FINAL SOLUTIONS:
THE CAUSES OF MASS KILLING AND GENOCIDE

by

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B.A. Political Science
Stanford University, 1993

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN POLITICAL SCIENCE
AT THE
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

FEBRUARY 2001

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Submitted to the Department of Political Science on September 7, 2000 in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

ABSTRACT

This dissertation seeks to identify the causes of genocide and mass killing. Many of the most widely accepted explanations of genocide and mass killing seek the causes of these events in the social structure, system of government or the collective psychology of the societies in which they take place. Although the factors highlighted by these explanations play an important role in many cases of mass killing, I find that society at large plays a smaller role in this kind of violence than is commonly assumed. Mass killing is rarely a popular enterprise in which neighbor turns against neighbor.

I argue that the causes of mass killing are best understood when the phenomenon is studied from a “strategic” perspective. The strategic approach suggests that the impetus for mass killing usually originates from a relatively small group of powerful political or military leaders and is often carried out without the active support of broader society. Mass killing is most accurately viewed as a goal-oriented policy -- a brutal strategy designed to accomplish leaders’ most important objectives, counter their most dangerous threats, and solve their most difficult problems. In order to understand and predict mass killing, therefore, this dissertation seeks to identify the specific factors and conditions that contribute to leaders’ decisions to launch mass killing.

Cases of mass killing in the Soviet Union, China, Cambodia, Armenia, Nazi Germany, Rwanda, Guatemala and Afghanistan are examined.

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Contents

Acknowledgements 7

1. Introduction: Definitions and Theories of Mass Killing and Genocide 9

2. Public Support and the Perpetrators of Mass Killing 39

3. A Strategic Approach to Mass Killing: Overview and Typology 77

4. Communist Mass Killings: The Soviet Union, China and Cambodia 111

5. Chauvinist Mass Killings: Ethnic Cleansing and Genocide in Nazi Germany, Armenia and Rwanda 161

6. Counter-Guerrilla Mass Killings: Guatemala and Afghanistan 217

Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been possible without the help and support of many friends, colleagues and institutions. My thesis committee, MIT Professors Stephen Van Evera, Barry Posen and Tom Christensen, deserve much of the credit for what is good about this dissertation. As for what is not so good, it is safe to assume that it would have been better if I had always taken their advice. Professor Myron Wiener also provided me with many valuable insights and criticisms. Although he passed away before this dissertation was completed, my thinking continues to be influenced by his ideas. Dr. Lynn Eden and Professor Scott Sagan gave me much-needed encouragement and sound advice on my research since I was an undergraduate. Ben Frankel also provided very helpful substantive and editorial suggestions.

Many colleagues have offered thoughtful comments on earlier drafts of this dissertation. My fellow graduate students at MIT took precious time away from their own research to help me improve this dissertation. I would especially like to thank Dan Byman, Jeremy Shapiro, Taylor Seybolt, Kelly Greenhill, Alan Kuperman, Andrea Gabbitas and Daryl Press for their assistance.

The MIT Department of Political Science, the MIT Security Studies Program and the MacArthur Foundation provided generous financial support for this research. My friends at the MIT Graphic Arts copy center, James, Richard and Rene, actually made me look forward to the countless hours I spent in front of the copy machine.

Tom Murphy proved a true friend to me throughout the process of writing this dissertation. In addition to quietly suffering through innumerable unsolicited lectures and diatribes on subjects of interest to no one but myself, he was invaluable as a proofreader and copy editor. My wife, Laura Hercod, also deserves my deepest thanks for her patience and support. Spending my days with the heartbreaking subject of this research would not have been possible without the emotional security and comfort she so kindly gave to me.

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother and father, Catherine and Dominic Valentino. I cannot express how enthusiastically they encouraged me, how generously they supported me and how profoundly they influenced me. Their love of learning has provided the example I have tried to follow in this dissertation and in my life.
CHAPTER 1
DEFINITIONS AND THEORIES OF MASS KILLING AND GENOCIDE

Introduction

Why do some conflicts result in the killing of massive numbers of unarmed civilians? This remains one of the most important questions facing humanity today. As the threat of global nuclear conflict recedes in the wake of the cold war, mass killing seems poised to regain its place as the greatest unnatural threat to human life. Episodes of mass killing in Cambodia, East Timor, Guatemala, The former Yugoslavia, Burundi and Rwanda are but the latest entries on a long list of atrocities extending back to earliest recorded history, even into the archeological record.¹ Mass killings have been perpetrated by and against a wide range of nations, cultures, forms of government, ethnic and religious groups. Between fifty million and one-hundred-and fifty million people have probably perished in over 60 episodes of mass killings during the twentieth century alone.² By comparison, international and civil wars have accounted for approximately forty-three million battle deaths during the same period.³ In light of this grisly balance sheet, it is

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² Estimate based on numerous sources. See tables 2-7 in chapter 2. The term “mass killing” is defined below. Using a more expansive definition, Rudolph Rummel estimates that between 76 million and 360 million (with a “prudent or conservative midrange estimate” of 169,198,000) people were killed in “democides” in the twentieth century. Rummel’s estimates are much higher than those of most other scholars. See: Rudolph Rummel, Statistics of Democide: Genocide and Mass Murder Since 1900 (Charlottesville: Center for National Security Law, 1997), p. 355, and Rudolph Rummel, Death by Government (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1994), pp. xviii–xx. Zbigniew Brzezinski estimates upwards of 80,000,000 politically motivated deaths (not including civilian or military deaths during war) during the twentieth century, see: Out of Control: Global Turmoil on the Eve of the Twenty-First Century (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1993), p. 17. Matthew White estimates 123,000,000 deaths from “genocide and tyranny” and “man-made famines” during the twentieth century, see: “Historical Atlas of the Twentieth Century,” (http://users.erols.com/mwhite28/warstats.htm), February, 2000. Using a more restricted definition, Barbara Harff estimates that between 6.7 and 16.1 million people were killed in genocides and “politicides” between 1945 and 1989, see: “Recognizing Genocides and Politicides,” in Helen Fein, ed., Genocide Watch (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 32–36.
³ William Eckhardt “Civilian Deaths in Wartime,” Bulletin of Peace Proposals, vol. 20, no. 1 (1989), p. 90. Eckhardt estimates a total of 85,527,000 war-related deaths between 1900-1988, of which approximately 50 percent were civilians. Estimates of civilian war-related deaths by Eckhardt appear to include episodes of intentional killing and therefore overlap considerably with genocide and mass killing. Rudolph Rummel estimates 34,021,000 total deaths from international and domestic wars between 1900-1987 not including “democide,” see: Rummel, Death by Government, p. 15. Zbigniew Brzezinski estimates 33,500,000 military and 54,000,000 civilian war-related deaths (excluding “deliberate genocide”) between 1900-1993, see: Out of Control: Global Turmoil on the Eve of the

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unfortunate that mass killing and genocide have received so little scholarly attention as a general class of events. At the end of the bloodiest century in human history, we still know very little about what accounts for this era’s violence or whether the next one hundred years will be as savage as the last.

Many of the most widely accepted explanations of genocide and mass killing seek the causes of these events in the structure, form of government or collective psychology of the societies in which they take place. In particular, many scholars have focused on the dangers of deep cleavages or dehumanizing attitudes between social groups, the psychological and political consequences of crises such as wars or revolutions and, most recently, the high concentration of power in nondemocratic political systems. Although these theories have generated many important insights, each also faces significant problems or limitations.

Structural factors such as the severity of ethnic, racial, national or religious divisions between social groups often fail to provide a strong indicator of mass killing. Indeed, some of the bloodiest mass killings in history have occurred in relatively homogenous societies, between groups of the same or closely related ethnicity, nationality, religion or class. Conversely, many deeply divided societies have survived for extended periods without experiencing mass killing. Nor can mass killing be fully explained by the presence of highly undemocratic governments or the occurrence of major social crises. While there is substantial evidence that these factors increase the risk that mass killing will occur, additional information is required to explain why so many undemocratic governments and social crises are not associated with massive violence against civilians.

In this dissertation I argue that the search for the causes of mass killing should begin with the specific goals and strategies of high political and military leadership, not with broad social or political structures. Previous studies of genocide have tended to dismiss explanations emphasizing the role of leaders on the grounds that such explanations cannot account for the participation of the rest of society in the genocidal process. Although leaders obviously cannot carry out genocide on their own, my research suggests that society at large plays a smaller role in mass killing than is commonly assumed. Mass killing is rarely a popular enterprise in which

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Twenty-First Century (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1993), pp. 9-10. Matthew White estimates 38,000,000 military deaths and 21,000,000 civilian deaths during wars in the twentieth century (excluding intentional killing).

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neighbor turns against neighbor. On the contrary, the impetus for mass killing usually originates from a relatively small group of powerful political or military leaders, not from the desires of the broader society. Even individual leaders can wield enormous influence. One struggles, for example, to imagine the Great Terror without Stalin, the Holocaust without Hitler or the Cultural Revolution without Mao.

An examination of the phenomenon of mass killing in the twentieth century reveals that the minimum level of social support necessary to carry out mass killing has been uncomfortably easy to achieve. Leaders have powerful methods to encourage the participation of the individuals tasked with carrying out mass killing and to secure the compliance, or at least the passivity of the rest of society. The broader public sometimes approves of mass killing, but often it does not. Whatever its position, the active support of a large portion of the public is usually not required to carry out mass killing. The killing itself is almost always performed by military or paramilitary organizations, often with little more than the passive acceptance of the rest of society -- including members of the perpetrators' own social groups.

In light of these unsettling truths, I argue that the causes of mass killing are best understood when the phenomenon is studied from a "strategic" perspective. The strategic approach suggests that mass killing is most accurately viewed as a goal-oriented policy -- a brutal strategy designed to accomplish leaders' most important objectives, counter their most dangerous threats and solve their most difficult problems. Like war, mass killing can be a powerful political and military tool. Unfortunately, states and other powerful groups throughout history have proved all too ready to use this tool when it seemed to serve their purposes.

Like war, however, leaders are likely to perceive mass killing as an attractive means to achieve their ends only in very specific circumstances and under very specific conditions. My research identifies several specific real-world scenarios that seem to generate powerful incentives for leaders to consider mass killing. Three of these scenarios have accounted for the great majority of mass killing in the twentieth century -- representing the most episodes of mass killing and the greatest number of victims. These three types of mass killing serve as the major focus of this dissertation.

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see: "Historical Atlas of the Twentieth Century."
First, mass killing can be an attractive strategy for regimes seeking to achieve the radical communization of their societies. Indeed, the most violent mass killings in human history have been carried out by communist regimes. I argue that radical communist regimes have been strongly associated with mass killing because the changes they have sought to bring about in their societies have resulted in the nearly complete material dispossession of vast numbers of people. Communist policies such as agricultural collectivization, for example, have often stripped millions of their homes, their property and their way of life. In practice, few people have been willing to submit to such severe changes without the most extreme levels of violence. Although communist leaders did not set out with the desire to kill millions of people, per-se, they did not shy away from this violence when they believed it was necessary to achieve their goals. Moreover, I argue that the scale of communist mass killings has been further magnified by communist leaders' adherence to the Marxist notion that resistance to communist policies is motivated by the immutable "class consciousness" of certain groups. This perception has often led radical communist leaders to seek the prophylactic suppression of entire social groups or "reactionary classes" even in the absence of any evidence of individual involvement in specific counterrevolutionary activities.

Second, regimes seeking to implement policies of large-scale ethnic cleansing also face significant incentives to consider mass killing. The mass killing of ethnic, national or religious groups has often been portrayed as the result of deep-seated hatred of victims by perpetrators or sometimes simply as killing for killing's sake. I argue, however, that these "chauvinist" mass killings occur when leaders come to believe that their victims pose a threat that can only be countered by removing them from society or by permanently destroying their ability to organize politically or militarily. This perception may be based on perpetrators' racist-ideological beliefs, or it may be a reaction to real, although often misperceived or exaggerated, threatening actions of victim groups. Even the most racist and hate filled perpetrators of mass killing, however, do not appear to view the murder of their victims as an end in itself. Rather, such violence has occurred only after leaders conclude that they have exhausted less violent ways for removing victims or their influence from society. Ethnic cleansing and mass killing are not one in the same, but like communist policies such as collectivization, they have often gone hand in hand because forcing people to abandon their homes, belongings and history for an unknown life in distant lands often
requires considerable coercion. Even after victims have been coerced into flight, the process and aftermath of large population movements itself can be deadly.

Third, regimes engaged in major counter-guerrilla wars have often found that a strategy of mass killing is the only effective way to defeat their enemies. In fact, my research finds that the intentional slaughter of civilians in the effort to defeat a guerrilla opponent is the most common impetus for mass killing in the twentieth century. I argue that guerrilla warfare has often led to mass killing because the unique nature of guerrilla tactics generates powerful incentives for counter-guerrilla forces to target civilians. Unlike conventional armies, guerrilla forces often rely directly on the civilian population for food, shelter, information and other services. Although the support of the civilian population is a significant asset to the guerrillas, it can also be a weakness. Unlike guerrilla forces themselves, the civilian population is virtually defenseless, largely immobile, and impossible to conceal. Leaders seeking to defeat a guerrilla opponent, therefore, may often find it easier to defeat the guerrillas by targeting their base of support in the people than by attempting to attack the guerrillas themselves. This brutal military strategy has often resulted in mass killing.

This dissertation is divided into seven chapters. The remainder of this chapter begins by examining the contentious debate surrounding the definition of the term “genocide.” I argue that many previous formulations of the term genocide are problematic and that a new term is needed to address the full range of events I wish to explore. I introduce and define the term, "mass killing," which represents the primary subject of this dissertation. This chapter also provides a brief review of several of the most influential existing theories of genocide and mass killing. I argue that while existing theories offer important insights, they tend to overemphasize the role of social and structural variables and neglect or underestimate the importance and power of small groups in causing such violence.

Chapter Two examines the role of public support for mass killing and addresses some questions about the psychology and motives of the individuals who actually carry it out. I argue that the level of public support necessary to carry out mass killing has been uncomfortably easy to achieve. I also argue that most rank-and-file perpetrators of mass killing are not driven primarily by a profound hatred of their victims, but rather by powerful situational influences and manipulation from their leaders.
Chapter Three presents the primary theoretical framework for this dissertation, which I refer to as the "strategic approach." I describe the specific circumstances in which leaders are likely to resort to mass killing. I also present a list of the complete universe of cases of mass killing in the twentieth century along with estimates of the number of people who perished in each episode. In addition, I describe the methodology that I will use to test the validity of the strategic approach in subsequent chapters.

Chapter Four applies the strategic approach to explain communist mass killings in the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia. Chapter Five examines "chauvinist" mass killings in Turkish Armenia, Nazi Germany and Rwanda. Chapter Six compares the predictions of the strategic approach to the history of counter-guerrilla mass killings in Guatemala and Afghanistan. Each of these chapters also briefly explores the history of several cases in which mass killing did not occur despite the presence of factors implicated by the strategic approach or other theories.

Chapter Seven summarizes the conclusions of this dissertation and discusses some implications of the strategic approach for preventing or limiting mass killing in the future. I argue that many suggestions for preventing mass killing are impractical or possibly counter-productive. Other strategies for limiting this kind of violence, particularly those involving a major commitment of military forces, have the potential to save lives, but seem unlikely to receive the necessary political support from Western publics or policy makers. Nevertheless, I suggest that, at least in some cases, strategies designed specifically to facilitate the escape of potential victims of mass killing may be practical, politically acceptable and effective.

Defining Mass Killing and Genocide

This dissertation seeks to develop theories that can explain the intentional killing of large numbers of noncombatants. No generally accepted terminology exists to describe this phenomenon. The most likely contender, of course, is the term "genocide." This term, however, is too limited to capture the wide range of events I wish to explore. The term "genocide" was first coined by Raphael Lemkin in the early 1930's. To create the term, Lemkin combined the Greek word "genos," meaning "race or tribe," with the Latin word "cide," which means "to kill."
According to Lemkin, genocide meant simply "the destruction of a nation or ethnic group." The United Nations Genocide Convention of 1948 limits the victims of genocide to "national, ethnical, racial or religious" groups. Many of the most infamous and important "genocidal" events of this century, however, including the deaths of between 9 million and 32 million people in the Soviet Union, between 5 million and 35 million in China, and between 1 million and 2 million in Cambodia, have not primarily involved a clash between different ethnic or national groups.

Because genocide is a term of general interest to society, however, and because it carries with it the weight of powerful moral sanction, many authors have been reluctant to give it up. The precise definition of the term has become the subject of intense debate. Since the Genocide Convention was adopted many authors have dissented from the UN definition arguing that the killing of political and other nonethnic groups should also be considered genocide. In academic works, however, it is useful if important terms coincide with their common English usage and etymology so that they can be readily understood, even by readers from outside the field. From a political perspective, it may be more effective to include political groups in the definition of genocide and in international agreements designed to prevent genocide. From a scholarly perspective, however, clarity is paramount.

In order to avoid this and other difficulties with the term genocide, this dissertation utilizes the term "mass killing"—defined here as the intentional killing of a significant number of the members of any group of noncombatants (as the group and its membership are defined by the

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6 Indeed, so powerful is the term that political activists have applied it to refer to policies such as abortion, interracial adoption and lack of government funding for AIDS treatment and research. For one example see: Robert Johnson and Paul S. Leighton, "American Genocide: The Destruction of the Black Underclass," in Craig Summers and Eric Markusen, eds., Collective Violence: Harmful Behavior in Groups and Governments (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), pp. 95-140. The use of the term "holocaust" has also generated a similar political debate. See: Samuel G. Freedman "Laying Claim to Sorrow Beyond Words," The New York Times, December 13, 1997, pp. A19, A21.

perpetrator).8 Victims of mass killing may be members of any kind of group (ethnic, political, religious, etc.) as long as they are noncombatants and as long as their deaths were caused intentionally. From this perspective, genocide is best defined as a specific subset of mass killing in which the victim group is defined on the basis of its ethnicity or nationality. Four aspects of the definition of mass killing require further elaboration.

First, mass killing focuses on “intentional killing” in order to distinguish acts of mass killing from accidental deaths including those unintentionally caused by the spread of disease or by the interposition of civilian populations between armies during war.9 This definition includes not only “direct” killings such as executions and gassings, but also deaths caused in more indirect ways when perpetrators deliberately create conditions expected to cause widespread death among specific groups. Such conditions may include forced marches or forced labor, the intentional destruction or blockade of civilian foodstuffs or the forced deportation of individuals to regions that lack the resources to support them.10

These deaths are considered intentional, however, only if the affected population is the direct object of a policy that results in widespread death. Thus, civilians killed by aerial bombardment would be considered victims of mass killing if their attackers intentionally aimed to kill civilians as part of an effort to coerce survivors to surrender. If the civilians were killed as

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8 This definition is similar in some ways to Rummel’s concept of “democide.” Rummel’s definition, however, includes the killing of any number of civilians, no matter how small. In addition, Rummel specifies that democide must be carried out by government groups, while the perpetrators of mass killing can belong to any kind of group. See: Rummel, Death by Government, pp. 31–43.

9 Disease can also be spread intentionally in as part of an effort to exterminate large numbers of people. European colonists, for example, appear to have made deliberate efforts to spread disease among native American populations, although it remains unclear whether these early experiments with biological warfare proved “successful.” See: William H. McNeill, Plagues and Peoples (Garden City: Doubleday, 1976), p. 222, and Russell Thornton, American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History since 1492 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), pp. 78–79.

the attackers attempted to destroy nearby military forces or infrastructure, however, these deaths are considered unintentional even though a certain level of civilian casualties might have been expected by the attacker. Deaths resulting from forced marches, forced labor or forced deportation are considered intentional if perpetrators could have reasonably expected such policies to result in widespread death -- even if perpetrators did not set out to kill these victims, per se. Unlike the civilian deaths caused by the bombing of factories and military installations, civilian populations are the direct objects of forced marches, forced labor and deportation, not merely the "collateral damage" of policies targeted against soldiers or physical structures.

The second aspect of the definition of mass killing that requires further specification is the meaning of "a significant number." Unlike many definitions of genocide, mass killing does not specify that perpetrators must intend to destroy an entire group or even a specific percentage of it.\footnote{Steven Katz, for example, argues that "the concept of genocide applies only when there is an actualized intent, however successfully carried out, to physically destroy an entire group...", see: Steven Katz, \textit{The Holocaust in Historical Context: The Holocaust and Mass Death Before the Modern Age} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 128 (italics in original).} Rather, for the purposes of this definition, a significant number is defined simply as at least 50,000 intentional deaths over the course of 5 years.\footnote{If an episode of mass killing continues for longer than five years, all deaths resulting from it are included as long as at least 50,000 civilians were killed in any five-year period during the episode. For example, approximately 80,000 civilians were intentionally killed during the civil war in El Salvador from 1979-1992. Although this figure represents an average of less than 50,000 deaths every five years, more than 50,000 of these occurred in the specific...} Selecting this numerical criterion for mass killing is to some extent arbitrary, but there are several reasons for choosing this particular limit. Limiting the definition to those involving more than 50,000 deaths over five years encompasses nearly all cases of popular interest, but still produces a data set of manageable proportions. In addition, this criterion is practical because it seems plausible to assume that theories which can explain events in which 50,000 or more people were killed can also explain events in which 30,000 or 20,000 died. If death toll estimates are inflated by 50 percent -- not at all unlikely given the nature of the data available for many cases of mass killing -- these theories might still be expected to provide an adequate explanation.

Limiting mass killing to the total annihilation of a group, on the other hand, would create a highly restrictive definition. In fact, by this definition genocide may never have been committed, only attempted. Even the attempt to destroy an entire group has been exceedingly

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rare. By this definition, the Holocaust itself would qualify as attempted genocide only if the victim group is defined as “European Jews,” since there is little evidence that the Nazis attempted to kill, for example, Jews living in the United States.\textsuperscript{13} Employing this kind of flexible definition of the victim group, however, opens the door to an infinite regress in which the attempted murder of a single individual, if he or she is the sole member of a narrowly defined group, could constitute genocide. Specifying that perpetrators must intend to kill a specific percentage of a victim group also can be problematic. In the case of very small groups, a definition based on specific percentages might include events in which perhaps a few hundred lives were lost -- still a great tragedy by any definition but hardly comparable to the more immense atrocities of this century.\textsuperscript{14} Such a definition also depends heavily on what kinds of groups qualify as victims. Yet one of the principal difficulties with previous attempts to define terms such as genocide has been that the definition of ethnic, national, or religious groups has proven nearly as contentious as the definition of genocide itself. Including political groups introduces even more difficulties. Does the killing of, say, the entire Romanov family by the Bolsheviks constitute genocide if we define the political group as “the Romanovs?” On the basis of what criteria are such groups to be excluded? Although not without its own limitations, a numerical criterion avoids each of these difficulties.

The third aspect of the definition of mass killing that must be clarified is the term “noncombatant.” A noncombatant is defined simply as any unarmed person who is not a member of a professional or guerrilla military group. Fourth and finally, mass killing specifies that the victim group is defined by the perpetrator because, in many cases, the victims do not perceive themselves to be members of the targeted group.

Mass killing as defined above encompasses a wide range of phenomena. Unlike genocide, mass killing applies to the intentional killing of noncombatants caused by practices ranging from aerial bombardment and starvation blockades during wars, to mass executions and

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\textsuperscript{13} The Nazis may well have \textit{wished} to kill American Jews, but for obvious reasons they took no concrete steps to do so. If such unactualized ambitions are sufficient to establish genocide the term would be stretched beyond all meaning. Thousands of members racist groups around the world undoubtedly harbor similar, and similarly unrealizable, desires today.

\textsuperscript{14} The populations of many indigenous tribes of central and South America, for example, comprise only a few thousand individuals.
gassing. What all of these disparate events share in common is the calculated decision to take the lives of vast numbers of unarmed human beings. It is this decision that separates mass killing from other forms of violence and what makes mass killing particularly disturbing. Understanding the motives for this decision is the primary object of this dissertation.

This broad formulation of mass killing might seem to expand the universe of cases to virtually unlimited proportions. In fact, this definition includes relatively few events that would not be encompassed by most definitions of genocide that incorporate the killing of non-ethnic groups.\(^{15}\) The additional events included under mass killing -- the intentional killing of large numbers of civilians as a military tactic during war -- have been relatively rare in this century. Because mass killing focuses only on events in which 50,000 or more lives were lost, it may actually result in a smaller universe of cases than many definitions of genocide that contain no numerical criteria.

Nevertheless, some scholars have objected to the incorporation of these events under the same terminology, claiming that their root causes and motivations are different.\(^{16}\) Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, for example, write that killing by aerial bombardment should not be considered genocide because "in this age of total war belligerent states make all enemy-occupied territory part of the theater of operations regardless of the presence of civilians. Civilians are regarded as combatants so long as their governments control the cities in which they reside."\(^{17}\) Similarly, Helen Fein argues that "To equate Auschwitz and Hiroshima belies the distinctive ends and root of each plan, focusing instead on the number of victims..."\(^{18}\) Lucy Dawidowicz claims that deaths caused by strategic bombing are not genocide because "America's decision to use the atomic bomb against Japan was not motivated by a wish to wipe out the Japanese people."

\(^{15}\) For a complete list of cases of mass killing in the twentieth century see tables 2-7 in chapter three.


\(^{17}\) Chalk and Jonassohn, *The History and Sociology of Genocide*, p. 24. This definition leads Chalk and Jonassohn to the perplexing conclusion that the civilian deaths caused by the use of siege warfare against cities such as Carthage qualify as genocide, while civilian deaths due to the aerial bombardment do not.

\(^{18}\) Helen Fein, *Genocide*, pp. xi-xii.
The purpose of the bombing was to demonstrate America’s superior military power and thus convince the Japanese that they had to capitulate, thereby ending the war and further killing.”

While the causes of events such as the Holocaust and the strategic bombings of the Second World War are surely distinct, this fact alone does not mandate that a separate term be used to describe each of them. Scholars regularly use the same term to describe phenomena with multiple causes. The word “war,” for example, is often defined very broadly by scholars and applied to a wide range of phenomena in its common English usage. Yet few scholars suggest that all wars have the same cause. Even scholars who adopt a more narrow definition of genocide usually accept that different examples of genocide may have different causes.

The broad definition of mass killing utilized in this dissertation is justified because it can yield important insights into its causes. Indeed, a major premise of this dissertation is that previous research into the causes of genocide often has been biased by a narrow focus on a very limited set of historical cases. This focus has tended to overemphasize explanations that stress structural variables within society or the nature of relations between groups. Examples such as the strategic bombing of Germany and Japan during the Second World War are particularly illuminating because they emphasize the instrumental and strategic motives for mass killing. This dissertation suggests that these motives played a central role in many more commonly accepted cases of genocide as well.

On Moral Equivalence

Because the term mass killing encompasses such a wide range of events, some readers undoubtedly will wish to draw moral distinctions among these cases. Most Americans, for example, continue to support the nuclear bombardment of Japan in the belief that the victims of the bombing were in some way guilty for not attempting to overthrow the Japanese regime or that the bombing served a greater good by ending the war without the need for an American invasion of the Japanese home islands. It is not the purpose of this dissertation to argue the appropriateness of such distinctions. The intentional killing of vast numbers of unarmed

19 Lucy S. Dawidowicz, The Holocaust and the Historians (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 17. As noted above, if genocide is limited to the attempt to eliminate an entire people, many commonly accepted cases of genocide would be excluded.

civilians, no matter what its cause, should raise profound moral questions. This is one of the most important reasons for studying mass killing. It should be emphasized, however, that referring to two distinct events as mass killing does not imply any moral equivalency between them. In scholarly works the same term is often applied to actions of differing moral rectitude. Scholars who study war or revolution, for example, need not imply that all wars or revolutions occupy the same moral domain. Readers should consult their own convictions about the subject of this dissertation and draw moral distinctions on a case-by-case basis.\textsuperscript{21}

\textit{The Literature on Genocide and Mass Killing}

There are few formal theories of genocide or mass killing. Although much has been written about specific episodes of mass killing and genocide, especially the Holocaust, little scholarship has been produced on mass killing as a general class of events. A relatively small body of more general, theoretical work has begun to accumulate, however, particularly during the last two decades.\textsuperscript{22}

Three broad families of writing on genocide and mass killing will be examined in the sections below. Each family identifies a different set of factors as central causes or important preconditions of genocide and mass killing.\textsuperscript{23} Because authors commonly suggest several different explanations for genocide and mass killing -- often without identifying when different explanations are likely to operate, or without addressing the contradictions between them -- a discussion of the literature is most productively organized around specific theoretical concepts and explanations rather than the writings of particular authors. Although these three families do not exhaust all scholarship on the subject of mass killing, the explanations they suggest and the small set of causal factors and conditions they emphasize appear repeatedly throughout the literature on mass killing and genocide.

\textsuperscript{21} Nor should the broad terminology advocated here should be taken to diminish the historical uniqueness of individual cases of mass killing. Any theoretical inquiry into the causes of mass killing requires a degree of historical generalization that can never do justice to the unique human tragedies that define each of these events.

\textsuperscript{22} For a comprehensive review of the literature on mass killing and genocide, see: Fein, \textit{Genocide}, pp. 32–50. A useful, if somewhat dated, review can be found in Kuper, \textit{Genocide}, pp. 40–56.
The first family of writing on the causes of genocide and mass killing focuses on the importance of deep social cleavages between groups as a primary cause or precondition of genocide and mass killing. A second family suggests that factors such as war, revolution and national crisis provide the spark for mass killing. The third family of writing identifies the concentration of political power in certain forms of government as the crucial factor for understanding mass killing. Although each of these families offers important insights and observations about mass killing, I argue that none provides a fully satisfying explanation for this kind of violence.

*The Plural Society Theory: Social Cleavages, and Dehumanization*

One of the factors most commonly cited as a central cause or precondition of genocide or mass killing is the presence of deep divisions between groups within society. Explanations of mass killing that focus on the impact of these “social cleavages” are referred to collectively in this dissertation as the plural society theory. The plural society theory is most closely associated with Leo Kuper, a pioneer of comparative genocide studies, although several other scholars have proposed similar explanations. Social cleavages are defined variously with reference to unusually deep ethnic, cultural, religious or class divisions, high levels of overt or de facto discrimination, political or economic exclusion and distrust or hatred between groups. A related group of theories focuses specifically on the dehumanizing character of relations between groups as a principal cause or precondition of genocide and mass killing. According to different

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23 These three families are, of necessity, artificial. Authors referred to within each family are not necessarily in complete agreement with each other and many authors combine factors and explanations from more than one category.

24 Kuper, *Genocide*. The concept of the “plural society” does not originate with Kuper, although he appears to be the first to apply it specifically to the study of genocide. For a brief review of the origins and problems of plural society theories in the study of ethnic conflict more generally see: Donald L Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 135–139. Helen Fein similarly asserts that “ethnic stratification” is an important predisposing factor for some types of genocide. See: Helen Fein, “Accounting for Genocide after 1945: Theories and Some Findings,” *International Journal on Group Rights*, vol. 1 (1993), pp. 88–92. Significant elements of the plural society theory are also adopted by several authors discussed in sections below.


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authors, social cleavages lead to genocide and mass killing by polarizing society, increasing the likelihood of inter-group conflict, sparking rebellions by oppressed groups, facilitating the identification of enemies, or by eroding norms of moral responsibility toward others.

There can be little doubt that the perpetrators of mass killing often consider their victims different, inferior, or even less human than themselves. It is hard to imagine how anyone could participate in the wholesale slaughter of a group of defenseless people he believed to be exactly like himself. Nor is it surprising that the victims of mass killing and genocide are often subjected to less violent forms of economic and political discrimination before they are killed. These observations, however, need not lead us to conclude that preexisting social cleavages or negative attitudes of victim groups are prime, independent causes or crucial preconditions of mass killing as the plural society theory suggests. A closer look at the history of mass killing indicates that unusually deep, preexisting social cleavages are neither sufficient nor universally necessary conditions for mass killing. Conversely, even the most severe social cleavages do not appear to provide a reliable indicator of mass killing. This is not to deny that cleavages between social groups often play an important role in the causal process of mass killing. Yet history suggests these attitudes need not be unusually severe to allow such violence to take place.

Although some level of discrimination, hatred or dehumanization are present between groups in nearly all cases of mass killing, these divisive forces seem to plague relations between at least some groups in almost every society. In order to distinguish peaceful societies from those prone to genocide and mass killing, therefore, most variants of the plural society theory focus only on unusually severe social cleavages. Yet proponents of the plural society theory offer surprisingly little evidence that social cleavages are more intense in societies that have experienced mass killing than in those that have not. Recent quantitative research on ethnic conflict and genocide has found little correlation between the severity of ethnic, social, economic and cultural differences and the likelihood of large-scale violence between groups.²⁶

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While reference to some level of pre-existing social cleavages may be necessary to explain most cases of mass killing, even low-level hatred or discrimination does not appear to be a universal pre-condition for this kind of violence. Indeed, history provides several striking examples of mass killing between members of similar social and economic groups with little history of unusually intense discrimination or dehumanization. Mass killings carried out by communist governments in the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia -- three of the bloodiest episodes of mass killing in history -- are especially illustrative. Although specific ethnic and national groups were singled out in each of these cases, vast numbers of victims were also drawn from dominant social groups. Ethnic and national minorities appear to have been targeted primarily because of suspected resistance to communist rule, not because of their ethnic or national affiliations per se. Nor can deep cleavages between economic classes explain the violence in these countries. Victims in all three states were often drawn from the same social and economic groups as their executioners. In the infamous Khmer Rouge prison known as S-21, for example, David Chandler finds that the prisoners were “socially and ethnically indistinguishable from the people who held them captive.” All three regimes eventually devoured large numbers of their own highest-ranking members. Nowhere was this more evident than during the Great Terror in Soviet Union. Many of the regime’s most prominent political and military elite were


executed or deported to the Gulag to die. Not even the Soviet secret police, the primary organ of the Terror, managed to escape the violent purges.\textsuperscript{31}

Even in the countryside, where the Soviet, Chinese and Cambodian governments attributed the massive violence during land reform and the collectivization of agriculture to "class warfare," there is surprisingly little evidence that class cleavages were stronger than in other societies which never experienced mass killing.\textsuperscript{32} Whatever the degree of economic and social divisions in the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia, these cleavages do not appear to have resulted in unusually intense hatred or dehumanizing attitudes between the peasant classes at the center of much of the violence. On the contrary, communist leaders in all three countries severely overestimated the degree of antagonism between peasant classes and lamented their inability to draw on preexisting class hatreds to encourage more widespread participation in attacks on enemies of communist rule.\textsuperscript{33} Ties of family, clan and village frequently proved stronger than those of class. When spontaneous support for violence against communist enemies failed to materialize, the poorest segments of the peasantry were accused of lacking "class consciousness."

This pattern is well illustrated by Jean-Louis Margolin description of the conditions prevailing in rural China prior to the implementation of Mao's bloody land reform:

\textsuperscript{31} Conquest, \textit{The Great Terror}, pp. 179–180, 279.


In comparison with the extreme social contrasts found in Europe before 1945 and still visible in much of South America even today, rural Chinese society was in fact relatively egalitarian. Conflict between rich and poor was far from being the principal cause of the [land reform violence]... Communists, including Mao himself, began to play at social engineering by trying to artificially polarize carefully defined rural groups and then decreeing that this polarization was the major cause of peasant discontent.  

Indeed, social cleavages and dehumanizing attitudes often seem more like an effect of mass killing than an independent cause or precondition of such violence. It is easy to overemphasize the importance of cleavages between groups after violent conflict has broken out. Widespread violence tends to exacerbate the negative aspects of group relations, making it harder to appreciate long periods of relative harmony and cooperation between groups. Severe discrimination, moral exclusion and dehumanizing attitudes, however, are often the result of a conscious strategy designed to facilitate violence against victim groups, not preexisting features of society. Even in relatively homogenous societies, powerful groups have proved capable of dehumanizing their enemies, intensifying existing social divisions or even inventing new ones out of whole cloth. In the Soviet Union, for example, violence during the forced collectivization campaign of 1929–32 was directed against the so-called kulaks. Yet it is now widely recognized that the peasant population of the Soviet Union had little concept of the kulak as an economic class until communist propagandists seized upon it in the effort to spark class warfare. This device was even more transparent in Cambodia where Khmer Rouge propaganda railed against the subhuman “new people,” a completely manufactured social group consisting of businessmen, city dwellers, foreigners, and virtually anyone with an education.

The intentional manipulation of group relations also played a role in the recent violence between Serbs, Croats and Muslims in the former Yugoslavia. Prior to the outbreak of large-

scale violence in 1991, overt discrimination does not appear to have been especially severe or pervasive. Ethnic relations, while not entirely harmonious, did not seem significantly worse than relations between ethnic groups in many other countries. Indeed, prior to the war, there was a greater degree of inter-marriage between Serbs and Croats in Croatia than between blacks and whites in the United States. Most observers of the conflict seem to agree that although some animosity and prejudice did exist between ethnic groups before the war, for the great majority of Yugoslavians these feelings were not intense enough to provoke violence until Yugoslav (especially Serbian) political leaders launched inflammatory rhetorical campaigns deliberately designed to exacerbate distrust among ethnic groups and mobilize for their people for war.

Even some mass killings perpetrated by Nazi Germany present significant difficulties for the plural society theory. The Nazi forced “euthanasia” campaign, for example, killed as many as 275,000 physically disabled, mentally ill or simply destitute Germans, including thousands of children. Yet there is little reason to suspect that prior to the Nazi seizure of power most Germans felt differently about their sick and poor than did the people of other nations -- although high ranking members of the Nazi party clearly did. In fact, German propagandists were compelled to try to overcome the public opposition to forced euthanasia with a propaganda campaign designed to dehumanize the chronically or mentally ill and to remind Germans of the burdens that such “life unworthy of life” imposed on society.

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42 Michael Burleigh, Death and Deliverance: ‘Euthanasia’ in Germany 1900–1945 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 183–219. Negative public reactions to the euthanasia program, especially from the church, may have played a role in speeding the end of the official program in 1941. Burleigh, however, argues that “the ‘euthanasia’ programme was not halted because of some local difficulties with a handful of bishops, but because its team of practiced murderers were needed to carry out the infinitely vaster enormity in the East” and

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Conversely, as some proponents of the plural society theory acknowledge, even societies torn by exceptionally deep social cleavages can exist for long periods without erupting in mass killing. Such societies actually appear to be quite common. Many historians, for example, agree that during the late 1800s and early 1900s anti-Semitic attitudes and discrimination directed against Jewish minorities in Russia, Poland, France and other European nations ran even deeper than in Germany itself. Jews in Germany were unquestionably the object of significant discrimination and hatred, but Michael Marrus concludes that “it is highly unlikely, by any scale of judgment, that Germany would be deemed the most anti-Semitic country in Europe” prior to the Nazi seizure of power. Sarah Gordon argues that “had the German population been uniquely rabid in its hatred of Jews, it is inconceivable that Jews could have fared so well, especially compared to Jews other nations.” Jews outside of Germany, however, avoided genocide until after the Nazi invasion of the Second World War.

African Americans living in the Southern United States prior to the 1960s also escaped genocide despite being subjected to overt discrimination, intense economic and political exclusion, dehumanizing hatred and violence by significant segments of society. Likewise, Palestinians living in Israel (and Israeli occupied territories) and black Africans in apartheid era South Africa each suffered extremely high levels of hatred and discrimination for decades without becoming victims of genocide. Thus, René Lemarchand’s comparative study of the relatively peaceful democratic transition of South Africa and the genocidal regimes of Rwanda and Burundi finds that “if all three states are (or were) hierarchically structured societies, only in South Africa was the once politically dominant minority judicially, culturally, and racially distinct from the African majority. History, language, and institutionalized discrimination

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because the organizers of the euthanasia campaign “had slightly exceeded their initial target of killing one chronic patient per thousand inhabitants of Germany” (p. 180). An unofficial euthanasia programa was continued in the greater secrecy provided by remote concentration camps, see: Marlis G. Steinert, Hitler’s War and the Germans: Public Mood and Attitude During the Second World War (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1977), p. 334.


46 Norman Finkelstein, for example, concludes that “there was much less popular participation in and support for violent racist incitement in Nazi Germany than in the American South.” See: Norman G. Finkelstein and Ruth Bettina Birn, A Nation on Trial: The Goldhagen Thesis and Historical Truth (New York: Holt, 1998), p. 46.
conspired to mark them off from each other in ways unknown in Rwanda and Burundi." These are but a few examples of what appears to be an extremely common pattern of social relations.

The evidence cited above strongly suggests that unusually severe, preexisting social cleavages are neither universally necessary nor sufficient conditions for genocide or mass killing. That said, this conclusion does not rule out a role for social cleavages or dehumanization in the causal process of mass killing. The influence of these factors, however, appears to be indirect and highly conditional. It seems likely that the existence of pre-existing social cleavages and dehumanizing attitudes play a facilitating role in mass killing, making it relatively easier for perpetrators to recruit accomplices and secure the support of the rest of society. On the other hand, the history of mass killing in this century suggests that, when carefully defined, the impact of social cleavages on the likelihood of mass killing is relatively weak. Explanations that highlight these factors are especially ill equipped to explain some of the most important and violent episodes of mass killing in this century -- mass killings carried out by communist regimes.

The severity of preexisting social cleavages, therefore, is unlikely to provide a reliable indicator of a society's susceptibility to mass killing. As I will document in Chapter Two, although preexisting social cleavages may make the perpetrators' job somewhat easier, the evidence suggests that this task is not as difficult as is commonly assumed. Preexisting differences, discrimination or hatred need not be unusually deep to permit such violence. Relations between some social groups in many, perhaps even most, societies seem to contain the necessary raw material. Other important factors and conditions, therefore, are required to explain why mass killing occurs in some societies and not others.

**National Crises and Mass Killing**

A second prominent family of explanations of mass killing and genocide suggests that wars, revolutions, severe economic depressions and other catastrophes (hereafter referred to as

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48 Helen Fein, for example, concludes that although she found "no linear or other clear relationship between discrimination and genocide, " deep discrimination and political exclusion between groups may nevertheless play an important role in provoking genocide by increasing the likelihood of rebellion by repressed groups and, in turn, the likelihood of a genocidal response by the state. See: Fein. "Accounting for Genocide after 1945," p. 88.
"national crises") provide the critical spark for mass killing. As these authors document, nearly all cases of mass killing follow or occur during some kind of national crisis. Explanations for the correlation between national crises and mass killing can be divided into two primary groups. The first group, referred to here as the scapegoat theory, focuses on the social-psychological effects of national crises as the trigger for genocide. The second group of explanations, referred to as the political opportunity theory, focuses on the opportunities and incentives for mass killing generated by national crises.

The Scapegoat Theory

The scapegoat theory is the most common and carefully articulated social-psychological theory of mass killing. This approach combines features of sociological research, often including some of the same factors and explanations highlighted by the plural society theory, with insights from individual and social-psychology. Proponents of the scapegoat theory claim that mass killing results when societies wracked by severe crises seek to place the blame for these hardships on minority groups or powerless majorities. According to these theories, individuals in societies suffering from exceptionally difficult life conditions have a powerful psychological need to understand and identify the sources of their problems and frustrations. Proponents of the scapegoat theory argue that choosing a scapegoat allows individuals to comprehend the source of their problems, to believe that these problems can be predicted and controlled, to project their own fears or insecurities onto others and to escape feelings of guilt and personal responsibility for life’s difficulties.

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49 These two explanations are not exclusive and some authors suggest that elements of both may be valid.
51 Specifically, many scholars draw on “frustration aggression theory” which suggests that humans respond aggressively when they feel threatened or are unable to achieve important goals. This hypothesis was originally proposed by John Dollard and his colleagues in the late 1930’s. See: John Dollard, L. Doob, N. Miller, O.H. Mowrer, and R. R. Sears, Frustration and Aggression (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939). For more recent examples and refinements of frustration aggression theory see: R. A. Baron, Human Aggression (New York: Plenum, 1977), and Leonard Berkowitz, Aggression: A Social Psychological Analysis (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962).
National crises do not inevitably or even usually lead to mass killing. While national crises are relatively common events, mass killing is rare. Thus, most proponents of the scapegoat theory suggest that certain aspects of the perpetrator’s society and culture predispose some states or societies to scapegoating and ultimately to mass killing. A wide variety of different factors have been proposed, but nearly all proponents of the scapegoat theory accept the premise that unusually strong, preexisting social cleavages make the resort to mass killing more likely in the wake of national crises.

Although the historical record largely confirms the scapegoat theory’s prediction that mass killings should occur after national crises, other evidence casts doubt on the theory’s explanation of the causal relationship between these events. First of all, as discussed above in reference to the plural society theory, unusually deep cleavages between social groups are not necessary for mass killing to take place. Genocide and mass killing commonly occur between members of similar social groups with little history of discrimination or violent conflict. This finding is damaging to the scapegoat theory because the theory suggests that preexisting social cleavages are a crucial factor which distinguish the relatively few societies that respond to national crises with mass killing from the great majority which do not.

More importantly, historical evidence casts doubt on the relevance of the basic psychological mechanisms described by many proponents of the scapegoat theory. The scapegoat theory suggests that mass killing serves to alleviate the psychological frustration and fear generated by national crises in society at large. If this claim is correct, we should find that mass killing is usually a popular undertaking among members of dominant social groups. Members of these groups should demonstrate spontaneous support for the killings.

History provides little confirming evidence for these propositions. Mass killing is often carried out with little public support, even from members of dominant social groups. It is difficult to imagine, for example, how the Great Terror in the Soviet Union could be characterized as a reaction to the desires of Soviet society. Scholars of the Terror often portray this episode as the impetus of a single man.52 Those in the general population who supported the


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arrests, show trials and purges did so largely on the basis of propaganda, forced "confessions" and other fabricated evidence supplied to them by the Soviet government. Fear, coercion and blackmail played a role in securing the participation of at least some of Stalin's accomplices.\textsuperscript{53} Many seem to have understood that they too could become victims at any moment.

Other cases of mass killing in countries such as Cambodia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Algeria (since 1992) and Afghanistan (since 1989), to name only a few, also took place with very little public support. These killings were not driven by "bottom-up" public discontent or a popular desire to blame others, but rather by powerful political and military interests working from the top down. Members of dominant ethnic, national or religious groups were often victims as well as perpetrators of these crimes.

Even the Holocaust offers considerable confounding evidence for the scapegoat theory. This evidence is particularly relevant since proponents of the scapegoat theory often cite the Holocaust as the paradigmatic example of this explanation. Although a small group of authors, most notably Daniel Goldhagen, assert that most Germans wished to see the Jews exterminated, the weight of scholarly opinion firmly opposes this interpretation.\textsuperscript{54} Research on German public opinion before and during the Nazi era refutes Goldhagen's conclusions and the scapegoat theory's implication that genocide should be broadly popular among members of the perpetrators' social group. Although no serious scholar disputes that anti-Semitism was

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\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{53} See: Tucker, \textit{Stalin in Power}, pp. 447-450.}

prevalent in German society before the Holocaust, most agree that the majority of the German population stopped well short of calling for the extermination of the Jews.\(^5\) Hitler, the Nazi regime and many of the limited anti-Jewish measures they promoted before the war were broadly popular, but forced deportation and systematic extermination received much less support.

Michael Marrus’s review of Holocaust scholarship concludes that “historians have been unable to identify a murderous impulse outside the Nazi leadership.... Popular strains of antisemitism were never strong enough on their own to support violent persecution in the modern period.”\(^6\)

The contention that most Germans supported the mass killing of the Jews is also contradicted by the behavior of the German people and the Nazi government itself. Spontaneous violence against Jews remained rare even after the Nazis gained power. Far from reacting to the impulses of the German population, as proponents of scapegoat theory suggest, Nazi leaders felt they had to intensify and disseminate anti-Semitic feelings through a sustained propaganda campaign beginning from the moment they seized power. Even this constant barrage of anti-Semitic slogans and images, however, appears to have been unable to convince the majority of Germans that the Jews should be killed (although it probably reduced their willingness to defend the Jews). The Nazi government ultimately felt compelled to try to keep the final solution secret from the German people.\(^7\) According to Ian Kershaw, the propaganda campaign was


\(^6\) Marrus, *The Holocaust in History*, p. 94.

\(^7\) Some scholars have suggested that German leaders believed that this secrecy was necessary not because they suspected that the German people would not support the killing, but because Nazi leaders feared adverse foreign reactions. Although negative foreign reaction was undoubtedly a serious consideration, high-ranking Nazi leaders including Heinrich Himmler, Martin Bormann, and Joseph Goebbels expressed the need for secrecy in terms of the German people themselves. See: Roger Manvell and Heinrich Fraenkel, *Himmler* (New York: Putnam’s, 1965), p. 197 and Steinert, *Hitler’s War and the Germans*, pp. 141–142. Steinert suggests that the strong desire of German leadership to keep the genocide secret may have stemmed in part from the negative reaction of the German public to the “euthanasia” killings of the incurably sick and mentally ill 1939–41 (p. 83). It should be noted that Nazi efforts to keep the genocide secret ultimately failed. By the end of the war most Germans had probably surmised that Jews were being killed in large numbers. For more detailed analysis of what contemporary Germans knew about the Holocaust see: Eric H. Johnson, *Nazi Terror. The Gestapo, Jews, and Ordinary Germans* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

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unsuccessful in generating widespread support for extermination precisely because -- and contrary to the predictions of the scapegoat theory -- most Germans did not see the Jews as responsible for their own hardships. Rather, the "constant barrage of propaganda failed to make Jews the prime target of hatred for most Germans, simply because the issue seemed largely abstract, academic, and unrelated to their own problems." \(^{58}\)

In the final analysis, the scapegoat theory seems to do a better job of explaining the psychology and actions of the individual leaders who conceive of and organize mass killing than it does of the broader societies over which these individuals rule. Individual leaders often appear firmly convinced that their victims are responsible for causing great suffering. Yet mass killing can occur even if this suffering is not experienced by the rest of society and even if the belief that the victims are responsible for this suffering is not accepted by the majority of society. Hitler, for example, clearly blamed the Jews for Germany’s loss in World War I and for the inter-war economic disaster. Many authors have also speculated that Hitler’s unique personal sufferings, rather than those common to most Germans, may have encouraged him to seek a scapegoat in the Jews. \(^{59}\) Although national crises may provoke some members of society to seek violent revenge on scapegoats, the history of mass killing suggests that this psychological reaction is far from universal. This path to mass killing becomes operative only when such individuals achieve positions of high political or military authority with the intent to act on these feelings. This outcome appears to be so rare relative to the number national crises as to provide virtually no basis on which to predict mass killing.

**Political Opportunity**

Another family of explanations which focuses on the effects of national crises suggests that these events encourage genocide not because they prompt societies to seek scapegoats, but because these events provide the incentives, opportunity and cover for revolutionary elites.

\(^{58}\) Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich*, p. 274.

seeking to consolidate political power or implement genocidal ideologies.\footnote{Krains, "State Sponsored Mass Murder," Robert Melson, \textit{Revolution and Genocide: The Origins of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). Melson's work seeks to explain only a small set of "total domestic genocides" which include the Armenian genocide, the Holocaust, the genocide of the Gypsies, mass killing during the Soviet collectivization of agriculture and the Cambodian mass killing.} Indeed, wars, revolutions and severe economic depressions can create the opportunity for relatively small, radical groups to assume control of the powerful political and military machinery of the state. From this perspective, Germany's military defeat and economic collapse are relevant to the Holocaust not because they induced the German people to blame the Jews for their problems, but because they seriously undermined the fledgling German democratic political system. These crises contributed to the creation of political factions, destabilized the democratic process, raised the specter of communism and encouraged a minority of voters to consider radical solutions (including both communism and fascism) to Germany's economic problems, thereby easing the way for extremely radical groups such as the Nazis to assume control of the German state.

This process is not unique to Germany. The political, military and economic chaos caused by the First World War, for example, undoubtedly helped the Bolsheviks gain power in Russia. The turmoil wrought by twenty-five years of conflict in Southeast Asia, culminating in the American invasion and bombardment of Cambodia, helped create conditions in which the tiny Khmer Rouge was able to seize power.\footnote{See: Ben Kiernan, "Roots of Genocide: New Evidence on the U.S. Bombardment of Cambodia," \textit{Cultural Survival}, vol. 14, no. 3 (1990), pp. 20–22.} National crises, especially wars, can also create situations which force even moderate leaders to consider the most brutal options available to them. The intentional bombardment of German and Japanese civilians during the Second World War and France's bloody tactics during the Algerian war of independence were not the work of radical dictators, but of democratically elected leaders.

Although the political opportunity theory offers a convincing explanation of the correlation between national crises and mass killing, it ultimately offers little leverage for understanding or predicting genocide and mass killing. National crises may raise substantially the probability of mass killing relative to more stable societies. The absolute likelihood that a national crisis will spark such violence, however, is extremely small.\footnote{Krains's research, for example, finds that even societies experiencing both civil and international wars during the same four-year period (the combination of factors emphasized by Melson) have only approximately a three to eight percent chance of experiencing genocide/politicide during that time. Krain's strongest result finds an increase of}
the majority of national crises, be they wars (won or lost), civil wars, revolutions or severe economic depressions, do not lead to mass killing. Most proponents of the political opportunity theory acknowledge this limitation. Unfortunately, few have devoted much effort to identifying and elaborating the specific conditions and factors that determine when political elites are likely to take advantage of the genocidal opportunities presented by national crises and when these crises are likely to pass more peacefully. Without this information, we can neither fully understand mass killing nor predict with confidence when it is likely to occur.

Democratic and Mass Killing

The third and final group of authors examined here search for the causes of genocide and mass killing in the form of government of the societies in which it takes place. Rudolph Rummel is the most forceful advocate of this explanation of mass killing. According to what Rummel terms “the power principle”

The more power a government has, the more it can act arbitrarily according to the whims and desires of the elite, and the more it will make war on others and murder its foreign and domestic subjects. The more constrained the power of governments, the less it will aggress on others…

Rummel and others have marshaled strong evidence to demonstrate that democratic forms of government are associated with lower levels of mass killing than other governmental systems, especially totalitarian and communist regimes. The fact that democracies engage in less mass killing of their own citizens than other forms of government is one of the most

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between 17 percent and 19 percent in the probability of genocide/politicide when decolonization and civil war occur in the same five-year period. Krain, “State Sponsored Mass Murder,” pp. 346–355. Melson likewise acknowledges that his theory does “not imply that circumstances of revolution and war will invariably produce total domestic genocide…[R]evolutions that lead to wars create conditions that are potentially genocidal. Whether such conditions in fact lead to genocide depends on the ideology of the perpetrators, the identity of the victims, and the other options that may be open or closed to ideological vanguards that have seized power following a revolution. See: Melson, Revolution and Genocide, pp. 278–279.


64 Rummel, Death by Government, pp. 1–2.

carefully documented findings of the theoretical literature on mass killing. Nevertheless, two problems limit the relevance of this insight.

First, as Rummel acknowledges, although democracies almost never kill their own citizens, they do engage in mass killing during foreign wars and in their own colonies abroad. The United States killed approximately 128,000 civilians, perhaps most of them intentionally, during its occupation of the Philippines from 1899–1902.66 The United States also intentionally killed between 268,157 and 900,000 Japanese civilians during the Second World War and, in collaboration with Great Britain, between 300,000 and 600,000 Germans.67 Democratic France, in concert with native Algerian allies, killed hundreds of thousands of civilians during its war in Algeria and perhaps 250,000 in Vietnam.68 In both cases many, if not most, of these deaths were intentional. Democracies have also been known to use mass killing against domestic groups not defined as citizens. The United States, for example, waged a relentless series of wars on the indigenous people of North America, a process that eventually resulted in their near total extermination.69 Democratic states have also provided economic and military assistance to foreign regimes engaged in mass killing.70

Rummel writes that “all this killing of foreigners by democracies may seem to violate the power principle, but really it underlines it. For, in each case, the killing was carried out in a highly undemocratic fashion: in secret, behind a conscious cover of lies and deceit, and by agencies and power holders that had the wartime authority to operate autonomously.”71 This argument is misleading. Actions such as the bombings of Japan and Germany and the wars against the American Indians were not kept secret from the general population. Not only was the

public aware of these events, they strongly supported them. The majority of Americans continue to support the atomic bombing of Japan today even now that the civilian death toll is widely known. Rummel is surely correct in his assessment that democracies engage in less mass killing because, unlike other forms of government, democracies guarantee the basic rights of their citizens and require a much higher degree of public support for their policies. This does not mean that democratic publics will never support mass killing, or that they will do so only on the basis of misinformation.

A second and more important limitation of Rummel’s power principle is that it provides relatively little ability to predict when mass killing will occur. As Rummel acknowledges, power is a necessary but not sufficient condition for mass killing. While it is important to understand that democracies engage in less killing than other forms of government, it remains true that even the most undemocratic regimes do not engage in mass killing most of the time. In light of this observation and the fact that democracies do resort to mass killing under certain circumstances, we know that other important factors and processes must also be at work. A more functional theory of mass killing should specify the conditions under which some groups -- democratic or otherwise -- decide to exterminate their opponents rather than deal with them peacefully.

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71 Rummel, Death By Government, p. 16.

72 A public opinion poll taken after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki indicated that less than five percent of Americans felt America should not have used the bomb and 23 percent felt America actually should have dropped more before permitting Japan to surrender. Cited in Elliot Aronson, Timothy D. Wilson, and Robin M. Akert, Social Psychology: The Heart and the Mind (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), p. 483.


74 Rummel, Death by Government, p. 20.

75 KRAIN, for example, finds “power concentration by itself has little effect on the probability of onset” of genocides and politicides, see: “State Sponsored Mass Murder,” p. 347.
CHAPTER 2

PUBLIC SUPPORT AND THE PERPETRATORS OF MASS KILLING

Introduction

In the early morning hours of July 13, 1942 approximately 500 men from German Reserve Police Battalion 101 surrounded the small Polish town of Józefów with orders to shoot anyone attempting to escape.¹ The policemen entered the town, rounded up every Jewish man, woman and child, and escorted them to the marketplace. Those victims too sick or too old to walk were shot, as was anyone who tried to resist. Male Jews of working age were separated from their families and prepared for deportation to slave labor camps. The rest of the villagers were loaded in small groups into trucks and transported to the forest a short distance away. They were ordered to lie face down on the ground. The policemen then methodically shot each person in the back of the neck. Women were murdered with their infant children. The killing lasted all day and into the evening. When it was over, the policemen were literally covered in the blood of their victims. Approximately 1,500 bodies littered the forest floor.

Events such as this have been a disturbingly common feature of twentieth century history. Similar massacres have been visited upon villages in Turkish Armenia, China under the Japanese occupation, Indonesia, Guatemala, Algeria, the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda and dozens of other countries throughout the world. Why do societies allow such atrocities to take place? Why do the individuals charged with carrying out these bloody operations agree to take part in the murder of defenseless civilians? These are the most troubling and difficult questions confronting scholars of genocide and mass killing. Although there can be no wholly satisfying explanation for this kind of human cruelty, this chapter seeks to develop a better understanding of the nature of public support for mass killing and the motives and mentality of the people who carry it out.

This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section analyzes public support for mass killing. In this section I argue that the active support of the majority of the public, although sometimes present, is not generally necessary for mass killing to take place. The actual violence of mass killing is typically carried out by a relatively small group of individuals, usually members of a military, paramilitary or police organization. All that is asked of the rest of society is passive compliance or indifference. The second section explores the motives and psychology of the “rank and file” perpetrators of mass killing. In this section I examine evidence from cases of mass killing, especially the Holocaust. I also discuss the findings of several psychological experiments that have important implications for understanding the behavior of these individuals. I find that although there is a wide range of motives for participation in mass killing, situational factors such as authority and peer pressure, rather than preexisting hatreds or convictions, provide the best explanation for the behavior of most perpetrators. The third section analyzes the implications of the findings of the first two sections. I argue that the limited degree of public support necessary for mass killing and the relative ease with which individuals can be led to kill means that small groups or even individual leaders can wield a determining influence over both the onset and the process of mass killing. This conclusion, in turn, suggests that the effort to understand and predict mass killing should begin with an analysis of the goals, beliefs and motives of these groups and their leaders, not the societies from which they are drawn or the individuals whom they recruit to carry out their bloody work.

Public Support

Perhaps one reason why so many scholars have searched for the causes of mass killing in the structure or psychology of society at large is due to an implicit assumption that a very large segment of society must be involved in, or at least actively support the implementation of mass killing for such violence to be carried out. Indeed, this belief has even led some authors to suggest that societies involved in mass killing should be considered collectively mentally ill.²

This assumption is unfounded. Although the general public sometimes supports mass killing, often it does not. As Rudolph Rummel’s research demonstrates, only democratic governments require broad-based, active public support for their policies and the vast majority of mass killings are not carried out by democracies.\(^3\) In most cases, the active support or direct participation of the broader public is simply not required to carry out mass killing.

