator*, trans. Nora Seligman Favorov (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015): 64.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁸ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2001): 2.

promotion of distinct languages, elites, and cultures.⁹ Ukraine formed the first SSR and Ukrainized language, education, and press.¹⁰ Indigenization created what historian Terry Martin famously called the “affirmative action empire” for its diversity.¹¹

Under Joseph Stalin in the late 1920s, the Soviet Union transitioned from NEP to the planned economy. Stalin introduced the first Five Year Plan in 1928, which outlined ambitious quotas across all industries.¹² To meet food quotas, the state pursued agricultural collectivization.¹³ Collectivization replaced individually-owned farms with collectively-owned farms, or kolkhozes with the goal of converting 80% of peasant households between December 1930 and September 1931.¹⁴ The policy greatly affected Ukraine’s majority-peasant population of 31 million.¹⁵ Kulaks, or wealthy peasants, were especially targeted. Kulaks were a Bolshevik concept more than a peasant concept, and, as Timothy Snyder notes, “the state decided who was a kulak.”¹⁶ Stalin demanded the “liquidization of the kulaks as a class.”¹⁷

Indigenization became less prominent in the late 1920s. Ukrainization came under fire for empowering Ukrainians. Fears of succession and resistance expanded.¹⁸ In 1930, open demonstrations against grain requisition were “especially widespread in Ukraine,” with over 13,000 demonstrations recorded.¹⁹ Peasants also protested collectivization with what James Scott refers to as “ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups”: malicious compliance and

⁹ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 10-13.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 35-37.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Abraham Ascher, *Russia: A Short History* (London: Oneworld Productions, 2017), 200; Khlevniuk, *Stalin*, 109.

¹³ Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 3-4; Khlevniuk, *Stalin*, 110.

¹⁴ Applebaum, *Red Famine*, 189; Robert Davies, and Stephan Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931-1933*. [Rev. ed.] (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009): 1.

¹⁵ Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow*, 302.

¹⁶ Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 25.

¹⁷ Applebaum, *Red Famine*, 189; Reid, *Borderland: A Journey Through the History of Ukraine* (New York, NY: Basic Books, Hachette Book Group, 2023): 122.

¹⁸ Applebaum, *Red Famine*, 114.

¹⁹ Sheila Fitzpatrick. *Stalin’s Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village After Collectivization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994): 65; Khlevniuk, *Stalin*, 114; Applebaum, *Red Famine*, 176-179, 189.

inefficiency.²⁰ Squandering livestock became an issue, as peasants “would sooner kill or sell their livestock than turn it over to the collective farm.”²¹ In 1931, 15.8% of kolkhozes faced attacks including poisoning of livestock, damage to machines, and arson.²² The state responded by arresting, deporting, and executing Ukrainians for overly enthusiastic nationalism or resistance.²³

Stalin conceded that collectivization and requisition policies were overly aggressive when he called the Soviet Union “dizzy with success.”²⁴ However, failure to meet quotas caused re-implementation of aggressive policies. The state imposed progressively higher quotas in the early 1930s.²⁵ Stalin said in 1931, “you can and must overfill [the quota].”²⁶ The Politburo found that Ukrainization intensified resistance to the Five Year Plan.²⁷ The Politburo blamed Ukrainization for a “lack of vigilance,” and the allowance of “the most evil enemies of the Party” to sabotage grain requisition.²⁸ Authorities guarded silos and searched homes for hidden grain.²⁹ Other food sources—including non-grain produce, meat, and seeds—bridged the gap between quotas and procurements.³⁰ The Decree of August 7, 1932 equivalated kolkhoz property to state property and criminalized the retention of grain, even in the smallest quantities, punishable by ten years in prison or execution.³¹ Fifteen thousand people were convicted within six months.³²

²⁰ James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (Yale University Press, 1985): 29, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1nq836>.

²¹ Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels Under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999): 72-75.

²² Davies and Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger*, 15.

²³ Khlevniuk, *Stalin*, 325.

²⁴ Applebaum, *Red Famine*, 173; Khlevniuk, *Stalin*, 114; Davies and Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger*, 45.

²⁵ Khlevniuk, *Stalin*, 112.

²⁶ Stalin, “To the Chairman of the Grain and Trust Board, to All State Grain Farms,” *Pravda* no. 147, May 30, 1931.

²⁷ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 302.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Applebaum, *Red Famine*, 200.

³⁰ Khlevniuk, *Stalin*, 118; Applebaum, *Red Famine*, 226.

³¹ Davies and Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger*, 165.

³² Applebaum, *Red Famine*, 217.

Famine conditions affected 70 million people in Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and the Caucasus.³³ The state mandated internal passports and closed borders to prevent peasants from fleeing.³⁴ Since personal ownership of food was illegal, “just being alive attracted suspicion.”³⁵ If a peasant managed to survive starvation, they risked execution, labor camp sentences, or deportation back to Ukraine. The conditions were so inhumane that a Soviet official remarked, “The nightmarishness of the scene was not in the corpse on the bed, but in the condition of the living witnesses.”³⁶ Spies reported their neighbors in exchange for food.³⁷ Desperation drove some to cannibalism and necrophagy.³⁸ Although state censorship and destruction of evidence obscured a death count, approximately 4.5 million people died.³⁹ The life expectancy in 1933 was seven years.⁴⁰ By the late stages of the famine, “even those who had rebelled in 1930 stayed silent.”⁴¹ The spirit of resistance faded as the population weakened and prioritized survival.

Famine has a connotation of occurring naturally, but policy undoubtedly was the primary cause of this famine. Despite being informed of deaths, Stalin continued to pursue the quotas.⁴² He blamed kulak sabotage, insisting peasants “declared war” against the Soviet Union.⁴³ The state rejected humanitarian aid and covered up the famine.⁴⁴

One of the first public figures to acknowledge the famine was Adolf Hitler, who used the famine in his anti-Marxist rhetoric.⁴⁵ This speech became the first instance of Holodomor being

³³ Khlevniuk, *Stalin*, 119.

³⁴ Davies and Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger*, xvi.

³⁵ Applebaum, *Red Famine*, 272.

³⁶ Reid, *Borderland*, 130.

³⁷ Applebaum, *Red Famine*, 266-268.

³⁸ Reid, *Borderland*, 130; Davies and Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger*, 421-422.

³⁹ Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, “2. Direct Famine Losses in Ukraine by Region in 1932, per 1000,” 2017, <https://gis.huri.harvard.edu/media-gallery/detail/1381000/1082128>.

⁴⁰ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 48.

⁴¹ Applebaum, *Red Famine*, 281.

⁴² Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow*, 326-327.

⁴³ Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow*, 7; Khlevniuk, *Stalin*, 117.

⁴⁴ Nicole Loroff, Jordan Vincent, and Valentina Kuryliw, “Holodomor – Denial and Silences,” *Holodomor Research and Education Consortium*, 2024. <https://education.holodomor.ca/teaching-materials/holodomor-denial-silences>.

⁴⁵ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 61.

“a matter of furious ideological politics.”⁴⁶ The famine received attention from diaspora communities, who created the term Holodomor (Ukrainian for “killing by hunger”) in the 1930s, and from Lemkin, who called the famine a “classic example” of genocide in 1953.⁴⁷ Scholars such as Robert Conquest and James Mace popularized the Holodomor genocide question in the 1980s.⁴⁸ However, historians such as Robert Davies and Stephen Wheatcroft have criticized this argument.⁴⁹ While they agree that the famine was man-made and policy-induced, they do not believe there is sufficient genocidal intent.⁵⁰ The academic community remains divided on the Holodomor genocide debate.

International recognition began in the 1990s and early 2000s. Nationalist parties in Eastern Europe and diaspora communities drove this first wave of recognition. In 1993, Estonia was the first state to officially declare Holodomor a genocide, and Ukraine followed in 2006.⁵¹ Following the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, another wave of recognition occurred, primarily by Western allies of Ukraine. Russia and Russian allies deny allegations of genocide, and at times have denied the occurrence of the famine at all. Today, almost three dozen states recognize the genocide, a noteworthy pattern in the face of such academic controversy.

⁴⁶ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 61.

⁴⁷ Applebaum, *Red Famine*, xxix; Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 53;

⁴⁸ Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow*; James Mace, “Genocide in the Ukraine: Its Secret Belongs to Humanity,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 14, 1986, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1986-08-14-me-6914-story.html>.

⁴⁹ Davies and Wheatcroft, *The Years of Hunger*; Robert Davies and Stephen Wheatcroft, “Stalin and the Soviet Famine of 1932-33: A reply to Ellman,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 58, no 4 (2006).

⁵⁰ Davies and Wheatcroft, “Stalin and the Soviet Famine of 1932-33: A reply to Ellman,” 628.

⁵¹ Baltic Assembly, “Statement: On Commemorating the Victims of Genocide and Political Repressions Committed in Ukraine in 1932 and 1933,” November 24, 2007, https://www.baltasam.org/uploads/Doc_8_ENG_26.pdf; Holodomor Research and Education Consortium, “Law of Ukraine, On the Holodomor of 1932–33 in Ukraine,” *Legal Assessments, Findings, and Resolutions*, originally from *Vidomosti Verkhovnoi Rady Ukrainy* (News of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine), trans. Bohdan Klid (2006): 8.

https://holodomor.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/4_HR_Legal_Assessments.pdf.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Methodology

Literature Review

Genocide is defined by the UN in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (“Genocide Convention”) as, “any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”⁵²

This definition encompasses a wide range of acts, but some are more readily recognized as genocidal because they are more aligned with a socially constructed image of what genocide looks like. Prototypical genocides, according to research by Lucas Mazur and Johanna Vollhardt, most often include systematic, direct killing motivated by hate.⁵³ The Holocaust is seen as the “gold standard” against which to compare other genocides.⁵⁴ Other prototypical genocides include the 1915 Armenian Genocide and the 1994 Rwandan Genocide. Even prototypical genocides face backlash about their classification as such, such as Holocaust denial. Yet, because of their prototypical features, these genocides continue to receive widespread recognition even in the face of denial.

