THE SOCIALIZATION OF THREATS IN MASS KILLING

by

Tetsushi Ogata
A Dissertation
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By

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Master of Science
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DEDICATION

To those who died,
At the unknown hands,
Against their will,
For being who they were,
Without knowing why,
And whose deaths remain faceless.
   Even today.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCP  Chinese Communist Party
COSVN Central Office for South Vietnam
CPK  Communist Party of Kampuchea
CR   Cultural Revolution
DK   Democratic Kampuchea
FUNK National United Front of Kampuchea
GRUNK Royal Government of National Union of Kampuchea
KCP  Kampuchean Communist Party
KPRP Khmer People’s Revolutionary Party
NKVD People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs
OGPU Joint State Political Directorate
PLA  People’s Liberation Army
PRC  People’s Republic of China
USSR Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
THE SOCIALIZATION OF THREATS IN MASS KILLING

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This dissertation discusses the mechanisms and patterns of how threats are socialized in the murderous societies where regimes struggle with exercising their political control in the midst of social mobilization and structural breakdown. Threat is a set of interpretations of novel events and of communicative action of such appraisal. Threat alone does not drive people to kill but some threats can dictate the entire social apparatus of the killing machinery, as in the episodes of mass killing in the former Soviet Union, China, and Cambodia. The threat analysis of the communist mass killing seeks a heuristically emergent view of ‘threat as a process,’ wherein the framing of what is threatening is relationally determined in an array of multiple social relations and therefore its meaning is constantly in flux with the passage of time. In the threat system, threat is what binds the past and the future, projecting the fear of the future generative needs of identity onto the present reality. The agents are predisposed to exercise threats in order to maintain the credibility of their control of the system, especially when they perceive
looming prospects of further loss. However, threats that the parties perceive or exert are not static at different points in time, even if their means and objectives remain constant. When the threat system is in place, the relational dynamics would be negative-sum. The labeling of identity becomes ideational and therefore enemy identities are no longer ineliminable. The exercise of threats becomes self-perpetual and self-reinforcing as the system is increasingly averse to endogenous changes.
CHAPTER 1: THREAT AND MASS KILLING

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Threat is one of the underlying governing forces of social relations. Most often it functions to regulate these relations. It creates reasonable expectations of unwanted consequences for the threatened, thereby maintaining order and stability. In this case, it projects predictable patterns of social relations, and any potential deviation can be confined within anticipated or acceptable boundaries. Yet threats can be too controlling; their force to regulate social relations can go well beyond the original expectations or intentions of those who threaten so that social relations are dictated—even if they are destabilized as a result.

The substance of threats is also ambivalent. It is an elusive property as it manifests itself as either an objective material or a subjective reality, or both simultaneously. Its elusiveness is due to the fact that threats lie in discursive space, in a world interpreted by the eyes of the beholder where one’s reality and imagination intersect. This duality can be manifested as a subjective interpretation of an objective reality, or as a subjective imagination of how this reality should be. Threat morphs the two, showing its ambivalent face in one way or another, depending on which side one looks at it from, either from the threatening or the threatened. As such, threat itself does
not have a clear beginning or an end. Threat is contingent and relational. It is a mode of communication, a means of control, or a sign of intent between the threatening and the threatened. It exists in such bidirectional interactions between them, and the substance of threat is made meaningful only through their relational interactions. Furthermore, threat itself is neither harmful nor helpful. It is ubiquitous in any society as well as in the lives of people at varying degrees. Its meanings can be shared with other members of society, often without having to explain why and how certain things are threatening. The mere imagery or symbolism of threat can evoke identical emotional or psychological reactions among given subjects. It is not a question of whether threat exists—it always does—but rather of what kind or of what nature. There are threats that drive people to kill, as in conflict, and some threats that can fuel the killings of millions, as in genocidal circumstances. That is the subject of this dissertation: what kind of threat is at work when people are systematically killed en masse?

This inquiry does not seek to identify the origins of violence. Nor does it intend to claim that a threat is the only malice in society where mass killing has transpired. To be sure, the socialization of threats itself is not the cause of mass killing. Rather, this study seeks to identify patterns of how divisive identities are created and systematized, the form of which often serves as the basis of massive social engineering even at the expense of destroying existing social relations, and how these patterns are connected to threats. That is, how did relational dynamics change such that the killing of a defined identity group was socially sanctioned and institutionalized? Histories and memories of genocide and mass atrocities have demonstrated that identities, whether those of perpetrators or victims,
were politicized, manufactured, stigmatized, prescribed, or proscribed to some identifiable human groups by birth or by association, but not by the choice of those labeled. This study seeks to find patterns and processes in which such identity was constructed and socialized in a destructive and divisive way over time and across space. Threats provide an analytic lens to see these patterns of the formation of such identities in relation to each other. It puts those processes in a relational context that enables us to explore the nexus between the subjective and objective realities, between macro- and micro-analyses of control and the deviance of social relations, and between international and domestic circumstances that give rise to the politics of genocidal mass killing.

Three episodes of highly destructive mass killings are selected for comparative analysis: those committed under the communist regimes of the former Soviet Union, China, and Cambodia. To suggest a frame of genocidal mass killing for these cases will be more contested than "classic" episodes of genocide—such as Armenia in 1915, the Holocaust, and Rwanda in 1994—as the communist mass killings do not strictly meet the standards of the legal definition of genocide as stipulated in the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The focus, however, is not whether or not they qualify to be labeled as genocide, but instead on how some people of the same, and often fictive, groups—be they racial, ethnic, national, national,

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1 The case of the destruction in Armenia is contested. It is not the subject of this study to support either of the camps, but there is no doubt in the fact that the majority of scholarships agree that destruction of Armenians in 1915 constituted genocide.

2 It follows the view of the 1994 episode as the genocide against Tutsis. It is not the intention of this study to argue the qualification of other alternative views, such as alleged genocidal crimes committed by Tutsis against Hutus in the post-1994 era.

3 The cases of the former Soviet Union, especially concerning Homodor, and China are also contested. Some say yes, others say no.
social, or political—were framed as enemies and subjected to killings. There are, of course, other episodes of mass deaths under totalitarian or fascist regimes in the twentieth century, but the three cases under consideration provide a conceptually cogent set of cases to analyze because they offer examples of mass killings based on arbitrary and a socialized construction of enemy identities in the regimes’ transition and consolidation processes. Overarching questions that guide the present study are: How did their relational dynamics become destructive and divisive in such a way that they 1) warranted killings of arbitrary enemies while 2) previous and subsequent generations of those enemies were spared? The analytical focus is placed here on the transmutability (degree of destructiveness in the temporal context in a particular space) and variability (degree of destructiveness in the spatial context at a particular time) of relational dynamics in connection with mass killing.

The purpose of this research is therefore not to account for the causal origin of genocide and mass killing as a whole, which necessarily involves a multidimensional constellation of variables that are beyond the scope of the present research. It also does not seek to label whether the cases constitute genocide or not, nor does the research explain a general theory of the causal mechanisms of genocide. For reasons that will be expounded upon later, a general theory of genocide is conceptually challenging within the social scientific methods. Rather, the study intends to delve deeper into the process in which the human relational system breaks down and manifests itself as a genocidal

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4 As will be discussed in the later chapter, “monolithic” does not mean that those societies were composed of a monolithic identity. The former Soviet Union was multi-ethnic and multi-national polity, and Cambodia was the same, albeit to a lesser extent. Ethnic and national questions were highly relevant in the policy decisions of mass killing, as we shall see, especially in the former Soviet Union and Cambodia.
system by analyzing the connection between threats, identity, and control. It seeks further analysis and refinement of the conceptual substance and contour of threats within myriad causal intersections of mass killing.

To view threat as a conceptual framework in the cases of the totalitarian mass killings in Soviet Russia, China, and Cambodia allows one to make subtle but important distinctions—or inversely speaking, clarifications—on several areas of academic discussions. The study of threat and identity contributes to i) the conceptual distinctions between killings in conflict and genocidal mass killing; ii) a shift from a nonlethal form of repression in totalitarian regimes to an excessively lethal form of repression; iii) another shift from totalitarianism in general to an extremely destructive and self-consuming form of totalitarianism; iv) the balance between political control and social deviance; and v) another balance between threat of punishment and promise of reward in the context of social mobilization and social breakdown. As will be elaborated in the later chapters, the three cases under question offer episodes in which the societies evolved to become genocidal, as some threats were perceived and then translated into counter-threats in practice, in such a way that the mass killing of citizens and party cadres was seen to be sine qua non of the implementation of their political projects; none of them were predisposed to genocidal mass killing from the outset. All of them—the Bolshevik Party of 1917 led by Lenin, the Chinese Communist Party of 1935 when Mao Zedong assumed its helm, and the Communist Party of Kampuchea of 1959 when Pol Pot climbed to its secretary general post—emerged out of the vestiges of war with the revolutionary ethos of Marxism, but they did not set out initially to eliminate ‘enemies of
the people.’ The regimes had undergone transformations in order to indulge in the violent destruction of their own societies for the sake of ensuring the integrity and credibility of their policy successes. For each of the regimes, these processes took place between 1917 and 1936, before the Great Terror of the Stalinist regime began; between 1942 and 1966, before the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was announced by Mao; and between 1959 and 1979, before the invading Vietnamese army overthrew the Khmer Rouge. It was during these periods when threats were socialized, as the killings and repressive means of control by the regimes shifted from conflict to genocidal mass killing.

This dissertation will therefore weave those discussions by exploring the role of threats in shaping the narratives and aspirations of the group identities involved through their associations with or adaptations to novel changes and events. It also seeks to understand a pattern of identity construction through which an image of the enemy is collectively shared by many and often accompanied by an excessive mode of control, with mass killing as one such exercise. Threat here is defined as *a set of interpretations of novel events and of communicative action of such appraisal*—and there are two key linkages between threat and identity. First, the role of threats acts as an important analytic lens to account for the relational contingency of social relations. Definitions of genocide often presuppose that victim identities are defined by the perpetrators. It is also assumed that victims are seen, from the perpetrators’ perspective, to be undergoing stigmatization and dehumanization processes, so that mass killing of those perceived enemies is dissociated from “the universe of moral obligation.”

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vices along the “axiology of difference.” Implicit in these views is the inherent lack of attention to how the perpetrators constructed their own identity and shared it across different levels of social apparatus, socializing the norms and perceptions about the threatening enemy identities. This study instead probes the cases by conceptualizing identity as a marker of relational dynamics, threat as a means of communication in the systems, and control as a functional mechanism of the systems. In so doing, it tries to understand how and why the perpetrators—not just the victims—radicalized and essentialized their belief in perceived threats and created threat-driven and threat-inducing identities.

Second, this identity construction is organized through a shift in the boundaries between the perpetrators and the victims, and threat provides a catalyst for those boundaries of group identities, as Volkan aptly illustrates: “individuals are not usually preoccupied with their large-group identity until it is threatened.” Threat can thus induce individuals to recognize their salient individual and group identities, even trumping the concern for individual needs in exchange for stability and control. Threats alone do not explain aggression, let alone genocidal killing, and yet they run at the core of the perpetrators’ identity formation in cases of mass killing, as well as the victims’ identity prescription. The study attempts to explore the inception of threats as perceived by the perpetrators, often elites and extremists of the totalitarian regimes, and the evolution and acceptance of those perceived threats by society, as expressed in identity labeling and

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exercised by systematic social control. In so doing, it seeks to treat a threat as a theoretical and analytical concept, amid other important explanatory variables, and unravel its socialization process that merits exclusive attention and further clarification.

The exploration of threats in fact acknowledges some merits of the concept. For example, the objective of understanding threats is not to pursue a world in which a threat no longer haunts our society. To be sure, a threat-free world is neither possible nor conceivable; one may argue it is not even desirable. Threat is one expression of many relational properties of human interaction, and it is bound to arise in any group relationships to varying degrees. It is akin to a kinetic force that arises under certain conditions and circumstances and subsequently defines the characteristics of human interaction with particular identity markers and relevant actions. It is latent but ubiquitous. It also serves as an insurance to predict an undesirable outcome and avoid it. In our conventional experiences, for instance, people are less inclined to buy car insurance policies unless there is a real threat of being in an accident or of getting fines by not having it. The safety we enjoy on the road and other safety measures in our society, such as social security and life insurance, are due in large part to our preparation to avoid unwanted and threatening consequences.

As such, the ensuing discussion is not driven by a desire to advocate for a world without threat, fear, or preoccupation that comes from someone or some groups that are marked with difference. Rather, the function of threats should help a system to induce self-correction, so that threats are never actualized as a violent response to emergent phenomena. The study is expected to contribute to our understanding of the workings of
threats, using the communist mass killings as the subject matter. Making distinctions in how threats work—based on their different categories, targets, and sources—further helps us clarify how threats work in the context of social change and in the process of identity formation. We are also able to discern how threats differ in genocidal mass killing from other broader contexts such as conflict, repression, or revolution in general. Threats function as a conduit of real and symbolic realms of the perpetrators’ identity needs, in both the individual and the collective social, political and economic spaces. This understanding of the prevalence of threats’ roles in identity dynamics of genocidal mass killing is important for future prevention of those atrocities. It is argued that studying the role of threats in a society provides an insight into how to learn threats correctly, especially where powerful agents—as they are controlling a large human system and are feeling threatened—reacted by killing millions of those who were previously thought of as their own citizens.

1.1.1. Overview of the Thesis Structure

This dissertation is divided mainly into two parts. The first part (Chapter 1) is devoted to the conceptual discussion of threats, which is then used to analyze specific case studies in the second part (Chapter 2 – 4). The conceptual discussion of threats is subdivided into three sections. The first section of theory discussion will dissect the functions of threats. Conceptually, threats have been analyzed by, among others, social psychologists, realists, international relations scholars, game theorists, and sociologists. While their conceptual propositions of threats are enriching in regard to the role of threats
in conflict, authoritarianism, policymaking and the like, a crucial distinction should be made between ‘threat-as-a-condition’ and ‘threat-as-a-process’ in order to understand its connection with mass killing. The existing scholarship tends to treat threat as a condition or factor within the relational systems, whereas the relational analysis in mass killing requires threat to be treated as a process. This is related to a shift from a paradigm of ‘one enemy and one threat’ to ‘multiple enemies and multiple threats.’ The discussion will highlight the multiplicity of emergent threat properties by illustrating the difference between the conditional nature and the structural nature of threats. Specifically, the former is characterized by an ‘exchange system’ or transactional views, and the latter is seen as a ‘threat system’ as part of structural violence.

The second section will elaborate on social mechanisms under which the politics of threat, identity and control were exercised. By drawing from perspectives from dynamical systems theory and prospect theory, it will touch upon the self-organizing pattern of regularity in the threat system that pushes threat to emerge or submerge. At the individual level, radicalization and dehumanization take place as needs of control are pursued. At the societal level, social mobilization and the breakdown of the state erupt congruently, creating a vacuum in the social order and privileged patronage systems. At the regime level, international and domestic dynamics create different interpretations of crises. At each level, multiple conflicts are fought between multiple enemies, and threats are used to minimize the complexity of social relations and restore the control of the

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systems. In social structures, control and reward mechanisms reinforce the threat system wherein potential deviation to the threat system itself perpetuates a perceived threat of control.

The third section will establish a conceptual framework to analyze threats as one of the relational elements to account for the identity system in the cases of mass killing, which has been underemphasized so far in the literature of conflict and genocide studies. The different nature of conflict and genocidal mass killing will be explored in terms of relational ontology and epistemology. This dissertation begins with a post-liberal construct of genocide and anti-realist orientation of conflict and moves towards a relational approach. When the relational dynamics shift from conflict to mass killing, the meaning of the social collectivity as objects of targeted elimination also shifts. This will be highlighted by the difference in the role of agency and its interactivity within structure, as well as by the way in which identity needs are analyzed, with threat as a central guiding framework. Through this discussion, the framework of needs analysis will be complemented by another inherent need for control, which is not basic to human survival but generative in nature and contributes to the basis of understanding the relational systems in mass killing.

