Revolutionary and Antirevolutionary Genocides: A Comparison of State Murders in Democratic Kampuchea, 1975 to 1979, and in Indonesia, 1965 to 1966

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Revolutionary ideologies of both the left and the right have led to genocide and mass murders of unprecedented scope in this century. The survey by Harff and Gurr shows that genocides and politicides—killings of people in groups targeted because of organized political opposition—between 1945 and 1980 may have caused in this same period over twice as many deaths than wars. Such state killings claimed up to 2.6 times the number of lives lost in the aftermath of natural disasters between 1967 and 1986 (1987). ¹ Similarly, Rummel argues that four times as many people have been killed in democides, or state mass murders, of citizens in the twentieth century than have been killed in wars (1992).

Harff and Gurr’s survey shows that revolutionary (communist) and praetorian (military) regimes, in that order, are the most likely since 1945 to commit genocide and politicide (1988). In a study of genocide after 1945 in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East—regions in which the great majority of genocides have occurred—I found that although both communist and other authoritarian states (most of which are military-led regimes) have committed genocide in the last forty years, when we take into account the number of states in each category, we find that communist states (36 percent of which

¹ This is my calculation based on reccompiling their figures to assess victims from each cause for the same period of time.
committed genocide), were 4.5 times more likely to have committed genocide and politicide than other authoritarian states (8 percent of which committed genocide) (Fein 1993a). None of the eight stable democracies in these regions were perpetrators. Rummel’s survey of the twentieth century similarly shows that eight of ten of the most infamous killers were communist and fascist states (1992).

The justifications are, however, different. In communist states, murders are justified in the name of the revolution; while in anti-communist states such murders are justified in terms of the need for homogeneity or ethnic purity and as a defense against revolutionaries. This is not surprising. Arendt first related genocide to the concept of totalitarianism in her explanation of the origins of the Final Solution (1966). But the classic concepts of totalitarianism, communism, and fascism are ideal-types based on the experience of the inter-war years in Europe. Major communist states have evolved from the totalitarian archetype, and new types of states have emerged with many, but not all, characteristics of communist and fascist totalitarian states since World War II: e.g., socialistic states in underdeveloped regions; Islamic fundamentalist states; praetorian regimes based on right-wing authoritarianism; and, most recently, ethnic-based authoritarian states in the Balkans. Such states display many of the characteristics of fascism and have generated similarly deadly effects.

However, while totalitarian states have been more likely to commit genocide than are other states, most cases of contemporary genocide since World War II were committed by authoritarian, not totalitarian, states and are not ascribable to ideology. Ten of thirteen cases of genocide between 1945 and 1988 in the regions surveyed were related to ethnic stratification rather than ideology (Fein 1993a). The most common pattern was that a high level of political discrimination or exclusion of a suppressed ethnoclass led to their rebellion which instigated the governing ethnoclass elite to respond with genocide (in half the cases) or other massacres or repression (in the other half).

In order to probe a more general theory of genocide, we focus on two cases in which governments (or parts thereof) actually labelled as enemies a large part of their citizens who were not otherwise differentiated from the perpetrators by any ethnic, racial, religious, or national identity. This should enable us to consider the usefulness of such a general explanation beyond the aims and precipitants of particular forms of genocide.

The cases under consideration may be labelled as ideological genocides. ²

² Ideological genocide is one of four types I distinguish from retributive, developmental, and despotic genocides. Similar divisions are made by Smith and Chalk and Jonassohn (Fein 1993b:28–29). Chalk and Jonassohn distinguish such state-sponsored massacres (as Cambodia) intended 1) "to implement a belief, ideology or theory" from genocides 2) "to eliminate a real or potential threat," or 3) "to acquire economic wealth" or 4) "to spread terror among real or potential enemies" (1990:29).
Ideological genocides, perhaps a unique twentieth-century innovation, are cases in which the state redefines society by eliminating people in order to correspond to its political formula, its representation of itself, and to legitimize the state. The two cases of this type which have been most often studied and compared are the Holocaust and the Armenian genocide (Fein 1979; Melson 1992; Mazian 1990; Dekmajian 1986; see also Fein 1993b:69–75). In both cases, the victims were discriminated from the perpetrators by longstanding religious and ethnic divisions.

We may better understand the origin of ideological genocide and the general determinants of genocide, especially genocides not related to pre-existing ethnic discrimination and exclusion by focusing on two superficially dissimilar cases which were justified by contrary ideologies and goals: to implement a communist utopia and to counter a present or future rise to power of a communist party. We shall examine commonalities—and differences—between the two cases in the same region within related time periods: the murder of an estimated million communists in Indonesia (1965–66) and of about two million Cambodians under the Khmer Rouge (1975–79).

But, some may ask, was either event actually a genocide? Did the United Nations Genocide Convention clearly apply to the mass murders in either situation? The victims’ deaths often were the direct or indirect result of class status (in Cambodia) and political group identity (Parti Kommunis Indonesia, or the Communist Party in Indonesia), but neither social class nor political groups are specified under Article II of the United Nations’ convention (UNGCR), which defines genocide 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 . . . , including a) killing members of the group; b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”

However, many social scientists apply the concept of genocide to all non-violent groups massacred by the state (see Fein 1993b:12–13). Some legal scholars have made charges of genocide when regimes destroyed a significant portion of their population on political grounds or intentionally destroyed a national group in part. Such regimes include the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia (Hannum and Hawk 1986:140–46) and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan (Reisman and Norchi 1988). My redefinition of genocide generalizes the characteristics of protected groups but is otherwise consonant with the terms of the UNGC: “Genocide is sustained purposeful action by a perpetrator to physically destroy a collectivity directly or indirectly, through interdiction of the biological and social reproduction of group members, sustained regardless of the surrender or lack of threat offered by the victim” (Fein 1993b:24).
Using this definition, both the Indonesian and Cambodian cases are instances of genocide. Other scholars consider the Indonesian case an instance of "genocidal massacre" (Kuper 1981) or a mixture of politicide and genocide (Harff and Gurr 1987).

To begin, I developed in 1982 an open-ended explanation aimed to cover all types of genocide and specified a variety of precipitants. Genocide is the calculated murder of a segment or all of a group defined outside of the universe of the perpetrator by a government, elite, staff or crowd representing the perpetrator in response to a crisis or opportunity perceived to be caused or impeded by the victim. Crises and opportunities may be a result of war, challenges to the structure of domination, the threat of internal breakdown or social revolution and economic development. . . . Motives may be ideological, economic, and/or political. . . . Genocides, as are other murders, may be premeditated or an ad hoc response to a problem or opportunity (Fein 1993b:36–37).

We can simplify and unpack the elements of this explanation (indicated by italics) so that we may later evaluate how well they fit the cases considered:

1) **Moral exclusion.** The victim, defined outside the universe of obligation of the perpetrator (see also Fein 1979:ch. 1), is thus excluded on the basis of a religious doctrine or ideology;

2) **Legitimacy problem.** Pre-existing legitimacy and solidarity problems lead to the acceptance of ideologies justifying the domination of one group;

3) **Blaming the victim.** A crisis or opportunity emerges which either is caused by or attributed to the victim or leads people to view the victim as inhibiting national or economic improvement or expansion; and

4) **Patrons' tolerance.** Because of the lack of checks by great powers and other patrons, genocide comes to be viewed as cost-free, making it a rational calculation in terms of costs and benefits.