Prototypicality can be helpful to a limited extent by providing an analogy, but it does not encapsulate the entire concept of genocide. A non-prototypical genocide does not exactly meet

⁵² Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Dec. 9 1948, S. Exec. Doc., Article II.

⁵³ Mazur and Vollhardt, “The prototypicality of genocide: implications for international intervention,” 296.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 299.

the legal criteria or prototypical image of a genocide yet is considered genocidal anyway. Holodomor is an example that has gained increasingly widespread recognition in recent years. Another prominent example is the 1975-1979 Cambodian Genocide, which refers to the Khmer Rouge's killing even though many victims were class targets.

The legal criteria of genocide are specific. Intent is definitionally necessary for genocide. However, the question of what level of intent is sufficient to meet the standard of genocidal intent is debated by the international academic community. Purpose-based intent, or specific intent, is the most simple interpretation. With purpose-based intent, the perpetrator acts with the destruction of a group as the specific goal. In other words, genocide is an end-goal, not a by-product. Scholars such as Günther Lewy and William Schabas support this conservative conception of intent.⁵⁵ Genocide may still serve perpetrators in other ways, like slave labor access or confiscation of property, but these gains are incidental.

Scholars like Alexander Greenawalt and Sangkul Kim challenge the limitations of purpose-based intent and favor knowledge-based intent. A perpetrator demonstrates knowledge-based intent when they “personally lack a specific genocidal purpose, but [commit] genocidal acts while understanding the destructive consequences of their actions.”⁵⁶ Kim interprets genocide as collective *actus reus* (guilty action), arguing intent exists at the collective level, even if actions exist at the individual level.⁵⁷ These approaches acknowledge that genocide takes place at a large scale in which perpetrators have diverse motives. The Nuremberg Trials in 1946 upheld knowledge-based intent as legitimate. In the Dostler case, the tribunal convicted

⁵⁵ Günther Lewy, "Can there be genocide without the intent to commit genocide?" *Journal of Genocide Research* 9, no. 4 (2007): 671-672, doi:10.1080/14623520701644457; Michael Ellman, "Stalin and the Soviet Famine of 1932-33 Revisited," *Europe-Asia Studies* 59, no. 4 (2007): 684, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20451381>.

⁵⁶ Alexander Greenawalt, "Rethinking Genocidal Intent: The Case for a Knowledge-Based Interpretation," *Columbia Law Review* 99, no. 8 (1999): 2259, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1123611>.

⁵⁷ Sangkul Kim, *A Collective Theory of Genocidal Intent* (The Hague: T.M.C. Asser Press, 2016): 230.

Nazi officer Anton Dostler of war crimes and rejected his superior orders defense.⁵⁸ This upheld as a precedent that knowingly committing genocide, even if motivated by non-genocidal factors, still contributes to genocide. Thus, while it seems clear that specific intent is sufficient to constitute genocide, the applicability of knowledge-based intent is unclear.

There is a lack of academic literature connecting famine and genocide. Scholars articulate man-made famine as starvation crimes or crimes against humanity due to the ambiguity of genocidal intent in indirect killing. Man-made famines can be genocidal when intent is present, as Bridget Conley and Alex de Waal argue, but famines are not necessarily genocidal.⁵⁹

However, starvation has been used in prototypical and non-prototypical genocides. Holocaust camps (1941-1945), the German *Hungerplan* (1941-1945) and the Herero and Namaqua Genocide (1904-1908) used starvation as a murder weapon. Some Irish nationalists consider the Irish Potato Famine (1845-1852) genocidal due to British colonial policies and food requisitioning, similar to the Holodomor debate.⁶⁰ Historian AJP Taylor stated, “All Ireland was a Belsen,” referencing the Holocaust camp.⁶¹ Historians do not widely accept the Potato Famine as a genocide. Also, California Governor Gavin Newsom called anti-Indigenous policies in North American a genocide.⁶² One policy was the destruction of the American bison after

⁵⁸ United Nations War Crimes Commission, *Law Reports of Trials of War Criminals*, Vol. I. (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1947): 27-29.

⁵⁹ Bridget Conley and Alex de Waal, “The Purposes of Starvation: Historical and Contemporary Uses,” *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 17, no. 4 (September 2019): 705.

⁶⁰ Christopher J. Murphey, “Did the Irish “Potato Famine” Constitute a Genocide?” *New York State Ancient Order of Hibernians*, February 28, 2022.

<https://www.nyaoh.com/nys-aoh-history-journal/did-the-irish-potato-famine-constitute-a-genocide.>; Brendan Ó Cathaoir, “Mitchel Politicised the Famine” *Seanchas Ardmhacha: Journal of the Armagh Diocesan Historical Society* 20, no. 2 (2005): 155.

⁶¹ James S Donnelly, “The Great Famine: Its Interpreters, Old and New,” *History Ireland* 1, no. 3 (1993): 28. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27724090>.

⁶² Andrew Oxford, “California governor calls Native American treatment genocide.” *Associated Press*, June 18, 2019, <https://apnews.com/article/california-native-americans-982b507a846a4ad6bc184b3e7f99ec70>.

General Sherman claimed, “Every buffalo dead is an Indian gone.”⁶³ As a result, Indigenous peoples starved. As such, famine certainly can be genocidal in the right context.

Prominent scholars who support defining Holodomor as a genocide include Robert Conquest, James Mace, Michael Ellman, Anne Applebaum, Yaroslav Bilinsky, and Wasyl Hryshko.⁶⁴ Authors in favor of genocide classification rely on circumstantial evidence to support knowledge-based genocidal intent. They argue that the famine is situated in a larger context to attack Ukrainians, such as purging of elites.⁶⁵ As Ellman argues, because the famine does not match prototypical genocides, its classification depends on the definition and intent applied.⁶⁶

However, many authors disagree with defining Holodomor as a genocide. These scholars include Robert Davies, Stephan Wheatcroft, John-Paul Himka, Hiroaki Kuromiya, and Timothy Snyder.⁶⁷ Generally, these scholars rely on the ambiguity of genocidal intent to promote a narrower, more conservative interpretation of the famine. Scholars in this camp do not tend to disagree with the man-made nature of the famine. However, they argue genocidal intent is unknowable and therefore restrict their classification of the famine to a crime against humanity.⁶⁸ Terry Martin notes that the Politburo only implicated Ukrainians, as opposed to only kulaks, *after* the famine began, meaning nationhood was not a relevant part of the original policies.⁶⁹

⁶³ J. Weston Phippen, ““Kill Every Buffalo You Can! Every Buffalo Dead Is an Indian Gone!”” *The Atlantic*, May 13, 2016. <https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2016/05/the-buffalo-killers/482349>.

⁶⁴ Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow*, 272; Mace, “Genocide in the Ukraine”; Ellman, “Stalin and the Soviet Famine of 1932-33 Revisited”; Applebaum, *Red Famine*, 356-357; Yaroslav Bilinsky, “Was the Ukrainian Famine of 1932-1933 Genocide?” *Journal of Genocide Research* (1999), <https://web.archive.org/web/2019102222381/http://www.faminegenocide.com/resources/bilinsky.html>; Wasyl Hryshko, *The Ukrainian Holocaust of 1933*, trans. M. Carynyk (Toronto: Bahriany Foundation, Suzhero, Dobras, 1983).

⁶⁵ Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow*, 272; Applebaum, *Red Famine*, 356-357.

⁶⁶ Ellman, “Stalin and the Soviet Famine of 1932-33 Revisited,” 690.

⁶⁷ Davies and Wheatcroft, “Stalin and the Soviet Famine of 1932-33: A reply to Ellman,” 633; Himka, “Review of Making Sense of Suffering: Holocaust and Holodomor in Ukrainian Historical Culture, and: Holod 1932–1933 rr. v Ukraini iak henotsyd/Golod 1932–1933 gg. v Ukraine kak genotsid [The 1932–33 Famine in Ukraine as a Genocide],” 690; Hiroaki Kuromiya, “The Soviet Famine of 1932-1933 Reconsidered,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 60, no. 4 (2008) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20451530>; Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

⁶⁸ Davies and Wheatcroft, “Stalin and the Soviet Famine of 1932-33: A reply to Ellman,” 631-633.

⁶⁹ Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 303-304.

Kristina Hook demonstrates an escalation of violence, in line with Martin’s implication that the famine may have become more focused on the nation as time progressed.⁷⁰

It is unlikely that a definitive answer exists. The destruction of evidence and the ambiguity of intent prevent historians from reaching a consensus. Despite the academic controversies, almost three dozen states worldwide recognize Holodomor as a genocide, with the total number having approximately doubled following the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine.⁷¹ Juxtaposing the academic controversy and the rise in political relevance highlights the need for further research. While current scholarship attempts to answer if Holodomor *should* be classified as a genocide, it largely fails to address the fact that Holodomor *is* classified as a genocide. This disjunction leaves readers of the current literature unsatisfied, because the question of why is skipped. My research examines why Holodomor is being classified as a genocide by many European states, filling this gap in research to provide clearer understanding of the development of the Holodomor genocide debate.