The discussion on research methods will develop this theoretical construct of threats as a lens through which process tracing—a form of qualitative time series analysis of comparative case studies—is used. Such a construct of threats will be a hypothetical

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and conceptual model, and it will serve as a guiding framework to process trace the causal mechanisms in the given cases, while juxtaposing it with findings from the case analysis. As such, the present research is designed to be a theory testing exercise to further refine the conceptual models of threats in genocidal mass killing.

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1.2. Overview of The Thematic Focus

1.2.1. Inquiry on Mass Killing

To study the most destructive form of social identity, one may rightly turn to genocide as the case in point. The proliferating literature of genocide studies, initially starting with the Holocaust, indeed shares such aspirations. However, the term ‘genocide’ is a contested one to apply to the cases selected, except for Cambodia.\(^\text{14}\) In fact, they will not be referred to as cases of genocide here, nor is it the intention of this study to label them as such. Instead, this study begins with the premise that genocide is a form of identity conflict, albeit the most extreme one, and therefore two modes of theoretical inquiry are possible. For one, the anti-realist orientation of conflict theories provides theoretically cogent observations to contextualize genocide in a broad spectrum of collective violence. Secondly, the post-liberal orientation of genocide studies\(^\text{15}\) allows for the deconstructing of genocidal social relations and analyzes the social construction of the identity groups involved. Therefore, the term ‘mass killing’ will be used to address

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\(^{14}\) However, some scholarship contends that the Cambodian case does not constitute genocide in terms of the legal definition. See Midlarsky.

\(^{15}\) Moses, “Conceptual Blockages and Definitional Dilemmas in the ‘Racial Century.’”
this subject. However, it should not be seen as a veil to mean the same thing as ‘genocide’ under a different name, but rather a methodological and conceptual departure from the definitional debates.

Conflict and genocide are not one and the same, neither are genocide and mass killing. While genocide may or may not entail massive physical destruction, mass killing may be carried out with or without the perpetrators’ intent to annihilate particular identity groups. Conflict theories in which grievance plays prominent roles provide analytically useful views on frustration as one of the demarcation lines for groups’ social comparison, although they nevertheless have not elaborately explained the systematic and intentional nature of genocidal destruction. There is something that shifts in this continuum in such a way that enemies are framed no longer as the rival-foe with which one seeks to compete with or against—as they are viewed with in conflict—but as the objects of annihilation. The social collectivity, as the targeted object of destruction, shifts its meanings from conflict situations to mass killing. There is a need to take into account both perspectives on conflict and genocide precisely because the communist mass killing of the three totalitarian regimes involved elements of both. The targeted nature of killing victim identity groups (whether they were kulaks, counterrevolutionaries, or ‘New People’) and the systemic way in which violence was unleashed (as in purges with summary executions) clearly exhibit resonance, even partially, with the legal definition of genocide. Yet it is debatable if the intent of annihilation was present if one considers that those campaigns were limited in scope in terms of their temporal duration. In the same vein the cases also present the examples of intractable conflict in which mutating groupings of the
parties constantly engaged in civil and internal strife, while the extent of destruction in all the three cases showed a qualitative leap from an average sense of conflict wherein the parties are assumed to exercise and represent their agency. This study contends that the analysis of threats complements our understanding of such shifts in collective violence from general to genocidal, as one manifestation of identity conflict, and that the role of threats plays defining characteristics of perpetrator and victim identities in such a continuum of destruction.

This approach to treat genocide in the broad spectrum of collective violence is methodologically vital. This is because genocide is a rare phenomenon. When it does occur, the cases are “too infrequent, too heterogeneous, [and] too contingent,” and therefore the appropriate universe of cases to study genocide as a dependent variable is necessarily small and fraught with ambiguity of “what genocide is” in the first place. In fact, cases of genocide suggest that “varied perpetrators have destroyed different types of groups at different times for different reasons.” No single, generalizable motive or type of perpetrators can cogently treat them as a common form of genocide, other than the outcome itself. Therefore, this paper does not aim to seek a general theory of genocide and instead tries to overcome this methodological limitation by focusing on ‘mass killing’ within the context of conflict, of which genocide is seen as a special manifestation (see

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16 This is not to enter into a moral discussion of how many cases would constitute “rare,” or inversely speaking “frequent.” The view adopted in this dissertation follows from the legally restricted definition of genocide as set forth by the 1948 UN Genocide Convention. Theorists who have advanced the broader frames of genocide, as in politicide, such as Barbara Harff, would contend this. The frame of mass killing is used precisely because it focuses our attention to destruction processes, rather than whether they were intended.


Mass killing can be seen as a part of the broad conception of collective violence. It overlaps with genocide to some extent, but it is not synonymous.

Figure 1. Boundaries of violence

In the figure above, the area of the genocide circle that is not covered by either conflict or mass killing can be seen as a form of destruction that does not require physical destruction, such as destruction of traits of national groups as conceived by Lemkin\(^\text{19}\) or ‘gendercide.’\(^\text{20}\) As such, many elements of both genocide and mass killing can be seen as morphing into each other when put into practice and if observed on the ground.

Analytically speaking, however, differentiation can be made. The label of mass killing is specifically chosen because this study is interested in the act of what transpires itself, and not in the intentionality of the act.

While the unit of analysis is *threat* in the relational dynamics in the forms of narratives, experiences, or acts, the contextual events of interest surrounding the unit are


the mass killing of civilian noncombatants organized by states. A frame of mass killing thus aligns more with a relational concept of genocide put forth by Powell, as a “process of violent destruction of that type of figuration (a self-reproducing dynamic network of practical social relations) whose organizing principle is a collective identification.”21 By placing mass killing in such a category, this study intends to remove several constraints inherent in the definitional debates on genocide.

The first step in removing the definitional constraints relies on a departure from the legal definition of genocide adopted by the 1948 UN Convention on Genocide, which followed the tradition of theorists who analyzed genocide as an extraordinary and yet observable form of human activities in the social sciences and distanced themselves from the UN definition.22 By expanding the scope of analysis to include broader forms of mass killing, victim groups are no longer distinguished on the basis of the four identity categories (national, ethnic, racial and religious) enshrined in the Convention’s text. Effectively, destruction of social and political groups—or “politicide” as defined by Harff and Gurr23 and which is not considered genocide under the Convention—is included as a subject of interest in this study. Figure 2 below attempts to capture the broader

conception encompassing the Convention’s legal definition of genocide and mass killing.

This conception is constructed broadly and is inclusive of politicide, which would be an area of ‘the mass killing-circle’ minus ‘the genocide-circle’ below. The circle of mass killing highlighted in gray in the figure below is the main area of focus. This area could also be called “geno-/politicide” as some scholars such as Harff refer, but the term ‘mass killing’ is used instead because the study tries to approach massive losses of human lives organized by states through a sociological frame and away from the definitional conundrum of intentionally destroying targeted identity groups.

Figure 2. Boundaries of mass killing

Therefore, paying due attention to mass killing, rather than the restrictive legal definition of genocide, allows one to deal with the destruction of ‘civilian noncombatants.’ This precludes not only any group of civilian combatants as in rebel or guerilla fighting forces, but also exclusive focus on only select groups of victim identities, such as national, ethnic, racial, religious, or political ones. The emphasis is placed on the innocent nature of

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victims who are not part of the armed and organized combat, including civilian men, women, and children. This approach transcends the categorical distinctions of who they are based on their identities.

Secondly, the approach taken helps to focus on shifts during the destruction process, not the outcome. Although not all the episodes of mass killing can be considered genocide and, likewise, not all the acts of genocide entail physical destruction (under the Convention’s text), both genocide and mass killing are closely associated with each other. While being mindful of these distinctions, this approach enables one to look at the spectrum of mass violence that can, at some point and under some circumstances, deteriorate into more systematic destruction of particular identity groups. However, the inclusive scope of mass killing may seemingly cover a wide range of killings and expand the list to an unlimited number of cases. Instead, the analysis employs the ‘mass killing organized by states’ to focus on the “overall destruction process” in a structurally organized manner.

Lastly, focusing on mass killing rather than genocide helps steer the attention away from the intentionality debates of genocide and towards a sociological analysis. Article Two of the Genocide Convention frames the acts and types of killing in connection with the “intent to destroy, in whole or in part.” It is difficult enough to locate the intent to attack groups without clear evidence, let alone identifying that such intent, if any, is genocidal in its nature. The International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia dismissed the application of the genocide definition to the atrocities

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25 Sémelin, Purify and Destroy.
committed in the Bosnian war in the 1990s, calling such atrocities ethnic cleansing instead, due to the lack of a specific intent to commit the destruction “as such.” The UN-appointed International Commission of Inquiry concluded in 2005 that the Sudanese government did not pursue a policy of genocide in Darfur, although the Commission condemned the atrocities committed as crimes against humanity. From the perspectives of the international judicial institutions, a state-endorsed plan or policy is a defining element of whether the acts in question constitute the crime of genocide and “lies at the very heart of the debate,”26 but it is not the intention of this study to argue the criminality of the chosen cases.

The aforementioned cases are contested examples of defining a particular episode as genocidal or not—and of the definitional traps one can get mired in—while the gravity of the atrocities is no less significant regardless of the label, qualitatively or emotively. Other research shows that the original intent of the drafters of the Convention did not encompass such a specific intent requirement, and thus “knowledge-based intent”27 or “constructive intent”28 suffice. These arguments contest that evidence of having prior knowledge of the consequences allows one to surmise the intent of the perpetrators. Following these logics, while the requirement of such a specific intent has been debated as a central qualifying factor in deeming an act genocidal, this study moves away from such a reductionist perspective in order to focus on processes in which threats are

socialized and operationalized in the genocidal mass killing. Therefore, it will forgo the debates surrounding the intentionality of destruction, whether it is actual commission of physical and direct killing or indirect deaths caused by starvation or forced deportation, by approaching those processes through the lens of mass killing, rather than that of genocide. The word “genocidal” will therefore be used in this study to connote the massive loss of human lives organized by states, while the emphasis is placed on process and not the outcome.

This conceptual approach therefore directs our attention to the unfolding process of human capacity to destroy. The notion of “the banality of evil”\textsuperscript{29} or the “ordinary men” of the police battalion who were studied by Christopher Browning,\textsuperscript{30} are resonant here. They suggest that génocidaire is not an impossible but rather a viable expression of a more destructive side of human potential, while reminding us that one’s thoughtlessness can lead to the mechanical docile body, in the Foucauldian sense, capable of executing evil deeds without moral reproach or apprehension as we would imagine. Criticisms notwithstanding, these observations by Arendt or Browning suggest one aspect of the reality that génocidaire can reside in our common humanity and we could be capable of internalizing it and even subsuming it without conscious will. The question is whether this human capacity is influenced by threats of enemies, when those enemies were not actually threatening, and if so, how it became socialized into the minds and systems of society.


The observation that such a phenomenon is a reality not too far distant from us is unnerving, but makes it even more compelling to study such “banality” or “extraordinary human evil” in the words of Arendt\textsuperscript{31} or Waller,\textsuperscript{32} respectively, out of which the potential of vicious human destructiveness leads to massive and extensive processes and outcomes of destruction. Yehuda Bauer’s reflection on the Holocaust illustrates a case in point: “[it] was unprecedented, but now the precedent is there.”\textsuperscript{33} The search of transmutable and variable shifts in destructive violence is therefore interested in “the issue of sliding into the act of violence in itself, i.e. on the manner in which banality, at the end of a highly complex process, serves to facilitate a collective monstrosity.”\textsuperscript{34}

For these reasons, this study approaches the complex interaction of causal factors through mass killing phenomena, with threat as the conceptual denominator and without the constraints of the definitional debates on genocide. The focus is placed on the process in which our latent capacity to inflict massive destruction—a unidirectional, systematic, and sustained campaign of human killing—upon those who were originally of the same identity groups. This socialization process ranges from inception, evolution, to the acceptance of genocidal identity formation. Why are enemies turned into those to be eliminated in mass killing, not just those to compete in conflict? By departing from the legal approach, the aim of analysis is “not so much examining the effects of the violent

\textsuperscript{31} Arendt, \textit{Eichmann in Jerusalem: a Report on the Banality of Evil.}
\textsuperscript{34} Sémelin, \textit{Purify and Destroy,} 289, emphasis added.
act on the victims as seeking to detect among perpetrators of massacres the *reasons for their descent* into violence.”

1.2.2. Essence of Threat

Threats are not specific to only genocide and mass killing, and connections between threats and conflict can be multifaceted. Korostelina summarizes the sources of out-group threat based on previous studies’ accounts of intergroup relations, which are “a) unequal economical, cultural or political positions of ethnic groups, b) different citizenship of ethnic groups, c) memories of the former domination of the outgroup and attribution of the desire for its revival, d) a perceived weaker or worse position in comparison with the outgroup, e) limiting of the socioeconomic opportunities of the in-group by outgroups, f) political extremism, violence, and nationalism of out-groups.”

Conceptions of threats have also been explored in the literature on intergroup bias. Brewer and Gaertner, for example, discuss a threat as expressed in the needs for group distinctiveness and differentiation. This research suggests that threats can be conceptualized as a perceptual property that is embedded in the realm of "the in-group's social identity, its goals and values, its position in the hierarchy, even its existence."
Specific to genocide and mass killing, other theorists have postulated ways in which threats play into one of the essential characteristics of human relationships from various angles, ranging from realist to social psychological paradigms.40 Especially, Midlarsky focuses on the “fear of loss” and “risk compensation” as the basic model of genocidal violence but his analysis takes place in the context of realpolitik.41 His later work includes micro- or meso-level analysis in terms of ephemeral gains and mortality salience.42 Jones also mentions “mortal fear” as an essential element of the motivational factors.43 Hiebert places “mortal threats” as one of the processes through which to dehumanize the victims who are then subjected to mass killing.44 Rothbart and Korostelina discuss further the dynamics of threats in terms of axiological differences.45 What permeates through these theoretical propositions with respect to the role of threats is that the perpetrators of genocide and mass killing experience threats, both in real and symbolic terms, which precipitate the escalation or aggravation of the extremely violent means utilized in achieving their ends. They are, however, mostly concerned with the effects of threats, but not the causation of how the psychological, emotive, and motivational elements of threats can occur and affect the identity boundaries of the perpetrators and victims.

41 Midlarsky, *The Killing Trap*.
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In trying to understand the role of threats in shaping identity systems in mass killing, there is a merit in exploring the workings of threats in connection with aggression by first revisiting the fundamental linkages between the original frustration-aggression thesis and the threat-aggression thesis. Essentially, there is a shift in a conflict paradigm from “what ought to be ours” (i.e. comparison-frustration-competition/appropriation) to “what must be ours” (i.e. comparison-fear-elimination/domination).