Further, I sought to answer the following questions without precluding discoveries in the course of study which might enrich the explanation. How does ideology incorporate preexisting prejudices, as well as religious and national sentiments? How do social structures and religious and political cultures provide justifications for people to murder their fellow-citizens? What preceding conditions lead to murderous elites assuming power?

Before comparing cases, I shall briefly summarize both cases, including the events which preceded the perpetrators' rise to power and facts which have led scholars to make a prima facie case for genocide.

**The Background of the Genocides**

**Indonesia**

By the late summer of 1965, both Indonesians and foreigners reported a growing public mood of high tension. "Foreign observers in Indonesia at this time were struck by the atmosphere of crisis, bordering on hysteria, that
prevailed" (Mortimer 1974:387; see also Hughes 1967:12–16; Crouch 1988:94–96).

The tension was the result of both extraordinary events and everyday difficulties. Prices had continued to rise. Inflation had increased by 100 percent each year between 1961 and 1964 (Hefner 1990:201). Xenophobia was stirred by mass mobilization against enemies of the state: Malaysia without and suspect plotters within the state. Rumours also magnified fears generated by the illness and possible impending death of President Sukarno.

Sukarno’s charismatic presence both legitimated his Guided Democracy and was the force joining disparate and rival elements of the national coalition: The PKI, the communist party (which had gained much popular support in the late 1950s), the military, and the Muslim and nationalist organizations were allegedly united by a series of verbal formulas—Pantjasila or the Five Magic Charms of the Revolution—the 1945 constitution, socialism, guided democracy, guided economy, and Indonesian personality (Crouch 1988:43–44). In the last six years (1959–65), Sukarno had begun to lean increasingly toward China and had legitimated the political alliance with the PKI, the leading party in terms of members (an estimated three million) and membership in allied organizations (over twenty million) but not in terms of political representation (Mortimer 1974:364–67).

His death was expected to dissolve the adhesion of the coalition and to precipitate a bid for power by one side. Partisans of all sides in Jakarta expected a coup by either the military or the PKI in the late summer of 1965. Not only did nothing work, but belief in the legitimacy of Sukarno’s plan for Guided Democracy, which attempted to eliminate party competition, was fading. The myth of the revolution, which identified members of the military as the founders of the Indonesian state, was increasingly stretched by conflicting group interests and ends. Further, the state was near bankruptcy. Foreign policy interventions, such as the Malaysian war (which the military had originally opposed) and Sukarno’s bid to head a new coalition outside the United Nations of the new emerging forces were used to stir domestic xenophobic and nationalist sentiment. Mass rallies temporarily unified Indonesians by arousing collective excitement.

The military viewed with concern Sukarno’s plans for a Fifth Force, which would give workers and peasants small arms, thus challenging the military’s monopoly of force. In addition, the United States considered whether it should stop its aid. Its policy planners viewed Sukarno as antagonistic to American interests because he had closed down the United States Information Agency library in Jakarta in February 1965—and provocative because officially instigated crowds had attacked the British Embassy. These policy planners also considered the most effective means of counteracting the increasing influence of communists in Indonesia (Bunnell 1990).

Although there was no revolution in 1965 in Indonesia, one could say there
was an antirevolutionary purge (such as occurred in the Vendée after the French revolution) or a counter-revolution. "In effect (I am not arguing that this was consciously intended), the state allied with the rural landowners to bring about a counterrevolution—ensuring that the process of concentration of land-holdings and capitalization of farming would not be obstructed by reformist movements" (Robison 1981:133).

It is true, as Hefner (1990) argues, that there were multiple bases of cleavage and regional variations between perpetrators and victims. Although I hold a Weberian bias (as does Hefner), this is compatible with a class-based explanation (or power or status-group explanation) when that best fits the facts of a specific case. Just on the grounds of theoretic plausibility, Robison's interpretation accounts for one major outcome: If one looks at which Indonesians benefited from the repression of the communist party, such repression appears rational from a class-oriented point of view. However, the United States' interest—as conceived by its strategists and officials at the time—was also a winner, indicating that the massacre and purge could also be considered rational from the point of view of a world power. The massacres, the seedbed for the counter-revolution, reoriented class relations in Indonesia, assured continuing military domination by removing communist and populist challengers, and reversed Indonesia's role in the Cold War alignment of states. So their consequences or function was counterrevolutionary irrespective of the absence of a revolution. Like many functional explanations, this does not account for the variety of motives of the participants at the time or the differences between their self-understanding then and their subsequent explanations (which are sparse because of the suppression of discussion of these events).

The counter-revolution emerged from the military countercoup (termed Gestok) which was a response to the military coup (termed Gestapu) of September 30, 1965, which led to the murders of six generals by those leading the coup and, according to rumour, the mutilation of their bodies. In Central Java, troops loyal to the coup leaders took command of five of seven infantry battalions and local revolutionary committees were established. Two officers were abducted and killed by the rebels there (Crouch 1988:100–1).

However, the first coup (October 1, 1965) was, according to the declaration of its leaders, a reaction or counter-coup to an anticipated coup by the Council of Generals instigated by the United States' Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Analysts do not agree as to which party was primarily responsible for staging the coup and recruiting performers or dupes. The leading candidate for staging the coup is the PKI, which used junior army officers as dupes with or without the encouragement or complicity of President Sukarno (Brackman 1969; CIA 1968). Although governments and journalists in the west generally accept this theory, scholars of Indonesian affairs are divided over the complete explanation and attribution of responsibility for these events. Other versions
view the coup either as a revolt by lower-level officers because of unresolved grievances within the army (Anderson and McVey 1971), or a plan by a double agent to trigger the destruction of the PKI, or a coup initiated by President Sukarno. Another, more prudent, resolution is to conclude there was no one motive but a confluence of motives joining the army rebels, the PKI, and Sukarno to instigate and support the coup (Hughes 1967:114–5; Crouch 1988:101–22).

Indeed, which act was the coup and which the counter-coup depends on whose political reading one accepts. The publicly perceived role of the PKI and the Gestok response to popular demands for vengeance (Hughes 1967:133–8) resulted in a violent social and political upheaval, leading to the delegitimization of President Sukarno and his replacement by General Suharto in 1966, the restructuring of the political system, and the reorientation of patterns of authority and obedience in Indonesia.

The mass killing of alleged and suspected communists was authorized by the new army leadership under General Suharto in Jakarta which took effective control of the army away from President Sukarno. In general, PKI activists were on the defensive or in hiding. Only one area (around the city of Solo) reported counter-reprisals by the PKI, in which government reports estimate that 200 to 369 anticomunist party leaders were killed (Crouch 1988:150). The organized slaughter, when directly led by the army, was combined with a sifting process in which PKI passive supporters were detained in camps and jails. The estimated number of people killed ranges from 78,000 to 2,000,000, although most are from 500,000 to 1,000,000 (Crouch 1988:155; Hughes 1967:185; Cribb 1990:7–12). However an official, though never published, Indonesian government study confirmed the latter figure.