Methods

I use rhetorical analysis of government statements published by European states and international organizations. I analyze preambulatory and operative clauses to reveal political motivations. Preambulatory clauses are “historic justifications for action.”⁷² Within these clauses are the explicit and implicit reasonings states recognize Holodomor as a genocide. Operative clauses are the literal policies the documents enact. By analyzing operative clauses, I identify

⁷⁰ Kristina Hook, “Pinpointing Patterns of Violence: A Comparative Genocide Studies Approach to Violence Escalation in the Ukrainian Holodomor,” *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* Vol. 15: Iss. 2 (2021): 24, <https://doi.org/10.5038/1911-9933.15.2.1809>.

⁷¹ Holodomor Museum, “Worldwide Recognition of the Holodomor as Genocide,” (2023) <https://holodomormuseum.org.ua/en/recognition-of-holodomor-as-genocide-in-the-world>.

⁷² Wichita State University. “Writing Resolutions.” https://www.wichita.edu/academics/fairmount_las/polisci/modelun/wa-mun/Reswriting.php. Accessed March 11, 2024.

policies that states consider relevant to the recognition of Holodomor. My analysis reveals links between Holodomor and other modern political goals, thus further enhancing the understanding of underlying political motivations to recognize Holodomor.

I analyze texts in English (original and translations), French, and German. I pull governmental documents from Ukraine, Russia, France, and Germany, and international organization texts from the European Union and Baltic Assembly. I chose these texts to provide diversity of sources linguistically, politically, and geographically. These texts are not representative of all statements on Holodomor, and analysis of all official stances would be outside of the scope of this research.

I use quantitative analysis to further support my claim that European international relations play a key role in Holodomor recognition. With Chi square tests of independence, I find strong correlations between Holodomor recognition and NATO interest. However, I do not find a strong correlation between Holodomor recognition and Ukrainian financial aid, revealing that aid serves other political goals than merely supporting Ukraine. Statistical correlation strengthens the methodology of this research by supporting the qualitative conclusions. It also allows me to consider the political stances of a greater number of state actors who I do not evaluate in my qualitative analysis.

Chapter 3: Former Warsaw Pact States

The Warsaw Pact was a collective security organization in existence from 1955 to 1991, which consisted of the Soviet Union and Soviet satellite states.⁷³ Eastern European states are relevant to the Holodomor genocide debate because they pioneered the shift of the debate from academic to governmental discussion. I use qualitative rhetorical analysis to examine texts from former Soviet Union SSRs due to their close or noteworthy relationships with Ukraine and Russia. I also use quantitative tests of correlation to examine the stances of all former Warsaw Pact members and their relationships to NATO. These relationships demonstrate substantial political interest in recognizing or not recognizing Holodomor. I argue that post-Soviet Eastern European relations significantly influence recognition of Holodomor. States who have attempted to distance themselves politically from Russia since 1991 demonstrate a higher likelihood of recognizing Holodomor and draw on their historic oppression as justification.

Government Statements

Seven former Warsaw Pact members recognized the Holodomor before the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. The Ukrainian Rada passed a law declaring Holodomor a genocide on November 28, 2006.⁷⁴ The Baltic Assembly passed a similar resolution on November 24, 2007.⁷⁵ By 2007, both Estonia and Lithuania had independently passed similar resolutions, and Latvia did so within a year of the Baltic Assembly resolution. Hungary, Georgia, and Poland are the other former Warsaw Pact members who recognized Holodomor before the 2022 invasion.

⁷³ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "What Was the Warsaw Pact?"

https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/declassified_138294.htm#:~:text= accessed March 11, 2024.

⁷⁴ Holodomor Research and Education Consortium, "Law of Ukraine, On the Holodomor of 1932–33 in Ukraine," 8.

⁷⁵ Baltic Assembly, "Statement: On Commemorating the Victims of Genocide and Political Repressions Committed in Ukraine in 1932 and 1933."

The legal language of Ukraine and the Baltic Assembly is not robust. Ukraine mentions the UN Genocide Convention, so the Rada clearly uses this definition. However, the Baltic Assembly does not state or reference a definition. All three Baltic Assembly member states were parties to the UN Genocide Convention at the time of the resolution, but the lack of clarity in the statement makes it difficult to assume that the UN's legal definition is in fact the one in use.

Neither Ukraine nor the Baltic Assembly mention genocidal intent directly. The Ukrainian law implicitly infers genocidal intent by linking Holodomor deaths and the resulting social damages to the Ukrainian nation. For example, the preambulatory clauses state that Holodomor led to many deaths “and the destruction of the social foundations of the Ukrainian people and of its centuries-old traditions, spiritual culture, and ethnic distinctiveness.”⁷⁶ Thus, genocidal intent is conceptualized by Ukraine as the resulting national destruction, not necessarily purpose-based intent on Stalin's behalf. Historians supporting Holodomor's genocide classification rely on similar knowledge-based intent, so Ukraine's articulation of intent is not necessarily unfounded. However, Ukraine does not address the unresolved criticisms that historians also face about knowledge-based intent. The Baltic Assembly lacks legal reasoning even more so. The statement lacks any insight into genocidal intent or acts of genocide that would illuminate the legal reasoning behind the decision. While the statement refers to “genocide and political repressions,” it does not name the particular genocidal policies. In fact, famine is only mentioned in the title, but not again in the body of the text.⁷⁷ The conception of the famine as a genocide is taken for granted and lacks legal elaboration in the Baltic Assembly's statement.

Broadly speaking, the statements on Holodomor in the 1990s and 2000s do not satisfactorily address the legal ambiguity of genocide recognition. Definitions and examples are

⁷⁶ Holodomor Research and Education Consortium, “Law of Ukraine, On the Holodomor of 1932–33 in Ukraine,” 8.

⁷⁷ Baltic Assembly, “Statement: On Commemorating the Victims of Genocide and Political Repressions Committed in Ukraine in 1932 and 1933.”

severely lacking, especially among the Baltics. The legal arguments are not persuasive to those who did not already support the conceptualization of Holodomor as a genocide. As such, the legal language of former Warsaw Pact members largely takes for granted that Holodomor was a genocide and should be classified this way.

Where the former Warsaw Pact documents are more compelling is the political commentary on Holodomor recognition. Legal language is weak, but political language is strong and explicit. These statements examine the underlying question of national identity, using recognition to legitimize the narrative of victimization under the Soviet Union.

The Ukrainian law creates a historical narrative of Holodomor as a story of Ukrainian survival. The resolution draws upon its “moral duty to past and future generations of Ukrainians” and uses Holodomor to “promote the consolidation and development of the Ukrainian nation [and] its historical consciousness and culture.”⁷⁸ In a 2003 resolution on Holodomor, the Rada acknowledges Holodomor recognition is necessary for “restoring historical justice and moral healing of several generations from terrible social stress.”⁷⁹ Thus, the language of the Rada does not describe Holodomor as a distinct moment in time, but rather within a long, Ukrainian narrative. The resolution indicates an understanding of the Ukrainian identity as an developing historical phenomenon.

Recognition of Holodomor also serves the purpose of reinforcing this narrative through social institutions. The law makes Holodomor recognition public policy as it encourages memorials and academic research.⁸⁰ Certain texts on Holodomor were already taught in school curricula, so this law serves to further reinforce the teaching of the famine to the population

⁷⁸ Holodomor Research and Education Consortium, “Law of Ukraine, On the Holodomor of 1932–33 in Ukraine,” 8-9.

⁷⁹ Holodomor Research and Education Consortium, “Resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine no. 789–IV of 15 May 2003... to Honor the Memory of the Victims of the Holodomor of 1932–1993,” *Legal Assessments, Findings, and Resolutions*, originally from *Vidomosti Verkhovnoi Rady Ukraïny*, trans. Bohdan Klid (2003): 7.

⁸⁰ Holodomor Research and Education Consortium, “Law of Ukraine, On the Holodomor of 1932–33 in Ukraine,” 9.

generally.⁸¹ Furthermore, the law outlaws Holodomor denial.⁸² By using the operative clauses to link Holodomor recognition with social and educational teachings, Holodomor recognition serves to reinforce national identity. Not only is the history of Holodomor contextualized within a national narrative, but also the law introduced institutional factors to promote this narrative. The attention given to the impacts on the Ukrainian nation indicate Ukraine had a broadly national identity-oriented political motivation for Holodomor recognition in 2006.

Indeed, the historical context of the law upholds this conclusion. Holodomor genocide recognition was popular as a nationalist politic in the 1990s before it became mainstream in the 2000s.⁸³ John-Paul Himka argues there are two forms of Ukrainian national identity: an “exclusivist” Western identity and a “post-Soviet” Eastern identity, with differing historical memories of Holodomor.⁸⁴ The Western identity seeks a more European future and maintains a sense of being distinctly Ukrainian. In contrast, the Eastern identity remains more closely unified with Russia in a less distinct, Slavic culture. Eastern regions with less Ukrainian national sentiment are less likely to adhere to the genocide historical memory.⁸⁵

The memory of the Holocaust also plays a role in the Ukrainian interpretation of Holodomor. Supporters of the Holodomor genocide classification constructed comparisons to the Holocaust, calling the famine a “Ukrainian Holocaust.”⁸⁶ In fact, the inflated Holodomor death count of seven to ten million was used because this number overshadowed the six million Jewish deaths in the Holocaust.⁸⁷ This is not merely an instance of a prototypical genocide serving as an analogy. Rather, nationalists appropriated the Holocaust for a nationalist purpose. In the

⁸¹ Holodomor Research and Education Consortium, “Law of Ukraine, On the Holodomor of 1932–33 in Ukraine,” 9.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Georgiy Kasianov, “Spaces of Memory,” in *Memory Crash: Politics of History in and around Ukraine, 1980s–2010s*, 249–318 (Central European University Press, 2022): 264–268.