Berkowitz\textsuperscript{46} and Gurr\textsuperscript{47} hypothesized the threat-aggression thesis as a special case of the frustration-aggression mechanism, where threats can be conceived of both as real and symbolic properties. This is because there exist threats to the physical and material welfare of the group (real threats) and threats to the group’s value system, belief system, or worldview (symbolic threats). The basic tenet of the threat-aggression thesis is that “violence response occurs as reaction to fear rather than expression of anger.”\textsuperscript{48} The distinction between fear and threat is slight, but important:

The change in the environment that triggers fear is not… a hostile act or threat \textit{per se} but only a novel event that one has learned to associate with threat, nor does the environmental trigger lead directly to aggression. Rather, an environmental change triggers the emotion, fear, that engages attention and disposes the subject to look for, and often find, threats… Contrary to our usual supposition, \textit{we do not fear because we are threatened, we feel threatened because we fear}.\textsuperscript{49}

What is at play here is the perceived threats caused by one’s interpretation of changing dynamics in the subject’s milieu. Fear arises out of one’s appraisal of potential

\textsuperscript{48}Ibid., 35, emphasis added.
danger. “Danger” is a situation of potential harm, and threat is something akin to a vector directed to the source of the danger.\(^\text{50}\) In other words, for threats to be actual, there is an appraisal process to make sense of the danger, involving one’s assessment of both the possibility and the conditionality of such harm: that is, the possibility of lurking danger and conditionality that such potential harm becomes real when conditions are right.\(^\text{51}\) Ashmore et al. would describe such an assessment as primary appraisal.\(^\text{52}\) This is an initial step in which people make sense of the sources or situations of danger. They try to identify what causes the problems and who is responsible. For violence to be systematic and widespread among a large segment of society, however, Ashmore et al. further argue that there is a secondary appraisal process in which shared group social identities are essentially interwoven with personal social identities while experiences of threats become congruent with their daily personal experiences. They discuss that this is when “‘guilt’ of the outgroup is solidified in socially projected images, and harm-doing is explained as a necessary or perhaps even a noble activity.”\(^\text{53}\)

As such, threats are made of appraisal: threats are a set of interpretations of novel events. They are concerned with fear of prospective changes in one’s milieu, as a result of cognitive appraisal of the expected negative consequences. As depicted in Figure 3 below, fear is an emotional reaction as part of such appraisal of potential and conditional danger, which is then expressed in the perception of threats, assigning blame and

\(^{50}\) Korostelina, Social Identity and Conflict, 138.
\(^{53}\) Ibid., 235.
responsibilities of the danger along “identity boundaries.” Fear is also the attribution of intentions and interpretations by the out-group to make sense of the danger. Fear is therefore connected to prospective frustration of the design of the future reality projected by the members of given identity groups who are threatened. While threats could originate from both real and symbolic sources, it is the fear that makes changes and novel events threatening. When this meaning-making process of those circumstantial and environmental changes is closely tied to culturally, socially, historically, and personally specific values and embedded in the structure of identity (secondary appraisal process), fear-driven threats produce motivational links with deadly aggression. Hence, threats are also communicative action of such appraisals.

Figure 3. Appraisals of threat

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54 Tilly, *Identities, Boundaries, and Social Ties.*
However, fear is not the only possible response to the appraisal of perceived danger. This process can actually encompass a broad array of consequences, such as mistrust, dissatisfaction, anger, resentment, stress, and other negative emotions. The preceding discussion of the threat-appraisal processes is also not just applicable to only cases of mass killing, but to other protracted conflict as well. The original hypothesis of frustration-aggression linkages also does not presuppose one’s subjective appraisal leads automatically to violence. The “secondary appraisal of threats” may serve as a catalyst of aggression for a group affected but cannot be equated with mass killing. Hiebert argues that the logical connection posed by some scholars on the notion that a threat posed by the victim groups propels the perpetrators to kill the threat by liquidating them. This is a reasonable claim in its basic logic but lacks specificity in that a perception of threats alone does not cause mass killing. There are differences between general threats and perceived “mortal threats” to the extent that the motivational links with mass killing are real and actionable.

Furthermore, another issue as to whether threats result in extremely violent response has to do with the credibility of threats. Boulding argues that “[i]n order for the threat to be perceived as a threat by the threatened, the threatener must be able to create a perception of credibility; that is, of both capability and will of carrying out the threat if the threatened does not do what the threatener wants him to do.” The seminal work by

57 Hiebert, “The Origins of Genocide.”
Thomas Schelling discusses threats in the context of bargaining and strategic behavior and sees threats closely associated with the power of deterrence to avoid the potential loss or damage—or to allow for a maximization of gains, depending on which side is examined—in bargaining situations.\textsuperscript{59} For Schelling, threats occur within a “‘rational’ value-maximizing mode of behavior” which is “concerned with influencing another’s choice by working on his expectation of how one’s own behavior is related to his.”\textsuperscript{60} In this conception of threat transaction, the credibility and efficacy of threats rest on the commitment and promise of threats amid several factors, such as costs and risks associated with making the threat real, the presence of alternatives, or the proximity of the threat and decision makers.\textsuperscript{61} This strategic conception of threats resonates with Valentino’s proposition that mass killing is deemed as the most strategically practical means by the elites to achieve their specific political and military objectives.\textsuperscript{62} However, in cases of mass killing, the balancing act of deterrence is somehow not effectuated by the lack of common interest between the parties involved and, more importantly, of comparable or contestable agency. Given the lack of ‘agent-hood’ of the victim groups, it is unclear how those threats are made meaningful and credible.

The table below, adopted from the Insult Matrix by Korostelina\textsuperscript{63} and inspired by Bartoli, tries to show these different orientations of threats in the matrix. The types of interest here are \textit{credible threat} and \textit{attributed threat}.

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 15.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 6.
\textsuperscript{62} Valentino, \textit{Final Solutions}.
Table 1. Threat matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Threatened (B)</th>
<th>Perceive</th>
<th>Credible Threat</th>
<th>Attributed Threat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not perceive</td>
<td></td>
<td>Futile Threat</td>
<td>Trivial Threat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the rational calculation mode, it is assumed that both the Threatening and the Threatened have some degrees of agent-hood within the transmission and reception of threats, and therefore the intentionality of threats (from the Threatening) and perceptiveness of those threats (for the Threatened) are given: hence, the presence of credible threat in the matrix. The credibility of such threats is a question of degree, not of whether it actually exists. In the cases of mass killing, however, a question emerges as to who is being threatened, as the power balance of agent-hood is completely skewed to being one sided. It is possible that the perpetrators perceive, real or imagined, a sense of threats and make sense of it (via primary and secondary appraisal processes), but a question remains as to whether the threats are really intended, especially when the agent-hood of the ‘Threatening-victims’ is denied in the first place, at least in the eyes of the ‘Threatened-perpetrators.’ This is illustrated as attributed threat in the matrix. There is something credible enough to ascertain the plausibility of threats, and yet that is attributed to non-agency. On the contrary, it is also possible that the victims are the ones
perceiving, quite rightly, threats coming from the perpetrators (credible threat in the matrix) while the perpetrators may or may not actualize or act upon those threats (another form of attributed threat). In other words, there are two foci from which to look at threats in the matrix when ‘A threatens B.’ One is to see a threat as A’s strategic and intended undertaking to induce B’s behavior, and the other is to see it in B’s attitude and reaction to A’s behavior, regardless of what A intended. It is essentially an action-outcome dichotomy. Game theorists tend to focus on the former understanding of threat as a strategic move, whereas the latter is a topic of interest to social psychologists. In their model, “threat is the outcome of A’s (intended future) activities as perceived (or imagined) by B” and threats are viewed in terms of attitude and anticipation by the Threatened with respect to impending harm, which is “a purely psychological concept, an interpretation of a situation by the individual.” In the real world of relational interaction, where the A-B connectivity is often iterative, one must also keep in mind that A and B can be interchangeable. Put differently, A (or B) can be both the Threatening and the Threatened at the same time.

This leads us to several questions regarding how the secondary appraisal process brings fears and threats together; what kind of fears are more pertinent to causing “mortal threats”; and through what commitment and promise those fears are turned into credible or attributed threats. Is the threat revealing something real or an invention of the mind?

Some research shows that construction of salient and shared identity is correlated to the

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65 Ibid., 72.
degree to which people feel threats. Unraveling such a linkage should help us better understand the connections among fear, threats, and elimination in a spectrum of identity formation processes between the perpetrators and victims (the Threatening and the Threatened) while recognizing that the role of threats is not the only explanatory variable for mass killing and does not necessarily rule out other explanations.

In sum, threat is an appraisal, a product of relational interactions. What may be threatening to one may not have the same effects on another person. This is possible even when both of them are in the same temporal and spatial context. Similarly, the same piece of threat may be threatening to one individual and another who are in different locations or time periods. Threat is thus relational and contextual. To analyze threat is to assess the meanings associated with each interaction of relational transactions of the parties involved, and how the credibility and attribution of the parties’ undertakings are seen and being reacted to. The threat system of mass killing will be further discussed below in the next section, highlighting the difference between threat-as-a-condition and threat-as-a-process. This will be followed by an elaboration of the relational dynamics perspective.

1.3. TOWARD THREAT ANALYSIS

Threat, after all, is only one of many items associated with the emergent process of collective violence, if one looks at it as a causal factor. We have garnered considerable scholarly analyses to this effect, trying to identify causal origins, triggering factors, or escalating or deescalating patterns and processes that led to conflict, including genocidal

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mass killing, by analyzing the role of greed, grievance, leadership, ideology, nationalism, political structure, identity, narratives, agency, and the like, to find and test a plausible explanation of why violence occurred in a way it did at a particular time and space.

Threat is arguably one of those items being studied, especially in the literature of social psychology and international relations. However, when seen as a system, threat is one of the understudied and overlooked properties, and as such there is the lack of understanding of how it influences, or even dictates, the workings of identity formation.68 Especially in the context of mass killing, we have a lingering question of how to make sense of connections among threats, fears, and identity and how they are relevant to experiences of gains or losses in relational interaction. This study is yet another attempt, supplementing but not supplanting, of explanation. Elasticity of relational dynamics will be highlighted through this process. This is in contrast to a traditional mode of inquiry, which, in search of plausible causal mechanisms, presupposes there was something extraordinary, erratic aberration, or abnormal psyches on which we could assign ‘blame’ as an explanatory factor allegedly causing a violent outcome. Further, ‘that’—whatever that object is defined as—is often seen as static across different contexts.

This section will proceed in discussing the mechanisms involved when ‘A threatens B’ and try to deconstruct the transitory nature of threat in relational interactions. As discussed, threats can be descriptively defined in terms of two dichotomous foci, one from the Threatening’s undertaking of coercive actions and the other from the

Threatened’s reactions to or perceptions of them. This dual nature of threats becomes even more multifaceted when we place them in the relational dynamics that cannot be neatly divided into the action-outcome dichotomy of either A’s undertaking or B’s reactions. Three points are especially worth noting in this context. First, as argued by Maslow, threats are connected to one’s motivations, and therefore some theories to explain one’s basic goals are critical in order to explore what those motivations purport to achieve through threats, regardless of conflict or mass-killing situations. Based on his psychopathological perspective, Maslow sees threats necessitate “danger to the basic needs or the necessary conditions upon which [those basic needs] rest for the individual.” This suggests that our understanding of threats—whatever their definitions may be—needs to identify what it is that is being threatened, in addition to the dual nature of how A is exercising its power and B is reacting. That will be an exploration of purposive transactions between A and B when threats are discharged.

Second, and as a corollary, this nexus between threats and needs requires an assessment of both what constitutes needs frustration or danger to those needs and how those situations deviate from the continuum of the relational dynamics. That is, from the dynamical systems perspective, signs of change are sought not only in the manifest forms of properties but also in patterns of their underlying interactions themselves. Theories of violence are often fraught with an assumption treating violence as if it were a separate property from human relationships. It is seen as a deed of aberration or a state of anomaly.

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70 Ibid., 84.
that exists elsewhere. Any discussion of threats as one’s undertakings and reactions should elucidate not only motivational linkages of threats and needs, but also threats as an expression of human relationships or identity systems at a given time and space. This means that whatever A’s or B’s threats are, they need to be contextualized in the conventional meanings of the given situation in order to gauge how novel changes were deemed dangerous or how much A’s and B’s threats were really meant to be threatening.

Thirdly, threats within the relational dynamics should not be reduced to defining a situation of threats in terms of the symptoms that arise as a result. That would be a “circular definition” in which “the situation is defined in terms of responses and the responses are defined in terms of the situations.”71 A’s and B’s threats are, of course, interwoven, but A’s threatening undertaking should not be deduced from B’s condition as the evidence of his threat.

Furthermore, we also need to take into account two phases of threat making, while paying due attention to the intricacies of threats in their objectives, contexts, and evidential actions. The first phase consists of the framing of some phenomenon as a matter of threat—essentially the primary or secondary appraisal processes discussed earlier. The second phase involves the acting out based on such framings. The ensuing discussion will deal with these two phases of threat making, by reviewing what has been discussed in research surrounding identity, rational choice, international relations, and behavioral-decision by various theorists. Prospect theory will be useful in accounting for

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71 Ibid.
how individuals choose and exercise their actions based on the prior framings of perceived risks and threats.

The literature review will sketch out a contemporary discussion of threats by distinguishing threat-as-a-condition and threat-as-a-process. The literature generally views threat as a conditional factor influencing power or identity relations. It is a *synchronous* outlook of causation oriented toward singular connections between i) threat causing some effect or ii) some cause generating threat. This is partly due to a linear perspective of causation in the relational systems. Consequently, prevailing assumptions treat threats as a static element that is reducible to various forms as power, a cost, an opportunity, a perception, or even an image of worldviews. Seen as such, threats are to cause or induce purported impacts on the targets. On the contrary, the theoretical orientation of threat-as-a-process seeks a *diachronically emergent* view, the view that the framing of what is threatening is *relationally* determined in an array of *multiple* social relations and therefore its meaning is *constantly* in flux with the passage of time. Threats that the parties perceive or exert are not static at different points in time, even if their objectives and methods remain constant. In other words, threat at time $t-1$ and threat at time $t$ may carry different meanings on a latent level, which then evolve into yet another threat at time $t+1$, even if all of them may be the same properties on a manifest level.

In threat analysis, this generates a unique “latent attractor” in the system.72 The agents may be predisposed to exercise threats, across temporal and spatial span, for the same and particular purpose such as maintaining the stability of their control, despite the

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mutable and variable meanings of those threat properties. The system—in this case seeking the stable control of the system by use of threats—tends to orient itself toward a default state of exercising more control and more threats (“an attractor” or “basin of attraction”).\textsuperscript{73} The relational transactions of such a system would be negative-sum, as the exercise of threats becomes self-perpetual and self-reinforcing. Perpetuation of the threat system emerges, with different implications of threats over time, but within the parameter of the same structured interactions.

### 1.3.1. Threat-as-a-condition

International relations scholars and psychologists have long discussed the role of (mis)perceptions of threats as critical in influencing the group dynamics of intergroup conflict.\textsuperscript{74} There are several strands of theoretical orientations that treat threat-as-a-condition. Proponents of realism have linked power asymmetry to perceptions of threats,\textsuperscript{75} while social psychological approaches focus on group processes.\textsuperscript{76} On the other hand, social constructivists in international relations\textsuperscript{77} and social identity theorists\textsuperscript{78} posit

\begin{itemize}
  \item Robin R. Vallacher and Andrzej Nowak, “The Emergence of Dynamical Social Psychology,” \textit{Psychological Inquiry} 8, no. 2 (1997): 73–99; Vallacher et al., \textit{Attracted to Conflict}.
\end{itemize}
that a shared sense of group identities helps alleviate such intergroup tensions arising from perceptions of threats. Recent trends include Rousseau and Garcia-Retamero who try to find a ‘construction of threat model’ to combine the relationship between power and identity in influencing threats.\textsuperscript{79}

These discussions usually see threats in the context of the two foci, the Threatening’s undertaking and the Threatened’s reactions/perceptions. When the two foci of threats are at work, they occur in the parameter of the basic interactions below:

\[ A \rightarrow B \]

The two foci of threats are operative in this relational interaction between A and B. There is a vector of influence from A to B, regardless of whether A is causing threats to B or whether B is feeling threatened as a result of A’s initial action.