The only serious attempt to calculate the number killed on the basis of direct evidence was a survey conducted apparently by KOPKAMTIB [Operational Command for the Restoration of Security and Order] using 150 “university graduates” in 1966 and made selectively available to various Western journalists and academics. This report . . . concluded that around one million people died, 800,000 of them in Central and East Java, 100,000 each in Bali and Sumatra. The reported scope of the investigation suggests that it was a genuine attempt to obtain reliable figures, but its conclusions cannot be accepted with any certainty (Cribb 1990:8).

Cribb observes the potentiality for many causes of overreporting; e.g., aggregates of local reports may count the same bodies floating down the river several times. However, what is notable about the study is its lack of denial or shame. Clearly, the survey body did not anticipate censure. And there was scarcely any censure in the West. American officials made their support for the generals clear after the coup and start of the massacres, both verbally and with material aid. Robert F. Kennedy was the only dissident (Bunnell 1990:59–60).

However, little was known of the actual role of the United States in these
events until recently. The United States had almost decided to stop its aid when Sukarno turned toward China, employed mob violence, and stirred up anti-American and anti-British sentiment in the name of anticolonialism. The then-Ambassador to Indonesia for the United States, Howard Jones, had in 1964 verbally tested the readiness of the generals to “crack down on the PKI” in event of a PKI bid for power, and the military clearly understood the interest of the United States in eliminating the PKI (Brands 1989:793–4, 802–6). Yet Jones stood for a more accommodating posture toward Sukarno than did his successor, Marshall Green, appointed Ambassador in June 1965, after Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker’s report concluded that the United States should continue efforts to work with Sukarno but recommended a reduced presence by the United States in Indonesia to reduce Indonesian targeting of American programs and facilities (Jones 1971:361–7; Green 1990:12–14).

State Department correspondence reveals a continued interest in the victory of the Indonesian generals led by Suharto over the PKI because State Department officials viewed it as a threat to the United States in Southeast Asia. Although Ambassador Green dwells on his government’s initial ignorance of the plans of the Indonesian military, officials of the United States offered encouragement in eliminating the PKI, did not indicate any limits to killing of civilians, and provided covert aid to the Suharto coalition (Kolko 1988:178–81; Green 1990:67–69). Green says that the “only military assistance we provided of a so-called ‘covert’ nature was some walkie-talkie equipment and medicines”—but Kolko implies that small arms were “dubbed ‘medicines’ to prevent embarrassing revelations” (Green 1990:69; Kolko 1988:181).

A strategic consideration, as Ambassador Green stresses, was that the United States not be openly involved in the operations of the generals, for it would undermine the chances of their success. His wire to the United States State Department states that the “main reason” for caution is “that we will handicap the Army if our support shows” (Green’s wire to the US State Department, October 14, 1965, cited in Green 1990:68). The United States had been considerably embarrassed by evidence of CIA aid (most visible in the form of a pilot plummeting from the sky) in a regional revolt led by a Muslim party in Sumatra in 1958 which had damaged American standing among anti-communist forces, including the military (Jones 1971:129–46; Kolko 1988:175).

But there was evidence in 1965 of the United States’s intent to eliminate the PKI and to sanction the massacres. Kathy Kadane, a journalist, uncovered admissions that a staff member of the United States embassy turned over a list of up to 5,000 PKI leaders to the military and that Ambassador Green had approved this list, thus instigating and legitimating their murder and that of other alleged communists (Kadane 1990). Embassy officials checked off the names of persons killed on their copy of the list after getting such news by
radio transceivers (the aforementioned walkie-talkies perhaps) supplied by the United States, Kadane says.

Brands rejects the “myth of American responsibility” (1989:806) but notes that on December 1, 1965, a delegation from General Suharto’s headquarters “asked the ambassador how much it was worth to the United States to see the PKI smashed.” However, “the Johnson administration refused to put a price tag on the Communist’s heads” (Brands 1989:806, 803).

Bunnell, surveying American tactical responses in Indonesia prior to the coup, remarks that although

the substance of US overt policy was one of largely consistent restraint in responding to President Sukarno’s often provocative and hostile “march to the left” . . . It is, however, premature for any analyst to render a final judgement on the CIA’s role in the October coup plot, or in other clandestine activities both before and after the coup, including the tragic massacre of about half a million alleged Communists in the fall of 1965 (1990:30).

The “low-posture” policy aimed at maintaining contacts with the army which, officials of the United States noted, was likely to respond violently to the PKI in time. “There is also strong circumstantial evidence that the CIA contributed to the highly effective army media campaign to demonize the PKI as the perpetrators of the bloody abortive coup” (Bunnell 1990:59).

Both the former Defense Secretary, Robert McNamara (Brands 1989:804–5), and former chief of the CIA, William Colby (Kadane 1990), have claimed credit for the Indonesian military’s anticommunist orientation at that time. Colby, who related the elimination of the PKI infrastructure in Indonesia to the Phoenix program in South Vietnam, did not recall who constructed the Indonesian lists (compiled as part of an intelligence operation) but did not deny the possibility that the CIA might have done so (Kadane 1990). It appears that the last word has not been said on this. We must await the release of many more documents and their analysis for that.

The New Order, a regime which has suppressed both mass nonviolent and violent expression, began with mass killings which often relied on local antagonisms dividing killers and victims (Cribb 1990:23–28). In Java, massacres were often organized (with the license of the generals) by militant Muslim organizations ready to kill on signal. The army delegated the killing in East Java mainly to the “black-shirted youth [Ansor] of the Nahdatul Ulama (Moslem Teachers’ Party), who killed with fanatical relish” (Hughes 1967:154). Ansor called their action a jihad or holy war and the Muslim Muhammadiyah, a modernist organization, “issued a fatwah referring to the extermination of the PKI as a religious duty.” Proclaiming their end the establishment of a Muslim state, Ansor also began killing nationalist party opponents active in anti-Muslim religious organizations (Hefner 1990:210–11). But nationalist party members (who also participated in the killings) tended to disagree with Ansor’s version of Islam.
Chinese Indonesians became a special target in some areas, supposedly because of the Chinese Embassy’s disrespect for the murdered generals. However, one must also consider as contributing factors the history of hostility toward overseas Chinese, typically a minority in the middle, in southeast Asia and the role in the Malay insurgency of some Chinese insurgents who had moved into Indonesia (Cribb 1990:24–25). The army tried to suppress the unauthorized killing (Crouch 1988:146, 149, 153–4; Hefner 1990:212–3).

The government’s estimate of one million victims indicates that, had all the victims been communists (which they were not), one out of two (the government’s estimate) or one out of three (the PKI’s estimate) members of the PKI were slain (Cribb 1990:41). Either number is more than enough to create enduring terror among other members of the PKI and other Indonesians.

How did this occur so rapidly? By all accounts, the generals relied on exploiting the bitter cleavages within and among villages: between lowlanders and highlanders, orthodox and other Muslims, landowners and peasants, and between parties. Some see these lines of cleavage as reinforcing, with more orthodox Muslim santri (apt to be landlords) in conflict with less orthodox abangan peasants; such scholars maintain that class conflicts are blurred by the concentration on cultural and ethnic differentiation (Kahn 1982; Robison 1982). Hefner maintains that these multiple bases of cleavage are not reducible on any one axis: Religious and party cleavages can be independent or can reinforce existing class cleavages (1990). It would help to resolve this controversy if we had more data on demographic and religious identities by class.