⁸⁴ Himka, “Review of Making Sense of Suffering: Holocaust and Holodomor in Ukrainian Historical Culture” 690.

⁸⁵ Kasianov, “Spaces of Memory,” 264–268.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 264, 276.

⁸⁷ Kasianov, “Spaces of Memory,” 276.

Holocaust, Ukrainians were not just victims, but perpetrators. The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists collaborated with the Nazis.⁸⁸ It is likely that the Holodomor-Holocaust analogy may glorify nationalists by presenting them as victims instead of perpetrators of genocide. Thus, Holodomor serves to victimize Ukraine to a greater extent than just cultural recognition alone.

The Baltic Assembly's decision has similar national tones. Of the four preambulatory clauses, the clause describing Baltic suffering at the hands of the Soviet Union is the longest at four text lines, as opposed to one to two text lines for the other clauses.⁸⁹ It states that the Baltic Assembly "truly understand[s] the tragedy of the Ukrainian people because during World War II the Baltic States lost their independence, and hundreds of thousands of their permanent inhabitants were executed or deported to the remote and harsh regions of the Soviet Union."⁹⁰ The statement stresses the "solidarity with the Ukrainian people" felt by the Baltic Assembly.⁹¹ As such, Baltic suffering under the Soviet Union is an explicitly stated reason to recognize the Holodomor as a genocide. Evidently, the Baltic recognition of the genocide is explicitly anti-Russian, as the Baltic states seek to condemn Soviet and Russian oppression of the other SSRs in the Soviet Union. The references to Baltic suffering transforms the resolution from one that uniquely describes Ukraine as a victim to one that broadly indicates the victimization of other Soviet SSRs. The emphasis on solidarity conceptualizes the Baltic Assembly and Ukraine as having solidarity specifically as a result of both having faced Soviet aggression. The resolution is still much shorter than the Ukrainian law and is not as robust in political motivation. However brief, the references to Baltic suffering under the Soviet Union position Baltic recognition as an anti-Russian political policy.

⁸⁸ Kasianov, "Spaces of Memory," 277.

⁸⁹ Baltic Assembly, "Statement: On Commemorating the Victims of Genocide and Political Repressions Committed in Ukraine in 1932 and 1933."

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Baltic Assembly, "Statement: On Commemorating the Victims of Genocide and Political Repressions Committed in Ukraine in 1932 and 1933."

Overall, my rhetorical analysis of former Warsaw Pact member statements on Holodomor supports the conclusion that recognition has a political impetus. While the statements of Ukraine and the Baltics lack sufficient legal and historical analysis to properly address the doubts of the genocide debate, their conceptualization of national identity is an explicit, continuous thread throughout the statements. Holodomor's status as a genocide is largely taken for granted. However, these documents insist on the Eastern European oppression under the Soviet Union to legitimize their national identity and narrative.

NATO Interest and Holodomor Recognition

I use statistical correlation tests to indicate a correlation between Holodomor recognition and affinity for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). NATO formed following WWII as a collective security alliance against the Soviet Union and its expansion in Eastern Europe.⁹² The Warsaw Pact formed in direct response to NATO, in particular the acceptance of West Germany into NATO.⁹³ The two intergovernmental organizations were, as the NATO website states, "ideologically opposed."⁹⁴ Although the Warsaw Pact dissolved, NATO persists and considers Russia its "most significant and direct threat" in the modern era.⁹⁵ It is evident that NATO and the Soviet Union/Russia were and remain opposed on the international stage.

Despite this opposition, over half of the successor states to the Warsaw Pact have joined or expressed serious interest in joining NATO since the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, as presented in Table 1. Because of the opposition between Russia and NATO, Russia perceives the

⁹² U.S. Office of the Historian, "North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), 1949," 2024, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/nato>.

⁹³ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "What Was the Warsaw Pact?"

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Jill Lawless, Joseph Wilson, and Sylvie Corbet, "NATO deems Russia its 'most significant and direct threat,'" *Associated Press*, June 29, 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-nato-zelenskyy-politics-jens-stoltenberg-54c91903690f0d56537fa40ada88d83c>.

inclusion of Eastern European states in NATO as aggressive. Putin described NATO as a Russian security threat on numerous occasions.⁹⁶ Eastward expansion of NATO, specifically the possibility of Ukraine joining, was a key reason cited by Putin for the invasion of Ukraine.⁹⁷

However, Eastern European states do not perceive themselves as being forcefully annexed by an enemy. Instead, they see NATO membership as a protective barrier against a historically aggressive state. Ken Moskowitz, who served in the American Foreign Service, wrote, “Former Soviet satellites... saw NATO membership as a shield from a future round of attacks from Russia.”⁹⁸ He references the history of military suppression in satellites, including the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and the 1968 Prague Spring, as historical justifications for pursuing NATO membership.⁹⁹ Moskowitz wrote, “It is clear to me that Russia has mostly itself to blame for the alienation of its former allies.”¹⁰⁰ The decision by former Warsaw Pact members to join NATO should be considered an anti-Russian stance. Whether or not states intend to be explicitly anti-Russian, or whether they broadly want to be considered more Westernized, NATO membership continues to represent anti-Russian international politics.

For this reason, I conducted a Chi-square test of independence between NATO interest and Holodomor recognition among former Warsaw Pact members. Table 1 shows the data on the NATO interest and Holodomor recognition in Warsaw Pact successor states. The hypotheses of the chi-square test are as follows:

⁹⁶ Eric Tucker, “Putin’s week: Facing NATO expansion, West’s unity on Ukraine,” *Associated Press*, July 1, 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-nato-putin-central-asia-1bf2b0827461d3a54a1dcf3bb1565aa5>; Guy Faulconbridge, “Russia’s Putin issues new nuclear warnings to West over Ukraine,” *Reuters*, February 21, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/putin-update-russias-elite-ukraine-war-major-speech-2023-02-21>.

⁹⁷ Ken Moskowitz, “Did NATO Expansion Really Cause Putin’s Invasion?” *American Foreign Service Association* (October 2022) <https://afsa.org/did-nato-expansion-really-cause-putins-invasion>; Cain Burdeau, “Putin blames NATO for pushing Russia into invasion,” *Courthouse News Service*, May 9, 2022, <https://www.courthousenews.com/putin-blames-nato-for-pushing-russia-into-invasion>.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

H_0 : NATO interest and Holodomor recognition are independent

H_1 : NATO interest and Holodomor recognition are not independent

Table 2 outlines the process I followed to conduct the Chi-square analysis. Table 3 includes specific data points for steps 1-3 of conducting a Chi-square analysis. Based on the data from Table 3, I calculated the total test statistic:

$$\text{Test statistic} = 2.94 + 3.83 + 3.83 + 4.97 = 15.57$$

I found that my test had 1 degree of freedom:

$$\text{Degrees of freedom} = (\text{rows} - 1) \times (\text{columns} - 1) = 1$$

Knowing the degree of freedom, selected a Chi-square value. I chose a value of $\alpha = 0.05$ because this is the conventional value representative of independence.¹⁰¹ At one degree of freedom and at $\alpha = 0.05$, the Chi-square value is 3.841.¹⁰²

In comparing our test statistic and the Chi-square value, we find that $15.57 > 3.841$. Therefore, the Chi-square test allows us to reject the null hypothesis that NATO interest and Holodomor recognition are independent. We can quantitatively accept a statistically significant correlation between NATO interest and Holodomor recognition. As such, quantitative data supports the concept that international politics underlie Holodomor recognition amongst former Warsaw Pact states.

Based on analysis of Eastern European government documents, I found support for the claim that Holodomor recognition was politically motivated. States recognized Holodomor in a way to actively conceptualize themselves as victims of Soviet oppression and to legitimize their historical memory. The statistical test of independence shows a correlation between Holodomor recognition and NATO interest. This reaffirms the idea that states who recognize Holodomor aim

¹⁰¹ "Chi-Square (X^2) Table." *Scribbr*. <https://www.scribbr.com/statistics/chi-square-distribution-table>.

¹⁰² *Ibid*.

Table 1: Relation Between Former Warsaw Pact States, NATO Membership, and Holodomor Recognition

Current State (Name Under Warsaw Pact)	Year of NATO Membership ¹⁰³	Year of Holodomor Recognition
Albania (People's Socialist Republic of Albania)	2009	
Armenia (USSR)		
Azerbaijan (USSR)		
Belarus (USSR)		
Bulgaria (People's Republic of Bulgaria)	2004	2023
Czech Republic (Czechoslovakia)	1999	2022
Estonia (USSR)	2004	1993
Georgia (USSR)	Expressed intent to join	2005
Germany (German Democratic Republic)	1955	2022
Hungary (Hungarian People's Republic)	1999	2003
Kazakhstan (USSR)		
Kyrgyzstan (USSR)		
Latvia (USSR)	2004	2008
Lithuania (USSR)	2004	2005
Moldova (USSR)		2022
Poland (Polish People's Republic)	1999	2006
Romania (Socialist Republic of Romania)	2004	2022
Russia (USSR)		
Slovakia (Czechoslovakia)	2004	2023
Tajikistan (USSR)		
Turkmenistan (USSR)		
Ukraine (USSR)	Expressed intent to join	2006
Uzbekistan (USSR)		

¹⁰³ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "NATO member countries," https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52044.htm; North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Enlargement and Article 10," https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49212.htm.