This is a linear perspective of threats, and the literature of threats is largely built on this causal orientation. Under this linear model, there is an additional set of two dimensions, with respect to the arrow mark in the formula: 1) whether a threat is a cause of something or 2) whether a threat is an effect of something. For our discussion of the figure above, one is to see the arrow as an action caused by threats. The other way of seeing it is as an action causing threats. To reflect this nuance in the formula, the original figure can be revised as follows.


\textsuperscript{79} Rousseau and Garcia-Retamero, “Identity, Power, and Threat Perception: A Cross-National Experimental Study.”
In both instances, $T$ denotes threat. These are two dimensions of threats when $A$ threatens $B$. Because threats are a function of the relational transactions, not an actual stand-alone material-object, it is shown in the circle with the vector of influence. Type 1 is where $A$’s influence, or more literally speaking $A$’s arrow in this formula, is caused by threat. Likewise, Type 2 is where $A$’s influence ($A$’s arrow) is generating threat.

The distinctions should be made clear between the two foci of threats and the two dimensions of threat actions. The two dimensions of threat actions are concerned with *an act itself* (either Type 1 or Type 2 above), while the two foci of threat focus on threat in terms of *an actor* (as shown below), either the initiator or the target of such action. The two foci lead us to distinguish which actor is the basis for understanding threat, as Focus 1 or Focus 2 below. In this case, the circle represents where the focus of threat lies.

Focus 1’s threat is on $A$’s undertaking, while Focus 2 places the emphasis on $B$’s reaction to $A$’s initial threat. Therefore, it is possible to deconstruct one instance of threat into four aspects of the same phenomenon, when we discuss *what it does* from whom to
whom (i.e., Focus 1—A’s undertaking; Focus 2—B’s reaction) and what it is (i.e., Type 1—action caused by threat; Type 2—action causing threat).

As an illustration, take person A and B as an example in which A is about to kill B. We can see this threatening situation as A’s threat as A’s possible undertaking (i.e., an act of murdering—Focus 1) or as B’s threat as B’s fear of being killed (i.e., his reaction to the prospective act of A—Focus 2). The same incident can be seen differently. A’s act of killing (note that ‘act’ is being focused here) could be caused by threats of another kind (Type 1), and the same action can be causing other threats, irrespective of how B reacts or perceives the initial action or the primary threat (Type 2).

Threat analysis, therefore, is to take into account these contexts. Part of the problem with the literature of threat lies in conflating these related but discrete aspects of threats. In what follows, our discussion will note, unlike the conventional notion of threats that tends to see them as static properties, that threat has two foci from which to look at, as well as two dimensions of how the act is manifesting itself. More specifically, it will be mindful of the variable nature of threat, such as a scenario in which both Type 1 and Type 2 occur in sequence in the actual workings of threat transactions. It can be said...
that A’s influence is caused by threat (T_a) and, in turn, such exertion by A generates threat (T_b) onto B (Type 3).

![Diagram showing A's influence on B through T_a, and T_b](image)

(Type 3)

Figure 6. Mutable elements of threat

In this case, a question remains open as to whether T_a and T_b would constitute the same threat.

In further consideration, it is also possible to differentiate Type 3 by integrating Focus 1 & 2 with Type 1 & 2, as shown below.

![Diagram showing different types and foci of threat](image)

(Focus 1 + Type 1)

(Focus 1 + Type 2)

(Focus 2 + Type 1)

(Focus 2 + Type 2)

Figure 7. Types and foci of threat
In each case, this elaboration can specify upon which actor (either A or B) we focus our analysis and what act (either the action caused by a (past) threat or the action causing a (new) threat) in the four combinations. In each of the four enumerations, we need to be cognizant of the transmutable nature of the threat from $T_a$ to $T_b$. This issue of heuristic transition, whether $T_a$ transforms itself to $T_b$ or actually stays the same, will be further discussed later. Now we will review how the current discussion of threats tends to treat them as conditional factors in a linear perspective.

*Threat as a potential or actual use of power to induce coercion*

Those who argue threats as a means to induce coercion discuss threats in conjunction with the actual or potential use of power. In a classical definition of power, Weber defines power as “the *probability* that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests.”

80 Unlike Marx who saw the basis of power rooted in economic relations and especially in a means of economic production, Weber recognized historical and structural circumstances—which may vary contextually—from which one can exercise his power. Threat as a conditional influence over others is closely related to this Weberian sense of power. Succinctly, threat in this case is a potential use of power in proportion to A’s power over B, as Dahl aptly argues, “to the extent that he can get B to

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do something that B would not otherwise do.” In this case, threat is manifested in the deterrent effects this kind of power projects, provided that this power has the capacity to do so. The greater the power is, the more threatening the threat is; power is seen as the predictor of threat. Regardless of whether this coercive, inducing power is actually used, or potentially will be used, threat is made credible by the plausibility of prospective consequences when it is carried out.

Realists and international relations scholars’ theoretical orientations are aligned with this interpretation of power dynamics as well as the workings of threats. Davis discusses threats in terms of the international relations and defines threats as a situation in which agents contest power and influence their calculus of actions. Rousseau and Garcia argue that the international relations literature characterizes threats as phenomena directed against the collectivity, mostly focusing on the ramifications for groups but also for individual spheres. They elaborate that threats against the collective groups can take the forms of military threats, economic threats, or cultural threats, which can be felt by individuals as threats against their physical wellbeing, personal wealth and income, or values and beliefs. This kind of threat therefore lies in the binary relations between A and B and is contingent on the actual and potential capacity of A’s power to influence B’s interests.

This notion of Power-Threat can be represented in the following basic formula, when A threatens B:

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\[ T_a = P (P_a > P_b) \]

where threat of A (T_a) is the probability (P) in which power of A (P_a) is greater than power of B (P_b), with the power being a property as defined by Dahl. Similarly, B’s perspective in relation to A can be represented as follows:

\[ T_b = P (A \rightarrow B | P_a > P_b) \]

Where threat of B (T_b) is the conditional probability (P) of A threatening B (A \rightarrow B) given that power of A (P_a) is greater than power of B (P_b).

Speaking of such probability of power relations, Dahl defines power in terms of amount, and Cartwright defines in terms of absolute strength.\(^8^4\) While Dahl explains that power is observable only after changes are effected in B, Cartwright understands the same process differently, where “A may be able to activate a component force (i.e., have power over B) and yet not be able to change the direction of the combined force acting on B…In this case, we should say that A, by activating a component force, has influenced B in some way (produced conflict, wavering, guilt, or what not) but we could not say that A has ‘controlled’ B’s behavior.”\(^8^5\) These views on power-based threats are essentially sanctions in positive or negative terms: threats can serve as either promise of reward or punishment depending on how B anticipates them. A and B calculate their transaction of threats and promise in terms of “A’s planning processes, the role of costs, the prospects of successes, the after and side effects on B, difficulty of legitimation, symbolic


importance, A’s view of human nature, efficacy, systemic stability, surveillance
difficulties, vulnerability to blackmail.”

The power-driven threat paradigm has its own matrix of positive/negative
sanctions to induce compliance/noncompliance. That is, the costs of threats and promise
are unevenly related to the probability of success of power exertion. The asymmetry
works like this:

[T]he bigger the threat, the higher the probability of success; the higher
the probability of success, the less the probability of having to implement
the threat; the less the probability of having to implement the threat, the
cheaper it is to make big threats. And also, the bigger the promise, the
higher the probability of success; the higher the probability of success, the
higher the probability of having to implement the promise; the higher the
probability of having to implement the promise, the more costly it is to
make big promises.

However, this notion of power is not without limitations. This power is what
Lukes called “one-dimensional power” which “involves a focus on behavior in the
making of decisions on issues over which there is an observable conflict of (subjective)
interests, seen as express policy preferences, revealed by political participation.” The
limitation is that this notion of power, and hence threat as its corresponding reflection, is
essentially too behaviorist and confined only to observable and manifest forms of action-
outcome dichotomies of A-B relations. It misses to recognize other kinds of power, when
power relations suppresses the behavior or the politics of decision making such that

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86 Baldwin, “Thinking about Threats,” 73.
87 Schelling, The Strategy of Conflict.
88 Baldwin, “Thinking about Threats,” 74.
decisions are suppressed even before being voiced. As a result, issues never become explicit, remaining instead as covert conflict or latent contradictions without their manifestation.\textsuperscript{90} This is essentially a kind of the difference Baldwin draws in distinguishing power in terms of A getting B to do things without B’s will vis-à-vis power in terms of A influencing B’s behavior without B’s knowledge.\textsuperscript{91} The analogy used by Baldwin is a case in point: “If A can secretly control the temperature in B’s room, A can get B to take off a sweater without B ever knowing about A’s influence attempt.”\textsuperscript{92} The latter is a form of power that may not be observable but incontrovertibly exists as a medium of exchange. For example, in some scenarios, B can feel threatened even without A’s undertaking or regardless of what A is doing or intends to do. A’s exertion of action or power is not a necessary condition for threat to be evoked by B. The presence of A does not even have to exist.\textsuperscript{93} There is an assumption, for these kinds of threat-promise sanctions to work, that B has some idea of what A intends to do in the first place and what A can do despite B’s compliance and noncompliance.\textsuperscript{94} A and B’s threat interactions therefore cannot be defined purely by the commission of threats.

If we only talk about A’s influence over B, this assumes that there is A’s attempt to influence, which is then met by either compliance or noncompliance by B. A may wish to still enforce its will by making B feel threatened by making his will clear to inflict

\textsuperscript{90} Lukes, \textit{Power}.
\textsuperscript{91} David A. Baldwin, “Power and Social Exchange,” \textit{The American Political Science Review} 72, no. 4 (1978): 1229–42.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 1230.
\textsuperscript{94} Baldwin, “Thinking about Threats.”
harm on B, but if A is not considering to change B’s behavior, A will not try as such. Therefore, there is a difference between the “threats of a sadist and those of a would-be influencer” of B’s future reactions and behavior, which we must be cognizant of.95 But in this interaction between A and B whether threat is coerced and enforced, there are relations between A and B that exist because B has the capacity to estimate A’s capacities and intentions as well as its own capacities and intentions. A’s threat or promise and its credibility and coerciveness is contingent on B’s estimates on the probability that it will disobey A, and the correlations are directly and inversely related.96

This kind of power-based threat implies that threat is a too probabilistic and retroactively applied concept. It is predicated on the assumption that the threat of power will eventually be exercised, the point at which we come to realize, retrospectively, that power actually exists and the threat was substantive. Threat of this kind occurs in the context of overt conflict in which binary relations of A and B contest each other for exercise of their influence over each other, and its credibility rests on the deterrent effects of the actual and potential use of such power. In other words, threat in this case is contingent on the probability of whether A actually or potentially exercises its power in manifest forms and is determined by how credible such a prospect is perceived to be.

95 Ibid., 73.
96 Baldwin, “Thinking about Threats.”
Threat as a product of behavioral and cognitive categorization

Threat is also pertinent to—or is a result of—the categorization process of identity boundaries. Social identity theory (SIT)\(^97\) and its derivative development of self-categorization theory (SCT)\(^98\) provide a theoretically cogent analysis to understand identity construction in tandem with threat perceptions. While the Power-Threat orientation tends to focus on the material factors of threats, a constructivist approach as demonstrated by identity theorists illuminate epistemological aspects of threats.

Both strands of identity theories, SIT and SCT, are concerned with explaining the attitudes and behavior of prejudice and discrimination arising out of in-group and out-group formations. SIT and SCT differ in their theoretical emphasis, with the former focusing on the behavioral and motivational aspect of the categorization process and the latter on the cognitive aspect. But both of them share the common trait that categorization itself is a natural cognitive and behavioral process that can take place in any social setting. Brewer and Brown discuss the categorization of Self and Other and how placement of the two identities occur in conjunction with each other, or at least that the Other is immediately created by categorizing Self by default.\(^99\)

While SIT posits multistep processes through which both cognitive and motivational elements contribute to group perceptions that associate in-group boundaries.

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\(^97\) Tajfel, *Differentiation Between Social Groups*; Tajfel and Turner, “An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict.”
with positive attributions, SCT focuses on the cognitive aspect rather than the motivational one. They both postulate that individuals at first sort themselves into groups that eventually foment the “us-them” boundary. These individuals then start assimilating into the in-group by adopting a set of normative beliefs, behavioral norms, or value systems that are associated with the group. SIT highlights the motivational element in this step as it considers the individuals’ desire to be accepted by fitting in to the group through the adaptation of in-group traits. SCT, on the other hand, emphasizes a purely cognitive aspect by focusing on the presence of a schema that is readily accessible to individuals in question. For instance, in this view, when an American child identifies himself or herself to be American, the schema of American-ness, however that is defined, becomes readily accessible to the child’s cognition. These are matters of different emphasis during the formative processes of group boundaries. Despite these differences in SIT and SCT concerning the underlying causal mechanisms of group formations, Rousseau and Garcia recognize that the categorization process essentially leads to “prejudicial attitudes toward the out-group and discrimination against them.”100 The process of collective identity formation can be described in behavioral, motivational, or cognitive terms, but the effect of categorization is pertinent to threat in so far as “recognizing external difference can assist in highlighting internal similarity, thereby strengthening group cohesiveness and the ability to act in a unified manner.”101 When categorization accentuates dividing lines of groups as such, it can potentially pose a threat

to an individual’s sense of self and their sense of belonging to the identity group. The implication here is that those members would hold on to the identity boundaries more tightly than usual because of fear or, inversely speaking, because of a desire to feel secure within that boundary. Coy and Woehrle aptly put it:

They may cultivate an even close relationship between their estrangement from the other parties and the collective identity that is closest to them and most meaningful to them. This narrowing of identity definition intensifies their estrangement from the other parties in the dispute and helps images of the enemy “Other” to more easily emerge and take hold.102

A number of scholarly discussions across disciplines have internalized this logic of favorable insiders vis-à-vis menacing outsiders in that 1) it has influenced international relations scholarship that systematically link conflict and cooperation behavior around identity and power103; 2) it underpins group interactions in psychological studies on authoritarianism where a perceived security threat from out-groups increases the level of authoritarian control104; 3) it is central to the intensity of group identification and of the pressure toward group cohesion, which then leads to the level of authoritarianism as a result of individual and group dynamics105; 4) it is mediated through social attitude or ideological belief dimensions, which are essentially characterized by the in-group—out-group divide106; or 5), it underlies the basis of threats to political or social order that

102 Ibid., 7.
103 Wendt, Social Theory of International Politics.
activate and aggravate the level of authoritarianism, more so than economic threat or personal well-being would do.\textsuperscript{107}

In previous work on the connections between authoritarianism and xenophobic threat, early theorists associated social and economic threats with the rise of Hitler and National Socialism in connection with the people’s desire for powerful authority.\textsuperscript{108} Sales conducted his research demonstrating that threats influenced the level of authoritarian behavior.\textsuperscript{109} Doty et al. built on Sales’ work and demonstrated the changes in the degree of threat over historical time periods.\textsuperscript{110} Furthermore, other research emerged where scholars investigated how the level of perceived threats and security influenced identity boundaries and policy preference, discovering that there are positive correlations between feelings of safety and cooperative policy preferences.\textsuperscript{111}

These constructivist discussions demonstrate ample signs of how the logic of the insider-outsider dichotomy underlies the basic, often implicit, framework of group membership and identification processes. It provides theoretically sensible insights into explaining the insipience of conflict-prone or authoritarian dispositions among identity group relations, based on intra- and inter-group comparison and subsequent competition as the fundamental bedrock of group action toward each other.