Leaders who possess the political and/or military support necessary to gain control of a state usually also possess sufficient support to carry out mass killing. In non-democratic states, this minimum level of support can be remarkably thin. The Bolshevik rise to power in Russia, for example, paved the way for some of the most deadly episodes of mass killings in history. Yet, as Robert Conquest writes, the Bolshevik “seizure of power” was “an almost purely military operation, carried out by a small number of Red Guards... The working masses were neutral. Then, and in the Civil War which followed, by daring and discipline a few thousand comrades imposed themselves on Russia....”\(^4\) Richard Pipes describes the event as “a classical modern coup d’état accomplished without mass support... It was a surreptitious seizure of the nerve centres of the modern state, carried out under false slogans in order to neutralize the population at large, the true purpose of which was revealed only after the new claimants to power were firmly in the saddle.”\(^5\) Although popular support for the Bolshevik regime increased following the seizure of power, their supporters probably remained a minority, at least until after the civil war.\(^6\) Even this level of support, however, should not be equated with popular approval of mass killing.

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\(^3\) See: Rudolph J. Rummel, *Death by Government* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1994). Although I have not conducted a systematic study of this question, it would appear that the relatively few episodes of mass killing carried out by democracies have indeed received a comparatively wide degree of popular approbation. Since almost all mass killings by democratic states have targeted foreign civilians or non-citizens, often during times of war, this level of support may reflect a more general trend (in both democracies and non-democracies) of wider public approval of mass killing of foreigners or war-related mass killing.


As Vladimir Brovkin argues, "a vote for the Bolsheviks in 1917 was not a vote for Red Terror or even a vote for a dictatorship of the proletariat."  

Likewise, the Croatian Ustasa regime, which presided over the murder of approximately 500,000 Serbs and 60,000 Jews in Yugoslavia during the Second World War, appears to have been supported by only a small fraction of Croatian society. Branimir Anzulovic concludes that "the vast majority of Croatians were... hostile towards the actions of the Ustasa regime." German occupying forces complained that the unpopularity of the Ustasa in Croatia was driving people to join Tito's insurgents. Indeed, the Ustasa regime itself estimated that it had at most 40,000 followers -- only about six percent of the Croatian population.

The history of mass killing also suggests that large segments of the public may sometimes support violent regimes while remaining indifferent or even opposed to mass killing itself. The Nazi party received over 37 percent of the vote in German parliamentary elections of July 1932, for example, but most scholars do not attribute the Nazis' electoral success to the appeal of Nazi anti-Semitic ideas, let alone support for extermination of the Jews. Although the Nazi regime -- especially Hitler personally -- remained broadly popular even as more and more radical anti-Semitic measures were enacted, scholars of German popular opinion overwhelmingly agree that most Germans did not support violent measures against the Jews. Rather, as Saul Friedländer concludes,

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10 Ibid.


among the traditional [non-Nazi] elites and within the wider reaches of the population, anti-Jewish attitudes were more in the realm of tacit acquiescence or varying degrees of compliance... [T]he majority of Germans, although undoubtedly influenced by various forms of traditional anti-Semitism and easily accepting the segregation of the Jews, shied away from widespread violence against them, urging neither their expulsion from the Reich nor their physical annihilation.  

Nationalist appeals, especially when associated with wars of national defense or liberation, can also rally public support behind a violent regime despite widespread opposition or indifference to its specific policies or methods. Chalmers Johnson, for example, argues that Chinese nationalism and opposition to the Japanese occupation, not the appeal of radical communist economic policies and ideas, accounted for early mass support for the communists in China.  

Likewise, the Khmer Rouge used the war against the United States to generate resentment for the Cambodian government and recruit supporters to help implement their radical, bloody, and highly unpopular plan to transform Cambodian society.  

Public support for mass killing, to the extent that it does exist, may sometimes be based on misinformation and propaganda. Propaganda issued by perpetrators often conceals the full extent of the killing. Victims are often linked to intervention by foreign powers or subversive internal plots. Propaganda almost always seeks to exaggerate the perception that the victims represent a major threat. In Rwanda, for example, Human Rights Watch has documented a coordinated propaganda campaign launched by Hutu extremists prior to the 1994 genocide.

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designed to portray the Tutsi as bloodthirsty foreigners intent on exterminating the Hutu.  

Propaganda may also lead the public to support individual leaders, even while opposing the regime or its policies. Both Stalin and Mao appear to have been the objects of genuine affection by large numbers of their countrymen. Even many of Stalin and Mao’s victims apparently refused to accept that these “devoted” leaders were responsible for the brutality that characterized communism in Russia and China.

Regardless of the degree to which the general public supports mass killing or opposes it, civilians almost never play a major role in the killing itself. Rather, in nearly all instances of mass killing, the majority of the actual violence has been carried out by a relatively small segment of society. These killers are almost always young men, typically members of an organized military group, militia or police organization. In a number of cases the perpetrators have been drawn or “self-selected” from gangs of violent criminals or even recruited directly from prison. These groups tend to be highly impressionable, loyal to their state and their fellow soldiers, and highly obedient to authority. In many cases they have been physically trained and psychologically prepared for violence and killing.

In the case of the Holocaust, for example, Daniel Goldhagen estimates that over 100,000 Germans “knowingly contributed in some intimate way to the mass slaughter of the Jews.”

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18 To my knowledge, widespread participation of civilians in killing operations has occurred in only four instances: the partition of India in 1947, the anti-Communist massacres in Indonesia in 1965, the Rwandan genocide of 1994 and during some episodes of mass killing in communist China. In each of these cases, however, much of the killing was organized and coordinated by (national or local) political and military leaders. Military, paramilitary or militia units still played a significant role in the killings, often resorting to coercion to enforce civilian participation.

19 For example, prisoners appear to have been recruited for mass killing operations in both Rwanda and the Former Yugoslavia. See: Susan L. Woodward, Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1995), p. 238, 265 and Philip Gourevitch, We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families: Stories from Rwanda (New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1998), p. 242.

20 Military organizations have developed powerful techniques for ensuring obedience from their members and increasing their willingness to kill. See Gwynne Dyer, War (New York: Crown, 1985), pp. 101–29.

21 Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust (New York: Knopf, 1996), pp. 164 , 167. Goldhagen’s estimate is not limited to individuals who took part in acts of actual violence or killing. In addition, his estimate does not appear to include non-German perpetrators. Goldhagen notes that “It would not be surprising if the number turned out to be five hundred thousand or more,” p. 167. Even this undocumented figure, however, amounts to only about 3 percent of the adult male population in Germany in 1938.
This number may be shockingly large in absolute terms, but it constitutes less than one percent of the adult male population of Germany in 1938.\textsuperscript{22} Wider participation was simply not necessary. As Raul Hilberg documents, in the mobile killing operations that followed the German invasion of the Soviet Union, "victims outnumbered their captors 10 to 1, 20 to 1, or even 50 to 1; but the Jews could never turn their numbers to their advantage. The killers were well armed, they knew what to do, and they worked swiftly."\textsuperscript{23} Since the same killers participated in numerous killing operations of this kind, the overall ratio of perpetrators to victims must be considerably higher. The notorious death camps were even more "efficient." At any given time, an average of 3000 SS guards administered the Auschwitz concentration camp complex where more than 1.1 million people likely perished.\textsuperscript{24} Nearly all of the actual killing during the Holocaust was performed by members of German military, police or allied organizations (including military units from Axis countries and paramilitary groups recruited from foreign populations).\textsuperscript{25}

Other examples of mass killing have also been carried out by relatively small numbers of men. In the Soviet Union, a prison guard force of approximately 135,000 men presided over a Gulag of at least 1.5 million in 1941.\textsuperscript{26} Between 12 and 19 million people probably passed through the camps from 1934 to 1947.\textsuperscript{27} Millions died there. In Rwanda, between 80,000 and 100,000 Hutu killed between 500,000 and 850,000 people in less than four months.\textsuperscript{28} In Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge army of approximately 70,000 soldiers and 1,000 political cadres

\textsuperscript{22} B. R. Mitchell, \textit{European Historical Statistics: 1750–1975}, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Facts on File, 1980), p. 47. Adult population considered between 20–49 years of age. If Goldhagen's figures include German women and non-German perpetrators, of course, the percentages of participating populations would become even smaller.

\textsuperscript{23} Raul Hilberg, \textit{The Destruction of the European Jews} (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985), p. 126. Hilberg estimates that over 1,300,000 people were ultimately killed in these operations. p. 338.

\textsuperscript{24} Figure for SS guards is from Aleksander Lasik, "Historical-Sociological Profile of the Auschwitz SS," in \textit{Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp}, ed. Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), p. 274. Lasik notes that SS guards accounted for 75 percent of camp personnel. As a result of turn over, 7,000 SS men and women served in Auschwitz throughout the war. Estimate for Auschwitz death toll is from Franciszek Piper, "The Number of Victims," in Gutman and Berenbaum, \textit{Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp}, p. 62.

\textsuperscript{25} These organizations also forced thousands of Poles, Russians, Jews and members of other captive or victim groups to help carry out the killing.


\textsuperscript{27} For a detailed discussion of the debate over the Gulag population see ibid., pp. 23-41.

gained control of the lives of nearly eight million of their countrymen in 1975.29 Less than four years later as many as two million were dead.30 At the facility known as S-21, the Khmer Rouge’s most important political prison, a staff of less than 300 (including many people not directly involved in violence) presided over the torture and execution of almost 14,000 people.31 These relatively small Khmer Rouge forces were able to generate so much bloodshed not because they had the support of the masses, but as Karl Jackson argues, because “they were the only organized coercive force in Cambodia.”32

More significant segments of the public frequently, although by no means always, lend their assistance to mass killing in ways that do not involve direct participation in violence. Indirect cooperation may involve activities such as producing weapons, providing logistical and administrative support to organizations directly involved in the killing, or informing on fellow citizens. Many instances of mass killing would not have been possible without widespread participation of this kind. Nevertheless, indirect collaboration should not automatically be equated with unhesitating approval of mass killing. Individuals may participate in these kinds of activities for a variety of other reasons ranging from an abstract sense of patriotic duty, material or careerist ambition, or outright fear and coercion. Human beings seem capable of psychologically separating their participation in such activities from their personal approval of or sense of responsibility for the killing itself.33 Even these more indirect forms of cooperation, however, seldom seem to occupy the majority of the public. In most cases, all that is required of

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the great mass of citizens is their powerlessness, passivity or disregard for others’ torments. Rather than positive support, mass killing seems often to require only “negative support” -- the lack of organized domestic or international opposition to perpetrators, the lack of viable means of defense or escape for potential victims, and the lack of public willingness to take personal risks on behalf of others. Thus, James J. Sheehan’s review of research on public opinion in Nazi Germany concludes:

While it is always frightening to imagine a nation swept away and dominated by the Nazis, it is surely no less frightening to consider that the Nazis were able to accomplish most of what they set out to do without acquiring unquestioning allegiance or imposing complete control. Apparently they did not need to: it was not necessary for Germans to believe, nor necessary for them to approve; compliance, not conviction was required. For the Nazi state to thrive, its citizens had to do no more than go along, maintaining a clear sense of their own interests and a profound indifference to the suffering of others.34

The Perpetrators of Mass Killing

Although mass killing typically requires the participation of only a relatively small group of people in acts of violence, it remains important to understand how these individuals are motivated to engage in such brutal behavior. Unfortunately, direct evidence of the personal beliefs and motives of the individuals who carry out mass killing in the real world is exceedingly rare. Perpetrators seldom record their inner thoughts and feelings about their deeds. Outside observers are rarely in a position to provide personal information of this kind. Even the limited number of existing statements from perpetrators are of questionable reliability -- particularly when, as is often the case, they are gathered after the fact or in the course of war crimes investigations -- since it is difficult to discount the possibility that these statements have been colored by the perpetrator’s attempt to diminish his personal responsibility and paint his actions in the best possible light. No doubt largely as a result of these difficulties, with the notable

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exception of the Holocaust, historians have devoted very little effort to explaining the behavior of perpetrators of mass killing.

In addition to this admittedly limited historical evidence, however, important insights into the behavior of perpetrators can be found in a substantial body of psychological research on the sources of violent behavior. Together, the evidence available from both historical and experimental sources indicates that the task of motivating individuals to participate in extreme acts of violence may be much easier than we might expect. This evidence strongly suggests that under certain conditions, many, if not most, human beings may be willing to engage in extraordinarily violent acts. Although some perpetrators of mass killing are motivated by severe, previously established prejudices against their victims, or a deep, personal commitment to the ideologies which promote such violence, many others are willing to participate in mass killing even in the absence of these beliefs.

Evidence from Psychological Experiments: Milgram and Zimbardo

Some of the most powerful evidence for understanding the behavior of perpetrators of mass killing can be found in the results of the now famous series of experiments performed by Stanley Milgram in the early 1960s. Under the pretext of studying learning and memory, Milgram asked his subjects to administer an ever more severe series of electrical shocks to a complete stranger whenever that person was unable to remember specific items from a list of words. Milgram found that two-thirds of his subjects were willing to deliver shocks until the victim was screaming for his life. Many went on shocking the victim even after he had lapsed into what could only be interpreted as unconscious silence. Milgram also conducted a number of variations on this “baseline” experiment. In one particularly disturbing test, Milgram found that 30 percent of subjects administered the highest level of shock -- past a row of buttons.

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35 See Milgram, Obedience to Authority. For an excellent review of Milgram’s findings and related research, see Arthur G. Miller, The Obedience Experiments: A Case Study of Controversy in Social Science (New York: Praeger, 1986).

36 Unbeknownst to the subjects, of course, the shocks were not real and the “victim” was actually an actor cooperating with the experiment.

labeled “Danger: Severe Shock” and ominously marked “XXX” -- even when the experiment required them to hold the victim’s hand forcibly on the electrode. Milgram’s extraordinary findings have proven remarkably robust. His results have been repeatedly replicated with subjects from a variety of different countries. Similar experiments have elicited equally disturbing behavior from ordinary people.  

Although Milgram’s experiments focused specifically on obedience to authority, many social-psychologists suggest that their wider significance is to emphasize the extraordinary power of situational factors in influencing human behavior more generally. Authority is only one of many situational pressures capable of promoting extreme and violent behavior from ordinary individuals.

This tendency was powerfully demonstrated by an extraordinary experiment conducted by a team of psychologists led by Philip Zimbardo at Stanford University in 1970. In an effort to study the psychological effects of imprisonment, Zimbardo created a simulated prison and randomly selected individuals from a pool of college students to play the role of guards or prisoners. All of the subjects had scored within the normal range on a battery of personality tests, including tests designed to screen out “authoritarian personalities.” By the second day of the experiment, however, guards began to subject the prisoners to brutal, sadistic and humiliating treatment. Although outright violence was prohibited, guards blasted prisoners with freezing carbon-dioxide from a fire extinguisher, stripped them naked, forced them to do repeated push-ups, exiled some to solitary confinement, and inflicted a variety of other mental “tortures” on the inmates. The guards’ cruelty increased in severity until, after only six days, Zimbardo was forced to terminate the experiment prematurely out of concern for the well-being of the prisoners. Zimbardo concluded that the simulation had demonstrated


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the relative ease with which sadistic behavior could be elicited from normal non-sadistic people. The pathology observed in this study cannot be attributed to any pre-existing personality differences of the subjects. Rather, their abnormal social and personal relations were a product of their transaction with an environment whose norms and contingencies supported the production of behavior which would be pathological in other settings, but were 'appropriate' in this prison.41

Evidence from Historical Cases of Mass Killing: The Perpetrators of the Holocaust

Unsurprisingly, evidence regarding perpetrators of mass killing in the real-world is considerably more ambiguous than the findings produced in these controlled experimental settings. In the real world there are probably as many motives for taking part in mass killing as there are individual perpetrators of such acts. Some killers are driven by the desire for personal wealth or professional advancement. Some seem drawn to mass killing by a sadistic love of violence. Others are clearly motivated by intense hatred of their victims or the strong belief in the necessity of their destruction. None of these motives, however, seems adequate to explain the behavior of most perpetrators of mass killing.

Rather, the limited historical evidence available on the mentality of perpetrators of mass killing tends to confirm that most individuals who participate in such acts are driven primarily by situational pressures and external influences, as opposed to a personal predilection for violence, unusually severe, preexisting prejudices or the ideological commitment to the extermination of their victims. History records that normal individuals have demonstrated a disturbing willingness to kill in the service of ideas, goals and strategies they may scarcely understand.

Of course, the situations facing perpetrators of mass killing in the real world are vastly different from the situations facing subjects in the Milgram and Zimbardo experiments. Most notably, unlike Milgram and Zimbardo's subjects, perpetrators of mass killing must often take part in extremely gruesome tasks, sometimes becoming soaked in the blood of their victims. The realities of face-to-face killing undoubtedly reduce the willingness of most individuals to comply with orders to kill. Nevertheless, other situational aspects of mass killing in the real world,

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which could not be replicated in the laboratory, appear to bolster rather than decrease the propensity for participation in killing operations.\footnote{See Elms, “Obedience in Retrospect,” p. 30.}

The subjects of both Milgram and Zimbardo’s experiments were ordinary civilians who had received no special training prior to their participation. As noted above, however, most perpetrators of mass killing are members of military, para-military or police organizations. These organizations have developed powerful tools for producing violent behavior and ensuring obedience to authority.\footnote{Dyer, War, pp. 102-129.} Unlike the perpetrators of mass killing, the subjects of Milgram and Zimbardo’s experiments had not been subjected to propaganda or other indoctrination designed to justify doing harm to their victims. On the contrary, the subjects believed that their victims were completely innocent. The subjects of Milgram’s experiments had no prior contact with the scientists who ordered them to administer the shocks and no reason to accept the legitimacy of these orders beyond the inherent presumption of the experimenter’s scientific license. Orders for mass killing, on the other hand, are likely to come from authorities known personally to the perpetrators and vested with significantly more legitimacy. Most importantly, however, neither experiment could faithfully reproduce the effects of peer pressure and group conformity on their subjects.\footnote{Milgram did perform a variation of the base-line experiment which found that when two “peers” (actually confederates of the experiment) were present and refused to obey orders to administer the shock, only 10 percent of subjects continued to obey the experimenter to the maximum voltage level. When the two peers obediently followed the experimenter’s instructions 72.5 percent of the subjects proved willing to administer the highest level of shock – not significantly higher than the 65 percent compliance in the baseline experiment with no peers present. Milgram did not attempt to test the effect of peer pressure independently of the effects of authority. See: Arthur G. Miller, The Obedience Experiments: A Case Study of Controversy in Social Science (New York: Praeger, 1986), pp. 58-65. Since, in both variations of the experiment, the “peers” were introduced to the subject only minutes before the experiment began, it seems likely that the effects of peer pressure – both positive and negative – would be much greater in real world situations in which peers have well established relationships among one another.}

Christopher Browning’s study of a German police battalion involved in mass killing operations in Poland finds that these pressures were central to compliance with orders to kill. Although individual soldiers were offered the option of not participating in the killings, Browning writes:
"80 to 90 percent of the men proceeded to kill, though almost all of them -- at least initially-- were horrified and disgusted by what they were doing. To break ranks and step out, to adopt overtly nonconformist behavior, was simply beyond most of the men. It was easier for them to shoot. Why? First of all, by breaking ranks, nonshooters were leaving the 'dirty work' to their comrades. Since the battalion had to shoot even if individuals did not, refusing to shoot constituted refusing one's share of an unpleasant collective obligation. It was in effect an asocial act vis-à-vis one's comrades. Those who did not shoot risked isolation, rejection, and ostracism -- a very uncomfortable prospect within the framework of a tight-knit unit stationed abroad among a hostile population, so that the individual had nowhere else to turn for support and social contact."

As noted above, the Holocaust is the only example of mass killing into which substantial research on the behavior of individual perpetrators has been conducted. This dearth of evidence renders it difficult to ascertain whether the behavior of perpetrators of the Holocaust is typical of perpetrators of other cases of mass killing. Some aspects of the Holocaust, including the scale of the killing, the large variety of different victim groups, the use of industrialized killing methods and the relatively high education level of many of the perpetrators are rare or even unique in the history of mass killing. Nevertheless, the behavior of Holocaust perpetrators appears largely consistent with the results of the psychological experiments described above, as well as the limited evidence available from other cases of mass killing and with research on the behavior of soldiers during war. This suggests that although the behavior of Holocaust perpetrators may not be fully representative of the behavior of perpetrators of other instances of mass killing, understanding their behavior may be of considerable value for understanding the perpetrators of mass killing more generally.

Perhaps the most compelling evidence for the relevance of Milgram and Zimbardo's experiments to the Holocaust is the frequency with which scholars have found these experiments useful for understanding the behavior of the perpetrators of the Holocaust. Arthur Miller's review of Holocaust scholarship finds "a remarkable degree of consensus regarding the generalizability of the obedience experiments. Clearly they are viewed by many commentators from a diversity of disciplines and orientations as convincing and meaningful to an understudying of the Holocaust, and of other instances of what is often referred to as 'social

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46 Browning, *Ordinary Men*, pp. 184–86. For another argument that stresses the power of situational factors over anti-Semitism see: Jürgen Matthäus, "What About the ‘Ordinary Men’?: The German Order Police and the

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Notably, Milgram and Zimbardo’s conclusions have been largely accepted by scholarship based on interviews with individuals who helped carry out the Holocaust. In the most ambitious of these studies, John Steiner conducted approximately 300 interviews with former members of the SS. Citing both Milgram and Zimbardo, Steiner concluded that although “the horrors of World War II were hardly the work of a handful of insane men... if individuals with leadership aspirations, authority, and power work hard enough, they can persuade people to commit destructive acts by producing a situation that will appear constructive due to seemingly desirable consequences.”

Despite the widespread agreement on the relevance of the Milgram and Zimbardo’s experiments and findings from related social-psychological research, however, critics have raised two main objections to explaining the behavior of Holocaust perpetrators with reference to authority, peer pressure and other situational factors.

First, critics have observed that, unlike the subjects of Milgram’s experiments, many Holocaust perpetrators appear to have been convinced that the orders they followed were basically just. Most of Milgram’s subjects seem to have recognized that the orders issued by the experimenter were in some sense morally wrong. They often protested and expressed their desire not to continue. They complied with orders because they felt the situation left them no other choice and because they believed that they were not responsible, or at least would not be held responsible, for any harm that might result from their actions.

Although most perpetrators of the Holocaust appear to have found their orders troubling and extraordinarily unpleasant -- especially at first -- many also seem to have believed them to be ultimately necessary and just. Even Heinrich Himmler, a man who could hardly be accused of

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47 Miller, The Obedience Experiments, p. 203.
49 See Goldhagen, Hitler’s Willing Executioners
51 Browning acknowledges that most perpetrators he studied expressed their revulsion to the killing in physical rather than ethical terms, but he also notes that: “Given the educational level of these reserve policemen, one should not expect a sophisticated articulation of abstract principles. The absence of such does not mean that their revulsion

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harboring moral reservations about the Holocaust, became physically ill after witnessing the execution of 200 Jews and is reported to have proclaimed that he was “repelled by this bloody job.”

Rank and file perpetrators regularly expressed their beliefs in the necessity of exterminating the Jews and other victims in private correspondence and other situations that were not directly monitored by their superiors. The comments of one member of the SS involved in the killing of Russian Jews might be considered typical. In a letter to his family he wrote:

> We have to eat and drink well because of the nature of our work... Otherwise we would crack up... It’s not very pleasant stuff... it is a weakness not to be able to stand the sight of dead people; the best way to overcome it is to do it more often. Then it becomes a habit... [T]he more one thinks about the whole business the more one comes to the conclusion that it’s the only thing we can do to safeguard unconditionally the security of our people and our future. I do not therefore want to think and write about it any further... [E]verywhere we go we are looked upon with some degree of suspicion. That should not divert us from the knowledge that what we are doing is necessary.

The second objection that has been raised against explaining the behavior of Holocaust perpetrators in terms of situational variables is that the perpetrators appear to have frequently exceeded their orders and acted with unnecessary brutality. Contemporary observers have recorded numerous examples of perpetrators actively searching out Jews, faithfully carrying out orders even in the absence of direct supervision and inventing gratuitous and appallingly grotesque cruelties to inflict upon their victims. Contrary to the claims of many perpetrators following the war, there is little evidence that refusal to obey orders to kill would have resulted in

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\[\text{did not have its origins in the humane instincts that Nazism radically opposed and sought to overcome.” See: Browning, Ordinary Men, p. 74.}\]


severe penalties.\textsuperscript{56} Indeed, as Browning documents, individuals in at least some units involved in killing operations were offered the option of not participating, yet the vast majority proceeded to kill.\textsuperscript{57}

These and other observations have led some scholars to suggest that perpetrators of the Holocaust were motivated not by situational factors such as authority and peer pressure, but rather by the profound hatred of their victims or by the fanatical adherence to the pseudo scientific Nazi ideology which mandated the elimination of certain groups. As Daniel Goldhagen argues, the perpetrators of the Holocaust were “assenting mass executioners, men and women who, true to their own eliminationist anti-Semitic beliefs, faithful to their cultural anti-Semitic credo, considered the slaughter to be just... [T]he perpetrators’ own convictions moved them to kill.”\textsuperscript{58}

Although the contention that many, perhaps most, perpetrators of the Holocaust felt that their savage actions were essentially just and necessary is probably correct, this observation is not sufficient to establish that personal convictions were the primary motivation for participation in the genocide. There are two main reasons to doubt that deeply held anti-Semitic hatreds or the firm belief in the Nazi ideology are the best explanations for the participation of most perpetrators of the Holocaust. First, most “rank and file” perpetrators of the Holocaust -- as opposed to the high military and political leaders who directed them -- appear to have had a surprisingly “shallow” belief in the Nazi ideology that justified such brutality. Second, on closer examination, acts of gratuitous brutality and compliance with orders even in the absence of direct supervision or the threat of serious punishment are fully compatible with the situational explanations suggested by the Milgram and Zimbardo experiments. Each of these arguments will be discussed in further detail below.

\textsuperscript{57} Browning, \textit{Ordinary Men}, p. 184.
Shallow Beliefs

Three observations suggest that the beliefs that motivated many perpetrators of the Holocaust were relatively "shallow." First, many rank and file perpetrators appear to have lacked a full understanding of the Nazi racial ideology that motivated the killings. Second, the perpetrators convictions often seem to have been based more on Nazi propaganda and indoctrination than on deeply held prior beliefs. Third, perpetrators proved capable of murdering vast numbers of innocent men, women and children drawn from groups that were not singled-out by Nazi ideology and against whom they appear to have harbored no preexisting hatreds.

Although many perpetrators of the Holocaust believed that their actions were just and necessary, most did not seem so enthusiastic about the killing that, if given the opportunity, they would have ordered it themselves. They were willing, sometimes even eager, to go along with murder but it probably would not have been their idea. For the most part, the rank and file German soldiers involved in the mass killings seemed to understand little more than that Jews were inferior beings, somehow responsible for much of the world's problems and that they had to be exterminated for the good of Germany. A more thorough comprehension of the complex, "scientific" racial ideology of Nazi theoreticians was simply not necessary for the individual soldiers who helped carry out the final solution.

Thus, Jürgen Matthäus' study of the German order police concludes that while pervasive anti-Semitism probably facilitated participation in mass killing operations, "[t]here is little proof... [that these men] were driven solely or even to a significant extent by what Daniel Goldhagen calls 'Nazi common sense'... [T]he impulse for murder seems to have come from a variety of factors more closely linked to specific surrounding circumstances than to an anti-Semitic grand design."

Some killers, of course, were clearly fanatics, drawn to their task by strong hatreds or convictions. A selection effect favoring "true believers" and sadists may have influenced the composition of the SS and the auxiliary police and militia formations recruited by the Nazis in

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59 Browning, Ordinary Men, pp. 55-77.

60 Matthäus, "What About the 'Ordinary Men,'" pp 144-145.
occupied countries. Nevertheless, these individuals probably remained a distinct minority. Large numbers of perpetrators, notably soldiers of the regular German army, were drawn from the ranks of normal society. As described above, the strong consensus among scholars of German public opinion is that the majority of Germans did not favor violence against the Jews. Spontaneous violence against Jews in Germany remained extremely rare even after the Nazis took power. These findings suggest that something about the situation into which Holocaust perpetrators were placed transformed them from indifferent anti-Semites into brutal killers.

It is true that many perpetrators of the Holocaust believed that their actions were justified. This conviction, however, seems to have been less often the result of deeply held prior beliefs, than of recently inculcated notions provided to killers by their leaders through propaganda specifically designed to portray their victims as a serious threat and to promote acts of violence against them. Like all Germans, perpetrators of the Holocaust were subjected to a steady stream of anti-Semitic propaganda beginning from the moment the Nazis seized power. Members of the military and police, especially units involved in mass killing operations, however, were singled out for more intense ideological indoctrination. As Charles Sydnor documents, members of the notorious SS Death’s Head Division received daily political training that sought to instill hatred of Nazi racial enemies and “shape them into political soldiers of the Führer.” Each member of the division was required to spend one week each month on guard duty at Nazi concentration camps, a duty the division’s commanding officer felt “would strengthen [the SS soldier’s] belief that the prisoners were inferior but implacable enemies of the German nation against whom the SS had to wage an unending struggle.”


64 Ibid., p. 27.
renounce their Christianity to comply with SS doctrine which portrayed the church as an enemy of National Socialism.65

Scholars disagree on just how effective the regime’s propaganda effort proved to be, particularly outside of specialized and highly selective units like the SS Death’s Head Division. Few argue that indoctrination turned most German soldiers into fanatic Nazis, but few suggest that it had no effect at all.66 Omer Bartov’s study of German Wehrmacht units -- many of which were involved directly or indirectly in mass killing operations -- is often cited as evidence that the perpetrators of the Holocaust accepted Nazi principles and believed in what they were doing. Although Bartov does conclude that many Germany soldiers believed in the necessity of the war and of its genocidal prosecution, he also emphasizes that that these beliefs were shaped significantly by Nazi propaganda -- both before and after Germans entered the army-- not by soldiers’ pre-existing convictions. Bartov’s analysis of soldiers’ letters home found a “remarkable similarity between their terminology, modes of expression, and arguments and those which characterize the Wehrmacht’s propaganda.”67 He concludes that indoctrination and propaganda influenced soldiers in two related ways:

First, it taught the troops totally to trust Hitler’s political and military wisdom, and never to doubt either the morality of his orders or the outcome of his prophecies.... Second, it provided the soldiers with an image of the enemy which so profoundly distorted their perception that once confronted with reality they invariably experienced it as what they had come to expect. Indoctrination thus served the double purpose of strongly motivating the troops and greatly brutalizing them, for it legitimized both one’s own sacrifices and the atrocities committed against the enemy.... This does not mean that every individual German soldier was a committed National Socialist; rather, it is to say that the vast majority of troops internalized the distorted Nazi presentation of reality.68

Browning, on the other hand, questions the degree to which the more abstract aspects of Nazi propaganda were internalized by the members of the police battalion he studied. He

65 Ibid., p. 29. Sydnor notes that the soldiers agreed to take this step despite the fact that it “periodically resulted in serious and permanent breaches” with their families.
66 For an argument stressing the role of small group dynamics over political convictions or Nazi ideology in motivating German soldiers in combat, see: E.A. Shils and Morris Janowitz, “Cohesion and Disintegration in the Whermacht in World War II,” Public Opinion Quarterly, vol. 12, no. 2 (Summer 1948), pp. 280-315.
67 Bartov, Hitler’s Army, p. 147.
68 Ibid. pp. 118, 144.
acknowledges, however, that propaganda likely facilitated the killing process by instilling a general sense of hatred for the Jews. He writes: “If it is doubtful that most of the policemen [involved in the mass killing of Jews] understood or embraced the theoretical aspects of Nazi ideology as contained in SS indoctrination pamphlets it is also doubtful that they were immune to... the incessant proclamation of German superiority and incitement of contempt and hatred for the Jewish enemy.”

If the beliefs that helped to motivate perpetrators of the Holocaust were based largely on propaganda and indoctrination specifically designed to facilitate their participation in acts of violence, these convictions can hardly be seen as a primary cause of the genocide. On the contrary, they were the intended result of a genocidal campaign conceived of by leaders who needed no indoctrination to accept the justness and necessity of such brutality.

It is conceivable, however, that Nazi propaganda would have fallen on deaf ears had it not been for the preexisting prejudices and negative stereotypes against Jews which were prevalent in German society even before the Nazis took power. In other words, if perpetrators’ preexisting beliefs were not a cause of the Holocaust, perhaps they were a necessary pre-condition. Even scholars who have rejected German anti-Semitism as the prime cause of the Holocaust have accepted this proposition. Although preexisting prejudices and stereotypes may account for some aspects of the Nazi genocide, two facts raise questions regarding the explanatory value of these factors in the case of the Holocaust as well as their relevance for understanding or predicting mass killing and genocide in general.

First, perpetrators of the Holocaust killed not only Jews, against whom they clearly harbored preexisting prejudices, but also a wide array of defenseless civilians from nearly every country occupied by Germany during the war. Jews were clearly the most important targets of Nazi violence. They were singled out for more complete, systematic annihilation and for more inhumane treatment than any other group. Yet German soldiers, police and other functionaries

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70 For example, see: Finkelstein and Birn, *A Nation on Trial*, pp. 53-54 and Ian Kershaw, “German Public Opinion During the Final Solution: Information, Comprehension, Reactions,” in Asher Cohen et. al., *Comprehending the Holocaust* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang. 1988), pp. 146-147.

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proved willing to murder large numbers of non-Jewish civilians from countries including (but not limited to) Poland, The Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Belgium, France, Greece, Italy and from groups such as the Gypsies and the mentally and chronically ill within Germany itself. It is possible that most Germans possessed negative attitudes regarding some of these groups as well (especially Poles and Russians), but other victims were drawn from groups against whom Germans had no history of preexisting prejudice.

Mark Mazower, for example, describes an incident in which a German army unit received the order to kill civilians of all ages and both sexes in the Greek village of Komeno in August 1943. The reprisal was ostensibly ordered in retaliation for a partisan attack (in fact, as many soldiers knew, there had been no attack). The soldiers surprised the village at dawn while most of the population was still asleep and proceeded to massacre 317 people -- over half the population of the village. Not only is there no evidence that the soldiers harbored preexisting prejudices against Greeks per-se, but many appear to have participated in the killing even though they felt that the action was immoral or even criminal. One soldier recalled that “almost none [of the men] agreed with the action.” Another told his commanding officer that this was “the last time I take part in something like that. This was an obscenity which had nothing to do with fighting a war.”

A third soldier recalled that after the action, some men had considered deserting, but ultimately “we fell back on the conclusion... that we had just obeyed orders.”

A similar massacre took place in June 1944 during the notorious reprisal raid against the French village of Oradour-sur-Glane. There, SS troops brutally murdered 642 people, including 190 children. Again, there is little reason to suspect that this behavior reflected preexisting prejudices against French people as such. Thousands of POWs and civilians were also executed.

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73 Quoted in Mazower, “Military Violence and National Socialist Values,” pp. 130-131. It is difficult to judge the sincerity of these statements since they were given in the context of an inquiry conducted 30 years after the event. The former soldiers may well have been trying to diminish the extent of their own responsibility. Mazower, however, suggests that there may be substantial truth to the statements since the former soldiers voluntarily admitted to much incriminating evidence and since the investigation never resulted in a trial. In any case, what is relevant for this discussion is that Germans agreed to kill Greek civilians against whom they held no preexisting prejudices.
74 Quoted in ibid., p. 131.
in Italy, a former German ally, after the fall of Mussolini’s regime.\textsuperscript{76} These massacres were not isolated incidents. Nor should they be attributed to the spontaneous actions of berserk soldiers driven to aggression by the psychological stresses of war. Atrocities of this nature occurred repeatedly throughout occupied Europe and appear to have reflected an explicit German policy designed to deter partisan activity by threatening civilian populations.\textsuperscript{77}

The second reason to question the explanatory power of perpetrators’ preexisting beliefs and convictions is that even if one accepts that such factors constituted a necessary precondition for the Holocaust, there is little reason to believe that identifying similar pre-conditions in other societies would provide an effective way to anticipate genocide and mass killing. Prejudices and stereotypes of the kind that existed in Germany prior to Hitler’s rise unfortunately characterize relations between at least some groups in many, if not most societies. As noted in chapter one, most historians agree that Jews in a number of other European countries suffered greater prejudice and discrimination than did Jews in Germany before the Nazi seizure of power. Likewise, while many Germans probably did harbor negative attitudes about Poles and Russians -- millions of whom were also murdered by the Nazis during the Second World War-- there is little evidence that these attitudes were more extreme than those between countless other historical antagonists who did not engage in mass killing.

If preexisting prejudices are a precondition for mass killing, history suggests that this factor alone is too common to be of much help in anticipating when and where genocide is likely to occur. The existence of severe, preexisting prejudices probably make the job of mobilizing perpetrators easier, but leaders seem capable of generating sufficient support to carry out mass killing even in their absence.

\textit{Gratuitous Brutality and Unsupervised Compliance}

The second reason to question the proposition that anti-Semitic and/or ideological convictions were the primary motives for perpetrators of the Holocaust is that the acts of gratuitous brutality and unsupervised compliance (or compliance in the absence of the threat of

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., pp. 461-462, 475.

severe punishment) which proponents of this proposition cite as evidence are, in fact, fully compatible with the situational perspective suggested by the Milgram and Zimbardo experiments.

Indeed, the central finding of Zimbardo’s prison experiment is that, under the “right” circumstances, a certain percentage of normal individuals would engage in acts of gratuitous brutality even in the absence of preexisting prejudices against their victims. Indeed, Zimbardo’s guards knew that their victims were college students like themselves and that, but for a toss of a coin, their roles might have been reversed. As Mazower documents, “[w]anton cruelty -- such as the deliberate mutilation of bodies” was not limited to German actions against Jews but also characterized the massacre of Greek civilians at Komeno described above. One participant in the Komeno massacre recalled having realized for the first time that there were “sadists” in his unit.

It bears noting that in Zimbardo’s experiment, and in most reports of Holocaust perpetrators, the percentage of “true sadists” was relatively small. Thus, Browning concludes that

“Zimbardo’s spectrum of guard behavior bears an uncanny resemblance to the groupings that emerged within Reserve Police Battalion 101: A nucleus of increasingly enthusiastic killers who volunteered for the firing squads and ‘Jew hunts; a larger group of policemen who performed as shooters and ghetto clearers when assigned but who did not seek opportunities to kill (and in some cases refrained from killing, contrary to standing orders, when no one was monitoring their actions); and a small group (less than 20 percent) of refusers and evaders.”

A number of Auschwitz survivors have reported that there were relatively few pure sadists -- perhaps five or ten percent -- among SS guards. In fact, many recalled that the so-called Kapos, fellow inmates recruited to administer camp operations, exhibited even more

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78 It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that Daniel Goldhagen’s book, which argues that gratuitous brutality is powerful evidence that Holocaust perpetrators were motivated by deep convictions, fails even to mention Zimbardo’s experiment or its findings. See Goldhagen, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*.
80 Ibid., p. 155.
81 Ibid., p. 155.
84 Finkelstein and Birn, *A Nation on Trial*, p. 67.
brutality than the guards. Although the Kapos were obviously motivated much more by the threat of severe punishment than were members of the SS, this motive explains only their participation, not the gratuitous brutality that they visited on their victims. This observation strongly suggests that the situation in which the Kapos were placed, rather than their personal beliefs regarding their victims, motivated their cruelty.

Nor does evidence of participation in killing operations in the absence of direct supervision or without the threat of severe punishment contradict the situational perspective on perpetrator behavior.\(^{85}\) Although Milgram found that his subjects were far less likely to comply with orders in the absence of direct supervision, neither supervision nor the threat of punishment can explain why Zimbardo’s guards chose to torture their victims. Zimbardo never gave the guards instructions to do so. Nor can the threat punishment explain the behavior of subjects in the Milgram experiment. Milgram never suggested that there would be any kind of punishment if subjects chose to discontinue their participation. Rather, when subjects protested -- as many did -- they were simply told that “the experiment requires that you continue” or “you have no other choice, you must go on.” Milgram himself did not attribute the obedience of his subjects as a reaction to the threat of punishment.\(^{86}\)

Finally, it should be noted that in addition to the relatively small group of brutal zealots and the majority of unassertive killers, there were also among the perpetrators of the Holocaust a small group of individuals who appear to have participated directly and indirectly in killing operations despite sincere reservations about the morality of such conduct.\(^{87}\) Although these individuals often attempted to minimize the extent of their participation, under certain circumstances they seem to have felt they could not refuse participation altogether. Browning, for example, notes that even the most insistent “non-shooters” in the police unit he studied usually participated in rounding-up Jews for deportation or for execution by other members of the unit.\(^{88}\)

\(^{85}\) The exact degree to which perpetrators complied with orders to kill in the absence of supervision remains unclear. Browning suggests that non-compliance under such circumstances may have been common: *Ordinary Men*, p. 176 and Browning, “Ordinary Germans or Ordinary Men?,” p. 260.

\(^{86}\) Miller, *The Obedience Experiments*, pp. 221-233.


\(^{88}\) Browning, “Ordinary Germans or Ordinary Men?,” p. 259.
This pattern of behavior is strikingly illustrated by the Dutch policemen involved in the deportation (and other anti-Jewish measures) of tens of thousands of Jews from Amsterdam during the German occupation. As Guus Meershoek documents, “most of [the policemen] had serious qualms about performing the task.” They “viewed the German measures with disdain, especially those aimed at Jews.”89 One patrolman sent an anonymous letter to the chief state prosecutor complaining that “from the start we were very reluctant to assist in the deportation of Jews who live in our city, but after several nights in which we have had to drag the elderly, infirm, and wretched men and women from their homes we have had too much. Many of us consider the assignment to carry out this work as an insult to our Dutch force.” He stated that the police had been obeying their orders “with bleeding hearts.”90 Yet the policemen continued to carry out the operations. Their participation does not appear to have been motivated by fear of physical punishment since the harshest penalty for refusing to participate (applied to only one man) was dismissal from the force. Rather as Meershoek concludes, “the tradition of submissiveness won the day... [the police] were both accustomed and bound by their membership in the force to follow rules and procedures that did not envisage the possibility of refusal.”91

Although this kind of behavior characterizes only a small minority of Holocaust perpetrators, it is at least as important for understanding the motives of perpetrators of mass killings as is the behavior of the equally small group of brutal fanatics. The behavior of these reluctant perpetrators demonstrates that under certain circumstances individuals may participate in mass killing with full knowledge that such actions are morally wrong. Like Milgram’s subjects, these perpetrators seem to separate the morality of their own participation in mass killing (and their own responsibility for its consequences) from their feelings about the morality of the killing itself.

90 Quoted in ibid., p. 284.
91 Ibid., p. 284, 297
Anecdotal Evidence from Other Cases

Although evidence regarding the perpetrators of cases of mass killing other than the Holocaust is scant, anecdotal evidence from such incidents as well as from the behavior of soldiers in combat, suggests that the power of situational factors and the willingness to kill on the basis of "shallow" beliefs is not limited to the Holocaust.

For example, David Chandler's research into the workers at the Khmer Rouge prison known as S-21 (or Tuol Sleng), where thousands of Cambodians were tortured and killed, concludes that the situational pressures cited by Milgram and Zimbardo were largely responsible for motivating the perpetrators there. Chandler argues that "bonded with people like themselves and abjectly respectful of those in charge, the workers at S-21, like the prisoners, were trapped inside a merciless place and a pitiless scenario."92

Deep political convictions seem an especially poor explanation for the behavior of the young and largely illiterate soldiers who carried out most of the Khmer Rouge mass killings. It is unlikely that these perpetrators could have grasped the abstruse political and economic ideology that motivated Pol Pot. As one observer of the Khmer Rouge evacuation of Phnom Penh noted: "The common soldier did not appear to be very concerned about politics, Cambodia's future or other ideological questions. I had the impression that a lot of them didn't know which group they belonged to. I felt that their fighting spirit and ability came more from rough discipline rather than from convictions.... [T]hey often seem like animals being led into the field by the master."93

Preexisting prejudices and negative stereotypes may have played a role in motivating the killing of some Khmer Rouge victims, especially the Vietnamese, but many of those killed were drawn from the same class, ethnic and social groups as their executors.94 As in the Holocaust, propaganda and indoctrination probably played an important role in facilitating the murder of these innocent victims. Thus, Chandler suggests that the young perpetrators had simply "been

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92 Chandler, Voices from S-21, p. 147.
93 Quoted in Laqueur, Guerrilla, p. 272.
94 On anti-Vietnamese prejudices see Kiernan, The Pol Pot Regime.
trained to hate ‘enemies of the Organization’—the Americans, who bombed the country, the traitors allied to the Americans, and the city dwellers who had refused to join the revolution.”

Many perpetrators of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda also appear to have killed on the basis of shallow beliefs. As Gérard Prunier argues: “If the notion of guilt presupposes a clear understanding of what one is doing at the time of the crime, then there were at that time... a lot of ‘innocent murderers.’” For many of the perpetrators, he writes, “the political aims pursued by the masters of this dark carnival were quite beyond their scope.” The organizers of the genocide relied on propaganda and misinformation to encourage participation in the killing. As Helen M. Hintjens describes this propaganda campaign:

State propaganda was designed to raise the hackles of the Bahutu [Hutu] population, and, during the early stages of the genocide there is little evidence of overt hostility from Bahutu towards their Batutsi [Tutsi] neighbors and relatives. Such hatred and fear was sometimes latent, and could be manipulated, but more commonly it was deliberately created in the context of well-prepared massacres... ethnic conflict was quite deliberately engineered in the run-up to the genocide.”

Such a campaign hardly would have been necessary if most Hutu killers were already firmly convinced of the righteousness of the genocide. This conclusion is further reinforced by the numerous reports documenting that army and militia members often had to resort to force -- including execution -- in order to compel Hutu civilians to kill. Indeed, a comprehensive inquiry carried out by the human rights group African Rights, including evidence based on numerous interviews with perpetrators and victims, concludes that “most Hutu who complied [with orders to kill] were reluctant accomplices.”

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97 Ibid., p. 232.
100 African Rights, *Rwanda*, pp. 993-1002. This unusual pattern may have resulted from the fact that, compared to the Holocaust and most other examples of mass killing, civilians played a more significant role in the killing in Rwanda. Nevertheless, the vast majority of Hutu civilians did not participate in the genocide. See René Lemarchand, “U.S. Policy in the Great Lakes: A Critical Perspective,” *Issue*, vol. 26, no. 1 (1998), p. 42.
Combat Motivation

Other compelling evidence for the influence of situational factors comes not from cases of mass killing, but from the behavior of soldiers in combat. If the willingness of human beings to kill others in the service of shallow ideas and beliefs seems inconceivable, one need only reflect upon the willingness of soldiers throughout history to offer up their own lives in pursuit of such goals. Most scholars of combat motivation have concluded that soldiers are driven more powerfully by small group dynamics -- primarily the desire to protect fellow soldiers, conform to group expectations and avoid the appearance of cowardliness -- than by an ideological commitment to the goals of the war. Other scholars have found a more central role for factors such as ideology, patriotism and nationalism, but these authors also stress that the origin of such attitudes often lies in systematic state propaganda, not deep, pre-existing convictions. Thus, as Gwynne Dyer’s study of men in combat concludes, although many soldiers “do feel the need for some patriotic or ideological justification for what they do... which nation, which ideology, does not matter: men will fight as well and die as bravely for the Khmer Rouge as for ‘God, King, and Country.’ Soldiers are the instruments of politicians and priests, ideologues and strategists, who may have high moral purposes in mind, but the men down in the trenches fight for more basic motives.”

History provides numerous examples of soldiers’ willingness to risk their lives for political or military goals they barely comprehend, sometimes in far away places previously unknown to them. The behavior of soldiers during the infamous battles on the western front during the First World War is particularly illuminating in this regard. At bloody battles such as Verdun and the Somme, hundreds of thousands of French and British soldiers willingly walked

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into no-man’s land and a wall of German machine gun and artillery fire. There can be little
doubt that these men believed in the justness of the allied cause, but after a few months at the
front, the average infantryman understood that a frontal attack on German lines could not
succeed and that he would probably be cut down within minutes of leaving his trench. Soldiers
who may still have harbored hopes for success at the Somme were quickly disabused. More than
20,000 British soldiers were killed on the first day of battle, most in the first hour of the attack.\footnote{Dyer, \textit{War}, p. 104. Dyer finds that small group pressures are the most important among these motives.} \footnote{John Keegan, \textit{The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo and the Somme} (New York: Penguin, 1976), p. 260.}

One British Brigadier General described the participation of his troops in one such
advance with a perverted sense of approval:

They advanced in line after line, dressed as if on parade, and not a man shirked
going through the extremely heavy barrage, or facing the machine gun and rifle
fire that finally wiped them out... [I] saw the lines which advanced in such
admirable order melting away under the fire. Yet not a man wavered, broke the
ranks, or attempted to come back... [I] have never seen, indeed could never have
imagined, such a magnificent display of gallantry, discipline and determination.\footnote{Quoted in Tim Travers, \textit{The Killing Ground: The British Army, the Western Front and the Emergence of Modern Warfare, 1900-1918} (London: Allen and Unwin, 1987), p. 158.}

A British Sergeant, on the other hand, described a similar attack in quite different terms:

That was a stupid action, because we had to make a frontal attack on bristling
German guns and there was no shelter at all.... We knew it was pointless, even before
we went over -- crossing open ground like that. But you had to go. You were
between the devil and the deep blue sea. If you go forward, you'll likely be shot. If
you go back, you'll be court-marshaled and shot.... What can you do? Even before
we went over, we knew this was death.... It was ridiculous. There was no need for it.
It was just absolute slaughter.\footnote{Quoted in Lyn Macdonald, \textit{Somme} (London: Michael Joseph, 1983), p. 157.}

This surreal scene led John Keegan to comment that “there is something Treblinka-like
about almost all accounts of [the Somme], about those long docile lines of young men, shoddily
uniformed, plodding across a featureless landscape to their own extermination.”\footnote{Ibid., p. 260.} Members of
the British cavalry adopted the motto, "We'll do it; what is it?" Perhaps this extraordinary level of compliance among the British soldiers would be easier to understand if these men were defending themselves or their homes. Yet these soldiers knew that they were relatively safe in their trenches and Britain itself never faced a serious threat of invasion during the First World War. Knowing that individuals are willing to give up their own lives under these circumstances, perhaps it may seem less remarkable to find that they are also capable of killing others.

*Moral Responsibility for Mass Killing*

Many readers will undoubtedly find the conclusion that the behavior of most perpetrators of mass killing is motivated more powerfully by factors such as authority and peer pressure than by deep personal convictions a difficult one to accept. This reluctance may reflect a general human tendency to discount the effect of situational pressures in influencing the behavior of others. Indeed, so common is the failure to appreciate the power of these variables that social-psychologists refer to this mistake as the "fundamental attribution error." However uneasy it may make us feel, the "just following orders" defense so often advanced by perpetrators of mass killing (although hardly an excuse for murder) may also be an uncomfortably accurate description of the behavior of many of these cold-blooded killers.

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111 In addition to more than 740,000 British soldiers killed in the First World War, approximately 60,000 Canadians, 59,000 Australians, 49,000 Indians and 48,000 Americans—none of whom would have faced any immediate physical danger from the war raging thousands of miles away—also proved willing to die in a conflict that began over the assassination of a monarch in a tiny province of Austria-Hungary. Figures are from Martin Gilbert, *The First World War: A Complete History* (New York: Holt, 1994), p. 541.
112 Interestingly, it was French soldiers who showed the greatest resistance to the war. In the spring of 1917, French soldiers in large numbers began to desert the trenches and refuse orders to engage in offensive operations. Nevertheless, these "mutinies" occurred only after nearly three years of pointless slaughter and were over within six weeks. The great majority of French soldiers did not participate in them. Niall Ferguson concludes that these actions were "conspicuous as the exception which proves the rule of a remarkable lack of disorder on the Western Front." As the war dragged on, British soldiers also tended to revert to a pattern of "live and let live" with the Germans, but no significant organized resistance to military authorities ever emerged in the British Army. See: Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War: Explaining World War I* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), p. 345.
In light of these observations, it may be tempting to conclude that only a few powerful leaders deserve condemnation for mass killing and that participants in this violence, or bystanders in the societies in which it occurs, are somehow morally excused for their actions. This conclusion must be rejected. Mass killing would not be possible without the active participation of at least a small group of people in acts of brutal violence and, in most cases, without public passivity or indifference to the killing. This behavior cannot be excused simply because it is commonplace.\textsuperscript{114} Although compliance with authority and public passivity may be the rule, history also provides notable examples of individuals who have refused to carry out immoral orders, or to stand by while killing took place -- often at great personal risk. Human beings may be influenced by powerful situational pressures, but each of us remains individually responsible for his or her own actions.

Our reaction to the foregoing discussion, therefore, must not be to diminish our moral condemnation of those who participate in mass killing, or those who simply decline to resist it, on the grounds that they were following orders or that others would have acted same way in the same situation. Rather, we should take heed of the fact that the capacity for violence -- or indifference to violence directed at others -- exists in nearly all human beings and societies. This capacity can be a powerful and therefore tempting tool for those in a position to call upon it.

\textit{Conclusions: The Power of the Few}

The evidence presented above strongly suggests that mass killing does not require the active support of most people in the societies in which it takes place. The individuals charged with carrying out such violence may do so even in the absence a deeply held prior commitment to its goals or a profound hatred of their victims. These findings have powerful implications for our understanding of mass killing. In particular, they highlight the decisive role that small groups or even individual leaders can play in the causal process of mass killing. Although the goals and motives of political and military leaders sometimes closely reflect the societies they govern, often they do not. While democratic processes tend to select leaders who represent the

\textsuperscript{114} On this subject see Sabini and Silver, "Destroying the Innocent with a Clear Conscience," pp. 338-343.
broad interests of their societies, most regimes that have launched campaigns of mass killing did not attain power through democratic means.

Historians have often remarked on the powerful influence that small groups or individual leaders have wielded in many of history's most infamous examples of mass killing. Of course, these groups or individuals did not carry out mass killing on their own. A wide range of other factors is necessary to fully explain these events. Yet, in many cases historians seem to doubt that mass killing would have occurred without the instigation of specific leaders. The unique ideas, beliefs, strategies and even personal psychology of these groups or leaders, in other words, often constitute necessary conditions for mass killing. As the evidence presented in this chapter demonstrates, the remaining (sufficient) social conditions for mass killing have been remarkably common and easy to achieve.

Most historians of the Holocaust, for example, seem to concur with Milton Himmelfarb's simple, yet compelling thesis -- "no Hitler, no Holocaust."\textsuperscript{115} As Michael Marrus' review of Holocaust scholarship concludes:

Hitler was the principal driving force of anti-Semitism in the Nazi movement from the earliest period.... Anti-Semitism was central because Hitler determined that it should be so.... Neither the existence of anti-Jewish traditions in Germany, the commitments of Nazi party leaders, nor the beliefs of the extensive Nazi following in the German population required the murder of the Jews. Put otherwise, anti-Semitism in Germany may have been a necessary condition for the Holocaust, but it was not a sufficient one. In the end it was Hitler, and his own determination to realize his anti-Semitic fantasies, that made the difference\textsuperscript{116}

Similarly, historians generally accept that the Great Terror in the Soviet Union would not have occurred without the personal influence of Stalin himself. As Robert Conquest concludes: "The nature of the whole Purge depends in the last analysis on the personal and political drives of Stalin... The revolution of the Purges still remains, however we judge it, above all Stalin's


\textsuperscript{116} Marrus, The Holocaust in History, pp. 17-18. As noted above, the willingness of Germans to murder thousands of non-Jewish victims casts doubt onto whether anti-Semitism, at least unusually severe anti-Semitism, was even a necessary condition for the Holocaust.
personal achievement.” 117 Nor have scholars found it easy to imagine China’s Cultural Revolution without the personal influence of Mao. Thus, Harry Harding asserts that “it is no exaggeration... to conclude that the principal responsibility for the cultural revolution -- a movement that affected tens of millions of Chinese -- rests with one man. Without a Mao, there could not have been a Cultural Revolution.” 118

In the case of Rwanda, despite the comparatively widespread involvement of civilians in carrying out the genocide, scholars generally agree that the impetus for the killing originated with a remarkably small group of fanatical Hutu leaders. Gérard Prunier, for example, argues that the organizers of the genocide were “on the lunatic fringes of radical Hutu extremism... ,” part of “a small tight group, belonging to the regime’s political, military and economic élite who had decided through a mixture of ideological and material motivation radically to resist political change which they perceived as threatening.” 119

Not only have leaders of genocidal regimes often conceived of and carried their murderous policies without the active support of the majority of their societies, many have viewed the very idea that their regime should be responsive to the “will of the people” with utter contempt. Lenin, after all, was the father not only of Russia’s bloody Red Terror, but also the progenitor of the concept of the “Vanguard of the Proletariat.” Writing in 1917, Lenin declared,

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117 Robert Conquest, The Great Terror, pp. 53, 70. See also Robert C. Tucker, Staln in Power: The Revolution from Above, 1928-1941 (New York: Norton, 1992) and Dmitri Volkogonov, Staln: Triumph and Tragedy, ed. and trans. Harold Shukman (New York: Grove Wiedenfeld, 1988), pp. 308-309. Other scholars have questioned the degree of Stalin’s premeditation and control over the Terror and have suggested that certain segments of the Soviet elite may have voluntarily supported the Terror, at least initially. Even in these accounts, however, the original impulse for the Terror rests with a small group of powerful political leaders and Stalin remains the single most important figure behind it. See J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks, 1932-1939 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), esp. 569-86; and J. Arch Getty, The Origins of the Great Purges. The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933-1938 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).


In times of revolution it is not enough to ascertain the ‘will of the majority.’ No -- one must be stronger at the decisive moment, in the decisive place, and win. Beginning with the medieval ‘peasant war’ in Germany... until 1905, we see countless instances of how the better organized, more conscious, better armed minority imposed its will on the majority and conquered it.\textsuperscript{120}

Hitler likewise acknowledged that the Nazi party did not rely on popular support to accomplish its rise to power. On the contrary, the centerpiece of Hitler’s political philosophy was the “Führer Principle,” which mandated unquestioning obedience to a single leader.\textsuperscript{121} Hitler’s explicit strategy had been to attract the most radical elements in society and use them to lead public opinion and the nation down the path he had chosen. Looking back on his rise to power in 1944, he reminded his generals that:

“I set up my fighting manifesto and tailored it deliberately to attract only the toughest and most determined minority of the German people at first.... then the moment will come where there’ll be this minority on the one side and the majority in the other -- but this minority will be the one that makes history, because the majority will always follow where there’s a tough minority to lead the way.”\textsuperscript{122}

A telling comment by Enver Pasha, the leader of the “Young Turk” regime responsible for the Armenian genocide of 1915, suggests that he not only understood of the powerful role that a relatively small group of people played in the rise of his own regime, but that the fear of such groups may actually have been a motive for launching the genocide. As he told the American Ambassador, Henry Morgenthau:

You must remember that when we [the Young Turks] started this revolution in Turkey there were only two hundred of us... It is our experience with revolutions which makes us fear the Armenians. If two hundred Turks could overturn the government, then a few hundred bright, educated Armenians could do the same thing.


We have therefore deliberately adopted the plan of scattering them so that they can do us no harm.\textsuperscript{123}

The power that small groups or individuals can wield over the process of mass killing is no better illustrated than by the frequency with which episodes of mass killing have come to a halt when murderous regimes have been overthrown or individual leaders have died. Mass killings carried out by Nazi Germany, Japan, Cambodia and Rwanda ceased practically overnight when the regimes that initiated the killings were overthrown by foreign invasions.

Of course, bringing an end to mass killing by these particular regimes required an extended military occupation. More revealing is the abrupt cessation of decades of mass killing in the Soviet Union and China following the deaths of Stalin and Mao respectively. These brutal leaders were replaced not by foreign powers, but rather by high-ranking members of their own political parties. Nikita Khrushchev and Deng Xiaoping were hardly role-models for democratic leadership. They each played a supporting role in at least some of the violent episodes initiated by their predecessors. Neither man was afraid to use harsh methods to crush internal dissent. Nevertheless, their explicit criticisms of Stalin and Mao’s brutal methods, their reversals of many of their predecessors’ more radical polices and the much less violent character of their own rule all strongly suggest that if these leaders had governed in the place of Stalin and Mao, the innocent people of Soviet Union and China would have experienced far less suffering. The fact that no leader of the Soviet Union or China since the deaths of Stalin and Mao sponsored violent campaigns on anything like the scale of their brutal predecessors suggests that both men failed to represent the goals and interests of their respective regimes, let alone those of the broader societies over which they governed.

The powerful influence of individuals and small groups not only diminishes the predictive power of broad social factors, but also renders it possible for highly idiosyncratic factors to play a major role in the process of mass killing. The path to power of some of history’s most brutal regimes was paved not by immutable, historical or social processes but by serendipity, contingency and historical fluke. As Henry Ashby Turner documents, the Nazi Party’s rise to power was a near run thing, which few contemporaries predicted and which would

not have been possible without a great deal of luck and the repeated bungling of Weimar
leaders.\textsuperscript{124} It is easy to imagine how events might have taken a radically different turn. If they
had, Turner argues, there would likely have been a major war, but the Holocaust and many of the
more terrible aspects of the Second World War would almost certainly have been avoided.\textsuperscript{125}
Impersonal historical forces may provide the conditions that make such events possible, but they
do not make them inevitable or even likely. As noted in chapter one, while factors such as war,
revolution and economic upheavals do seem to increase the likelihood of political upheaval,
these crises are only rarely successfully seized upon by leaders bent on mass killing.