Table 2: Steps to Chi-Square Test of Independence

1. Find actual values	Taken from Table 1
2. Calculate expected values	Expected = (row total x column total) / table total Table total = 23 Expected / (row total x column total) / 23
3. Calculate test statistics	Test statistic = (actual - expected) ² / expected
4. Calculate total test statistics	Total test statistic = test statistic ₁ + test statistic ₂ ...
5. Calculate degrees of freedom	Degrees of freedom = (rows - 1) x (columns - 1)
6. Determine Chi-square value based on degrees of freedom	Chi-square values are standardized. Reference a Chi-square value table. ¹⁰⁴
7. Compare total test statistic to Chi-square value	Test statistic > Chi-Square value indicates statistical correlation and rejects null hypothesis

Table 3: Chi-square test of independence data for the relationship between NATO interest and Holodomor recognition among former Warsaw Pact members¹⁰⁵

	Holodomor Recognition	No Holodomor Recognition	Row Totals
NATO Member/Aspiring Member	Actual: 12 Expected: 7.35 Test statistic: 2.94	Actual: 1 Expected: 5.65 Test statistic: 3.83	13
Non-NATO Member	Actual: 1 Expected: 5.65 Test statistic: 3.83	Actual: 9 Expected: 4.35 Test statistic: 4.97	10
Column Totals	13	10	Total: 23

to distance themselves from the Soviet Union and Russia. Evidently, international relations play a significant role in the early Holodomor recognitions in Eastern Europe.

¹⁰⁴ “Chi-Square (X²) Table.” *Scribblr*.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*.

Chapter 4: Recognition and the 2022 Russian Invasion

In 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, which elicited a strong response worldwide. NATO and the European Union (EU) reacted resolutely in favor of Ukraine, interpreting it as a war of aggression. Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union, as well as the EU website as of February 2024, both highlight a key priority of the EU being promotion of peace and European security.¹⁰⁶ Thus, the cause to protect Ukrainian peace and sovereignty became a key political cause for European peace. A second wave of Holodomor recognition emerged. While early recognition in Europe was limited to Eastern Europe, the second wave became more popular in Central and Western Europe. I argue that this second wave represents another example of political impetus for Holodomor recognition. Like former Warsaw Pact members, recognition still serves to condemn Russian aggression, but for the EU, this is specific to condemning the Russian invasion. However, the condemnation of the invasion does not just serve Ukraine, but rather serves the entire continent when faced with the fear of war. As such, Holodomor recognition serves as one method to condemn Russia, but it is not the only method.

Government Statements

The European Parliament, a legislative body of the EU, passed an overwhelmingly popular resolution to recognize Holodomor in late 2022.¹⁰⁷ The European Parliament passed the declaration of genocide recognition with 507 votes in favor against 17 abstentions and 12 votes

¹⁰⁶ European Union, “Article 3,” *Consolidated Treaty on the European Union*, OJ C 202, 7.6.2016: 17, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A12016M003>; European Union, “Aims and Values,” https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/principles-and-values/aims-and-values_en.

¹⁰⁷ “Holodomor: Parliament recognises Soviet starvation of Ukrainians as genocide,” *European Parliament News*, December 15, 2022, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20221209IPR64427/holodomor-parliament-recognises-soviet-starvation-of-ukrainians-as-genocide#:~:text=>.

against.¹⁰⁸ Many member states of the EU independently passed similar resolutions, including Germany in 2022 and France in 2023.¹⁰⁹

The European Parliament resolution references the UN Genocide Convention by its full title and writes out the definition, leaving no ambiguity to the definition the Parliament used. It specifically cites the clause of “deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction” as the genocidal act committed by the Soviet Union against the Ukrainian people.¹¹⁰ The French resolution similarly evokes Article 2 of the Genocide Convention.¹¹¹ However, the German government does not explicitly reference the Genocide Convention or a definition. It simply states that it “shares this classification [of genocide].”¹¹² Overall, from Western European resolutions we see fairly robust legal language to articulate the claim that Holodomor was a genocide.

All three resolutions elaborate in great detail about what policies they consider to be acts of genocide. The documents by the EU, France, and Germany all refer explicitly to forced collectivization as a policy that contributed to genocide. In articulating how the policy uniquely targeted Ukrainian nationality, all three governments explicitly elaborated on the persecution of Ukrainian elites.¹¹³ The EU describes the famine as “a reign of terror against the bearers of Ukrainian cultural identity,” therefore highlighting the role of Ukrainian culture in the

¹⁰⁸ “Holodomor: Parliament recognises Soviet starvation of Ukrainians as genocide,” *European Parliament News*.

¹⁰⁹ Deutscher Bundestag, “Holodomor in der Ukraine: Erinnern - Gedenken - Mahnen,” Drucksache 20/4681, November 11, 2023, 2, <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/046/2004681.pdf>; Sénat de France, “Génocide ukrainien de 1932-1933: Proposition de Résolution,” Texte n° 200, Paris, France: Sénat de France, December 9, 2022, <https://www.senat.fr/leg/ppr22-200.html>.

¹¹⁰ European Parliament, “90 years after Holodomor: Recognizing the mass killing through starvation as genocide,” December 15, 2023, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0449_EN.html.

¹¹¹ Sénat de France, “Génocide ukrainien de 1932-1933: Proposition de Résolution.”

¹¹² “Damit liegt aus heutiger Perspektive eine historisch-politische Einordnung als Völkermord nahe. Der Deutsche Bundestag teilt eine solche Einordnung”; Deutscher Bundestag, “Holodomor in der Ukraine: Erinnern - Gedenken - Mahnen.”

¹¹³ European Parliament, “90 years after Holodomor: Recognizing the mass killing through starvation as genocide”; Deutscher Bundestag, “Holodomor in der Ukraine: Erinnern - Gedenken - Mahnen,” 2; Sénat de France, “Génocide ukrainien de 1932-1933: Proposition de Résolution.”

persecution of elites.¹¹⁴ The resolutions also mention the closing of Ukrainian borders (EU, France, and Germany), the deportations and executions of resistors (France and Germany), and exportation of grain out of starving regions (EU and Germany).¹¹⁵ The articulation of particular policies is extremely thorough and encapsulates many official and de facto policies in Soviet Ukraine in the early 1930s. Therefore, the European allies of Ukraine address in depth the question of genocidal acts by naming specific policies.

The statements also address the genocidal intent question in a more meaningful and satisfactory manner. In discussing intent, all three statements refer to the Soviet policies as intentional: the EU calls them “cynically planned and cruelly implemented,” the French resolution refers to “methodical organization” of policies, and the German resolution names the responsibility of Joseph Stalin.¹¹⁶ In describing the genocidal acts, the statements regularly use the terms deliberate, methodical, and organization to indicate thought and intentionality behind the policies. Beyond just the intentionality of the policies, the resolutions articulate intentionality to destroy Ukrainian identity through the quelling of Ukrainian resistance. Although all three refer to cultural identity, the German resolution is the most thorough in describing the intentionality of targeting Ukrainian identity. The German resolution states, “The Russian language and culture again stood unchallenged at the top of the unofficial hierarchy of the Soviet Union” due to Holodomor.¹¹⁷ It particularly highlights Stalin’s anti-Ukrainian sentiment, noting, “The ‘Ukrainians’ were, to Stalin, deeply suspicious... and should unconditionally be kept under

¹¹⁴ European Parliament, “90 years after Holodomor: Recognizing the mass killing through starvation as genocide.”

¹¹⁵ European Parliament, “90 years after Holodomor: Recognizing the mass killing through starvation as genocide”; Deutscher Bundestag, “Holodomor in der Ukraine: Erinnern - Gedenken - Mahnen,” 1-2; Sénat de France, “Génocide ukrainien de 1932-1933: Proposition de Résolution.”

¹¹⁶ European Parliament, “90 years after Holodomor: Recognizing the mass killing through starvation as genocide.”

¹¹⁷ “Die russische Sprache und Kultur standen wieder unangefochten an der Spitze der inoffiziellen Hierarchie innerhalb der Sowjetunion.”; Deutscher Bundestag, “Holodomor in der Ukraine: Erinnern - Gedenken - Mahnen,” 2.

strict control by the Soviet center of power in Moscow” [my translation].¹¹⁸ It is legally significant in these Holodomor classifications to acknowledge the interpretation of pre-famine anti-Ukrainian policies as genocidal intent. They do not refer to collectivization as an intentionally genocidal act per se, but rather rely on political context to conceptualize a broader genocidal context. This aligns with knowledge-based intent as a standard of genocidal intent to meet the UN Genocide Convention definition.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the EU resolution actually addresses the common arguments against Holodomor genocide recognition. Scholars who object to the genocide classification claim the persecution of Ukrainian peasants was political, not national.¹¹⁹ If this is true, Holodomor cannot meet the UN genocide definition because classes are not considered victim groups of the crime of genocide. The European Parliament actually argues that the Soviet Union produced “agitprop [communist propaganda] scapegoating peasants.”¹²⁰ This is a particularly unique clause of the EU resolution. It implies Stalin used communist ideological propaganda to hide a genocide. Such an interpretation is not entirely unreasonable, because the Soviet Union did in fact place historical events within an ideological and teleological interpretation. However, it is easy to push back against the EU’s interpretation. Knowing what Stalin himself was actually thinking is not possible for either the EU or the scholars. The EU’s interpretation of hiding a genocide with political propaganda is no more satisfactory than opposing claims, but it is noteworthy that the EU addressed a counter-argument in such a manner.

