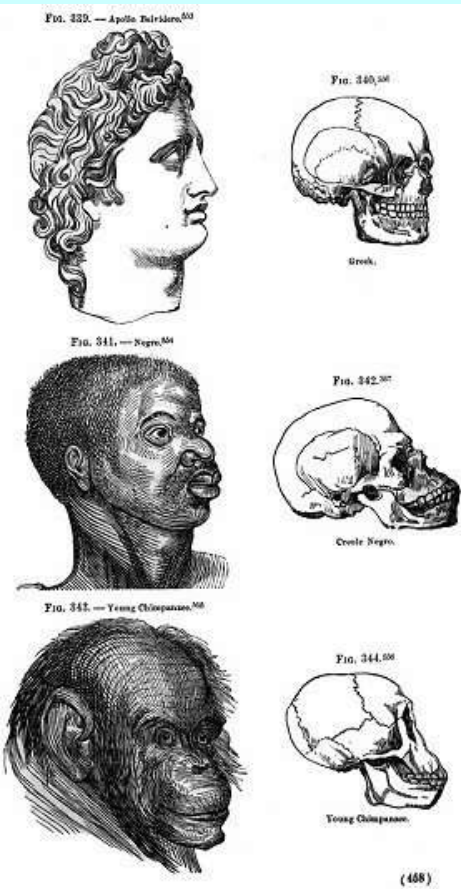


# **Delegitimization in Conflicts: Ideological Description, Explanation and Justification of Violence in Conflicts**

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# Delegitimization in General



# Definition of Delegitimization

***“Categorization of a group or groups into extremely negative social categories that exclude it or them from the sphere of human groups that act within the limits of acceptable norms and/or values, since these groups are viewed as violating basic human norms or values”.***

Moral exclusion (Opotow, 1990)

Denial of humanity (Schwartz & Struch, 1989)

Delegitimization is a cultural-societal phenomenon

# Types of Delegitimization

(Bar-Tal, 1989)

- **Dehumanization** (use of subhuman epithets, demonizing expressions, biological/zoological/medical terms or mechanistic labels)
- **Out-casting**
- **Very negative trait characterization**
- **Political labeling**
- **Group comparison**
- **Use of the term “enemy”**

# Implications of Delegitimization

- Denies humanity.
- Provides rigid, persistent and durable category.
- Homogenizes the delegitimized group as one entity.
- Is part of a wide scope *psychological intergroup repertoire* (other beliefs like collective memory, attitudes, affect, emotions).
- Is regulated and maintained by social norms.
- Has important behavioral implications for the delegitimizing and the delegitimized group.

# **Conditions for the Development of Delegitimization**

**Delegitimization develops under two conditions which are not necessarily mutually exclusive:**

- 1. a situation of extreme ethnocentrism**
- 2. a situation of vicious and severe lasting intergroup conflict.**

**Delegitimization almost always develops as part of an ideology.**

- **Delegitimization is often based on experiences of realistic and/or symbolic threat.**
- **Delegitimization develops towards an outgroup that is very relevant to the life of the ingroup- has influence on the well being of the ingroup and/or the intergroup relations.**

# Delegitimization as an Ideology

- **System of description-** delegitimization provides knowledge about the other group—such as its roots, characteristics, values, morality, intentions, and practices.
- **System of explanation--** delegitimization clarifies the causes and the context of the particular relations between the delegitimized and delegitimizing groups, including the reasons for the delegitimization.
- **System of justification-** delegitimization legitimizes the nature of relations between the delegitimized and delegitimizing groups and the behaviors that the delegitimizing group is performing in this relationship.



# **Delegitimization in the Context of Conflict**

# Examples of Delegitimization

## Rwanda Conflict

### Hutu on Tutsi

- “We began by saying that a cockroach cannot give birth to a butterfly. It is true. A cockroach gives birth to another cockroach ... The history of Rwanda shows us clearly that a Tutsi stays always exactly the same, that he has never changed ". (March 1993, newspaper *Kangura*, Des Forges, 1999, pp. 73-74).