Although the PKI drew support from members of many classes, it had waged a militant campaign for rural support in late 1963 that elicited violent responses:

Pressured in part by poor peasants hurt by the economic decline, but also hoping to seize the moment from its political rivals, including the military, the PKI responded to the national crisis by trying to expand its rural base. . . In early 1964 PKI-organized peasants launched “unilateral actions” . . . seizing the land of large landowners and staging demonstrations in support of squatters and sharecroppers. The initiatives provoked strong reactions on the part of landlords and Muslim party supporters. Rural violence quickly escalated to new heights. . . Muslim party leaders saw the campaign as a direct challenge to their authority, and thus characterized it as an assault on Islam rather than an economic struggle. Anti-Muslim outbursts in several well-publicized PKI actions lent credence to their charges (Hefner 1990:201–2).

The PKI, as well as their antagonists, demonized the opposition. Brackman asserts that Aidit, head of the PKI, charged his audience in different speeches in September to “operate on the cancer of society”—the “capitalist bureaucrats, economic adventurers and corruptors” (which included the generals)—and to move: “Dare, act, and move against the devils of the cities, that is, the high and mighty, thieves and corruptors” (1969:63–64). Similarly, Mortimer (who is, unlike Brackman, sympathetic to the aims of the PKI) remarks on the violent language used by the PKI in 1965 (1974:377–80, 387).
The immediate reaction to the killings of the generals and the PKI newspaper editorial approving the rebels' aim was the gathering of massive crowds to vent rage against communists. This rage was further expanded by the funerals staged for the generals and the infant daughter of one who had been killed by her father's attempted captors. "A carefully orchestrated campaign of disinformation" about the deaths of the generals, involving pornographic and sadistic orgies by members of a left-wing women's organization, "portray[ed] the party, which had previously enjoyed an enviable reputation for chastity and incorruptibility, as a hotbed of immorality" (Cribb 1990:28).

However, it is not clear whether the Indonesian generals ordered the killings to implement an ideology and to execute a preconceived plan or they reacted spontaneously to what they perceived as a communist coup within the army which had led to the murder of six generals (some rumoured to have been killed in a ritual manner by a PKI-organized crowd). Cribb views ideological motives as secondary: "for the most part the perceived need to kill arose out of a sense of self-interest and self-defense, and was in no way dictated by a formal ideological world view" (Cribb 1990:15).

Some generals had considered an attack on the PKI in response to a violent challenge by the PKI (Brands 1989). Their ideology may have rationalized their need for reprisals and also protected their future role in the Indonesian political economy as managers of state capitalism, expanding their managerial role under Sukarno (described by Crouch 1988:344–5).

The goal of the generals to eliminate the PKI can also be seen against the background of a defeated communist revolt in 1948. This led the generals to anticipate both an immediate threat to their lives and a long-range threat to their status and power, compelling them to view the killings as a case of Them or Us. Despite the alternative hypotheses about the September 30 [1965] coup, there is enough circumstantial evidence supporting the generals' inference that this was an aborted communist coup to make their perception a plausible one (Brackman 1969; CIA 1968; Cribb 1990:6–7; Hughes 1967).

The massacres were a precondition for and physical expression of the new dictum: anticommunism (heretofore stigmatized by President Sukarno) became the prescribed orthodoxy of the day and communists were to be cast out or killed. Society had to be reconstructed to correspond to the new basis of solidarity.

Are we then looking at a primarily retributive genocide intended by the army not only to revenge the deaths to members of their class but to forestall threats to their future hegemony? What makes this an ideological genocide or a mixed case is not just the scale of the murders but the use of the communist threat to justify a new design of state and society, the repudiation of the past, and the creation of a new state myth.

However, the generals knew that they could turn to the United States as a patron, so their act was a calculated one. Indeed, the United States was help-
ing them in their annihilation campaign. In making a rational assessment of
their future, the generals had to take into account the likelihood that they
would get away with mass murder and the probability that their state would be
viable and stable, if they cooperated with American interests. These interests
also reinforced the officers’ own economic interests as members of the mana-

The army leaders turned to the United States as a patron after rejecting the
Chinese model and China’s influence, thus negating Sukarno’s policy. The
government formally banned the communist party and related organizations in
1966 (after the army had ordered its elimination). The newly reconstituted
state (formally based on restoration of the 1945 constitution) supplanted Su-
karno’s Guided Democracy with Suharto’s New Order, an authoritarian state
based on capitalist development. This was accompanied by mass detention
(without charge or trial) of 750,000, who were banished to remote camps for a
decade or more after these events. Several hundred of these were still detained
of former ‘PKI’ prisoners were required to report regularly to local military
authorities and suffered officially sanctioned discrimination in employment,
and political and other fields” (Amnesty International 1990:121).

Cambodia

In Cambodia, the victory of the insurgent Khmer Rouge (hereafter KR),
which triggered a radical, annihilatory version of communism, was largely
made possible by the unanticipated consequences of events starting with the
incursion by Vietnam and the United States intervention, expanding the Indo-
china war. For a narrative account of these years (from 1965 to 1975), I rely
principally on Shawcross (1979, 1984) and Becker (1986) and for the internal
development of the Khmer Rouge on Kiernan (1985).

The destabilization of Cambodia began during the Indochina war in the
1960s, after the North Vietnamese retreated into sanctuaries in Cambodia and
after the United States escalated the Indochina War. The incentives to wide-
scale smuggling of rice by Khmers to Vietnam (sold to both sides) also
undermined the Cambodian state economy by depriving it of tax revenues
(Kiernan 1992). Prince Sihanouk first tried to appease the North Vietnamese
and later agreed to the secret bombings by the United States of Vietcong
sanctuaries in Cambodia while he publicly protested American incursions to
the United Nations (Haas 1991:15; Shawcross 1979:70, 390). Sihanouk’s
policies led to military and political unrest and the Lon Nol coup in 1970.
Sihanouk reacted to his deposition by formally joining a KR coalition created
by China.

The US bombing, which killed an estimated 50,000 to 150,000 Cambo-
dians (Kiernan 1989:32), led to additional gains for the KR because the
bombing drove the Vietnamese further inside Cambodia and radically dislo-
cated and disorganized rural life, leading to an estimated two million displaced peasants in the cities (Shawcross 1979:174–6; Haas 1991:16). Malnutrition, inflation, and the corruption of the military led to further misery and demoralization among the refugees. Such effects were neither calculated for nor compensated for by the United States, whose administration saw Cambodia as a “sideshow” in the Indochina war (Shawcross 1979). Kiernan observes that “although it was indigenous, Pol Pot’s revolution would not have won power without US economic and military destabilisation of Cambodia. . . . This was probably the most important single factor in Pol Pot’s rise” (Kiernan 1993a:1).