Overall, these three statements offer many details about Holodomor and their decision to classify it as a genocide. They mentioned specific definitions and policies in great depth.

¹¹⁸ “Das „Ukrainische“ war Stalin zutiefst suspekt... und sollte unbedingt unter strikter Kontrolle des sowjetischen Machtzentrums in Moskau gehalten werden”; Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Davies and Wheatcroft, “Stalin and the Soviet Famine of 1932-33: A reply to Ellman.”

¹²⁰ European Parliament, “90 years after Holodomor: Recognizing the mass killing through starvation as genocide.”

However, despite the legally and historically robust articulation of Holodomor, these three statements are explicitly and continuously political in nature. The resolutions all passed in the year following the Russian invasion of Ukraine during a time where all three bodies offered political and financial support to Ukraine. Each government acknowledges the purpose of Holodomor recognition in supporting Ukrainian sovereignty today. Thus, these recognitions are subject to significant politicization.

One political throughline is the presence of starvation in the 1930s and the 2020s. The EU parallels forced starvation during Holodomor to the global food crisis created by the Russian invasion. They compare the similar policies of destruction and looting of grain stores by both the Soviet Union and Russia.¹²¹ The resolution notes that Russian blockades and theft of grain “renewed fears of large-scale, artificial famine.”¹²² A similar argument is made by the EU’s agricultural commissioner, Janusz Wojciechowski: “[the Russians] want to create hunger and to use this method as a method of aggression [in the invasion]... It is a similar method that was used in 1930s by Soviet regime against Ukrainian people.”¹²³ In Germany, Green Party member Robin Wagener also highlighted the similarities of the periods: “the parallels [of Holodomor] with today [the 2022 Russian invasion] are unmissable.”¹²⁴ The recognition must be placed within the context of threatened European food supply chains due to Russian aggression. As such, the correlation between contemporary limitations to Ukrainian grain and grain confiscations during the Holodomor is politically significant in European recognition.

In addition to the throughline of hunger and a global grain crisis, other broad comparisons link Holodomor and the Russian invasion. The French exposé states that the

¹²¹ European Parliament, “90 years after Holodomor: Recognizing the mass killing through starvation as genocide.”

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Eddy Wax, “The starvation of a nation: Putin uses hunger as a weapon in Ukraine,” *Politico*, April 1, 2022, <https://www.politico.eu/article/the-starvation-of-a-nation-how-putin-is-using-hunger-as-a-weapon-in-ukraine>.

¹²⁴ Deutsche Welle, “Germany declares Ukraine’s Holodomor famine a genocide,” November 30, 2022, <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-declares-stalin-era-holodomor-famine-in-ukraine-a-genocide/a-63944665>.

contemporary events in Ukraine “demonstrate a parallel between the Holodomor and Putin’s objectives to negate the Ukrainian identity” (my translation).¹²⁵ The French resolution lists similar methods of destruction used in both events, including not only starvation, but also cold, torture, theft, and misinformation.¹²⁶

Declarations highlight the importance of Holodomor memory as a tool against modern-day authoritarianism, arguing that the suppression of information about the Holodomor exists within the broader context of “false historical narratives that are fabricated and disseminated to support the ideology and survival of criminal regimes.”¹²⁷ The EU operative clauses “condemns, in the strongest terms, all forms of totalitarianism.”¹²⁸ The German resolution uses Holodomor recognition to support the statement, “there can be no more place for striving for great power and oppression in Europe” [my translation].¹²⁹ In the preambulatory clauses, the Bundestag claims the “authoritarian state leadership in Russia under Vladimir Putin forces an ideological historical policy that prevents an investigation into Stalinist crimes, including the Holodomor” [my translation].¹³⁰ These resolutions conclude that recognition is necessary as a bulwark against Russian authoritarianism. Thus, the recognition sits within a broader political goal of promoting democracy and undermining authoritarianism.

Similar to promoting democracy, the resolutions promote access to free information. In particular, the resolutions construct Holodomor denial not as an academically legitimate stance,

¹²⁵ “Les événements actuels en Ukraine semblent en effet démontrer le parallélisme entre l’Holodomor et un objectif poutinien d’une négation de l’identité ukrainienne et de la disparition de la nation ukrainienne”; Sénat de France, “Génocide ukrainien de 1932-1933: Proposition de Résolution.”

¹²⁶ Sénat de France, “Génocide ukrainien de 1932-1933: Proposition de Résolution.”

¹²⁷ European Parliament, “90 years after Holodomor: Recognizing the mass killing through starvation as genocide.”

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ “dafür ein, dass für Großmachtstreben und Unterdrückung in Europa kein Platz mehr sein darf”; Deutscher Bundestag, “Holodomor in der Ukraine: Erinnern - Gedenken - Mahnen,” 2.

¹³⁰ “...forciert die autoritäre Staatsführung in Russland unter Wladimir Putin eine ideologisierte Geschichtspolitik, die eine Aufarbeitung der stalinistischen Verbrechen, einschließlich des Holodomors, verhindert”; Deutscher Bundestag, “Holodomor in der Ukraine: Erinnern - Gedenken - Mahnen,” 3.

but as a by-product of authoritarian thought. For example, the French exposé compares denial of Holodomor under the Soviet Union with Vladimir Putin's denial today, thus articulating denial as a hold-over of Soviet totalitarian oppression.¹³¹ The European Parliament stated that it “regrets” not having yet legally evaluated Soviet crimes at an international level and urges Russia to open the archives.¹³² The EU aims, through these clauses, to rectify what it perceives as false historical narratives perpetuated by Russian authoritarianism. In particular, the closed archives on the famine and the refusal to recognize Holodomor exist within a politically undemocratic state in which information is kept from citizens. As such, the recognition of Holodomor advances, or is constructed to advance, European goals of democracy and freedom of information.

Recognition also serves to promote support for Ukraine in the conflict explicitly, and the passing of these resolutions provide legal precedent to uphold humanitarian and military aid. All three statements refer to the invasion of Ukraine as a war of aggression, in which Ukraine is a victim. The fourth operative clause of the German resolution directly names Ukraine as the victim in the Russian invasion, which it describes as a war of aggression and a violation of international law.¹³³ The most tangible element of the operative clause dedicates Germany to continuing political, financial, and humanitarian aid within the German budget.¹³⁴

It is also significant that the EU published materials pertaining to its support for Ukraine in both Ukrainian and Russian in addition to its other standard languages of publication. This is the case for the recognition of the genocide, in which the final demands of the resolution call for immediate Russian and Ukrainian translations of the document and copies to be shared with the Russian and Ukrainian governments.¹³⁵ Likewise, on the EU website as of February 2024, the

¹³¹ Sénat de France, *Génocide ukrainien de 1932-1933: Exposé de motifs*.

¹³² European Parliament, “90 years after Holodomor: Recognizing the mass killing through starvation as genocide.”

¹³³ Deutscher Bundestag, “Holodomor in der Ukraine: Erinnern - Gedenken - Mahnen,” 4.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ European Parliament, “90 years after Holodomor: Recognizing the mass killing through starvation as genocide.”

first section under “Highlights” is a page titled “EU support for Ukraine,” under which the first sentence also links to Ukrainian and Russian translations.¹³⁶ The emphasis on accessibility of these documents to Ukrainian and Russian speakers indicates an external audience. In publishing both the genocide recognition and other pro-Ukrainian statements, the EU explicitly shares these opinions with the state of Russia. Ukrainian President Zelensky “thanked EU lawmakers for their recognition.”¹³⁷ As such, the recognition is not only an internal statement by the organization, but an international dialogue between the EU and its allies.

In addition to the international relations concerns of Germany, the Bundestag has another unique reason for its recognition of the Holodomor: its past as an aggressor in genocide. The resolution references the Holocaust in Ukraine, including the Babi Yar, a Ukrainian ravine in Kyiv where massacres of Jewish Ukrainians took place.¹³⁸ The Bundestag “borrows from its own history a special responsibility to recognize and deal with international crimes against humanity” [my translation].¹³⁹ The third operative clause encourages German reflection of Eastern European history; while this clause does not directly reference the Holocaust, the fact that a significant amount of the Holocaust occurred in Eastern Europe is context that reveals why Germany may feel it is necessary to understand Eastern European narratives.¹⁴⁰

Overall, resolutions passed by European allies to Ukraine are deeply detailed in their legal and historical conception of Holodomor as a genocide. In particular, the later resolutions that followed the Russian invasion are much longer and more detailed than those passed before

¹³⁶ European Union, “EU support for Ukraine,”

https://european-union.europa.eu/priorities-and-actions/eu-support-ukraine_en.

¹³⁷ Deutsche Welle, “European Parliament recognizes Ukraine Holodomor as genocide,” December 15, 2022, <https://www.dw.com/en/european-parliament-recognizes-ukraine-holodomor-as-genocide/a-64107714>.

¹³⁸ Michael Berenbaum, *The World Must Know* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2006): 96-99.