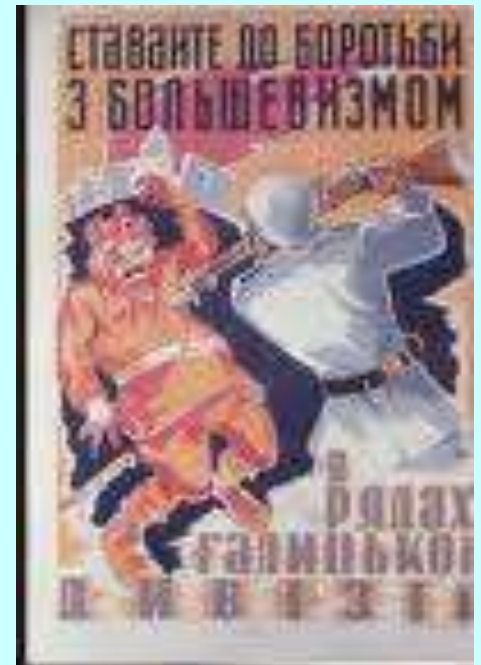
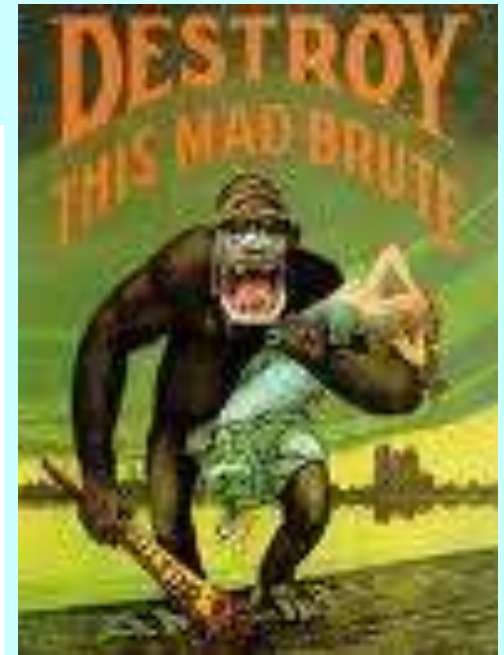
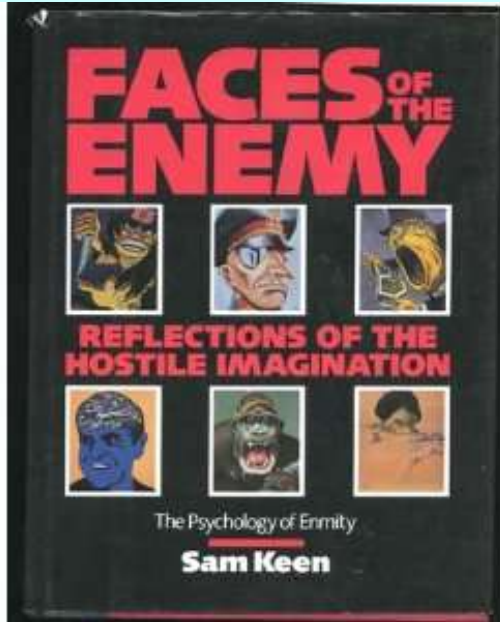
## Northern Ireland Conflict

### Protestants on Catholics

- “lazy, priest-ridden, untidy and potentially treacherous” (Cecil, 1993, p.152),

### Catholics on Protestants

- “bigoted, mean, and lacking in culture” (Cecil, 1993, p.152).