These conclusions suggest that the search for the causes of mass killing should begin with
the goals, interests, ideas and strategies of groups and individuals in positions of political and
military power and not with factors which cause societies to generate such leaders. Powerful
groups may achieve their position because the public staunchly supports them, because the public
is indifferent, or because other centers of political and military power are too weak or too inept to
effectively oppose them. Whatever their path to power, groups that have managed to attain it
have likely also achieved the prerequisite capabilities for mass killing. Material, social or
cultural factors may constitute pre-conditions for the rise of such groups, but the evidence
presented in this chapter (and in chapter one) suggests that these conditions are too common or
too idiosyncratic and contingent to generate a high absolute probability that mass killing will
take place. The costs of intervention on a scale wide enough to address these preconditions
ev everywhere they occur -- assuming policy makers even knew \textit{how} to influence such complex
social factors -- seem prohibitively high.

Focusing on the goals and interests of groups already in or near positions of power, on the
other hand, does not mean that it is impossible to predict mass killing until after it has already
begun. Groups with violent agendas often remain in or near power for extended periods before
launching mass killing. Hitler ruled in Germany for more than eight years before launching the
Holocaust. His violent anti-Semitism was well known for years before he achieved power. The
Khmer Rouge began implementing their violent policies of "rural reform" in the remote areas

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., pp. 172-176.
under their control years before they gained dominion over the entire country in 1975.126 Even their policy of emptying cities had been seen already in 1973 when they began to systematically burn rural villages in the effort to force peasants into new agricultural collectives.127 The radical group of Hutu leaders responsible for the 1994 Rwandan genocide was not in full control of the government and military until after the genocide began, but included many high placed members of the regime. Their radical agenda was well known within Rwanda prior to the genocide. Some had even been openly calling for a policy of mass murder.128 In the months preceding the genocide, a wide range of warning signs suggested that massive violence was imminent.129

Contemporary observers often have been aware of the violent ideas, plans, statements and even actions of future perpetrators of mass killing, but too frequently have failed to take these warnings seriously. Since threats of violence are far more common than mass killing, it is easy to dismiss such threats as mere bluster.130 By learning to recognize the specific kinds of goals, beliefs and situations which make leaders likely to consider mass killing, however, we may be better able to discriminate between empty threats and those that indicate a more significant possibility of mass killing. The remaining chapters of this dissertation, therefore, are devoted to identifying and understanding the factors and conditions that contribute to leaders' decisions to launch mass killing.

129 Prunier. The Rwanda Crisis, p. 169
CHAPTER 3

A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO MASS KILLING: OVERVIEW AND TYPOLOGY

The evidence presented in Chapters One and Two indicates that understanding and anticipating mass killing will require understanding the specific goals, ideas and beliefs of powerful leaders, not the broad social or governmental structures of the societies from which these leaders are drawn. While a few leaders cannot carry out mass killing alone, the active support necessary to implement this violence can be surprisingly easy to achieve. "Negative support," the lack of organized resistance to perpetrators or active support for victims, is usually all that is required. A tiny minority, well armed and well organized, can generate an appalling amount of bloodshed when unleashed upon unarmed and unorganized victims.

My research, therefore, suggests that the causes of mass killing will be best understood when the phenomenon is studied from a "strategic" perspective. Rather than focusing on the social structures or psychological mechanisms that might facilitate social support for mass killing, the strategic approach seeks to identify the specific situations, goals and conditions which prompt leaders to consider this kind of violence in the first place. My research finds that mass killing occurs when powerful groups come to believe it is the most "practical" way to accomplish certain radical goals, counter specific types of threats, or solve particular military problems. This approach suggests that mass killing should be recognized as a goal-oriented policy calculated to achieve leaders' most important political and military objectives with respect to other groups -- a "final solution" to leaders' most urgent problems.

A strategic understanding of mass killing does not imply that leaders accurately assess the problems they face or the ability of mass killing to resolve these problems. On the contrary, the fact that individuals and small groups can play such a powerful role in mass killing may actually promote misperceptions by shielding erroneous ideas and beliefs from the critical scrutiny of a wider audience. Indeed, in many cases of mass killing, the threat posed by the victims has been more imagined than real. Moreover, leaders often overestimate the capacity of mass killing to achieve their goals, especially in the long term. While mass killing can be a powerful political or military strategy, it can also be extremely counterproductive, even from the point of view of its
perpetrators. In practice, it has often backfired, increasing resistance among opponents or
drawing third parties into the conflict. Nevertheless, leaders ultimately act on the basis of their
perceptions and beliefs, not objective reality. The strategic approach, therefore, suggests only
that leaders resort to mass killing when they perceive it to be both necessary and effective, not
when it is actually so.

This chapter is divided into two major sections. In the first section, I present a typology
of mass killing. This typology identifies the unique circumstances and conditions under which
leaders may be likely to consider mass killing. I also describe the specific real-world scenarios
under which these conditions are likely to occur, and present a complete list of the historical
episodes of each type of mass killing in the twentieth century. The second section briefly
discusses the advantages and disadvantages of the methodology that will be used to test the
validity of the strategic approach in the following three chapters of this dissertation.

A Typology of Mass Killing

Several scholars have noted that mass killing and genocide can often appear “rational”
from the point of view of the perpetrator. Peter duPreez, for example, argues that “there is a
‘rationality of genocide’ just as there is a rationality of business or athletics or war or science.”1
Likewise, Roger Smith asserts that “genocide is a rational instrument to achieve an end.”2 More
specifically, a number of scholars have pointed out that genocide can sometimes be motivated by
the desire to counter real or perceived threats posed by victims or by the desire to implement
certain ideologies.3

Unfortunately, few scholars have gone beyond simply noting the potential rationality of
genocide and mass killing to identify the precise conditions under which mass killing is most
likely to appear “rational” and necessary to its perpetrators. Why, in other words, is mass killing

a rational way to meet some threats and implement some ideologies, but not others? Helen Fein, for example, argues that many cases of genocide result from the violent repression of victim groups rebelling against severe discrimination.⁴ Rebellion, however, is a far more common phenomenon than mass killing. Fein offers no explanation for why mass killing is used to repress some rebellious groups and not others.⁵ Without this knowledge, we can neither understand the “rationality” of genocidal repression nor anticipate when it will occur.

Like the authors noted above, my research also suggests that mass killing, among other things, may serve to counter threats or implement ideologies. I argue, however, that leaders are likely to perceive mass killing as an attractive means to achieve these ends only in very specific circumstances and under very specific conditions. The strategic approach identifies six specific motives -- thus, six “types” of mass killing -- which, under certain specific conditions, appear to generate strong incentives for leaders to initiate mass killing. These motives, in turn, may be grouped into two general categories.

First, when leaders’ plans result in the near complete material or political disenfranchisement of large groups of people, leaders are likely to believe that mass killing is necessary to overcome resistance by these groups or, more radically, that mass killing is the only practical way to remove these groups or their influence from society. In this dissertation I refer to this general class of mass killing as “dispossessive” mass killings. Second, mass killing can become an attractive solution when groups find themselves engaged in military conflicts in which conventional military options prove ineffective or inefficient. When leaders encounter great difficulties defeating their enemies’ military forces directly, they face powerful incentives to target the civilians whom they suspect of providing support to those forces. I refer to this class of mass killing as “coercive” mass killings.

This typology, along with the real-world scenarios in which each type of mass killing occurs as well as several selected historical examples of each scenario, is presented in Table 1 below. This typology may not exhaust the entire universe of potential motives for mass killing.

--- footnotes continued from last page ---

⁵ Nor does Fein attempt to explain why severe discrimination leads to rebellion in some cases but not others.
in the twentieth century, but it does appear to account for the majority of these episodes. Each of the types of mass killing identified in this table will be briefly described in following sections of this chapter. A complete record of the historical episodes of each type, including estimates of the number of people killed in each episode, is provided in separate tables following each of these sections. Three types of mass killing -- communist mass killing, chauvinist mass killing, and counter-guerrilla mass killing -- have been the most significant forms of this violence in the twentieth century, accounting for the majority of episodes of mass killing as well as the greatest number of victims. Chapters Four, Five and Six, therefore, are devoted to describing the causes of these types of mass killing in further detail and to testing the ability of the strategic approach to explain several prominent historical episodes of these types of mass killing.

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6 At least two notable cases -- the mass killing of between 250,000 and one million people in Indonesia in 1965 and the mass killing of between 100,000 and 500,000 people in Uganda under Idi Amin from 1971 to 1979 -- do not appear consistent with any of the motives described in this dissertation.

7 Other scenarios of mass killing have been comparatively rare in the twentieth century, although some of these scenarios were more common in earlier historical periods.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motive/Type</th>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communist</td>
<td>Communization (i.e. collectivization and political repression)</td>
<td>• Soviet Union (1917–53)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• China (1950–76)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Cambodia (1975-79)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chauvinist</td>
<td>Ethnic cleansing</td>
<td>• Turkish Armenia (1915–918)</td>
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<td>• the Holocaust (1939–45)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Rwanda (1994)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Territorial</td>
<td>Colonial enlargement</td>
<td>• European colonies in North and South America (1492–?)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• genocide of the Herero in German South-West Africa (1904–7)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expansionist wars</td>
<td>• German annexation of Eastern Poland (1939–45)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Counter-guerrilla</td>
<td>Counter-guerrilla wars</td>
<td>• Algerian war of independence from France (1954–62)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979–89)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Ethiopian civil war (1970s–80s)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Guatemalan civil war (1980s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Terroristic</td>
<td>Strategic bombing</td>
<td>• Allied bombings of Germany and Japan during WWII (1940–45)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Starvation blockades/siege warfare</td>
<td>• Allied blockade of Germany during WWI (1914–19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mass terrorism</td>
<td>• Nigerian blockade of Biafra (1967–70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperial</td>
<td>Imperial conquists and rebellions</td>
<td>• FLN terrorism in Algerian war of independence against France (1954–62)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Viet Cong terrorism in South Vietnam (1957–75)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• RENAMO terrorism in Mozambique (1981–92)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• German occupation of Western Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Japan’s empire in East Asia (1910–45)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8 Selected examples only, not a complete list of all instances of mass killings within each category. Some examples combine aspects of more than one motive.
**Conditionality and Intervening Variables**

It must be emphasized that although the general scenarios described below generate powerful incentives for mass killing, they do not invariably provoke it. A variety of intervening variables may act to increase or decrease leaders' incentives for ordering mass killing and consequently, the likelihood that mass killing will occur. Although it is not possible to identify all of the factors and conditions which may impact the likelihood of mass killing, I have attempted to identify some of the most significant intervening variables by analyzing the history of a number of less violent examples of the scenarios listed in Table 1. These conditions are listed at the end of each section below.\(^9\) Conditions affecting the likelihood of communist mass killing, chauvinist mass killing and counter-guerrilla mass killing, along with a brief analysis of several less violent examples of these scenarios, are described in further detail in Chapters Four, Five and Six.

**Dispossessive Mass Killings**

Dispossessive mass killings are the result of policies which, by design or by consequence, have the effect of stripping large groups of people of their possessions, their homes or their way of life. Although such policies may not aim at mass killing per-se, in practice, their implementation has often required extensive violence. My research identifies three major types of dispossessive mass killing in the twentieth century. First, regimes seeking to achieve the radical communization of their societies have forced vast numbers of people to surrender their property and abandon their traditional ways of life. Second, chauvinist regimes have forced large groups of people to relinquish their homes and possessions in the process of “ethnic cleansing.” Third, the territorial ambitions of colonial or expansionist powers have often stripped pre-existing populations of their land and means of subsistence.

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\(^9\) Some of these conditions, such as the perpetrator’s physical capability to carry out mass killing, the size of the victim group and the ability of victims to flee to safety, apply to all types of mass killing. Other conditions apply only to specific scenarios of mass killing.

82
A note on the role of ideology in dispossessive mass killing

Many of the cases categorized in this chapter as "dispossessive mass killings" have been described as "ideological" mass killings (or ideological genocides) by other authors. Indeed, few scholars who have studied genocide and mass killing have failed to comment on the central role that ideology has played in some of the twentieth century's most bloody mass killings. In particular, the ideology of ruling elites appears to have played a major role in mass killings by communist states, such as the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia and by racist or chauvinist states like Nazi Germany. Various authors have suggested that the most dangerous ideologies are those which seek to purify the nation, dehumanize victims, place national security above all other goals, or expound a political formula that excludes victim groups from the larger community or nation.  

From a strategic perspective, however, what ideologies that lead to mass killing share is not their specific content, but the magnitude, scope and speed of the changes they force upon large social groups. The desire to implement such radical changes may stem from ideological doctrines calling for a revolutionary transformation of the economic or demographic composition of society, but it may also stem from more "pragmatic" concerns such as the effort to eliminate perceived political or military threats, or the attempt to colonize and repopulate territories already inhabited by large numbers of people. Whatever its fundamental motivation, the effort to impose extremely radical changes on the lives of large numbers of people often results in the near total material or political disenfranchisement of existing social groups.

Radical ends, however, require radical means. Leaders with such radical agendas soon discover -- or simply anticipate -- that members of disenfranchised groups will not cooperate with the implementation of a new social order in which they stand to loose their livelihood, their homes or their very way of life. Massive violence may be required to force such changes upon large numbers of people. Leaders may simply decide that the victim group must be totally

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annihilated, or that killing large numbers of them is necessary to enforce their compliance and deter surviving members from mounting further resistance. Even if victim groups can be forced to submit to such harsh polices, the process and aftermath of such radical changes -- often involving the sudden movement of vast numbers of people or the severe disruption of traditional means of economic production -- can take a major toll in human life.

Despite their deadly consequences, it is important to recognize that the radical goals, be they ideological or pragmatic, which motivate dispossession mass killings do not aim at the destruction of specific groups as an end in itself. This conception would simply lead to the tautological conclusion that groups engage in mass killing because they want to engage in mass killing. Rather, dispossession mass killing occurs when leaders come to believe that this kind of violence is the most “practical” strategy to accomplish political or military objectives short of mass killing. These objectives may call for an open assault on the way of life of victim groups or for their segregation or removal from society, but they do not amount to killing for killing’s sake. In fact, mass killings in the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia resulted from policies that communist leaders believed would ultimately improve the lives all citizens, including the social groups whose existence was most severely disrupted by such policies. In the eyes of communist leaders, violence became a necessary expedient because these groups failed to rise above their narrow “class consciousness” to appreciate the benefits of communist society.

Under certain circumstances, however, even truly revolutionary changes can be accomplished without mass killing -- although seldom without any violence whatsoever. Indeed, as I will document in Chapters Four and Five, dispossession mass killings are rarely a policy of first resort. Leaders commonly experiment with other options, such as voluntary emigration or less violent forms of repression to achieve their radical goals. When these options fail or are deemed impractical, however, leaders may be forced to choose between compromising their goals and resorting to more violent means to achieve them. Regardless of leaders’ original intentions vis-à-vis their victims, mass killing can become an attractive option.
Communist Mass Killing

The most deadly mass killings in history have resulted from the effort to transform society according to communist doctrine. Communist regimes in the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia alone may be responsible for between 15 and 72 million deaths (see table 2 below). “Revolutionary” communist regimes have proven so exceptionally violent because the changes they have sought to bring about in their societies have been extremely radical and have directly impacted the lives of vast numbers of people. Radical communist policies have extended well beyond the restriction of personal and political freedoms common to so many merely authoritarian or dictatorial regimes. Radical communist regimes have sought a truly revolutionary transformation of their societies, a transformation that has resulted in the nearly complete material dispossession of vast numbers of people, the abrupt destruction of traditional ways of life and means of production, and the subordination of once personal decisions and daily activities to heedless state authorities. Not surprisingly, many people have chosen to resist rather than submit to these drastic changes. Faced with the choice between moderating their revolutionary goals or using violence to achieve them, radical communist regimes have often opted for mass killing over compromise.

Mass killings associated with the collectivization of agriculture and other radical communist agricultural policies provide perhaps the most striking examples of this process. Indeed, the desire to transform agricultural production has been the motive for several of the most deadly incidents of mass killing in human history. Communist agricultural policies like collectivization have tended to go hand in hand with mass killing because, perhaps more than any

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other communist program, these policies have striped vast numbers of people of their most valued possessions -- their homes and their way of life.\textsuperscript{12} As will be described in Chapter Four, the imposition of radical communist agricultural policies on the peasantry of the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia resulted in millions of deaths. Some of these deaths were the unintentional result of massive famines sparked by the inefficiencies of communist agricultural policies. Vast numbers of people, however, were also intentionally killed in the effort to force a new way of life on a reluctant or openly rebellious peasantry. While the severe famines in the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia were not deliberately engineered, as some have argued, communist leaders in all three states directed the worst effects of the famines against individuals and social groups suspected of resistance to collectivization as well as other perceived enemies of the regime.

In addition to mass killings associated with radical agricultural policies, communist mass killings have also taken the form of brutal intra-party purges and attacks on social and cultural elites, intellectuals, and members of opposition political parties. The Red Terror and the Great Terror in the Soviet Union and the Cultural Revolution in China represent the most violent examples of this type of communist mass killing. As I argue in Chapter Four, these episodes appear to have been motivated by the desire of communist leaders to extend and protect the communist transformation of society from perceived enemies both outside and within the communist regime. Indeed, in all three cases examined in Chapter Four, the most savage political purges were driven in part by the effort to eliminate real and perceived opposition to the regime's radical agricultural policies within the communist party. In the eyes of Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot, the communist transformation remained extremely fragile even many years after the revolution. This conviction was bolstered by the existence of real opposition to radical communist policies and by a conspiratorial Marxist-Leninist world-view which encouraged the perception that the enemies of communism were both powerful and numerous.

\textsuperscript{12} As I will describe in chapter 4, socialist agrarian policies such as the expropriation and redistribution of large estates (especially when foreign-owned), on the other hand, have often received much broader popular support. This type of "land reform" has often been accomplished without massive bloodshed (although seldom without at least some violence) since such measures tend to adversely impact fewer people.
Communist mass killing is more likely:

- the higher the priority that communist leaders assign to the radical transformation of society
- the more the communization of society results in the dispossession of certain groups
- the greater the number of people disenfranchised by communist policies
- the more rapidly communist leaders believe the transformation must be carried out
- the greater the physical capabilities for mass killing possessed by the communist regime
- the fewer and more difficult the options for victims of communist policies to flee to safer areas

<table>
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<th>Event(s)</th>
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<th>Estimated Range</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Soviet Union (1917-1923)</strong></td>
<td>Russian Civil War and Red Terror, collectivization, Great Terror, occupation of the Baltics and Western Poland</td>
<td>counter-guerrilla</td>
<td>500 - 3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (1927-1945)</strong></td>
<td>collectivization, Great Terror, occupation of the Baltics and Western Poland</td>
<td>counter-guerrilla</td>
<td>9,100 - 32,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>China (including Tibet) (1949-1972)</strong></td>
<td>land reform, Great Leap Forward, political purges, Cultural Revolution</td>
<td>counter-guerrilla</td>
<td>5,000 - 35,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cambodia (1975-1979)</strong></td>
<td>collectivization and political repression</td>
<td>chauvinist</td>
<td>1,000 - 2,000</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Possible Cases**

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<tr>
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<td>agricultural collectivization and political repression</td>
<td></td>
<td>25 - 150</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Bulgaria (1944-?)</strong></td>
<td>agricultural collectivization and political repression</td>
<td></td>
<td>172 - 222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>East Germany (1945-?)</strong></td>
<td>political repression by Soviet Union</td>
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<td>80 - 266</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Romania (1945-?)</strong></td>
<td>agricultural collectivization and political repression</td>
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<td>60 - 245</td>
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<td><strong>North Korea (1948-?)</strong></td>
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<td>counter-guerrilla</td>
<td>200 - 1,500</td>
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<td><strong>North and South Vietnam (1953-?)</strong></td>
<td>agricultural collectivization and political repression</td>
<td></td>
<td>65 - 443</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chauvinist Mass Killing

While communist leaders have sought to reshape the economic fabric of society, groups seeking the radical ethnic, national or religious transformation of society have also killed millions in places like Turkey, Nazi Germany, and Rwanda. In this dissertation, this type of mass killing is referred to as “chauvinist mass killing.”\textsuperscript{15} Chauvinist mass killings are often presumed to be the result of severe hatred of victims by perpetrators, or portrayed simply as killing for killing’s sake. As described in Chapter One, however, hatred is not a sufficient explanation for mass killing. Severe hatred exists between groups in many societies, yet mass killing remains relatively rare. Although the perpetrators of chauvinist mass killings almost always hate their victims, additional information is required to understand why hated groups in a few societies have been systematically exterminated, while others have escaped such a fate.

The strategic approach suggests that chauvinist mass killing results when leaders come to believe that certain ethnic, national or religious groups pose a threat which can only be countered by physically removing these groups from society. Policies designed to bring about this kind of radical demographic transformation often take the form of “ethnic cleansing.”\textsuperscript{16} As I will describe in greater detail in Chapter Five, the decision to launch a policy of ethnic cleansing appears to have little to do with hatred between groups or the desire to kill victims, per-se. Rather, the most important determinants of the decision to engage in ethnic cleansing relate to the specific ways in which perpetrators perceive their victims as threatening and to the availability of less radical options for dealing with this perceived threat. The perception that

\textsuperscript{14} Evidence for these cases suggests that mass killing may have occurred but is insufficient to reliably estimate the number of people killed and or the intentions of the perpetrators.

\textsuperscript{15} The mass killing of ethnic, national or religious groups is commonly referred to as genocide. This dissertation utilizes the term “chauvinist mass killing” in order to distinguish cases of genocide driven by the desire to transform the ethnic, national or religious composition of society, from cases of genocide which are motivated primarily by the desire for territory (as in the genocide of indigenous people or genocide during wars of territorial annexation) or by strategic military considerations (as in cases of counter-guerrilla mass killings between ethnic groups). These types of mass killing are described in following sections. The Oxford English Dictionary defines chauvinism as “excessive loyalty to or belief in the superiority of one’s own kind of cause, and prejudice against others” J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner eds., Oxford English Dictionary Volume III (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 62 The Random House Unabridged Dictionary defines Chauvinism as “the biased devotion to any group, attitude, or cause” See: Stuart Berg Flexner, ed., Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2nd edition (New York: Random House, 1993), pp 350-351

\textsuperscript{16} Ethnic cleansing is not the only instrument available to alter the demographic make-up of society. For a discussion of the various methods that have been employed to achieve demographic transformations, see Milica Zarkovic Bookman, The Demographic Struggle for Power: The Political Economy of Demographic Engineering in the Modern World (London: Frank Cass, 1997)
victim groups represent a serious threat may be primarily influenced by perpetrators' ideological beliefs, as it was in Nazi Germany. It may also be a reaction to real, although often misperceived or exaggerated, threatening actions of some victim group members, as in Rwanda. In many cases, a combination of ideological beliefs and real-world conflicts seem to shape perpetrators' perception of victim groups.

The decision to engage in ethnic cleansing, however, is not always a decision for mass killing. Ethnic cleansing and mass killing are often conflated in popular parlance, but they are not synonymous. Ethnic cleansing refers to the physical removal of certain groups from a given territory, a process that may or may not involve mass killing. Nevertheless, like communist policies such as collectivization, large-scale ethnic cleansing frequently has been associated with mass killing because it often -- indeed, almost by definition -- results in the near complete dispossession of large groups of people. Violence is often required to force people to relinquish their homes and their possessions. Even after victims have been coerced into flight, the process and aftermath of large population movements itself can be deadly.

The most bloody episodes of chauvinist mass killing, however, occur when leaders conclude that there are no practical options for the physical relocation of victim groups. In such cases, leaders may see violent repression on a massive scale as the only way to meet the perceived threat posed by their victims. The killing may be designed to deprive the victim group of the ability to organize politically or militarily by killing its elites, intellectuals or sometimes all males of military age.17 Worse yet, leaders may conclude that systematic extermination is the only means to counter the threat. Chauvinist mass killing, therefore, is best seen as an instrumental strategy which seeks the physical removal or permanent military or political subjugation of large groups of people, not the annihilation of these groups as an end in itself.

Thus, as I will document in Chapter Five, mass killings in Turkey, Nazi Germany, and Rwanda occurred when chauvinist leaders came to see a radical policy of ethnic cleansing as the only way to meet the perceived threats posed by their victims, and, in turn, to see mass killing as the only way to achieve ethnic cleansing. Leaders in Turkey and Rwanda actively experimented with strategies other than ethnic cleansing -- including less violent forms of repression and even

17 This appears to have been the aim of the 1972 genocide of Hutu in Burundi. See René Lemarchand, Burundi Ethnocide as Discourse and Practice (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 96-105.
limited political reforms -- before resorting to mass killing. In all three cases, the decision for mass killing seems to have been based on the perception that other options for removing their victims from society would be impossible, impractical or inadequate. Indeed, Nazi leaders tried to “cleanse” Germany of its Jews through emigration and forced deportation for more than seven years before launching the “final solution” in 1941. Leaders in Turkey and Rwanda, on the other hand, appear to have opted for mass killing over expulsion primarily because they were already facing attacks from Armenian and Tutsi diaspora in neighboring states. Driving Armenian and Tutsi populations across the border, therefore, would only have exacerbated the very problems Turkish and Hutu leaders were trying to solve.

*Chauvinist mass killing is more likely:*

- the greater the threat that chauvinist leaders believe is posed by their ethnic, national or religious enemies
- the fewer and less practical the policies other than ethnic cleansing that chauvinist leaders believe will counter the perceived threat posed by their victims
- the more rapidly chauvinist leaders believe ethnic cleansing must be carried out to counter the perceived threat posed by the victims
- the greater the numbers of people subjected to ethnic cleansing
- the greater the physical capabilities for mass killing possessed by the chauvinist regime
- the fewer and more difficult the options for victims to flee to safe areas

### Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country (Years)</th>
<th>Event Type 1</th>
<th>Event Type 2</th>
<th>Number of Deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turkey (1915-1918)</td>
<td>genocide of Armenians</td>
<td>counter-guerrilla</td>
<td>600 - 1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soviet Union (1937-1953)</td>
<td>Soviet deportation of nationalities</td>
<td>counter-guerrilla</td>
<td>400 - 800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany (1939-1945)</td>
<td>genocide of Jews and other Nazi race enemies</td>
<td>counter-guerrilla</td>
<td>4,504 - 7,529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yugoslavia (1941-1945)</td>
<td>Ustasha violence against Serbs</td>
<td>counter-guerrilla</td>
<td>200 - 600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Europe (1945 - 1947)</td>
<td>post-WWII expulsion of ethnic Germans</td>
<td>counter-guerrilla</td>
<td>600 - 2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India (1947 - 1948)</td>
<td>partition of India</td>
<td>counter-guerrilla</td>
<td>200 - 800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh (1971)</td>
<td>partition of East Pakistan</td>
<td>counter-guerrilla</td>
<td>500 - 3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burundi (1972)</td>
<td>genocide of Hutu</td>
<td>counter-guerrilla</td>
<td>100 - 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia-Herzegovina (1990-1994)</td>
<td>ethnic cleansing of Muslims from Bosnia</td>
<td>counter-guerrilla</td>
<td>25 - 155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda (1994)</td>
<td>genocide of Tutsi</td>
<td>counter-guerrilla</td>
<td>500 - 1,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Territorial Mass Killing

The third general motive for dispossessive mass killing occurs when powerful groups attempt to resettle territories already inhabited by other people. Unlike the chauvinist mass killings described above, perpetrators of territorial mass killing do not seek to cleanse a given territory of its inhabitants because they believe these groups pose a threat, but rather because perpetrators want to cultivate or populate the land with their own people. As with chauvinist mass killings, however, territorial mass killing occurs because the process and aftermath of rapidly removing large numbers of people from their homes often involves considerable violence.

Territorial mass killings have emerged in two closely related scenarios. First, mass killing has frequently resulted as settler colonies have sought to expand their territories into regions already populated by indigenous people. This scenario has occurred primarily in colonial settings, most notably in the European colonies of North and South America and to a lesser extent in Africa. Not all colonists, however, have annihilated the indigenous peoples they encountered. European states that have engaged in mass killing in some of their colonies have behaved more peaceably in others. What separates these “peaceful” colonies from the ones which resort to mass killing? The answer often seems to depend upon the nature of the colonial economy and its relationship to the indigenous population.

In agricultural economies, particularly those with an emphasis on herding, land is a valuable asset. The economic structure of indigenous societies, however, may also depend on the land. Many colonies do not encompass enough high-quality land to support both a land-hungry agrarian economy and the pre-existing indigenous population. In such cases, the settlers’ desire for more and more land tends to push the colony into conflict with neighboring indigenous populations. Indigenous efforts to resist colonial expansion may prompt increasingly violent responses from the settlers, sometimes escalating to mass killing. Where land is available,

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18 For the purposes of this dissertation, colonies must be distinguished from imperial possessions. In this dissertation, colonies are territories intended to be permanently settled by large numbers of people from the colonizing state. Imperial possessions are not settled. Rather, subjects of empire are required to provide goods and services for the empire. Empires have also been frequent perpetrators of mass killing, although for different reasons which will be described below.
colonists may attempt to relocate indigenous people to distant or unwanted territories. Even in these cases, however, the outcome is often mass death. Violence is frequently required to force indigenous people to abandon their homes. The process of moving large populations often proves deadly, as the relocation of the Cherokee people in 1838 on the infamous “trail of tears” demonstrated. To make matters worse, starvation, disease and depredation by other tribes often await those who survive relocation since colonists have seldom chosen to deport indigenous populations to hospitable regions.

This deadly competition for land played a major role in the destruction of many indigenous tribes of America. According to David Stannard, “since the colonizing British, and subsequently the Americans, had little use for Indian servitude, but only wanted Indian land...straightforward mass killing of the Indians was deemed the only thing to do.” Not all economies, however, are so economically dependent upon land. Non-agricultural forms of production require relatively little land, but are often dependent on a cheap and plentiful source of labor. Indigenous people have often fulfilled this function. Indigenous people can also provide important markets for goods and have even provided soldiers for colonial armies.

Two French colonies in North America provide telling examples of how the economic relationship between colonists and indigenous peoples can influence the likelihood of mass killing. In what is now Canada, the Huron people became an integral part of France's fur trade, serving as guides and skilled trackers for the French. French trappers relied on Huron villages

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for supplies and protection from other Indians. The French and the Hurons maintained a relatively peaceful relationship until the Huron were decimated in a war with the Iroquois in 1649. The relationship between the French and the Natchez people of the lower Mississippi, on the other hand, ended in the annihilation of the Natchez by the French colonists. In the lower Mississippi, the French planned a large colony based on agriculture. They imported slaves from Africa for their servants and laborers. The Natchez people simply stood in the way of expanding French plantations. When the Natchez would not abandon their land peacefully, the French decided to remove them by force. By 1731 the Natchez had ceased to exist. 23

The second major scenario of territorial mass killing has resulted when groups engaged in expansionist wars have sought to resettle areas already occupied and developed by others. Perhaps the most horrific example of this kind of mass killing occurred during the Second World War as Germany attempted to expand its territory eastward into regions inhabited by Poles, Russians and other Eastern European peoples. This effort to acquire Lebensraum (living space) for Germany’s growing population was one of Hitler’s primary obsessions, rivaled in importance only by his interrelated campaign to rid Europe of the Jews. Hitler’s plans called for physically removing existing populations and repopulating the land with ethnic Germans. In some cases, the local population was temporarily “spared” to be used as slave labor during the war, but German plans called for the eventual deportation or extermination of many Eastern European populations.

German occupation had its most devastating effect in German-occupied Poland where colonization by German settlers began almost immediately following the defeat of Poland. 24 On the eve of the German invasion, Hitler ordered his forces to put to death “without pity or mercy all men, women and children of Polish descent or language. Only in this way can we obtain the

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23 As with most individual Native American tribes, the Natchez population was too small to qualify as mass killing as defined in this paper. This example is intended to illustrate the motives behind numerous instances of violence against Native Americans, which, when considered together, account for a much higher death toll.

24 On the German resettlement program during the war, see Anna C. Bramwell, “The Re-Settlement of Ethnic Germans, 1939-41” in Michael R. Marrus and Anna C. Bramwell, eds., *Refugees in the Age of Total War* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), pp. 112-32
living space we need."²⁵ By the end of the war more than 22 percent of the prewar Polish population was dead.²⁶ The German occupation of France and the Low Countries, on the other hand, while hardly peaceful, was more selective in its brutality. German military and police forces occupied French territory with the intention of exploiting its natural resources and labor as part of the effort to increase German war production. The Germans, however, never intended to colonize large portions of Western Europe. German violence in these countries was primarily aimed at the suppression of resistance to the occupation and eliminating Jews, Gypsies, communists or other suspected enemies of the Nazi regime.

Territorial mass killing appears to have become considerably less common in the twentieth century. Unfortunately, this trend is probably less the result of a moral conversion among settlers or expansionist powers and more the consequence of the fact that indigenous populations have already been reduced to mere fractions of their original size and -- especially since the end of the Second World War -- because the conquest of territory seems to have become less important for national security or economic prosperity.²⁷

²⁶ Ibid., p 38 This figure includes several million Jews who were killed not because they occupied German living space but as part of the Final Solution
Territorial mass killing is more likely:

- the higher the priority perpetrators assign to the re-population of new territories
- the less the ratio of usable land per colonist resettled in new territories
- the greater the numbers of people already residing in colonized territories
- the more rapidly perpetrators seek to relocate existing populations
- the greater the physical capabilities for mass killing possessed by the perpetrators
- the fewer and more difficult the options for victims to flee to safe areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Territory</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Target Type</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Namibia (1904-1907)</td>
<td>Genocide of Herero and Nama</td>
<td>counter-guerrilla</td>
<td>48 - 65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Europe (1939-1945)</td>
<td>Nazi territorial expansion</td>
<td>counter-guerrilla, imperial</td>
<td>8,625 - 15,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4
Territorial (Colonial and Expansionist) Mass Killings in the Twentieth Century

Coercive Mass Killings

Sometimes mass killing is simply war by other means. Coercive killings result when groups engaged in conflict lack the capabilities to defeat their opponents’ military forces with conventional military methods. When such conflicts threaten important goals, leaders are forced to search for alternative means to defeat their enemies. Under such circumstances, military and political leaders may conclude that the most effective way to achieve victory is to attack the civilians who they suspect of providing material and political support to enemy

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28 Not all the violence associated with these types of mass killing is designed solely to “coerce.” As Thomas Schelling argues, coercion, which achieves its goals with respect to others by threatening violence (or the further escalation of violence) if the target refuses to comply, must be distinguished from “brute force,” which achieves its goals simply by physically imposing them upon others. See: Thomas Schelling, Arms and Influence (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1966), pp. 2-18. Most of the scenarios described below involve a combination of purely

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military forces. My research identifies three major types of coercive mass killing: counter-guerrilla warfare, terroristic warfare and imperial warfare.

**Counter-guerrilla warfare**

Mass killing can be an attractive strategy for governments engaged in counter-guerrilla warfare. Under certain circumstances, states involved in major guerrilla conflicts, both domestic and international, have strong incentives to engage in the mass killing of civilians. Although many observers have characterized mass killing in counter-guerrilla warfare as the result of the actions of undisciplined, frustrated or racist troops, the strategic approach suggests that counter-guerrilla mass killing is a calculated response to the unique military challenges posed by guerrilla warfare.

Unlike conventional armies, guerrilla armies often depend on the local civilian population for food, shelter and supplies. Guerrillas also depend on the local population to reveal information about enemy outposts and troop movements and as a form of “human camouflage” into which guerrillas can blend to avoid detection. Thus, according to Mao Zedong’s famous analogy, “the guerrillas are as the fish and the people the sea in which they swim.”

Civilian support can be a major source of strength for guerrilla armies, but it can also be a weakness. Regimes facing guerrilla opponents either at home or abroad have sometimes been able to turn the guerrillas’ dependency on the local population to their own advantage. Unlike the guerrillas themselves, the civilian support network upon which guerrillas rely is virtually defenseless and impossible to conceal. Some regimes have found it easier, therefore, to fight a guerrilla army by depriving it of its base of support in the people than by attempting to target the guerrillas directly. In the terms of Mao’s metaphor, this strategy seeks to catch the fish by draining the sea. Not surprisingly, this devastating military strategy has frequently resulted in mass killing.

Theorists of counter-guerrilla warfare have often advocated “selective” violence targeted only against those who provide active support for the guerrillas. In practice, however, such distinctions have been difficult to maintain. As I will describe in greater detail in Chapter Six,

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coercive violence intended to demonstrate the capacity for even more violence if the victim group does not submit and brute force violence designed to destroy the capacity of the victims to resist
counter-guerrilla warfare has often been characterized by reliance on indiscriminate tactics such as "free fire zones," the intentional destruction of crops, livestock and dwellings, massive programs of population resettlement, and the use of torture and large-scale massacres designed to intimidate guerrilla supporters.

Guerrilla warfare, of course, has been one of the most common forms of combat in the twentieth century. In most cases, it has not provoked counter-guerrilla mass killing. As I will document in Chapter Six, when leaders believe that the guerrillas are not receiving significant support from the local population, do not pose a major threat to critical goals or interests, or that the resistance can be suppressed by other means, they have little reason to order the killing of large numbers of civilians.

**Counter-guerrilla mass killing is more likely:**

- the greater the threat that perpetrators believe guerrillas pose to vital interests
- the more significant the support perpetrators believe that guerrillas receive from the population
- the greater the difficulties the perpetrators encounter in defeating the guerrillas with less violent means
- the greater the numbers of people who reside in areas of guerrilla activity
- the greater the physical capabilities for mass killing possessed by the perpetrators
- the fewer and more difficult the options for victims to flee to safe areas

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### Table 5
**Counter-Guerrilla Mass Killings in the Twentieth Century**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Casualty Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philippines (1899-1902)</td>
<td>US occupation of Philippines</td>
<td>128-487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China (1927-1949)</td>
<td>Nationalist repression in Chinese civil war</td>
<td>6,000 - 10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain (1936-1943?)</td>
<td>Nationalist violence in civil war</td>
<td>100 - 210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria (1954-1963)</td>
<td>Algerian war of independence from France</td>
<td>82 - 300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan (1956-1971)</td>
<td>Suppression of southern Sudanese</td>
<td>250 - 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq (1963-1988)</td>
<td>Suppression of Kurdish rebellion</td>
<td>100 - 267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala (1966-1985)</td>
<td>Guatemalan civil war</td>
<td>100 - 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angola (1975-?)</td>
<td>Angolan civil war</td>
<td>100 - 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia (East Timor) (1975-1992)</td>
<td>Suppression of East Timorese separatist movement</td>
<td>60 - 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan (1978-1989)</td>
<td>Soviet invasion and occupation</td>
<td>948 - 1,283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador (1979-?)</td>
<td>Salvadoran civil war</td>
<td>20 - 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan (1983-1995)</td>
<td>Suppression of southern Sudanese</td>
<td>500 - 1,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Possible Cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Casualty Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania (German SW Africa) (1905-1907)</td>
<td>Suppression of Maji-Maji uprising</td>
<td>50 - 300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam (1945-1954)</td>
<td>French suppression of communist guerrillas</td>
<td>30 - 150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia (1948-1958)</td>
<td>“Conservative” violence against “Liberals” in Colombian civil war</td>
<td>70 - 105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam (South) (1965-1975)</td>
<td>US and South Vietnamese suppression of NLF</td>
<td>61 - 294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia (1969-1973)</td>
<td>US invasion -bombardment of Cambodia</td>
<td>60 - 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique (1975-?)</td>
<td>Suppression of RENAMO guerrillas</td>
<td>3 - 198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran (1979-1987)</td>
<td>Suppression of opposition to Iranian fundamentalist regime</td>
<td>35 - 90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda (1979-1987)</td>
<td>Suppression of former Amin supporters</td>
<td>50 - 300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mass Killing as Mass Terror

A related scenario of coercive mass killing occurs when combatants engaged in protracted wars of attrition search for means to bring the war to a speedy end. As in counter-guerrilla killings, leaders may choose to target enemy civilians in the hopes of coercing surrender without having to defeat the enemy’s military forces directly. During time of war, of course, civilians often become victims of famine, disease or exposure, or perish when they are caught in the crossfire of opposing forces. These deaths, however horrible, do not qualify as mass killing as defined above because they are not intended by either party. Civilians are also targeted intentionally, however, when leaders come to believe that bringing the conflict directly to enemy civilian populations will spread terror, break enemy morale, destroy enemy economic productivity or spark rebellions inside enemy territory.\(^{30}\) The ultimate goal of this type of mass killing is straightforward -- to speed the end of the war.

The advent of strategic air power has rendered this strategy an especially attractive and extremely deadly weapon. During the Second World War, Britain and the United States intentionally bombed German cities in an effort to weaken German public support for the war and force an early surrender. In the early stages of the war, British civilian and military leaders considered the possibility of using air power to defeat Germany without targeting civilians, but they soon discovered that these techniques were not technically practical.\(^{31}\) British strategic bombing planners ultimately decided that in order to crush the German will to fight, “we must achieve two things: first, we must make [German towns] physically uninhabitable and, secondly, we must make the people conscious of constant personal danger. The immediate aim is therefore two-fold, namely to produce: (i) destruction; and (ii) the fear of death.”\(^{32}\) By 1942, the British government had directed the Royal Air Force to abandon its efforts to conduct precision bombing

\(^{30}\) In practice, distinguishing the intentional killing of civilians during war from unintended deaths can be extremely difficult. The determination ultimately depends on a close analysis of leaders’ private statements regarding their aims and the pattern of the killing itself.


\(^{32}\) Quoted in ibid., p. 261.
of military and industrial targets and stated that “a primary object” of RAF bombing raids should be “the morale of the enemy civil population.”

In public, of course, the allies were careful to justify their attacks by claiming that the raids were intended to destroy German war industries or military targets. The high proportion of incendiary bombs used by the allies, however, casts doubt on whether military targets were the first priority of these raids. As for industrial targets, while the destruction of German industry was undoubtedly a serious and in many cases the primary strategic priority, many cities were destroyed which lacked significant industrial resources. Arthur Harris, the head of the RAF Bomber Command, admitted in his memoirs that the destruction of several factories in the 1943 raid on Hamburg, during which more than 40,000 people were killed, had been only “a bonus.” By the end of the war, American and British bombing probably killed between 300,000 and 600,000 civilians in Europe.

The strategy of terror warfare existed long before the advent of long-range bombers. Military forces throughout history have relied on the practice of siege warfare and the use of starvation blockades to achieve exactly the same effect. Famine is often an unintended consequence of war, but it too can be used as a military tool, like the bombing of cities, to force an early surrender. During the First World War, for example, more than 250,000 people died of starvation and malnutrition when the British implemented a blockade against Germany and Austria-Hungary in an effort to starve them into surrender. More recently, at least 500,000

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34 Ibid., p. 270.
37 Ibid., p. 260.
people died in the late 1960's when Nigeria blockaded food supplies to the Eastern part of the country which was attempting to secede.40

Finally, powerful sub-state groups have sometimes used coercive mass killing to terrorize their enemies, typically a colonial government and its supporters among the native population. By inflicting high casualties on specifically targeted groups of civilians, these terrorists hope to achieve their political goals without directly engaging the superior military forces of their enemies. Algerian resistance groups relied heavily on this strategy during their war for independence from France, eventually killing nearly 70,000 people -- nearly all native Algerians.41 Communist guerrilla groups in Vietnam also resorted to widespread terror in their fight for liberation against France and later the United States.42

Terroristic mass killing by states and sub-state groups has remained relatively rare in the history of warfare. This fact reflects the practical and political difficulties inherent in this strategy. Few states throughout history, for example, have possessed the military forces necessary to carry out large-scale strategic bombing campaigns or to implement effective starvation blockades even if they wished to do so. Sub-state groups, in particular, have usually lacked the capabilities and organization necessary to carry out killings beyond a few scattered terrorist acts.43 Organizations with the capability to carry out terroristic mass killing often have the means to win without resorting to this kind of violence. In many cases, leaders have reason to believe that mass killing is not only unnecessary but actually counterproductive. Mass killing can risk drawing concerned third parties or international powers into the conflict. Policies such as strategic bombing can backfire by stiffening the resolve of the enemy population, thus making surrender less likely.44 The use of mass killing in many conflicts may be deterred if the targets of such violence possess the means to retaliate in kind. Leaders of sub-state groups often fear that

44 Pape, Bombing to Win, 24–27.
the use of widespread violence might provoke increased repression by the state or alienate the very people they depend upon for support.45

Terroristic mass killing is more likely:

• the more the perpetrators believe the conflict threatens their vital interests
• the more the perpetrators believe that their enemies cannot be readily defeated with conventional means
• the greater the numbers of people who reside in territories engaged in conflict with the perpetrators
• the greater the physical capabilities for mass killing possessed by the perpetrators
• the less the capabilities for retaliation the perpetrators believe that victims possess
• the less the perpetrators believe that mass killing will provoke the intervention of other powers
• the fewer and more difficult the options for victims to flee to safe areas

45 On the other hand, some terrorist groups seem to have actively sought to provoke violent repression by the state in the hopes that this response will encourage the population to join the resistance. See: Rubenstein, Alchemists of
Table 6
Terroristic Mass Killings in the Twentieth Century

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Approximate Deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany (1914-1918)</td>
<td>Allied blockade of Germany in WWI</td>
<td></td>
<td>161 - 800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China (1927-1949)</td>
<td>Communist terror in Chinese civil war</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,800 - 3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain (1936-1939)</td>
<td>Republican terrorism in Spanish civil war</td>
<td></td>
<td>55 - 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom (1940-1945)</td>
<td>German bombardment of UK in WWII</td>
<td></td>
<td>40 - 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany (1940 - 1945)</td>
<td>Allied bombardment of Germany in WWII</td>
<td></td>
<td>300 - 600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan (1942-1945)</td>
<td>American bombardment of Japan in WWII</td>
<td></td>
<td>330 - 900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria (1954-1963)</td>
<td>FLN terrorism</td>
<td></td>
<td>50 - 150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam (1954-1975)</td>
<td>NLF (Viet-Cong) terrorism in Vietnam war</td>
<td></td>
<td>33 - 164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria (1967-1970)</td>
<td>Suppression of secession of Biafra</td>
<td></td>
<td>500 - 1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angola (1975-?)</td>
<td>UNITA terrorism</td>
<td></td>
<td>100 - 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique (1975 - ?)</td>
<td>RENAMO terrorism in Mozambican civil war</td>
<td></td>
<td>100 - 700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria (1992 - 1999)</td>
<td>Civil war anti-government terrorism</td>
<td></td>
<td>50 - 120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Possible Cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Approximate Deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Korea (1950-1954)</td>
<td>US ROK bombing and violence in Korean War</td>
<td></td>
<td>500 - 2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia (1948-1958)</td>
<td>Liberal violence against conservatives in Colombian civil war</td>
<td></td>
<td>70 - 105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia (1965-1966)</td>
<td>anti-Communist terror in Indonesia</td>
<td></td>
<td>250 - 1,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Imperial Mass Killing

The final scenario of coercive mass killing has been closely associated with empire. History provides numerous examples of mass killings committed by imperial powers. Imperial mass killings are motivated by the desire to diminish the costs of building and maintaining empires.46 Large empires, after all, would be prohibitively expensive if each conquered city,

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Revolution, pp. 90, 96-100


103
state or province had to be defeated by force and then policed to a man. Imperial leaders, therefore, have strong incentives to adopt a strategy of mass killing as a method of deterring rebellions and resistance within their empire and as a method of intimidating future conquests into submission. When individual regions, cities or states resist annexation or attempt to rebel against exploitation by the empire, imperial powers often respond with mass killing, sometimes in an exceptionally violent and gruesome manner. The annihilation of rebellious subjects is intended to demonstrate to other provinces considering rebellion the fate which awaits them if they resist.

The Mongol Empire ruled by Genghis Khan and his progeny was one of the first recorded and most efficient practitioners of this kind of mass killing. According to Paul Ratchnevsky, “Genghis Khan used terror as a strategic weapon in his military plans.... Terrible destruction was threatened in the event of resistance; bloody examples were designed to spread fear and reduce the populace’s will to resist.” Empires ranging from Rome, to the Aztec empire in Central America, to Nazi Germany’s empire in Western Europe, to Japan’s empire in China and Korea have all used mass killing in this manner. Like territorial mass killing, however, imperialism has also been a declining cause of mass killing in the twentieth century as the great European colonial empires have steadily dissolved.

*Imperial mass killing is more likely:*

- the more the perpetrators perceive their empire as a vital interest
- the greater the numbers of people residing in areas resisting imperial rule
- the larger the size of the empire relative to the perpetrators’ capabilities to police it
- the greater the physical capabilities for mass killing possessed by the perpetrators
- the less the capabilities for retaliation the perpetrators believe that victims possess
- the less the perpetrators believe that mass killing will provoke the intervention of other powers
- the fewer and more difficult the options for victims to flee to safe areas
TABLE 7
Imperial Mass Killings in the Twentieth Century

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Estimated Deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Asia 1937-1945</td>
<td>Japanese occupation of East Asia (especially China)</td>
<td>Counter-guerrilla</td>
<td>3,000 - 10,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Europe 1940-1945</td>
<td>German occupation of Western Europe</td>
<td>Counter-guerrilla</td>
<td>271-590</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Testing Strategic Theories of Mass Killing: A Note on Methodology

The primary objective of this dissertation is to develop and refine new theories which can help us understand the causes of mass killing and genocide. This dissertation, however, also attempts to conduct at least a partial test, or "plausibility probe" of these theories. The research design employed to conduct these tests, like all historically based social science research, must face an inescapable trade-off between the number of different observations (or cases) examined and the degree of historical detail that can be generated for each observation.

Traditional qualitative case study research designs have usually focused on testing theories against a very small number of historical cases (typically three or fewer), often selecting only cases in which the dependent variable is present. Many theoretical studies of genocide and mass killing, for example, focus on the Holocaust and/or the Armenian genocide, but investigate no cases in which genocide did not occur.48 This approach has the advantage of permitting highly detailed historical research, thereby generating a relatively high degree of confidence that the hypotheses being tested are, in fact, confirmed by the historical record of the cases examined. Unfortunately, this methodology provides relatively little confidence that the theory will apply to other historical cases (past or future) and risks overlooking important operative conditions or intervening variables necessary to draw meaningful causal inferences.49 Indeed, as I argued in

49 On methods which can partially address these problems, see: Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research (Princeton: Princeton University Press,

footnotes continued on next page...

105
Chapter One, the narrow focus on the mass killing of ethnic groups in the theoretical literature on genocide may have lead scholars to overemphasize the importance of factors such as hatred or discrimination as causes or preconditions of this kind of violence.

"Large-n" research designs, on the other hand, examine a very large number of historical cases (usually dozens or more), including cases in which the dependent variable is not present. Large-n studies of mass killing, for example, often examine all states or regimes in a given time period, including a majority which did not engage in mass killing.\(^50\) This approach has the advantage of demonstrating the wide applicability of the theory being tested and helps avoid the possibility of neglecting important operative conditions or intervening variables. Because of the large number of cases that must be examined, however, and because the variables implicated by many social science theories are difficult to observe or quantify, large-n research is limited in the kinds of hypotheses it can effectively test. This kind of research can provide strong evidence of the correlation between variables, but without tracing the complex historical links between them, it can only suggest causation. In the literature on genocide and mass killing, for example, large-n studies have focused on testing the influence of readily observable variables such as regime type or the occurrence of "national upheavals" like wars or revolutions.\(^51\) While these variables have been shown to correlate with mass killing, even the authors of these studies acknowledge that they do not cause such violence per-se. Moreover, the need to examine such a large number of complex historical cases means that the potential for incorrect coding of even seemingly transparent variables is a significant risk in large-n research designs.\(^52\)

Although the research design utilized in this study cannot completely avoid the basic trade-off between the quantity and detail of observations, it attempts to achieve at least some of the benefits of both methodologies described above, while avoiding at least some of their disadvantages. This dissertation focuses on eight historical episodes of mass killing. Chapter

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\(^{50}\) Large-n research in the study of mass killing and genocide has been rare. For two prominent examples, see: Matthew Krain, "State Sponsored Mass Murder: The Onset and Severity of Genocides and Politicides," The Journal of Conflict Resolution, vol. 41, no. 3 (June 1997), pp. 331-360, and Rudolph J. Rummel, Death by Government (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1994).

\(^{51}\) See: Ibid.
Four examines communist mass killings in the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia. Chapter Five analyzes chauvinist mass killings in Turkish Armenia, Nazi Germany and Rwanda. Chapter Six focuses on counter-guerrilla mass killings in Guatemala and Afghanistan. The examination of each case relies primarily on "process tracing" -- identifying the causal processes which link the factors and conditions implicated by the strategic approach to the outcome of mass killing.\(^{53}\) Although these cases were selected primarily because they are comparatively well documented in secondary sources, they also provide a relatively wide cross-section of geographic location, time period, form of government, and cultural variations. These variations serve as a means to identify the potential influences of geographic, temporal, governmental and cultural variables, and can thereby increase our confidence in the generalizability of the strategic approach to cases of mass killing not directly examined in this dissertation.

The number of cases examined in this dissertation is only somewhat greater than in most qualitative case study research designs, but four additional aspects of the methodology utilized in this dissertation generate increased confidence in the validity and generalizability of the strategic approach. First, in each case of mass killing examined in this dissertation I explore not only the history of the killing itself, but also the period before the killing began and, in some cases, the period after it ceased. This "within case comparison" generates both increased variation on the dependent variable and acts as a control for factors such as the nature of pre-existing inter-group relations, culture or geography -- factors which remained relatively stable within each case during the period under consideration.

Second, in addition to the eight cases of mass killing listed above, this dissertation also briefly investigates a number separate cases in which mass killing did not occur despite the presence of causal factors identified by the strategic approach or other theories. Thus, Chapter Four analyzes the history of several communist regimes which did not engage in mass killing; Chapter Five examines chauvinist regimes and episodes of ethnic cleansing which were not associated with mass killing; and Chapter Six investigates guerrilla wars which did not result in

\(^{52}\) Robert Pape, for example, argues that 35 out of 40 cases of economic sanctions deemed "successful" by one large-\(n\) study on the effectiveness of economic sanctions were, in fact, incorrectly coded. See: Robert A. Pape, "Why Economic Sanctions Do Not Work." *International Security*, vol. 22, no. 2 (Fall 1997), pp. 90–136.

mass killing. These cases are examined in much less detail than the eight primary case studies of
mass killing, but they are sufficient to identify at least some of the most important conditions and
intervening variables that may effect the likelihood of mass killing.

Third, the strategic approach suggests a number of specific, observable implications for
each type of mass killing examined in this dissertation, as well as cases in which mass killing did
not occur. These empirical predictions are compared to the historical record of the cases
examined in Chapters Four, Five and Six. This methodology effectively multiplies the number
of observations represented by each historical case, thereby increasing our confidence in the
validity of theory.54

Fourth, in the process of generating the typology of mass killing described above, I have
also conducted at least a cursory examination of the secondary literature for each of the more
than 60 separate cases of mass killing in the twentieth century. This limited research does not
constitute a genuine test of the theories described above, but it is sufficient to make a plausible
case for the classification of each episode of mass killing in the typology. As such, it is at least
suggestive of the wide applicability of the strategic approach.

Despite these advantages, the methodology employed in this dissertation is not without
significant limitations. Most importantly, the practical demands of examining the history of
eight cases of mass killing as well as numerous cases of “not mass killing” prohibits extensive
research in primary sources. The majority of the evidence presented in Chapters Four, Five and
Six, therefore, has been culled from the work of other scholars. This approach is potentially
vulnerable to biases in the secondary literature, a serious problem in the literature on many cases
of mass killing. Much of the “scholarship” on historical cases of mass killing has been produced
by advocates for victim groups, apologists for perpetrators or by authors seeking to advance
other political agendas.55 In addition to this problem, much of the secondary literature on mass
killing simply fails to furnish the kind of evidence required to test the theories described above --

54 On the value of increasing the number of observations within individual cases, see: King, Keohane, and Verba,
Designing Social Inquiry.
55 On this problem in the historiography of the Armenian genocide, for example, see: Gwynne Dyer. “Turkish
either because such evidence is unavailable or because scholars have been interested in other aspects of the historical record.

I have attempted to avoid this hazard by focusing only on historical cases for which a well-developed and professional secondary literature has been produced. Unfortunately, this methodology severely limits the potential pool of cases which can be examined, raising the risks of selection biases. I have been hard-pressed to find even eight cases with an associated literature adequate to conduct meaningful case studies, let alone to permit the selection of cases with appropriate variation on all potentially significant variables. Indeed, even among these eight cases, the extent and quality of the secondary literature varies enormously. The Holocaust and the mass killings in the Soviet Union, for example, have received far more scholarly attention of a far higher caliber than any of the other cases examined in this dissertation. Although the limits of the secondary literature prevent the optimal selection of cases, as noted above, the cases examined in this dissertation nevertheless provide a relatively wide range of variation on factors such as culture, geography, time period, and regime type.

No research design is free of problems. The methodology employed in this dissertation, however, provides an effective compromise between the advantages and disadvantages of other research designs. Although the case studies presented in the following three chapters do not constitute conclusive tests of the strategic approach, they do provide a reasonable degree of confidence in its explanatory power. More importantly, they provide a foundation upon which future research, including both in-depth case studies and large-\(n\) analyses, can build.
CHAPTER 4
COMMUNIST MASS KILLINGS:
THE SOVIET UNION, CHINA AND CAMBODIA

Introduction

Communist regimes have been responsible for this century’s most deadly episodes of mass killing. Estimates of the total number of people killed by communist regimes range as high as 110 million.¹ This chapter will focus primarily on mass killings in the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia -- history’s most murderous communist states. Mass killings in these three states alone may account for between 15 million and 72 million deaths.² Mass killings on a smaller scale also appear to have been carried out by communist regimes in North Korea, Vietnam, Eastern Europe and Africa. Documentation of these cases in secondary sources, however, remains inadequate to render a reliable judgment regarding the numbers and identity of the victims, let alone the intentions of their killers.³ Despite communism’s bloody history, it should be emphasized that most regimes which have described themselves (or been described by others) as “communist” have not engaged in mass killing. In addition to explaining why communist regimes have been so much more violent than other forms of government, therefore, this chapter


² Author’s estimate based on numerous sources. See Table 2 in chapter 3.

³ Markedly high estimates of mass killings by these smaller communist states can be found in Rudolph Rummel, Statistics of Democide: Genocide and Mass Murder Since 1900 (Charlottesville: Center for National Security Law, 1997). See also: Courtois, et. al, The Black Book of Communism.
also seeks to explain why some communist regimes have managed to avoid this level of violence.

Understanding communist mass killings is of vital importance not only because of the monumental death toll these episodes have generated. Communist mass killings also hold significant implications for our understanding of mass killing as a general class of events. In particular, the history of communist mass killings demonstrates the difficulty of tracing the roots of mass killing to structural characteristics of society at large. On the contrary, mass killings under communism highlight the decisive power that relatively small groups can exert over entire societies. Communist regimes have often seized power with remarkably little public support. As Lenin famously described the October Revolution in Russia, the Bolsheviks all but “found power lying in the streets and simply picked it up.”4 Likewise, the tiny Khmer Rouge army seized power in Cambodia in 1975 not because they had the support of the masses, but, as Karl Jackson has suggested, because “they were the only organized coercive force in Cambodia.”5

This is not to deny that broader segments of the public have sometimes lent their support to hard-line communist regimes. Of the regimes studied in this chapter, this was most notably true during the Chinese revolution. Yet public support for radical communist regimes has almost always been based on appeals to nationalism, wars of national defense or liberation, the promise of moderate economic reforms, or simply the lack of attractive political alternatives.6 The radical economic and social policies most closely associated with communist mass killings, on the other hand, have been met with widespread resistance, even from the segments of society thought to benefit most from these changes. Policies such as the collectivization of agriculture, the abolition of private property, the assault on religion and the violent suppression of internal political dissent have almost never received widespread popular support. As Vladimir Brovkin

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argues, “a vote for the Bolsheviks in 1917 was not a vote for Red Terror or even a vote for a dictatorship of the proletariat.”

As noted in chapter two, the impetus for some of the bloodiest episodes of communist mass killing can often be traced to individual leaders. Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot each wielded enormous influence over the mass killings they unleashed upon their societies. Of course, these men did not commit their terrible crimes alone. Had these particular leaders never come to power, however, it seems likely that some or all of the mass killing in the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia would never have taken place. Indeed, repeated cycles of mass killing came to an abrupt halt in the Soviet Union following the death of Stalin and in China after the death of Mao. This sudden shift to less violent forms of political repression occurred in both countries despite the fact that the political parties of Stalin and Mao remained firmly in power after their deaths.

Communist mass killings also emphasize that neither preexisting differences, prejudices, discrimination nor a long history of conflict between the victims and perpetrators of mass killing are necessary conditions for even the most extreme levels of violence. Victims of communist mass killings have often been drawn from the same ethnic, social and economic groups as their killers. In many instances, the victims have been members of the communist party itself. Political differences, not pre-existing social divisions, defined the line between victims and perpetrators. This pattern of communist violence raises questions about the saliency of pre-existing social divisions as a primary cause of mass killing even in instances where deep social cleavages between victims and perpetrators can be readily identified.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into seven main sections. The first section describes the strategic approach to communist mass killing. The second section briefly identifies some empirical predictions of this approach which may be compared to evidence from the historical record. The third, fourth, and fifth, sections apply the strategic perspective to understand the mass killings in the Soviet Union, Cambodia and China respectively. The sixth section explores the history of several communist regimes which did not engage in mass killing. The final, concluding section summarizes the findings of this chapter and considers the

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implications of the decline in the global appeal of communism for the incidence of mass killing in the future.