¹³⁹ “Der Deutsche Bundestag leitet aus Deutschlands eigener Vergangenheit eine besondere Verantwortung ab, innerhalb der internationalen Gemeinschaft Menschheitsverbrechen kenntlich zu machen und aufzuarbeiten”; Deutscher Bundestag, “Holodomor in der Ukraine: Erinnern - Gedenken - Mahnen,” 2.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

the invasion. Part of this length is due to extra information about why these states have chosen to recognize Holodomor as a genocide. They provide space for discussion of Soviet policies and ramifications for Ukraine. However, a significant amount of this length comes from political interpretations of Holodomor recognition. In articulating the famine as a genocide, it provides political and historical precedent to further condemn Russian aggression against Ukraine today. In defining former actions as genocide and then comparing Russia's actions today to the genocidal actions, these resolutions seem to imply that Russia today may be or may eventually commit a genocide against Ukraine through those same actions.

Since the invasion of Ukraine, the historical memory of Holodomor has regained significance domestically and in how Ukraine interacts internationally. Ukrainian President Zelensky said, "If [Putin] could arrange another Holodomor for Ukraine, he would do it."¹⁴¹ During the electric blackouts brought about by Russian bombings, Zelensky referenced Holodomor: "Once they wanted to destroy us with hunger, now—with darkness and cold."¹⁴² Roman Leshchenko, Ukraine's minister of agriculture in early 2022, stated Russia "[was] trying to weaponize mass hunger, like Stalin did in the 1930s... for the second time Russia is trying to inflict [starvation] on Ukraine in our living memory."¹⁴³ Comments like these from Ukrainian government officials highlight the use of Holodomor parallels to emphasize the importance of the present-day Russia-Ukraine conflict and rally Ukrainian popular support.

As such, the relevance of Holodomor in a post-invasion Ukraine underscores the national, political motive of recognition. Historical memory is significant in nation-building, with history and historical events being one of the elements that contribute to the "imagined community" of

¹⁴¹ Kateryna Tyshchenko, "Zelenskyy: Putin would subject Ukraine to another Holodomor famine if he could." *Ukrainska Pravda*. November 25, 2023. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2023/11/25/7430353>.

¹⁴² Marc Santora and Cassandra Vinograd, "Ukraine Draws Parallels Between Holodomor and Russia's Strikes," *The New York Times*, November 26, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/26/world/europe/ukraine-war-holodomor-strikes.html>.

¹⁴³ Wax, "The starvation of a nation: Putin uses hunger as a weapon in Ukraine."

a nation.¹⁴⁴ Historical memory of destruction remains consequential for generations and plays a role in defining the nation. In the case of Ukraine, the repeated references to Ukrainian identity in the recognition and the call-backs to the Holodomor in rallying support in the war both present the Holodomor as a significant cultural memory in the Ukrainian nation. As such, the primary political motivation for Ukrainian recognition is rooted in support for the Ukrainian nation.

Russia actively denies Holodomor was a genocide. This is not a new stance by Russia, but is of renewed significance in the war context. Russian Holodomor denial serves as political damage control in the face of a new wave of Holodomor recognition. Vladimir Putin, while describing the history of Russian-Ukrainian relations, describes the famines as a “common tragedy” of the Soviet Union.¹⁴⁵ This conception obviously dodges that claims of genocide perpetration to the political benefit of Russia. Interestingly, Putin himself actually recognizes nationalist motivations for recognition, noting that Ukraine sought to “justify” independence.¹⁴⁶ While this research does uphold this claim to an extent, Putin goes further to deny the famine. He describes recognition as “denial of the past” and claims Ukrainians “mythologize and rewrite history.”¹⁴⁷ By upholding Russian starvation under the famine and rejecting the Ukraine-specific interpretation, Putin similarly uses the famine to affirm historical suffering of his nation.

Russia has responded negatively to international recognition of the genocide. After France officially called Holodomor a genocide, the Russian Embassy in Paris stated France was attempting to “rewrite history and instrumentalise past events for perfidious political purposes.”¹⁴⁸ The United Kingdom, Italy, and Germany received similar condemnations by

¹⁴⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition (London: Verso, 2006).

¹⁴⁵ Vladimir Putin, “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians,” Russian Presidential Library, 2022, <https://www.prlib.ru/en/article-vladimir-putin-historical-unity-russians-and-ukrainians>.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Davide Basso, “Russia slams French parliament for calling Holodomor ‘genocide,’” *Euractiv*, May 18, 2023, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/russia-slams-french-parliament-for-calling-holodomor-genocide>.

Russia. Embassies claimed British recognition was “an exclusively political step that has no bearing on historical facts.”¹⁴⁹ The embassy called Italian recognition “propaganda,” and to the Germans, the embassy called it an attempt to “demonize Russia.”¹⁵⁰ The Russian government has made similar statements to non-European recognition of the Holodomor: the embassy in the United States called American recognition a “false thesis” and called for Americans to recognize “the key role that the West played” in the Holodomor, and the embassy in Israel called draft recognition “distorting history” and encouraged rejection of the draft.¹⁵¹

A common theme in Russian denial of the Holodomor and Russian justifications for war in Ukraine center around the political dangers of the West. The Russian embassies in Italy and Germany both referenced “neo-Nazi and Russophobic forces” encouraging Holodomor recognition.¹⁵² The Nazi claim is significant in the context of Ukrainian nationalist Nazi collaboration. In Italy, the embassy described the Holodomor “myth” used “to please... Anglo-American masters.”¹⁵³ By articulating Holodomor recognition as a false Western narrative, Russia aims to delegitimize Holodomor recognition as a politically viable stance.

Russia claims recognition of the Holodomor is politically motivated, but Holodomor denial is equally politically motivated. Condemnations of official recognition refers to neo-Naziism and the West, clearly situating Holodomor denial as a pro-Russian and anti-Western

¹⁴⁹ “Russian embassy slams British lower house’s politicized vote on Holodomor,” *Tass*, May 26, 2023, <https://tass.com/politics/1623707>.

¹⁵⁰ “Moscow attempts to interfere with Italian Senate Holodomor vote,” *Decode39*, July 26, 2023, <https://decode39.com/7400/moscow-attempts-interfere-italian-senate-holodomor>; “Moscow Says Berlin Tried to ‘Demonize Russia’ with Famine Ruling.” *The Moscow Times*, December 1, 2022. <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/12/01/moscow-says-berlin-tried-to-demonize-russia-with-famine-ruling-a79559>.

¹⁵¹ “Comment by the Russian Embassy in the United States,” *Embassy of the Russian Federation in the USA*, November 25, 2023, https://washington.mid.ru/en/press-centre/news/comment_by_the_russian_embassy_in_the_united_states_agr; “Russian embassy slams British lower house’s politicized vote on Holodomor,” *Tass*.

¹⁵² “Moscow attempts to interfere with Italian Senate Holodomor vote,” *Decode39*; “Moscow Says Berlin Tried to ‘Demonize Russia’ with Famine Ruling.” *The Moscow Times*.

¹⁵³ *Ibid*.

stance. This political positioning supports other overall evidence that recognition is a more pro-Western political stance while denial is a more anti-Western stance.

Financial Aid to Ukraine and Holodomor Recognition

All members of the EU provided financial aid to Ukraine after the Russian invasion. This aid, represented in Table 4 as percentage of GDP, includes both aid through the EU and through bilateral treaties.¹⁵⁴ Chart 1 depicts a graphical representation of bilateral aid by countries that do and do not sovereignly recognize Holodomor as a genocide.

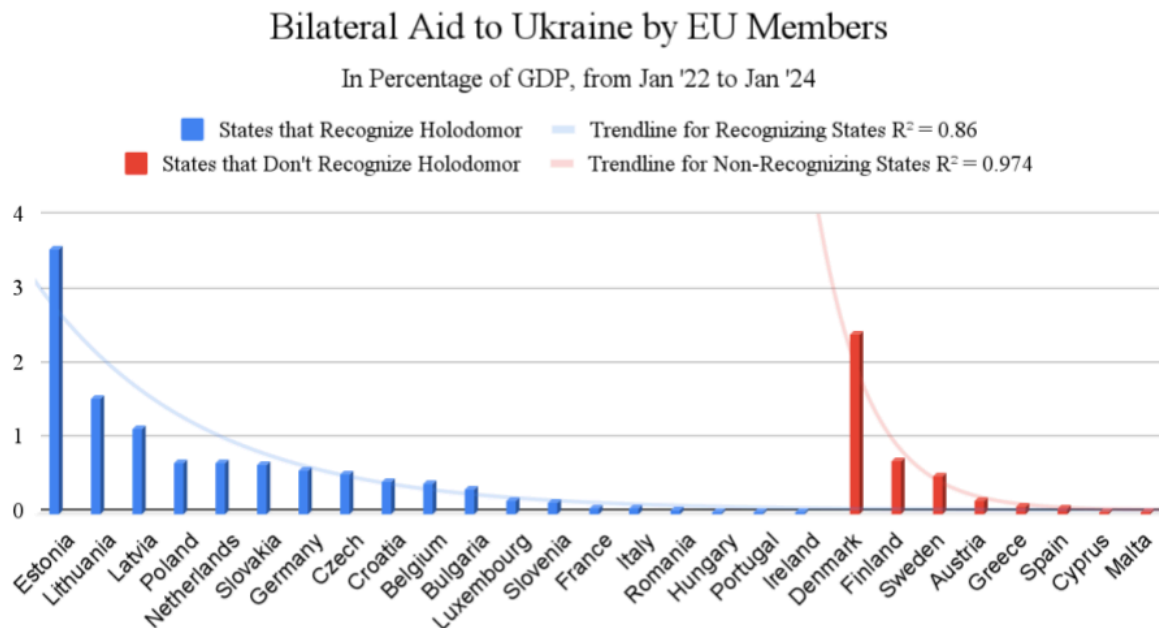
Overall, there is not a statistically significant correlation between bilateral financial aid to Ukraine and Holodomor recognition. As seen in Chart 1, both recognizing and non-recognizing states have provided aid, and the regression models are both exponential decay lines. Overall, this lack of correlation exists because collective security in Europe is a greater priority. It is true that the EU and certain member states use Holodomor recognition as a political justification to provide Ukrainian aid. However, Russia's war of aggression is interpreted by the majority of European states to be a clear threat, regardless of their affinity towards Ukraine. Broadly, the quantitative analysis leads me to conclude that Holodomor recognition is a tool in supporting Ukraine, but it is not as significant in European geopolitics as literal financial support. Thus, all EU states contribute to the protection of Ukraine financially, but not all go as far as to independently recognize Holodomor.