# **Delegitimization in Conflicts**

- Delegitimization develops in violent and severe conflicts.**
- Delegitimization is inseparable part of the repertoire that evolves in societies involved intractable conflict.**
- Delegitimization is part of intergroup very negative repertoire towards the rival that includes also mistrust, hatred, and animosity. It should be seen as part of hostility syndrome, playing in it a central role.**

# **Delegitimization in Conflicts**

- **Delegitimization is an essential part of ethos of conflict and collective memory of conflict that both serve as an ideology of conflict and eventually provide the contents for the development of the culture of conflict.**
- **Delegitimization develops together with the following other important themes of ethos of conflict and collective memory of conflict: justness in own goals, collective self victimhood and self collective glorification.**

# Functions of Delegitimization

- **It fulfills the epistemic function of illuminating different aspects of the conflict situation.**
- **It justifies the violence and destruction inflicted on the adversary by the delegitimizing group.**
- **It reflects the shared reality for group members: a common fate, provides important content for the societal repertoire, and reaffirms identification with the group.**
- **It creates a sense of differentiation and superiority**

- **It serves as motivator for mobilization.**
- **It motivates for action (revenge and prevention).**

# Delegitimization in Culture of Conflict

- **Extensive sharing.** The delegitimizing beliefs are widely shared by society members.
- **Wide use.** Delegitimizing beliefs are also actively used (e.g., speeches of leaders, ceremonies) in public discourse for various purposes.
- **Expression in cultural products.** They are also expressed in cultural products such as films, TV programs, books, theatrical plays, etc.
- **Appearance in educational materials.** Delegitimizing beliefs appear in the textbooks used in schools as part of the socialization process.



# Consequences of Delegitimization

## View of the conflict

### Sensitivity

- The delegitimizing beliefs direct attention to particular type of information.
- The delegitimizing beliefs provide basis for expectations.

### Selective and biased information-processing

- The delegitimizing beliefs serve as a basis for encoding the incoming information.
- The delegitimizing beliefs serve as a basis for evaluating and interpreting the incoming information about the conflict and particularly about the rival group.
- The delegitimizing beliefs serve as a basis for remembering a confirming information.

- **Sense of being a victim, egocentrism and lack of empathy**
- **Pressure toward Conformity**
- **Freedom of action**
- **Rationalization and justification of own immoral acts**
- **Reduction of group-based guilt**

# Reducing Delegitimization

- Reducing delegitimization is a societal change
- The goal is to increase the circles of society members who cease to delegitimize and begin to **legitimize, equalize, differentiate and personalize** members of the rival group.
- **Legitimization** allows viewing the opponent as belonging to an acceptable category of groups, with whom it is possible and even desired to terminate the conflict and construct positive relations.

- **Equalization** turns the rival into an **equal** partner with whom it is possible to establish new relations.
- **Differentiation** leads to heterogenization of the rival group, which implies that the rival is made up out of various subgroups, which differ in their views and ideologies.
- **Personalization** allows to view the rival group not as depersonalized entity, but as made up out of individuals with ordinary human characteristics, concerns, needs, and goals.

# Obstacles

1. Difficulty to change the course after years of indoctrination and massive socialization towards delegitimization
2. The context is still confirming the delegitimizing view as the violence often continues.
3. Powerful groups of spoilers are active.
4. The rival is also not unanimously supporting peace but there are spoilers on his side as well.

# Phases of Peace Making

- 1. Emergence of the idea (including legitimization of the rival)
- 2. Legitimization
- 3. Institutionalization
- 4. Conflict resolution
- 5. Reconciliation

# Principles

- 1. There is need to use contents and ways that **legitimize, equalize, differentiate and personalize as a goal.**
- 2. In most of the cases it has to go with changing the goals of the conflict.
- 3. It is a very long process that needs persistence
- 4. It has to have coordination with the past rival.
- 5. It has to go from bottom up and top down

- 6. There is need to work in accordance to phases
- 7. There is need to deal with the past especially if it involved violence, atrocities, etc (apologizing, forgiving).
- 8. Different contents have to be used in the campaign.
- 9. There is need to use contents that are related to culture and touch on symbols.
- 10. Different techniques have to be used.



- 11. Different media have to be used—films, literature, mass media
- 12. There is need to use epistemic authorities.
- 13, There is need to use help of a third party and the international community
- 14. There is need to take into account that there will be violent events.
- 15. There is need to take into account that spoilers will try to counter the efforts.

# Thank You