*A Strategic Approach to Communist Mass Killings*

It is a tragic irony that the most deadly mass killings in human history have been motivated by the desire to create a radically different and better society. The attempt to engineer Utopia has been used to justify some of the world's most horrendous crimes.\(^8\) As Isaiah Berlin described the justification for communist brutality: if a "final solution" to the world's problems was possible, "surely no cost would be too high to obtain it: to make mankind just and happy and creative and harmonious forever -- what could be too high a price to pay for that? To make such an omelet, there is surely no limit to the number of eggs that should be broken -- that was the faith of Lenin, of Trotsky, of Mao... of Pol Pot."\(^9\)

Why did the communist Utopias of the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia become history's greatest slaughterhouses? The strategic approach to mass killing suggests that hard-line communist regimes have proven such prodigious killers because the changes they sought to bring about in their societies have been both extremely radical and widespread. It is this revolutionary desire to bring about the rapid and fundamental transformation of society that distinguishes radical communist regimes from less violent communist regimes and from most non-communist, authoritarian regimes. Communist leaders in the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia did not set out with the goal of exterminating large numbers of people. They hoped that people would see the "superiority" of the new way life they were offering. They did not shy away from such violence, however, when they came to believe -- because of genuine opposition to communist policies or because their preconceived, Marxist notions about the sources of such opposition -- that it was necessary to create the revolutionary society they sought to bring about.

The "dictatorship of the proletariat" is a dictatorship unlike any other. It is difficult to

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overstate the extent and the dispossession impact of the transformation that leaders such as Lenin, Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot imposed upon their societies. The social transformation sought by radical communist regimes has been far more extensive than the mere monopoly of political power and curtailment of individual liberties characteristic of other oppressive regimes past and present. The latter have usually managed to maintain power and suppress internal political dissent with comparatively low levels of violence. Radical communist policies, on the other hand, have often had the effect of completely disposessing vast numbers of people, stripping them of their personal belongings, their homes and their livelihood. The most radical communist visions have aimed at crushing all vestiges of individualism and creating a fundamentally new kind of human being.

There can be no starker illustration of the profound nature of these changes than the Soviet collectivization of agriculture. Collectivization was one of the largest and most radical attempts at social engineering in human history. It directly impacted well over half of the Soviet population and shattered a way of life that had existed for hundreds of years. Decisions about what, when, where and how to plant, once made individually by millions of peasant households, were centralized under the Soviet command system in the course of less than five years. Millions perished in the process. Leszek Kolakowski concludes that the Soviet collectivization of agriculture was “probably the most massive warlike operation ever conducted by a state against its own citizens.”

Social transformations of this speed and magnitude have been associated with mass killing for two primary reasons. First, as will be described in more detail below, the massive social dislocations produced by such changes have often led to near complete economic collapse, epidemics and widespread famine. Indeed, famine was one of the primary vehicles of mass

10 The main exception to this pattern has been regimes facing significant internal guerrilla warfare. Mass killing by these regimes will be discussed in detail in chapter 5.
killing in the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia. Famines took the lives of perhaps 7,000,000 people in the Soviet Union, 30 million in China and at least 700,000 in Cambodia.\textsuperscript{14} Although not all the deaths due to famine in these cases were intentional, the evidence suggests that communist leaders bear direct responsibility for many of them.

The second reason that communist regimes bent on the radical transformation of society have been linked to mass killing is that few of their citizens have proved willing to accept such far-reaching sacrifices without being subjected to the most extreme levels of coercion. Machiavelli recognized these dangers, cautioning the Prince that “nothing is more difficult to handle, more doubtful of success, and more dangerous to carry through than initiating changes in a state’s constitution. The innovator makes enemies of all those who prosper under the old order, and only lukewarm support is forthcoming from those who would prosper under the new...”\textsuperscript{15} Machiavelli concluded that only those who “can depend on their own resources and force the issue” are likely to succeed in bringing about a new order -- “that is why all armed prophets have conquered and unarmed prophets have come to grief.”\textsuperscript{16}

Like Machiavelli, radical communist leaders have well understood that violence and terror can be, in the words of Karl Marx, the “the midwife of revolution.” As Leon Trotsky put it, “the historical tenacity of the bourgeoisie is colossal. It holds to power, and does not wish to abandon it.... We are forced to tear off this class and chop it away. The Red Terror is a weapon used against a class that, despite being doomed to destruction, does not wish to perish.”\textsuperscript{17} Indeed, the attempt to impose communism has often led to violent uprisings, some on a truly massive scale.

Alexander Dallin and George Breslauer reached a similar conclusion in their study of the use of violence by communist governments. They argue that a radical communist regime


\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p. 52.

\textsuperscript{17} Quoted in Stéphane Courtois, “Why?” in Courtois, et. al, \textit{The Black Book of Communism}, p. 749.
... committed as it is to substantial transformations -- whether for ideological or power related reasons -- is bound to encounter and generate resistance and alienation, since the changes it is determined to carry out will necessarily clash with the values and perceived interests of some significant sectors of society. Anticipating such hostility, the authorities, in line with their preconceptions and images of class or group loyalties and grievances, may identify certain strata as requiring preemptive, or prophylactic, suppression, intimidation or removal.18

Similarly, Jonathan Adelman observes:

Communist regimes have... been internally driven to adopt radical programs for the transformation of their societies. These programs, such as collectivization, nationalization and modernization, inevitably entail great hardships that will arouse strong opposition from significant elements of the population.... [C]ivil peace... has generally been rejected in favor of radical social measures that have often entailed a virtual declaration of civil war with large and influential segments of the population.19

In some cases, communist regimes have used “selective” killing to deter organized resistance and coerce active compliance with their policies. Thus, specific individuals or groups accused of resistance were killed in the effort to intimidate large numbers of others. As Trotsky explained, “A victorious war, generally speaking, destroys only an insignificant part of the conquered army, intimidating the remainder and breaking their will. The revolution works in the same way: it kills individuals, and intimidates thousands. In this sense the Red Terror is not distinguishable from the armed insurrection, the direct continuation of which it represents.”20 Such killings were often carried out in a highly public forum and often exceptionally brutal manner, so as to have the greatest impact on the largest possible audience. The Chinese communists referred to this kind of violence as “killing chickens to scare monkeys.”21 Coercive methods of mass killing proved highly effective in breaking organized resistance to communist

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20 Quoted in Dallin and Breslauer, *Political Terror in Communist Systems*, p. 6.
power. Communist leaders in the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia, however, were not content with this result.

The most bloody mass killings under communism have resulted from the effort to permanently subjugate or physically eliminate large social or political groups believed to stand in the way of the communization of society. These "prophylactic" killings have been driven not only by the real threat posed by suspected counter-revolutionary groups and classes, but also by communist leaders' adherence to a paranoid Marxist-Leninist (or perhaps more accurately, Stalinist) world-view that vastly exaggerated the origin and scope of this threat. This world-view has been characterized by the related beliefs that powerful opponents of the communist transformation of society are lurking everywhere and that certain social groups or economic classes are inescapably bound by their "class consciousness" to oppose communism through any means available.

Although these beliefs were partly a consequence of the personal paranoia of individual communist leaders, they were powerfully influenced by the belief in the same Marxist ideology that drove these leaders to seek the communist transformation of society. Marxist analysis suggested that individual behavior was largely determined by one's class background. As Marx himself most succinctly put it, "circumstances make men just as much as men make circumstances."²² In its most radical interpretation, this ideology seemed to imply that individuals could never truly rise above their "class consciousness."²³ This interpretation, in turn, led naturally, and fatefuly, to the conclusion that as long as members of such classes survived, they would pose a threat to communism.

Indeed, in the eyes of Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot, the communist transformation of society remained extremely fragile even many years after the revolution. These leaders did not believe that resistance by reactionary classes would be defeated by the triumph of the communist revolution. Enemies of the revolution, they believed, would continue organizing in secret even years after the revolution, garnering support from capitalist forces abroad, and most significantly, infiltrating communist organizations in the hopes of reversing the communist transformation of society from within. This ultra-paranoid vision led to its most murderous consequences under

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²³ See: Conquest, Harvest of Sorrow, p. 120.
Stalin. As Peter Kenez observes, Stalin "proclaimed that the successful building of socialism, the elimination of private property, did not in fact end the class struggle. On the contrary: according to the Stalinist metaphor, the cornered enemy fought back all the more bitterly... This theory was Stalin's most significant contribution to Marxism. The sharpening class struggle provided ideological justification for the purge trials and purported to explain the mass arrests [during the Great Terror of the late 1930s]."

These fears have led to the conviction among radical communist leaders that reactionary classes must be suppressed as a whole -- as a prophylactic measure -- and not on the basis of individual involvement in specific counterrevolutionary activities. Martin Latsis, the first Deputy Chairman of the Cheka, Lenin's internal police, instructed his comrades in 1918 as follows: "We are not waging war against individual persons. We are exterminating the bourgeoisie as a class. During the investigation, do not look for evidence that the accused acted in deed or word against the Soviet regime. The first questions that you ought to put are: To what class does he belong? What is his origin? What is his education and his profession? And it is these questions that ought to determine the fate of the accused. In this lies the significance and essence of the Red Terror." The same logic remained in effect during the Soviet collectivization campaign of the early 1930s. Robert Conquest notes that official policy during the campaign maintained that "a man's having at some time in the past fulfilled the conditions of a Marxist-devised class categorization is a matter of 'essence' which no later change can alter... Thus, by a strange logic, a middle peasant could become a kulak by gaining property, but a kulak could not become a middle peasant by losing his. In fact the kulak had no escape. He was 'essentially' a class enemy, a sub-human."

This deterministic notion of social origins appears to have found its most extreme interpretation in Cambodia. As Jean-Louis Margolin notes, "for the Khmer Rouge... some social

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25 Peter Kenez, A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 121. This philosophy also played a role in Stalin's campaign to eliminate the so-called Kulak class during the drive to collectivize agriculture. See: Martin Malia, The Soviet Tragedy, pp. 192-193.
27 Conquest, Harvest of Sorrow, p. 120.
groups were criminal by nature, and this criminality was seen as transmittable from husband to wife, as well as an inherited trait. We can speak of the racialization of social groups." The Khmer Rouge targeted a wide range of social groups, some seemingly invented by the regime itself, which they believed constituted intractable foes of the communization of Cambodian society. These enemies included not only traditional communist class enemies, but also city dwellers, merchants, Buddhist monks, Vietnamese, Chinese and Muslim minorities. In 1975, a Khmer Rouge party journal warned cadres following the evacuation of Cambodia's major cities, that these "classes have already collapsed, but their views still remain, their aspirations still remain. Therefore, they continue to conflict with the revolution. Whether they can carry out activities against us is the concrete condition which prompts us to continue the revolution." Mao's views on the influence of social origins were somewhat more flexible. He allowed for the possibility that some "black elements" could be reformed through "re-education," propaganda and forced labor. Nevertheless, he feared that many would not be able to leave behind their class-consciousness. As David Zweig notes, this fear "led Mao to emphasize the perpetual potential for the rejuvenation of old opposition classes... Landlords and rich peasants, long stripped of their land and authority... remained potent supporters of a capitalist restoration." This conviction is well represented in the writings of Chen Bod. One of communist China's most influential early ideologists. Writing in 1952, Chen warned that "the representatives of the national bourgeoisie... placed their men in government organizations... and in addition enticed... some of the personnel in our government organs... into becoming their agents. They launched a violent attack against the state, against the working class.... Even after the founding of the People's Republic, they dreamed of clandestinely usurping the working class-led People's Republic.... They dreamed of checking the advance... from New Democratic construction to Socialist development. It is very obvious that the state will be in


danger if we do not repel this frenzied assault by the law-breaking elements of the bourgeoisie.”

In practice, communist notions of class have almost always failed to match the more complex realities of the societies they have been imposed upon. Identifying members of supposedly “parasitic” groups such as landlords and kulaks proved easier in communist propaganda than it did on the ground. The peasants themselves often failed to recognize communist theoretical distinctions between rural classes. In the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia, these difficulties forced the communists to rely on simplistic and apparently arbitrary formulas and quota systems, often requiring that each village designate a certain percentage of its population as class enemies. The resulting campaigns for the “liquidation” of entire social classes often resulted in violence on a massive scale. Because the paranoid communist worldview described above often left little room for the reformation of individuals from suspect classes, execution and life-long imprisonment seemed more appropriate solutions to many communist leaders. Stalin, for example, rejected a 1938 proposal to allow the early release of prisoners for good behavior. He argued, “Can’t we arrange things so that people stay on in the camps? If not, we release them, they go back home and pick up again with their old ways. The atmosphere in the camp is different, there it’s harder to go wrong.”

Testing the Strategic Approach

The strategic approach suggests that communist mass killings result from the effort to implement policies of radical social or economic transformation and to protect that

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transformation from real and perceived enemies. Communist mass killings in the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia have assumed two primary forms. The first, and by far the most deadly, have been mass killings associated with the implementation of radical communist agrarian policies in the countryside. Second, communist regimes in all three states also killed large numbers of people in brutal political purges which targeted suspected enemies in society-at-large as well as in the communist party itself.

**Mass Killing and the Communist Transformation in the Countryside**

Radical policies of social and economic transformation were closely associated with severe episodes of mass killing in the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia. The implementation of radical communist agrarian policies, especially agricultural collectivization, was the occasion for the most deadly instances of mass killings in each of these three states.35 There are three primary reasons for the close association between mass killing and radical agrarian policies such as collectivization.

First, policies that entail the removal of large numbers of small scale agriculturists from their land, the establishment of large collective farms or the confiscation of most or all of the harvest have proven to be extremely difficult without the resort to high levels of violence and other forms of coercion. Peasants place a high value on their land, the freedom to farm it as they see fit, and the right to benefit from the products of their labor. Even those who do not own land themselves have almost universally aspired to land ownership.36 The imposition of radical agrarian policies in the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia was anathema to these fundamental peasant goals and interests.37 Unsurprisingly, peasants responded with multiple forms of resistance. In the Soviet Union, and to a lesser degree in China, peasants ultimately resorted to

35 This chapter focuses primarily on collectivization, but other communist agrarian policies, especially so-called “land reform” campaigns have also been associated with high levels of violence. In China, for reasons we will explore below, collectivization itself was accomplished with relatively little violence. The majority of violence associated with communist agrarian policies in China occurred during the land reform campaigns of 1949-54 and during the Great Leap Forward.
armed revolt to protect their way of life.\textsuperscript{38} Communist leaders were thus faced with the stark choice between retreating from radical agricultural "reforms" and employing coercion and violence to force millions of peasants to accept this fundamentally changed and highly oppressive way of life. The three regimes studied in this chapter each opted for communism over compromise. Because peasants formed the most numerous social class in all three countries, the number of victims of these policies was staggering.

The second reason that radical communist agrarian policies have been associated with such high levels of violence is that the architects of these policies have often perceived that the social transformation of the countryside would require not only the elimination of pre-existing forms of agricultural production, but also the destruction of the pre-existing institutions and traditions which supported this way of life. In the effort to gain the unprecedented degree of control over the day-to-day activities of millions of lives which their policies required, communist leaders have sought the subjugation of all other local forms of power, organization and loyalty. Radical communist agricultural campaigns, therefore, have often coincided with an assault on the other pillars of peasant life -- religion, national or ethnic loyalties, traditional systems of village leadership and political organization, and in some cases even the family itself. The result of this assault has been to both increase peasant resistance to communist policies and to multiply the number of potential targets of communist coercion and violence.

The third reason for the relationship between radical communist agrarian policies and mass killings is that such policies have often led to severely decreased agricultural productivity, especially in the period immediately following their implementation. When combined with the massive expropriations of agricultural products that have also been a hallmark of radical communist agrarian policies, even a moderate shortfall in the harvest can result in widespread starvation.\textsuperscript{39} Not all of the deaths resulting from such famines represent mass killing as defined

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in this study. As I will describe below, many of these deaths were not strictly intended by the communist regimes studied in this chapter. Nevertheless, in each of these cases, the famine was intentionally exacerbated by the regime, or directed against certain segments of the population. In all three cases, communist leaders refused to back away from their radical policies even after they had received credible reports that a major famine was taking place. Rather, leaders blamed food shortages on peasant “grain hoarding” or sabotage. Communist leaders exported grain from starving regions and implemented systems of internal passports to prevent peasants from fleeing to the cities or other areas where the famine was less severe. In the case of the Soviet Union, at least, there is strong evidence that hunger was used as a weapon to crush peasant resistance to collectivization.40 Deaths resulting from these and similar policies meet the criteria for mass killing because the communist regimes in question can be said to have deliberately created “conditions expected to cause widespread death among specific groups.”

Mass Killing, Terror and Communist Political Purges

In addition to mass killings directly involved with the implementation of communism in the countryside, the communist regimes of the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia each engaged in massive political purges of suspected enemies in society and in the ruling party itself. The targets of these purges have included current and former members of opposition political parties, moderates within the communist party, intellectuals, artists, religious, ethnic or nationalist leaders and a myriad of other suspected political opponents of the regime. These purges have often been portrayed as attempts by power-hungry communist leaders to gain absolute personal power for its own sake. The strategic perspective, on the other hand, suggests that communist political purges were closely linked to radical leaders’ desire to protect and extend the

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transformation of society in which they genuinely believed, as well as to their adherence to a
paranoid world-view that made this transformation appear extremely fragile.

In all three countries studied in this chapter, the most brutal political purges can be viewed in large part as a response to the political opposition that emerged during the
communization of the countryside. In the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia the worst political
purges occurred shortly after the spectacular failure of radical communist agrarian policies. The
disastrous effects of these policies engendered widespread opposition to the radical communist
visions of Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot. Large numbers of ordinary citizens and communist party
members began to call for a retreat from the most excessive communist policies. If communist
leaders in these countries had merely been concerned with maintaining their personal hold on
power, they could have easily reached a compromise. Indeed, relatively little organized
opposition to the communist party itself or to Stalin and Mao personally emerged before the
major purges (Pol Pot was ultimately overthrown by a Vietnamese invasion and may have faced
at least one serious coup attempt from within Cambodia). The more limited reigns of terror that
were implemented when these leaders took power, and the powerful cults of personality that
developed around them (again, with the exception of Pol Pot), had seen to that. Communist
leaders reacted so violently to opposition not only because they believed it threatened their
personal leadership, but because they believed it directly threatened their deeply held and
extraordinarily radical goals. In order to ensure that these goals would be implemented even at
the lowest levels, Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot sought to eliminate from their political organizations
not simply enemies, but anyone lacking the proper revolutionary spirit.

Communist leaders probably could have protected their vision for society with
considerably less violence than they ultimately employed. The political purges in the Soviet
Union, China and Cambodia eventually assumed such massive proportions in large part due to
communist leaders’ perception that (as described above) opposition was far more widespread
than it was in reality. In particular, Communist leaders in all three countries expressed fears that
the party would be subverted from within by elements of the former “ruling classes.” These fears
ultimately led to the massive repression of anyone who expressed views that differed even

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intentional use of famine by the Khmer Rouge see: Margolin, “Cambodia: The Country of Disconcerting Crimes,”
p. 601.

125

\textit{Predictions of the Strategic Approach to Communist Mass Killings}

Several specific empirical predictions derive from the strategic approach which can be compared to the historical record of the Soviet Union, China, and Cambodia:

\textit{prediction 1:} Policies of radical social transformation in the countryside should be associated with episodes of mass killing. The violence associated with policies of transformation should be more severe the greater the number of people affected by the transformation, the greater the magnitude of the changes these people are forced to undergo, and the more rapidly such changes are thrust upon them. Mass killings should cease when new radical policies cease to be forced on society.

\textit{prediction 2:} Evidence from the historical record should reflect that communist leaders were motivated to resort to mass killing in the effort to achieve or protect the communization of society. Communist leaders should describe their motives for initiating violence in terms of the need to achieve and protect the communization of society. The historical record should reflect that communist leaders placed extremely high value on achieving this transformation.
**prediction 3:** Killings should focus primarily on the groups that communist leaders believed were most likely to resist the transformation of society. These groups include not only those most directly disfranchised by communist policies, but also real and perceived political opponents of these policies within and outside of the party.

**prediction 4:** The strategic approach also makes a number of predictions regarding communist regimes that have not engaged in mass killing. In particular, when compared to the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia, the policies of such regimes are likely to have one or more of the following characteristics: a) They should have a more moderate and less disposessive affect on the population; b) They should affect smaller numbers of people; c) They should not be motivated by the same paranoid communist world-view described above.

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**The Soviet Union**

**The Transformation of the Countryside**

The collectivization of agriculture in the Soviet Union during the late 1920s and early 1930s was the world's first experiment with full-fledged communist agriculture. Collectivization of agriculture had been a central goal of the Bolsheviks ever since they seized power. Early efforts to collect large amounts of grain from the peasantry, however, were met with widespread resistance from the countryside. Largely because the fledgling regime was too weak to put down these revolts and was still dependent on peasant support, the Bolsheviks decided to retreat from the policy in 1921.\(^{42}\) During the mid 1920s, the Soviet regime tried less violent means to induce the peasantry to join collectives and surrender a greater portion of their harvest to the state. A variety of tax and price incentives and propagandistic measures were applied.\(^ {43}\) These efforts not only failed to achieve their desired effect, they resulted in a decline in agricultural procurement by the state. By the late 1920s, the Soviet Union was facing severe grain shortages in the cities.

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Stalin decided that the time had come to gain control of the Soviet Union’s agricultural production by force. As Dimitri Volkogonov writes, Stalin believed "the higher aim always justified whatever means were necessary to achieve it.... It mattered not at all to Stalin that the offensive was being mounted against the man in his tattered smock, illiterate, sustained by his traditions and his cares, and tied by the umbilical cord to his own patch of land. For Stalin the peasant was a means to the higher goal, a goal that was superior to everything."\textsuperscript{44}

It is difficult to fathom the magnitude and pace of the changes wrought by this policy on the peasantry of the Soviet Union. From 1929 to 1936, more than 130 million people were forced into 240,000 collectives, most in the three years between 1931 and 1934.\textsuperscript{45} Collectivization completely transformed peasant life in the Soviet Union as individual decision-making power was suddenly replaced by the edicts of centralized state bureaucracies. A contemporary observer of the collectivization campaign remarked on the inherent conservatism of Soviet peasants: They "never believed in anybody’s words.... And now they were being asked to give up their individual land, their horses, their cows, their farm buildings -- the things that had given them bread, protection against starvation, the very security they needed to hold body and soul together -- all on the mere promise of a youthful agitator that this would enrich their lives."\textsuperscript{46}

The transformation was especially drastic for the nomadic herding peoples of the Steppe. For them, collectivization not only entailed the loss of land and imposition of state control over economic production, but also the imposition of an entirely new, sedentary way of life. In Kazakhstan alone, nearly 400,000 households were forcibly settled between 1930-1936.\textsuperscript{47}

As Lynne Viola describes it, peasants believed that "collectivization was apocalypse, a war between the forces of evil and the forces of good.... They understood it as a battle over their culture and way of life, as pillage, injustice, and wrong.... Removed from the distorting lens of official propaganda, belief and perception, collectivization was a clash of cultures, a civil war."\textsuperscript{48}

 \textsuperscript{43} See: Kolakowski, \textit{Main Currents of Marxism}, pp. 40-41.
\textsuperscript{44} Volkogonov, \textit{Stalin: Triumph and Tragedy}, pp. 169-170.
\textsuperscript{45} Malia, \textit{The Soviet Tragedy}, p. 199.
It is hardly surprising that many Soviet peasants chose to resist this onslaught with virtually every means at their disposal. At first, the peasants resisted with largely non-violent means. They refused to meet unreasonably high grain quotas. Many chose to slaughter farm animals before they could be turned over to the collectives. They refused to assist communist party cadres in the identification and persecution of so-called Kulaks. As communist pressure intensified, however, peasants increasingly turned to public anti-Soviet demonstrations, vandalism, arson and violent attacks on local representatives of the communist party. In some regions, particularly the North Caucasus and the Ukraine, the Soviet regime was faced with full-scale civil war as peasants fought back against local Soviet officials.\textsuperscript{49} From March to June 1930, widespread resistance forced a temporary retreat from collectivization and millions of peasants fled the newly formed collectives.

The collectivization of agriculture was not only opposed by the so-called “rich peasants” and kulaks, who might seemingly have had the most to loose, but by the peasantry as a whole. Robert Tucker writes that “[h]istorical evidence available to us now in great abundance attests that not alone the ones classified as kulaks, whose ‘liquidation as a class’ was proclaimed as the banner of the collectivization drive, but the mass of the middle peasants and even some of the rural poor were sullenly opposed to the rural revolution and joined the kolkhozy [collective farms] only under duress or because of fear.”\textsuperscript{50} Poor peasants complained to Soviet officials that “you turned us into worse than serfs.”\textsuperscript{51}

The Soviet regime met all forms of peasant resistance with extreme brutality. Heavily armed units of the state political police (and to a lesser extent the Red Army) were dispatched to the countryside to requisition grain, crush all political resistance and force the peasants into the collectives. From 1929 to 1936, between 8.5 million and 11 million people probably perished as a result of the campaign to collectivize agriculture. Victims included not only those whose economic status classified them as kulaks, but virtually anyone suspected of opposing collectivization. Religious leaders and traditional village elites were also targeted. A third or more of the victims of collectivization were shot outright or died during deportation, in exile or

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., pp. 132-145.


\textsuperscript{51} Quoted in Davies, \textit{The Socialist Offensive}, p. 256.
labor camps. More would die after this period in forced labor camps and “special settlements” in the barren wastes of Siberia.

The majority of these men, women and children, however, died during the massive famine of 1932-1933. Much of the shortfall in food production during these years was a result of unintended economic inefficiencies and dislocations produced by the rapid shift to the collective farming system. Drought also contributed to the abnormally small harvest. There is considerable evidence, however, that at least in certain regions, communist leaders deliberately exacerbated the famine with the intent of eliminating class enemies and crushing peasant resistance to collectivization. Soviet leaders, including Stalin, were well aware that a major famine had gripped the countryside in 1932. Khrushchev himself later admitted that “we knew... that people were dying in enormous numbers.” Stalin believed that the peasants were simply hoarding grain and accused them of waging a “war of starvation” against the Soviet Union. The regime continued to confiscate large amounts of grain from famine stricken regions and refused to release grain reserves. Harsh penalties, including execution, were levied against anyone caught stealing grain. A system of internal passports and police checkpoints was initiated which prevented starving peasants from seeking food or work elsewhere. Expropriation of grain was targeted against suspect classes or anyone who refused to join the collectives.

Hunger was employed to coerce peasants -- except the wealthiest Kulaks, who were to be deported or executed -- to join the collectives, where food was at least somewhat more plentiful.

Some scholars have argued that the famine was engineered specifically to crush nationalist movements in the Ukraine, Kazakhstan and elsewhere. Indeed, these areas suffered the greatest loss of life during collectivization. Perhaps five million perished in the Ukraine and 1.5 million may have died in Kazakhstan. In retrospect, however, the communist party’s desire

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53 Conquest, Harvest of Sorrow, pp. 322-326.
to eliminate nationalism in these regions appears to have been secondary to their desire to collectivize agriculture. Large numbers of ethnic Russians also died in the famine. The regions in question suffered the most because peasants made up the overwhelming majority of the population and because these areas represented the major grain producing regions of the Soviet state. Partly because of nationalist sentiments, and partly because these regions had the most to lose from the communization of agriculture, both peasant resistance to collectivization and Soviet repression were greatest there.

*Political Purges and Terror*

Stalin’s Great Terror gripped the Soviet Union from 1936-1939. Many authors have portrayed this brutal period as a consequence of Stalin’s unrelenting drive to accumulate virtually unlimited power for himself and for the Soviet state. Robert Conquest argues that following the completion of the collectivization of agriculture in 1934, Stalin had won a major victory and should have been ready to “consolidate and perhaps to relax, to reestablish the Party’s links with the people, and to reconcile the embittered elements in the Party itself. Such were the ideas which seem to have entered the minds of many of the new Stalinist leadership. But they did not enter Stalin’s. His aim remained... unchallenged power. So far he had brutalized the party, but he had not yet enslaved it.”

This interpretation seems only partially accurate. Although Stalin’s personality played a major role in both the initiation and course of the terror, his ambition was not simply to gain personal power for its own sake. Rather, the terror was a reaction to Stalin’s desire (shared by some other high ranking radical communists) to protect the radical transformation of society he had fought so hard to build from what he perceived to be vast numbers of enemies both inside and outside the party. In the late 1920s, Stalin had won a major battle over party opponents by

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59 Ibid., pp. 167-168.
securing support for his radical policy of crash collectivization. Opponents of the policy were forced to recant but many of them, including most notably Nikolai Bukharin, still remained in the party. Nevertheless, collectivization had been a near-run thing. In addition to widespread peasant opposition and revolt, large numbers of low-level cadres demonstrated their reluctance to push forward with collectivization as rapidly as Stalin demanded.

The disastrous results of collectivization seemed to vindicate this so-called “right-opposition.” As J. Arch Getty and Oleg Naumov observe, “the chaos of 1932 produced doubts, grumbling and eventually outright opposition among some veteran Old Bolsheviks. And below the very top level... resistance to Stalin’s policies was still strong.” A group of moderates headed by Mikhail Riutin, a former Moscow district secretary and supporter of Bukharin, began harshly criticizing Stalin’s policies during collectivization and openly calling for his removal. What the Stalinist leadership referred to as “the new situation” had emerged.

Opposition to Stalin’s policies may have been real and growing, but it most likely never posed a major threat to his continued rule. If Stalin had simply wished to maintain his hold on power, he probably could have reached a compromise with the right. Such a compromise, however, would have involved at least a partial rollback of the revolutionary transformation Stalin had only just completed. Getty and Naumov suggest that such a compromise would have been impossible because it was “impossible for leading Bolsheviks within the Stalinist faction to accept that their policies were wrong. Everything in their background and intellectual baggage told them that... in Stalin’s general line they had found the correct solution to Russia’s backwardness, to class oppression, and to the problems of capitalism... Aside from their desire to protect their privileged position, they really believed in socialism and their key importance in realizing it. It was genuinely impossible to imagine that their policies were wrong.”

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64 Ibid., p. 52. See also: Malia, The Soviet Tragedy, pp. 243-245.
65 For the complete text of the Riutin platform, see: Getty and Naumov, The Road to Terror, pp. 54-58.
66 Getty and Naumov, The Road to Terror, pp. 71-72.
Leonard Schapiro concludes that "Stalin’s revolution in agriculture and industry and his assault on the party which consummated this revolution must be seen as integrated parts of one and the same process."  

The enemies that Stalin was most determined to crush were those who had any connection to opposition activity past or present. An analysis of the fate of nearly 900 members of the Soviet political, military and cultural elite determined that oppositionists were nearly 5 times more likely to become victims than other elites. Kulaks who had managed to escape death, deportation or imprisonment during collectivization drive once again became targets of mass arrest. 

Yet the terror ultimately consumed vast numbers of individuals who had no links to opposition activity whatsoever. The expansion of the terror is best explained by Stalin’s belief that active opposition was far more extensive and dangerous than it was in actual fact. Stalin’s belief that opposition was often motivated the indelible mark of one’s social origins led to an even broader extension of violence. Stalin feared that the further the Soviet Union progressed toward full-scale communism, the more fiercely these groups would resist. The recent rise of rightist opposition within the party convinced Stalin that the primary method of resistance would be the subversion of the party and other communist institutions from within. In January 1933 Stalin described this outlandish conspiratorial vision to the central Committee, warning them that:

The remnants of the dying classes -- industrialists and their servants, private traders and their stooges, former nobles and priests, kulaks and their henchmen, former White officers and NCOs, former gendarmes and policemen -- they have all wormed their way into our factories, our institutions and trading bodies, our railway and river transport enterprises and for the most part into our collective and state farms. They have wormed their way in and hidden themselves there, disguised as ‘workers’ and ‘peasants,’ and some of them have even managed to worm their way into the party.

70 See: Kenez, A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End, p. 121.
What have they brought with them? Of course they have brought their hatred of the Soviet regime, their feeling of ferocious hostility to the new forms of the economy, way of life, culture... The only thing left for them to do is to play dirty tricks and do harm to the workers and collective farmers. And they do this any way they can, on the quiet. They set fire to warehouses and break machinery. They organize sabotage... Some of them... go so far in their wrecking activities as to inject livestock... with plague and anthrax, and encourage the spread of meningitis among horses and so on.

If drastic action was not taken, Stalin argued, socialism would be subverted and the hard fought victories of the last 15 years would be washed away. Wave after wave of party purges were launched. Beginning in 1933, individuals with suspect social origins or political background were purged. At first the victims were simply expelled from the party. By 1936, however, more often than not they were shot or sent to the gulag. Victims' family members often met the same fate.\footnote{Walter Laqueur, \textit{Stalin: The Glasnost Revelations} (New York: Charles Scibner's Sons, 1990), pp. 79-80.} The terror eventually struck outside the party, at intellectuals, cultural elites, the military and sometimes, although less often, at common people accused of wrecking or sabotage. As the war with Germany approached, the charge of spying for the Fascists became common. By the time the terror abated in 1939, at least 5 million people had been arrested and one million executed.\footnote{Volkogonov, \textit{The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Empire}, p. 105. Much higher figures are possible, particularly if the period is expanded to include the years between 1934-1945. For a detailed discussion of the debate over the Gulag population and deaths due to the terror, see: Edwin Bacon, \textit{The Gulag at War: Stalin's Forced Labour System in the Light of the Archives} (New York: New York University Press, 1994), pp. 23-41.} Many of the former would perish in the Gulag in the coming years.

\textit{Cambodia}

\textit{The Transformation of the Countryside}

The effort to achieve the communization of society reached its brutal apotheosis in Cambodia during the three years of Khmer Rouge rule from 1975-1978. No drive to transform society has matched the scope, speed and intrusiveness with which the Khmer Rouge thrust their peculiar brand of "pure communism" on the Cambodian people. Khmer Rouge leaders adhered to a particularly radical variant of Maoist-Marxism -- what Karl Jackson has described as "the ideology of total revolution" -- that called for extraordinarily profound changes in the daily
existence of Cambodians from all walks of life. Agricultural production was transfigured, major cities were emptied, money, markets, and virtually all private property were eliminated, former elites were stripped of power, organized religion was abolished, all expressions of individualism were suppressed and children were separated from parents to serve the needs of the state. There is some evidence that the Khmer Rouge may have also sought to cleanse Cambodian society of certain ethnic groups. Khmer Rouge leaders literally believed they were creating a completely new Cambodian society starting from “year zero.” Jackson concludes that “seldom has any regime sought so much change so quickly from so many.”

As in the Soviet Union, the most significant of these changes was the rapid communization of Cambodian agriculture. 85 percent of the Cambodian population worked in the agricultural sector. The revolution in agriculture was the most important element in the Khmer Rouge’s blueprint for a new, egalitarian, and economically self-sufficient Cambodian society. From the moment they seized power, Khmer Rouge leaders announced that “we are reorganizing the country on the basis of agriculture.” As in the Soviet Union, most Cambodian peasants were opposed to radical communist agricultural policies. As Kenneth Quinn notes, “Cambodia’s peasantry has a long history of ownership if its own land... The history of the Pol Pot regime has been one of peasant resistance to the imposed changes, rather than active or even grudging support and involvement.” David Chandler argues that “taking away people’s smallholdings, houses, and livestock without compensation... alienated nearly all the people.” As in the other communist regimes studied in this chapter, “very few people were willing to overturn their lives as completely as the CPK [the Cambodian Communist Party] demanded.” The Khmer Rouge achieved compliance with these policies only through the massive application of

74 See: Kiernan, The Pol Pot Regime, pp. 251-309.
75 Jackson, “The Ideology of Total Revolution,” p. 77.
77 Ibid., p. 109.
81 Ibid., pp. 236-237. See also: Chandler, Brother Number One, p. 127.
vindictive and intimidating.  

In addition to their agricultural program, the Khmer Rouge introduced a number of other radical social and economic policies which drastically altered the lives of vast numbers of people. The most infamous of these policies was the decision to completely evacuate Cambodia’s major cities. Khmer Rouge leaders appear to have had several reasons for taking this radical step. The cities were the center of the capitalist way of life that the Khmer Rouge had set out to abolish. Large cities had no place in their Utopian vision of a society dominated by agriculture. Perhaps most importantly, however, the cities were home to the social groups and economic classes that Khmer Rouge ideology described as implacable enemies of the communist transformation they were seeking to build. As Ben Kiernan writes, when “the Khmer Rouge applied their class analysis to the urban population, they found no allies.”  

As Pol Pot later admitted, he believed that forcing the bulk of the urban population into the countryside and exterminating their elites would render them easier to control.

This policy subjected the large population of city dwellers to the same kinds of life-shattering changes that were primarily reserved for the countryside in the Soviet Union and China. Nearly two million people were forced out of the capital city, Phnom Penh, alone. Even the hospitals were emptied. By one estimate 10,600 people died during the trek to the countryside. Once they reached their rural destinations, former city dwellers were put to work in the fields. Many were unaccustomed to hard labor and soon perished from exhaustion. Former city dwellers generally received the worst land and lower food rations. When the famine struck they suffered disproportionately. Perhaps 400,000 evacuees eventually died.

The Khmer Rouge regime also sought to bring about a complete revolution in social values. According to Chandler, “commands from the revolutionary organization covered every aspect of people’s lives.... Strict rules for behavior were laid down. These governed clothing, haircuts, vocabulary, leisure, and sexual relations, to name only five.”  

Achieving compliance with these bizarre policies from a bewildered and conservative population required high levels of

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84 Jackson, “The Ideology of Total Revolution,” p. 47.
coercion. As Chandler notes, "disobedience was often punishable by death."  

The brutality of the revolution was greatly exacerbated by the extreme haste with which the Khmer Rouge sought to impose these changes on society. The Khmer Rouge consciously set out to achieve communism more rapidly and more completely than had their Soviet and Chinese predecessors. Although the Khmer Rouge drew much of their inspiration from those revolutions, even direct warnings from Chinese communist leaders regarding the dangers of this course were dismissed out of hand. Khmer Rouge leaders Khieu Samphan and Son Sen told Norodom Sihanouk that "Kampuchea was going to show the world that pure communism could indeed be achieved in one fell swoop.... 'Our country's place in history will be assured,' they said. 'We will be the first nation to create a completely communist society without wasting time on intermediate steps.'"

The extraordinarily radical changes imposed by the Khmer Rouge resulted in extraordinary suffering for Cambodian society. Between 800,000 and 2,000,000 people perished during the 44 months the Khmer Rouge governed Cambodia. This staggering loss represents approximately one-tenth to one-quarter of the country's population. By one estimate, 34 percent of Cambodian men aged twenty to thirty, 40 percent of men aged thirty to forty, and 54 percent of people of both sexes over age sixty died. The Soviet collectivization of agriculture, which left roughly five to 6.5 percent of the Soviet population dead, was considerably less violent by comparison.

As many as half of the deaths caused by the Khmer Rouge appear to have been the result of executions. As in the Soviet Union, however, Khmer Rouge social and agricultural policies

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87 Chandler, The Tragedy of Cambodian History. p. 244.
88 Ibid., p. 244.
91 Ibid.
94 Ibid., p. 591.
also sparked a major famine. Despite allegations to the contrary, there is little evidence to suggest that the Khmer Rouge deliberately created the famine, but as in the Soviet Union, there can be no doubt that the regime took actions that exacerbated it and directed its most deadly effects against suspect classes and other enemies of the regime. As Margolin notes, "the hunger that crushed so many Cambodians over the years was used deliberately by the regime in the service of its interests... The games that were played with the food supply made forced evacuation easier, promoted acceptance of the collective canteens, and also weakened interpersonal relationships, including those between parents and children. Everyone, by contrast, would kiss the hand that fed them, regardless of how bloody it was."95 The Khmer Rouge refused to relax the pace of the transformation or reduce grain quotas even after it was clear that a major famine was taking place. Instead, survivors report that Khmer Rouge cadres repeated the slogan: "Losing you is not a loss, and keeping you is no specific gain."96

Political Purges and Terror

Although historical documentation on the use of political purges in Cambodia is sparse, it is evident that this kind of violence played a significant role in Khmer Rouge mass killing.97 As in the Soviet Union, it appears that Pol Pot's extremely radical policies and their disastrous results generated opposition not only among the direct victims of these policies but also within the communist party itself. Such opposition may have emerged even before the party launched its radical collectivization campaign in 1976 during internal battles between officials backing Pol Pot's radical plan and "others perhaps reluctant to transform Kampuchea so rapidly and so completely."98 According to Kenneth Quinn, many military officers and senior party leaders "were dismayed by the continuing level of violence in the country and the stark nature of the new society."99

Unlike the Soviet Union, however, this opposition may well have posed an immediate threat not only to Pol Pot's vision for society, but also to his continued place in power. There

95 Ibid., p. 601.
96 Ibid., p. 597.
97 For a general description of Khmer Rouge intra-party violence, see: Elizabeth Becker, When the War was Over: Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge Revolution (New York: Public Affairs, 1986), pp. 261-289.
98 Chandler, Kiernan and Boua, Pol Pot Plans the Future, p. xvi.
appear to have been at least two attempts to overthrow the government -- one from within the communist party itself and one by party members with military backing from Vietnam. Evidence regarding the aims, extent or even existence of the first coup is extremely limited.\textsuperscript{100} Testimony from several defectors, however, indicates that some kind of plot against Pol Pot may have been launched in September 1976 in response to the concerns of political and military leaders mentioned above.\textsuperscript{101} Describing the alleged coup attempt, one Khmer Rouge defector explained that “all the soldiers wanted to create a rebellion that would allow people to go back to work as they did before the capture of Phnom Penh.”\textsuperscript{102} The second coup was launched in 1978 with Vietnamese support and ultimately succeeded in bringing down the Khmer Rouge government.

Pol Pot responded to the prospect of internal opposition with a brutal purge of the communist party. High-ranking Khmer Rouge officials suspected of involvement in the coup or who simply opposed Pol Pot’s radical designs for Cambodian society were executed. Five of the thirteen highest-ranking Khmer Rouge officials of 1975 were dead by 1978.\textsuperscript{103} According to Quinn, by 1977 Pol Pot had effectively eradicated opposition from within the party and “appeared to have the ability to continue to rule for the indefinite future.”\textsuperscript{104} Like the other communist leaders discussed in this chapter, however, Pol Pot subscribed to a deeply conspiratorial world-view that motivated him to lash out in all directions at imaginary enemies. The purge ultimately expanded to include large numbers of people with little real connection to opposition activity, including many people outside the party.

Like Stalin, Pol Pot believed that many individuals were driven to oppose communism by their social origins.\textsuperscript{105} As Karl Jackson observed, the Khmer Rouge’s belief in “the necessity of permanently eliminating all potential counterrevolutionary elites derived from a pervasive fear that revolutions are often betrayed... The fear of betrayal required eliminating not just individual enemies but entire classes that had served as the social and economic magnets for previous rulers

\textsuperscript{100} For some doubts regarding the existence of the coup, see: Chandler, \textit{Brother Number One}, p. 129.
\textsuperscript{102} Quinn, “Explaining the Terror,” p. 195.
\textsuperscript{104} Quinn, “The Pattern and Scope of Violence,” p. 208.
of Cambodia."\textsuperscript{106} Pol Pot also accepted Stalin’s view that class struggle would intensify, rather than abate, after the revolution.\textsuperscript{107} He believed that enemies of the regime would most likely attempt to undermine it from within and eventually destroy it or co-opt it for their own purposes.\textsuperscript{108} The Khmer Rouge leadership was obsessed with the possibility of internal subversion.\textsuperscript{109} In July 1978, the party monthly declared that “there are enemies everywhere within our ranks, in the center, at headquarters, in the zones, and out in the villages.”\textsuperscript{110}

Party members with suspect “life histories” were purged and executed.\textsuperscript{111} Emphasizing the belief that opposition was determined by one’s social background, family members of the victims were often executed as well.\textsuperscript{112} Military organizations were purged. Intellectuals and all other potential sources of opposition were attacked. The purges also focused on anyone with foreign ancestry or connections abroad, especially the Vietnamese. No separate estimates have been produced for the death toll resulting from these purges, but the dead surely numbered in the tens, and quite possibly hundreds of thousands. Ironically, some historians have suggested that it may have been the brutality and over-application of these purges which led to the second -- and ultimately successful -- coup against Pol Pot.\textsuperscript{113}

\textbf{China}

\textit{The Transformation of the Countryside}

Assessing the effects of the communist transformation of society is somewhat more difficult for China than for the Soviet Union or Cambodia. Particularly in their early campaigns, Chinese leaders adopted a more moderate, gradual and volunteeristic approach to the

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{105}{David. P. Chandler, \textit{Voices from S-21: Terror and History in Pol Pot’s Secret Prison} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 43-44.}
\footnotetext{106}{Jackson, “The Ideology of Total Revolution,” p. 57.}
\footnotetext{107}{Becker, \textit{When the War was Over}, p. 234, and Chandler, \textit{Voices from S-21}, pp. 41-43.}
\footnotetext{109}{Chandler, \textit{Voices from S-21}, pp. 41-49.}
\footnotetext{110}{Quoted in Margolin, “Cambodia: The Country of Disconcerting Crimes,” p. 586.}
\footnotetext{111}{Becker, \textit{When the War was Over}, p. 211.}
\end{footnotes}
transformation of society than did communist leaders in the Soviet Union and Cambodia. As a result, intentional killing ultimately struck down a smaller percentage of the Chinese population than they did in either of those two countries. Nevertheless, the communistization of society was not accomplished without considerable violence and massive loss of life.

As in the Soviet Union and Cambodia, peasants constituted the overwhelming majority of the Chinese population. As a result, the communist transformation had its most devastating effects in the countryside. Although the communist party enjoyed much greater popularity among peasants in China than it did in either the Soviet Union or Cambodia, many Chinese peasants were opposed to radical communist agrarian policies that stripped them of their land and their freedom.\textsuperscript{114} Chinese peasants felt an extraordinarily strong attachment to their land.\textsuperscript{115} Those most adversely affected by communist agrarian policies, and those thought most likely to resist them, were those with the most land. The Chinese “land-reform” campaign of 1949-1953 was designed to confiscate the land from so-called “landlords” and crush the traditional power structure of the village. Between one million and four million people were executed during the campaign and an additional four million to six million sent to forced labor colonies, where many perished.\textsuperscript{116}

The collectivization of agriculture itself, on the other hand, was accomplished with much less bloodshed than in the Soviet Union and Cambodia. In these countries, collectivization had actually proved far more violent than land redistribution since it adversely affected a much greater portion of the peasant population. Historians have identified three factors which may explain the comparatively peaceful implementation of collectivization in China.

First, China adopted a more gradual, “staged” approach to the implementation of collectivization.\textsuperscript{117} The process was by no means slow given the nature of the changes it brought about (it was completed between 1950 and 1957), but several scholars have suggested that its

\textsuperscript{113} Quinn, “The Pattern and Scope of Violence,” p. 207.


\textsuperscript{115} Becker, \textit{Hungry Ghosts}, p. 29.

\textsuperscript{116} Margolin, “China: A Long March into Night,” p. 479. A much lower estimate of 200,000 to 800,000 executions is offered in Stavis, \textit{The Politics of Agricultural Mechanization in China}, p. 29.
staged implementation helped eased peasants into their new way of life. Chinese peasants were first organized into "mutual aid teams," where labor was pooled, but peasants retained ownership of their land and other property. Next they were formed into lower level agricultural cooperatives, where land and animals were pooled, but individuals still received a share of the harvest and other farm produce according to the amount of land and equipment they had contributed. Only then did the communists proceed to full collectivization, where virtually all property was commonly owned and payment was based on labor alone. As Thomas Bernstein notes, "it is significant that perhaps two-thirds of China's peasants had previously had experience with some form of elementary producers' collective [prior to full-scale collectivization].... Thus a majority of the peasants did not have collectivization thrust upon them as a totally novel revolution. This was surely not an unimportant factor in explaining the ability of the Chinese village to absorb the upsurge." Gradualism also allowed the communists to make more effective use of economic, social and political pressures and limit the resort to outright violence.

Second, the residual, coercive effect of the land reform violence seems to have played a significant role in facilitating the subsequent less violent transition to collectivization in China. Thus, Bernstein suggests that "the Chinese regime, through its extremely effective application of violence during land reform, and the counter-revolutionaries' campaign, demonstrated its determination... compliance during the upsurge [in collectivization] can be attributed to a sense..."

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117 Chinese leaders' decision to proceed towards collectivization in stages appears to have been directly influenced by their understanding of the difficulties encountered by the Soviet Union during collectivization. See: Teiwes, "The Establishment and Consolidation of the new Regime, 1949-1957," pp. 56-61.


121 In the Soviet Union, on the other hand, collectivization required a new round of terror since the violence of land reform had taken place more than ten years earlier. In fact, land reform in the Soviet Union may ultimately have increased resistance to collectivization because the large number of formerly landless peasants who had received plots during land reform proved reluctant to give them up during collectivization.
of resigned inevitability." Chinese peasants engaged in many of the same kinds of non-violent resistance to collectivization that Soviet peasants employed, albeit on a smaller scale. Unlike Soviet peasants, they did not participate in open revolt against the regime. The Chinese regime met peasant resistance with varying levels of coercion, including a large number of arrests for "political offenses," and comparatively low levels of violence and killing.

The third, and perhaps important reason that Chinese collectivization was accomplished with relatively little violence, however, is that the most radical and devastating communist agrarian policies were not implemented until Mao launched the so-called Great Leap Forward in 1958. In contrast to the generally more voluntary, gradual, staged approach employed during collectivization, the Great Leap imposed a host of radical changes on the Chinese countryside practically overnight. Peasant life became increasingly regimented. Peasants were not allowed to prepare their own meals, but rather were forced to eat in communal mess halls. They were organized into massive work brigades to construct dams, irrigation projects, roads and bridges. Thousands died of exhaustion. An absurd scheme for producing iron and steel in millions of individual "backyard furnaces" was introduced. In some provinces, money was abolished. Small private plots and gardens which peasants had been allowed to retain under previous stages of collectivization were completely collectivized. Peasants were no longer allowed the right, even in theory, to withdraw from collectives. Traditional farming practices were done away with in favor of untested methods such as "close planting" and "deep ploughing." These schemes led to utterly unrealistic expectations regarding the amount of grain that could be

125 The significance of this step is emphasized by the fact that when these plots were revived in later years, they became the most productive land in many Chinese villages.
produced by the peasants and collected by the state.

Unlike collectivization, the radical communist agrarian policies of the Great Leap met with active resistance and revolt from significant segments of the Chinese peasantry.\textsuperscript{128} The Chinese regime did not refrain from using massive violence to crush this resistance. Secret Chinese military papers reveal that during the Great Leap Forward, “hunger and brutality precipitated widespread revolt and ‘armed banditry’… Challenged, the party launched an all out effort to ‘suppress the counter-revolutionaries and pacify the countryside.’\textsuperscript{129}

The disastrous policies of the Great Leap ultimately resulted in the most massive famine in human history. Close to 30 million people are thought to have perished in the four terrible years between 1958 and 1962.\textsuperscript{130} The famine claimed over 50 percent of the population in certain villages. There is no evidence to suggest that Chinese leaders deliberately engineered the famine. Its primary cause appears to have been the attempt by local cadres to meet the regime’s preposterously high grain production goals.\textsuperscript{131} Previous purges and repressive political campaigns, especially the “anti-rightist” campaign of 1957, had proved so effective that local communist cadres feared they would be purged, arrested or killed if they failed to meet or even surpass their quotas. In many regions, they confiscated nearly the entire harvest, leaving peasants with nothing.

Although Chinese leaders did not intentionally create the famine, the regime took a number of actions that greatly exacerbated it and directed its most dangerous effects against suspected enemies of the regime. As in the Soviet Union, a system of internal passports kept peasants from fleeing to the cities or other areas where the famine was less severe. Local granaries in some famine stricken areas remained full and peasants seeking access to them were shot. Mao received numerous credible reports that a major famine was gripping the countryside,

\textit{---------------- footnotes continued from last page ----------------} 
\textsuperscript{127} Becker, \textit{Hungry Ghosts}, pp. 70-82.
\textsuperscript{129} Lewis, “China’s Secret Military Papers.” pp. 76-77.
but he refused to change course.  Although he eventually accepted that the country was in the grips of a major famine -- he even gave up eating meat in symbolic solidarity with the starving masses -- Mao blamed the famine on counter-revolutionaries, announcing that "we must recognize that there is a severe grain shortage because production teams are hiding and dividing grain and this is a common problem all over the country." Likewise, the communist party district secretary for Xinyang, a region containing 10 million people, claimed that "the problem is not that food is lacking. There are sufficient quantities of grain, but 90 percent of the inhabitants are suffering from ideological difficulties."  

As Anne Thurstan argues, "the main point about Mao is that for long after he knew there was a famine, he refused to introduce policies that would eliminate the crisis." In fact, although Mao agreed to scale back some Great Leap policies in the spring of 1959 in response to reports of growing starvation conditions in some localities, a few months later re-instituted these polices and purged communist leaders who urged greater caution. Like the other communist leaders studied in this chapter, Mao did not want to kill or starve peasants per-se, but when the famine struck, his actions proved he was willing to accept staggering costs in human lives to achieve his radical goals.

Furthermore, it should be noted that not all of the suffering visited on China during the Great Leap was the result of the famine. Communist officials sometimes tortured and killed those accused of failing to meet their grain quotas. According to Jasper Becker, as the famine grew worse, "Party cadres had increasingly to rely on force and terror to get the peasants to obey their orders. At the height of the famine, they wielded the power of life and death because they controlled the grain stores and could kill anyone by depriving them of food." As in the Soviet Union and Cambodia, the famine was specifically targeted at social groups suspected of being hostile to the regime. One local official remembered that during the famine "[n]o one in a

133 Quoted in Ibid., p. 86.
136 See: Ibid., Becker, Hungry Ghosts, p. 93 and Yang, Calamity and Reform in China, p. 36.
137 Becker, Hungry Ghosts, p. 111.
 cadre’s family died.” On the contrary, as Becker documents,

“The most vulnerable section of China’s population, around five per cent, were those whom Mao called ‘enemies of the people.’ Anyone who had in previous campaigns of repression been labeled a ‘black element’ was given the lowest priority in the allocation of food. Landlords, rich peasants, former members of the nationalist regime, religious leaders, rightists, counter-revolutionaries and the families of such individuals died in the greatest numbers. During the Great leap Forward many more people were placed in these categories and often imprisoned.”

Political Purges and Terror

Political purges and campaigns were an almost constant feature of political life in communist China until the end of the Mao era. Political purges focused on a wide range of targets, but as in the Soviet Union and Cambodia, a recurring motive for the purges was the perceived need to eliminate opposition to the radical policies of social transformation favored by Mao and his followers. As in the other regimes studied in this chapter, many of the purges trace their origins to hard fought political battles over the communist transformation of the countryside.

The first major purge, known as the “anti-rightist campaign,” was launched in 1957, just as the Chinese collectivization of agriculture was being completed. The purge appears to have been launched largely in response to growing criticism from intellectuals and from party members about the direction of the Chinese revolution. Mao had actively encouraged intellectuals and others to voice criticism of the regime in the so-called Hundred Flowers Campaign in 1956. Although the anti-rightist campaign resulted in relatively few executions, between 400,000 and 700,000 people were arrested and sentenced to “reform through labor” in

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139 Ibid., p. 103. Conditions and food shortages in Chinese prisons were even worse than in the countryside and many if not most of those sent there soon died.
140 The name comes from the Chinese phrase “let a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred schools of thought contend.” It is not clear whether Mao had set a cruel trap for these critics, or whether he was genuinely surprised by the extent and character of the criticism.
prisons or in the vast Chinese camp system. Moderate Chinese intellectuals who had criticized the party during the Hundred Flowers Campaign were major targets of the purge, but Becker notes that the purge also targeted "large numbers of high- and low-ranking officials who had complained about Mao's agricultural policies." Indeed, the Hundred Flowers Campaign had led peasants and communist cadres in the countryside to speak out against, and in some cases even begin to dismantle, the newly established collectives.

The most violent political terror in the history of communist China, however, was Mao's so-called Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Like Stalin's Great Terror, the origins of the cultural revolution are closely tied to the communist transformation in the countryside. The catastrophe of the Great Leap had generated considerable opposition to Mao's radical policies not only in the countryside but also from moderate leaders within the party. In 1959, Mao had triumphed over the party moderates, most notably the Minister of Defense, Peng Dehuai, who wanted to pull back from the most radical policies of the Great Leap. By the summer of 1960, however, even Mao could no longer deny that the Great Leap had been a disaster. At the Ninth Plenum of the Communist Party's Central Committee, he grudgingly agreed to a retreat from the Great Leap Forward. Nevertheless, Mao feared that the retreat might go too far, perhaps rolling back collectivization itself. Several high-ranking communist leaders, especially President Liu Shaoqi, seemed to be pushing in this direction. Mao was also deeply concerned about recent political developments in the Soviet Union, particularly the rise of Khrushchev and his policies of de-Stalinization. He felt the Soviet revolution had been betrayed from within by "bourgeois revisionists" and feared a similar fate for China's revolution.

These fears appear to have been the major impetus behind Mao's decision to launch the cultural revolution in 1966. The cultural revolution was a twin pronged assault on the elements

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141 Margolin, "China: A Long March into Night," p. 485. Frederick Teiwes suggests that 550,000 Chinese were "label rightists" but seems to imply that although "reform through labor was apparently meted out on a large scale," not all of these people were actually arrested. See: "The Establishment and Consolidation of the New Regime, 1949-57," p. 82.
142 Becker, Hungry Ghosts, p. 54.
in society and in the party which Mao believed stood in the way of his Utopian plans for China. Like Stalin and Pol Pot, Mao believed that the enemies of communism were often motivated by their bourgeois social origins and that their preferred method for bringing down the revolution was by subverting it from within. As Andrew Walder argues, "by the mid-1960s Maoists had concluded that the party itself had become corrupted by an ongoing, massive, yet largely hidden conspiracy of reactionary social classes and revisionist traitors who were consciously embarked on a plot to restore capitalism and who needed to be dragged out by the mass action of Chairman Mao's militant loyalists."147

This conspiratorial vision was outlined in a political tract known as the Ninth Polemic, authorized by Mao in 1964. The authors of the Polemic argued that "[i]n socialist society, the overthrown bourgeoisie and other reactionary classes remain strong for quite a long time.... They have a thousand and one links to the international bourgeoisie. They are not reconciled to their defeat." Instead they "conduct open and hidden struggles against the proletariat in every field... they work to undermine socialism and restore capitalism... [they] sneak into government organs, economic departments, and cultural and educational institutions so as to resist or usurp the leadership of the proletariat."148

Arguing that bourgeoisie forces, represented by Khrushchev, had already hijacked the Soviet state, the Polemic argued that it was an open question "whether or not we can successfully prevent the emergence of Khruschov's [sic] revisionism in China. In short, it is an extremely important question, a matter of life and death for our party and our country."149 Commenting on this passage, Roderick MacFarquhar writes that "here, unveiled, was the apocalyptic vision of a dark future which would eventually convince Mao of the need for the Cultural Revolution."150 This vision, which highlighted the traitorous impulses of entire social groups, also played a major role in expanding the violence with which the Cultural Revolution would be prosecuted the years that followed.

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Relying on his strong power base in the military, Mao and his radical supporters in the "Cultural Revolution Group" organized a major purge of the party. As MacFarquhar concludes, "Ruthlessly Machiavellian in the acquisition and retention of power, Mao remained recklessly Utopian in the uses to which he put it.... If revolution from above was now impossible, it would have to be revolution from below. If the party could not change society, the Mao would unleash society to change the party."151 Perhaps 60 percent of communist party officials were ultimately purged.152 Between three and four million cadres were imprisoned.153 In order to bring the revolution to society, the Cultural Revolution Group also promoted the organization of youth groups into the infamous Red Guards. The Guards set about terrorizing all elements of society that might represent bourgeois thinking or culture. Teachers and intellectuals, factory bosses and "revisionist" party officials were engaged in "struggles sessions" that often ended in savage beatings and sometimes in death. Members of pariah classes who had managed to escape earlier campaigns received especially harsh treatment.