Of note, the four biggest contributors of financial aid who recognize Holodomor as a genocide are Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, and Poland. These states are all former Warsaw Pact members who have a history of Soviet oppression and recognized Holodomor pre-invasion.

¹⁵⁴ Kiel Institute for World Economy, "Government support to Ukraine: By donor country GDP, incl. and excl. EU share," *Ukraine Support Tracker*, January 15, 2024, <https://www.ifw-kiel.de/topics/war-against-ukraine/ukraine-support-tracker>.

Table 4: EU Financial Aid to Ukraine (Jan '22 to Jan '24) and Holodomor Recognition

State	Bilateral Aid (% GDP)	EU Aid (% GDP)	Total Aid (% GDP)	Holodomor Recognition
Austria	0.18	0.62	0.80	
Belgium	0.41	0.61	1.02	2023
Bulgaria	0.32	0.73	1.05	2023
Croatia	0.44	0.62	1.06	2023
Cyprus	0.02	0.56	0.58	
Czech Republic	0.52	0.53	1.05	2022
Denmark	2.41	0.65	3.06	
Estonia	3.55	0.54	4.09	1993
Finland	0.71	0.58	1.29	
France	0.07	0.59	0.66	2023
Germany	0.57	0.49	1.06	2022
Greece	0.09	0.68	0.77	
Hungary	0.03	0.65	0.68	2003
Ireland	0.03	0.40	0.43	2022
Italy	0.07	0.60	0.67	2023
Latvia	1.15	0.52	1.67	2008
Lithuania	1.54	0.50	2.04	2008
Luxembourg	0.17	0.38	0.55	2023
Malta	0.01	0.49	0.50	
Netherlands	0.67	0.78	1.45	2023
Poland	0.69	0.63	1.32	2006
Portugal	0.03	0.58	0.61	2017
Romania	0.05	0.58	0.63	2022
Slovakia	0.65	0.79	1.44	2023
Slovenia	0.14	0.59	0.73	2023
Spain	0.07	0.83	0.90	
Sweden	0.51	0.54	1.05	

Chart 1: Bilateral Aid to Ukraine by EU Members

The political correlation is clear: these states have a history of pro-Ukrainian policies since independence, and Ukrainian financial aid fits within this foreign policy. Thus, while some states may have further political motives for financially supporting Ukraine, this is not the case for all.

Overall, Ukrainian allies have an undoubtedly political motivation to recognize Holodomor as a genocide. It strengthens the decision to provide wartime financial aid to Ukraine and demonstrates a sense of allyship to the state. However, the desire to support Ukraine is not the only political goal in play. European states also are concerned with their own security in the presence of continental warfare. Thus, while many states have taken steps to acknowledge Holodomor, even those who have not remain Ukrainian allies.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This research was guided by the question of how international political interest influences European recognition of Holodomor as a genocide. I analyzed the government policies by Ukraine and the Baltic Assembly and concluded that these states had a national impetus to recognize Holodomor. Their statements did not completely address the nuances of the Holodomor genocide debate, and I found them particularly lacking in addressing the ambiguity of Soviet genocidal intent. However, they revealed a strong political condemnation of the Soviet Union and of modern-day Russia. Among the former Warsaw Pact states, I found statistically significant correlation between Holodomor recognition and pursuit of NATO membership, again underscoring the political impetus of recognition. Among EU member states, I found a much clearer articulation of genocidal intent. However, even these states had a strong political motivation behind recognition. In particular, the analyzed documents all connected genocide recognition with the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. As such, I conclude that political interest is a significant factor in recognition of Holodomor.

Such a conclusion prompts two contradictory interpretations. Supporters of the genocide classification may take away that politicization limits recognition of genocides. Besides Holodomor, other genocides also face denialism. The Armenian Genocide, the Rwandan Genocide, and even the Holocaust all face denial by individuals and states despite being widely documented, prototypical genocides. During the Rwandan Genocide, American State Department spokesperson, Christine Shelly, notoriously claimed Rwanda had “acts of genocide” instead of genocide in order to avoid an American obligation to intervene.¹⁵⁵ The Irish Potato

¹⁵⁵ Samantha Power, “Bystanders to Genocide,” *The Atlantic*, September 2001, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2001/09/bystanders-to-genocide/304571>.

Famine follows a similar fact pattern to Holodomor, yet only Holodomor has received international genocide recognition, leading supporters to question if Holodomor has only received recognition due to the West's worse relations with Russia as opposed to the United Kingdom. In these circumstances, the politicization of genocide recognition perpetuates harm against legitimate victims. On the other hand, those who reject the genocide classification may take away that politicization leads to recognition of events that are not actually genocides. Examples of such misappropriation of genocide include the abortion debate and the We Charge Genocide paper, which claimed that black people were victims of genocide in the United States due to systemic discrimination such as slavery.¹⁵⁶ Evidently, there must be space for both of these viewpoints in the conversation. However, on both sides, the politicization of genocide recognition demonstrates genuine limitations.

The primary limitation is remarkably dreary: the politicization of genocide recognition may diminish the strength of the term in international affairs. What was meant to be a poignant and striking term now may be perceived by some as merely a political buzzword. Despite the best attempts by the UN to define genocide in clear, legal language, the term still is interpreted in a largely subjective manner at the will of states, especially world powers.

Despite these limitations, recognition also brings about some significant merits. This research supports the use of genocide recognition to affirm national identity. The severity of genocide and its evocation of the historical memory of the Holocaust sets a precedent for victims groups to receive reparations. The severity of the Holocaust "set the parameters for what other

¹⁵⁶ Nicola Beisel and Sarah Lipton-Lubet, "Appropriating Auschwitz: the Holocaust as Analogy and Provocation in the Pro-Life Movement," *American Sociological Association*.
<https://www.asanet.org/wp-content/uploads/savvy/sectionchs/documents/beisel.pdf>; Civil Rights Congress, "We Charge Genocide," 1951,
<https://ia800500.us.archive.org/30/items/We-Charge-Genocide-1970/We-Charge-Genocide-1970.pdf>.

groups felt they could reasonably demand.”¹⁵⁷ Sovereignty, reparations, and dominance of the historical narrative serve to protect and promote the national interests of groups that have experienced genocide. In the case of Holodomor, genocide recognition came with domestic and international legitimization of the Ukrainian historical narrative. Such an assertion was undoubtedly significant for Ukraine and other former Soviet SSRs following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. As such, the use of genocide recognition to uphold national historical narratives cannot be overstated.

Similarly, genocide recognition may serve as a precedent to move forward with prosecution, financial aid, or other policies that support victims and condemn perpetrators. As seen in the cases of Ukrainian allies, the recognition of genocide is directly associated with increased aid in the war with Russia. In the construction of laws, preambulatory clauses serve to contextualize and justify the policies evoked by operative clauses. Within the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the implications for Holodomor recognition are more profound in how they set a precedent of Russian violence against Ukraine. In other words, the recognition upholds financial aid for Ukraine as legitimate because Ukraine is a repeated victim. During the war in Ukraine since 2022, Russia has faced accusations of genocide and war crimes. News articles refer to the allegedly “pre-planned” starvation of Ukraine during the invasion, with Paul Grod, the President of the Ukrainian World Congress, going so far as to say that “Putin wants to complete Stalin’s unfinished genocide.”¹⁵⁸ Therefore, recognition of the victimization of a nation can serve to justify positive international relations between two allies.

¹⁵⁷ David MacDonald, *Identity politics in the age of genocide: The Holocaust and historical representation* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008): 29.

¹⁵⁸ Arpan Rai, “Putin could face new war crime case as evidence suggests starvation of Ukraine was pre-planned,” *The Independent*, November 16, 2023, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/putin-grain-theft-ukraine-russia-latest-b2447644.html>; Paul Grod, “Opinion: Putin wants to complete Stalin’s unfinished genocide in Ukraine,” *Kyiv Independent*, November 24, 2024, <https://kyivindependent.com/opinion-putin-wants-to-complete-stalins-unfinished-genocide-in-ukraine>.

This leaves us with one final question, one that cannot be answered by this paper alone: if genocide becomes a matter of politics instead of a matter of morality and law, does it serve a continued use in international affairs? Why not use other, less politicized crimes, such as crimes against humanity? Further research on this topic is necessary. In particular, we—the international community—must continue to evaluate the language and laws we use in order to serve victims of international violence instead of politics. I believe that the term genocide may very well maintain a relevant place in international law, so long as those who use the term closely examine historical fact, legal language, and political biases.

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