Rousseau and Garcia seek “the construction of [the] threat model” that can be illustrated as one hallmark of the Identity-Threat discussion. Through their experiments they argue “both power and identity influence threat perception”\textsuperscript{112} and “as a sense of shared identity decreases, the material balance of power becomes a more powerful predictor of threat perception.”\textsuperscript{113} Their model supposes that power is relevant only after the relationship between the Self and Other has been established through categorization processes. This can be summed up, based on Rousseau and Garcia’s formula:

\[ T = f(Id \text{(affect/similarity)} \times P) \]

This is a phenomenological understanding of social relations at the individual or group level as they emerge, and threat is rather a byproduct of natural behavioral and cognitive processes of group boundary formation, meaning there is no directionality in ‘who threatens whom.’ Within the context of ‘A threatens B,’ however, this formulation of identity, power and threat intersections is relevant to Type 1 of the threat dimensions discussed earlier to the extent that both A and B equally perceive threats from out-groups.

\[ T_{a,b} = f(Id \left|A-B\right| \times P_{a,b}) \]

That is, both A and B’s threats \( T_{a,b} \) are relevant to a function of their identity distance (distance between A and B, \( |A-B| \), which is a function of affect and similarity between them) and their power differentials \( P_{a,b} \).


\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 766.
However, this leaves open the question of what happens to those collective in-group or out-group identities once they are adapted and assimilated. SIT and SCT are able to explain how transient shifts of identities as a result of motivational or cognitive functions can influence a group to adopt certain identity features based on social contexts. This process can, in turn, generate different levels of perceived threats with different implications (i.e. levels of cooperation or authoritarianism). For instance, the two identity theories would be able to explain how an individual shifts back and forth from his identity as a father and a teacher during his commute, or as a Westerner or American during his travel, but what is threatening about being a teacher or an American is left unanswered. As will be discussed, we need further understanding of mutable threats in the process of identity formation.

Threat as a narrative “We” assign to “Them”

While SIT and SCT shed a light on different accounts of identity categorization processes, Rothbart and Korostelina discuss the order of threat narratives as a result of emerging dominant social identities based on an “axiology of difference.” In this respect, their account is more focused on the moral denigration of the Other, the process and outcome of which are involved in assigning categories of virtues and vices, especially in protracted social conflict. Essentially, this perspective is premised that there are some axes of identities underpinning every social unit and relation by which an

\[114\] Rothbart and Korostelina, _Identity, Morality, and Threat_.

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individual’s value-commitments delineate boundaries of what is acceptable behavior and what is prohibited. They describe this process as:

A collective axiology defines boundaries and relations among groups and establishes criteria for ingroup/outgroup membership. Through its collective axiology, a group traces its development from a sacred past, extracted from mythic episodes beyond the life of mortals, and seeks permanence. Transcending the finitude of individual life, a collective axiology extends retrospectively from the salient episodes of the past to a prospective vision, presumably into the otherwise uncertain future.\(^{115}\)

Thus, this perspective is based on a telomorphic model of group identities—the view characterized by an idealized totality of the past, present, and future—that guide the moral universe for the in-group, often dictating ‘what things ought to be.’ This is an idealized and mythic construct of reality projected onto the images of identity, built on romanticized memories of the sacred past, and creating anew a permanent moral high ground for the in-group vis-à-vis the out-group. But this entails a more purposive process of identity formation than the simple categorization processes discussed in the previous section. Normative agency and normative order of what constitutes the in-group becomes the framework of defining common and proper traits, thereby creating a community boundary by moral obligations for the group members.\(^{116}\) They further discuss the mechanisms of fomenting the axiological difference through balances of an individual’s malleability to changes and differences (i.e. the degree of collective generality and the degree of axiological balance).

\(^{115}\) Ibid., 4.

Mortality salience as conceptualized by terror management theory is another variant. Terror management theory supposes that, like other animals, humans are driven by inherent drives to survive and to anticipate the ever-present possibility of pain and harm to hinder such survival. The theory casts a view that cultures are developed to address and mitigate terror. Cultures develop symbolic conceptions of the universe, or cultural worldviews, that provide order, meaning, and values to the society. By adhering to this set of cultural worldviews, one is afforded with protection and self-esteem, which protect against death. According to this theory, people therefore keep their faith in accordance with their cultural worldviews and live up to the standards of values and meanings set forth by such systems. These systems serve as a “cultural anxiety-buffer.”

This is self-sustaining, in that mortality salience underpins an individual’s set of stereotypes and preferences, thus reinforcing the behavior and boundaries of what is threatening or not.

Hence threat narratives paint the picture of the ‘Threatening Other’ who is precluded from the version of collective axiology held by groups. Threat is not necessarily particular aspects of the Other per se, but it is something that threatens to the integrity and coherence of the in-group’s normative order and boundaries. This view

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helps to understand the often entrenched value-commitments involved in identity conflict that defy superficial contestation over interests or needs. Threat, in this case, relies too heavily on formulating the “moral indictment” from the standpoint of the group’s teliomorphic model of the normative order. While the construction entails dynamic elements in formative processes, threat is a static value judgment of the Other. It is useful in the most destructive and dividing moments of identity struggle, but it does not explain the mutability of threats when identity groups still remain present in the same location, for instance. In other words, collective axiology explains the teliomorphic origin of threats in identity formation, in addition to the categorization processes of social identities. But it remains unclear as to what makes up the substance of threat, because threat is discussed only in terms of mirroring images of ‘what the in-group is not.’ In other words, the Self-Other relation is too rigidly binary.

*Threat as a cost of taking action or inaction*

Threat is also a topic of interest in the contentious politics involving interactions between popular movements and the regimes. In this case, threat is often discussed in the context of political opportunities for mobilizing collective action. The political opportunity thesis associates the causation of violence with fortuitously or structurally endowed access to and availability of resources. Weinstein, for instance, discusses in the context of rebels in civil war who fight where there are opportunities that afford them to
do so. Counter to intentionalist arguments, this political-conflict thesis treats agents not as devout ideologues who would be driven only by grievances or who die in the name of abstraction or for a radical cause. They are rather seen as opportunistic rational actors who weigh carefully strategic choices to maximize their optimal gains. But too often discussions on political opportunity placed threat as a negative connotation of what opportunity brings, the flip side of the same coin, often delegating it to be “costs of action, costs of mobilization, and the risks and incidence of repression.” That is, threat is inversely proportional to a failed or missed opportunity or set of opportunities. Higher opportunity would equate with lesser threat and lesser opportunity would mean higher threat. Instead, Goldstone and Tilly argue that opportunity and threat should be defined as analytically distinct and independent properties. In the context of contentious politics, they define opportunity as “the probability that social protest actions will lead to success in achieving a desired outcome,” while threat means “the costs that a social group will incur from protest, or that it expects to suffer if it does not take action.”

Thus, this view departs from a commonly conceived notion of opportunity that sees waging an action would be a result of increased opportunity. Inversely speaking, retracting or curtailing the action would be due to reduced opportunity.

In most cases, people engage in contentious politics as they try to seize opportunities while responding to threats they perceive to their interest or identities. But

122 Ibid., 182–3.
as Tilly and Tarrow argue, threats and opportunities co-occur dynamically, and not necessarily proportionally, in the midst of the “fragmentation or concentration of power, changes in the regime’s openness, instability of political alignments, and the availability of allies.”

While this explanation of social mobilization is logical, it does not wholly encompass scenarios in which agents still wage collective action despite higher risks of repressive repercussion or backlash. In other words, this does not fit with cases in which people still revolt or protest and increase its intensity even in the face of mounting repression (i.e. there would be a diminished sense of opportunity—meaning high threat—and therefore we would see less action).

\[
G = \left[ O \times (A + T_c) \right] - T_r
\]

“Where \( O = k_1 \) (state weakness) + \( k_2 \) (popular support) + \( k_3 \) (strength of nonstate allies and opponents) and where protest actions are expected if the gains \( G \) are greater than zero.”

In this formula, \( G \) is an outcome of successful gains as a result of making collective action, but people would arrive at this gain as a result of taking new advantages \( A \) as well as potential harms that lie ahead as current threats \( T_r \), both of which are mediated by the opportunities \( O \) presented in the given scenario. Consequently, after such action

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is taken, there is another possibility of impending harm, which would serve as repressive threat \(T_r\) that arises out of the prior action.\(^{126}\)

However, this model is applicable to cases of contentious politics wherein there are two defined parties: the state and the protestors who challenge it. Threat can be seen as a currency in their relational transactions between them, gauging the cost of action or inaction. Therefore, threat is contingent on the state’s choice of its actions, weighing whether to concede or repress. While the opportunity structures in contention are relatively well defined, such as political centers of authority, political alignments, and the availability of allies,\(^{127}\) what would constitute the threat structures is still ill defined. That is, even in this model, threat is accounted for only in terms of the state’s response to either increase repression or decrease concession, thereby changing the costs of the successful mobilization from the protestors’ standpoint. Although Goldstone and Tilly recognize some iterative consequences of threat-opportunity transactions in contentious movements, the threat structures’ essence still remains as inverse reflection of making repression or concession by the state.

There is an assumption, essentially a glitch, between purported effects of threats and actual outcomes. Some researchers have demonstrated that policies of threat making can create fear as originally intended, but this does not automatically result in the anticipated changes in attitude or behavior.\(^{128}\) In a similar vein, Deutsch demonstrates the complexity in connecting threatening situations, conflict parties’ competitive behavior,

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\(^{126}\) Ibid., 185.

\(^{127}\) Tilly and Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*.

and biased perceptions in conflict settings. This may seem trivial, but the inherent challenge in accounting for threats in action or inaction is that, as Gordon and Arian allude, there is an assumption among the people who, such as policymakers, employ threats that “threats will lead to submission,” when in fact, as other scholars note, the complex connections defy such singular linkages.

1.3.2. Threat-as-a-process

So far the preceding discussion has presented a conceptual overview of threats functioning as a cause of some consequences or an effect of some preceding phenomena. To restate it by the previously used formulations, it can be said either \((A \rightarrow T_a \rightarrow B)\) or \((A \rightarrow T_b \rightarrow B)\) is at work. Note that, in this case, there is no use in discussing whether \(T_a\) and \(T_b\) could be the same or different properties, as it is already given that \(T_a\) and \(T_b\) are separate in this threat-as-a-condition perspective. The conceptual underpinnings here are closely related to a “methodological individualism” within a sociological approach to individual-to-social emergence, the stance that “social properties can be fully explained in terms of properties of individuals and their interactions.” The fundamental nature of such inquiry is implicitly but unequivocally influenced by the tradition of logical positivism, looking for reducible properties and trying to make sense of causal explanations in doing so. In this reductionist notion, the laws at the higher-level properties of a given structure

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are assumed to be discernible by those of “the lower-level building blocks” although the linkages may not necessarily appear direct or linear.\textsuperscript{132} Threat-as-a-condition views would follow this logic in such a way that we see threats being reducible to an identifiable and observable ingredient of the social reality or we would be able to ascertain them only through such manifestation. If applied to threat analysis, these methodological orientations to look for individual-level explanations—whether these microelements are persons or properties—and to account for the macro-workings of social phenomena are but only one side of how we can understand threats.

Although this study does not discount such a notion of threats being actualized in tangible forms—indeed they do appear in a form often recognizable to our cognition and perception—what threat-as-a-process views contend is that threats need to be understood not only by a reductionist approach (so that we can pin it) but also by a dynamical systems perspective. This theoretical perspective tries to unravel some underlying principles of a self-organizing system that the reductionist individualists cannot, or are not placed to, grasp. Threat-as-a-process views are less concerned with reducibility of properties of social phenomena but more interested in “pair-interaction rules”\textsuperscript{133} or “pattern-based causality”\textsuperscript{134} of emergent phenomena.

To focus on threat as a matter of process in a system that engages in mass killing is to recast some views on causality prevalent in the scholarship of conflict and genocide studies. This can be characterized as a departure from an independent-dependent variable

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{133} Sawyer, “Emergence in Sociology.”
\end{flushleft}
driven paradigm that is so deeply ingrained in how we conceive of violence in conflict and genocide studies. Scholars have sought to identify the causal mechanisms of conflict and genocide in terms of both tangible and intangible sources and factors such as power, greed and grievance, needs and interest, agency and structure, resources and institutions, ideologies and rational choice, and the like. While these discussions have explained where the ‘fault’ lies for wrongdoers and their evil deeds, most often their epistemological approach is premised in a particular outlook on causation—that is, an atomic view of properties in a relatively linear and unidirectional causal fashion. Some $x$-value is induced to cause some corresponding $y$-value. In regards to genocidal mass killing, as will be highlighted in the research methods section below, these trends are reflected in methodological tendencies of liberal and post-liberal traditions.\(^{135}\) The pitfall is that it is a synchronic outlook of causation oriented toward singular connections. Whatever that connection may be, there is a linear perspective on how an outcome is caused or manifested by an immediately preceding influence. There is a supposition about “the co-existence of novel ‘higher level’ objects or properties with objects or properties existing at some ‘lower level’.”\(^{136}\) Even if the perspective is widened to a diachronic one to see “the emergence of novel phenomena across time,”\(^{137}\) like a time series analysis, our attention would focus on changes in one or more variables over defined time dimensions. Put differently, whether emergence of the novelty is viewed synchronically or diachronically, a prevailing outlook is paradigmatically fixated on


\(^{137}\) Ibid.
changes in only some properties or variables that are essentially separable from each other.

To be clear, this causal orientation is not wholly inaccurate; in many cases, such causality is authentic. But it tends to overlook another crucial basis of causation itself, where it is not only constructionist—wherein causal chains are iterative—but also *heuristically emergent*. A perspective of dynamical systems is a useful framework to illustrate this case in point.

A dynamical systems perspective is based on the capacity of a system to “evolve in time” in the absence of external causal influence. It acknowledges the intrinsic principle of the system’s self-organization, characterized as *internal causation*, which is “the tendency for change in a system to be internally generated, that is, a system’s own capacity for evolution over time without the necessity of an external influence either causing or directing this change.” This inherent potential or capacity of internal causation generates a distinctive feedback loop of variables in that those variables at a specific time are dependent on the values of the *same* variables at the immediately preceding time; the state of the system at the subsequent time emerges through the generative process of those variables. Therefore, “the same variable can act as a cause one moment and as an effect the next.” In this picture of causation, a system carries “an attractor” that orients itself toward its own default state that emerges and submerges conditionally. An attractor of the system represents “the basin of attraction” for different

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140 Vallacher and Nowak, “The Emergence of Dynamical Social Psychology,” 75, emphasis added.
initial states to eventually converge on to the same state, within the same attractor basin.\footnote{Vallacher and Nowak, “The Emergence of Dynamical Social Psychology”; Vallacher et al., \textit{Attracted to Conflict}.} Thus, an attractor can serve as the system’s internal driver for or repellent to potential changes, depending on the degree of attraction. The reverse can be said that, as a result of having multiple basins, even a slight departure from the original basin of attraction to another basin may yield a disproportionately larger scale of change. From a dynamical systems theory perspective, an attractor at work in the threat-as-a-process mechanism serves as both resistant and resilient to novel changes—or, in this case, threats—thereby inhibiting potential deviations from the original basin and maintaining the \textit{status quo ante}.

The mechanism of how the threat serving as an attractor can be further illustrated by discussing “phase space” and by reexamining how we look at the novelty as a matter of nonlinear causality. Unlike diachronical time-series analysis, time can be seen in “phase space” in the internal causation perspective, as shown in Figure 8 below. Phase space is the space of “abstract mathematical realm in which variables are mapped against one another.”\footnote{Goldstein, “Social Psychology and Nonlinear Dynamical Systems Theory.”} In this conceptual mapping, the focus of attention is not necessarily on how variables change from one state at time $t$ to another state at $t+1$ but rather on how the \textit{pattern of interaction among} other variables (in this case, A, B, and C) changes and how such pattern-based change manifests itself in the realm of phase space. Through this pattern one can gauge whether the system is stable and predictable.\footnote{Ibid., 126.} This means that the novel emergence is within the acceptable parameter of certain regularity. For example, as
properties self-organize through interaction and mutual adjustment among elements at a lower level, they coalesce and lead to more coherent and stable structures and behaviors at a higher level, which in turn project a coordinated influence on the original lower level elements. Changes in this system are therefore not necessarily exogenous, but instead “the higher order structures emerge from the internal workings of the system itself.” Consequently, the system comes to possess fewer degrees of freedom, resulting in the system’s behavior that can be explained by a fewer number of variables.¹⁴⁴ That is the chief characteristic of self-organization. The same can be said about the inhibition of novel changes through self-organization (serving as an attractor resistant to and resilient to threatening deviations).