It appears, however, that the Cultural Revolution Group never had complete control over the activities of the Guards. Eventually the violence got out of hand, escalating beyond what Mao and his colleagues had intended. The army was finally called in to restore order. By the time it was over, the Cultural Revolution had killed between 400,000 and 1,000,000 people, not including those who eventually perished in forced labor colonies.154

Less Violent Communist Regimes

Understanding the reasons why radical communist regimes have been so violent can also shed light on the question of why many other communist regimes have managed to avoid mass killing. Communist regimes in countries such as Czechoslovakia, Cuba, Laos, Nicaragua, Benin, Cape Verde among many others have not engaged in mass killing. Although they can hardly be

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150 Ibid., p. 364.
151 Quoted in Ibid., p. 470.
152 John King Fairbank and Merle Goldman, China: A New History (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 387. As in earlier purges, executions were far less common than in the Soviet Union or Cambodia.
deemed pacific, these regimes never experienced violence to compare to the mass killings in the
Soviet Union, China and Cambodia. A multitude of factors -- many highly specific to individual
cases -- account for the differences between these "less violent" communist states and the brutal
regimes described above. Four more general factors, however, are especially useful for
understanding the less violent history of some communist states. These factors may operate
alone, but more commonly they appear in combination in less violent communist regimes. These
factors may act to avert mass killing altogether, or they may simply reduce its magnitude. It
should be emphasized that these factors are not simply an ad-hoc list of unrelated variables and
conditions. On the contrary, these factors are of general importance because they directly impact
the causal processes identified in this chapter. The appearance of these factors in less violent
communist regimes, therefore, provides further evidence for the validity of the strategic
approach.

The first and most self-evident factor common to many less violent communist regimes is
a relatively small population. Some less violent communist regimes have killed fewer people
than the regimes described above simply because they have ruled over considerably smaller
numbers of people. The absolute death tolls in China and the Soviet Union were so staggering at
least in part because these countries were the two of the most populous states in the world. The
population of the Soviet Union during the 1930's was over 160 million.155 China's population in
1958 (at the start of the Great Leap Forward) was over 659 million.156. By contrast, none of the
communist regimes in Eastern European except Poland (with a population of 23,770,000 people)
ruled over a population of more than 20 million people in 1946.157 Although the Cambodian
experience (which left between 800,000 and 2,000,000 dead out of a total population of
approximately 8 million people) demonstrates that even countries with relatively small
populations can experience mass killing of immense proportions, it is axiomatic that less

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154 Ibid., p. 513.
155 According to the 1937 census, the population of the Soviet Union was 162,003,225. See: Bacon, The Gulag at
War, p. 33.
157 In 1946 the population of Albania was 1,130,000; the population of Bulgaria was 7,000,000; the population of
Czechoslovakia was 12,920,000, the population of East Germany was 18,060,000; the Population of Hungary was
9,040,000; Romania was 15,790,000; and the population of Yugoslavia was 15,440,000. See: B.R. Mitchell,

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populous states must be relatively more radical and violent to generate the same death tolls as larger ones.\textsuperscript{158}

Because of the close connection between the implementation of radical communist agricultural policies and mass killing, the size of the population employed in the agricultural sector can be especially important. When farmers make up a relatively smaller percentage of the total population, radical agricultural policies such as collectivization become relatively easier to implement. Such appears to have been the case in East Germany, for example, where only 23 percent of the population was employed in agriculture in 1950 and in Czechoslovakia where 39\% were farmers.\textsuperscript{159} In contrast, prior to collectivization, more than 80 percent of the populations of the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia worked in agriculture.\textsuperscript{160}

The mitigating effect of small population size is not simply an artifact of the numerical criterion for mass killing utilized in this dissertation. When the size of the population directly affected by radical communist policies is sufficiently small, the decrease in the amount of violence necessary to implement specific policies may actually be greater than the proportional decrease in population relative to the communist states studied in this chapter. Small population size, especially in the agricultural sector, can open up an entirely different set of options for communist leaders. Dispossessed farmers may be able to find employment in the industrial sector or migrate to other countries. Communist regimes may even be able to afford to rely primarily on positive economic inducements to convince farmers to join collectives or to compensate individuals for nationalized property.

A second factor which influences the likelihood of mass killing under communism is the degree of radicalism or moderation in the policies of social transformation adopted by these regimes. Less violent communist regimes have generally taken a more moderate, gradual and incentive-based approach to the transformation of their societies. Compared to Stalin, Mao and

\begin{footnotesize}
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  \item \textsuperscript{158} As noted above, the Khmer Rouge consciously set out to surpass China and the Soviet Union in the speed and scope of the communization of society.
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Pol Pot, leaders of less violent communist regimes have proved much less committed to transforming their societies into full-fledged communist Utopias. For Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot, the communist transformation of society was the central goal of the revolution. Its attainment was an end in itself and justified virtually any means. As described above, when faced with widespread popular resistance, economic dislocation and even massive famine these leaders refused to compromise. Resistance to communist policies was seen as a manifestation of inevitable class struggle to be crushed without mercy.

Less violent communist leaders, often weaned on Stalinist doctrine, have sometimes come to power with radical plans for transforming their societies. When confronted with the harsh realities required to bring about this transformation, however, pragmatism has usually prevailed over dogmatism. When widespread popular resistance to particular policies has materialized, moderate communist leaders have been willing to compromise or in some cases completely abandon plans for the radical transformation of society.

Although moderate communist regimes have often crushed political opposition parties and denied individual liberties such as freedom of speech, press and organization, they have generally imposed fewer fundamental, disspossessive changes on their societies than were forced upon the people of the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia. Their more moderate policies have tended to generate fewer adverse affects on smaller numbers of people. As a result, they have also generated less resistance and consequently presented leaders with fewer incentives for resorting to large-scale violence. Some communist regimes have focused primarily on the nationalization of major industries or large estates -- especially when foreign owned -- and left small-scale agriculture and small businesses in the hands of private individuals. Restriction of property rights in the industrial sector generally has been somewhat easier to accomplish because industrial property has tended to be concentrated in the hands of a relatively small number of individuals. The shift to state ownership has not usually dispossessed the mass of industrial workers of their most valued possessions, nor has it imposed upon them a fundamentally new way of life. In some cases the communization of industry may actually result in increased wages and improved working conditions for laborers.

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152
Perhaps the most important aspect of policy moderation in less violent communist regimes has been their approach to the transformation of the agricultural sector, particularly their policies of collectivization. Less violent communist regimes often launched no major collectivization drives at all, or have opted to collectivize a relatively small number of farms. This pattern was particularly prevalent in nominally Marxist African states such as Benin, Cape Verde, Madagascar and Mozambique where true collective farms seldom accounted for more than five percent of the arable land.\footnote{Frederic L. Pryor, \textit{The Red and the Green}, p. 99. On the Marxist classification of these regimes, see: p. 363.} In some countries, collectivization appears to have occurred in name only, with collective farms serving as a cover for the operation of private companies or for the traditional agricultural practices of individual farmers.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 12-13.} Other regimes have retreated from plans for large-scale collectivization after encountering practical difficulties or strong resistance from the peasantry. Such was the case in both Yugoslavia and Poland in the early 1950s.\footnote{See Sokolovsky, \textit{Peasants and Power}, pp. 31-85, and Melissa K. Bokovoy, \textit{Peasants and Communists: Politics and Ideology in the Yugoslav Countryside, 1941-1953} (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998).}

A few communist regimes, however, have succeeded in introducing widespread agricultural collectivization with relatively little violence, although probably never without any violence or imprisonment. These less violent communist regimes have usually elected to implement collectivization with much greater freedom and flexibility for farmers, and/or by means of a gradual or staged approach. They have tended to rely on positive inducements, economic incentives and political propaganda in order to encourage participation in collectives. They have permitted “rich peasants” or “kulaks” to join collectives. Crucially, in contrast to the excessive and uncompensated seizures of grain and confiscation land that characterized collectivization in the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia, less violent communist regimes have tended to demand less of the peasants’ harvest and pay more for it. They have provided greater compensation for confiscated land and other property, especially from small holders.

The collectivization of agriculture in Hungary provides a illustrative example of both the violence associated with efforts to force a rapid transition to collectivization and the possibility of a less violent transition when more moderate methods are employed. Hungary’s first collectivization drive was launched under pressure from the Soviet Union and was heavily
influenced by the Stalinist model. Peasants were forced to join collectives. Thousands of so-called kulaks were arrested and cadres commonly resorted to violence to crush resistance to collectivization. As in the Soviet Union, these policies met with stiff resistance from the peasantry and provoked a major economic and political crisis for the new regime. Stalin’s death in 1953, however, eased pressure from the Soviet Union for rapid collectivization and allowed a more moderate regime to come to power. Collectivization was largely abandoned and many of the newly formed collectives disbanded. A second collectivization drive was launched in 1958 by the regime installed by the Soviet Union following the suppression of the Hungarian revolution. As Ján Sokolovský documents, however, the new regime adopted a considerably more moderate approach toward collectivization. Peasants were compensated for the land, animals and equipment that they contributed to the collectives. Valuable subsides for the purchase of equipment and livestock were provided to collective farms. Greater autonomy was granted to the collectives. Perhaps most importantly, the class struggle against the kulak was explicitly repudiated and all peasants were encouraged to participate in the collectives. By the early 1960s, almost all of Hungary’s arable land had been organized into state or collective farms with very little violence.

A third factor affecting the likelihood that communist regimes will engage in mass killing is the degree to which those groups and individuals most likely to resist the communization of society are able to flee the country. The exodus of potential enemies of the regime both limits the scope of the repression the regime must use to impose the transition to communism and makes available vital resources, especially land, which can used to entice the remaining population into compliance. Under these circumstances, regimes may be able to make the transition to communism with relatively little violence -- although seldom without any violence whatsoever. In Cuba, for example, one million people out of a population of less than eight million fled the country in the aftermath of the 1959 revolution. Among those who fled were the owners of most of Cuba’s major industries and large agricultural plantations. This exodus left Castro with vital resources that might otherwise have required considerable violence to

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165 Ibid., p. 147.
166 Ibid., pp. 145-147.
167 It must be noted that tens of thousands of these drowned at sea trying to escape.
procure. Although several thousand people were killed as Castro attempted to crush his remaining political opponents, over 85 percent of the land was ultimately consolidated in state and collective farms.\textsuperscript{168} Robert Melson argues that the flight of “upper and Middle classes” to the United States may have allowed Cuba to get “rid of its real and imagined enemies without having to resort to genocide.”\textsuperscript{169}

A similar situation developed in Vietnam after the Geneva accords divided the country in 1954. More than 900,000 residents of North Vietnam -- more than 6 percent of the population -- fled to the South.\textsuperscript{170} Bernard Fall writes that as a result of this migration, “not only was land freed for redistribution by the Viet-Minh, but a vast reservoir of potential anti-Communist subversive elements was cleared from the area.”\textsuperscript{171} Between 1,500 and 50,000 people may have been killed in connection with the collectivization of agriculture in North Vietnam, but such figures pale even in relative terms to the massive violence experienced in the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia.\textsuperscript{172} The same may have been true in East Germany, where over 3,500,000 people -- almost 20 percent of the Eastern population -- fled the communist regime between 1950 and 1961, many as a direct response to collectivization.\textsuperscript{173} Likewise, over one million Koreans -- more than 10 percent of the population above the 38th parallel -- made their way to the South between 1945 and 1947 following the communist takeover.\textsuperscript{174} Hundreds of thousands of

\textsuperscript{168} Pryor, The Red and the Green, p. 100.
\textsuperscript{170} After the fall of South Vietnam in 1975 more than 1.4 million Vietnamese fled the country. See: Herring, America’s Longest War, p. 270. Herring also notes that “as many as 50,000” Vietnamese “boat-people” perished in flight.
\textsuperscript{174} William Stueck, The Korean War: An International History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 22. Bruce Cumings argues, however, that not all of these were actually fleeing communism. See: The Origins of the

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Japanese, including a major percentage of Korea’s large landowners, also fled Korea after the Second World War. Estimates of the number of people killed by the North Korean regime vary widely, but several authors have noted that the exodus may have eased the process of communization in the North.\textsuperscript{175}

The fourth reason that some communist regimes have avoided mass killing is that the leaders of these regimes do not seem to have shared the ultra-paranoid world-view held by Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot. Leaders in less violent regimes have generally rejected (or at least placed less emphasis on) the Stalinist notions that individual behavior is determined by immutable class origins and that the “class struggle” is destined to intensify following the victory of communist forces. Indeed, a shift in the mentality of communist leadership goes a long way towards explaining why mass killing virtually ceased in the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia immediately following the deaths of Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot.\textsuperscript{176} In his secret speech to the 20th Party Congress in 1956, for example, Khrushchev accused Stalin of being “sickly suspicious... everywhere and in everything he saw ‘enemies,’” two-facers’ and ‘spies.’”\textsuperscript{177} He explicitly rejected Stalin’s notion that the class struggle would intensify as communism progressed.\textsuperscript{178} He attacked Stalin for using “mass repression at a time when the revolution was already victorious, when the Soviet State was strengthened, when the exploiting classes were already liquidated... he chose the path of repression and physical annihilation, not only against actual enemies, but against individuals who had not committed any crimes against the party and the Soviet government.”\textsuperscript{179}

Prior to Stalin’s death in 1953, the distinction between the paranoid, Stalinist world view

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\textsuperscript{175} Documentation of the violence associated with the regime is too unreliable to determine if a major mass killing actually took place. For an argument that the North did not engage in mass killing (emphasizing the importance of the exodus as well as the moderate nature of collectivization in the North), see: Cumings, \textit{The Origins of the Korean War}, pp. 416-417, 425-426. See also: Pryor, \textit{The Red and the Green}, pp. 84-85. For arguments that the North is guilty of mass killing, see: Pierre Rigolot, “Crimes, Terror, and Secrecy in North Korea,” in Courtois, et. al, \textit{The Black Book of Communism}, pp. 547-564, and Rummel, \textit{Death by Government}, pp. 365-379.

\textsuperscript{176} The second generation of leaders in these countries also implemented fewer radical plans for their societies. In fact, radical plans initiated by Stalin, Mao were often discontinued or reversed by their successors.


\textsuperscript{178} See: Ibid., pp. 34-35.

\textsuperscript{179} See: Ibid., pp. 28.
and the more moderate views of less violent communist leaders was most clearly demonstrated by the public split between Stalin and Yugoslav leadership under President Josip Tito. Stalin attacked Yugoslavia’s policies and tactics over a variety of issues, including Yugoslavia’s more gradual, voluntary program for the collectivization of agriculture. A major element of the dispute, however, centered around the Yugoslav approach to “class struggle.” In Yugoslavia, repression was primarily targeted against specific individuals who resisted communist policies. Yugoslav leaders believed that the former exploitative classes could be reformed and integrated with the rest of society. They therefore rejected the Stalinist tactic of using terror as a prophylactic measure to “liquidate” entire classes. Stalin believed that the Yugoslav leadership’s failure to launch an all-out assault on the capitalist classes, especially the kulaks, was a grave error and a repudiation of the policies Stalin had fought so hard to implement in the Soviet Union. In a 1948 letter to the Yugoslav Communist Party, Stalin and his Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov attacked Yugoslav leaders for “their denial of the strengthening of capitalist elements, and in connection with this, the sharpening of the class struggle in the villages...” They charged that “this denial arose from the opportunist contention that in the transitional period between capitalism and socialism, the class struggle does not become sharper, as taught by Marxism-Leninism, but dies out, as averred by opportunists of the Bukharin type, who postulated a decadent theory of the peaceful absorption of the capitalist elements into the socialist structure.”

Tito’s more moderate ideas about the nature of the opposition and the usefulness of repression also applied to the Yugoslav communist party itself. Tito lacked Stalin’s suspicious nature. He proclaimed that “our revolution does not devour its children.” Although Tito was not afraid to crack down on the Cominformists within the party who sided with Stalin during the Yugoslav-Soviet confrontation, Richard West notes that “the persecution of Cominformists never became a witch-hunt, similar to the smelling out of ‘Trotskyists’ and ‘saboteurs’ in the Soviet Union during the 1930s. The great majority of people arrested in Yugoslavia really were Cominformists...” Perhaps 12,000 were imprisoned, but there were few if any executions.

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180 Bokovoy, Peasants and Communists, pp. 89-91
181 Quoted in Ibid., pp. 87-88, 108.
183 Ibid., p. 235.
Tito believed that “We mustn’t allow petty suspicions to lead us, like the Russians, into destroying our comrades. We have to give our comrades a chance to correct their mistaken views.”

Conclusions

Reflecting on the violent history of the twentieth century, Robert Conquest has concluded that “humanity has been savaged and trampled by rogue ideologies.” As this chapter has described, radical communist ideologies savaged and trampled the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia from top to bottom. The mass killings carried out in these three countries were remarkably similar in many respects. All three regimes launched extremely radical campaigns to transform agricultural production. Each campaign ultimately resulted massive violence and famine. All three regimes launched major political purges of their own ruling parties. Each purge was motivated at least in part by opposition generated during the communization of the countryside. All three leaders were motivated by fantastically paranoid beliefs about the scope and nature of the opposition to them. Each leader consequently broadened his purge until it swallowed a vast array of innocent victims in his own party and in society-at-large.

These were the acts of true believers. Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot were radicals, even among members of their own, radical political parties. Each sought more, faster and deeper changes than almost any of his contemporaries. Each believed his ends justified his means. Each ultimately sanctioned the use of massive violence because he believed it was the only “practical” way to achieve and protect his utopian vision for society.

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184 Ibid., p. 236.
185 Conquest, Reflections on a Ravaged Century, pp. xi.
186 Indeed there can be little doubt that each regime consciously studied and often emulated or attempted to outdo the ones that preceded it. See: Walder, “Cultural Revolution Radicalism: Variations on a Stalinist Theme,” p. 51. See also: Friedman, “Maoism, Titoism, Stalinism,” pp. 175-176, and Quinn, “Explaining the Terror,” pp. 215-240.
187 See: Hollander, Political Will and Personal Belief
Communism, especially the kind of radical communism preached by Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot, today appears to be drawing its last breaths.\textsuperscript{188} The communist states of the Soviet empire have crumbled. Communist regimes in Asia and Africa are steadily leading their societies closer to free markets, agricultural de-collectivization and private property. The principles of communism have been widely discredited in the eyes of the world and it seems unlikely that new revolutionaries will continue to emerge to fight for them.\textsuperscript{189} The single most important cause of mass killing in the twentieth century appears to be fading into history.

The strategic approach cannot predict if or when similarly violent ideologies might emerge again. The history of communism in the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia is a powerful demonstration of the degree to which historical accidents, serendipity and the power of individual personalities can determine the rise of extremely radical and violent groups. The strategic approach does, however, identify the general characteristics of ideologies which, if deeply held by those with the power to act on them, may represent a significant danger of mass killing. As noted above, history's most savage ideologies have been those which call for the extremely rapid and radical transformation of society. Such transformations have almost always come at great cost in human life.

Although it is impossible to rule out the rise of completely novel ideologies, few contemporary contenders seem ready to rival the bloody Utopias of radical communism. Radical racist or eugenic ideologies remain a threat but, with the possible exception of anti-Semitism, these ideologies have tended to be localized to certain regions of the world and have been targeted against geographically localized races. One reason that radical communism became history's most deadly ideology was its ability to be applied to virtually any society. No single racist ideology has attained the global appeal of communism, nor does any seem likely to do so. Fundamentalist Islam is a serious danger -- and in Iran and Afghanistan this ideology has proved quite violent indeed -- but it also seems likely to remain restricted in its global appeal. More importantly, even the most radical fundamentalist regimes have not sought to completely dispossess the most populous social groups in their nations, as the communist regimes described


\textsuperscript{189} On the declining intellectual appeal of communist ideology, see: Colburn, \textit{The Vogue of Revolution in Poor Countries}, pp. 89-96, and Hollander, \textit{Political Will and Personal Belief}.
in this chapter did. It may be premature to celebrate the "end of history," but if no similarly radical ideas emerge to gain the widespread applicability and acceptance of communism, humanity may be able to look forward to considerably less mass killing in the coming century than it experienced in the last.\footnote{Francis Fukuyama, The End of History and the Last Man (New York: The Free Press, 1992).}
CHAPTER 5
CHAUVINIST MASS KILLINGS:
ETHNIC CLEANSING AND GENOCIDE IN
NAZI GERMANY, TURKISH ARMENIA AND RWANDA

Introduction

Ethnic, national and religious groups have been frequent victims of mass killing in the twentieth century. This sub-set of mass killing is commonly known as genocide. The victims of genocide include not only ethnic, national and religious minorities but also defenseless majorities. The cases examined in this chapter, however, are distinguished from other instances of mass killing not simply by the identity of their victims but by the chauvinist ideological or political goals of their perpetrators. In this dissertation, this kind of mass killing is referred to as "chauvinist mass killing."1 This terminology distinguishes the cases studied in this chapter from other cases of genocide that are motivated primarily by the desire for territory (as in the genocide of indigenous people or genocide during wars of territorial annexation) or by strategic military considerations (as in cases of counter-guerrilla mass killings between ethnic groups).2

This chapter focuses on the genocide of Armenians in Turkey in 1915, the Nazi genocide of Jews in Germany and German occupied territories during the Second World War, and the genocide of Tutsi in Rwanda in 1994. These events represent three of this century’s most violent episodes of chauvinist mass killing. Chauvinist motives also appear to have played a prominent role in a number of other major mass killings in the last 100 years, including, but not limited to,

2 During the Second World War, for example, the Nazis intentionally killed millions of Polish and Russian civilians. Although Nazi ideology claimed that Poles and Russians were racially inferior to ethnic Germans, most scholars believe that the primary rationale for the murder of these groups was the procurement and “clearing” of territory for German settlement. See: Gótz Aly, Final Solution: Nazi Population Policy and the Murder of the European Jews (London: Arnold, 1999).
the mass killing of: 400,000-800,000 people during the Soviet deportation of various nationalities from 1937-1953; 600,000-two million ethnic Germans during their expulsion from Eastern Europe in 1945-47; 200,000-800,000 Hindu and Muslim civilians during the partition of India in 1947-48; 500,000-three million Bengalis (mostly Hindus) during the partition of East Pakistan in 1971; and perhaps 150,000 people (the great majority Muslims) in Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1992 and 1996. These cases will not be dealt with in detail here, however, because documentation available in the secondary literature, particularly evidence that might shed light on the intentions of the perpetrators of these atrocities, remains extremely limited.

Despite the violent record of these regimes, most chauvinist regimes have not committed mass killing. As described in Chapter One, the history of the twentieth century is replete with examples of highly discriminatory societies that have existed for long periods without mass killing -- although seldom without any violence whatsoever. Any effort to understand why some chauvinist regimes have proved so violent, therefore, must also seek to identify the factors and conditions that help to explain why other chauvinist regimes have not engaged in mass killing. Thus, in addition to the brutal regimes of Nazi German, Turkey and Rwanda, this chapter also briefly analyses a number of chauvinist regimes that have not engaged in mass killing despite the presence of severe discrimination and violent conflict between certain ethnic groups.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into seven main sections. The first section describes the strategic approach to chauvinist mass killing. The second section briefly identifies some empirical predictions of this approach that may be compared to evidence from the historical record. The third, fourth, and fifth, sections apply the strategic perspective to the mass killings in Turkish Armenia, Nazi Germany and Rwanda. The sixth section briefly explores the


4 In fact, even the documentation of the Armenian and Rwandan mass killings is minuscule when compared to the vast secondary literature available on the Holocaust.
history of several "less violent" chauvinist regimes. The final, concluding section summarizes the findings of this chapter.

*A Strategic Approach to Chauvinist Mass Killing*

Like the communist mass killings described in chapter four, chauvinist mass killings result from the effort to fundamentally reorganize society at the expense of certain groups. Whereas radical communist regimes have sought to transform the economic basis of society, radical chauvinist regimes have sought to transform its ethnic, national or religious composition. From this perspective, therefore, the oft-debated comparison between Stalin and Hitler is justified. As Paul Johnson has written, "[L]ike Lenin and Stalin, Hitler believed in the ultimate social engineering. The notion of destroying huge categories of people whose existence imperiled his historic mission was to him, as to them, entirely acceptable." It could be argued that communist efforts at social engineering represented a "creative" impulse, in the sense that they sought to build new social structures, while chauvinism is merely "destructive," seeking to change society simply by subtracting some of its members. Although there is some truth to this view, in practice both communist and chauvinist ideologies have contained significant destructive as well as creative elements. The communist leaders examined in Chapter Four clearly believed that certain groups and classes had no part to play in the new society they sought to create. Thus, communist/Stalinist ideology often appears directed as much against these groups as it does toward the creation of anything else. Conversely, each of the chauvinist leaders studied in this chapter appears to have viewed their mission as not simply the elimination of hated groups, but as the creation of a new, more harmonious society in which future conflicts between groups would no longer occur and where the dominant group and its

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5 Many grounds have been offered for the comparison between Hitler and Stalin and their respective regimes. The perspective presented here refers only to the assertion that both men used mass killing as a means to implement policies of radical social engineering. For a discussion of the various bases of comparison between Hitler and Stalin see: Ian Kershaw and Moshe Lewin, eds., Stalinism and Nazism: Dictatorships in Comparison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Steven Wheatcroft, "The Scale and Nature of German and Soviet Repression and Mass Killings, 1930-1945," *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 48, no. 8 (1996), pp. 1319-1353, Peter Baldwin, ed., *Reworking the Past: Hitler, the Holocaust and the Historians’ Debate* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990).

unique culture would be able to flourish. The effort to eliminate supposedly alien elements, therefore, has often been combined with major projects to further the cultural, material and even biological prerogatives of favored groups.7

Nowhere was this revolutionary form of chauvinist social engineering more apparent than in Nazi racial and population policy. Hitler’s crusade to purge Germany of its Jews was only one part of a massive program to reorganize the demographic composition of all of Europe.8 Even the non-Jewish populations of vast swaths of Eastern Europe were to be relocated to make room for immense farms worked by ethnic Germans resettled from states all over Europe. This plan was to serve three purposes. First, it would protect Germany from starvation blockades like the allied blockade of the First World War. Second, it would eliminate the potential for conflict between German minority populations and other ethnic groups throughout Europe. Third, it would concentrate Europe’s Aryan gene pool in a single geographical area, thereby ensuring the biological purity and strength of future generations of Germans.

The Nazis’ eugenic master plan was also pursued through a wide range of bizarre and fantastic schemes ranging from the forced sterilization of racially inferior Germans, the abduction of “racially valuable” children from occupied nations, the official promotion of large families for German women, and even the creation of Aryan “stud farms” where the racially superior men could impregnate dozens of Aryan women.9 Racial considerations were to be introduced into nearly every aspect of German life. Some scholars have concluded on the basis of these and other Nazi policies that the Nazis aimed for a “racial revolution” in German society no less profound than the communist revolution in Russia.10 Indeed, Heinrich Himmler, the chief of the Nazi SS, referred to his racial policies as the “socialism of good blood.”11

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8 Aly, Final Solution, p. 89.

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Although no other chauvinist regime has generated plans matching the scope and scale of Nazi social engineering, other chauvinist regimes have attempted to achieve both creative and destructive goals through the process commonly known as “ethnic cleansing.” Episodes of ethnic cleansing in the twentieth century have resulted from two primary motives. First, ethnic cleansing has been used in the effort to implement ideologies calling for the ethnic, national or religious purification of certain territories. Second, campaigns of ethnic cleansing have been utilized as a radical means to resolve political or military conflicts between ethnic groups over the control of certain territories. Most incidents of ethnic cleansing have been sparked by a combination of these motives, although the second motive has probably been more prominent, especially in recent years.

Chauvinist mass killings, especially the Holocaust, have tended to be portrayed as little more than killing for killing’s sake. From this point of view, the social transformation sought by chauvinist regimes is simply mass killing itself. The strategic approach, however, suggests that chauvinist mass killings occur when leaders come to believe that mass killing is the most “practical” way to accomplish a policy of ethnic cleansing. Although ethnic cleansing and mass killing are often used interchangeably in popular discourse, they are not one in the same. Rather, mass killing is a radical tactic that is sometimes, but not always, used by regimes seeking to implement a policy of ethnic cleansing.\(^{12}\) In some cases the line between ethnic cleansing and mass killing can be very fine, but mass killing always remains a means to an end, not an end in itself.

Policies of large scale, rapid ethnic cleansing have often gone hand in hand with mass killing because ethnic cleansing frequently results in the near complete material and political disenfranchisement of certain groups. Ethnic cleansing, like communist policies such as collectivization, is a radical policy of social engineering.\(^{13}\) Like collectivization, it can completely dispossess vast numbers of people, forcing them to relinquish their homes, their property and their way of life. As in communist regimes, leaders of radical chauvinist regimes

\(^{11}\) Aly, *Final Solution*, p. 89.
\(^{12}\) Bookman, *The Demographic Struggle for Power*, p. 135.
quickly discover that forcing changes of such magnitude on large numbers of people in a short period of time is difficult without resorting to the most extreme levels of violence. Both chauvinist and communist mass killings, therefore, are considered in this dissertation as varieties of “dispossessive” mass killing. While chauvinist policies such as ethnic cleansing generally have been even more dispossessive than communist policies such as collectivization, communist polices usually have proved more deadly since their worst effects often strike the majority of society whereas chauvinist policies typically target minority groups.

The effort to implement policies of ethnic cleansing can lead to mass killing for three reasons. First, massive violence is often required to “convince” large numbers of people to abandon their homes, property and way of life for what they can generally assume to be a meager existence in some distant land. As Robert Hayden argues, “[p]hysical slaughter enters the picture as an element of ethnic cleansing, since, after all, it usually takes a great deal of pressure to persuade people to leave their homes for ‘homelands’ that they might, in fact never have seen.” Thus, Kurt Glaser and Stephan Possony note that during the bloody partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 “[p]art of the violence was aimed at separating the Muslim and Hindu populations. Yet few wanted to leave their homes and abandon acquired rights and belongings. Hence violence was mounted to frighten the undesired elements away. When fear through terror did not work well enough, violence was employed to evict the ‘enemy’ physically.” More recently, ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia followed a similar pattern as radical Serbian nationalists sought to rid certain territories of their ethnic-political enemies. As Mark Danner concluded, Serbian “officers were making rational, systematic use of terror as a method of war. Rather than being a regrettable but unavoidable concomitant of combat, rapes and mass executions and mutilations here served as an essential part of it. The Serbs fought not only to

14 As noted in chapter three, territorial mass killings (including the mass killing of indigenous people during colonial enlargement and wars of expansion) are also considered dispossessive mass killings. These episodes are distinguished from the chauvinist mass killing described in this chapter in that the primary motive for the killing is neither ideological or political, but rather the straightforward desire for land already occupied by others.
conquer territory but to ‘clear’ it of all traces of their Muslim or Croat enemies; or, as the notorious Serb phrase has it, to ‘ethnically cleanse’ what they believed was ‘their’ land.’17

Second, the process of rapidly relocating large numbers of people (including the sick, the very old and the very young) and the inhospitable conditions prevailing in the regions to which they are resettled can take a substantial toll in human life. Many regimes simply lack the vast logistical resources necessary to carry out such transfers in a humane manner. Perhaps more importantly, because the organizers of ethnic cleansing usually view their victims as a substantial threat, they are generally reluctant to devote scarce resources to ensuring their enemies’ well-being. Perpetrators of ethnic cleansing may not actively seek to exterminate their victims, but seldom are they willing to make significant sacrifices for their victims’ comfort or survival. Tens of thousands of Jews, for example, died as a result of the harsh conditions imposed during deportation and ghettoization in the years between 1939 and 1941. Yet, as Christopher Browning has documented, during this period “ghettoization was not a conscious preparatory step... to facilitate mass murder nor did it have the ‘set task’ of decimating the Jewish population.”18 The Nazi decision to physically annihilate the Jews does not appear to have been reached until sometime in the summer or fall of 1941. Rather, the deaths during deportation and ghettoization in this period resulted primarily from the extremely low priority that the ghettos received in the Nazi allocation of resources, especially food and medicine.19

Finally, the desire to implement ethnic cleansing may lead to mass killing when leaders conclude that the deportation and relocation of large numbers of people is simply impractical or impossible. This conclusion may be based on the perception that there is no territory available to accept deported groups, that the process of moving vast numbers of people is impractical or too time consuming, or that refugees would continue to pose a cross-border threat even after their deportation. In such cases, leaders may conclude that straightforward mass killing of entire

19 Browning, “Nazi Ghettoization Policy in Poland, 1939-1941,” p. 53. Such deaths are nevertheless considered “intentional” by the definition presented in chapter one because the Nazis “deliberately created conditions expected to cause widespread death” among the Jews and because the Jews were the direct object of the policy that created such conditions.
populations is the only practical way to remove ethnic groups from certain territories. Alternately, they may seek to deprive their victims of the ability to organize politically or militarily by killing and intimidating its elites, intellectuals or men of military age on a mass scale. Thus, as I will describe in detail below, the Nazi decision to annihilate the entire Jewish population of Europe occurred only after Nazi leaders reached the conclusion that other methods of ethnic cleansing, such as "voluntary" emigration, forced deportation and forced sterilization, had proved impractical for dealing with the vast population of Jews under Nazi control (particularly after the invasion of Poland and the Soviet Union). Some Nazi leaders may also have believed that even if the Jews could have been relocated beyond the borders of the Reich, they would have continued to pose a threat to Germany from the outside.

Testing the Strategic Approach

Several specific empirical predictions follow from the strategic approach described above which can be compared to the historical record of the Holocaust, the Armenian Genocide, and the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda:

prediction 1: Mass killing should be associated with policies designed to achieve ethnic cleansing. The violence associated with ethnic cleansing should be more severe the greater the number of people affected by it, the more difficult the conditions imposed during their relocation and resettlement, and the more rapidly it is carried out.

prediction 2: Evidence from the historical record should reflect that chauvinist leaders were motivated to resort to mass killing primarily in the effort to implement a policy of ethnic cleansing. The historical record should reflect that chauvinist leaders placed extremely high value on achieving ethnic cleansing, be it for ideological, political or military reasons. Chauvinist leaders should consider means short of mass killing to achieve ethnic cleansing.
prediction 3: The strategic approach makes a number of predictions regarding chauvinist regimes that have engaged in ethnic cleansing but not in mass killing. When compared to the regimes studied in this chapter, the policies of such regimes are likely to have one or more of the following characteristics: (1) they should affect smaller numbers of people, (2) they should impose fewer adverse conditions on victims during and after relocation.

The Armenian Genocide of 1915

From 1915 to 1918, between 500,000 and 1,500,000 Armenians from a total population of less than two million living in Turkey died in the first chauvinist mass killing of the 20th century.\textsuperscript{20} Since the mid-16th century, Armenian Christians had lived as one of many minorities in the Ottoman Empire, most in the Eastern regions of what today is modern Turkey. The Ottoman “millet” system granted the Armenians substantial autonomy in their internal and religious affairs, but they remained officially subordinate to Muslims and enjoyed fewer rights and privileges under Ottoman law.\textsuperscript{21} Despite this prejudicial relationship, Armenians and Turks had managed to live in relative peace until the last decades of the 19th century when the Ottoman Empire reached the verge of collapse. The Armenian genocide was the final move in a long series of responses by the Turks designed to halt the accelerating disintegration of the Empire. When the Turkish leaders became convinced that other solutions -- some involving violence, others offering accommodation and compromise -- had failed to counter what they perceived as a mortal threat to the survival of Turkey itself, ethnic cleansing and mass killing emerged as the preferred answers to the what the Turks referred to as the “Armenian question.”

The “Armenian Question” and Early Efforts for Reform

The Ottoman Empire had been in a state of decline since the late 17th century, losing important territories in Eastern Europe, Northern Africa, and the Balkans. In the 1800s, the

\textsuperscript{20} This figure also includes tens of thousands of Greeks who were also murdered during the genocide.

Empire’s territorial losses were increasingly the result of nationalist movements discontent with life as second-class citizens under Ottoman rule. The Empire responded to these rebellions not only with repression, but also with reforms designed to increase equality among imperial subjects and thereby decrease the impetus for further secession. These reforms culminated in 1876 with the adoption of a new constitution which created more democratic institutions and officially proclaimed equality for all Ottoman subjects, including Armenians. In practice, however, many of the new legal reforms remained unrealized. Moreover, by the late 19th century, many nationalist groups had decided that they had little interest in remaining part of the Ottoman Empire under any conditions and would be satisfied with nothing less than complete independence.

The so-called Armenian question became a central issue in the collapse of the Ottoman Empire during the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878. Desperate to hold on to what remained of the Ottoman Empire in Europe, the Turks had increasingly resorted to violence against civilians in the effort to crush the rapidly multiplying separatist movements there. War erupted when Russia intervened to protect the Ottoman Empire’s Christian populations (particularly those in Bulgaria and Bosnia and Herzegovina) from this violent persecution. Russia routed Turkey in the war, occupying vast areas of the Empire and advancing to the outskirts of Constantinople. In 1878, the Western powers intervened to negotiate the Treaty of Berlin, which officially ended the war. Russia agreed to withdraw its army from Turkey. In return, the Ottomans agreed to grant several Balkan provinces either autonomy or independence. The Treaty also included clauses that pledged the Empire to protect the rights of Christian minorities, specifically naming the Armenians.

Although the Turks resented the Western powers’ intervention in the Empire’s domestic affairs, the Treaty provided no real means to enforce the protection of the Armenians or other minorities. Indeed, in the years after the Treaty was signed, Armenians continued to be subjected

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to discriminatory policies. They suffered periodic depredations by Kurdish gangs, which went unpunished by Turkish authorities. Most Armenians had remained loyal to the Empire during the war with Russia, but now some of them began to organize politically and militarily. Some groups appear to have wanted merely greater autonomy for Armenians within Turkey, while others were clearly seeking independence. Some advocated reform through peaceful agitation, but others believed that violent means were necessary and justified. Many seem to have concluded from the Russo-Turkish war that further intervention by Russia or the Western powers was Armenia’s best hope for escaping Turkish domination.

*From Reform to Repression*

The Turkish regime under Sultan Abdul Hamid II saw Armenian political mobilization as a serious threat to the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. Separatist movements in the Balkans had eroded the periphery of the Empire, but the Armenian reform movement was perceived as a threat to the heart of Turkey itself. Furthermore, Muslims (primarily Turks and Kurds) actually outnumbered the Armenians in the Eastern areas of Turkey that would have formed the territorial basis of a separate Armenian state. If the Armenians gained independence, these groups would have been forced to live under Christian rule.

The Sultan is reported to have claimed that he would rather have his head chopped off “than to permit the formation of a separate Armenia.” He believed that the reforms of the first half of the century had failed to provide a solution to the Empire’s minority problems. Instead, he reacted to Armenian political agitation with increasingly severe political repression and violence, particularly during the early 1890’s. The Western powers threatened to intervene to enforce the Treaty of Berlin if the Armenian reforms were not implemented. Finally, in response to an escalating number of Armenian political demonstrations, uprisings and some acts of

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terrorism, the regime launched a massive wave of massacres that continued from 1894 to 1896.\textsuperscript{27} Tens of thousands (possibly over one hundred thousand) of Armenians were slaughtered. Thousands more fled the country. For all their savagery, however, the massacres do not appear to have been intended to exterminate the entire Armenian population or to force them out of the country. Rather, they seem to have been carried out primarily in the effort to stamp out the Armenian independence movement.\textsuperscript{28} As Vahakn Dadrian concludes:

[T]he resort to exterminatory massacres was viewed by the whole array of perpetrators as a problem-solving behavior. The Turko-Armenian conflict required a solution to be devised by central authorities. Since that conflict basically revolved around a system of reforms which, to these authorities... were anathema, and since the pressure of the [European] powers to adopt these reforms was becoming intense and portentous, the option for a radical solution was considered and decided upon... By substantially decimating the Armenian population in the provinces, the issue of Armenian reforms would erode, and, by the same token, through such punishment and terror, the Armenians would be reduced to an impoverished, cowed and even more submissive entity.\textsuperscript{29}

For a time, the massacres and repression appeared to have been successful in “solving” the Armenian question. When the European powers failed to intervene to protect the Armenians as they had done for Christian minorities in the Balkans, many Armenians lost hope. Most Armenian revolutionary groups disbanded, moved underground or scaled back their protests. Relations between Turks and Armenians returned to their testy, but generally peaceful pre-

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\textsuperscript{28} As such, these massacres seem closer to the imperial mass killing described in chapter 3 than to chauvinist mass killings. Indeed, Christopher J. Walker argues that the killings followed an “almost classic pattern” of imperial rule: Walker, Armenia: The Survival of a Nation, p. 172. See also Melson, Revolution and Genocide, p. 69.

\textsuperscript{29} Vahakn N. Dadrian, The History of the Armenian Genocide Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus (Providence: Berghahn, 1997), pp. 160-161. A similar interpretation of the motive for the massacre is offered in Melson, Revolution and Genocide, pp. 44-53.
massacre pattern.30

A Second Chance for Reform

The Sultan’s violent solution, however, proved to be only temporary. The Armenian question resurfaced in Turkish politics in 1908 when a group of military officers calling themselves “the Committee of Union and Progress” (CUP), also known as the “Young Turks,” seized control of the Empire. The Young Turks came to power hoping to prevent the further decline of the Empire by a return to the principles of “Ottomanism” and the 1876 constitution (suspended since the Russo-Turkish war), which promised greater equality, autonomy and representation for all Ottoman subjects, including Armenians. The Young Turks specifically rejected the “despotic” style of governance practiced by the Sultan. Indeed, many Armenians cheered the revolution in 1908. Two of the largest Armenian political parties had actively supported the Young Turks against the Sultan.31 The CUP enacted a number of concrete measures designed to redress Armenian grievances.32

Like the earlier Turkish attempts to stave off the collapse of the Empire through liberalization, however, the Young Turks’ experiment with reform proved a failure. Christian minorities became disillusioned with the Young Turks when the regime proved unwilling or unable to protect them from local Muslim groups opposed to the reforms. Rather than decrease secessionist impulses, the new freedoms encouraged some minority groups to agitate for even greater autonomy and led others to conclude that the time was ripe to push for independence.33 A series of disastrous defeats for the Empire ensued. In 1908, Bulgaria proclaimed independence from the Empire, Austria officially annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Albanian nationalists launched a major revolt against Ottoman rule. In 1911, the Italians occupied Libya. By the end of that year the Young Turks had lost more than 35 percent of the Empire’s territory and 20 percent of its population.34 The final humiliation occurred in October 1912 when a coalition of

30 Shaw and Shaw, History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, p. 205
34 Melson, “Provocation or Nationalism,” p 72.
Balkan states, supported by Russia, launched a major offensive, which succeeded in expelling the Ottoman Empire from virtually all its remaining territories in Europe.

Nor did the Young Turk’s reforms succeed in solving the Armenian question within Turkey. On the contrary, like the Balkan minorities, many Armenians used their new freedoms to agitate for even greater reforms. Armenians saw the events of 1908-1912 as proof of what a determined independence movement could achieve. Some appear to have concluded that the chaos created by the Turkish defeats created a political opportunity to increase their rights and autonomy within the Empire. As a result, Armenian political parties grew even more vocal in the years between 1908 and 1914. Some radical Armenian groups turned to acts of terrorism.

*From Integration and Reform to Ethnic Cleansing and Genocide*

In January 1913, a small faction of radical Turkish nationalist officers within the CUP, distressed by the political and military disasters of the previous years, seized control of the Young Turk regime in a coup d’etat. The leaders of this group were convinced that earlier policies of Ottomanism and reform had failed to prevent the collapse of the Empire or preserve the peace within Turkey. They were determined to prevent any further disintegration of what little remained of the once mighty Ottoman Empire.

The leaders of the new regime were convinced that the Empire’s precipitous decline over the previous century had been the direct result of its multi-national character. They believed they could save the Turkish homeland from a similar fate only by creating an homogenous Turkish state. If minorities had been the cause of the Empire’s disintegration, they reasoned, this disintegration could only be halted by ridding the state of its minorities altogether. Thus, Dadrian argues that the leaders of the new regime subscribed to an ultra-nationalist ideology which “centered on the goal of radically restructuring Ottoman society by way of converting a heterogeneous social system into a more or less homogenous one.” Similarly, Richard Hovannisian claims that “[t]he Young Turk leaders were drawn to the newly articulated ideology

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36 Shaw and Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, p. 287.

37 Macfie, *The End of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 87.
of Turkism, which was to supplant the principle of egalitarian Ottomanism and give justification to violent means for transforming a heterogeneous Empire into a homogeneous state based on the concept of one nation, one people."\(^{39}\)

The leaders of the new regime believed that the Armenian minority represented the most critical threat to the creation of this new, more harmonious Turkish state. In 1913, Armenians were one of the largest remaining non-Turkish groups within the Empire. Moreover, the integration of the Armenians into Turkish society was perceived to be particularly difficult because, unlike other non-Turkish minorities such as Kurds and Arabs, the Armenians were also non-Muslim.\(^{40}\) While the Young Turks believed that Muslim minorities could still be integrated into a Turkish state, they felt that Armenians would never make good Turkish citizens. As Bernard Lewis describes the mentality of the regime: "For the Turks, the Armenian movement was the deadliest of all threats. From the conquered lands of the Serbs, Bulgars, Albanians and Greeks, they could, however reluctantly, withdraw.... But the Armenians... lay in the very heart of the Turkish homeland -- and to renounce these lands would have meant not the truncation, but the dissolution of the Turkish state."\(^{41}\)

Scholars disagree as to whether most Armenians at this time in fact sought an independent state, or whether they simply wanted greater autonomy within Turkey.\(^{42}\) The

\(^{38}\) Dadrian, The History of the Armenian Genocide, p. 198. See also: Melson, Revolution and Genocide, pp. 159-169.


\(^{40}\) These considerations also applied to Turkey’s large Greek minority. Some scholars have speculated that the Turks planned to deal with the Greeks as soon as the Armenian question was “solved.” Indeed, Greeks also suffered horribly at the hands of the Turkish regime during the First World War. Many fled to Greece and some were deported to the interior alongside the Armenians. Tens of thousands of Greeks probably died. Greeks probably avoided the fate of the Armenians, however, because Greece itself remained neutral until July 1917 and was never a major combatant during the war. When conflict between Greece and Turkey did erupt between 1919-1923, however, the new Turkish regime under Mustafa Kemal quickly decided the time had come to cleanse Turkey of its remaining Greek population. Tens of thousands of Greeks died, but the death-toll was probably lessened by the refugees’ ability to flee to Greece and by the eventual international supervision of the population transfer. See: Michael R. Marrus, The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 96-106, Ioannis K. Hassiotis, “The Armenian Genocide and the Greeks: Response and Records (1915-23),” in Richard G. Hovannisian, ed., The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, Ethics (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992), pp. 129-151, and Howard M. Sachar, The Emergence of the Middle East 1914-1924 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), pp. 291-335.


leaders of the new regime, however, saw little difference between the two objectives. As Dadrian notes, "[f]or the Turks it was not easy to forget that the Balkan nationalities' attainment of complete freedom and independence was traceable to the rudimentary demands for reform which eventually entailed some form of autonomy.... Any kind of autonomy in any scheme of reforms for the Armenians was thus defined by the [Young Turk] leaders as a non plus ultra for Turkey." 43

The new Turkish regime felt particularly threatened by the effort on the part of some Armenian groups to elicit support for their cause from foreign powers, especially Russia, Turkey's most powerful enemy. In the years between 1912 and 1914, Russia (largely for its own strategic and domestic political reasons) exerted increasing pressure on the Turks to grant autonomy to the Armenians. 44 Russia threatened to intervene militarily if the Turks refused to implement reforms or if they attempted to crack down on the growing Armenian unrest in Eastern Turkey. In February 1914, as a result of these efforts, Turkey was forced to accept European administration of Turkish Armenia. The Turks had managed to avoid complete Armenian autonomy or independence, but for the ultra-nationalist leaders of the regime, the agreement was yet another humiliating foreign intervention in Turkey's sovereign affairs. 45

Worse yet, it seemed one step closer to Armenian secession, the outcome they most desperately wanted to prevent.

Events following the outbreak of the First World War appear to have provided the leaders of the Turkish regime with what they considered to be final proof that Armenians constituted a mortal threat to the integrity of Turkish homeland. After Turkey entered the war against Russia and the other Allied powers, many Armenians had remained loyal to the Empire, some even enlisting in the Ottoman army. Others, however, believed the outbreak of war was Armenia's best opportunity to gain independence. 46 Thousands of Armenians crossed the border and joined

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the Russian army. Armenian guerrilla units sabotaged the Ottoman army from the rear. Armenians living abroad offered to raise a force of 20,000 men to fight the Turks. Several Armenian villages rose in open revolt against the regime.

It is difficult to determine how great a threat these developments actually posed to the Young Turk regime. The Ottoman army suffered several major defeats at the hands of the Russians during the first months of the war. Armenian uprisings appear to have contributed to at least some of the regime’s military setbacks.\(^47\) Whatever the actual extent of the “Armenian threat,” however, there is little doubt that Turkish leaders believed that something had to be done immediately to counter it if Turkey was to survive the war intact. Gwynne Dyer concludes that “there was a genuine, though mistaken, belief among the Ottoman leaders in Istanbul that there was a deliberate and coordinated Armenian uprising in the East, with Empire-wide ramifications.”\(^48\) As the Ottoman Minister of War, Enver Pasha, told the American ambassador in 1915, “[Y]ou must understand that we are now fighting for our lives... and that we are sacrificing thousands of men. While we are engaged in such a struggle as this, we cannot permit people in our own country to attack us in the back.”\(^49\) “[I]n time of war,” Enver claimed, “we cannot investigate and negotiate. We must act promptly and with determination.”\(^50\) Likewise, Turkish historian Ahmed Emin suggests that Turkish leaders acted according to the following logic: “A dense Armenian population, in the Eastern Provinces, has proved to be a danger to the very existence of Turkey. We are acting as instruments to remove this danger.”\(^51\)

The Turkish solution to the Armenian question was swift and brutal. The decision was made to remove Armenians from the Turkish homeland immediately and by whatever means necessary. In early 1915, Armenian soldiers were discharged from the Ottoman army. Arms were confiscated from the Armenian civilian population. Armenian political and community leaders were arrested. In April, the regime ordered the deportation of the entire Armenian

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\(^47\) Ibid., p. 131.
population of Eastern Turkey -- where most Armenians lived and where the major battles between Russian and Turkish forces were taking place -- to camps in the Syrian desert. By Autumn, most of eastern Turkey had been cleansed of its Armenian population. Eventually the deportations were expanded to include virtually all Armenians living in Turkey.

Turkish historians and even some Western scholars have suggested that the deportations were intended as a temporary military measure and that the massive death toll was the unintended result of famine, disease or uncoordinated attacks by local Kurdish gangs. Turkish actions, and the testimony of contemporary observers (including Turkish officials), however, strongly suggests that the Turks saw the deportations as a permanent measure designed to solve the Armenian question once and for all. Indeed, many authors have concluded that the deportations were, in fact, intended to exterminate the Armenian population. At a minimum, it appears that the Turks hoped to expel the Armenians from the Turkish homeland and to reduce them to a state of isolation and impotence. Able-bodied Armenian men were frequently shot immediately rather than deported. Armenian political and cultural elites were murdered. Armenian refugees were slaughtered in great numbers even after they had begun their forced march to the camps. The Turks made virtually no effort to provide supplies for the refugees either during their deportation or after they reached the camps. Vast numbers of Armenians continued to perish due to starvation and disease until the end of the war.

Documentary evidence of Turkish leaders' decision making process during this period is extremely limited, but it seems likely that the regime decided on mass killing in the conviction

54 Some scholars suggest that the Turks deliberately created harsh conditions during the deportation and at the camps in the attempt to exterminate the refugees. See: Ternon, The Armenians’ History of a Genocide, pp. 187-220.
that other potential options for dealing with the Armenian question had already failed or would not provide a permanent solution to Turkey’s problems. Three considerations appear to have persuaded the Young Turks to conclude that ethnic cleansing and mass killing were the most appropriate means to deal with the Armenian threat.

First, as described above, the leaders of the Young Turk faction which seized power in 1913 were convinced that the efforts of earlier regimes to address Armenian separatism through reform and liberalization (including the initial policies of the CUP) had failed. Indeed, even in 1913, the new regime was probably leaning towards some form of ethnic cleansing as the ultimate solution to the Armenian question.

Second, although violent repression of the Armenians may also have been considered, Turkish leaders knew that even the massive anti-Armenian massacres unleashed by Sultan Abdul Hamid in 1894-1896 had failed to produce a long-term solution to the Armenian question. As one influential member of the regime cautioned the Central Committee of the CUP in 1915:

“If we remain satisfied with... local massacres..., if this purge is not general and final, it will inevitably lead to problems. Therefore it is absolutely necessary to eliminate the Armenian people in its entirety, so there is no further Armenian on this earth and the very concept of Armenia is extinguished.... Perhaps there are those among you who feel it is bestial to go so far. You may ask, for instance, what harm could children, the elderly or the sick do to us that we feel compelled to work for their elimination. Or you may feel that only those guilty should be punished.... I beg you, gentlemen, don’t be weak. Control your feelings of pity. Otherwise these very feelings will bring about your own demise.”

Finally, the last remaining alternative, expelling the Armenians from the Empire, likely appeared highly problematic for the Turks. Deporting the Armenians across the border to Russia was obviously out of the question since one of the regime’s primary concerns had been Armenian collaboration with the Russian invaders. It seems unlikely that any of Turkey’s Muslim neighbors would have been willing or able to accept over one million impoverished and discontented Christian refugees. Even if they had, the Turks might still have feared that the Armenians would simply regroup and attempt to return to re-conquer their homeland. Since the Turks believed that the Armenian question had to be “solved” immediately if Turkey was to
survive the war, the alternative of encouraging emigration to more distant states would also have been deemed too time consuming. As one Turkish official declared: "[T]here is no room for Armenians and Turks in our state, and it would be irresponsible and thoughtless for us if we didn’t take advantage of this opportunity to do away with [the Armenians] thoroughly."\(^{56}\) Although it is possible that the Turks intended for the Armenian population to go on living indefinitely in the Syrian desert, the violent process of deportation and the conditions awaiting Armenians when they arrived there ensured that mass killing was the ultimate result.

*The Holocaust*

The Holocaust, which extinguished the lives of between five and six million Jewish men, women and children, remains history’s most infamous and bloody episode of chauvinist mass killing. In many ways the horrors of the Holocaust seem impossible to comprehend. Yet, in at least one fundamental sense, the most significant cause of the genocide is relatively transparent. Simply put, Hitler and a small group of radical anti-Semites like him came to believe that the Jews posed a mortal political and racial threat to Germany itself. Drawing on a bizarre combination of anti-Semitic Jewish conspiracy theories and pseudo-scientific eugenic ideas, these men eventually concluded that the only way to save Germany was to rid it once and for all of Jewish influence. It was this revolutionary desire to bring about the radical racial transformation of German (and ultimately European) society that led to the Holocaust. As in the Armenian genocide, however, the Nazis did not initially believe that mass killing was the only way to deal with the Jewish threat. Genocide emerged as the preferred solution to the “Jewish question” only after the Nazis concluded that other means of expelling the Jews from Europe had proved unworkable.

\(^{55}\) Quoted in Graber, *Caravans to Oblivion*, p. 87. See also Ternon, *The Armenians. History of a Genocide*, p. 171.

\(^{56}\) Quoted in Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide*, p. 208.
The Jewish "Threat"

Hitler and other radical anti-Semites believed the Jews posed two interrelated threats to Germany. The first threat was essentially political in nature. Hitler fully accepted *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the anti-Semitic work of propaganda that purportedly revealed that Jews were involved in a vast international conspiracy to destroy Germany and achieve world domination. Crucial to the political aspect of Hitler’s anti-Semitism was his belief that the Jews were responsible for the “stab in the back” which had caused Germany’s defeat in World War I. Hitler believed that during the war the Jews had coordinated the international coalition against Germany from without. The Jews had also fomented the collapse of the German war effort from within by seizing control of the economy and inciting Germans to revolution. After the war, Hitler believed that Jews continued to manipulate the governments of France, England and the United States from behind the scenes.

Equally important to Hitler’s political anti-Semitism was his belief that an unholy alliance bound Judaism to international Marxism. Hitler was convinced that Marxism was the vehicle through which the Jews sought to dominate the world. He believed that the Jews had already engineered the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. Once in power, he claimed that the Jews had exterminated the Russian elite (whom Hitler believed were of German ancestry) and “killed or starved about thirty million people with truly fanatical savagery, in part amid inhuman tortures.” Hitler feared that the Jewish-Bolshevik alliance was planning a similar fate for Germany. “A victory of Bolshevism over Germany” he wrote, “would not lead to a [new] Versailles treaty, but to the final destruction, even the extermination, of the German people.”

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In addition to the perceived political threat posed by the Jews, Hitler and other radical anti-Semites also believed that the Jews posed a biological threat to the German people. According to Hitler, the Jews were not a religious group, but a biologically distinct race. This idea was rooted in a particularly pernicious variation of the social-Darwinist ideology that had pervaded European thinking since the late 19th Century. In a perverted analogy to Darwin’s theory of natural selection, proponents of this thesis argued that human beings belonged to unique races competing for survival amongst each other. Racial purity was the most valuable asset in this struggle. In Hitler’s eyes, of course, the Jews occupied the lowest position in the hierarchy of human races. They were a parasite race, the carriers of congenital diseases. Unable to win their own state or develop their own culture, the Jews lived off the labor and creativity of others, corrupting the purity and strength of other races through interbreeding. Despite their supposed biological deficiencies, Hitler did not consider the Jews to be weak, per-se. He acknowledged that they had demonstrated a powerful instinct for self-preservation. Through cunning and deception they had achieved positions of power in many of the world’s great societies. If nothing was done to check Jewish influence, Hitler feared, the Aryan-German race would die out, the biological bases of its health and power corrupted from within.

Hitler’s perception of the seriousness of the combined Jewish political-biological threat scarcely can be underestimated. In Mein Kampf, he warned: “If, with the help of his Marxist creed, the Jew is victorious over the other peoples of the world, his crown will be the funeral wreath of humanity and this planet will, as it did thousands of years ago, move through the ether devoid of men.” Nor, according to Hitler, was the Jewish menace a matter to be left to future generations. He believed the Jews posed an immediate threat to German survival.

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64 Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 300
65 Ibid., p. 305.
66 Ibid., p. 65. For other statements by Hitler regarding the seriousness of the Jewish threat for German and the world see Yehuda Bauer, “Genocide Was it the Nazi’s Original Plan,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 450 (July 1980), p. 38
Segregation and Emigration

Despite the fanaticism with which Hitler and other radical anti-Semites believed in the Jewish threat to Germany, most did not immediately conclude that mass killing was the best or only means to counter the perceived Jewish menace. Even Nazi anti-Semitism did not call for mass killing as an end in itself. Rather, the Nazis’ primary aim was to purge Germany (and eventually all German occupied territories) of Jewish influence. As Yehuda Bauer concludes, “the decision to kill Jews was one logical outcome of Nazi ideology, but not the only one.”68 In contrast to the so-called “intentionalist” interpretation of the Holocaust, which claims that the Nazis (or at least Hitler) had always intended to kill the Jews, I argue that the decision to exterminate the Jews was made only after the Nazis encountered a variety of practical problems in attempting to implement less bloody solutions to the “Jewish question.”69 Although these measures involved significant death, violence and other inhuman practices, they did not yet entail the systematic destruction of every Jewish man, woman and child. Ultimately, practical problems with these less violent efforts appear to have led the regime to the “Final Solution.”

Efforts to deal with the perceived threat posed by the Jews began almost immediately after the Nazis gained power in 1933. These efforts evolved through three main (and overlapping) phases before the Final Solution was launched. The first phase involved a variety of measures designed to protect Germany politically and biologically from Jewish influence while the Jews remained in Germany. One after another, Jewish economic and political rights were abolished. Jews were excluded from service in the government, medicine, law, academia and many other influential vocations. Jews were segregated from Germans in public places. Intermarriage between Jews and Germans was outlawed.

It is not clear, however, if the Nazis ever believed that the Jewish threat could be adequately addressed as long as the Jews remained in Germany. It is possible that such early policies were always intended as temporary measures and/or were designed to contribute to the

68 Bauer, “Genocide: Was it the Nazi’s Original Plan,” p. 44.
69 This interpretation of the Nazi genocide incorporates elements from both schools of thought in the well-known intentionalist/functionalist debate on the Holocaust. Like the intentionalists it suggests that Hitlerian-Nazi anti-Semitic ideology, not gradual bureaucratic radicalization, was the guiding force behind the Holocaust. Like the functionalists, on the other hand, it suggests that this ideology did not result in a genocidal intent until after the war had broken out. For reviews of this debate see Browning, The Path to Genocide, 87–121, Michael R. Marrus, The
second phase of Nazi anti-Jewish policy -- the coerced emigration of Jews from Germany. Indeed, as early as 1934, a memorandum of the SS Security Service concluded that "the aim of Jewish policy must be the complete emigration of the Jews... [T]he life opportunities of the Jews have to be restricted, not only in economic terms. To them Germany must become a country without a future, in which the old generation may die off with what still remains for it, but in which the young generation should find it impossible to live, so that the incentive to emigrate is constantly in force."  

Whatever the true goal of the Nazis' early anti-Jewish measures, by 1937 at the latest emigration seems to have become the preferred policy for dealing with the Jews. Progressively harsher economic policies were imposed on the Jews. Organized attacks on Jewish individuals, businesses and places of worship were sanctioned as part of the effort to force the Jews to emigrate. The infamous Kristallnacht pogrom of November 1939 may have been conceived of for this purpose. Jewish citizenship was revoked. Actions were also taken to increase opportunities for Jewish emigration. German bureaucrats actively explored the possibility of cooperating with the British and Zionist organizations to create a Jewish state in Palestine. Negotiations with other nations to facilitate Jewish emigration were conducted.