Not only outside forces but also the opportunistic and short-sighted political decisions of Cambodians, foremost of whom was Prince Sihanouk, the focus of traditional loyalty in Cambodia, enabled the KR to come to power. Sihanouk’s strategy of aligning himself nominally to the KR after the Lon Nol coup served to legitimate the KR and to diminish resistance to it. The KR, who had been repressed and denied rights to compete politically under Sihanouk, bided its time and tolerated him. Its victory was also hastened by the brutality, military ineptitude, and magical thinking of Lon Nol.

Becker relates both the magical thinking and the cruelty of the KR to the Khmer past and to a tradition of cruelty and total despotism dating from Angkor:

The outer world was becoming unmanageable, and Khmers retreated to an inner world of spirits and animism, an exotic realm where spells and amulets provided solace against incomprehensible catastrophes. . . . When the victorious revolutionaries of Pol Pot arrived, the city people of Phnom Penh said they were very “black” people; and these “black” people chose as their victims the “jade white” citizens of the city (Becker 1986:85).

The “blacks,” including the Khmer Loeu, highland tribal people, historically used by princes out of power to attack the center, were recruited by the KR during their years in the jungle (Becker 1986:121–3). Marxists from an educated middle class background in Cambodia, the members of the KR had extended their rural support during these years in which they governed the local population in a draconian way, sustaining them through enforced agricultural collectives. Despite—or because of—their urban origins and foreign (Parisian) education, the KR rejected the influence of foreigners in food, clothing, hair styles, and music and sought purification from foreign contamination.

Both the KR and the Lon Nol government were hostile to the Vietnamese forces and displaced their anger on local Vietnamese Khmer, who were mostly urban clerks and skilled workers. Although Vietnam was the traditional hegemonic power in the region, relations with the Vietnamese in Cambodia had usually been pacific. The Lon Nol government interned 30,000 Vietnamese Cambodians, jailed “7,000 of them under suspicion of treason,” and

The KR hostility to the Vietnamese Communists was reinforced by the experience of being used and subordinated by them in pursuit of their national goals (Jackson 1989:41; Becker 1986:93–94). Between 1973 and 1975, the KR became radicalized as an indirect consequence of United States bombardment, leading to the diminished influence of Vietnamese-trained and moderate leaders (Kiernan 1985:390–4). After 1970, the KR began to kill returning KR cadres who had spent a decade involuntarily in Vietnam. One survivor, Hem Samin, recalled that "there was nothing but insults . . . —talk about the God-damned Vietnamese in Khmer skin" (Becker 1986:192). The border conflict with Vietnam, escalated by the KR after their victory to a full-scale war, led ultimately to the fall of the KR in 1979.

When the KR came to power, they imposed totalitarian rule without law, expelling the urban population (including the sick and the hospitalized) of Phnom Penh peremptorily and imposed a secret government (based on the military and the cooperatives) throughout the rural areas. People were both terrorized and atomized as the family, neighborhood groups, villages and associations were subject to "sociological dissolution . . . khchatkhchay os roling which is translated 'scatter them out of sight' or 'scatter them to the last one'" (Hawk 1988:137). By destroying any independent economy, eliminating the marketplace and money, and by virtually annulling kinship solidarity and preventing new groups from forming, the KR destroyed any basis for opposition. It spoke of the ruling elite as Angkar (usually translated as "the organization"), invoking parental authority: "Since Angkar is the 'dad-mom' of the people, it hence has the responsibility to determine who is part of the family and who is not" (Ponchaud 1989:165). Quinn observes that

in order to create the "new socialist man" to inhabit his new society, Pol Pot sought to strip away the cultural, religious, and social infrastructures upon which traditional Khmer society was based and to replace them with a new socialist order based on total acquiescence to the "organization" (Angkar) and subjugation of the individual self to the collective good. The new collective farms served as the main instrument for achieving this goal. They represented a tabula rasa upon which the new Khmer culture was to be imprinted. Similar to the Chinese Cultural Revolution's campaign to destroy the "Four Olds" . . . this process had several distinct elements, all aimed at destroying the institutions and organizations of the ancien regime (1989:190–1).

Becker compares the political economy of the KR and the brutality of their implementation to similar periods of early communism in both the Soviet Union and China (Becker 1986:196–202). Similarly, Jackson notes that "the goals sought by the KR were far from unique. In fact, these goals mirror the
thinking of the radicals surrounding Mao Zedong during the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution” (Jackson 1989:38).

The Indonesian massacres of 1965, noted by Pol Pot in China, were also a precedent of mass annihilation. The massacres then showed him the vulnerability of a communist party which had taken a constitutionalist road (as well as later, perhaps, the possibility of changing a society radically by annihilation). The massacres also showed the KR that they were dependent on Sihanouk, who used the Indonesian slaughter as “a reminder to you and not a threat” (Kiernan 1985:222, 235, quote on 252).

The KR’s drive to create a new society, purified racially and ethnically, is ascribed by Becker both to communism and to native fascism. They were moved, she says, both by “fear of racial extinction and a corollary belief in its [Khmer] cultural if not racial superiority” (1986:16). Fascism, she asserts, was the goal of both Lon Nol and Saloth Sar (Pol Pot), the former viewing salvation in the past and the latter in the future. “Both leaders also encouraged fascism’s by-products—racism and xenophobia” (1986:136).

The KR’s fear of group extinction can be traced both to the deaths and disorganization in the preceding decade before their rule and the historical subjugation of the Khmer kingdom by its neighbors. The KR’s reiteration of blood themes in song and speeches—“The red, red blood . . . The sublime blood” (and so forth) in the national anthem (Jackson 1989:72–73)—resembles the Nazi emphasis on blood, which also has been related to a fear of group extinction (Weinstein 1980).

The KR also spilled blood without hesitation or qualms, killing both minorities and a large number of members of the majority group. The KR destroyed, through secret killings and torture, as well as enforced hunger and slave labor leading to starvation and untreated diseases, the Buddhist priesthood and ethnic minorities—the Cham and Vietnamese—and the Khmer in the eastern zone who were educated and open to foreign influence. Hannum shows how both killings and such indirect means of producing death against the Khmer national group constitute acts of genocide under the Convention because they were committed with intent to destroy the Khmer nation in the name of purification: Under Article 2 of the UNGC, proscribed acts include killings; 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 (Hannum 1989:86–93).

Kiernan’s (1993b) estimates of the death tolls under Pol Pot show the disparate effects of KR policies on different ethnic groups: 100 percent of Vietnamese, 50 percent of Chinese, 40 percent of Lao, and 36 percent of Cham in Cambodia are believed to have died. Among the Khmer, Kiernan estimates that 25 percent of urban Khmer forced to migrate to the countryside died as contrasted to 15 percent of the Khmer previously living there. Total estimates of the dead tend to be around two or three million, or 21 percent to
31 percent of all Cambodians in 1975, depending on various estimates of the population then (Hannum and Hawk 1986:122–9; Hannum 1989; Kiernan 1993; Rummel 1992).