Figure 8. Phase space—internal causation perspective (from Carver 1997)

The heuristically emergent view based on dynamical systems theory would see the pattern, not the dichotomy, of interaction between the agents’ subjectivity constituting the system as well as the objective structural coordination that operates independently of

such intentionality. While the existing scholarship is mostly oriented toward either
synchronic or diachronic epistemology, such pattern-based interaction is instead focused
on some properties functioning as stabilizing or repelling attractors to abrupt changes to
the system at the same time. For threat analysis, implication is manifold. First and
foremost, the framing of what is at stake (i.e., “what is threatening?”) is relationally
determined in a complex array of multiple pairs of relations (i.e., A-B, B-A, or A”-A-B,
or more). Accordingly, the meaning of what lies at issue—in the case of mass killing, of
the social collectivity that is being targeted as the object of annihilation—is always in
flux over time.

Additionally, even if some changes may occur in such pattern-based interactions
among multiple pairs, there is a difference between changes occurring within a basin of
attractor and changes that take the attractor to another basin. In other words, even if some
changes may be visible or manifest, the system itself may not have shifted at a more
fundamental level due to a “latent attractor.” The heuristically emergent view of
causation also helps us better understand a “latent attractor” in the myriad basins of
attraction that exist in dynamical systems, which may be invisible or unnoticeable even to
those concerned.145 Latent attractors can be an alternative pattern of behavior that may
not reveal itself while at the same time its latency does not suggest that its influences do
not exist. They may well be still present, albeit inconsequentially. To take an example,
racism or ideology or strategic decisions can be explicit drivers of collective violence, but
they are only one temporary manifestation of those latent potentialities that were uniquely

145 Vallacher et al., Attracted to Conflict.
inherent in the given contexts regardless of their salient manifestation. In this vein, the threat analysis of causal origins, as it were, tries to see both temporarily manifested characteristics and their latent potentialities of the dynamical systems that give rise to a particular configuration of causation. This requires another epistemological orientation, one that looks not for the transient façade of variables, but for the self-organizing pattern of their interaction. This study identifies such a heuristic regularity of a system as an alternative to the methodological individualist tendencies and premises that are prevalent in conflict and genocide studies. In the following section, discussion will further illuminate mechanisms of threat-as-a-process causality. It will discuss elements of both threat-driven and threat-inducing figuration of identity boundaries as part of the dynamical systems.

Mechanisms of threat-as-a-process causality

The focus of threat-as-a-condition views would deal with changes of property A and B from a given time $t$ to a later time $t_{n+1}$ as they become $A^*$ and $B^*$. By contrast, the threat-as-a-process views are focused on a set of systemic interactions between A and B—symbolized as \{A, B\}—at time $t$ to \{A*, B*\} at time $t_{n+1}$. To take a further example, in the conditional views, a property $b$ is said to be novel, i) when $b$ is an element of $B^*$ ($b \in B^*$) and ii) when $b \notin A$ and $b \notin B$ are also true. It is a singular connection between those properties and essentially a question of whether $b$ exists then or now. On the other hand, in the process views, when a property $b$ is an element of the new system $B$ ($b \in B^*$), $b$ is said to be novel, i) when reference systems \{A, B\} are only different in \{A*, B*\}
with the value of the control parameter \( p \) (that is, external variables influencing the
dynamical systems \( \{A, B\} \)) and do not have \( b \), and ii) when the behavior of \( \{A^*, B^*\} \)
with \( b \) exhibits qualitatively and topologically different trajectories of behavior of \( \{A, B\} \).\(^{146}\) In other words, the feature of the novelty is determined with respect to a reference
system \( \{A, B\} \) and defined as a relation between the reference system \( \{A, B\} \) and the
new system \( \{A^*, B^*\} \) in its entirety. This is in contrast to seeing the novelty in terms of a
relation between properties at a given time, either synchronically or diachronically (i.e.,
\( A \rightarrow A^* \) and \( B \rightarrow B^* \) separately).

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A. Trajectory in phase space

![Trajectory in phase space](image)

B. Topography of behavior across time

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A  C  B  A  B
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C. Variations in motive strengths

![Variations in motive strengths](image)

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Figure 9. Novel emergence (from Carver 1997)

To highlight this point, Carver’s diagram shows another useful illustration.\textsuperscript{147} In the figure above, the diagram $A$ (which was used earlier) shows movements of properties $A$, $B$, and $C$ in phase space as interactive trajectories of each property over time and space dimensions. One can focus on salient manifestations of those trajectories in a time spectrum in the diagram $B$. The same trajectories can be presented in a Cartesian quadrant, in the diagram $C$, with different degrees of movement strength of each property.

What is relevant to our discussion, first of all, is that the movements of each property’s trajectory in phase space are always present. The salient manifestation of movement strength in a time spectrum may change, as in the diagram $B$ above (i.e., $A \rightarrow C \rightarrow B \rightarrow A \rightarrow B$), but the composition of $\{A, B, C\}$ does not dismiss any of the properties even if it means their strength may be weak and inconsequential (for example, the weak signal of $A$ at a time when $C$ is the most saliently manifest property). We are often fixated to focus on what appears in tangible forms that, in turn, make significant impacts on dependent variables. In the threat-as-a-condition view, our attention is often skewed, as it were, to look at what is above the black line, as we can see Figure 10 below, which is drawn across in the modified diagram $C$ from Figure 9. The propensity to find (singular) connections between independent and dependent variables inherently focuses on these salient impacts of the properties’ trajectories and may preclude—in our (limited) perception or imagination—what transpires beneath the black line drawn here.

C. Variations in motive strengths

![Motive strength vs Time graph]

Figure 10. Manifest and latent levels (from Carver 1997)

In Figure 10 above, the conditional views would posit that a property $b$ is novel when $b \in B$ occurs with B surfacing above the black line drawn. On the contrary, the heuristically emergent perspective would treat $b$ as a novel property of B when \{A, B, C\} in the first phase and \{C, B, A\} in the second phase do have $b$ in their set interaction but exhibit qualitatively and topologically different behavior of $b$ in \{B, A, C\} in the third phase in such a way that $b \in B$ appears in a more salient manner than other time phases. All the while any changes in the emergent property $b$ is relational with respect to the pair-interaction pattern of \{A, B, C\}.

Furthermore, to focus on the pair-interaction pattern allows one to see nonlinear relations of \{A, B, C\} in terms of hysteresis.
This is a diagram of cusp catastrophe but closely relevant to how dynamical systems would look at an emergence of properties. This diagram can be deconstructed in the following Cartesian quadrants in Figure 12, to see pair-interaction between A and C. The A-axis and C-axis show nonlinear relations of the set interaction of \( \{A, C\} \). When one looks at variable C in terms of A, C’s value can vary from rear, middle, or front planes even when \( \{A, C\} \) is captured at a single moment. A zone of fold-over in the front plane is called hysteresis, a situation in which variable C is existent in two different states for a single value of A. At the same time, while C takes two different values for A in one plane (i.e., front), C has only one corresponding value for A on other planes (i.e., middle and rear). This speaks for the complexity of pair-interaction in terms of A and C and its multidimensionality even at one single moment in time. Likewise, the similar projection can be drawn in the interaction between B and C. In that case, the zone of hysteresis for \( \{B, C\} \) would appear in the middle plane.
The discussions so far provide several implications for the model of threat-as-a-process when dynamical systems theory postulates that “the same variable can act as a cause one moment and as an effect the next.” First, a given property cannot be construed by a one-dimensional perspective of whether it appears in relation to other properties or not. As shown above, the nature of a property cannot be deduced only through its appearance, as there are two aspects of its existence, manifest and latent. Just as the properties exist beneath and above the black line dividing the salient manifestation (as in Figure 10), and just as there are multiple basins of attraction even if some of them are
invisible, the transient manifestation of a property is only but one façade of its intrinsic nature. It therefore needs to be placed in pattern-based and pair-interaction of properties mapped against each other, rather than a relation between two properties at a given time.

Second, the value of a given property may not assume only a single corresponding value, as in the case of hysteresis. A property may entail two different meanings of its own value, as a simple cause-effect dichotomy does not apply in the dynamical systems perspective.

This means that our threat analysis needs to encompass both the conditionality of threat (as the threat-as-a-condition view posits) and heuristics of threat. More specifically, (1) it means that there is a transient face of threat as it manifests itself, whose façade may or may not change over time; (2) there is a self-organizing pattern of regularity in phase space that pushes threat to emerge or submerge; and (3) there are some fundamental characteristics of threat that are meaningful to the situation under consideration.

In the next section, the discussion will touch upon point (2), concerning the self-organizing pattern of regularity. The present section was on point (1), about the multiplicity of emergent threat property. Point (3) is reserved for later, with the discussion of relational ontology and epistemology. The ensuing discussion will clarify that when a system shifts to a threat-driven and threat-inducing system, the system freezes time, contrariwise to the heuristic nature of the system to self-organize and undergo changes. In so doing, the system predetermines and prescribes ‘what is’ of properties, defying the intrinsic nature of the properties’ capacity to evolve in time. This
discussion will be illustrated by making the distinction between the exchange system and the threat system.

1.3.3. Exchange System vs. Threat System

The preceding discussion advanced an understanding of causation mechanisms that are not only based on a synchronic or diachronic epistemology, but also a heuristic one, in that it can be now shown as $(A \rightarrow T_a \rightarrow B \rightarrow T_b \rightarrow A^*)$ or $(\{A, B\} \rightarrow T_{ab} \rightarrow \{B^*, A^*\} \rightarrow T_{ba} \rightarrow \{A^*, B^*\})$. Threat here is not just sequential or consequential, but emergent. This section deals with what characterizes the regularity of the self-organizing principles of the threat system.

The contrast highlighted above between conditional and heuristic views is pertinent to the contrast Boulding draws between the “exchange system” and “threat system.” The former is a system whose characteristics of relational associations are exchangeable in nature and can be consummated, wherein gains of one side is compensated by a loss of the other. Relatedly, mutual gains or losses are also conceivable on the balance sheets of their relational transactions. On the other hand, the “threat system” requires a different kind of analysis and, unlike the exchange system, is not characterized by either gain or loss calculus, but by different modus operandi.

Boulding touches upon threat in the context of the Cold War and its power race in mind, but his systemic descriptions of the two systems shed a light on the relational dynamics that are involved in conflict vis-à-vis mass killing. He argues:

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Like exchange, threat in its simplest form is a relationship between two parties. Exchange, however, originates in a conditional promise to do something good if something good is done in return, whereas a threat originates in a promise to do something bad. The threat relationship begins when the threatener says to the threatened, “You will do something nice to me or I will do something nasty to you.” The exchange-like form of the threat can be seen in the threat of the holdup man, “your money or your life.” There is a real difference, however, between the commodity which is offered in exchange and the discommodity which is offered in the threat. “I will give you your life” means “I will not take away your life.”

Boulding’s contention illustrates that there are different figurations of human relationships in terms of how threat is involved in them. First is threat-submission relationship, “like paying taxes, which everybody wants to do if everybody does it, but which nobody wants to do if other people do not.” This is what he calls the nonconflictual threat-submission relationship, based on the legitimacy of threat. Deterrence of the crime works in this framework. In this sense, the threat-submission relationship carries also a force of social organizer.

The second type of threat-as-a-human-relationship is threat-defiance. In this case, when threat is defied, a burden of whether to respond or not falls on the initial threatener who has to make that decision. This is different from an exchange model of relational transactions where defiance increases costs of inaction fall on the threatener. The threatener’s inaction will put the credibility of his initial threat at stake.

The third type is counter-threat, basically working as deterrence. This also puts the burden on the initial threatener. If he is deterred by counter-threat, his credibility is

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149 Ibid., 426.
150 Ibid., 427.
damaged and his next move of threat will not be taken with as much credibility as the initial one. The “capital value of his threat potentiality” will be reduced. In this sense, the major difference between the exchange system and the threat system, he argues, is that while exchange will be positive-sum when transactions are consummated, threats are negative-sum after consummation.\textsuperscript{151} As the exchange system constantly seeks to make optimal gains in exchange between the parties involved, threats in the threat system demand their reinforcement by occasionally carrying out the threat to maintain (or sustain) the very basis of credibility, so that threats would remain threatening enough for the subjects, creating a pattern of self-perpetuation. Boulding argues:

A threat to the threat system, therefore, is seen as a threat to the integrity of the society itself. We love making threats and it satisfies our masculine demand for ‘strength’ to make them, and hence a threat to the threat system is seen as a threat to that which we love.\textsuperscript{152}

However, there is some paradox about this nature of the threat system’s self-organization. For a system to remain credible, it is logical for its behavior to keep or enhance the credibility by enacting the original promise, regardless of it being a reward or a punishment. But if the same system keeps executing a negative promise and results in a vicious cycle of negative-sum outcomes as a result of such execution and the mutual consummation, that would undermine the original balance of self-organizing principles by destabilizing the system itself. Why self-inflict damage?

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., 428.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 434, emphasis added.
Self-perpetual and self-reinforcing mechanisms

The self-perpetual and self-reinforcing mechanisms of threat as ascribed by Boulding’s conception of the threat system are consistent with what prospect theory hypothesizes in behavioral decision making. After the seminal work of prospect theory,\(^{153}\) the theory’s utility has increased as a leading alternative to rational choice models or expected utility theory, to account for decision-making processes under risk.

The main proposition of prospect theory is that:

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\text{[I]ndividuals evaluate outcomes with respect to deviations from a reference point rather than with respect to net asset levels, that their identification of this reference point is a critical variable, that they give more weight to losses than to comparable gains, and that they are generally risk-averse with respect to gains and risk-acceptant with respect to losses.}^{154}
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Prospect theory runs counter to expected utility theory, which underscores the normative basis of rational choice and suggests that “individuals attempt to maximize expected utility in their choices between risky options: they weigh the utilities of individual outcomes by their probabilities and choose the option with the highest weight sum.”\(^{155}\) The major focus of prospect theory lies in the significance associated with recent changes to a reference point from which people evaluate their current conditions, as opposed to evaluating their total value positions.