Emigration was probably delayed by the contradictory Nazi policy of confiscating much of the property of Jewish émigrés and by the reluctance of other countries to accept the impoverished Jews. Nevertheless, the regime's emigration policies proved remarkably effective. By 1939 roughly 72 percent of Germany's 500,000 Jews had fled the country. William Rubinstein argues that had the process been allowed to continue for a few more years, "it seems very likely that virtually every single Jew in the Nazi Reich would have emigrated to safety."

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70 Quoted in Friedländer, Nazi Germany and the Jews, p. 201.


75 William D. Rubenstein, The Myth of Rescue Why the Democracies Could Not Have Saved More Jews From the Nazis (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 16-17. As Rubenstein notes, these Jews must be distinguished from the 7.5 million Jews outside of the Reich who came under Nazi control after 1939. In addition, some Jews immigrated to countries such as France and Poland which were later occupied by the Nazis.
From Emigration to Deportation

September 1939 marked the beginning of the shift to the third phase of Nazi anti-Jewish policy. The invasion of Poland had incorporated 2.5 million Jews into the German sphere. Since Hitler’s grand plans for the demographic reorganization of Europe called for repopulating much of Poland with ethnic Germans from across Europe, these Jews (and eventually millions of Poles as well) would have to go.\(^{76}\) Coerced emigration of the kind already underway in the Reich was clearly insufficient to deal with this vast population. The emigration process was a slow one, and the experiences of previous years had shown that foreign countries would never accept such a large mass of refugees.\(^{77}\) The invasion and subsequent outbreak of the Second World War also infused a new sense of urgency into Nazi anti-Jewish planning. Hitler’s beliefs about causes of the German defeat in the First World War led him to fear that Germany would not triumph in the new war as long as the Jewish influence was present in German (or even European) society.\(^{78}\) As Yehuda Bauer explains, Hitler believed that “if Germany planned to free itself and the world from a demonic [Jewish] force, it could not very well start the process while that demonic force was sitting right in its midst.”\(^{79}\)

These new realities did not, however, immediately result in a decision to exterminate the Jews. Rather, they prompted more serious consideration of plans already being developed within the Nazi bureaucracy for the deportation of the Jews to foreign territories.\(^{80}\) This “territorial solution” evolved rapidly from 1939 to 1941.\(^{81}\) Jews were to be concentrated in urban centers to facilitate their control, exploitation and eventual deportation.\(^{82}\) Early plans called for the Jews to be sent to the Lublin region of Poland, at the easternmost extremity of the German Empire. The

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\(^{77}\) Aly, Final Solution, p. 79.

\(^{78}\) Burtn, Hitler and the Jews, pp. 29-32.

\(^{79}\) Bauer, “Genocide: Was it the Nazi’s Original Plan?,” p. 39.

\(^{80}\) Jewish emigration also continued during this period, although at a much reduced rate, as the doors of many Western nations closed to German refugees following the invasion of Poland.

\(^{81}\) For a detailed discussion of the various deportation plans see: Christopher R. Browning, “Nazi Resettlement Policy and the Search for a Solution to the Jewish Question, 1939-1941,” in Browning, The Path to Genocide, pp. 3-27, Aly, Final Solution

\(^{82}\) Browning, “Nazi Ghettoization Policy in Poland, 1939-1941,” p. 31
Lublin plan was scrapped, however, when the Nazis decided the region was needed to settle ethnic Germans from elsewhere in Europe. Some Jews were expelled directly into the Russian-occupied zone of Poland.\(^{83}\) In March, 1940, Hitler was reported to have stated that

the Jewish question is really a space question which was difficult to solve... since he had no space at his disposal. Neither would the establishment of a Jewish state around Lublin ever constitute a solution as even there the Jews lived too close together to be able to maintain a somewhat satisfactory standard of living.... He, too, would welcome a positive solution to the Jewish question... this, however, was not possible under present conditions when he had not even sufficient space for his own people.\(^{84}\)

Before long, however, Europe began to appear too small for both the regime’s overriding goal of attaining German Lebensraum and for Jewish reservations. The Nazis began to consider deportation to more distant locales. In May 1940, Heinrich Himmler, the man most directly responsible for Nazi deportation policies, drafted a memorandum stating that “I hope completely to erase the concept of the Jews through the possibility of a great emigration of all Jews to a colony in Africa or elsewhere... [H]owever cruel and tragic... this method is still the mildest and best, if one rejects the Bolshevik method of physical extermination of people out of inner conviction as un-German and impossible.”\(^{85}\) Nazi bureaucrats developed fantastic plans to deport millions of Jews to Madagascar or to the wilds of Siberia. These plans were adopted as official policy at the highest levels.

Tens of thousands of Jews died during deportation and ghettoization between 1939 and 1941. Many more surely would have perished if any of the plans for deportation had reached fruition. The Nazi leaders made conflicting statements as to whether the deported Jews would be allowed to have their own state or whether they would remain quarantined in a reservation system policed by Germany. Although these policies were brutal and cruel, they did not seek the physical annihilation of the Jews. Indeed, while the Nazis were clearly willing to accept a


\(^{84}\) Quoted in Browning, “Nazi Resettlement Policy and the Search for a Solution to the Jewish Question, 1939-1941.” pp 16-17 See also Aly, *Final Solution*, pp 68-70

\(^{85}\) Browning, “Nazi Resettlement Policy and the Search for a Solution to the Jewish Question, 1939-1941.” pp 16-17. According to Himmler, Hitler explicitly approved of the memorandum. An almost identical statement was made by Reinhard Heydrich in the summer of 1940. See Aly, *Final Solution*, p 3
significant amount of Jewish deaths during deportation and ghettoization and did little to ameliorate the harsh conditions, the possibility of using these "natural" processes to systematically exterminate the Jewish population altogether was raised by some local authorities before 1941 and specifically rejected.\footnote{Browning, "Nazi Ghettoization Policy in Poland, 1939-1941," p. 28-56.}

While Nazi deportation schemes may seem farfetched, there is overwhelming evidence that they were taken seriously by Nazi officials, including Hitler.\footnote{See Browning, "Nazi Resettlement Policy and the Search for a Solution to the Jewish Question, 1939-1941." pp 3-27. Hans Mommsen, "The Realization of the Unthinkable: The 'Final Solution' to the 'Jewish Question' in the Third Reich," trans. Alan Kramer and Louise Willmot in Gerhard Hirschfeld, ed., \textit{The Policies of Genocide} (London: German Historical Institute, 1986), p. 120, and Aly, \textit{Final Solution}, esp. pp. 88-104.} Documentation of numerous secret discussions, meetings and memoranda confirm that these plans were not simply a cover for the Nazi's ultimate genocidal aims as some authors have suggested.\footnote{Leni Yahil, "Madagascar -- Phantom of a Solution for the Jewish Question," in Bela Vágó and George L. Mosse, eds., \textit{Jews and Non-Jews in Eastern Europe 1918-1945} (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1974), pp. 315-234 and Philip Friedman, "The Lublin Reservation and the Madagascar Plan: Two Aspects of Nazi Jewish Policy During the Second World War," in \textit{Two Annual of Jewish Social Science}, vol. 8 (1953), pp. 151-177.} Significant human and material resources were devoted to these plans. Diplomatic efforts were launched to work out the details of the deportations with other countries.\footnote{Browning, \textit{The Final Solution and the German Foreign Office}, pp. 35-43} As Michael Marrus concludes, "[I]t seems entirely possible that Nazi decision makers seriously intended such schemes and were prepared to live with insufficiencies that have been subsequently identified. ... [I]nternal evidence and the context of these plans suggest that they were genuine efforts to deal with a Nazi-defined 'problem.'"\footnote{Marrus, \textit{The Holocaust in History}, p. 63.}

\textit{From Deportation to Extermination}

Scholars have fiercely disputed the exact timing of the fateful shift from Nazi planning for the deportation of the Jews to the policy of outright extermination.\footnote{Browning, \textit{The Final Solution and the German Foreign Office}, pp. 35-43} Apart from those who argue that Hitler had been planning to kill the Jews from the moment he gained power, most historians agree that the decision was made somewhere between the early spring and late fall of 1941. Many scholars agree that this decision was based at least in part on the conclusion that the regime's earlier deportation schemes had failed and that deportation was no longer a practical

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\footnote{Browning, "Nazi Ghettoization Policy in Poland, 1939-1941," p. 28-56.
Marrus, \textit{The Holocaust in History}, p. 63.}
solution to the “Jewish question.”

Scholars disagree as to which factors were the most important in convincing Nazi leaders that deportation was unworkable. It is likely that several factors contributed to this perception. First, the Madagascar plan, the most seriously considered deportation scheme, had been predicated on the defeat of the British who controlled the sea-lanes between Germany and Madagascar. Germany’s failure to triumph in the Battle of Britain, however, had effectively ruled out this plan by the end of the summer of 1940.92

Second, Germany’s failure to knock Britain out of the war and Hitler’s decision to launch the invasion of the Soviet Union made the purging of the Jews seem even more urgent than it had in 1939. The Nazis found themselves engaged in a two front war -- a predicament which Hitler had wished to avoid, and which he blamed on Jewish influence in Britain and the United States.93 Germany could not wait until the end of the war to complete the removal of the Jews without risking a repeat of 1918.

Third, Nazi population policy experts knew that the conquest of the Soviet Union would nearly double the total number of Jews under German control to over 11 million people. Officials in charge of deportation were hard pressed to find a “suitable” area to receive so many refugees and to provide the necessities of life for them in the midst in the war.94 Plans to deport this vast population of Jews to Siberia were considered in the early months of 1941, but it is possible that these plans were already intended to bring about the destruction of the Jews through “natural means.”95

Fourth, there are indications that at least some Nazi leaders worried that any plan for deportation which left the Jews encamped in an embittered mass just across the of border of the Reich would not completely eliminate the Jewish threat to Germany. With the Final Solution already underway, Hitler explained, “It is entirely natural that we should concern ourselves with


the [Jewish] question on the European level. It’s clearly not enough to expel them from Germany. We cannot allow them to retain bases of withdrawal at our doors...."96

Finally, if as some historians have argued, the decision to systematically exterminate the Jews was not reached until sometime after the late summer of 1941, the military setbacks suffered by the German army in Russia (which occurred during that time) may have foreclosed the option of deportation to Siberia for the immediate future.97

These considerations appear to have led Hitler and other Nazi leaders to conclude that the most “practical” remaining option for ridding Europe of the Jews quickly was systematic mass killing. The precise contours of this policy -- utilizing the combination of gas chambers and crematoria -- probably did not crystallize until the fall of 1941. Once it did, Hitler’s conviction that the Jewish question must be resolved before the end of the war ensured that the process of extermination would proceed at a terrible pace. Approximately 3.8 million Jews were dead by the end of 1942 -- almost two thirds of all the Jews who perished in the Holocaust.98

From this perspective, the final solution was “final” both in the sense that it was seen as a permanent solution to the “Jewish question” and in the sense that it was the last in a series of Nazi efforts to deal with this question. As Bauer argues, however, all these solutions

“were based on the same principle... to “remove” the Jews altogether. In prewar Germany, emigration suited the circumstances best, and when that was neither speedy enough or complete enough, expulsion -- preferably to some ‘primitive’ place, uninhabited by true Nordic Aryans, the Soviet Union or Madagascar -- was the answer. When expulsion did not work, either... the murder policy was decided on, quite logically on the basis of Nazi ideology. All these policies had the same aim: removal.”99

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95 See Aly, Final Solution, pp. 173-177.
97 See Martin Broszat, “Hitler and the Genesis of the ‘Final Solution,” p. 101. Although the German Army did not suffer its first major defeats until December 1942, by late August, Hitler knew the war could not be won until well into 1942 at the earliest. This was considered a serious setback given Germany’s military strategy which relied on a quick victory. See Michael Geyer. “German Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare, 1914-1945,” in Peter Paret, ed., Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 589-591. See also: Marrus, The Holocaust in History, p. 45.
As noted above, proponents of the intentionalist school have rejected this interpretation, arguing that the Holocaust was the result of Hitler’s long-held plan to exterminate the Jews which he consistently pursued since as early as 1918. Hitler, they suggest, was merely awaiting the onset of war to provide the cover needed to carry it out. As Lucy Dawidowicz argues, the annihilation of the Jews was “a central tenet in Hitler’s ideology from which he never deviated... awaiting only the political opportunities for its implementation.”

Intentionalist scholars invariably point to the numerous public and private statements by Hitler hinting at his desire for the destruction of the Jews. Most often cited is Hitler’s infamous speech before the Reichstag on January 30, 1939 in which he warned: “If international Jewry within Europe and abroad should succeed once more in plunging the peoples into a world war, then the consequence will not be the Bolshevization of the world and therewith a victory of Jewry, but on the contrary, the destruction of the Jewish race in Europe.”

Although this and other statements by Hitler might seem to be straightforward indications of the desire to murder the Jews, there are two reasons to question whether genocide was truly Hitler’s intent, or the intent of the Nazi regime, prior to 1941. First, many of Hitler’s statements regarding the Jews remain open to interpretation. Most of Hitler’s early remarks do not clearly call for systematic extermination, but rather for the Jews to be “crushed;” to “disappear from Europe;” for “the removal of the Jews altogether;” or for “a solution to the Jewish question.”

Some authors have speculated that these threats were issued in an effort to intimidate Jews living abroad from using their supposed influence over western powers to spark a global war against Germany.

Moreover, in addition to the violent threats cited by intentionalist scholars, Hitler also made numerous statements in both public and private settings explicitly calling for Jewish emigration, resettlement or deportation. As late as May 1940, Hitler wrote in the margin of a secret memorandum on Jewish deportation that Himmler’s assertion that the “physical

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101 Quoted in Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews*, p. 106.

102 Bauer, “Genocide: Was it the Nazi’s Original Plan?,” pp. 36-37.

destruction of a people [was] un-German and impossible” was “very correct.”

Even Hitler’s oft-quoted January 30, 1939 Reichstag speech included the declaration that “I believe that this [Jewish] problem will be solved -- and the sooner the better.... The world has enough space for settlement....”

Hans Mommsen concludes that with the exception of Hitler’s comment to a Slovak diplomat in 1939 that “we are going to destroy the Jews,” “there are no known statements by Hitler that refer directly to the policy of genocide” even after the Holocaust was underway.

Second, focusing on Hitler’s often ambiguous and conflicting anti-Jewish threats neglects copious evidence regarding Nazi policies and actions that is simply incompatible with the intentionalists’ assertion that a plan to systematically murder the Jews existed prior to 1941. As described above, there is substantial evidence that high-ranking Nazis, including Hitler, fully approved of earlier plans for coerced emigration and deportation. If Hitler had always intended to kill the Jews, why did he allow so many to flee to the safety of countries such as the United States, where he could never reach them and which he never planned to conquer? Nor does the intentionalist assertion that Hitler was waiting for the onset of war to provide cover to launch a long-premeditated genocide withstand scrutiny. Rather, as Christopher Browning argues,

If Hitler was merely awaiting the outbreak of conflict to pursue his “war against the Jews,” why were the millions of Polish Jews in his hands since 1939 granted a thirty-month "stay of execution"?.... If Hitler could kill at least seventy thousand Germans through the euthanasia program between 1939 and 1941, why was it not "opportunite" to murder several hundred thousand German Jews who constituted an "internal menace" in wartime? It certainly would have occasioned far less opposition than euthanasia. Why was this period not used to make preparations and plans for mass extermination, avoiding the clumsy improvisations of 1941? In short, the practice of Nazi Jewish policy until 1941 does not support the thesis of a long-held, fixed intention to murder the European Jews.

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105 Quoted Frieländer, Nazi Germany and the Jews, p. 309. On the ambiguous implications of this speech see also: Marrus, The Holocaust in History, pp. 37-38.
106 Mommsen, “The Realization of the Unthinkable,” p. 109. As Mommsen is careful to note, the absence of such a statement, of course, should not be taken as evidence that Hitler was unaware of the Holocaust as some authors have suggested. See David Irving, Hitler’s War (New York, Avon Books, 1990), pp. 425-427 and 463-467.
A Note on the Uniqueness of the Holocaust

Much has been written about the uniqueness of the Holocaust and its incomparability to other incidents of mass killing.\textsuperscript{108} Although this dissertation is obviously predicated on the conviction that many aspects of the Holocaust can be compared to other examples of genocide and mass killing, the peculiar pseudo-scientific, eugenic concepts which supported Nazi anti-Semitism do indeed seem unique to the Holocaust.\textsuperscript{109} I know of no other example of mass killing which was motivated so powerfully by the desire to eliminate a "dangerous" biological gene pool from society. While the use of language by killers describing their victims as inferior, disease ridden, or sub-human is commonplace in the history of mass killing, these epithets usually appear to be secondary to political and military conflicts. Perpetrators of mass killing target entire ethnic groups for extermination not because of all members of these groups share the same "tainted" biology, but because perpetrators embrace the more traditional racist proposition that all members of the victim group subscribe to the same political views or support the same military cause. If women and children are targeted, it is not because perpetrators fear they are carriers of dangerous genes, but because perpetrators believe that the women are feeding the men and that children will grow up to avenge their fathers.

The uniqueness of Nazi ideology was its reliance on perverted social-Darwinistic concepts which made the complete elimination of the Jews from German society appear vital to German survival. The "logic" of these ideas did not lead directly or inexorably to mass killing but, as described above, it did rule out any possibility for the accommodation of Jews within Germany or German occupied Europe. When Nazi leaders concluded that less violent solutions for removing the Jews had proved unworkable, this ideology combined with the brutal efficiency of the Nazi state to produce a genocidal program which spared virtually no Jewish man, woman or child within its reach.

Rwanda

The roots of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda can be traced to the political struggles between Hutu and Tutsi which emerged at the end of the Belgian colonial period in the 1950s. Prior to European colonization, Hutu and Tutsi seem to have considered themselves as something more akin to castes or classes than ethnic groups. Both groups spoke the same language and adhered to the same religion. Individuals occasionally moved between Hutu and Tutsi groups through intermarriage, clientage or through the acquisition of wealth. In some regions of Rwanda the terms “Hutu” and “Tutsi” held little or no significance. Systematic violence between Hutu and Tutsi as such was unknown.

The Belgian colonial administration of Rwanda, however, tended to racialize Hutu and Tutsi identities, rendering them exclusive and immutable. The Belgian administration heavily favored the Tutsi, who comprised less than 15 percent of the population, for positions of authority in the government. Eventually, European conceptions of Hutu and Tutsi groups seem to have been adopted by the Rwandans themselves -- although many Rwandans seem to have defined the groups in relation to state power and privilege, rather than race.

The process of decolonialization sparked the first violent conflict between Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda in 1959. As independence approached, the Belgians began to promote democratization and an end to ethnic favoritism in Rwanda. Hutu leaders seized this opportunity to push for greater power, privileges and representation. A struggle between Hutu and Tutsi for political control ensued which escalated to a series of violent attacks against the Tutsi. Hutu political leaders gained control of the government. The violence during this period forced thousands of Tutsis to flee the country, most seeking refuge in Burundi, Tanzania and Uganda.

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111 Prunier, The Rwanda Crisis, p. 39. Gourevitch, We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families, p. 59

112 Rwanda did not become formally independent until July 1962
The refugees made several efforts to fight their way back to Rwanda between 1961 and 1963, but each time they were repelled. In the Winter of 1963-64, following the most serious refugee incursion, the Hutu government initiated a new wave of anti-Tutsi violence, resulting in the deaths of approximately 10,000 Tutsis and the flight of tens of thousands more. Although Tutsi incursions into Rwanda ended in 1967 (along with anti-Tutsi violence inside Rwanda), many refugees, especially those in Uganda, never gave up hope that they would eventually return to Rwanda. They spent much of the next 30 years organizing, training and waiting for the moment to act.113

That moment came in October 1990 when, for a variety of reasons, the main Tutsi political organization in Uganda, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) decided to launch an invasion across the border into Rwanda.114 The RPF made it clear that their goal was not simply the repatriation of Tutsi refugees, but also the overthrow of the Rwandan Hutu regime led by President Juvenal Habyarimana.115 The RPF invasion occurred at the same time that domestic and international forces were mounting on Habyarimana to democratize the Rwandan single-party political system.116 Both Tutsi and Hutu within Rwanda had begun putting pressure on Habyarimana to dismantle the single-party state and allow the formation of new political parties. The concurrent RPF invasion and domestic upheaval sparked a political and military crisis in Rwanda which ultimately led to the genocide of 1994.

Confrontation and Repression

Habyarimana responded to this crisis with a variety of confrontational military and political measures. Habyarimana refused high-level diplomatic contacts with the RPF.117 The Rwandan army, with the assistance of foreign troops, managed to turn back the RPF invasion. A

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114 For an explanation of the timing of the invasions see Ogenga Otunnu, “An Historical Analysis of the Invasion by the Rwandan Patriotic Army,” in Adelman and Suhkne, eds., The Path of a Genocide, pp. 31-49.
115 Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999), p. 48
116 Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, p. 47.
wave of arrests targeted all potential sources of domestic opposition, both Tutsi and Hutu.\textsuperscript{118} Approximately 13,000 people were arrested.\textsuperscript{119} Small scale violent attacks on Tutsi civilians were carried out, especially in areas where the RPF had been active.\textsuperscript{120}

Neither Habyarimana’s military nor political strategies proved effective for very long. The RPF invasion was repulsed but not defeated. Instead, the RPF shifted to low-level guerrilla operations and repeated cross-border raids from Uganda into Rwanda.\textsuperscript{121} Large numbers of Hutu civilians fled the northern areas of the country, where most of the fighting was taking place. The growing pool of internal refugees placed great strains on Rwanda’s economy. By early 1992, it was becoming clear that the Rwandan army lacked the capability to decisively defeat the RPF.\textsuperscript{122}

Habyarimana’s domestic political crackdown also backfired. His ruthless methods actually increased internal opposition to the single-party system.\textsuperscript{123} A number of political organizations were formed to protest the policies of the regime and demand democratization. Pressures from Rwanda’s foreign aid benefactors were also brought to bear on Habyarimana.

\textit{From Confrontation to Compromise}

Having failed at political and military confrontation, Habyarimana reluctantly decided to try his hand at compromise. According to Joan Kakwenzire and Dixon Kamukama, by early 1991 Habyarimana appears to have “realized the futility of using force in sorting out the political mess in the country.”\textsuperscript{124} In June 1991, he accepted a constitutional amendment allowing the formation of multiple political parties. In March 1992, he agreed to form a coalition government with the newly formed parties. Eleven out of twenty cabinet seats, including the post of prime minister, were awarded to opposition party representatives. The new government enacted policies designed to open the political process, fight corruption, ensure stronger civilian control over the military and redress institutional discrimination against Tutsi. Perhaps most

\textsuperscript{119} Human Rights Watch, \textit{Leave None to Tell the Story}, p. 49.
\textsuperscript{120} Prunier, \textit{The Rwanda Crisis}, p. 110.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., p. 135.
\textsuperscript{123} Human Rights Watch, \textit{Leave None to Tell the Story} , pp. 31-32, and Prunier, \textit{The Rwanda Crisis}, p. 121.
importantly, the coalition government forced Habyarimana to agree to peace talks with the RPF. The agenda of the talks was to include not simply a negotiation of a cease-fire or the repatriation of Tutsi refugees, but also a comprehensive political agreement for power sharing with the RPF in Rwanda.

The formal peace talks began in July 1992 in Arusha, Tanzania. The two sides quickly agreed to a cease-fire. The broad outlines of a power sharing agreement were in place by December. In early February 1993, however, the talks were derailed by a wave of local anti-Tutsi violence in Rwanda which in turn prompted a new RPF military offensive. Although the offensive was partly a response to the anti-Tutsi violence, many observers believe that it may also have been part of an effort by the RPF to gain leverage in the final phases of the Arusha talks (which were to address the crucial issue of the integration of RPF forces into Rwanda’s national army).125

The offensive was remarkably successful. In less than two weeks, RPF forces advanced to within 30 km of the capital city of Kigali. Hundreds of thousands of Hutu fled the fighting. Only the intervention of French troops prompted the RPF to halt its offensive and declare a unilateral cease-fire on February 20th, 1993. Tanzanian and French intelligence services estimated that without continued French support the RPF could defeat the Rwandan army.126 Perhaps realizing this, Habyarimana, who had never been a strong proponent of the negotiations, personally called for a resumption of the talks. The final accords were signed on August 4th, 1993, and the United Nations agreed to oversee their implementation.

By nearly all accounts, the Arusha accords were a triumph for the RPF. The accords granted the RPF a prominent role in both Rwanda’s government institutions and its military organizations. The RPF received five cabinet seats in the transitional government, as many as Habyarimana’s own party. Fifty percent of the command positions in the integrated army were to be filled by members of the RPF. The new political system substantially reduced the authority of Rwanda’s president, emphasizing parliamentary politics and thereby increasing the RPF’s power as a major opposition party. Bruce Jones suggests that the accords were made possible

only by the RPF's military superiority and represented a "victor's deal which reflected RPF views much more than it did a true compromise."127

The "Tutsi Threat" and the Rise of Extremists

Historians continue to disagree over how personally committed Habyarimana ever was to the Arusha accords. At best he was a reluctant partner. Throughout the talks, he publicly expressed reservations about many of the terms of the accords. What is abundantly clear, however, is that a relatively small group of radical Hutu politicians, both outside and within the Rwandan government and military, were convinced that the accords would have catastrophic results both for themselves and for the Rwandan Hutu population in general. Indeed, these extremists had been warning of the gravity of the Tutsi threat since the initial RPF invasion in 1990. As early as 1991, they had begun to organize Hutu militia groups (including the notorious "Interahamwe") to terrorize domestic political opponents and to defend Hutu from RPF guerrillas and the Tutsi civilian "accomplices," who they believed were providing the guerrillas with sanctuary, supplies and information.128 They had also begun to coordinate radio and print media to use as outlets for their message. Many of these radical Hutu leaders were allied to the Coalition for the Defense of the Republic (CDR), an explicitly racist political party founded in early 1992 whose mission was to "defend the interests of the majority [i.e. the Hutu] publicly and consistently."129

Although the radical Hutu groups like the CDR often collaborated with Habyarimana's party against the moderate Hutu opposition, they harshly criticized him for failing to take more forceful measures against the "Tutsi threat." Indeed, when Habyarimana agreed to resume negotiations after the RPF's February 1993 offensive, the CDR issued a statement arguing that the agreement "shows clearly that Mr. Habyarimana... does not care any more about the interests

129 Quoted in Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story. p. 52.
of the nation and is now defending other interests.... [Habyarimana’s agreement to return to negotiations] constitutes an act of high treason.”

The effort to understand precisely how Hutu leaders conceived of the Tutsi threat and why they believed it was so perilous in the context of the post-1990 events must remain speculative. Relatively few internal documents or private statements from radical Hutu groups have become available and many public remarks are clearly propaganda designed to incite Hutu to join the extremists or engage in violence. Nevertheless, scholars have identified at least three primary fears which seem to have contributed to the Hutu perception of the Tutsi threat.

First, radical Hutu leaders saw the Tutsi invasion, the rise of moderate Hutu political parties and the subsequent power sharing agreements as threats to their own personal hold on power. The transitional government created by the Arusha accords completely excluded the CDR. Many radical Hutu politicians within Habyarimana’s party would also have lost their positions and associated privileges under the accords. The military saw the accords as particularly threatening since, as noted above, the agreement allocated 50 percent of command positions in the Army to the RPF. As a study conducted by the human rights group African Rights concluded, the Arusha accords “introduced what the extremists dreaded: power-sharing, an end to privileges and the principle of accountability.”

Second, radical Hutu leaders saw the events of the early 1990’s as a threat to the preservation of Hutu political and economic predominance more generally. They appear to have feared not only the loss of their personal privileges, but a return to a system of Tutsi domination which had prevailed before 1959. An internal Rwandan Army memorandum issued in September 1992, for example, argued that the regime was facing a severe threat from “Tutsi inside or outside the country, extremist and nostalgic for power, who have NEVER recognized and will NEVER recognize the realities of the 1959 social revolution and who wish to reconquer

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130 Prunier, The Rwanda Crisis, p. 182.
131 Scholars disagree on how important each of these threats appeared to Hutu extremists.
power by all means necessary including arms.” The authors of the memorandum claimed that the Tutsi were motivated by “a single political will and a single political ideology, which is Tutsi hegemony.”

Although the RPF officially espoused a philosophy of ethnic unity, the conduct of their military campaign and their intransigence at the Arusha talks led Hutu leaders to fear that the RPF never planned to share power with Hutu. These fears were certainly exaggerated in Hutu propaganda but they were not altogether fantastic. Anyone who doubted the potential for Tutsi domination needed only to look across the border to Burundi, where the Tutsi minority continued to repress the Hutu majority. Beginning in the late 1980’s Burundi had attempted to democratize, but this experiment was brought to an abrupt halt in October 1993 when the newly elected Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye, was assassinated by extremist Tutsi army officers, setting off a massive wave of ethnic violence and a return to Tutsi domination. Eventually, these events even led many members of moderate Hutu political parties to share the extremists’ fears of Tutsi domination.

Finally, radical Hutu leaders believed that the Tutsi posed a threat to the physical safety of Hutu in Rwanda. RPF forces had engaged in massacres of Hutu civilians on several occasions since the 1990 invasion. Radical Hutu politicians and ideologues continually warned that the RPF and their Tutsi “accomplices” within Rwanda would go on killing Hutu if nothing were done to stop them. Ndadaye’s assassination and the subsequent violence in Burundi only intensified these fears. Hutu extremists began warning of Tutsi-RPF plans to systematically exterminate Rwandan Hutu, sometimes comparing the RPF to the Nazis or the Khmer Rouge. It is difficult to determine the degree to which these fears were genuinely felt, or how much they were exaggerated in an effort to frighten ordinary Hutu civilians into supporting the extremists’ agenda. References to the 1972 genocide in Burundi, which killed between 100,000 and 200,000

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135 Quoted in Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, pp. 62-63. Capitalization original.
136 Prunier, The Rwanda Crisis, p. 180 and Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, pp. 110, 126, 135.
137 Prunier, The Rwanda Crisis, p. 175.
Hutu, however, were a constant theme in Rwandan Hutu political discourse. It seems plausible that at least some radical Hutu leaders truly feared a repeat of this event in Rwanda.\textsuperscript{139}

\textit{From Compromise to Genocide}

This understanding of the Hutu extremists’ perception of the magnitude of “Tutsi threat” may explain why the extremists felt they had to do something to protect themselves and their prerogatives from the Tutsi. As Gérard Prunier concludes, “when the political situation looked as if [the] Tutsi were going to come back to positions of power... such a desperate threat called for desperate remedies.”\textsuperscript{140} The perception of even the most desperate threat, however, does not explain why genocide emerged as the preferred response. The scarcity of internal documents from the extremist groups which organized the genocide means that there can be no definitive answer to why the extremists settled on this bloody solution. In spite of these limitations, however, a largely deductive, yet compelling explanation can be constructed which is consistent with what is known about the progression of events from 1990 to 1994 and with the limited evidence available from the extremist groups themselves. This explanation suggests that Hutu extremists arrived at the decision to launch a systematic genocide only after they had concluded that less violent options for dealing with the Tutsi threat had failed and that other potential solutions would be impractical or insufficient. Four factors may have contributed to this perception among the extremist groups.

First, as noted above, Habyarimana’s confrontational strategy for dealing with the RPF invasion and domestic political opposition had failed by late 1991, or early 1992 at the latest. Sharing power with the RPF and domestic opposition may have been an acceptable, if highly distasteful, compromise for Habyarimana. Such a compromise, however, was precisely the outcome the extremists wished to avoid, since they feared it would simply result in the dreaded consequences described above. The RPF offensive of February 1993 and the assassination of Ndadaye in October of that year only confirmed the extremists’ conviction that power sharing with the Tutsi was impossible. Thus, many observers have speculated that Hutu extremists were


\textsuperscript{140} Prunier, \textit{The Rwanda Crisis}, p. 226.
responsible for assassinating President Habyarimana immediately before the genocide began. As Francois Xavier Nsanzuwera, the former Attorney General of Rwanda, argues:

They killed the President to be able to kill everybody else. My sense is that President Habyarimana was in favor of killing his political opponents but not the general public, that is women and children.... But this was the objective of the fanatics of the CDR whose language was to ‘clear the country of the internal accomplices of the RPF’ after which they planned to engage the RPF in a fight to the death. Therefore they had to kill the President in order to kill everyone else who they considered an obstacle.\textsuperscript{141}

Second, the extremists' own efforts to deal with the Tutsi threat had also failed. These efforts included significant violence, but were not yet part of a systematic plan to exterminate the Tutsi. Since 1991, extremist militia groups had been conducting small-scale massacres of Tutsi civilians in Rwanda. Following the RPF offensive of 1993, the militias were expanded and massacres became more frequent. The massacres appear to have been intended to eliminate or intimidate the Tutsi civilian accomplices who the extremists believed were supporting the RPF invasion. They may also have been intended to send a message to the RPF itself. For example, one extremist politician announced on Rwandan Radio that he had “a message for the RPF: Stop fighting this war if you do not want your supporters living inside Rwanda to be exterminated.”\textsuperscript{142} Extremist death squads also assassinated Tutsi elites and leaders of moderate Hutu political parties in the effort to crush domestic opposition and derail the Arusha talks.\textsuperscript{143} Despite these brutal methods, however, power-sharing negotiations continued and the RPF’s military power continued to multiply. As Rwanda’s Minister of Finance described the extremists’ decision to launch the genocide: “They have resorted to massacres because they knew they could not win the war.”\textsuperscript{144}

Third, the CDR and other extremist groups tended to view the Hutu-Tutsi political and military conflict primarily in racial terms, assuming that all Tutsi were enemies and that

\textsuperscript{141} Quoted in African Rights, Rwanda Death, Despair and Defiance, p. 98.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., p. 79.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., pp. 64-66.
\textsuperscript{144} Quoted ibid., p. 89.
cooperation with them was impossible.\textsuperscript{145} This view tended to encourage the conclusion that any
effective response to the Tutsi threat must address all Tutsi living in Rwanda, not simply those
who could be directly linked to the RPF or opposition activity. As a March 1993 article in an
extremist newspaper explained:

\begin{quote}
[A] cockroach [the pejorative term for Tutsi] cannot give birth to a butterfly. It is
ture. 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.... Who could tell the difference between the [Tutsi] who attacked in
October 1990 and those of the 1960s. They are all linked... their evilness is the
same.\textsuperscript{146}
\end{quote}

Unlike the Nazis’ conception of the Jews, Hutu extremists do not appear to have felt that
the Tutsi posed a biological threat to Hutus, per se. Rather, they simply argued that virtually all
Tutsi were supporters of the RPF. As one suspected Hutu organizer of the mass killings in
Rwanda argued, “the Tutsis were not killed as Tutsis, only as sympathizers of the RPF... ninety-
nine per-cent of Tutsis were pro-RPF. There was no difference between the ethnic and the
political.”\textsuperscript{147} A former member of the Interahamwe explained that “we did not have a role of
exterminating all Tutsi, but it was said that every Tutsi cooperates with the [RPF].”\textsuperscript{148} Although
Tutsi men were the primary targets of the violence, even children would have to be dealt with
somehow since they were destined to grow up to carry on the fight.\textsuperscript{149} As African Rights’
investigation of the genocide documents, “as the militias were sent to kill, they were exhorted to
kill the young children too -- on the grounds that today’s RPF fighters are yesterday’s refugee
children.”\textsuperscript{150} Likewise, Tutsi women had to be killed lest they give birth to more Tutsi
children.\textsuperscript{151}

Finally, extremist leaders seem to have believed that any solution that involved expelling
or deporting the Tutsi from Rwanda would simply result in a perpetuation of the conflict. The

\textsuperscript{145} See: Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, pp. 72-74, African Rights, Rwanda: Death, Despair
and Defiance, p. 36, Hintjens, “Explaining the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda,” p. 249 and Kakwenzire and Kamukama,
The Development and Consolidation of Extremist Forces in Rwanda,” pp. 61-91.
\textsuperscript{146} Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, pp. 73-74.
\textsuperscript{148} Quoted in African Rights, Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance, p. 65.
\textsuperscript{149} See Pruner, The Rwanda Crisis, pp. 226-227.
\textsuperscript{150} Quoted in African Rights, Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance, p. 39.

202
current fighting, after all, was being carried out by the descendants of Tutsi who had fled Rwanda following the 1959 Hutu revolution. It made no sense to send more of them across the border. Indeed, the desire of Hutu extremists not to repeat the “mistake of 1959” appears to have been one of the most important factors in motivating the decision for genocide. References to this “error” appear repeatedly in Hutu extremist political writings and speeches. As Prunier described the extremists’ logic: “It was a matter of survival and the mistake of 1959 could not be repeated: if the evil race had been thoroughly eradicated then, their children would not have been threatening us now. Simple but true.” Indeed, after the genocide began, the Hutu made every effort to prevent Tutsi from escaping to neighboring countries.

It is impossible to determine the precise date (if there was a single date) on which the extremists reached the decision for genocide. It is clear that the slaughter was planned at least several months in advance of Habyarimana’s assassination on April 6, 1994. Prunier has speculated that “the general notion of ‘solving’ the power sharing question by large-scale slaughter of most Tutsi and of all the known Hutu opposition supporters” probably came under consideration in late 1992 and was finally adopted as an actual plan sometime soon after Ndadaye’s assassination in late October 1993.

This timeline is largely consistent with the interpretation that the decision for genocide was reached when the extremists felt that all other solutions for dealing with the Tutsi threat had proved unworkable. By late 1992 it must have been clear to the extremists that Habyarimana’s efforts to defeat the RPF had failed and that the final outcome of the Arusha talks would be even more threatening than they had feared. By October 1993, it should have been clear that the extremists’ own violent efforts to crush the Tutsi threat using militias and death squads had failed as well. On the contrary, the Arusha accords were beginning to be implemented under the supervision of the United Nations, and Habyarimana was coming under increasing international pressure to cooperate. The RPF offensive of February 1993 and Ndadaye’s assassination

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151 Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, pp. 295-297.
152 See African Rights, Rwanda. Death, Despair and Defiance., p. 39, 77, 79 and Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda, p. 204.
154 Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story, pp. 204, 212-214
155 Prunier, The Rwanda Crisis, pp. 223-225.

203
probably convinced those extremists who still questioned the ethics or the need for such a radical solution that genocide was both necessary and urgent. As Prunier concludes, in the history of the Rwandan conflict “killings were merely one of the means used in a broad spectrum of political tools which included war, bribery, foreign diplomacy, constitutional manipulations and propaganda.”\textsuperscript{157}

Once it began, the pace of the Rwandan genocide surpassed even the industrialized murder of the Holocaust. Because they were militarily inferior to the RPF, the extremists probably believed that the genocide could only succeed if they acted quickly. Although the killing was performed primarily with small arms and edged weapons, 500,000 to 800,000 people were murdered in less than three months. A quarter of a million people may have been killed in the first two weeks of the genocide.\textsuperscript{158} Not all the victims were Tutsis. Between 10,000 and 30,000 Hutus suspected of sympathizing with the RPF were also murdered.\textsuperscript{159}

Although the genocide eliminated more than 75 percent of Rwanda’s Tutsi population, it did not defeat the RPF as the extremists had hoped. Rather, the slaughter came to an end when RPF forces routed the Rwandan army and seized control of the country. The extremists, along with between one and two million Hutus, were forced to flee across the border to Burundi, Tanzania and Zaire.

\textit{Less Violent Chauvinist Regimes}

Chauvinist regimes have been a common feature in the history of the twentieth century. Discriminatory relations and conflict between at least some ethnic, national and religious groups continue to exist in almost every society on earth. By definition, chauvinist regimes have engaged in overt or de facto economic, political and cultural discrimination, and often the violent repression of certain groups. Yet most chauvinist regimes have not engaged in mass killing.

\textsuperscript{157} Prunier, \textit{The Rwanda Crisis}, p. 141.
\textsuperscript{158} Alan J. Kuperman, “Rwanda in Retrospect,” \textit{Foreign Affairs} (January/February 2000)
\textsuperscript{159} Prunier, \textit{The Rwanda Crisis}, p. 141.
What separates these "less violent" chauvinist states from the genocidal regimes described above? The strategic approach suggests that the critical differences lie in two sets of variables. The first set encompasses the various considerations that contribute the perception of chauvinist leaders that a policy of ethnic cleansing is the best available means to deal with their ethnic, national or religious enemies or to accomplish other important goals. The second set consists of factors and conditions that render it more likely that ethnic cleansing will result in mass killing.

Factors Influencing the Decision to Implement Ethnic Cleansing:

Turkey, Germany, Rwanda and South Africa Compared

The evidence presented in this chapter suggests that the likelihood that leaders will make the fateful decision to implement a policy of ethnic cleansing is largely determined by their judgments regarding two critical questions: (1) How great is the threat that leaders believe their ethnic opponents pose? and (2) What policies other than ethnic cleansing are available and acceptable to leaders for countering this threat? In practice, of course, these questions are closely related since the way leaders perceive a threat often depends on their ability to counter it.

Although the answers to these questions are surely influenced by impersonal, structural factors, they cannot be reduced to such factors alone.160 Leaders' answers are ultimately determined by their own unique set of beliefs, judgments and perceptions. As described in chapters one and two, small groups or even individual leaders can wield extraordinary power over the processes which lead to mass killing. The judgments of leaders need not reflect those of the wider societies over which they rule. In Turkey, Germany and Rwanda the radical leaders who ultimately chose to implement policies of ethnic cleansing rose to power through highly undemocratic means, overthrowing more moderate leaders who appeared to have preferred compromise to ethnic cleansing.161 Indeed, the change of regimes in these three states provides a kind of historical "control variable" for structural forces since different regimes in the same society perceived and responded to the same situation in very different ways. Nor was the triumph of extremists groups over moderates predetermined by structural forces. In all three

161 In both Rwanda and Turkey leaders seized power in coups. In Germany, Hitler was appointed Chancellor through technically constitutional (although hardly democratic) means, but within less than a year he had eliminated Germany's democratic institutions and achieved nearly complete dictatorial powers.
cases, scholars have suggested plausible alternate historical processes through which extremist
groups might never have gained power, thereby averting ethnic cleansing and genocide.\textsuperscript{162}

Unfortunately, the strategic approach offers relatively little assistance in predicting when
and where radical chauvinist leaders are likely to come to power.\textsuperscript{163} The strategic approach is
most useful in assessing when specific groups or leaders are likely to decide that ethnic cleansing
is the best available way to achieve their ends. Only in light of the specific situations these
leaders face, and with an understanding of their unique goals, values and perceptions, can
leaders’ answers to the two critical questions listed above be reliably ascertained. A brief
comparison of the three regimes studied in this chapter with the “less violent” South African
apartheid regime reveals how the different perceptions of white leaders in South Africa led them
to arrive at very different answers to these two questions than the chauvinist leaders of Turkey,
Germany and Rwanda.

Leaders of each of the three regimes studied in this chapter answered in ways that
emphatically encouraged the decision for ethnic cleansing. First, the leaders of all three regimes
sincerely believed that their victims represented a critical threat not only to the continued power
and privilege of the regime, but to the integrity of the state and the physical safety or survival of
the dominant group as well. The ultra-nationalist faction of the Young Turks saw the Armenians
as a threat to Turkey’s prospects for success in the First World War, to the territorial integrity of
what remained of the once mighty Ottoman Empire and to the continued survival of the Turkish
homeland itself. The Nazis believed that the Jews posed a deadly biological threat to the health
of the Aryan race and a political threat to Germany’s survival in the competition among
European nations in general, and in the Second World War in particular. Rwandan Hutu
extremists feared the Tutsi would throw them from power and either slaughter the Hutu
population or reduce it to servitude. Leaders of all three regimes also believed that their victims
were the primary obstacle standing in the way of the creation of a new, more harmonious society

\textsuperscript{162} For example see: Henry Ashby Turner, Jr., Hitler’s Thirty Days to Power: January 1933 (Reading: Addison-
Wesley, 1996), esp. pp. 163-183, Roderic H. Davison, “Nationalism as an Ottoman Problem and the Ottoman
Response,” in William W. Haddad and William Ochsenwald eds., Nationalism in a Non-National State (Columbus:

\textsuperscript{163} As described in chapter one, factors such as war, revolution and other national crises do appear to make the rise
of these groups more likely, but they still generate a relatively low absolute likelihood of the onset of mass killing.
in which the dominant group and its unique culture could thrive without the constant fear of violence and conflict. In Turkey and Rwanda, there may have been at least some basis to extremists' fears, since in both countries some opposition groups had organized militarily and used violence in the attempt to gain autonomy, secession or the overthrow of the current regime. In Germany, on the other hand, the "Jewish threat" was purely a figment of Nazi ideology. As the Holocaust ultimately demonstrated, however, this illusory threat proved at least as powerful a motivation for murder as any based in reality.

Second, and perhaps most importantly, leaders of all three regimes examined in this chapter believed that methods short of ethnic cleansing -- including both limited compromise and violent repression -- had proved ineffective or inadequate to meet the threat posed by their ethnic, national or religious enemies. In Turkey, the radical faction of the Young Turks believed that the efforts of earlier regimes (including the initial efforts of the CUP itself) to prevent Armenian autonomy or secession through moderate political reforms, and even with violent repression, had failed. They strongly believed that granting significant autonomy to the Armenians would only lead to Armenian secession and would probably encourage the secession of other minorities within the empire. Likewise, Hutu extremists in Rwanda believed that efforts to defeat the RPF through internal repression had failed and that the Arusha negotiations demonstrated that the RPF was unwilling to accept any compromise that did not result in massively disproportionate Tutsi political and military control. The extremists were unwilling to contemplate real power sharing with the RPF since they feared that such a compromise would likely result in the reinstitution of the system of violent Tutsi domination that still prevailed in Burundi. Indeed, extremist leaders in both Turkey and Rwanda seized power in the explicit effort to prevent further concessions to the Armenians and Tutsis, which they feared would lead to disaster for themselves, their state and their people.

In Nazi Germany, Hitler clearly felt that the gradual legal, cultural and economic integration of Jews into German society since the late 19th century had only increased the political and biological danger to Germany. The regime's early anti-Semitic policies focused on segregating the Jews politically (by expelling them from civil service and other important fields) and biologically (through sterilization programs and a ban on intermarriage) from Germans
within Germany. It seems unlikely, however, that Hitler ever sincerely expected these measures to be sufficient to counter the Jewish threat.\textsuperscript{164} The Nazis' ideological conception of the "Jewish question" was probably never compatible with any solution short of ethnic cleansing, even if it may have been compatible with solutions short of mass killing.

\textit{South Africa}

A brief examination of the chauvinist apartheid regime in South Africa reveals that white leaders arrived at very different answers to the two critical questions posed above. As a result, South African leaders never felt it necessary or expedient to attempt to create an all-white South Africa. Any analysis of South African leaders' responses to these two questions, however, must distinguish the regime led by F.W. de Klerk from 1989-1994 from the ones which preceded it.

Although virtually all white South African leaders prior to de Klerk perceived the black African population as a very serious threat, most appear to have viewed this threat primarily in political, rather than physical terms. For the most part, apartheid era leaders believed blacks posed a danger to continued white political and economic domination, not survival. This feeling was largely the result of the relatively moderate goals and limited violent activities of the primary black opposition groups. Indeed, no major black opposition group advocated the repression of whites or their expulsion from South Africa as an ultimate goal.\textsuperscript{165} Black violence against white civilians remained quite rare throughout the apartheid years. No internal or external military force posed a real challenge to white rule in South Africa.

The realities of black conduct, however, cannot be the sole explanation for whites' perceptions. As described above, the fact that Jews posed no real danger to Germans did not alter the Nazis' perception that the Jewish race represented a mortal threat to Germany's survival. Mainstream South African leaders, on the other hand, appear to have maintained a relatively realistic view of their situation. Unlike the Nazis, they did not subscribe to a revolutionary racial ideology which mandated the complete removal of blacks from society. Segregation under

\textsuperscript{164} As noted above, the regime's early anti-Jewish measures may have been partly intended to encourage emigration from Germany.

Apartheid was largely conceived as a “pragmatic” measure designed to preserve minority rule and provide security for whites from black insurrection. As Heribert Adam and Kogila Moodley write, “Apartheid must be seen as a tactical device, invented as a response to pressure, almost a last resort of token decolonization, reluctantly implemented wherever necessary and feasible. Grand Apartheid lacks a motivating belief system, a utopia to strive for.”

Perhaps the most important reason for white “restraint” during the years before 1989 is that means short of ethnic cleansing and mass killing had proved highly effective in countering threats to white rule. The vast military superiority of the apartheid regime provided whites with a degree of comfort not available to the Young Turks after the Russian invasion in World War I or Hutu leaders in Rwanda after the Tutsi invasion of 1990. Even in 1983, in the midst of some of South Africa’s most significant black uprisings, Heribert Adam observed that “[i]t is doubtful whether the majority of whites, particularly Afrikaners, do in fact feel threatened by blacks... The success of the government in quelling racial disorder, the tough, no-nonsense image of the authorities... reinforce an experience that everything is under control.”

From the conception of apartheid in 1948, South African leaders found effective ways to protect white domination and security utilizing both the promise of limited political reform and autonomy for blacks and the threat of violent repression. The carrot and the stick were frequently used at the same time. Thus, P.W. Botha’s “total strategy” for maintaining white power combined extensive reforms -- including national political representation, the reinstatement of black citizenship, and the abandonment of the segregated black homelands -- with increased internal policing, arrests and repression. In addition, since most apartheid era leaders recognized that black labor was vital to South Africa’s economic prosperity, gradual segregation of blacks within South Africa was preferred to full-scale ethnic cleansing. From this perspective, South Africa’s ruling National Party prior to 1989 more closely resembled the Young Turk regime before the 1913 coup or the Rwandan regime under Habyarimana than it did the radical regimes which replaced them.

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167 Adam, “The Manipulation of Ethnicity,” p. 133. Adam refers here to the attitudes of white South Africans in general, but he clearly indicates that these attitudes were shared by most members of the National Party.
Apartheid was ultimately abandoned not because these methods had failed to preserve white domination, but because, like moderate Hutu political parties in Rwanda, the government of F.W. de Klerk preferred compromise to the costly or violent alternatives necessary to maintain the status quo. Unlike South African leaders before him, de Klerk believed that power sharing with the blacks would not spell disaster for white South Africans. As Patti Waldmeier argues: "Though apartheid was in crisis when de Klerk became president, the state was not; the monolith was not about to crumble. And though the foreign loan embargo choked off economic growth, South Africa could have kept on getting slowly poorer for years to come. De Klerk’s options were frighteningly costly, but they were options nonetheless." As the evidence presented in this chapter has shown, radical chauvinist leaders in Turkey, Germany and Rwanda were willing to pay an extraordinary price to avoid the kind of compromises de Klerk proved willing to accept. Radical leaders in Nazi Germany and Rwanda believed that dealing with the perceived threat posed by their ethnic enemies was the single most important issue on their agenda. They defined themselves by their unwillingness to compromise on this issue. Without the achievement of this goal, they feared, nothing else was possible. The intensity of this conviction is no better illustrated than by the fact that all three regimes chose to divert scarce resources away from desperate ongoing war efforts to their genocidal campaigns against internal populations.

Not all groups in South Africa shared de Klerk’s values or perceptions. There were (and still are) powerful groups and individuals in South Africa, including some within the National Party and the South African military, who believed that Blacks posed a significant threat to their most important goals and who were prepared to use whatever means necessary to prevent the power sharing agreement which de Klerk negotiated. If this so-called “third force” had achieved power, there is little doubt that they would have had sufficient support to carry out ethnic cleansing and mass killing.

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170 Turkish leaders placed solving the “Armenian question” very high on their list of priorities, but it does not appear to have been the raison d’être of the regime.
Why then did not extremist groups come to power in South Africa as they did in Turkey, Germany and Rwanda? The answers to questions such as this are beyond the scope of the strategic approach. The strategic approach does suggest, however, that the answer does not lie solely in the fact that most white South Africans do not appear to have supported systematic violence against blacks. After all, most Germans did not support such measures against the Jews in 1933, and most Rwandan Hutus did not favor the extermination of the Tutsi in 1994.\textsuperscript{172} It is instructive to note that the 68 percent of white South Africans who voted in support of de Klerk's power sharing negotiations in 1992 is almost exactly the same as the percentage of Germans who voted \textit{against} Hitler in 1933.

\textit{From Ethnic Cleansing to Mass Killing}

As noted in the beginning of this chapter, ethnic cleansing and mass killing, though often conflated, are not one in the same thing. Mass killing is a tactic that is sometimes, but not always, utilized to implement a policy of ethnic cleansing. Ethnic cleansing almost always entails significant violence and coercion, but it has been accomplished without mass killing.\textsuperscript{173} A comparison of the three regimes studied in this chapter with others that have achieved ethnic cleansing using lower levels of violence highlights three primary factors which appear to affect the likelihood that ethnic cleansing will lead to mass killing: (1) the size of the population subject to cleansing, (2) the speed with which ethnic cleansing is carried out, and (3) the availability of hospitable territories to receive the refugees.\textsuperscript{174} These variables may operate individually or in conjunction with one another. Because these factors are directly implicated by the causal processes identified in this chapter, their explanatory power provides further confirmation for the strategic approach to chauvinist mass killing.

\textsuperscript{172} Evidence regarding public opinion in Turkey is too limited to make any judgment regarding Turkish support for anti-Armenian measures. Christopher Walker does note that at least a few Turks "opposed the regime's violent policies... both at the official and the popular level" and that the "authorities had doubts about the popularity of their measures at the local level." See: Christopher J. Walker, "World War I and the Armenian Genocide," in Hovannisian, ed., \textit{The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times}, pp. 261, 267-268.


\textsuperscript{174} Other factors undoubtedly play a role, but these three seem to be particularly significant.
The most obvious factor which can influence the likelihood that leaders will use mass killing to achieve ethnic cleansing is the size of the population subject to removal. All else being equal, the larger the population which must be relocated the greater the number of people who will be subjected to violence in the process. There were over 1,500,000 million Armenians in Turkey in 1915, 11,000,000 Jews in occupied Europe and the Soviet Union in 1941, and between 650,000 and 930,000 Tutsi in Rwanda in 1994. Several other of this century's most deadly examples of chauvinist mass killing have also been associated with the ethnic cleansing of vast numbers of people. Between 600,000 and two million ethnic Germans died in 1945-47 when nearly 12 million were expelled from Eastern Europe. Between 200,000 and 800,000 Hindu and Muslim civilians died during the partition of India in 1947-48 in which approximately 10 million people were relocated. Over 10 million people were moved and between 500,000 and three million Bengalis (mostly Hindus) died during the partition of East Pakistan in 1971.

The size of the population does not simply affect the violence against victim groups in proportional terms. The task of moving extremely large numbers of people can render less violent strategies of ethnic cleansing all but impossible. Larger populations are generally harder to move, more likely to resist relocation, and less likely to be admitted for resettlement by foreign states.\textsuperscript{175} The Nazis' policy of coerced emigration, for example, proved largely successful in cleansing Germany of its 500,000 Jews between 1933 and 1939. The invasion of Poland and the Soviet Union, however, rendered this policy unworkable (in part because no foreign country was willing to accept such large numbers of refugees, a factor which will be discussed in more detail below) and prompted the Nazis to consider plans for deportation and ultimately genocide. Likewise, in 1972, Idi Amin was able to deport nearly all 70,000 Asians (most of Indian descent) living in Uganda in a matter of months and with relatively little violence.\textsuperscript{176} Most of the refugees were evacuated by airplane and granted asylum in Britain, Canada and the United States. Such

\textsuperscript{175} Population size relative to the size of the perpetrators' population may be particularly important since the resources perpetrators can devote to easing the process of resettlement and the likelihood that victims will attempt to resist deportation are (at least partially) a function of relative rather than absolute population sizes.

an operation would have been unthinkable had the population numbered in the millions instead of the tens of thousands.

A second factor which may influence the likelihood that ethnic cleansing will result in mass killing is the pace with which it is carried out. When leaders believe that ethnic cleansing must be carried out rapidly, greater violence may be required to force people from their homes. Refugees may be unable to take any of their personal belongings with them. In addition, when deportations are carried out in great haste, leaders are less able to provide for humane conditions for refugees during relocation or after resettlement, even if they are so inclined.

All three mass killings described in this chapter occurred in wartime. In all three cases, leaders believed that ethnic cleansing had to be completed rapidly if their country hoped to survive the war. Not all examples of ethnic cleansing, however, are carried out with such a sense of urgency. A slower pace allows regimes to use means other than violence to accomplish ethnic cleansing. Both the sponsors and objects of ethnic cleansing have greater time to prepare for relocation and resettlement, thereby reducing deaths resulting from harsh conditions. Agreements may be reached with states willing to accept refugees. As described above, the Nazi regime “successfully” used economic and political pressures to encourage gradual Jewish emigration from Germany between 1933 and 1939 with relatively little violence. Similarly, between 1960 and 1980, the white regime of South Africa pushed between 1.5 and four million black Africans into “homelands” within the boundaries of the South African state. Although the process was not without violence, the removals were implemented gradually and the regime relied primarily on political and economic pressures to promote relocation. South Africa devoted substantial resources to developing the homelands -- although not nearly enough to provide blacks with anything like the lifestyle that whites enjoyed. Violence and death on the scale of the three regimes described in this chapter did not materialize.

The third factor which can influence the violence associated with ethnic cleansing is the availability of territories for resettlement acceptable to the sponsors of ethnic cleansing and capable of supporting the influx of refugees. The Nazi regime actively sought such a location for Jewish refugees in Eastern Europe, Madagascar and Siberia. In Turkey and Rwanda, the option of expelling refugees across the border was out of the question since leaders in both states were already facing cross-border violence. It is impossible to know for certain, but the willingness of Turkish and Rwandan Hutu leaders to consider alternate solutions to their minority problems
suggests that they might have sanctioned the deportation of their ethnic enemies to more distant locations if other states were willing to accept them. Indeed, in 1923 the new Turkish regime under Mustafa Kemal agreed to the internationally negotiated deportation of Turkey’s Greek minority to Greece.\(^{177}\)

The availability of safe havens can diminish the deaths associated with ethnic cleansing by providing chauvinist leaders with an option other than outright extermination and by providing refugees with more hospitable conditions after deportation. The availability of suitable territories for refugees seldom averts violence altogether, however, because force often remains necessary to coerce victims to abandon their homes and property. The recent violence in the former Yugoslavia illustrates how the availability of safe havens can diminish the violence associated with ethnic cleansing. During the civil war between 1992 and 1995, large numbers of Muslims, Serbs and Croats were forced to flee their homes. Muslims suffered by far the most violence, however, in part because unlike Serbs and Croats, they could not flee Bosnia to safety in an independent Bosnian Muslim state.\(^{178}\) Indeed, unlike Serbian and Croatian leaders, Muslim leaders actively discouraged Bosnian Muslims from fleeing to safer areas as part of the effort to prevent the partition of Bosnia.\(^{179}\) Likewise, at least 850,000 Kosovar Albanians were expelled from their homes in Kosovo in 1999, most in the course of just a few weeks in February and March. Between 2,100 and 11,000 people (including combatants) were killed as Serbs forced them from their villages, but it seems likely that the toll would have been much higher were it not for the well-supplied refugee camps available across the border in Albania and Macedonia.\(^{180}\)

This perspective also suggests one reason why so-called “stateless” groups have proven especially vulnerable to mass killing. Groups like the Jews (prior to the establishment of Israel),

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\(^{177}\) Although many thousands died during the expulsions, particularly in years before the deportations came under international supervision, the Turks did not seek to exterminate the Greeks as the previous regime had done to the Armenians. See: Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 96-106.


\(^{180}\) Judah, *Kosovo: War and Revenge*, pp. 252-253. Judah notes that while “the camps were hardly comfortable... compared to refugee camps in Africa and other parts of the Third World, these were certainly at the luxury end of the market.” Over 90,000 Kosovars were also airlifted to safety and resettled in Western countries.
Kurds, and Gypsies have been the repeated victims of mass violence not simply because they have been historical objects of discrimination and hatred, but because they have had nowhere to run when threatened by conflicts with more powerful groups.