What is sociologically significant about the genocide of the Khmer by the KR is how the KR divided the Khmer into classes by labelling, discriminating who might live and who could be destroyed: people with “full rights,” “candidates” for full rights, “depos- itees” (without rights); old people (with the KR before 1975) and new people; the people and enemies of the people [Hannum and Hawk 1986:23–24, 65–66]. Those who were to be eliminated were stigmatized as sub-human, excluding them from the perpetrator’s universe of obligation as effectively as any pre-existing division of religion or race. . . . Where people were transferred, the KR sometimes used physical signs—blue and green scarves—to distinguish the victims to be killed in much the same way the Germans used the yellow star [Kiernan 1991] (Fein 1993b:77–78).

In these efforts, the KR secured some support from members of the lowest classes and of many tribal people, whose status was exalted in the new inverted class pyramid; the lowest were now the highest and the highest the lowest (Becker 1986:122–3; Ponchaud 1989:157–67). The people with “full rights” were compensated with a share in the power to decide the fate of the rightless, rather than material goods. The victims, despite their numbers, could not organize resistance because of the pervasiveness of fear: the new people feared the old (more loyal to the KR); and parents feared their children, socialized by the KR to regard them as corrupt and treacherous, as enemies (Quinn 1989:191–3, 203).

Democratic Kampuchea had disconnected itself from the world economy, from world communications, and from reliance on foreign patrons by choice of the KR leadership. It not only rejected foreign aid, with an exception for about “20,000 PRC advisors [who] were in Cambodia by 1978 to provide technical assistance” (Haas 1991, 21), but also rejected humanitarian donations by nongovernmental organizations. The KR rationale was derived from a theory of economic autarchy, rejecting “artificial modernization” and Cambodia’s dependence on the world market, maintaining that “international integration . . . is the root cause of underdevelopment of the Khmer economy,” a conclusion reached by Khieu Samphan in his doctoral dissertation in 1959 (Jackson 1989:74–75). However, Becker observes that Khieu Samphan proposed both agricultural reform and nationally controlled industrialization (1986:79) rather than autarchy. One may view the KR economic theory as a crude deduction of implications from dependency theory. Similarly to the latter school, Wallerstein (1974), ascribes the states’ position in the periphery, often called “underdevelopment,” to their place in the world-system of division of labor.

No foreign power appeared to have the will to impose any sanctions against the KR. China was responsible for brokering the KR alliance with Prince Sihanouk and loyally supporting the KR until 1991, using Cambodia as a
counter to Vietnam. Thus, China, supporting Pol Pot, and the USSR, supporting Vietnam, which backed a faction of the KR that had been mislabelled pro-Vietnamese (a self-fulfilling prophecy), reinforced and acted out their antagonism.

Zhou Enlai was reported to have cautioned KR leaders in 1975 against radial utopian attempts to impose communism abruptly, as these had failed in China (Jackson 1989:63). Becker reports the testimony of a senior Chinese diplomat to the effect that China, aware as early as 1976 of the purges and violence of the KR, decided not to protest (1986:286–7). Vickery maintains that neither China nor the Soviet Union mandated the KR’s policies; neither could they have stopped them (1986:21–24). However, he overlooks how the PRC benefited from the policies of the KR and validated them.

China demanded in 1977 that the KR publicly “declare themselves communists, unveil Pol Pot as the leader of the party and the country, and begin to counteract the bloodcurdling stories being told by refugees who had fled Democratic Kampuchea into Thailand” (Becker 1986:313). Haas cites PRC Prime Minister Huang Hua, who in 1977 “gave Phnom Penh a green light to conduct purges and to make war on Vietnam” (1991:23). China actively collaborated in the third Indochina war.

The downfall of the KR ultimately resulted from the Vietnamese invasion in 1979. Had the Pol Pot regime not both attacked Vietnam and begun a purge within the KR for suspects with pro-Vietnam sympathies, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy—that they would go over to the Vietnamese side for self-preservation—it might have prevented the Vietnamese invasion and the regime might still be in place today.

Paradoxically, despite the KR defeat, the KR are still players today. Their right to participate in the new government of Cambodia has been legitimated by the peace plan negotiated by the permanent members of the UN Security Council, thanks to the great powers’ protection of client states and armies and the alliances among them. During the negotiating process, the KR successfully lobbied for the abandonment of charges against them. “The years 1988–91 saw a progressive elimination of diplomatic criticism of the 1975–79 Cambodian genocide” (Kiernan 1992:20). The Perm-5 plan stipulates that the KR will participate in the sovereign body of Cambodia, the Supreme National Council. It could enable the KR to return to power by electoral coalition, intra-governmental subversion, terror and physical intimidation in the countryside or on the battlefield. “Through the Perm-5 Plan, the international community has thrust responsibility for the Khmer Rouge onto the Cambodian people. The country faces several more years of living dangerously” (Kiernan 1992:23).

Comparison and Discussion

Indonesia and Cambodia differ greatly in age, size, potential power or powerlessness in relationship to their neighbors, and history. Cambodia is histori-
cally prone to be dependent because of its size, location, and the superpower and regional powers in the neighborhood. Indonesia, the largest country in southeast Asia, is situated in a strategic geopolitical position and prone to be hegemonic because of its size, population, and location.

In terms of social structure and problems, there were few similarities between Cambodia and Indonesia. Cambodian pre-war (pre-1970) society was characterized by little stratification (Vickery 1986:52), an ample food supply, and “a general ethic of fundamental egalitarianism” (Ebihara 1989:21). Indonesia before 1965 was characterized by high population pressure, high landlessness, rural poverty, and malnutrition (Palmier 1985:16–19; Hefner 1990:113–22).

Similarly, their societies differ in associational form and political and ethnic culture. In Cambodia, there were few intermediate associations between the family or village and the head of state. In Indonesia, there were many associations. Both cultures are diverse, but Indonesia, a much more diverse aggregate of many islands and peoples, is indeed a model of the plural society.

Preceding both genocides, however, both societies experienced multiple crises. The most important political crisis was the fracturing of authority, which stemmed from the inability of these governments to command and control the military and the inability of the military to control the territory of the nation. The coming to power of military leaders in the name of the revolution or for the defense against the revolution was facilitated in both cases by the ineptitude of charismatic leaders, Sukarno and Sihanouk, who tilted toward China, and the ineptitude of Lon Nol, who was backed by the United States. But China could not restore Sukarno’s power and never tried to restore the power of Sihanouk. Nor could the United States save the regime of Lon Nol.

Review of Theory and Cases

Genocide is viewed theoretically herein as a strategy that ruling elites use to resolve real solidarity and legitimacy conflicts or challenges to their interests against victims decreed outside their universe of obligation in situations in which a crisis or opportunity is caused by or blamed on the victim (or the victim impedes taking advantage of an opportunity) and the perpetrators believe that they can get away with it. I shall illustrate the elements of the theory in reviewing both cases. These include legitimacy problems, moral exclusion (of the victims), blaming the victim and patrons’ tolerance.

Legitimacy Problems

These arose from crises due to the collapse of governments and authority. These states folded in different ways—an implosion of power in Cambodia (allowing the KR to take power) and an explosion of power in Indonesia, reinforced by the manipulation of collective rage. This led to the seizure of
power by elites who were not elected democratically and who faced real and potential challenges to their legitimacy.