\(^{155}\) Ibid., 173.
In the literature of behavioral decision theory, there were other models to account for risk propensity. One was the rational choice model of general risk aversion. Another is an inductive approach to explain risk propensity at time $t$ based on the same propensity at time $t-1$. Another model is to explain risk propensity based on personal traits.\textsuperscript{156}

Figure 13. Value positions from prospect theory\textsuperscript{157}

Besides these, prospect theory can be seen as the “fourth explanation of risk propensity,”\textsuperscript{158} and unlike agents in expected utility theory, it supposes that individuals place different weighted values on potential future loss. Essentially, the central feature of

\textsuperscript{156} Duckitt, “Authoritarianism and Group Identification.”
prospect theory is characterized by people’s propensity for loss aversion. The figure above shows the concave curve in the domain of gain and the convex curve in the domain of loss, highlighting how value significance is gauged differently across the Gains Frame and Losses Frame even if the absolute value of gain or loss may be the same (i.e., the value of x on an x-axis). The function of prospects as depicted in the graph has a steeper curve in the negative values (the Losses Frame domain) than it does in the positive domain. That is to say, the meaning attached to the values of losses is projected to loom larger than corresponding values of gains.¹⁵⁹

Rational choice models assume that preferences tend to remain constant, fixed and given but prospect theory allows one to account for change over time in response to dynamic changes in the environment.¹⁶⁰ Other models are usually concerned with explaining structural factors such as the balance of power at the state level or regime types at the domestic level. Prospect theory is primarily interested in the individual level of analysis, although it is different from personality theory or individual characteristics of a person. Rather, the utility of this theory is about “the importance and impact of the environment on the person.”¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 293.
The crucial departure that prospect theory takes from other theoretical propositions lies in how loss is construed, in that “a loss hurts the decision-maker more than an equally large gain makes him happy.” It is imaginable that for the same value of either gains or losses the figure above shows the disproportionate value significance of the shadowed area in the gains frame or losses frame. As a crude illustration, one can say it is a more painful experience to lose a $20 bill than being gratified to have it. This is due to the “endowment effect,” a state of which people feel it is “more painful to part with something they own than they once found it satisfying to come to possess it” when loss is

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162 Shafir, “Prospect Theory and Political Analysis,” 316.
incurred or felt. As a logical corollary, it is expected that people are more risk averse in the domain of gain to maintain what they already own but they are more risk acceptant in the domain of loss in order to avoid further loss (i.e., further pain).

Figure 15. New value areas

The combination of the loss aversion and the endowment effect is a critical component of behavioral decision making in the threat system, especially due to the iterative and heuristic nature of the system’s behavior. From the dynamical systems perspective, when the reference point $R$ shifts to the domain of loss, as demonstrated in the figure above, the value of gains and losses would be calculated not just to the new

\[163\] Ibid., 317.
reference point $R'$ but in comparison to the original reference point $R$ as well. In this case, what would have been a possible gain at $R$ originally seems suddenly much less probable and appears to be a much smaller prospect once the reference point shifted downward to $R'$. Figure 15 shows this shifting pattern. The original prospect of grains is now smaller in the new Gains Frame.

On the other hand, the newly accrued loss at $R'$ is now combined with that of $R$, making it appear bigger and more painful for the person to bear and thereby turning him into a more risk acceptant actor in order to avoid further loss or even recover what was just lost. The shadowed area in the new Losses Frame of Figure 15 represents the expanded size of value significance illustrating how losses can loom larger to the mind of the stakeholder when the reference point shifts from $R$ to $R'$, to the new domain of loss. Consequently, and paradoxically, this feature of prospect theory, when contextualized in the time spectrum, suggests that people would pursue aversion of loss by accepting further risks of loss—which is contradictory. But Jervis rightly points out that people are more influenced by a decrement relative to the person’s total endowment (i.e. recent experiences of change) than net value assets, and therefore even if the change is minor it is felt as significant damage because “what the person focuses on is the loss itself.”

In the threat system, implications of self-perpetual and self-reinforcing threat as a means to avert loss are manifold. For instance, Nieburg discusses the functional nature of the threat of violence in terms of its efficacy to maintain a democratic society in the face of a status quo challenge. Threat of violence in international and national communities

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helps to keep “flexibility and stability in democratic institutions.” But this is possible when the threat of violence is used from time to time to keep its plausibility as a deterrent effect. A threat of coercive power would eventually lose its effects until and unless the threatener fulfills the threat by taking action. From the regime maintenance perspective, violence can encompass two utilities, one is its actual use and the other is its potential use (or threatened use). The potential (or threatened) use of violence can be rational in so far as it accommodates interests, without provoking actual violence. Likewise, actual violence can be rational in so far as it demonstrates the will and capability to act, “establishing a measure of the credibility of future threats, not the exhaustion of that capability in unlimited conflict.” But, as in the threat system, the question is how far the threat system can tolerate its own self-consummation.

1.4. Meaning of Loss

So far we have discussed the conditionality and heuristics of threat in making. To revisit, we have touched upon the point (1), concerning the multiplicity of emergent threat properties, and the point (2) about the self-organizing pattern of regularity in the threat system. This section will deal with the remaining point (3), on the fundamental nature of threat whose meaning is relevant to the situations of mass killing.

The preceding discussion of conditional vis-à-vis heuristic views of threats, drawing from dynamical systems perspectives and prospect theory, is in many ways

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166 Ibid., 865–6.
relevant to any threat, whether conflict or genocidal mass killing. It was a generic query trying to uncover threat’s patterns and functions, but not about the composition of its substance or incipience. What the previous discussions have raised is a number of emergent aspects of threats. That is, it may appear in a particular form from time to time; serve as either a manifest or latent attractor for the behavior of systems; be causing some action or is caused by other action; be discernible not just now but across time; or even be like a trap in which one can get further mired. Yet those discussions did not delve into a question of what an essential substance of threat is, if at all and aside from how it appears or behaves, that is specific to genocidal mass killing. Earlier it was defined that threat is a set of interpretations of novel events and of communicative action of such appraisal. What makes that interpretation and action so threatening to the extent that it is socialized in mass killing?

To understand those questions it is necessary to explore the meaning of loss. As discussed earlier in the chapter, we feel threatened because we fear. It was further discussed that fear arises out of appraisal of impending danger or potential harm, and such appraisal is pertinent to novel changes emerging in one’s milieu. Given these propositions, it was argued that one’s attempts to contain or avoid the emergence of some novelty—especially those associated with prospects of loss—can be self-perpetual and self-reinforcing. It is crucial, therefore, to understand what those prospects of loss would mean in (novel) context and what people are fearful about such potential experiences of loss when their relational and social systems are constantly undergoing (novel) changes.
The following discussions will elaborate on the meaning of loss in the relational systems in order to understand where the most pertinent fear lies in mass killing.

1.4.1. Connections of Threat, Fear, and Loss

What would constitute loss in situations of mass killing and how loss is connected to threats have been scarcely analyzed. Assessing loss is related to the framing of a given problem or the “editing” of choices in weighing prospective values, but Kahneman and Tversky and the subsequent development of prospect theory tend to deal with moments of making behavioral decisions or evaluations, which presumably follow only after such editing of choices. On dynamical system theory side, the attractor concept explains the operational nature of the system’s internal causation to revert to its default state, but falls short in accounting for the substance of what that attractor is. Both dynamical systems perspective and prospect theory are useful in mapping conceptual outlines of how threats can behave in phase space, both as conditions and processes, and how they can be increasingly rigid and resistant as they perpetuate and reinforce their cause and objectives, but neither of them provide an adequate explanation to a threat appraisal process itself, like the primary or secondary appraisals discussed earlier.

There have been some other theoretical attempts to paint the picture, but mostly without reference to mass killing. Scholars have put forth several propositions in determining qualitatively how to gauge loss and where to draw the boundaries of their

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reference points to frame the choices under risks. For example, such analysis in the domains of gain and loss will include defining the domain relative to each other, risk propensity, and choices made by particular leaders. With respect to the leaders’ decision making, an analysis would further need to investigate from three angles: “decisionmakers evaluated outcomes in terms of the reference point adopted at \( t \); decisionmakers perceive themselves as facing gains or losses relative to that reference point at \( t+n \); and the group’s risk-taking behavior is in the predicted direction (risk aversion for gains or risk acceptance for loss).” Also, one needs to take into account “the identification of indicators that a decision-maker is ‘in’ a particular domain.” How reference points are defined in collective action is partly influenced by the organization framing the measures to avert further losses or take risks and partly by the way in which such options are presented and supported. There are two other sticking points that are salient in influencing the reference points. One is “aspiration level” of what individuals believe to deserve or strive to achieve; the other is what others have.

Notwithstanding these myriad propositions, we still have scarce understandings of what kinds of reference points are at stake in connection with mass killing and how novel changes are evaluated in relation to these reference points. Any experiences of loss are substantial and meaningful in so far as the degree to which deviation occurs from the reference points, but the standards of the reference points can be arbitrary and fluid, as

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well as meanings of what constitutes gains and losses. It is therefore important that the analysis of fears about novel changes in social relations be attentive to their shifting boundaries and patterns. There was, for instance, the shift from the violent Bolshevism to the genocidal forms of Stalinism; from repressive Chinese agrarian reforms to the self-destructive killings of Maoist purges; and from nationalist revolutionary struggles to the Khmer Rouge’s self-destructive genocide against its own people. To speak of these shifts in political dimensions in (alleged) connection with fears of change or fears of loss, one needs to first deconstruct their relational associations and then make sense of shifts in relational and contextual patterns and boundaries, in order to understand their appraisal (i.e., what constituted fears) of the novel changes or dangers of the given milieu. Through understanding the reference points as such, we will have a better understanding of the meaning of loss, as perceived by the beholder, making distinctions between threats derived from conflict settings and those from mass killing. In so doing, one can find the variability of threats, where the baseline of the threat system lies, and how far it can tolerate its self-consummation.

In the following sections, we will discuss the substance of the reference points by evaluating what constitutes deviations and fears associated with those changes. This will begin by discussing the relational ontology and its ideational process in the next section.

*Relational ontology and its ideation*

In order to explore the nexus between fear and loss, we start from articulating relational ontology in terms of conflict and mass killing. Specifically, it means to
reassess: a) the ontology of relational systems in conflict and mass killing and b) the ideational development of how such relational ontology comes to be perceived in the first place. This articulation is crucial as it helps to delineate the baseline of the reference points—how the people conceive of their own relational systems—from which shifting patterns of social relations, such as gains and losses, are gauged. It is also critical because, in order to find the meaning of loss, we need to clarify the difference between basic needs (as relationally determined ontological properties) and generative values of those needs (as properties determining those very relations of the ontological needs). This is because the loss can be multi-dimensional. Here the discussion intends to highlight not only “what” people are about to lose, whether the loss is concerned with political or social or economic capital, but also what “that” loss would mean to them.

Relational ontology can be defined as “the relational processes by which the very idea of individual units—including both self and group—come into being.”\textsuperscript{173} The ontological substance and the ideational process to perceive it are thus not separable and should be discussed in tandem. There is also an inherent contradiction in the conception of needs being ‘ontological.’

To be ontological, needs are inherent in nature, and they can—and should—be fulfilled regardless of whether one is cognizant of their basic existence. There is a set of basic content within needs, too basic that one cannot live without. Scholars have expounded different types, sources, and structures of needs, including a hierarchy of

needs; autonomy, competence, and relatedness; belonging, understanding, effective, benevolent and self-esteem; welfare, freedom, and meaning; security, identity, and recognition; security, identity, recognition, participation, dignity, and justice and others. Despite their varied propositions, they fundamentally share the notion that there are some inherent qualities in humans’ ontological needs that need to be fulfilled in order to be functional social beings.

However, needs analysis is a probabilistic, retroactive, and unfalsifiable exercise. Its basic approach is premised on an agent’s subjective introspection of his or her agent-hood. To take an example, Staub develops an analysis of genocide from the needs perspective. He starts by probing questions concerning “group self-concept,” which is the way in which “members consensually see and experience their group.” He then delves into the motivational sources of violent behavior based on needs analysis and tries to locate the sources of unsatisfied personal or group goals in the continuum of destruction. Contingent upon certain cultural and social preconditions, he sees that a sense of weakness and vulnerability, as well as beliefs of superiority, may compound the

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178 Burton, *Conflict*.
180 Staub, *The Roots of Evil*.
motivational links with systemic genocidal destruction. But this is an unfalsifiable conception; in many ways needs analysis can be conducted in any form of collective, political violence because some needs are always deprived in conflict at any level.

Furthermore, the ontological substance is manifested only partially as the relational contexts make them appear as such. It is conceivable, depending on the context, that what appears to be a deprived need of security could be a need of identity at the same time. The problem is that a need can be multi-dimensional and take different labels depending on whose lens it is being rendered from. Potapchuk touches upon this self-understanding issue of needs deprivation and argues that there are “potentially fatal obstacles” for people to know what their needs and satisfiers are in that 1) people may pursue to satisfy their needs even, or intentionally, at the expense of others’ needs satisfaction; 2) the pursuit of their needs may actually be false satisfiers and thus end up making political, social, or economic changes that are not related to the needs in question; or 3) some people may not be even aware of or incapacitated to ascertain their needs when they are induced by the systems or the powerful to accept the status quo.

The limitation of needs analysis, epistemologically speaking, is therefore its atomized view. It sees one’s set of inherent needs as too personal and independent of each other and therefore the loss of the needs is also seen as atomized, even if the mechanisms of such loss may make sense at the unit level. But needs possess inherently the dual nature: personal and relational aspects. Needs are personally ontological but exist only in relation to each other. For instance, identity is espoused and made salient in

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contrast to or comparison with other forms of identity. Security, by definition, requires the presence of the Other or an Object from which one tries to ensure the Self’s own safety. As Burton argues, there are identity needs that are non-negotiable, while, as Kriesberg argues, there are multiple identities and the significance of which identity is more salient depends on the context.\textsuperscript{183} Salience of identity is a shifting property in a constant state of flux. In this sense, formation of in-group identity is intricately linked with delineation of boundaries that people use to identify, or preclude, out-groups. One (i.e. inclusion) without the other (i.e. exclusion) does not exist.\textsuperscript{184} There is simultaneous identity negotiation that takes place in both perpetrators and victims. Where there is the dehumanization of the enemy identity, there is a purported construction of some humanized perpetrator identity. In other words, the parties are made aware of the ontology of their needs \textit{always} through relational associations. Even the negation of needs is premised on their negotiation that takes place in the relational systems, however dysfunctional they may be.

This should be called an ideational process, the one in which the self-conception of needs becomes conceivable. In a similar vein, Lederer argues that “[n]eeds are theoretical constructs…at best, the existence of a need can be concluded indirectly either from the respective satisfiers that the person uses or strives for or symptoms of frustration caused by any kind of nonsatisfaction.”\textsuperscript{185} Therefore, the conception of human needs itself—what we think we need and what we are made to think we need—is a constructed

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\textsuperscript{183} Coy and Woehrle, \textit{Social Conflicts and Collective Identities}, 6.
\textsuperscript{184} Ibid., 8.
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self-understanding about one’s own relational associations. It necessarily presupposes the relational systems that are bound to each other such that frustration or nonsatisfaction is recognizable through comparable objects or by relative measures. This is also relevant to the cultural critique of human needs.186

However, it is futile to try to render any judgment of what precedes—whether ontology or relativity.187 Rather, the perspective of the ideational process that is presented here is based on “transactional views” of social relations, as opposed to a traditional conflict paradigm wherein virtues and vice are ascribed to coherent but separate agents.188 The transactional views emphasize that the meanings are generated in relational associations, not just to agents. They underscore what transpires in that particular relationship, although we tend to associate the “genesis of meaning” only with the work of individual minds.189 As Gergen argues, our conceptions of agency and causality tend to paint “a picture of atomized society” in which “society is composed of individual, bounded units” regardless of whether these units are moved by external force or their own volition.190 Instead, the relational approach and its transactional views emphasize that it is not only individual agents who make up relationships, but also interactive associations that engender the very basis of the individual and the relationships.191

Constructivists are concerned with iteration here, but the ideational process is concerned

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187 This debate is not likely to come to an end, because the relationship between the ontology of atomized agency (which assumes the fulfillment of needs independently of relations) and such relativistic ontology (which falls in a tautological circle) is essentially irreconcilable.
188 Tilly, Explaining Social Processes.
189 Gergen, “From Moral Autonomy to Relational Responsibility.”
190 Ibid., 207.
191 Ibid.
with heuristics, the simultaneity of needs to be manifest and latent at the same time. The distinction that is of interest to our discussion lies between what an individual property means by itself and what that individual property means in relational associations where it takes place.