Conclusions

Contrary to depictions of chauvinist leaders as bent on genocide, the behavior of the regimes studied in this chapter suggests that chauvinist leaders saw genocide not as an end in itself, but as the "final" solution among many others. The evidence presented in this chapter suggests that leaders do not resort to chauvinist mass killing simply because they are consumed with hatred of their victims or because they want to kill them. Indeed, leaders in all three regimes seriously considered less violent strategies for dealing with their ethnic enemies. In Turkey and Rwanda, leaders were even willing to concede to limited reforms in the hopes of averting more violent conflict. Although none of the regimes studied in this chapter could be accused of harboring any love or even pity for their victims, they do demonstrate that hatred and callousness need not result in mass killing. Rather, the tragic history of Turkey, Germany and Rwanda reveals that the process that leads to mass killing begins when leaders come to believe that a radical policy of ethnic cleansing is the best available strategy for achieving their ideological and political ends. Even then, however, mass killing is not the only possible outcome. Only when situational factors conspire to make the prospect of peaceful expulsion difficult or impossible does mass killing become the likely result.
CHAPTER 6
COUNTER-GUERRILLA MASS KILLINGS: GUATEMALA AND AFGHANISTAN

Introduction

The large-scale killing of civilians perpetrated in the service of counter-guerrilla warfare has been the most common form of mass killing in the twentieth century. This chapter focuses on episodes of mass killing in Guatemala from 1978-1996 and Afghanistan from 1979-1988 -- two of the most significant, and well-documented cases of counter-guerrilla mass killing in recent history. Counter-guerrilla motives have also been the driving force behind numerous other episodes of mass killing, including, but not limited to, the mass killing of 128,000-487,000 Filipinos by the United States from 1899-1902; 6-10 million Chinese by the Nationalist regime in the Chinese Civil War from 1927-1949; 82,000-300,000 people during the Algerian war of independence from France from 1954-1962; several hundred thousand Vietnamese civilians by French, American and South Vietnamese forces from 1945-1975; 20,000-80,000 people in El Salvador's Civil War from 1979-1992; 236,000-1.5 million people during Ethiopia's Civil War from 1974-1986; 60,000-200,000 East Timorese by Indonesia from 1975-1999; between 100,000-200,000 Iraqi Kurds from 1961-1988; 322,000-1.5 million Southern Sudanese from 1983 to the present; 50,000-200,000 Hutu in Burundi from 1993-1998; and 28,000-100,000 Chechens by Russia from 1994-1997. Counter-guerrilla motives have also played a secondary role in many other cases of mass killing. Communist and chauvinist regimes, settler colonies, and regimes engaged in wars of territorial expansion have often employed this form of mass killing to crush guerrilla resistance to their policies.

Guerrilla tactics, and consequently counter-guerrilla warfare, have been a common mode of combat in the twentieth century. Although counter-guerrilla warfare seldom avoids violence against civilians altogether, systematic mass killing remains relatively rare. In order to understand why some regimes have responded to guerrilla warfare with mass killing while others have relied on less brutal methods, therefore, this chapter also briefly analyzes a number of counter-guerrilla wars which did not result in mass killing.
The remainder of this chapter is divided into seven main sections. The first section proposes a strategic approach to the understanding of counter-guerrilla mass killing. The second section identifies some empirical predictions of this approach which may be compared to evidence from the historical record. The third and fourth sections apply the strategic perspective to the mass killings Guatemala and Afghanistan. The sixth section explores the history of “less violent” counter-guerrilla wars. The final, concluding section briefly summarizes the findings of this chapter and suggests some reasons why counter-guerrilla mass killing has been so prevalent during the last 100 years and why it is likely to remain a common strategy in counter-guerrilla warfare in the future.

A Strategic Approach to Counter-Guerrilla Mass Killing

Although guerrilla tactics are probably as old as warfare itself, they have become especially prominent since the end of the Second World War.1 Guerrilla warfare is notoriously difficult to define. The term, which means “small war” in Spanish, first appears to have entered military vocabulary during Napoleon’s Campaign against Spain from 1808 to 1814. Since then, the term has come to be applied to almost any unconventional, revolutionary or civil war. For the purposes of this dissertation, however, guerrilla war may be distinguished from other forms of warfare by three central characteristics. First, guerrilla warfare relies primarily on irregular forces, organized in small units and operating mostly without heavy weaponry such as tanks, artillery or aircraft. Second, guerrilla tactics seek to avoid decisive set-piece battles in favor of hit-and-run attacks, assassinations, terror bombing, sabotage, and other operations designed to increase an opponent’s political, military and economic costs, as opposed to defeating his military forces directly. As a result, clear lines of battle in guerrilla warfare are rare and guerrilla forces often operate in territories technically under the military control of their opponents. Third, and most importantly for understanding counter-guerrilla mass killing, guerrilla armies rely directly on the local population for food, shelter, supplies and intelligence, as well as to act as a

form of “human camouflage” into which the guerrillas can disappear to avoid detection. As Mao Zedong, one of history’s most influential strategists of guerrilla warfare, famously argued:

Because guerrilla warfare basically derives from the masses and is supported by them, it can neither exist nor flourish if it separates itself from their sympathies and cooperation.... Many people think it is impossible for guerrillas to exist for long in the enemy’s rear. Such a belief reveals lack of comprehension of the relationship that should exist between the people and the troops. The former may be likened to water and the latter to the fish who inhabit it....

Guerrilla warfare can be an extraordinarily powerful weapon. Skillfully applied, guerrilla tactics can provide even relatively small and weak groups with the capability to inflict significant military and political costs even on regimes capable of fielding vastly superior conventional forces. Determined guerrilla forces have proven extraordinarily difficult to defeat even by the most advanced Western armies. Conventional military tactics are poorly suited to combating an enemy who seeks to avoid direct military confrontations, has no permanent lines of supply or communication, and whose forces are often indistinguishable from the civilian population. Policing the vast spaces and large populations resident in areas of guerrilla activity requires resources beyond those of all but the largest armies. These dilemmas forced regimes threatened by powerful guerrilla insurgencies to search for unconventional strategies capable of defeating their enemies. Unfortunately, the logic of guerrilla tactics has often led military and political leaders to conclude that the massive killing of civilian populations is the only “practical” solution to the seemingly intractable problems of guerrilla warfare.

The reliance of guerrilla forces on the local population may be one of their greatest strengths, but it can also be a weakness. Rather than fighting the guerrillas on their own terms, regimes determined to defeat a guerrilla opponent may adopt a strategy designed to sever the guerrillas from their base of support in the people. Unlike guerrilla forces themselves, the guerrillas’ civilian support infrastructure -- being both defenseless, largely immobile and difficult to conceal -- offers an easy target. As Roger Trinquier, a French counter-insurgency theorist and veteran of counter-guerrilla wars in both Indochina and Algeria argues:

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2 Of course, conventional armies, too, ultimately rely on civilians for many needs, but in a much more indirect manner.
It is the inhabitant who supplies the guerrilla with his food requirements on an almost day to day basis.... It is the inhabitant who also occasionally supplies him with ammunition. The inhabitant contributes to his protection by keeping him informed.... No troop movement can escape the inhabitant. Any threat to the guerrilla is communicated to him in plenty of time.... Sometimes the inhabitant’s home is the guerrilla’s refuge, where he can disappear in case of danger.... But this total dependence upon terrain and population is also the guerrilla’s weak point. We should be able, with our more powerful potential, to make him submit or to destroy him by acting upon his terrain and upon his support -- the population.4

Likewise, Franklin Lindsay, an American OSS veteran who had worked with the partisan movement in Yugoslavia during the Second World War, writes:

“A guerrilla force is like the top of an iceberg: the supporting civilian organization, without which it cannot survive, is the much larger part that cannot be seen. Just as control of the air has become a prerequisite for successful frontal warfare, so control of the population is a prerequisite for successful unconventional warfare.”5

The killing of civilians in counter-guerrilla warfare has often been attributed to the actions of “over-zealous,” poorly disciplined or racist troops. It seems likely that the frustrations of fighting an opponent who refuses to stand and fight, along with the difficulty of distinguishing guerrillas from civilians makes atrocities more common in counter-guerrilla warfare than other forms of combat. Such uncoordinated actions, however, are unlikely to generate the levels of violence necessary to meet the high criteria for mass killing utilized in this dissertation.6 Counter-guerrilla forces do not engage in mass killing primarily because they lack discipline or because they hate their victims. On the contrary, mass killing in counter-guerrilla warfare -- including associated practices such as torture and mutilation -- is often viewed in cold military

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4 Roger Trinquier, Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency, trans. Daniel Lee (New York: Praeger, 1964), pp. 63–64. Despite the implications of this argument, it should be noted that Trinquier avoids openly advocating violence against civilians.
6 Mass killing, as defined in chapter one, is the intentional killing of more than 50,000 civilians over the course of five or fewer years.
terms, as one tactic among many used to respond to the unique threats posed by a guerrilla opponent. As I will document below, counter-guerrilla forces have often combined mass killing with “positive” policies designed to improve the lives of the civilian population and draw support away from guerrillas. It is this understanding of counter-guerrilla mass killing that explains the perverse logic behind the infamous comment of an American officer during the war in Vietnam: “We had to destroy the village in order to save it.”

As many perpetrators of counter-guerrilla warfare have openly acknowledged, if the civilian population is the “sea” in which the guerrilla “fish” swim, counter-guerrilla mass killing is the result of a strategy which seeks to kill the fish by draining the sea. Efforts to defeat guerrilla insurgencies by acting upon their support in the civilian population have led to the development of three related counter-guerrilla tactics, “counter-terror,” population resettlement, and “scorched-earth warfare.” In practice, each of these tactics has demonstrated a considerable potential to result in mass killing. In addition, counter-guerrilla forces have also developed non-violent, “civic action” tactics for reducing or eliminating civilian support. Each of these four tactics -- often referred to collectively as “pacification”-- will be described in detail below.

Counter-Terror

Counter-guerrilla forces have often sought to defeat guerrilla opponents by terrorizing and intimidating the guerrillas’ supporters among the civilian population. By killing individuals suspected of collaborating with the insurgents -- often in public and/or in an intentionally gruesome manner -- leaders seek to intimidate the rest of the population into shunning the guerrillas or revealing information about guerrilla activities. As Lindsay writes, “when two forces are contending for the loyalty of, and control over, the civilian population, the side which uses violent reprisals most aggressively will dominate most of the people, even though their sympathies may lie in the other direction.”8 Lindsay and other Western theorists of counter-guerrilla warfare are careful to point out that this tactic works best when it is applied in a highly selective manner, targeting only active participants in the insurrection or its known supporters. In practice, however, such accurate discrimination can be extremely difficult. Guerrilla

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7 In practice, these tactics are not always clearly distinct and are often implemented simultaneously.
8 Lindsay, “Unconventional Warfare,” p. 268.
organizations go to great lengths to conceal their membership. Counter-guerrilla forces typically lack the detailed information necessary to distinguish between civilians and guerrillas.\textsuperscript{9} Nor do they have the time or resources necessary to grant suspects the benefit of due process. The temptation to resort to violence and torture to gather information from suspected guerrillas and their supporters can be very great.

Moreover, even if truly selective counter-terror were possible, counter-insurgent forces would still face considerable incentives to target civilians. Most so-called "guerrilla supporters" are in fact civilians, not active combatants. They support the guerrillas with food, shelter, information or political agitation, but do not participate in acts of violence. The ability to determine who is a guerrilla and who is a civilian guerrilla supporter, therefore, would not eliminate the incentive to eradicate or intimidate the guerrillas' base of support. Furthermore, counter-guerrilla forces often seek not only to prevent civilians from actively supporting the guerrillas, but also to force civilians to cooperate in the effort to defeat the insurgency. Such "cooperation" must often be elicited by violent coercion.

As a result of these difficulties and incentives, a strategy of counter-terror can easily degenerate into "collective punishment" and the indiscriminate slaughter of large numbers of innocent civilians. During the German occupation of Russia and Eastern Europe in the Second World War, for example, the German Army adopted a policy of "prophylaxis by terror" designed to suppress resistance from the guerrilla partisans. Hitler himself urged German occupying forces to "spread the kind of terror" which would "make the population lose all interest in insubordination."\textsuperscript{10} The German High Command concluded that "a deterrent effect can be attained only through unusual hardness" and called for the application of "collective measures of force," even in cases of "passive resistance."\textsuperscript{11} In many areas of German occupation it was standard practice for Germans to execute 50 to 100 civilians for every German soldier killed by

the partisans.\textsuperscript{12} It was not unusual for entire villages, including women and children, to be exterminated in response to partisan attacks.\textsuperscript{13}

Terror was also a common tactic of US forces in the 1899-1902 counter-guerrilla war in the Philippines. Although unused to guerrilla warfare, US military commanders soon realized that “the unique system of warfare” utilized by the Filipinos “... depended upon almost complete unity of action of the entire native population.”\textsuperscript{14} General J. Franklin Bell, the commander of the US Army in the province of Batangas, developed a strategy designed to separate the guerrillas from their support in the population. Bell let it be known that “all consideration and regard for the inhabitants of this place cease from the day I become commander....”\textsuperscript{15} Lacking the information necessary to determine who supported the guerrillas and who did not, a system of collective punishment was adopted. Bell argued that even “neutrality should not be tolerated.”\textsuperscript{16} Only those who demonstrated active support for US forces would be spared. Bell claimed that he wished to instill such “anxiety and apprehension” among the population that no one would dare support the insurgents.\textsuperscript{17} A ruthless campaign of terror and intimidation was launched in which, according to one correspondent, American soldiers killed “men, women, children, prisoners and captive, active insurgents and suspected people, from lads of ten and up...”\textsuperscript{18}

\textit{Forced Population Resettlement}

A second tactic often utilized in counter-guerrilla warfare is the forced displacement and resettlement of civilian populations. By relocating civilians from regions of high guerrilla activity to “regroupment camps” or “strategic villages” more easily policed by the regime, this tactic is designed to deprive the guerrillas of the civilian support they need to carry on fighting. In addition, resettlement has often been combined with the creation of so-called “free-fire zones,”

\textsuperscript{15} Quoted in Ibid., p. 17.
\textsuperscript{16} Quoted in Ibid. pp. 17-18.
\textsuperscript{17} Quoted in Stanley Karnow, \textit{In Our Image: America’s Empire in the Philippines} (New York: Random House, 1989), p. 188.
\textsuperscript{18} Quoted in Ibid., p. 188.
in which any person remaining in depopulated regions may be shot on sight on the presumption of being a guerrilla or guerrilla supporter. As John McCuen describes this tactic:

The concept is simple. The entire population is evacuated from an area, regrouped, and forbidden to re-enter it without special permission. By so doing, the governing authorities remove the revolutionaries’ only real important source of strength -- the people. Without a population, the rebels are deprived of their protective screen, source of recruitment, food supply, intelligence network, and so forth.... Furthermore, the mobile forces [of the government] now have complete freedom of action, for they can attack as an enemy anyone remaining in the zone.19

Although in theory more humane than the terror tactics described above, in practice relocation can be even more deadly.20 Violence may be required to coerce people into leaving their homes and possessions for a unknown life in a far away location. The process of rapidly relocating large numbers of people, including the old, sick and very young, can also be deadly. The extraordinary expense of providing adequate subsistence, shelter and sanitation for large numbers of refugees means that starvation and disease often await relocated population regroupment camps or strategic villages.21 Many inhabitants -- including those with no connection to the guerrillas -- refuse to relocate under such conditions and thus become targets when free-fire zones are established in their villages. Sometimes, in operations more appropriately termed “depopulation” than resettlement, the population in guerrilla-active regions is simply expelled with little or no provision made for their relocation.

One of the first experiments with mass relocation in guerrilla war occurred during the Boer War from 1899-1902. In an effort to deprive the Boer guerrillas of support, the British forcibly removed over 150,000 civilians, almost all women and children, from their farms and

20 See: Rice, Wars of the Third Kind, pp. 95–98.
21 For nations willing and able to commit such expenses to resettlement, however, the violence of relocation can be mitigated. Major population resettlement campaigns involving a vast commitment of resources, for example, were carried out by the French in Algeria and by the United States in Vietnam with relatively little violence. Nevertheless, the subsequent imposition of free fire zones and the use of scorched-earth tactics resulted in widespread civilian deaths in both instances.
interned them in squalid camps.\textsuperscript{22} Over 20,000 internees died of malnutrition and disease.\textsuperscript{23} Ethiopia also used large-scale resettlement in its battle to crush the guerrilla insurgency in Tigre. From 1984 to 1986, between 700,000 and 800,000 people were uprooted and relocated to government controlled villages and camps. Between 50,000 and 200,000 perished in the process.\textsuperscript{24} Although the Ethiopian government claimed the program was a famine relief measure, the relocated populations consisted primarily of those living in strategically significant regions, not the areas most severely stricken with famine or drought.\textsuperscript{25} Most observers agree that the primary goal of relocation was to deprive the Tigrean rebels of their base of support.\textsuperscript{26} Indeed, referring directly to Mao’s famous dictum, one cadre of the Workers’ Party of Ethiopia plainly described the government’s strategy for defeating the rebellion in Tigre to a group of Tigrean peasants: “If you dry out the sea the fish will die.... We will dry out Tigre and force the bandits to give up. You are the backbone of the bandits, so we have to break you first; then we can also destroy the marrow.”\textsuperscript{27}

\textit{Scorched-Earth Warfare}

A third counter-guerrilla tactic, often used in conjunction with population resettlement, is the systematic destruction of crops, livestock, dwellings and other important infrastructure in areas of guerrilla activity. This “scorched-earth” policy serves three primary functions.\textsuperscript{28} First, it deprives the guerrillas and their supporters of food and shelter, killing them or starving them into submission. Second, it can be used to force local populations into government controlled resettlement camps and discourage refugees from returning to their homes. Finally, it can be

\begin{footnotes}
\item[27] Quoted in Kaplan, \textit{Surrender or Starve}, p. 101.
\item[28] This counter-guerrilla tactic should not be confused with more traditional “scorched-earth” policies used by retreating conventional armies in the effort to deny supplies to advancing enemies.
\end{footnotes}
used selectively as a severe punishment and deterrent for villages suspected of supporting the guerrillas.

Scorched-earth tactics have been a common feature of counter-guerrilla warfare throughout this century. The U.S. Army utilized this method in the Philippines from 1899-1902 to eliminate the source of supplies for the insurgents and to force the population into regroupment camps.29 Hundreds of thousands of Filipino civilians died during the war, many of starvation directly attributable to the scorched-earth campaign.30 Scorched-earth tactics have also been a central feature of the ongoing counter-guerrilla war in Sudan, resulting in massive famines. According to a report on the war by the human rights organization, African Rights, the Sudanese regime hoped that the famine would break the will of the people and force them into government controlled areas.31 The report concludes that "[t]he creation of famine was a deliberate government military policy. The widespread burning of villages and food crops and stealing of livestock could have no other effect. There can be no doubt... that politicians and generals were fully aware of what they were doing when they launched the scorched-earth strategy."32

Perhaps nowhere were these scorched-earth counter-guerrilla tactics applied with greater ruthlessness than in the Japanese occupation of Northern China during the early 1940's. In areas of intense guerrilla activity, Japanese tactics bordered on outright extermination. The Army adopted what it called a "three all" policy -- kill all, burn all, loot all. Although some have attributed Japanese brutality to anti-Chinese racism, Lincoln Li argues that it was primarily the result of "a kind of scorched-earth policy in reverse. Indiscriminate devastation was designed to break the will of the populace from supporting the resistance cause, and to deprive the Chinese Communist military forces of sources of manpower and food supplies."33 Likewise, Chalmers


32 Ibid., p. 93.


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Johnson suggests that the policy "aimed at destroying close cooperation that existed between the communists and the populace. The essence of the [three all policy] was to surround a given area, to kill everyone in it, and to destroy everything possible so that the area would be uninhabitable in the future."\textsuperscript{34} Approximately 19 million people in communist controlled areas of North China were rendered homeless by Japanese operations. Perhaps one million of these were killed or died of starvation and exposure.\textsuperscript{35}

Scorched-earth tactics in counter-guerrilla warfare have also been implemented through the use of aerial bombardment. For military organizations with the necessary airborne capabilities, this tactic holds the promise of reducing the high casualty rates often suffered by counter-guerrilla forces in ground operations. On the other hand, the use of this tactic is by definition indiscriminate. It seeks to terrorize and kill civilians and to destroy food crops and structures which provide sustenance and shelter for both guerrillas and civilians. Counter-guerrilla forces in El Salvador used this tactic to devastating effect. As a report by Americas Watch concluded, during the intense fighting of the early 1980's,

...aerial power was being used extensively to drive masas [civilians suspected of supporting the guerrillas], or those designated in this way, from large sections of the country that were controlled by the guerrillas. The apparent purpose was to deprive the guerrillas of sources of food and information about troop movements. In the process many hundreds of civilians were killed in aerial attacks, and many more were injured. Villages were laid waste, farm animals were killed, peasants left their homes, often without any possessions.\textsuperscript{36}

"Civic-action"

Violence is only one method used to separate civilians and guerrillas. Indeed, counter-guerrilla strategist frequently combine the brutal tactics described above with seemingly

\textsuperscript{35} Rudolph Rummel, \textit{China's Bloody Century} (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1991), p. 139. There is little hard evidence for this estimate, which should be considered a very rough approximation.
contradictory policies designed to entice the population away from the guerrillas with the prospect of rewards including money, food, land, medicine, social and political reforms or improved infrastructure. These pacification policies, commonly referred to as “civic-action” or “winning hearts and minds,” seek to address the root economic, political or social causes of the insurgency and to convince the population that cooperation with the government is in their best interest.

Programs of civic-action have been a common feature of counter-guerrilla warfare in this century, even in conflicts noted for their brutality. American forces in the Philippines, for example, combined violent reprisals against villages suspected of supporting the guerrillas with large-scale civic-action programs including sanitation, vaccination, education and food distribution. Likewise, the counter-guerrilla war waged by the Chinese Nationalist regime against Mao’s communist insurgency was characterized by “extermination campaigns” which killed millions of people. Yet, in some areas the regime also implemented rent reduction, land reform and affordable loan programs designed to redress the grievances which drove peasants to the communists and to reward the loyalty of peasants in areas of active insurgency.

Unfortunately, civic-action programs can be extremely expensive to implement, especially when there are millions of hearts and minds to be won. Few regimes have the resources or inclination to provide truly attractive bribes to such large numbers of people. Counter-guerrilla forces facing a mass-based insurgency, therefore, have seldom relied on such tactics alone. The promise of rewards for cooperation has almost always been supplemented by the threat of severe punishment for those suspected of supporting the guerrillas.

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Testing the Strategic Approach

Several specific empirical predictions follow from the strategic approach described above which can be compared to the historical record of the Soviet war in Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989 and the Civil War in Guatemala from 1978 to 1984.

prediction 1: Mass killing should be associated with counter-guerrilla military tactics. The violence associated with these tactics should be directed primarily against areas of high guerrilla activity.

prediction 2: Evidence from the historical record should reflect that leaders were motivated to resort to mass killing in the effort to defeat guerrilla insurgents by acting on their base of support in the population. Political and military leaders should also consider means short of mass killing to fight the guerrillas.

prediction 3: The strategic approach also makes two main predictions regarding counter-guerrilla wars which have not resulted in mass killing: 1) Mass killing is less likely the less support leaders believe the guerrillas receive from the population; 2) Mass killing is less likely the less guerrilla operations threaten important interests of the regime.

Guatemala

In the years between 1960 and 1996 Guatemala was ravaged by repeated waves of guerrilla insurgency and counter-guerrilla warfare. The insurgency began in 1960 when a small group of military officers launched a coup d'état against the Guatemalan regime. Although the

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coup failed, its organizers escaped capture, organized a small guerrilla force, and vowed to overthrow the government. From 1961 to 1978, however, the insurgency lacked strong support in the rural population and did not employ true guerrilla tactics. Government sponsored violence was pervasive, but remained at comparatively low levels. Beginning in 1978, however, the insurgents developed a significant following among the Guatemalan peasantry and adopted new mass-based guerrilla tactics. These fundamental changes in the nature of guerrilla tactics prompted equally fundamental changes in the regime’s strategy for defeating the insurgents. The Guatemalan regime’s effort to separate the guerrillas from their newly found civilian support resulted in a devastating campaign of mass killing.


Following their failed coup in 1960, rebel military officers fled to the countryside in Eastern Guatemala. There, they entered into an alliance with the military wing of the Guatemalan communist party, a faction which eventually came to dominate the insurgency. The insurgent forces remained very small, probably less than 500 men.\(^39\) Although they had approximately 6,000 active supporter among the local peasants, they did not develop a national, mass-based organization.\(^40\) Most peasants saw little reason to support one group of military officers against another. The guerrillas’ communist program was at worst anathema to peasant interests and at best too abstract to motivate a national rebellion. In particular, the insurgency failed to achieve broad support among the indigenous Mayan Indians who constituted the majority of Guatemala’s population.\(^41\) Rather, the insurgents operated according to the so-called “foco” theory of guerrilla warfare most famously propounded by Ernesto “Che” Guevara. As Robin Corbett describes this theory, “[d]enying the need for a mass movement or a vanguard party (and thus contradicting both Lenin and Mao Tse-Tung), Guevara argued that a small.

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mobile and hard-hitting band of guerrillas could act as the focus for the revolution... or foco, and go on to seize power."

The foco theory suggested that a small guerrilla band could spark a national revolution by staging highly visible raids and terrorist attacks in selected regions of the country. These attacks would serve to rouse the population into action by demonstrating the power and revolutionary spirit of the rebellion and by provoking an excessively repressive response on the part of government forces. Harsh government repression, in turn, would convince even more people of the need to join the revolutionaries and overthrow the regime. In its early years, therefore, the Guatemalan guerrillas focused on small-scale attacks and ambushes on police stations, military outposts and patrols. In urban areas, they staged bombings, kidnappings and assassinations of high-ranking officials.

The Guatemalan regime’s response to the insurgency escalated with the severity of guerrilla attacks. Prior to 1965, government repression remained at relatively low levels. Indeed, guerrilla leaders remained in contact with their former friends in the Army, sometimes even appearing in public in Guatemala city. In 1965 and 1966, however, the rebels launched a bold series of kidnappings, assassinations and bombings which the Guatemalan government could not ignore. From 1966 to 1967, the government carried out a brutal campaign to crush the rebellion. A state of siege was declared throughout the country. The primary objective of this campaign of “counter-terror” was the destruction of the guerrillas’ rural bases in eastern Guatemala. The Army, backed by local militia units and government organized right-wing “death squads” killed anyone suspected of supporting the guerrillas. Entire villages were razed to the ground. Mutilated bodies were left in public places as a warning to others. Between 5,000 and 10,000 people may have been killed over the course of the campaign. Since there

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42 Corbett, Guerrilla Warfare, p. 87.
44 Ibid., p. 112.
47 Schirmer, The Guatemalan Military Project, p. 36.
were no more than a few hundred guerrillas active at the time, however, most of the victims were innocent civilians. Many may actually have been government supporters.48

While the government’s counter-guerrilla campaign was shockingly violent, it’s most violent effects remained localized to the few isolated areas where the guerrillas received support from the population. The campaign succeeded in stamping out the guerilla bases in the countryside.49 Indeed, the guerrillas’ failure to protect their civilian supporters probably hurt their cause among the masses for years to come.50 In 1967, the surviving rebels were forced to shift most of their operations to urban areas.51 Others fled across the border to Mexico. For the next 15 years, various rebel groups carried out small-scale terrorist attacks and kidnappings. Government sponsored death squads waged a low-level war of counter-terror against political opposition groups and anyone suspected of collaborating with the rebels. Amnesty International estimates that more than 30,000 people were “abducted, tortured and assassinated” in the years between 1966 and 1981.52


By 1976, disappearances and assassinations at the hands of government organized death squads had become a way of life in Guatemala, especially in the cities. Although such violence took the lives of several hundred to over a thousand people each year, it never reached the level of mass killing. As in other Latin American countries such as Chile and Argentina, this level of violence proved sufficient to suppress Guatemala’s relatively small, primarily urban-based political opposition. Both the nature of the Guatemalan insurrection, however, and the tactics Guatemalan military leaders used to counter it, began to change after a massive earthquake shook the country in February 1976, killing more than 20,000 people.

49 Ibid., p. 116.
50 Jonas, The Battle for Guatemala, p. 69.
In the aftermath of the quake, over one million people were left homeless. The government did little to help the victims, mostly the rural poor. On the contrary, corrupt public officials and Army officers gained control of the distribution of international aid, often reselling it for a profit. International and domestic relief workers, missionaries and labor unionists traveled throughout the countryside, spreading new ideas and promoting political organization. In addition, the quake coincided with major changes in the economic organization of rural life. A major economic downturn in the early 1970’s, combined with a population explosion and a decline in traditional forms of agriculture, produced severe poverty throughout the countryside. Indians, who made up the majority of Guatemala’s population, and an even greater majority among the rural poor, were particularly hard hit by the economic upheaval.53

These and other social, economic and political developments dramatically increased national dissatisfaction with the Guatemalan military regime during the 1970’s. The guerrillas, in disarray or living in exile in Mexico since the crack-down of the late 1960s, reemerged intent on taking advantage of these sentiments to build a national base of support among the peasants. Unlike the guerrilla movements of the 1960, this second generation of guerrillas intended to fight a prolonged, mass-based guerrilla insurgency. Perhaps most importantly, in contrast to the predominately ladino movements of the past, the guerrillas specifically set out to win the support of Guatemala’s indigenous population.54 As Susanne Jonas notes, the insurgency abandoned the failed foco strategy of the 1960s and “transformed itself... into a force with broad popular support nationally, incorporating the indigenous population in massive numbers....”55

The rebellion spread rapidly in the late 1970’s. Violent government repression of any attempt at political organization convinced even more peasants to join the guerrillas. Indeed, David Stoll suggests that the majority of support for the guerrillas stemmed from the peasant population’s reaction to overly-harsh government repression, not from revolutionary-ideological impulses or social or economic discontent.56 The most powerful of this new generation of guerrilla groups, the so-called Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP) swelled from just over a dozen

54 Black, Garrison Guatemala, pp. 78-87.
men in 1972 to 4,000 to 6,000 regular fighters and 10,000 local, irregular forces by 1982.\(^{57}\) The guerrilla’s most powerful asset was its new-found support among the indigenous population, especially those living in Guatemala’s western and central highlands. Between 250,000 and 500,000 Indians participated in the insurgency in one form or another -- most providing food, clothing, shelter and information to the guerrillas.\(^{58}\) This new organization constituted a formidable military force. Guerrilla operations posed a substantial threat to the ability of the Guatemalan Army, itself numbering only 18,000 men, to maintain control over the country.\(^{59}\) In some areas, the guerrillas were carrying out attacks on an almost daily basis. By 1981, the Guerrillas virtually controlled eight of Guatemala’s 22 provinces and had a significant presence in eight others.\(^{60}\)

The Guatemalan regime could not fail to appreciate the significance of the changes in the nature of the guerrilla insurgency. The regime’s initial efforts to suppress the rebellion through a campaign of "selective repression" from 1978 to 1980 had failed.\(^{61}\) As Beatrice Manz notes, by 1981 "the Army sensed the guerrillas had tapped into a deep reservoir of popular discontent.... Unlike the 1960’s, the guerrilla ‘fish’ were no longer in an isolated pond but rather swimming in a very large sea."\(^{62}\) Indeed the Guatemalan Army estimated that the EGP alone had over 360,000 supporters in 1981.\(^{63}\) The victory of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua in 1979 served as a powerful warning to Guatemalan leaders of what a determined guerrilla resistance could accomplish. The Guatemalan Defense Minister recalled that "[t]his was a great threat to Guatemala. The guerrillas were well entrenched and intended to declare a portion of the highlands liberated territory."\(^{64}\)

By the early 1980’s, the Guatemalan regime under President-General Romeo Lucas realized that destroying the guerrillas directly would be all but impossible. Rather, defeating the


\(^{58}\) Arias, "Changing Indian Identity", p. 255.


\(^{64}\) Quoted in Ibid., p. 42.
insurgency would require crushing the guerrillas’ civilian support and infrastructure. Eliminating
the guerrilla’s support, in turn, would require mass killing. Beginning in 1981, Lucas launched a
major counter-guerrilla campaign in both rural and urban locations. According to Michael
McClintock, the Army’s policy “was to annihilate the guerrillas’ social base across the board in
the most seriously ‘infected’ areas....”65 Perhaps 35,000 people, the vast majority of them
civilians, were killed during the campaign.66 Nevertheless, the Army’s tactics during this period
remained disorganized and largely reactive.67 Troops responded to guerrilla attacks by
massacring local peasants and burning nearby villages, but the Army had yet to formulate a
systematic, offensive plan for defeating the insurgency. Indeed, the guerrilla resistance actually
continued to grow under the Lucas regime.

Partly in response to the perceived inability of Lucas’ regime to deal with the guerrilla
threat, Lucas was deposed in a coup by a group of young Army officers in March 1982. The new
regime, led by General Efrain Rios Montt came to power determined to crush the guerrillas by
whatever means necessary. Montt, a military professional trained in counter-guerrilla warfare in
the United States, launched an exceptionally brutal counter-guerrilla campaign which he publicly
vowed would “dry up the human sea in which the guerrilla fish swim.”68 As Guatemala’s
Deputy Chief of Staff General Alejandro Gramjo described the campaign, “here were the
villages, here is the population supporting la guerrilla from behind, and the Army attacked
everyone and we continued attacking, attacking until we cornered them and got to the point
where the [the population] was separated from the subversive leaders.... Exactly in 1982 this
strategy began.”69

Jennifer Schirmer concludes that the “searing contradiction” of the Guatemalan Army’s
strategy was that “to accomplish this ‘separation,’ certain areas are targeted for massive killings;
that is, the military must treat the civilians they are to ‘rescue’ as though they are combatants,
killing and burning all living things within the ‘secured area’.... Nor are killings accidental
‘abuses’ or ‘excesses’; rather, they represent a scientifically precise, sustained orchestration of a

66 Schirmer, The Guatemalan Military Project, p. 44.
67 Ibid., p. 44.
68 Michael Richards, “Cosmopolitan World View and Counterinsurgency in Guatemala,” Anthropological
systematic, intentional massive campaign of extermination." 70 75,000 people, nearly all civilians, were slaughtered in 18 months, most in the first eight months of the campaign. 71 In the area of highest guerrilla activity, known as the Ixil Triangle, approximately one-third of the local population may have been killed. 72

Despite the massive violence associated with the campaign, the Guatemalan Army's brutality was not primarily the result of bloodthirsty leaders, undisciplined troops or racism directed against the guerrilla's indigenous supporters. Although each of these factors probably contributed to the violence, as I will describe below, the actions of the Guatemalan military, as well as statements made by Guatemalan leaders, suggest that the brutality of the campaign is best understood as a calculated military response on the part of the regime to the exigencies of mass-based counter-guerrilla warfare.

Guatemala's military leaders do not appear to have preferred killing for killing's sake. Indeed, at the same time that the regime massively stepped-up its use of violence against the civilian population, it also launched a series of "positive" economic, social and political projects designed to address the root causes of the insurgency and win the hearts and minds of the population. Atrocities were too widespread to reflect the uncoordinated actions of poorly disciplined troops. Rather, as Allan Nairn argues, the war in Guatemala was "a blood-bath not because the Guatemalan soldiers are irrational but because their enemy is a large portion of their own people and to defeat them they must kill them." 73 Finally, racism seems unlikely to be the main cause of the bloodshed. Violence against civilians targeted the areas of greatest guerrilla activity, not Indians per-se, and many Spanish-speaking ladinos were also slaughtered during the campaign. 74

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69 Quoted in Schirmer, The Guatemalan Military Project, p. 49.


71 Schirmer, The Guatemalan Military Project, p. 44.

72 Ibid., p. 56.


Counter-Guerrilla Tactics in Guatemala

The Guatemalan regime employed all four tactics of counter-guerrilla warfare described in the first section of this chapter:

Counter-Terror

The Army under Rios Montt continued to wage a violent war of counter-terror, particularly in the countryside. As noted above, this tactic had been in widespread use since 1978. Leaders of Rios Montt’s regime believed that Lucas’ counter-terror tactics had failed, however, because they had been too reactive and indiscriminate. What the new leaders objected to was not the killing of civilians per-se, but the lack of an offensive, systematic plan for the use of violence.75 Indeed, Rios Montt himself frankly stated that “the problem of war is not just a question of who is shooting. For each one who is shooting there are ten working behind him.”76 Rios Montt’s Press Secretary explained,

“The guerrillas won over many Indian collaborators. . . . Therefore, the Indians were subversives, right? And how do you fight subversion? Clearly you had to kill Indians because they were collaborating with subversion. And then they [presumably human rights advocates] would say, ‘you’re massacring innocent people.’ But they weren’t innocent. They had sold out to subversion.”77

Beginning in 1982, the Guatemalan military sought to apply counter-terror with “scientific” precision designed to target specifically those individuals and villages which Army intelligence had determined to be guerrilla supporters. As General Gramajo described the strategy, “it was determined village by village if each was infiltrated and consciously or unconsciously involved [with the guerrillas].”78 Another Army officer explained that the offensive was “elaborated down to the last detail and the enemy, which had to be eliminated,

77 Quoted Ibid., p. A23.
very carefully defined."79 Rios Montt rejected the practice of previous regimes of using death squads to secretly abduct and murder suspected leftists. On the contrary, he said he wanted to send a clear message to guerrilla supporters: "Whoever is against the... government, whoever doesn't surrender, I'm going to shoot. It is preferable that it be known that 20 people were shot, and not just that 20 bodies have appeared by the side of the road."80

Despite the widespread use of torture to extract information from captured guerrillas, in practice, such careful discrimination proved nearly impossible.81 Crude methods were used to identify guerrilla supporters. Labor organizers, community leaders or educated persons were often executed without provocation. Anyone showing fear in the presence of soldiers or attempting to flee the advancing Army was assumed to be a guerrilla supporter and shot.82

In many cases, the Army did not even attempt to determine individual guilt, instead targeting entire villages suspected of collaborating with the guerrillas. Villages were categorized into one of three color-coded zones. Villages in "red zones" were to be completely destroyed and their inhabitants killed. Villages in "pink zones" would be attacked but not leveled. Those in "white zones" were considered friendly and left untouched. As Latin America Regional Reports observed in 1983, "The killing is sometimes selective, with community leaders, such as teachers or church activists, and their families being singled out. In other instances whole villages have been wiped out. Everything depends on the Army's perception of the level of local support for the guerrillas."83

The difficulty of distinguishing civilians from guerrillas, however, was not the only reason for the killing of civilians. Civilians were not merely unintentional victims of the Army's counter-terror operations. Rather, as James Morrissey argues, in many cases,

[the] massive retaliation which followed guerrilla activities was deliberately aimed, not at the guerrillas, but at civilian populations anywhere near where the guerrillas had operated.... The intent was clearly not only to make the people reluctant to have anything to do with the guerrillas, but to make the consequences

79 Ibid., p. 48.
81 Schirmer, The Guatemalan Military Project, pp. 52-55.
of the guerrillas' operations so repugnant that the guerrillas themselves would refrain from action rather that risk having people suffer such barbarism.  

Even women and children were sometimes considered legitimate targets. The Guatemalan Army believed that women and children contributed to supporting the guerrillas. As Christopher Dickey has documented, "senior Army officials stated openly that they would have to wipe out what they called "family nuclei," including children whom they considered essential to the revolutionary organizations in the countryside." One Army lieutenant justified his involvement in the massacre of women by arguing that "[w]e have to finish them all off, to put an end to the guerrillas. The women are preparing their food. If we finish them off, things will soon calm down." Children were killed because they were considered potential future recruits for the guerrillas. The killing of women and children, often carried out in an exceptionally grisly manner, may also have been used to demonstrate to other individuals and villages what would happen to those who supported the guerrillas.

Population Resettlement

The regime's second counter-guerrilla tactic, population resettlement, was new to the Guatemalan civil war. As a secret Army General Staff document stated, a primary object of the regime's counter-insurgency strategy was to "deny the guerrillas access to the civilian population, from which it supports itself and within which it hides." Forcing villagers from their homes, however, often required the massive use of violence. Villages in areas of high guerrilla activity were typically burned to the ground. Villagers were forced to choose between fleeing to remote, mountainous regions of the country -- where they continued to be hunted by the Army -- or agreeing to relocate to government controlled areas. Starvation, disease and exposure also took a great toll among those who chose to flee. Although as many as 200,000 people managed to escape across the border to refugee camps in Mexico, the Army sought to

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84 Quoted in Stoll, Between Two Armies, p. 84
86 Falla, Massacres in the Jungle, p. 89.
prevent this exodus, fearing that the camps would serve as protected bases for guerrillas. As Schirmer documents, the Army sought to "sever the guerrillas from their civilian support network. This meant literally emptying the local population from its socio-cultural and geographic habitat in order to create logistical and recruitment difficulties of every order. Mass killing... was thus inexorable to these campaigns."

Far more people were forcibly driven from their homes than could be resettled in the camps known as "model villages." Originally, the regime planned to build nearly 50 new villages housing 100,000 people. This project, however, proved extraordinarily expensive and only half of the villages were ultimately built. Yet the counter-guerrilla campaign displaced over one million people -- half of the Indian population in the guerrilla-active areas. Living conditions in the model villages were better than existence in the jungles and mountains, but most villagers still resented the loss of freedom and disruption of their traditional ways of life. Although the government promised amnesty to guerrilla supporters if they agreed to settle in government controlled areas, many refugees were summarily executed. Some observers believed that the villages were little more than "forced internment and political re-education" camps. As one reporter described the villages in 1988, "it is the firm threat of Army terror that makes the system work. The Army seldom needs to kill civilians nowadays; the Indians remember its pre-1982 massacres, and they know they will be killed if they fail to follow instructions or attempt to leave the hamlet."

**Scorched-Earth Warfare**

The Guatemalan Army's third and most devastating counter-guerrilla tactic was the widespread application of scorched-earth warfare. In areas of suspected guerrilla activity, the Army systematically burned entire villages to the ground, destroyed crops and slaughtered...
livestock. Soldiers reportedly returned to the same villages again and again to destroy any rebuilt homes or newly planted crops. Vast swaths of jungle were intentionally burned in the effort to deny cover to the guerrillas. In some areas the devastation was so complete that climate and rainfall patterns appear to have been permanently altered.

The scorched-earth policy seems to have served two main purposes. First, by burning villages and destroying crops and livestock, the Army sought to deprive the guerrillas of the infrastructure they needed to continue fighting. The second purpose of scorched-earth warfare was closely linked to the Army’s population resettlement campaign. By rendering large areas of the countryside uninhabitable, the Army ensured that peasants who had been forced into the model villages would have no incentive to try to return to their homes. By destroying crops, livestock and all other sources of economic production, the Army also hoped to force peasants who had fled to the mountains to surrender. Thus, Cultural Survival Quarterly reported in 1988 that the Army “has succeeded in choking off the mountainous outback economically, cutting the flow of commerce and thus creating severe hardship for both the remaining refugees and the guerrillas.” According to a 1982 Americas Watch report, the Army’s scorched-earth tactics were “a deliberate policy of forcing peasants to near starvation” designed to force villagers into government controlled areas – the only places where food was available.

Civic-action

In addition to the brutal counter-guerrilla tactics described above, the Guatemalan regime under Rios Montt introduced a fourth strategy designed to reduce support for the insurgency. Rather than relying on violence and intimidation, this strategy sought to win the hearts and minds of the peasants with the promise of security and economic development. These so-called “civic-action” programs represented the “beans” in what Guatemalan leaders called the “guns and

96 Americas Watch, Creating a Desolation and Calling it Peace (New York: Americas Watch, 1983).
98 Jonas, The Battle for Guatemala, p. 149.
beans” counter-insurgency strategy. In many ways, the regime believed this strategy was even more important than the strictly military operations described above. Guatemalan leaders claimed that only 30 percent of their efforts were devoted to the “guns” aspect of their strategy, with the remaining 70 percent devoted to “beans.”102 Beginning in 1982, the Army created “Civil Affairs Units” tasked with providing villages in government controlled areas with food and clean water, medical care, improved roads, electrical power and other community oriented projects. The regime also implemented a number of political and social reforms. As a Guatemalan Army officer explained the strategy: “War is not only won with weapons. This National Plan of Security and Development [civic-action] of ours means bringing life [and] revenue to a people, to a community.... There is a saying here in Guatemala: you get more with honey than with vinegar.”103

Civic-action programs served two main purposes. First, civic-action provided a positive incentive to draw people into government controlled areas in addition to the numerous violent inducements of the resettlement campaign. The model villages were designed to look attractive, with electric power and other modern amenities. Thus, one Army officer claimed that the model villages were intended to “fill [the refugees] up in the mountains looking down... with questions to put to [the guerrillas] who had told them that everything was abandoned after the massacres of the Army.”104 Another officer described this aspect of the program in simpler terms: “If you are with us we’ll feed you; if not, we’ll kill you.”105

Civic-action programs served a deeper purpose as well. They were designed to address what the Army perceived to be the root causes of the insurgency and to move from simply separating the population from the guerrillas to enlisting them in defeating the insurgency. In other words, the regime sought to “win the hearts and minds” of the population. This new strategy marked a major shift from the Army’s earlier thinking, especially under the Lucas regime. The 1982 Civic-action plan concluded that the causes of subversion were “based on social injustice, political rivalry, unequal development, and the dramas of hunger, unemployment

103 Ibid., p. 71.
104 Ibid., p. 74.
and poverty; but it can be controlled if we attempt to solve these problems.”\textsuperscript{106} Likewise, a 1984 military handbook recommended that:

“[O]perations of security, development, counter-subversive and ideological warfare will be conducted. In other words, having once attained security, the Army penetrates the population with the incentive for development, to correct the vulnerability of abandonment in our society in which [the population] has lived and which the subversion has exploited very efficiently.”

In addition to development programs, the Guatemalan Army created a system of “civil defense patrols” in which local population were required to assist the Army in the war against the guerrillas. By mid-1983 Rios Montt claimed that over 300,000 people had been “recruited” into the patrols.\textsuperscript{107} 5000 Indians were also enlisted in the regular Army. The patrols served several purposes. They facilitated closer cooperation between the population and the Army. They forced the population to participate in its own defense. Perhaps most importantly, civil defense patrols (and several other civic-action programs) were designed by the Army to help bridge the cultural and social gap between Guatemala’s indigenous people and the dominant Spanish-speaking ladinas who controlled the government and the Army.

The Guatemalan regime’s civic-action and development programs ultimately proved far less appealing in practice then they did in theory.\textsuperscript{108} As noted above, conditions in the model villages were far from idyllic. Although the villages had electricity and clean water, villagers often lacked sufficient land to provide subsistence for their families. Many became dependent on government aid. Residents of model villages also resented their loss of personal freedom. Although some indigenous people were successfully integrated into the war against the guerrillas, most appear to have participated in the patrols only under pressure from the Army.

Despite these serious problems, Guatemala’s civic-action programs appear to have been a genuine attempt by the regime to help defeat the insurgency through methods other than violence. To be sure, these programs were not motivated by the altruistic desire to “elevate the population,” as government propaganda portrayed it. Nevertheless, government documents and

\textsuperscript{106} Quoted in Schirmer, \textit{The Guatemalan Military Project}, p. 62.
\textsuperscript{107} McClintock, \textit{The American Connection}, vol 2, pp. 249-253.
statements of high ranking Guatemalan officials strongly suggest that the regime seriously intended civic-action programs to address poverty and inequality -- the factors it perceived to be the root causes of the insurgency.\textsuperscript{109} Lack of resources, rather than lack of commitment, was probably the most important reason for the deficiencies of civic-action in Guatemala.

\textit{Assessing the Effectiveness of Guatemala's Counter-Guerrilla Strategy}

Most observers agree that the Guatemalan Army's strategy after 1982 was remarkably effective at crushing the guerrilla insurgency.\textsuperscript{110} The bloody counter-guerrilla campaign succeeded in military terms. Guerrilla operations were reduced to sporadic terrorist attacks and the immediate threat of a guerrilla victory was squelched. Active guerrilla members were reduced from 6,000 or more in 1982 to between 1,000 and 1,200 by 1988 -- with most of these having been pushed into the most remote regions of Guatemala or across the border to Mexico.\textsuperscript{111} Most importantly, the guerrillas were almost completely severed from their base of support in the population.\textsuperscript{112}

Although the violent strategy was a clear "success" in the short-term, its long-term effectiveness is more difficult to assess. The guerrillas, while severely weakened, were not completely defeated. The Army's brutal tactics had turned much of the Guatemalan population against the regime. Government repression continued into the 1990's, albeit at much lower levels than in the period from 1979 to 1983. As Rachel McCleary argues: "Even though the military had won the war tactically, it had no clear criteria for ending state violence."\textsuperscript{113} Increasing international pressure for democratic and human rights reform was brought to bear on the regime. Ríos Montt was overthrown in a coup in 1983. Since then the military has gradually accepted the need to cede political control to civilians. In 1994, the civilian government agreed to allow refugees of the war to return to their homes -- or what remained of them. In 1996, a

\begin{itemize}
  \item\textsuperscript{109} Schirmer, \textit{The Guatemalan Military Project}, pp. 64-124.
  \item\textsuperscript{111} Arbuckle, "Counterinsurgency the Guatemalan Way," p. 1254.
\end{itemize}
peace accord was signed with the guerrillas which abolished the civil patrol system and obliged the military to reduce its forces and orient itself for national defense rather than domestic operations. Some observers have noted that despite these concessions, the military has managed to maintain considerable influence over certain aspects of the political process in Guatemala.\textsuperscript{114} Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that three decades of civil war in Guatemala were brought to an end not simply by the application of massive violence, but also by the willingness on the part of the Guatemalan military to agree to significant political reforms.

\textit{Afghanistan}

Soviet leaders did not enter the war in Afghanistan in 1979 expecting to fight a bloody campaign against the civilian population. They hoped that the war would be quick and inexpensive, and that the main burden of the conflict would be born by their Afghan allies. Soviet leaders understood that the incumbent Afghan communist regime was unpopular with the Afghan population, but they believed that with some minor reforms, support for the resistance would dry up. Reforms, however, failed to produce the desired results, and the Afghan armed forces soon proved themselves completely unreliable. As the Soviets were drawn deeper into the military confrontation with the guerrilla resistance, Soviet commanders realized that their conventional military tactics were poorly suited to the kind of combat they encountered in Afghanistan. In an effort to defeat the guerrillas while keeping their own costs (in both lives and Rubbles) to a minimum, the Soviets increasingly resorted to violent attacks against the civilian population. By 1987 between one million and 1.5 million people, the great majority civilians, had died, and nearly one-third of the population had fled the country.\textsuperscript{115}

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The assault on the civilian population was not primarily the result of "frustrated" or "undisciplined" Soviet troops or of racist Russian hatred of the Afghani people.\textsuperscript{116} These factors undoubtedly played a role in increasing the bloodshed, but as I will describe in greater detail below, three kinds of evidence suggest that they were the not most important reasons for the violence against civilians. First, there is at least limited evidence from Soviet sources indicating a systematic policy of killing civilians. Second, the killing of civilians was too common and the pattern of killing operations too regular to have been the result of unruly troops.\textsuperscript{117} Finally, the fact that the killing of civilians was focused on areas of high guerrilla activity, while other areas of Afghanistan were left untouched or even supplied with aid, suggests that chauvinism was not the primary motive for the slaughter.\textsuperscript{118}

The participation of the Afghan Army in numerous atrocities against civilians also suggests that racism was not the driving force behind the killing. Rather, as David Isby concluded in 1983, "[i]t is the nature of the Afghan resistance that has resulted in some of the Soviet decisions about how to conduct operations and tactics. The Afghans are a nation in arms against the Soviets, but with no centralised command. The Soviets must therefore make war not just against the forces in the field but against the people as a whole."\textsuperscript{119}

\textit{Background to the Soviet Invasion}

In April 1978, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), an armed communist movement with only a few thousand members, seized control of Afghanistan, a country of between 15.5 and 17 million people, in a coup d'etat.\textsuperscript{120} The new regime immediately

\textsuperscript{116} Mark Urban's otherwise excellent work, for example, acknowledges a policy of "deliberate depopulation" in certain areas but argues that "this does not amount to evidence of a centrally organised national policy." Instead Urban speculates that as in "past guerrilla wars [such as Vietnam]," the violence may be explained "in terms of indiscipline, frustration and a sense of superiority on the part of the soldiers concerned." See: Mark Urban, \textit{War In Afghanistan} (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), pp. 110-111.

\textsuperscript{117} For the most well-documented description of Soviet operations against civilians, see: Jeri Laber and Barnett R. Rubin, \textit{A Nation is Dying} (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988).


launched a wave of violent repression, killing approximately 10,000 members of the former regime and their supporters (including the President and 17 members of his family), and imprisoning between 14,000 and 20,000 more. The PDPA then proceeded to launch a variety of programs designed to rapidly socialize the Afghani society and economy. Many of these initiatives violated deeply held religious beliefs and cultural traditions of the great majority of the Afghani people.

Popular opposition to the regime spread quickly and soon took the form of the armed guerrilla resistance known as the Mujahideen (fighters for the faith). Opposition was particularly strong in rural regions which tended to be highly conservative and where the most individuals were affected by the regime’s radical agricultural policies. Major uprisings occurred throughout the country. Large numbers of Afghan soldiers (perhaps more than 50 percent of the Army by the end of 1979) defected and joined the rebels. Factional fighting plagued the PDPA. By the Spring of 1979, the survival of the Afghani regime appeared to be in jeopardy.

Leaders in the Soviet Union viewed the developments occurring just across its southern border with grave concern. The Soviets had supported the PDPA regime from the start, but by the fall of 1979 they had completely lost faith in its new leader, Hafizullah Amin, who had seized power in a coup in September of that year. The Soviets feared that the Afghan regime had been infiltrated by the CIA and might be replaced by a government hostile to the Soviet Union. Soviet leaders also feared an international loss of credibility if a communist revolution was defeated by popular insurrection so close to the Soviet Union. They believed they had a commitment to support the fledgling communist movement in Afghanistan by whatever means necessary.

In early 1979, the Kremlin decided to send thousands of Soviet military advisors and a massive quantity of military equipment to Afghanistan in an effort to prop up the regime. Most members of the Politburo, including Premier Leonid Breshnev, initially opposed sending Soviet

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troops into battle in Afghanistan. By the end of 1979, however, growing popular resistance and Soviet distrust of Amin appears to have convinced Soviet leaders that direct military intervention was necessary. On December 25th, the USSR invaded Afghanistan. Soviet forces helped depose Amin and installed Babrak Karmal, whose first official act was to request immediate Soviet "military assistance" for Afghanistan.

Soviet leaders hoped that Karmal, who vowed to repeal many of the more radical and violent policies of the previous two years, would find greater support among the Afghan people. The result was precisely the opposite. Afghans perceived the new regime as the puppet of a godless and anti-Islamic foreign power. Popular resistance multiplied. Many who had supported or been indifferent to the earlier regime joined the opposition. Whole brigades defected from the Afghan Army to the Mujahideen. Karmal was virtually impotent to suppress the massive revolt. Much of the countryside, and even some larger cities, was under rebel control. Soviet military leaders realized that without direct Soviet intervention against the Mujahideen the Kabul regime might crumble.

The Soviet Union and the War Against the Mujahideen

It appears that the Soviet Union did not originally plan to fight a counter-guerrilla war in Afghanistan. From 1980 until mid-1981, Soviet counter-guerrilla operations remained tentative. The Soviets hoped to wage a short, low-cost war. Indeed, early Soviet plans called for withdrawing most military forces after six months. The Soviet Army pursued a largely conventional strategy which focused on securing major airfields, government centers and roads. The Soviets sought to leave direct confrontation with the rebels to the Afghan Army. This strategy proved poorly suited to the war in Afghanistan. Moreover, the Afghan Army

126 Urban, War In Afghanistan, pp. 53-56.
was unable to mount effective operations of any kind during this period, giving the Mujahideen a free hand in many areas of countryside.

Very little direct evidence on the thinking of Soviet military leaders has been made public, but numerous reports of Soviet tactics and military operations are available. On the basis of these reports, most analysts surmise that during the second half of 1980, Soviet military leaders had recognized the deficiencies of their initial strategy and organization and began to adapt their forces and strategy in response to their experiences. In addition to technical and organizational innovations such as the greater use of air power and smaller, more independent fighting units, the new Soviet strategy also included increasingly violent attacks on the civilian population. By 1984, these "special operations" had become the major focus of Soviet strategy. Soviet tactics took on the familiar pattern of counter-guerrilla operations described in the introduction to this chapter.

The new Soviet strategy appeared to be based on the understanding that the Mujahideen depended on the support of the local population for food, shelter and information. As Henry Bradsher concludes, "at first the Soviet Army sought out the Mujahideen to fight... But soon Soviet frustration at being unable to come to grips with the elusive guerrillas caused a shift to trying to destroy the popular base of support for the resistance." Likewise, Hassan M. Kakar argues that the Soviets appeared to have concluded that the "Mujahideen had to be detached from the people. As guerrilla fighters, they could not be a viable force without the support of local populations. Hence, the Soviets felt it necessary to suppress defenseless civilians by killing them indiscriminately, by compelling them to flee abroad and by destroying their crops and means of irrigation, the basis of their livelihood."

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The Soviet strategy also seems to have been influenced by the desire of Soviet leaders to keep the costs of the war as low as possible.135 Soviet forces in Afghanistan reached a peak of 115,000 troops (compared to 535,000 US troops in Vietnam) in 1986.136 The Soviets never sought to occupy or even permanently control most areas of Afghanistan, instead continuing to focus on major roads, urban centers and military garrisons and the critical region along the border with Pakistan. As Alex Alexiev concludes, this strategy was "very likely due to the realization that such a military solution [a decisive defeat of the Mujahideen] is not obtainable short of a dramatic intensification of the Soviet effort entailing massive and perhaps intolerable personnel loss and economic and political costs."137 Soviet forces relied extensively on the use of air power, perhaps to avoid the high casualties associated with ground operations in counter-guerrilla warfare. Costly, but potentially less violent tactics such as population resettlement and civic-action also played a relatively smaller role in Soviet strategy than in Guatemala.138

Counter-Guerrilla Tactics in Afghanistan

Counter-Terror

Throughout the war, Soviet and Afghan forces employed counter-terror tactics against civilians suspected of supporting guerrillas. As Jeri Laber and Barnett Rubin have documented, "[t]he strategy of the Soviets and the Afghan government has been to spread terror in the country so that villagers will either be afraid to assist the resistance fighters who depend on them for food and shelter or be forced to leave."139 Executions were often carried out with extreme savagery and in full public view, presumably to further intimidate the populations.140 Since the Soviets generally lacked the intelligence to identify guerrilla supporters on an individual basis, entire

140 Ibid., p. 716.
villages, including women and children were often slaughtered. Two defectors from the Soviet Army claimed that these atrocities were not merely the actions of out of control troops. Rather, as they described a typical operation: "An officer decides to have a village searched to see if there are any rebels in it.... What usually happens is we found a cartridge or a bullet. The officers said: 'This is a bandit village; it must be destroyed.'... The men and young men are usually shot right where they are. And the women, what they do is try to kill them with grenades."\(^\text{141}\)

The toll of Soviet counter-terror operations was exacerbated by the frequent use of air power in reprisal attacks on Afghan villages. According to one estimate, aerial bombardment was the most common cause of civilian casualties during the war, accounting for 46 percent of all deaths and injuries.\(^\text{142}\) Although the evidence is not conclusive, there are numerous reports that the Soviets used chemical weapons in some aerial attacks.\(^\text{143}\) Many deaths resulting from aerial bombardment were probably the unintentional "collateral damage" of inaccurate Soviet weapons -- especially high altitude bombers. There is strong evidence that bombardment was frequently used to punish entire villages suspected of aiding the guerrillas.\(^\text{144}\) Indeed, perhaps the majority of aerial attacks were carried out by theoretically more discriminating helicopter gun ships. As Rubin concludes: "Bombing conveyed to a village and its neighbors as collectives the message that supporting the resistance had a cost."\(^\text{145}\) Alexander Rutskoi, a fighter pilot in Afghanistan who would later become the vice-president of Russia under Boris Yeltsin, reportedly acknowledged the use of these tactics. Viktor Ivanenko, the head of the KGB, told a reporter that during a conversation with Rutskoi regarding the Russian war in Chechnya in 1995, Rutskoi suggested that Russia should use the same approach he had employed in Afghanistan:


“A kishlak [village] fires at us and kills someone. I send a couple of planes and there is nothing left of the kishlak. After I’ve burned a couple of kishlaks they stop shooting.”

In the cities, the Afghan secret service, the KHAD, waged its own war of counter-terror against the population. Suspected political opponents of the regime were subject to arbitrary arrest, torture and execution. After the Russian withdrawal, a former representative of the KHAD estimated that 150,000 people had been arrested during the Soviet occupation. Executions do appear to have decreased under the Karmal regime, and most were conducted with at least some legal process. Nevertheless, one former Afghan judicial official stated that over 8,000 people were put to death from 1980 to 1988.