Both the KR and the Indonesian generals seem to have anticipated that they could be confronted with armed enemies within their country. Moreover, the KR feared they could not control Cambodia without terror. There were not enough communist cadres and army members until 1977 to even admit the state was controlled by the communist party. Their fear of the United States was revived by the Mayaguez incident in 1975, when the United States attacked Cambodia again, supposedly to release a United States merchant ship which Cambodia had seized and already agreed to let go.

The collapse led to revolutionary and antirevolutionary upheavals. The ideologies of both regimes, looked at retrospectively, perhaps appear more coherent now than they were at the time. Both the ideologies of the KR and of the generals may be viewed not only as justifications for an envisioned future society but also as responses to sensed disorder. These regimes created new orders based on an elite monopoly of power which atomized society completely in Cambodia and banned anti-state organization in Indonesia.

Their ideological formulas and their resultant murders served to resolve problems of legitimacy and solidarity. Genocide in Democratic Kampuchea resolved the problem of the lack of legitimacy of the KR government by eliminating people deemed potentially disloyal and unassimilable. The KR was creating a new Khmer man, a constituency that would maintain the KR in power. Similarly, by eliminating PKI activists in Indonesia (among the hundreds of thousands of victims), the generals eliminated the threat of mobilized class conflict undermining traditional hierarchy and instigating opposition to their rule.

In both societies, the recruitment of killers paralleled the fault lines of social structure. In Cambodia, the “blacks”, peasants displaced by bombing and marginal tribal peoples recruited as part of the KR, were more likely to be the killers of the city people than were other city people or “whites.”

In Indonesia, class, religion, and ethnicity played a role in dividing, and sometimes reinforcing, allegiances and antagonisms. In Java, where an estimated four of five Indonesian victims were killed (Cribb 1990:8), parties representing the landlords participated in the killings, perhaps retaliating for earlier class conflicts between landlords and peasants organized by the PKI. Although religious differences among Muslims also reinforced class-based strife between landlords and peasants, such differences often crosscut social class position. Muslim organizations may have misused religious authority to call for extermination of the PKI as a jihad or religious duty, but when they did so, they used this both as an instigator and a legitimating device. In other places, hostility by the dominant group towards ethnic minorities marked them disproportionately as victims (Cribb 1990:23–28).
MORAL EXCLUSION

The victims in both cases were decreed outside the universe of obligation of the perpetrator by religious doctrine and ideology. Communism, which had previously been viewed as compatible with the state ideology or Pnajasainya was now demonized in Indonesia; Muslim organizations also labelled communists as atheists and infidels. However, the army eventually acted to limit these organizations because their goal of creating an Islamic state was not the army’s. The minorities subject to slaughter because of group identity were largely viewed as foreigners.

The victims in Cambodia were largely other Khmers who were defined by the KR as enemies, people without rights. The minorities who were annihilated were non-Khmer; the Vietnamese among them had previously been subject to discrimination and pogroms under several governments.

BLAMING THE VICTIM

The victims in both countries were judged (by the organizers of their massacre) as collectively guilty. The victims in Indonesia were blamed and held collectively guilty for a crime or outrage—the killing of the generals in 1965—that only a few could have perpetrated. In Cambodia, the victims were (for the most part) not accused of anything other than being what they were: guilty by class, religious, and ethnic origin. They were viewed by the KR as enemies by definition or by blood—non-Khmer, new people, enemies of the people, creatures without rights.

PATRONS' TOLERANCE

The preceding crises and isolation of both states during the killings made these genocides largely invisible on the world scene. But they were visible to the patron-states: the United States and China. The evidence does not prove either that the United States instigated the massacres in Indonesia or that China initiated the direct and indirect slaughter by the KR. But the patrons did collaborate with their clients, using them to reinforce their position in Asia. The United States supported the continuation of the Indonesian massacres and legitimated them as a tool of state by supplying the Indonesian military with communication equipment and what was in effect a hit list. China tolerated the KR killings in Cambodia and authorized the purge of the alleged pro-Vietnamese KR and the war with Vietnam.

This last element of explanation implies that the calculus of genocide is a rational one: Genocide can be expected to be cost-free because there are no sanctions or checks against it and external actors continue to support the perpetrator. This also suggests a deterrent (later discussed) by reversing the response of the patron states.
Vulnerability and Preparation for Genocide

Besides confirming our hypotheses, the reader may ask what we have learned. First, there is the question of national vulnerability. Some of the causes of vulnerability in both cases are unrelated to cultural and national characteristics. For example, both upheavals also may be related to the existing social unrest in both states which can be partly attributed to inflation and decline in living standards in both states. In Cambodia there was also the killing of civilian and enormous refugee flow resulting from American bombings between 1970 and 1975 which led not only to physical displacement but to a prolonged sense of insecurity and fear.

War is often the precursor or the precipitant or the consequence of genocide. All cases of genocide between 1945 and 1988 in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East occurred among states at war at some time; from 14 percent to 29 percent of warring states in these regions also were perpetrators of genocide (Fein 1993a:Table 4). War leads to genocide for several reasons. First, it releases aggression. The losses from war lead to a sense of grievance and may lead to revolutionary and genocide-prone elites coming to power. Finally, war enables the perpetrator to mask the crime and to label the victim as enemy. In his comparison of the Ottoman Empire’s genocide against the Armenians during World War I and Nazi Germany’s genocide of Jews and Gypsies during World War II, Melson illustrates how wars increase the probability that revolutionary elites will resort to genocide and observes the similarity to the origins of genocide in Cambodia (1992:16–20).

In the case of Cambodia, the Indochina war and its escalation by the United States clearly led to the Khmer Rouge victory in 1975. Although there was an Indonesian intervention in Malaysia preceding the 1965 massacres, the presumed communist attempt influenced the perception of threat—and the opportunity—of the generals who organized the massacre.

The perception by leaders in both Cambodia and Indochina that they were threatened appeared to reinforce their cold rationality. The architects of the killing in both instances were said to be impelled by the fear of extinction. In Indonesia, the collectivity of the alleged perpetrator—communists being viewed as a collective actor—was said to be the aggressor, although there is no way personal responsibility for the coup and the alleged mutilation of the generals could be ascribed to two or three million people. Defenders of the army and others also often say that the perpetrators believed they had no other choice: Either they had to exterminate the PKI or be exterminated (Green 1990:150; see also Brackman 1969:116–7; Hughes 1967:189; Cribb 1990:6–7, 123).

In Cambodia, leaders of the KR authorized the slaughter of people who were unorganized and had no ability to attack, as well as the slaughter of army and government officers of the old regime and their families. The leaders
justified their methods by a theory similar to other communist utopian justifications of imposed mass death in China and the Soviet Union. Becker (1986) implies that the fear of death, of national extinction, also instigated them to adapt theories which purported to explain their helplessness by corruption, demanding purification.

Now one can view the alleged fears of the perpetrators as a rationalization for the murders—that is, it was us versus them—as I tend to do. Some psychological theorists do, however, focus on fear of death as a primal motor of genocide (Charny 1982; Lifton 1986; see critique in Fein 1993b:46–47).

How the perpetrators killed is also related to their fears and their bases of legitimacy. In the case of Cambodia, there was little participation in killing. But in Indonesia there was much participation in killing of citizens in a polarized nation: Dissidents fled and hid in terror.

Differences between the organization of killings in both states appear not to have been solely a function of the ideology of the ruling elites but of their sources of power and support initially. The KR regime did not invite popular participation because it disdained nonviolent means of reinforcing legitimacy and creating support. Rather, it organized a monopoly of terror, fearing people who had no motive to murder on cue. Indeed, it did not publicly reveal who the Organization governing them was for two years. It did not gather crowds and generally abjured the strategy of inducing loyalty (to the party and to a charismatic leader), governing by terror instead. Rather, it attempted to control by atomizing society, preventing kin and larger groups from forming, after the forced urban displacement and breakup of families in the new communes. Genocide in Cambodia was executed by a secret organization whose new class was rewarded with some but limited authority.

In Indonesia prior to September 1965, an increasingly fragile coalition was held together by Sukarno’s manipulation, backed by his charismatic power over the electorate and the organized strength of the PKI. If Sukarno died, the state would lack all forms of legitimacy (using the bases noted by Weber (1946:78–81): charismatic (based on Sukarno), traditional (discredited) and legal (disdained with the renunciation of liberal democracy). The New Order’s destruction of mass class-based organizations and protests taught its citizens how to comply with new alacrity; they could not easily forget the terror of 1965.

In both cases, the readiness of leaders to kill in order to create a new order is related to pre-existing national definitions of enemies and characteristically tolerated uses of aggression, such as the state-sanctioned practice of allowing crowd processions to riot and at times to torch buildings and to kill.

State-manipulated prejudices and sanctioned violence led both the Indonesians and Cambodians to vent aggression against foreigners and attribute collective guilt to whole nations, ethnic groups, and parties. In totalitarian
states, and under Sukarno’s Guided Democracy (1957–65), large crowds were led and aroused by Sukarno to channel hatreds and on occasions to rampage against selected targets. Under Sukarno, mass rallies against imperialism and stereotypes of external enemies—the United States, Great Britain—and internal enemies were the norm. Enemies were to be destroyed, liquidated. Several writers (from different political perspectives) remark on the tension and atmosphere of mass hysteria of the last days. Aggression was externalized, with the army and nation mobilized to incorporate and defeat neighbors: West Irian, Malaysia.

Despite their drastically different potential for domination, Indonesia and Cambodia were alike in their ambiguous definition of national borders and how this was used to justify aggression. The KR relied on this ambiguity about where their state ended, evoking memories of an old “galactic state with no fixed borderline, whose influence extends as far as it can go without meeting a force of equal strength” to justify fighting Vietnam (Thion 1987:159). The Indonesians began to assume their identity coincided with the peninsular range (including 3,000 islands), justifying wars to incorporate their neighbors, negating claims to self-determination, and evoking popular support and participation in aggression through riots and rallies. Similarly, both societies were used to violence against groups who might be labelled as the enemy within. Both countries tolerated periodic pogroms against citizens with whom they peacefully coexisted at other times.

Pogroms are often preceded by collective accusations. Such collective punishments rest on an underlying belief among many peoples in collective guilt which justifies collective punishment or retribution (Fein 1977:ch. 1). Many learned this through the earlier repertoire of state-authorized aggression in pogroms and riots. Popular prejudices, chauvinism, and nationalist fervor especially helped to justify the killing of minority victims.

The victims of local pogroms were minorities drawn from more powerful neighbors with whom the state was, had been, or might be in conflict. In Cambodia, these are the Cambodians of Vietnamese origin; in Indonesia, the Indonesians of Chinese origin. This provided a model for the elimination of minorities and dissidents.

Thus, the genocides might be seen in part as both an escalation of violence against a previously marked domestic enemy and a venting within the state of rage and aggression usually directed at a foreign power but transferred to members or sympathizers of such foreign powers. In Indonesia, PKI members and Chinese were assumed to identify with China and with revolutionary violence. In Cambodia, the KR targeted the Vietnamese and other non-Khmer minorities and Khmer of urban and educated classes (most apt to have been influenced by foreign models), decreeing all foreign persons and influences were the enemy. There is also some evidence that cultural traditions in both
cases have in the past justified collective punishments of families and groups (Cribb 1990:31–34; Ponchaud 1989:161–75).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Struggles within the state over legitimacy and solidarity take many forms and have a range of outcomes. Although most genocides emerge from struggles between ethnic groups about domination within the state, there are recurring cases of crises leading to revolutionary regimes and genocide (Harff 1988; Melson 1992; Fein 1993a). The linkages are direct and indirect. The military, rather than the party, is the organization most likely to bring about such a revolution in the new states. The genocides in Cambodia and Indonesia resulted from revolutionary and counter-revolutionary upheavals emerging from military struggles rather than revolution from below.

Communism, the leading ideology since 1945 until the present, promised social change even as it authorized killing on the basis of class and politics, identifying dissidents as “enemies of the people.” But upon closer examination, the xenophobic ideology of the KR regime resembles more an almost forgotten phenomenon of national socialism, which Becker (1986) calls fascism. Such regimes themselves evoke the threats that demand purges, promoting paranoid myths of persecution or anticipated persecution as a means of inciting solidarity (Fein 1991).

What Asian communism, fascism, Sukarno’s Guided Democracy, Lon Nol’s authoritarianism, and the succeeding New Order of the generals, have in common is their disdain for liberal democracy, the limits of constitutionalism and rules, and the personalization of enemies. Which form of authoritarianism wins out depends on many contingencies.

Ideological choices and the decisions by the perpetrators to eliminate their enemies are results not only of internal forces but of the planned and unintended effects of interventions by superpowers (and regional powers). When genocide and politicide (or state mass murder) are cost-free, as in Indonesia, they are likely to be repeated. Between 1975 and 1984, the Indonesian intervention in East Timor, classed by Harff and Gurr (1987) as genocide, is estimated to have taken the lives of as many as 200,000, “about a third of the pre-invasion population” through indiscriminate bombardment, famine, disease and extrajudicial executions (Amnesty International 1985:6).

The United States has supported Indonesia since then uncritically, supplying arms despite mass killing and genocide in West Irian and East Timor. China has continued to arm the KR, which, many informed observers believe, still has the capacity to come back in Cambodia, given the negotiated truce concluded with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council. Thus, both superpowers defend their clients consistently.

To prevent genocide will require not only unmasking the perpetrators in the
act but exposing and reorienting superpower policies, as well as pressing patrons to take responsibility not only for their own acts but also for the acts of the client states they help put in power, arm, and support.

The readiness of major states (that is, the United States, China, Britain, France) to sanction conditions enabling the KR to return to power in Cambodia shows they have no interest in the consequences of their acts. Kuper asserted “that the sovereign territorial state claims, as an integral part of its sovereignty, the right to commit genocide, or engage in genocidal massacres, against peoples under its rule, and that the United Nations, for all practical purposes, defends this right” (1981:61). The patrons of such states have the means to change the contract of the sovereign territorial state with the international community and to intervene against and sanction insurgents and established armies which also perpetrate genocidal massacres. Were they to view genocidal massacres which propel hundreds of thousands to flee (such as, Bosnia-Herzegovina) as a violation as grave as that of states crossing international borders (such as, what Iraq did in Kuwait), they would do so.

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