**Population Resettlement or Depopulation?**

Soviet military operations strongly suggest that forced population resettlement was a major focus of counter-guerrilla warfare in Afghanistan. Although direct evidence of Soviet intentions is limited, most analysts and observers of the war have concluded that the Soviets adopted an intentional policy of attacking villages in areas of high guerrilla activity in the effort to force the population into flight. “Free-fire zones” were established in depopulated areas, permitting Soviet forces to shoot anything that moved. In addition to the tens of thousands killed directly in attacks on villages, this policy eventually resulted in one of the most massive refugee movements in modern history. Approximately five million people out of a total pre-war population of between 15.5 and 17 million had fled the country by the early 1990’s (the great

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149 Ibid., p. 137.  
majority across the border to Pakistan). Two million more became internal refugees.\textsuperscript{152} Many refugees died during the difficult journey over mountain passes to Pakistan.\textsuperscript{153}

The exodus was even more substantial in areas of intense guerrilla activity. Claude Malhuret, the executive director of the Paris-based human rights group Doctors Without Borders, estimated in 1983 that the Soviets had killed or expelled nearly half of the population in areas controlled by the guerrillas.\textsuperscript{154} As Edgar O’Ballance concludes: “The Soviets were reversing conditions conducive to the operation of Mao Tse-Tung’s theory of guerrilla warfare, based on the ‘guerrilla fish’ swimming and hiding in the ‘sea of the people.’ The Soviets were draining away the ‘sea’ by removing the inhabitants, and so making it harder for the Mujahideen... to operate, as they were being deprived of shelter food and information.”\textsuperscript{155}

During the first several years of the war, the Soviets made virtually no effort to direct the flow of refugees. Although so-called “displaced persons camps” were established outside major cities, the Soviets did not seem to have an organized plan for relocating refugees within Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{156} For this reason Soviet operations in Afghanistan have often been referred to as “depopulation” rather than resettlement.\textsuperscript{157} Some observers have suggested that the Soviets hoped to encourage refugee flows across the border to the massive camps in Pakistan, where the burden of their care would fall on others. This seems unlikely, however, since the Soviets knew that the camps in Pakistan served as bases for guerrilla incursions and a major source of Mujahideen recruits. Indeed, there are numerous reports of Soviets attacking or turning back refugee columns heading for the border.\textsuperscript{158} It seems more likely, therefore, that the Soviets -- lacking the resources necessary to provide for domestic relocation programs or to seal-off the border and prevent the exodus to Pakistan -- simply hoped refugees would relocate to areas of lesser guerrilla activity within Afghanistan, especially in and around the major cities where Soviet control was greatest.

\textsuperscript{152} Boulouque, “Communism in Afghanistan,” p. 717.
\textsuperscript{153} Kakar, Afghanistan. The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response, p. 239.
\textsuperscript{154} Malhuret, “Report From Afghanistan,” p. 431.
\textsuperscript{155} O’Ballance, Afghan Wars, p. 97. See also: Girardet, Afghanistan: The Soviet War, p. 41.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., p. 111.
\textsuperscript{158} Laber and Rubin. A Nation is Dying, pp. xiv.
As the war dragged on, at least some efforts were made to relocate population of guerrilla active areas. In 1986, for example, the Afghan government launched a project to deport over 300,000 people from several eastern provinces under control of the Mujahideen to Afghanistan’s barren Western deserts. As O’Ballance notes, “[t]he ostensible reason was to take people from overcrowded areas to develop the economy in south-western parts of the country by bringing virgin land under cultivation. The real reason was to drain off people from some of the Mujahideen ‘liberated zones.’”159

Scorched-Earth Warfare

Scorched-earth tactics also played a significant role in Soviet counter-guerrilla strategy.160 In areas of high guerrilla activity Soviet forces systematically burned crops and dwellings. Vast swaths of territory were reduced to wasteland. Incendiary weapons, including napalm and phosphorous cluster munitions, were used to burn crops from the air.161 Entire herds of livestock were slaughtered or confiscated. Irrigation systems were intentionally destroyed, rendering agriculture in Afghanistan’s arid climate all but impossible.162 There are also reports of the poisoning of grain stores and water supplies.163 Houses and agricultural fields were heavily mined.164 Largely as a consequence of these tactics and the resulting exodus of the rural population, agricultural production in Afghanistan in 1984 had fallen by 75 to 80 percent from its pre-1979 levels.165

Direct evidence of Soviet intentions is once more lacking, but analysts and scholars have suggested three possible functions of scorched-earth warfare in Soviet-Afghan counter-guerrilla strategy. First, these tactics may simply have been another way of punishing villages suspected

161 Laber and Rubin, A Nation is Dying, pp. 77-104, and Kakar, Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response, pp. 60-61.
163 Laber and Rubin, A Nation is Dying, pp. 77-104, and Kakar, Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response, p. 239.
164 Laber and Rubin, A Nation is Dying, pp. 42-48.
of supporting the Mujahideen.\textsuperscript{166} Second, scorched-earth warfare, particularly the use of mines, supported the policy of depopulation by rendering certain areas of the country permanently uninhabitable, thereby discouraging refugees from returning to their homes.\textsuperscript{167} Finally, and perhaps most importantly, these tactics seem to have been intended to destroy the infrastructure upon which guerrilla forces relied for food and shelter.\textsuperscript{168}

\textit{Civic-Action}

The counter-insurgency strategy of the Soviet Union and the Afghani communist regime did not rely exclusively on violence. Positive inducements were also employed to gain the support (or at least neutrality) of the population, and to address the root causes of the rebellion. Winning the “hearts and minds” of the Afghani population was never the primary objective Soviet-Afghan counter-guerrilla strategy, but such policies did constitute an increasingly important compliment to strictly military operations as the war dragged on.

Soviet-Afghan policies in the early stages of the conflict aimed less at providing new benefits to the population than at reversing the policies of 1978-1979 which had provoked the rebellion in the first place. Many of the regime’s anti-religious laws were repealed or no longer enforced. The Kabul regime also rebuilt damaged mosques and constructed over 100 new ones.\textsuperscript{169}

Land reform had been one of the most detested of the communist regime’s policies, generating powerful enemies among the religious and village leaders whose land was confiscated and receiving little support even from those who directly benefited from it.\textsuperscript{170} In 1981, the Karmal regime, under pressure from the Soviets, substantially revised the land reform program in an effort to regain popular support in the countryside. Confiscated land was returned or compensation paid to key groups including religious and village leaders, officers in the Afghan

\textsuperscript{166} Laber and Rubin, \textit{A Nation is Dying}, pp. 9-42.

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military, and farmers who agreed to sell their harvest to the state. These groups were also exempted from the acreage ceilings imposed by the land reform. The distribution of land gave priority to peasants with sons in the Afghan military. Beneficial treatment was granted to peasants who grew cash crops rather than food crops which might be used to feed the Mujahideen. As Rubin argues, these changes “effectively transformed land reform into a counterinsurgency measure. Ownership of land became a privilege that the state would protect in return for allegiance.”171

When these efforts failed to win back a significant portion of the population, more direct inducements were employed. Money and even weapons were offered to village leaders who supported the regime.172 Political reforms were instituted, allowing for greater representation at the local level.173 Government jobs and economic development projects were awarded in an effort to win the support of key villages or ethnic groups.174 The Afghan government also implemented a program designed to lure refugees back from Pakistan with the promise of land and monetary rewards.175

These positive measures, however, were combined with further violent counter-guerrilla operations to bring increasing pressure on the rural population to cease their support for the guerrillas. As Anthony Cordesman and Abraham Wagner observe, Soviet and Afghan forces utilized a “mix of carefully targeted attacks, bribes, and other activities designed to win political control rather than defeat the Mujahideen in battle. The mix of ruthless ‘carrot and stick’ tactics was more successful than the largely military tactics the USSR had used earlier, but it still could not win control of the countryside.”176

174 Ibid., p. 188.
175 Bradsher, Afghanistan and the Soviet Union, p. 211 and Laber and Rubin, A Nation is Dying, p. xv.
Assessing the Effectiveness of the Soviet-Afghan Counter-Guerrilla Strategy

As in Guatemala, the overall success of the Soviet's counter-guerrilla strategy is somewhat difficult to assess. Although the Soviet Union agreed to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan in 1988, many analysts do not attribute the withdrawal primarily to a Soviet military defeat. Despite the fact that the Soviets never devoted their full resources to the war, they prevailed in almost every military confrontation with the Mujahideen. The total number of Soviet troops killed during the war was less than 15,000 (compared to over 55,000 American deaths in the Vietnam war). Contrary to popular belief, the provision of "Stinger" anti-aircraft missiles by the U.S. to the Mujahideen does not appear to have made a decisive military contribution to the war. The Soviets probably could have continued to shoulder the economic burden of the war for at least several more years. As late as 1986, Mark Urban suggested that "in purely military terms the Soviets and their Afghan allies are winning."

While the Soviets may not have lost the war, however, neither were they able to win it. They were unable to completely seal off the border with Pakistan from which the Mujahideen received supplies and recruits. Perhaps more importantly, Soviet-Afghan operations were unable to destroy the guerrillas' civilian support network within Afghanistan. Thus, Cordesman and Wagner's analysis of the war concludes:

"[T]he Soviets repeated many aspects of the American experience in [Vietnam]. They were able to win most military encounters, but they were not able to occupy the countryside, and they faced an insuperable military problem: they could not defeat an aroused people and were committed to backing a government that lacked popular support.... Nothing short of the destruction of the people could allow Soviet forces to defeat the enemy in the countryside and outside major urban areas and strong points. Nothing short of a truly massive Soviet military presence five to six times the forces the USSR deployed could have allowed them

177 Ibid., p. 10.
180 Urban, War In Afghanistan, p. 221.
to occupy the territory they gained temporary control of through tactical victories.”

It appears that some Soviet leaders understood these limitations, perhaps as early as 1983. In 1986, Marshal Akhромеев, Chief of the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces, told the Politburo that “we have lost the struggle for the Afghan people. A minority of the people supports the government.” For some time after Soviet leaders had grasped the futility of the situation, however, withdrawal was deemed politically unfeasible -- due primarily to its presumed effects on Soviet credibility with the West. Only after Gorbachev and other “new thinkers,” who believed in the necessity of reducing the USSR’s foreign commitments and greater security cooperation with the West, had secured control of the Soviet regime did withdrawal from Afghanistan become a reality. As Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison argue:

Despite the widespread stereotype of a Soviet military defeat, Soviet military forces were securely entrenched in Afghanistan when the Geneva Accords were finally signed on April 14, 1988. The Red Army did not withdraw in the wake of a Waterloo or a Dien Bien Phu. Confronted by a military and political stalemate, Gorbachev decided to disengage because the accords offered a pragmatic way to escape from the growing costs of deadlock and to open the way for improved relations with the West.

Less Violent Counter-Guerrilla Warfare

Perhaps because guerrilla warfare can be such a powerful weapon, it has also become one of the most common forms of combat in the twentieth century. Although counter-guerrilla mass killing may be the most common form of mass killing during the last century, compared to the number of guerrilla wars that have been fought during this period, it remains a relatively rare phenomenon. While few, if any, counter-guerrilla wars have been prosecuted without any

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185 Cordovez and Harrison. *Out of Afghanistan*, pp. 4-5. For a similar argument see: Mendelson. *Changing Course*
violence against civilians, many regimes have managed to wage counter-guerrilla warfare without the kind of large scale, systematic murder of civilians described above.

My research has identified two main variables which appear to influence the likelihood of mass killing during counter-guerrilla warfare. These variables do not exhaust the factors and conditions which affect the likelihood of counter-guerrilla mass killing, but they do appear to be the most powerful determinates of this kind of violence. Since these two variables directly influence the causal processes suggested by the strategic approach, their relevance also provides further confirmation of the validity of this explanatory framework.

*The Guerrilla-Civilian Relationship*

The most significant factor which can influence the likelihood of mass killing in counter-guerrilla warfare is the way that leaders confronting a guerrilla opponent perceive the nature and extent of the relationship between the guerrillas and the civilian population. As I have argued, mass killing in counter-guerrilla warfare is typically intended to separate guerrilla forces from their support network in the population. The greater the number of supporters and the more extensive the degree of assistance that leaders believe guerrillas are receiving from the civilian population, therefore, the greater is the pressure to target this population.

Not all so-called guerrilla forces, however, depend so heavily upon the local civilian population for support. These kinds of forces, which may bear more resemblance to terrorist groups, often receive the majority of their support from foreign powers. In some cases they may simply carry out low-level operations without the need for a great deal of civilian support. If leaders believe that their opponent is not receiving substantial support from the civilian population, they have little incentive to target large numbers of civilians in counter-guerrilla operations.

This pattern is powerfully illustrated by the way regimes confronting guerrilla opponents react to changes in guerrilla strategy. As described above, for the first 15 years of the Guatemalan civil war, the guerrillas lacked broad-based civilian support, adhering instead to the “foco” theory of guerrilla warfare. As a result, government repression during this period focused primarily on the regime’s urban political opponents and never reached the level of mass killing.
Only after the guerrillas adopted a rural, mass-based strategy in the late 1970’s, did the Guatemalan military respond with a brutal campaign against the civilian population.  

This pattern appears to have occurred in reverse order during the civil war in El Salvador in the 1980’s. During the first half of the decade, Salvadoran guerrillas relied heavily on civilian support and attempted to maintain control over large areas of the country. The Salvadoran military responded with the familiar brutal tactics designed to destroy the guerrillas’ civilian support system. Perhaps 50,000 people were killed between 1980 and 1983. As a report by the human rights group Americas’ Watch documents, however, by the mid-1980s government attacks on civilians grew less frequent. The shift away from overt attacks on civilians was due in part to pressure from the United States, the regime’s biggest benefactor, but Americas’ Watch concludes that

“the largest factor in their discontinuation was a shift in strategy by the guerrillas.... Their new strategy involved a greater reliance on the dispersal of their forces throughout the country.... They continued to obtain food from civilians in the areas in which they operated... Yet for the armed forces to bomb and strafe these civilians would have been counterproductive, because many were not supporters of the guerrillas....”

Support for guerrilla forces is sometimes limited to small or isolated segments of the civilian population. In Europe and the United States, for example, a number of small urban guerrilla/terrorist groups such as the Red Brigade, Direct Action and the Weather Underground emerged in the late 1960’s. Yet, as Richard Rubenstein argues, no “dirty war” was launched against these groups because “no European or North American government has felt compelled to

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186 Rubenstein, Alchemists of Revolution, p. 196.
187 David Stoll suggests that while the guerrillas did receive broad public support, this support may have been primarily the result of the Guatemalan regime’s over-reaction to early political organization and low-level terrorism by the guerrillas. This vicious cycle, in turn, resulted in broader government repression and, in turn, more guerrilla supporters. Stoll argues that the lack of strong, intrinsic support for the guerrillas’ cause helps explain why the insurgency was so quickly suppressed. Without such a cause to motivate continuing sacrifices, many peasants decided that the best way to avoid further violence was to accept Army domination. See: Stoll, Between Two Armies, esp. pp. 61-128.
190 Americas Watch, El Salvador’s Decade of Terror. p. 58.
choose between unleashing a full-scale counterterrorism campaign and submitting to radical destabilization.” The fact that no such campaign was launched, Rubenstein claims, “is attributable not so much to liberal restraint as to... [the terrorists’] own inability to spread rebellion far beyond a narrow circle of alienated intellectuals and oppressed workers. As a result of political weakness, terrorists could be singled out for very harsh treatment... without rending the entire fabric of legality.”  

Lack of popular support for insurgent groups may also help explain the absence of mass killing in counter-guerrilla wars in Peru and Bolivia in the 1960’s. The British defeat of the 1948-1958 communist insurgency in Malaya (now Malaysia) is often touted as one of the best examples of a successful, yet generally humane counter-guerrilla campaign. The British ability to defeat the insurgency, however, was greatly assisted by the failure of the guerrillas to win the support of large segments of the population. As Robin Corbett concludes: “The insurgency was... restricted almost exclusively to only one section of the population [a group of 500,000 Chinese squatters living on the fringes of the Malayan jungle]. [T]he insurgents chose to call their movement the MRLA [Malayan Races’ Liberation Army] but in reality they gained hardly any support from the Malays, who regarded the insurgency as an attempt to impose Chinese hegemony upon them.” In 1950, the British successfully relocated most of the guerrillas’ Chinese supporters who, being squatters, “were only loosely attached to their former homes” and who were so impoverished that the conditions in the “New Villages” constructed by the British represented a real improvement in their standard of living. The British also agreed to grant independence to Malaya in 1957, severely undercutting the power of the nationalist appeals. Deprived of support, the insurgency had dwindled to a few hundred men by 1960.

Guerrilla forces are sometimes supported primarily from foreign powers rather than the domestic civilian population. The Contra guerrillas of Nicaragua, for example, received the great majority of their support from the United States, and were based primarily in camps across the border in Honduras. Largely dependent on external support, the Contras seldom operated for

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193 Ibid., p. 59. Corbett also suggests that the Malay peninsula’s geography helped the British by allowing them to seal off the insurgency from outside sources of support.
194 Ibid., p. 56.
long periods of time deep in Nicaraguan territory. The Sandinista regime could not launch major attacks against the bases in Honduras without risking direct American intervention. While many Nicaraguans came to oppose the Sandinista regime, only a limited number supported the Contras, who engaged in frequent atrocities against civilians and who continued to be associated with the highly unpopular Somoza regime. For the most part, therefore, the Sandinistas had little incentive to target Nicaraguan civilians in counter-guerrilla operations. The main exception to this general pattern of Sandinista restraint occurred along Nicaragua’s northern border and Atlantic coastal region where the Contras did receive significant support from dissatisfied indigenous groups. The Sandinista regime sought to pacify these regions with a campaign of forced population resettlement combined with at least limited use of scorched-earth warfare and free fire zones. While several hundred people may have died as a result of these operations, the relatively small number of relocated individuals (approximately 30,000 over the course of the war) meant that the violence remained at relatively low levels.

Less violent counter-guerrilla strategies may also succeed when popular support for guerrillas is broad but not deep. Such appears to have been the case in the successful suppression of the so-called "Huk rebellion" in the Philippines from 1947 to 1953. During the first three years of the rebellion, the communist Hucks dominated the countryside of the Philippine Island of Luzon. Perhaps two million people lived in Huk-controlled areas, and many appear to have willingly paid taxes to the rebels or provided them with food, shelter or information. Early efforts by the US-backed Philippine Army to crush the insurgency involved repeated attacks on civilians which ultimately drove even more people into the hands of the guerrillas. In 1950, however, the new Philippine Secretary of Defense, Ramon Magsaysay, introduced a new, less

violent counter-guerrilla strategy based on a different understanding of the nature of the Huk’s civilian support base. Although the Huks received significant support from peasants, most Huk supporters simply sought moderate economic reforms and an end to government repression -- not the communist society offered by the Huks. As Michael Shafer argues, the “insurgency was thus vulnerable to even minor government concessions targeted to the [Huk] rank and file.... As a result, the insurgency’s longevity depended on government intransigence. If the government could manage the effort, even minimal reforms could undo it.”

Realizing this crucial weakness in the insurgents’ support, Magsaysay eliminated large-scale violence against civilians in military operations and introduced a number of moderate political and economic reforms targeted at the Huk’s rural supporters. The new strategy worked, and within two years the rebellion had all but died out.

Guerrilla Restraint

Mass killing in counter-guerrilla warfare may also be averted by the exercise of restraint on the part of the guerrillas. As noted above, the operations of fringe organizations such as the Red Guards or Direct Action were constrained primarily by their lack of popular support. Other guerrilla/terrorist organizations, however, have exhibited restraint in the scale and targets of their operations despite relatively broad popular support. In such cases, a form of mutual deterrence appears to operate, and counter-guerrilla forces may thus be content to keep repression at relatively moderate levels.

Perhaps the most notable example of this pattern occurred between South Africa’s Apartheid regime and the African National Congress [ANC] during the 1970s and 1980s. Although the ANC enjoyed the support of the majority of the black African population, it generally limited its operations to demonstrations, strikes, economic boycotts and other political tactics. Violent attacks on white civilians remained rare. The apartheid regime was never

\footnote{Shafer, *Deadly Paradigms*, pp. 234.}
seriously threatened by black violence. As Rubenstein suggested in 1987, however, "[w]hat restrains them [the ANC and other black guerrilla groups]... is the likelihood of genocidal retaliation against a population already concentrated in black townships and 'homelands.' The actions of the South African regime could hardly be characterized as non-violent, but it never resorted to mass killing. The application of more selective violence and political repression managed to keep black violence at "acceptable" levels.

The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) also received broad support from the civilian population but have been either incapable or unwilling to escalate attacks to a level which might threaten Israeli or British rule. Unlike the ANC, both the PLO and IRA sanctioned attacks on civilian targets, but these attacks remained at relatively low levels. The violence in Northern Ireland, for example, killed 467 people (on all sides, including 103 soldiers) at its peak in 1972. After that year the death toll dropped rapidly. In 1984, 64 people were killed, about one-third the number who died in traffic accidents in Ulster that year. PLO terrorist operations against Israel also remained at relatively low levels of violence. During the so-called Intifada uprising of the late 1980's, the period of most intense PLO activity in the occupied territories, Palestinians engaged in demonstrations, strikes, rock throwing and occasional violent acts such as bombings and shootings. The violence did not escalate beyond these kinds of activities and Israeli forces responded with violence well short of mass killing. In an ominous response to the question of what would happen to the Palestinians if the violence had escalated, however, then-prime minister Yitzhak Shamir said bluntly, "There will not even be a memory of them left."
Conclusions

The evidence presented in this chapter strongly suggests that mass killing in counter-guerrilla warfare is motivated primarily by the nature of guerrilla warfare itself. The mass killings in Guatemala and Afghanistan were not the result of frustrated or racist troops, but rather of military tactics specifically designed to eliminate the civilian support network upon which Guatemalan and Afghan guerrilla forces depended. Mass killing is not the only way to reduce civilian support for guerrillas, however. Both regimes also utilized a variety of positive inducements and political reforms in the effort to address the root causes of the insurgency and draw support away from the guerrillas.

Mass killing can be a powerful military tool, at least in the short term. From a political perspective, however, mass killing can backfire, increasing public support for guerrillas and generating powerful international pressures against regimes that engage in it. Indeed, mass killing as a counter-guerrilla strategy in both Guatemala and Afghanistan produced decidedly mixed results. In Guatemala, although the guerrilla insurgency was largely suppressed, it was not completely eliminated, and popular resentment of the regime remained high. The Guatemalan military regime was gradually forced to introduce political reforms and negotiate with the guerrillas. In Afghanistan, although the Soviets remained dominant militarily through the end of the war, popular support for the Mujahideen was virtually universal. The availability of outside support for the guerrillas severely limited the effectiveness of Soviet pacification efforts. Soviet leaders ultimately chose to withdraw rather than continue fighting. Neither the Guatemalan nor even the Soviet regime "lost" their wars with the guerrillas. In the long run, however, neither regime proved willing or able to incur the costs of continued violent repression.

Despite these limitations, mass killing has remained a common counter-guerrilla strategy. Even the Soviet Union's experience with guerrilla warfare in Afghanistan did not deter Russia from resorting to similar tactics only a few years later in its counter-guerrilla campaign in Chechnya. Regimes facing determined guerrilla opponents have most likely continued toward gravitate to mass killing because less violent strategies for counter-guerrilla war have proven
extremely costly, time consuming and at least equally prone to failure. Although some counter-insurgency theorists have touted the effectiveness of less violent strategies in places like Malaya and the Philippines, the evidence presented above suggests that lack of strong civilian support for guerrillas was the primary reason for the success of less violent counter-guerrilla strategies in these conflicts. In Vietnam, where popular support for the insurgents was stronger, the United States expended vast resources in a self-conscious attempt to emulate these strategies, but achieved few results.209

Regimes facing well-organized guerrilla opponents with strong support from the civilian population have few attractive options for meeting this threat. To leaders determined to avoid defeat, mass killing may appear to offer the greatest chance for victory at an acceptable cost. As long as guerrilla warfare remains a common form of modern conflict, therefore, counter-guerrilla mass killing seems likely to remain the most common motive for mass killing.

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208 Gall and de Waal, Chechnya: Calamity in the Caucasus, p. 97.
CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSIONS:
STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTING AND REDUCING MASS KILLING:
POTENTIALS AND LIMITATIONS

The evidence presented in this dissertation highlights three central conclusions regarding the causes of mass killing and genocide. First, this dissertation emphasizes the role that small groups can play in instigating and carrying out mass killing. In each of the eight cases examined in this dissertation, mass killing was initiated and organized by a relatively small group of powerful political or military leaders acting in the service of their own interests, ideas, hatreds, fears and misperceptions -- not reacting to the attitudes or desires of the societies over which they governed. This pattern should hardly be surprising since none of the regimes studied in this dissertation was democratically elected.\(^1\) Indeed, in the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, China and Cambodia -- the four bloodiest mass killings analyzed in this dissertation -- it is not unreasonable to conclude that, but for the influence of a single dictatorial leader, mass killing might have been averted, or at least substantially diminished in magnitude. In Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, China, Cambodia, and Guatemala, the evidence suggests that the majority of the public, including members of dominant ethnic or national groups, did not support mass killing. In the remaining three cases -- Turkey, Afghanistan and Rwanda -- evidence of public opinion is too limited to draw clear conclusions, but in none of these societies did the public appear to have been clamoring for mass killing.

In seven of the eight cases examined in this dissertation, virtually all of the actual killing was carried out by relatively small military, para-military or police groups acting under direct orders from central political and military authorities. Only in Rwanda did ordinary civilians play

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\(^1\) The Nazi regime achieved power legally, but hardly democratically. The Nazis never received a majority of the vote or established a governing coalition in the Reichstag. Hitler was appointed Chancellor only through a loophole in the Weimar constitution which allowed the President to appoint a cabinet in the absence of a parliamentary majority and then allowed the government to rule without the assent of parliament on the basis of presidential "emergency powers." Within months, Hitler had dismantled Germany's democratic institutions and assumed almost complete dictatorial powers.
a major role in the violence. Even there, however, military and para-military groups were probably responsible for most of the killing. Rwandan civilians appear to have participated in killing operations primarily under the supervision of these groups and, in many instances, only after substantial coercion.

Second, the evidence presented in this dissertation casts doubt on the explanatory power of unusually severe hatred or discrimination against victims as a predominant cause of mass killing. This dissertation does not directly address the possibility that intense hatred or discrimination between groups may increase the likelihood of mass killing, but it does demonstrate that such “social cleavages” are neither universally necessary nor sufficient conditions for this kind of violence. Although there is at least some evidence of pre-existing hatreds or negative attitudes regarding victim groups in each of the cases examined in this dissertation -- especially the genocides in Turkey, Nazi Germany and Rwanda -- there is little indication that these attitudes were more severe than in many other countries which never experienced mass killing. Conversely, as noted in Chapter One, history provides numerous examples of highly divided societies that have persisted for years without erupting into mass killing. Thus, while pre-existing social cleavages may play a role in the causal processes of many cases of mass killing, their influence usually appears to be relatively weak and indirect. Such factors alone are unlikely to provide a reliable indicator of the potential for mass killing.

In Guatemala and Afghanistan, perpetrators of mass killing actually sought to minimize the extent of social differences and ameliorate discrimination against victims in an effort to draw support away from guerrilla insurgents. In the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, China, Cambodia and Rwanda, on the other hand, intense hatred was deliberately promoted by radical leaders seeking to increase public support for attacks on victim groups. Pre-existing hatreds between perpetrators and victims are a particularly weak explanation for the communist mass killings described in Chapter Four -- three of the most deadly instances of mass killing in human history -

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2 Civilians were involved in at least some episodes of mass killings in China and Turkey but to a much lesser extent than in Rwanda.
3 As noted in chapter one, however, large-n statistical studies of ethnic conflict have found no strong correlation between the degree of discrimination, economic or cultural differences and the likelihood of large-scale ethnic conflict.
- since many of the victims of these communist regimes were never the objects of intense hatred. In fact, in all three cases, large numbers of victims were drawn from the communist party itself.

The limitations of explanations which focus on severe pre-existing hatred or discrimination against victims extend not only to the general public but also to the individuals tasked with carrying out mass killing. As described in Chapter Two, a close examination of the behavior of perpetrators of this kind of violence suggests that even these individuals need not be consumed with hatred for their victims in order to participate in mass killing. Powerful situational pressures, rather than deep personal convictions, seem to be the best explanation for the behavior of most individual perpetrators of mass killing.

Finally, this dissertation finds that mass killing is usually driven by goal-oriented, strategic calculations. The history of all eight cases studied in this dissertation suggests that leaders conceived of mass killing as a calculated strategy designed to achieve their most important political or ideological goals, counter their most dangerous threats or solve their most difficult military problems. Mass killing was viewed by these leaders as a bloody, but effective solution to such problems. Indeed, it is revealing how often phraseology such as “the Armenian question,” “the Ukrainian problem,” “the Jewish question,” “the Afghan question” and “the final solution” appears in discourse among leaders in the months and years leading up to mass killing. This dissertation also finds, however, that leaders are likely to perceive mass killing as an attractive strategy only in a few, relatively rare situations. Three specific historical scenarios, the implementation of radical communist policies, large-scale ethnic cleansing, and counter-guerrilla warfare, have generated the incentives for the majority of episodes of mass killings in this century. Even these scenarios have prompted leaders to consider mass killing only under specific conditions.

None of the cases of mass killing examined in this dissertation can be accurately described as killing for killing’s sake. Indeed, mass killing was not the only strategy most leaders examined in this dissertation considered to achieve their ends. Mass killing has not always been a policy of last resort, but rarely has it been a policy of first resort either. With the possible exception of Cambodia, leaders in all eight cases examined in this dissertation appear to have seriously considered or experimented with options short of mass killing to achieve their
Systematic mass killing was adopted only after leaders came to believe, often mistakenly, that other strategies for achieving their goals were impossible or impractical.

**Implications for Preventing or Limiting Mass Killing**

The findings of this dissertation have significant implications for international efforts to prevent or limit mass killing. The strategic approach to mass killing suggests that the most effective strategies for averting these violent events may differ substantially from those suggested by other explanations of mass killing. As described in Chapter One, prevailing explanations of genocide and mass killing tend to focus on variables such as highly fragmented or discriminatory societies, dehumanizing attitudes between groups or non-democratic forms of government as the prime causes or preconditions for this kind of violence. Such theories would seem to suggest, therefore, that societies which exhibit these characteristics remain in constant danger of mass killing unless there is a fundamental change in the structure of the society, the character of inter-group relations or the society’s form of government.

Ervin Staub, for example, claims that preventing genocide might require efforts ranging from increasing cultural exchanges between groups, to encouraging people to help one another, to providing basic needs for all members of society, even changing the way parents raise and educate children. Helen Fein argues that “the best way to avoid... genocides is to promote nonviolent change in states (and occupied regions) based on ethnoclass domination.” Rudolph Rummel’s “Power Principle,” on the other hand, suggests that “the way to end war and virtually all democide [the murder of any person or persons by a government] appears to be through... fostering democratic freedom.”

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4 As described in chapter four, Khmer Rouge leaders appear to have deduced from Soviet and Chinese experiences that massive violence would be required to implement communism in Cambodia.


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To be sure, reducing stratification in society, increasing understanding among groups and encouraging the spread of democracy are important goals. Among countless other benefits, such changes could help reduce the incidence of mass killing -- although the evidence presented in this dissertation suggests that they would not completely eliminate it. As policy recommendations, however, these suggestions are far from practical. Influencing the basic structures or attitudes of foreign societies from the outside is an extraordinarily difficult task. Intervening preemptively in all societies characterized by discrimination, hatred between groups, or those governed by non-democratic regimes would be prohibitively expensive. Even if the list of states threatened with mass killing could be effectively narrowed, efforts to alter deeply rooted social structures are likely to prove far too time consuming to prevent imminent violence. To make matters worse, it is not clear that politicians or social scientists would know how to bring about such transformations even if unlimited time and resources were available.  

Most scholars of genocide and mass killing have recognized these limitations and proposed more immediate solutions, such as international military intervention, economic sanctions or the provision of humanitarian assistance to halt or limit mass killing. Such measures, however, would do little to address what these scholars see as the root causes of the killing, thus leaving society open to future violence. This apparent shortcoming would seem to undermine the case for expending substantial resources on such measures.  

In many ways, the strategic approach to mass killing proposed in this dissertation paints a disturbing picture of our world. Yet, while it emphasizes the frightening ease with which individuals and societies can be drawn into mass killing, it also suggests that the practical problems of preventing or limiting this violence will be different, and at least in some respects less daunting, than other theories might lead us to expect. Because the strategic approach finds that the impetus for mass killing usually lies with high political and military leadership, not in

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basic social structures, it suggests that effective intervention to prevent mass killing need not seek the fundamental transformation of society.

The strategic approach suggests that it may be possible to anticipate at least some cases of mass killing and identifies four general sets of strategies for preventing or limiting it: 1) promoting moderates and deposing radicals; 2) facilitating the escape of victims; 3) protecting potential victims; and 4) punitive compellence. Unfortunately, none of these strategies is without substantial risks or limitations. As I will describe below, none holds the promise of an easy solution to the problem of mass killing and genocide. None is likely to be successful all of the time. Furthermore, implementing these strategies will require a significant expenditure of resources. I conclude that, at least in the near future, the costs and risks of intervention will likely cause policy-makers to focus on the two least costly strategies -- facilitating the escape of potential victims and punitive compellence. Although these strategies generally entail few costs in terms of lives and material resources, they also provide relatively limited potential to prevent mass killing. Nevertheless, I argue that strategies which facilitate escape, if carefully designed and implemented, in many cases may be able to save a substantial number of lives. Punitive compellence, on the other hand, seems unlikely to be widely effective and poses a serious risk of prompting an escalation of violence against potential victims. This strategy should be employed only with great caution.

A Note on Early Warning

Some strategies for preventing or limiting mass killing may only be practical if sufficiently early warning that such violence is imminent is available. The strategic approach suggests that, in at least some cases, reasonably reliable early warning of mass killing may be possible. As noted above, mass killing is rarely a policy of first resort. This conclusion suggests that careful observers may receive warning of the potential for mass killing as leaders attempt to achieve their goals with less violent means. The Soviet regime, for example, spent nearly 12 years in the open effort to force farmers into collectives using tax and price incentives and even lower levels of violent repression before Stalin declared all out war on the peasantry in 1929. In Nazi Germany, more than seven years passed between the Nazis’ seizure of power and the initiation of the systematic genocide of the Jews. During this period the Nazis did not attempt to conceal their efforts to cleanse Germany of the Jews by other means. Likewise, Guatemala’s
military regime struggled for more than three years to crush the guerrilla opposition in the
 countryside before it resorted to full-scale mass killing in 1981.

As described in Chapter Three, the strategic approach identifies several general situations
which, in combination with specific conditions, may create a considerable likelihood of mass
killing. Even outside observers should be able to identify many of these situations and
conditions, often well in advance of the onset of mass killing. Careful monitoring of radical
ideological regimes and mass-based guerrilla conflicts, for example, could increase our ability to
identify potential incidents of mass killing before they happen.

Although the strategic approach emphasizes the murderous potential of small groups, it
does not suggest the need to monitor every radical chauvinist organization or political fringe
movement in every society around the globe. States and organizations interested in generating
early warning systems for genocide should focus their resources on understanding the ideologies,
goals and interests of groups in or near political and military power -- particularly in societies
with weak or unstable political institutions. Fringe groups that advocate hatred and
discrimination pose little threat of mass killing if they lack the potential to gain power. Groups
lacking popular support stand a better chance of seizing power if they have developed significant
military forces and/or if the political system is too weak to prevent them from seizing control.
The Soviets and the Khmer Rouge, for example, each seized power without significant public
support thanks in large part to the military weakness and political disorganization of their
opposition. Although the Nazis received a much higher degree of public support than the Soviets
or the Khmer Rouge, no less than two-thirds of Germans voted against the Nazis in Germany’s
last free election. The Nazi rise to power was also greatly facilitated by Germany’s economic
instability and by the frailty of the Weimar political system.

Not all strategies for limiting mass killing, however, require early warning. Strategies
designed to protect victims or facilitate their escape, for example, may be effective even if
implemented only after violence has begun. Although these strategies are unlikely to avert
killing altogether, as I will argue below, they may still be able to save many lives.

*Strategy One: Promoting Moderates and Deposing Radicals*

If the impetus for mass killing often originates with small groups or powerful leaders, as
the evidence presented in this dissertation suggests, it may be possible to avert or limit mass
killing by influencing the balance of power among contending groups or leaders in societies at risk for mass killing. Three closely related strategies for intervention might be considered.

First, assistance could be provided to help defend moderate regimes threatened by radical groups. Depending on the immediacy and severity of the threat, intervention could range from providing financial support, to military aid, and ultimately to direct military intervention. For example, it is conceivable that some form of outside assistance might have helped avert mass killings in the Soviet Union, Cambodia and Rwanda by preventing radical groups from seizing power in these states. In each of these three cases, radical groups succeeded in gaining and consolidating power despite the lack of broad public support primarily because other domestic sources of power were too weak and disorganized to oppose them.

The lessons of these cases, however, also suggest the difficulties and limitations of this strategy. Although the Allies provided substantial support to Russia during the First World War, they could not prevent the Bolshevik rise to power. Even allied military intervention in the Russian civil war could not turn the tide against the communists. Similarly, American economic and military aid to the Lon Nol regime in Cambodia did not check the rise of the Khmer Rouge. On the contrary, American bombing may actually have backfired, generating recruits for Khmer Rouge and sowing discontent among the population, rendering them unwilling to defend the Lon Nol regime.10

These failures, however, do not rule out the possibility that more substantial or more carefully administered aid could have been successful. In both cases, outside aid was too limited to bolster regimes threatened simultaneously by foreign and domestic enemies. Full-scale American military intervention was required to prevent the victory of communist forces in South Korea. Had the communists succeeded, residents of South Korea would likely have suffered the same fate at those North of the 38th parallel. More importantly, intervention in both Russia and Cambodia was aimed not at preventing the rise of murderous regimes per se, but at defeating communist-oriented groups of any kind. As a result, moderate nationalist-communist groups which may have had the potential to generate popular support were dismissed in favor of unpopular and corrupt, but staunchly anti-Communist parties.

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Second, if a regime intent on mass killing has already seized power, intervention might seek to provide economic and military aid or direct military intervention to assist moderate groups in their efforts to unseat the regime. This kind of intervention would seem to hold the greatest chance of success if implemented soon after new regimes have seized power, before they are able to consolidate their control of the repressive instruments of the state. Some observers have suggested that such a strategy -- aimed at deposing the Hutu extremist regime directly or assisting moderate Hutu or the RPF in toppling it -- might have saved lives in the 1994 Rwandan genocide.\footnote{11}{Human Rights Watch, Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999), pp. 21-27. Alan J. Kuperman suggests that Human Rights Watch and other analysts have underestimated the difficulties of intervention in Rwanda, but still concludes that a large-scale intervention might have saved over 100,000 lives. Kuperman also suggests that an alliance between Hutu moderates and the RPF might have succeeded in halting the genocide, but that such cooperation was “politically implausible.” See: “Rwanda in Retrospect,” Foreign Affairs, vol. 79, no. 1 (January/February 2000), pp. 94-118.}

Unfortunately, the history of efforts to induce regime changes from the outside also illustrates the many difficulties associated with this kind of intervention. Even highly unpopular regimes have managed to maintain a firm grip on power for extended periods.\footnote{12}{For the various techniques utilized by such regimes, see: James T. Quinlivan, “Coup-proofing: Its Practice and Consequences in the Middle East,” International Security, vol. 24, no. 2 (Fall 1999), pp. 131-165.} In states such as the Soviet Union, Germany and China, moderate political groups were either too disorganized and divided to make good use of outside aid, or so quickly and effectively suppressed that no viable political opposition survived to which assistance could have been provided.\footnote{13}{For the history of opposition groups in Germany, see: Joachim Fest, Plotting Hitler’s Death: The Story of the German Resistance (New York: Henry Holt, 1996). On early resistance to the Bolsheviks in Russia see: Vladimir} Although most Germans do not appear to have supported Nazi policies of mass killing, the regime itself was broadly popular and millions of Germans proved willing to fight in Hitler’s armies. Replacing the Nazis ultimately required the largest war in world history. Similarly massive and violent undertakings would probably have been required to unseat the entrenched communist regimes in the Soviet Union and China.

A third and final option for altering the balance of power in societies threatened with mass killing would seek the removal or assassination of individual leaders, as opposed to the defeat of their regime or party. As noted in Chapter Two, the death of Stalin and Mao brought an abrupt end to repeated episodes of mass killing in the Soviet Union and China, despite the fact

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that the communist party continued to rule in both states. It seems plausible that at least certain episodes of mass killing in the Soviet Union and China might have been averted if these men had been assassinated or otherwise removed from power at an earlier date. Likewise, it is not difficult to imagine that the assassination or removal of Adolf Hitler could have averted the Holocaust. As noted in Chapters Two and Five, Hitler’s personal convictions played a crucial role in sparking the genocide. Other high ranking Nazis, including Goebbels, Himmler and Goring, were not as deeply obsessed with the “Jewish question” as was Hitler. As Michael Marrus concludes, while Hitler’s determination to exterminate the Jews increased as Germany grew closer to defeat in the Second World War, “[s]ome of Hitler’s lieutenants [including Himmler], apparently, were ready to abandon the genocide in favor of other objectives of a dying regime.”

While replacing or assassinating an individual leader might appear simpler than engineering the replacement of an entire regime, in practice it has also proved exceedingly difficult. For example, several attempts were made to depose or assassinate Hitler from 1938 to 1944, both from inside and outside Germany, but each time he managed to escape death. Repeated US efforts to assassinate Fidel Castro during the early 1960’s also failed to hit their mark. Nor have nearly ten years of direct and indirect US interventions in Iraq succeeded in killing or deposing Saddam Hussein.

In addition to these practical questions, of course, intervention of this nature -- particularly when carried out before mass killing has occurred -- raises serious legal, political and moral issues. In fact, the United States and many other nations “officially” renounce the use of

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16 On internal efforts to assassinate Hitler, see: Fest, Plotting Hitler’s Death. On British plans to assassinate Hitler (which were never implemented), see: T.R. Reid, “British Spies Planned Many deaths for Hitler,” The Washington Post, July 24, 1998, p. A32.

assassination as a tool of foreign policy. Ultimately, policy-makers cannot escape the difficult choice between the political costs and moral uncertainties of this kind of intervention, and the potential human costs of inaction.

*Strategy Two: Facilitating Escape*

A major finding of this dissertation is that the ability of potential victims of mass killing to flee to safer areas has been an important factor in limiting or averting this kind of violence. While this finding might seem self-evident, explanations which locate the prime causes of mass killing in hatred between groups, scapegoating behavior, or describe it as killing for killing’s sake seem to suggest that the perpetrators of mass killing would generally seek to prevent victims from fleeing to safety. If perpetrators of mass killing are often willing to permit the flight of victim groups, on the other hand, then intervention designed to facilitate the process of escape might offer some hope of preventing or limiting mass killing. Two broad strategies for facilitating escape might be utilized.

First, foreign states could agree to grant asylum to potential victims of mass killing. As argued in Chapter Four, the ability of potential victims of communist regimes in Korea, Cuba and Vietnam to flee to South Korea, the United States and South Vietnam respectively, may have saved vast numbers of lives in these states. This kind of strategy could also have reduced the toll of chauvinist mass killings in Turkish Armenia, Nazi Germany and Rwanda. As described in Chapter Five, between 1933 and 1939, Nazi Germany actively encouraged the emigration of its Jewish population, a process that ultimately resulted in the exodus of approximately 75 percent of Germany’s Jews. As the Second World War neared its end, the Nazis also suggested a willingness to barter for the release of surviving Jews. Had Western nations accepted greater numbers of Jewish immigrants before the war or pursued negotiations for their release after it had begun, many Jewish lives might have been saved.

Unlike pre-war Nazi Germany, the Young Turk regime actively prevented Armenians from fleeing to neighboring countries when the Armenian genocide was launched in 1915. Similarly, Hutu extremists sought to block the escape of their Tutsi victims during the 1994

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18 In Libya, Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan and the Former Yugoslavia, however, the United States has employed military attacks on facilities suspected of housing enemy leaders.
genocide in Rwanda. As argued in Chapter Five, however, these actions were likely due to the
fact that both regimes were already facing significant cross-border attacks from their ethnic
enemies in neighboring states. Expelling the Armenians or Tutsis across the border, therefore,
would simply have exacerbated the very problem the perpetrators of these genocides were trying
to solve. If more distant foreign states had been willing to accept Armenian and Tutsi refugees,
on the other hand, it is possible that Turkish and Hutu leaders would have permitted them to
leave -- especially if some guarantee could have been provided that the refugees would not
attempt to return. Indeed, in 1923, Greece and Turkey agreed to an internationally negotiated
transfer of their respective Greek and Turkish minorities. Over 1.5 million people were
relocated. Although thousands died of disease, especially in Greece where authorities
experienced great difficulty providing for the vast influx of refugees, the death-toll was
substantially lower than during the violent and unregulated expulsion of Greeks from Turkey
which had been taking place during the two previous years. Most observers agree that the
experience demonstrated the humanitarian value of carefully regulated population transfers.\(^{20}\)

The possibility of asylum for refugees might also have reduced the death toll in
Guatemala. During the war, the Guatemalan regime feared that refugee camps across the border
in Mexico were serving as secure bases for the guerrillas. As a result, the Guatemalan Army
sought to prevent refugees from fleeing to Mexico and even engaged in cross-border attacks
against refugee camps there. Yet the regime also seemed willing to consider less violent
solutions. In fact, the Guatemalan regime actively pressured Mexico to relocate the refugee
camps away from the border, where they would no longer pose a threat to Guatemala.\(^{21}\) Mexico
initially resisted relocation because it did not want to assume permanent responsibility for the
refugees, but in 1984 and 1985 it agreed to move about 17,000 refugees to camps further away
from the border. Unfortunately, this move came too late to have much effect since the most
severe period of violence in Guatemala had ended in 1983. If this strategy had been
implemented earlier, and had more international aid been provided to Mexico for relocation,


\(^{20}\) Michael R. Marrus, The Unwanted European Refugees in the Twentieth Century (Oxford: Oxford University

\(^{21}\) Beatriz Manz, Refugees of A Hidden War: The Aftermath of Counterinsurgency in Guatemala (Albany: State
however, Guatemala might actually have encouraged refugee flows to Mexico and many lives could have been saved.

Although the offer of permanent asylum for large numbers of refugees has been granted in a few cases, generally speaking, asylum is a practical solution only when the number of potential victims is relatively small. 70,000 Asian-Ugandans, for example, may have avoided mass killing at the hands of Idi Amin when Western nations granted the entire population asylum in 1972. States lacking a direct political interest in the fate of potential victims, however, are unlikely to grant permanent asylum to hundreds of thousands or perhaps millions of refugees. In such cases, a second set of strategies for facilitating escape may be more practical.

Many victims of mass killing die in the process of fleeing, or of disease or deprivation in the inhospitable lands or crowded refugee camps to which they are forced to relocate. Others, perhaps anticipating these hazards, die defending their homes. Speedy humanitarian intervention could save many of these lives. Indeed, humanitarian intervention has probably been the most common international response to mass killing, particularly in recent years. Humanitarian assistance has had a spotty track record, but aid to refugees has undoubtedly saved many lives in places such as the former Yugoslavia, Guatemala, Afghanistan and Ethiopia. Although unlikely to prevent mass killing altogether, this type of intervention could probably save even more lives if greater resources -- particularly the logistical, housing, sanitation and security resources of Western military organizations -- were devoted to it.

Unfortunately, all strategies which aim at assisting the escape of potential victims of mass killing share a common hazard. By facilitating and thereby encouraging the flight of refugees, such strategies may actually risk inviting perpetrators to engage in ethnic cleansing. Regimes which might have eschewed a policy of ethnic cleansing as too difficult or too violent could reach the opposite conclusion if others prove willing to reduce the costs of such a policy by facilitating the movement and resettlement of refugees. Although it is difficult to determine how prevalent this dynamic may be, there appears to be no easy resolution to this dilemma. Delaying the provision of assistance to refugees until they have already been attacked or expelled in large numbers might reduce this risk, but it would also substantially decrease the effectiveness of humanitarian aid. Ethnic cleansing, however, is not mass killing. On balance it seems likely that the lives saved by increased humanitarian assistance will outweigh the potential increase in ethnic cleansing that such assistance could engender.
Strategy Three: Protecting Potential Victims

A third set of strategies for preventing or limiting mass killing would save lives by providing protection to potential victims. This kind of intervention could assume three general forms.\textsuperscript{22}

First, military aid could be supplied to potential victims of mass killing in an effort to help the victims defend themselves. Several American politicians, most notably then-Senator Robert Dole, recommended this course of action during the war in Bosnia in the early 1990's.\textsuperscript{23} Although many victim groups have advocated this strategy, it also poses substantial risks. Arming potential victims may simply convince perpetrators that the victims pose a real threat, thereby provoking or exacerbating the violence it was meant to prevent. Newly armed victim groups may prove to be nearly as bloodthirsty as their enemies. Arming victims may also serve to prolong bloody conflicts or spark new violence between victim group factions, thus increasing the number of victims. As noted in Chapter Six, American and Arab military assistance to Afghan Mujahideen may well have helped prevent a Soviet victory, but it was not sufficient to defeat the Soviet forces in Afghanistan. The Mujahideen spent much of the war engaged in internal fighting for control of the resistance movement. After the Soviet withdrawal, the arms provided to the Mujahideen helped fuel a bloody civil war that has lasted for over ten years. As a result, while military aid probably hastened the end of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, it may actually have increased the suffering of the Afghan people.

Second, direct military intervention could seek to create "safe zones" or "safe havens" for potential victims either within their home country or in neighboring states. The safe zone strategy, for example, was employed in Northern Iraq in 1991 when American forces intervened to defend Iraqi Kurds from attacks by Saddam Hussein. In light of the fact that the Kurds had already been the victims of Iraqi counter-guerrilla mass killing in 1988, it seems likely that American intervention may have prevented substantial violence.


Although direct military intervention has the potential to save lives in many cases of mass killing, the size and nature of the commitment required for such operations must not be underestimated. The limited UN forces deployed to defend safe havens in Bosnia, for example, proved unable to protect these areas from even lightly-armed Bosnian-Serb forces. The fact that the regimes which carry out mass killing often lack popular support may mean that intervening forces will not have to overcome a nation in arms, but as noted above, even unpopular regimes can field substantial military forces. Large numbers of troops are likely to be necessary for any such operation. These troops must be prepared to inflict significant casualties among the enemy as well as to incur casualties themselves. Thus, Alan Kuperman argues that a force of 80,000 to 160,000 troops would have been necessary for full-scale, preemptive policing of Rwanda.\textsuperscript{24} Deployment of at least 15,000 well-equipped U.S. troops would have been required to provide partial protection for the Tutsi during the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Even then, Kuperman claims, this force would probably have arrived too late to save 75 percent of the victims.

As the American mission in Somalia from 1992 to 1994 revealed, with enough determination, even a third world adversary fielding only irregular and lightly armed forces can be capable of inflicting casualties on well-armed Western troops. American military operations, on the other hand, which caused between 500 and 1000 deaths in a single two-day battle in October 1993, should serve as a reminder that military intervention to protect potential victims of mass killing will likely cost lives as well as save them.\textsuperscript{25}

The third strategy for protecting potential victims of mass killing would seek to promote or facilitate the formation of separate states for ethnic or political enemies.\textsuperscript{26} Several scholars have proposed partition as a solution to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia.\textsuperscript{27} Partition is often seen as necessary to physically separate groups so consumed by hatred that they could never live in peace. The evidence presented in this dissertation, on the other hand, suggests that even severe hatred between social groups may not pose a major threat of mass killing. Partition may

\textsuperscript{24} Kuperman, "Rwanda in Retrospect."


still be a useful strategy for preventing or limiting mass killing, however, because it provides a means to protect potential victims from the relatively small groups that are often responsible for such violence. As I argued in Chapter Five, groups like the Armenians, Kurds and Jews (prior to the creation of Israel), have been repeated victims of mass killing not simply because they have been more hated than minority groups in other societies, but because they have had nowhere to run when such hatreds have been seized upon by murderous elites. Partition might seem a radical means to achieve this end, but because perpetrators may accept or even promote partition, in some circumstances it may actually be easier to implement and more effective than some of the other strategies described in this chapter.

Partitions and population transfers have had a somewhat checkered history. As documented in Chapter Five, mass killings in Turkey, Nazi Germany and Rwanda were the result of efforts to remove large groups of people from society. Violence has frequently accompanied partition, since violence has often proved necessary to force people from their homes. In some cases, partition has merely transformed civil wars into international wars. Perhaps most importantly, partition cannot avoid imposing great hardships on large numbers of innocent people, often forcing them to abandon their ancestral homes, places of worship and other irreplaceable symbols of their cultural heritage. These potential hazards suggest that partition and population transfers should remain a policy of last resort.

Nevertheless, at least some of the problems with past partition schemes appear to have resulted from poorly designed or poorly executed partition plans, not from inherent flaws in the concept of partition itself. If more careful preparation and greater resources were devoted to facilitating transfers and partitions, displaced populations might prove more willing to leave their homes and the process and aftermath of their departure could be eased. Robert Hayden, for example, argues that some of the violence associated with ethnic cleansing in Bosnia could have been averted if the international community could have agreed upon a plan for partition in the

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early stages of the conflict. Likewise, Chaim Kaufmann suggests that the violence during the partition of India in 1947 could have been diminished if the British, Indian and Pakistani governments had provided more troops and humanitarian assistance to keep order and reduce the hardships of relocation.

*Strategy Four: Punitive Compellence or Deterrence: Raising the Costs of Mass Killing*

A final set of strategies for averting or limiting mass killing would seek to deter this kind of violence, or compel its cessation, by threatening punishment for perpetrators. Numerous policies have been suggested to serve this function, including the withholding of foreign aid, the imposition of diplomatic or economic sanctions, arms embargoes, economic blockades, the establishment of war crimes tribunals and punitive air strikes. NATO’s punitive air strikes against Serbia’s economic infrastructure, for example, have been widely credited with preventing mass killing in Kosovo in 1999. Human Rights Watch has argued that unequivocal international political condemnation, the withdrawal of economic aid, and the imposition of an arms embargo might have halted the 1994 genocide in Rwanda by turning the population and mid-level government functionaries against the Hutu extremist regime.

These strategies have been popular with policy-makers in the West because, compared to the strategies described above, they require relatively little commitment of resources and pose little risk of Western casualties. Unfortunately, the history of these efforts suggests that punitive measures are unlikely to prove highly effective in deterring mass killing. The evidence presented in this dissertation suggests that, like the decision to go to war, leaders do not take lightly the decision to embark upon a policy of mass killing. On the contrary, leaders order mass killing in an effort to achieve their most important goals or counter what they perceive to be their most dangerous threats. Mass killing is usually launched only after other, less violent alternatives have failed to achieve these goals or defeat these threats. Since states threatening punitive

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32 Barry Fosen argues that intervention in humanitarian crises will more often take the form of compellence, which is generally considered more difficult to carry out. See: “Military Responses to Refugee Disasters,” pp. 79-86.
33 Human Rights Watch, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, pp. 16-27, 635-660
actions generally lack the level of commitment to preventing mass killing that perpetrators have for carrying it out, such threats often lack credibility.\textsuperscript{34}

Even if punitive threats are actually carried out, the costs generated by these measures may not be great enough to persuade leaders to abandon their most important goals. Decades of Western political and diplomatic sanctions, and economic and military embargoes, for example, failed to force the Soviet Union and China to alter their policies.\textsuperscript{35} Nor did international sanctions or the threat of prosecution for war crimes deter Serbian sponsored violence in Bosnia or Kosovo. Although both the Young Turks and the Nazi regime were threatened with international sanctions, including a total economic blockade, both Turkey and Germany chose to wage total war rather than surrender to external pressures.

Because mass killing is often carried out without much popular support, punitive measures designed to arouse the opposition of the general population are unlikely to halt such violence unless an armed resistance group exists to challenge government authority. Thus, as Alan Kuperman concludes, even if international economic or diplomatic sanctions against Rwanda had succeeded in turning the population -- or even moderate members of the government and army -- against the Hutu extremists, these moderates would have had no means with which to oppose the military forces loyal to the extremists.\textsuperscript{36}

The threat of punitive air strikes holds a greater potential for increasing the costs facing perpetrators of mass killing, but in practice even this weapon has not proved widely effective.\textsuperscript{37} Allied strategic bombing of Germany and Japan killed between 600,000 and 1.5 million people, yet it did not deter either nation from engaging in mass killing.\textsuperscript{38} Some analysts question

\textsuperscript{34} Posen. "Military Responses to Refugee Disasters." p. 82.
\textsuperscript{36} Kuperman, "Rwanda in Retrospect."
\textsuperscript{38} It should be noted that allied bombing aimed at forcing an unconditional surrender, not merely the cessation of mass killing. It is impossible to rule out the possibility that bombing aimed at this more limited goal might have succeeded at an earlier date.
whether the strategic air campaign proved a decisive contribution to the German or Japanese surrenders at all.\textsuperscript{39} The NATO bombing campaign may well have contributed to the Serbian withdrawal from Kosovo, but it could not have prevented mass killing in Kosovo, if this had been the Serbs' intention.\textsuperscript{40} Indeed, the air strikes did not prevent the Serbs from killing between 2,000 and 10,000 Kosovar Albanians and expelling almost 850,000 more.\textsuperscript{41}

To be fair, the kinds of punitive measures described above have often been implemented half-heatedly or without complete international cooperation. In practice, diplomatic and economic sanctions have frequently been restricted in scope, left completely unenforced, or circumvented by allies of the perpetrators. Air strikes, too, have often been strictly limited in number, duration, type of target or type of ordnance employed. The poor record of sanctions and air strikes in the past, therefore, might not rule out the possibility of more effective punitive strategies in the future. On the other hand, the frequent inability of previous efforts to generate powerful punitive inducements suggests the extreme difficulty of this task. Redressing the practical deficiencies of this kind of strategy would undoubtedly entail very significant costs -- the very thing that policy makers have sought to avoid by opting for punitive measures over the other potential strategies of intervention described in this chapter.

Perhaps more important than the practical limitations of strategies such as sanctions or air strikes, however, is the significant danger that in some cases these policies may actually provoke the violence they seek to prevent. The primary shortcoming of these strategies is that they tend to confirm perpetrators' suspicions regarding the threat posed by victims groups while doing nothing to physically protect these groups from mass killing. The promise of international support may encourage potential victim groups to rise up, provoking a brutal crack-down by perpetrators. Sanctions and air strikes may succeed in increases the costs of mass killing for perpetrators, but if perpetrators simply blame the victims for the suffering inflicted by these policies, the incentives to engage in mass killing, or even popular support for it, may multiply.

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Likewise, the threat of prosecution for war crimes runs the risk of encouraging mass killing by convincing perpetrators that they must triumph over their opponents at any cost.

Unfortunately, these dynamics appear all too commonly in the history of mass killing. International diplomatic pressure to end the abuse of Armenians in Turkey, for example, prompted Armenian agitation for greater rights and privileges within Turkey. These actions, in turn, appear to have increased the Turkish perception that Armenians were a foreign, treacherous group which posed a mortal threat to the integrity of Turkey. As Vahakn N. Dadrian argues, "the humanitarian intervention of the Europeans [on behalf of the Armenians], however benign in its original intentions, created the very conditions that ultimately led to genocide." 42 As described above, from a purely humanitarian standpoint, U.S. sanctions against the Soviet Union and the provision of military aid to the Mujahideen during the war in Afghanistan may have backfired -- increasing the threat to the Soviet-Afghan regime but failing to protect the Afghan population. Similarly, some observers have suggested that Western diplomatic pressures to improve the treatment of Albanians in Kosovo may have emboldened Kosovar separatists, in turn prompting the severe Serbian crack-down of 1998-1999 and ultimately resulting in greater suffering for the Kosovar Albanians. 43 NATO bombing also appears to have hardened Serbian opinion against the Kosovar Albanians and rallied public support behind Milosevic, at least initially. 44

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61 and Steven Erlanger, "NATO was Closer to Ground War in Kosovo Than is Widely Realized," New York Times, November 7, 1999, p. A4


Practical Limits and Political Realities

The strategies described in this chapter, as well as the potential risks and limitations associated with them, should be familiar to policy-makers and scholars of international relations. Indeed, they are little different from the strategies of intervention that have been considered as means to prevent or limit more traditional forms of organized violence, such as war. The evidence presented in this dissertation suggests that if we are serious about limiting mass killing, however, we must begin to think of this kind of violence not as a fundamentally different form of conflict, but as a strategy used by groups in traditional conflicts under special conditions. As with these more traditional forms of conflict, we should expect no easy answers.

The practical problems of predicting and preventing mass killing are significant. Yet the strategies described above suggest that if policy makers approached intervention to prevent mass killing with the same level of determination and commitment of resources devoted to the defense of more traditional interests, at least some of these problems could be overcome. The United States, for example, deployed over 540,000 troops to the Persian Gulf in 1991, expended billions of dollars, suffered 148 fatalities and has proved willing to maintain military forces in the region for nearly ten years.\textsuperscript{45} In Rwanda, on the other hand, as noted above, it has been suggested that a short-term deployment of 15,000 American troops might have saved approximately 125,000 lives in the 1994 genocide.\textsuperscript{46}

To date, however, Western publics and political leaders have not demonstrated the willingness to make even this level of commitment to prevent mass killing in the absence of a credible invocation of "national security interests." Unfortunately, this situation has tended to lead Western states to opt for less costly, punitive strategies such as international sanctions -- or more rarely air strikes. As described above, these instruments have demonstrated relatively little ability to prevent mass killing and carry with them the significant risk of actually provoking or exacerbating this kind of violence.

\textsuperscript{46} Kuperman, "Rwanda in Retrospect"

287
Like nearly all scholars of genocide and mass killing, I hope that Western publics and policy makers will eventually summon the resolve to confront this kind of violence with the same level of commitment devoted to more traditional military conflicts. Until they do, however, policy makers should be very cautious about implementing more limited forms of intervention. The desire to do something about mass killing should not be allowed to obscure the real limitations of intervention. Policies designed to promote the escape of potential victims or provide them with speedy and effective humanitarian assistance, while imperfect, may save more lives with fewer risks than strategies designed to punish potential perpetrators.