The two modes of epistemological inquiry can be highlighted in this regard. Similar to the contrast between conditional vis-à-vis heuristic views developed earlier, one is based on linear perceptions of unit-based causal mechanisms of needs relations, while the other is more concerned with the transmutable nature of the needs. The study of conflict is premised with an implicit assumption that there are identifiable origins of conflict. The identification of sources by needs analysis, an exercise of exploring fundamental motivational links of violence with needs (whether they take perspectives from grievances, social identity or political development) finds itself caught in a tautological argument. This is because evidence of needs deprivation (hence, presence of potential violence) is often demonstrated by the presence of violence itself. Consequently, a loss of basic needs is often associated with the singular relational connection, with the loss itself being unitary and constant. The transactional views of ideation, on the contrary, probe the transmutability of its own meanings in relational connections; for instance, one can lose the generative meanings of identity needs even if the same identity is indeed present. Likewise, one can have the different generative meanings of identity at different times, despite it being the same. That is to say, the heuristic evolution of certain values of identity can take different faces, even across the synchronic or diachronic span, without necessarily transforming itself to be an entirely different substance of identity.
This perspective suggests a reorientation in our views about “ontological” needs: basic needs can be ontological, but the substance of such ontology and their manifestation as tangible realities necessarily requires the relational coordination of what those needs mean to the beholders, synchronically or diachronically. Similarly, the loss of ontological needs can be viewed in a tangible and substantiated term, but the meaning of such loss is gauged in a different term at the experiential (or even existential) level. It can be said that what basic human needs theorists describe as identity needs is the desire to have a form of relationship that gives meanings of who they are. Basic human needs, whether they are identity or security or recognition, is ontological in the sense that it is necessary to have those needs. But what to have and how to have it is governed by the very relationship in which those basic needs are situated. Such meanings are negotiated and coordinated: “We do not have cause and effect, but relational coordination that brings forth the meaning of events.”

As such, the relational transaction views are pertinent to threat analysis as a mode of inquiry. For threat is ubiquitous in the coordination of meanings in almost all kinds of relationships, its presence can be discernible not only in conflict or mass killing but in other circumstances in which violence is not readily manifest. The meanings of threat cannot be studied only when it is apparent or tangible; they are visible only in so far as the relational associations in question exhibit them as such. At the same time threat is meaningful (i.e., threatening) when there is the emergence of some novelty. Its meaningfulness is intimately related to the degree of deviation of such novel emergence.

192 Ibid., 212.
In this sense, it is not simply utterances of words, acts of behavior, signs of ideas, or symbols of ideology, or even a state of structural conditions through which we find the signs of threat or the threat-laden meanings of relational associations. These are median carriers of threats and their meanings are constantly negotiated heuristically. There are therefore secondary or latent meanings of threat—in terms of gains or loss—that are assessed separately by the system’s reference points along this process, sometimes automating the machination of social apparatus. It is therefore important to understand both the relational ontology of what the parties conceive of their own relational systems and how they come to recognize it epistemologically. In so doing, we can explore “what it is” (i.e., threat-based relational associations) and “how it appears” (i.e., by deviations, such as gains and losses, from the reference points) in the given social relations.

Making these distinctions provides a basis of understanding fears of loss that are particularly associated with relational systems in genocidal mass killing. As the relational ontology shifts from conflict to genocidal, fears of loss at work will also shift, as well as the substance of threat. That is, we need to differentiate fear of losing a tangible or intangible form of basic needs vis-à-vis fear of losing control over the future projections of those needs. As will be further discussed later, threat in mass killing is directly linked to such generative projections—from substantive (i.e., ontological) to ideational (i.e., epistemological). Essentially, these are the fears generating a set of anticipated threats to the needs of future group identity.193 These needs give existential meaning to agency

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193 See also Rothbart and Korostelina, *Identity, Morality, and Threat*. 

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especially in the realm of identity of the “imagined communities”\(^{194}\) that are projected into the future.

Despite obvious challenges in accounting for meaning-making processes, especially the meanings of threats and fears, which dwell in the minds of other individuals (let alone hermeneutic challenges of making sense through words or deeds of those individuals), this relational orientation shifts “the locus of meaning from within the person to between persons.”\(^{195}\) To think of threats, therefore, is to search for destructive shifts in the relational associations, transmutating ‘fears of loss’ from substantive to ideational and encompassing both their manifest and latent forms. It is an exploration of such a paradigm of the relational ontology that governs how one associates with the other in situations of mass killing, probing micro-events with a phenomenological scope at the meso-level while contextualizing them within the macro-dynamics.

*Interactivity and doubling*

There are qualitative differences in the degree to which physical destruction varies from minor conflict to major conflict, but a more fundamental shift from conflict to mass killing happens ontologically, especially in a relational sense. In the debate on how to identify and define genocide, there are those that advocate for the inclusion of ‘intent’ as a specific qualification,\(^{196}\) and those who do not.\(^{197}\) However, this debate has


\(^{195}\) Gergen, “From Moral Autonomy to Relational Responsibility.”

not taken issue with the ontological concept of human relationships. The debate has been successful insofar as to distinguish genocide from other organized mass killings in phenomenological terms, but such discussion did not describe it in relational terms. Besides the quantitative (i.e. how many were killed) and phenomenological (i.e. how they were killed and on what grounds) differences, there is a qualitative shift in the fundamental way in which people relationally associated with their avowed enemy identity groups.

What is specific to genocidal mass killing is the lack of comparable or competitive agency. For a human relation to become entrenched in conflict, whether it is inter-personal, inter-communal, or international in nature, it is premised that there are at least parties in the conflict that can assert their agent-hood, despite power asymmetry between the adversaries, whose agency is strong enough to be contestable. They are able to compete and therefore seek to maximize optimal gains in their own value systems, desired goods of interest, or political or social positions.

This conception of conflict is evident in how conflict is defined by scholars. Conflict is defined as the “pursuit of incompatible goals by different groups” or the “perceived divergence of interest, a belief that the parties’ current aspirations are incompatible.” Although these two definitions of conflict demonstrate the different

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orientations to see conflict parties’ interaction, at the bottom of human behavioral and perceptional realms incompatibility is the essential characteristic of conflict. Any conflict at any level with any group presupposes that there are two or more parties who exist and contest each other, in myriad ways with varied reasons for specific objectives. They keep contesting until their incompatible means or perceptions\textsuperscript{200} are either exhausted or resolved. This would be a state in which aspiration of at least one party is achieved, compromised, thwarted, or transformed. The parties in this process maintain their agency, the capacity to choose and enact their action, as long as they are still able to stand up against each other. This incompatibility exists within the parameters of group competition or group comparison among the parties who can still assert their agency even when challenged by the adversaries’ competing means to achieve their ends or different perceptions of their interests, notwithstanding power imbalances. Essentially, the parties are still able to choose, assert, and exercise their chosen mode of needs satisfiers.

Redekop captures this binding nature of the relational system in conflict settings and, referring to a French philosopher Paul Ricoeur’s notion, argues:

There is a relationship between Self and Other to the extent that one cannot define or think of a Self without taking into consideration a relationship with the Other. We form our identities though our relationships with others. The minimum unit of human analysis, in other words, includes Self and Other…. [T]he sense of what we aspire to in terms of selfness is formed in relation to the Other and the appraisal of where we are now in terms of selfness is likewise formed in relation to the Other.\textsuperscript{201}

\textsuperscript{200} Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, and Miall, \textit{Contemporary Conflict Resolution}; Pruitt and Kim, \textit{Social Conflict}.

\textsuperscript{201} Vern Neufeld Redekop, \textit{From Violence to Blessing: How an Understanding of Deep-Rooted Conflict Can Open Paths to Reconciliation} (Ottawa: Novalis, 2002), 64.
Following in the intellectual footsteps of René Girard, a French thinker who traced the origin of violence in human’s imitative desire, or mimesis, Redekop sees the essential characteristics of conflict in human *interactivity*, the idea that conflict needs the presence of the Other in each person's interior world. Conflict therefore can be characterized, in its most basic sense, as the incompatibilities arising out of competition or comparison through which the fundamental unit of human relationships, the Self-Other, is still tenable. Redekop’s account assumes that there is an Object for which the Self is competing with the Other. This Object, in Redekop’s sense, is a needs satisfier for the Self’s identity to be complete. The Self is competing with the Model-Other based on a fascination or obsession with the desired Object, binding their relationships so that the Obstacle-Other becomes a part and parcel of the Self’s identity formation and thus the two “become *doubles* of one another.”\(^{202}\) This perspective recasts the view on conflict such that conflict exists because not only do the parties compete against each other for their self-aspiration, but also because the existence of the Other constitutes the basis of forming the Self’s identity. As a result, conflict requires the presence of an enemy, by nature and by default. The Enemy-Other becomes a necessary constitutive element of the parties’ incompatible competition or comparison. Within the conflict system, the fact—or even the mere assumption—that the Enemy-Other exists on a level that is so infused with the Self’s identity, the two actors are inherently indivisible (i.e., called ‘doubling’).

\(^{202}\) Ibid., 69, emphasis added.
By contrast, this basic form of the relational systems collapses during episodes of mass killing. In Redekop’s language, the presence of the Other no longer holds in the doubling of their relationship, but instead the absence of the Other, in and of itself, becomes the fervent objective of the rivalry. The relationship is then characterized as the lack of comparable or competitive agency. The salient distinction here leads to the difference in the purposes of killings. In conflict, the act of killing is generally a means to address incompatibilities between the parties involved, and it ends when the purpose is served, still operating within the framework of the basic doubling relationship. In contrast, mass killing of the enemies purports to discard such a relational system itself. Genocidal killing is an act of the perpetrator-Self to attain the identity system that exists in their image of the future—but not at the present interior world. The future projection of the purported identity systems underlies its purpose. Extermination of the chosen identity group—removing the very basis of competition or comparison itself—becomes the corollary to address the incompatibilities.

In Gergen’s terms, this is tantamount to “the end of meaning” of the relational associations. Conflict is essentially based on the interactivity of agency, dealing with incompatible perceptions or goals, but it still occurs within the purview of the contestable meanings that result from competition or comparison. In any conflict, whether it is at the inter-personal, communal, national, or international level, conflict always entails parties who are able to contest each other for the projected images of the relational systems they aspire to achieve. The interactive doubling thus makes up the basis of the relational systems. However, its termination means no more coordination of any emergent
meanings in that particular relationship. This can be understood as the abdication of relational responsibility, essentially the cessation of coordinated patterns and processes of meaning making.

In such a system, the interactivity and doubling of the relational associations are no longer tenable, and therefore negotiated meaning making is not possible. The relational dynamics are such that mutually concatenating relational processes can create certain new meanings in the process but, paradoxically, result in the end of meaning. In a dynamical systems language, it can be said that the latent attractor emerges in such a way that, even if novel changes may arise, any changes or meanings eventually end up converging back to the original basin of attraction. The system becomes increasingly resistant to the coordination of (new) meaning making. Here, threat is what constitutes the “deviation from accepted patterns of coordination.” The boundary of what is “accepted” is the basin itself, and what is “coordinated” is the engendering of any new meanings of the relational associations in order to revert back to status quo ante. Consequently, any deviation that may go beyond this basin, or beyond this pattern, is the threat to this (what is now less) dynamical system.

As a corollary, the relational ontology and its ideational process are played out differently in conflict and mass killing. In terms of what deviates from, the difference lies in how the minimal unit of human relational systems is framed in terms of group interactions. The characteristics of the relational associations are distinct from each other; the basic, fundamental frame of the relational system in conflict is characterized by

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grievance, while fear characterizes that of mass killing. The former is concerned with frustration, *real or imagined*, of ontological needs or relative value discrepancy as the impetus of aggression,204 compounded by the positioning of social identity.205 On the contrary, the latter is based on the fear, *prospective and therefore not real*, of frustration or loss. Note that such frustrations are not substantiated *as yet*. This difference in the relational ontology affects how people’s contention in the relational systems ends. Human relationships in conflict assume that competition continues so long as incompatibilities persist but ends when common ground is found. By contrast, there is no such ground to be found in the midst of genocidal mass killing, as the future needs are essentially unsatisfiable. Therefore, the difference in the relational ontology leads to the different kind of threat. Whereas the parties in conflict would be threatened by the prospects of their undesirable interactive and doubling relational outcomes, in mass killing, any prospects of emergent (i.e., meaning deviant) meanings of the relational associations are threatening.

*Fear of loss and deviation*

Now the discussion will turn to the essence of such “emergent meanings” in terms of the relational systems in mass killing that would amount to “deviation from accepted patterns of coordination.” There is already scholarship on exploring the need for meaning


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as a way to establish a coherent comprehension of reality and identity. However, once again, attention needs to be made such that this threatening deviation should be specific to situations of mass killing while it may be relevant to conflict.

Scholars often turn to the content and structure of group and individual social identities in order to discuss the substance of threat in connection with identity and violence. For instance, a mixture of the past experiences of victimhood, a sense of vulnerability to group identity, or the lack of valued personal self-concept, can increase the risk of group mobilization for violence. Many threat narratives also entail elements of in-groups’ normative agency to distinguish between virtues and vices; a desire to predict “their” potential future violence upon “us”; or an inclination to position “our” standing in relation to “them,” legitimizing group decision and actions.

These illustrations suggest that people possess inherent motivations and tendencies to seek legitimate, undeterred, and stable group social identities, transcending boundaries of time and space. This suggests further that people would be fearful of threats that can destroy a coherent framework to chart a path of group identity from the past and its projection onto the future. When fears get embedded within the identity system as such, connections between threats and violence become more pronounced and destructive.

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Such fears are generated through the self-ascribing ideational process. Inspired by Erik Erikson’s developmental psychological framework, Simmons provides an insight on ‘generativity’ amid needs to have individual characteristics and cultural variance in values in the given context. Generativity can be seen as one’s desire *to have the meanings of Self and to leave an imprint on the future.* In other words, a generative form of needs is a ‘need to have meaningful identity.’ Simmons places the generative needs as follows:

> If the problem of identity is concerned with the maintenance of meaningful autobiography amid the vagaries of life, the problem of generativity is to maintain a sense of the meaning of history amid seeming chaos in the course of human events… Generativity directs our attention to a party’s need to be needed and to the powerful consequences of the desire to outlive the self, without losing sight of the effects of the need for individuals to develop a coherent social identity.

These needs are ideational in nature. They are real needs, and yet of fictitious identity. They portray a socially constructed fascination of the Self’s projected reality in the future, made up of the confluence of historical narratives, social structures, personal narratives and social identities. In this sense, threats on the generativity of identity directly challenge the self-ascribed interpretation of reality *as well as its projection.* Furthermore, as a corollary, distinct kinds of fears can be dissected in relation to these threats. They are, namely:

- Fear of reversion to the painful past of group history

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210 Ibid., 152.
211 See also Volkan, *Bloodlines.*
• Fear of uncertainty caused by the present crisis
• Fear of inconsistent reality with future projection.

Those fears challenge the ideational process of the generativity. They produce prospective frustrations of the generative values of the identity needs, undermining their stable and sustainable trajectories that span from the past through the future. They stand in contradiction to the generative needs to have control over their needs, to maintain a coherent and undeterred sense of their agent-hood, in a synchronic and diachronic span of time and space. This is tantamount to what Semelin would call “the imaginary construct of fear.” As Semelin argues, “[c]onvinced of an imminent threat born of the imaginaire of fear, men are driven to seek a rational means of eradicating this threat.” Based on the transactional views of ideation, we can surmise that what it means to lose generative values of identity needs is that one would lose the imagined reality of one’s identity even if he still possesses the same identity. This is the transmutability of latent and manifest meanings of identity.

These fears, however, do not cause mass killing, by themselves. Nor do they explain, by themselves alone, retaliatory or vengeful killing that may take place in conflict or in mass killing. Threat of these fears is not the only consequence of negative social or relative social competition or comparison. Neither is it the single most outstanding cause of genocide or mass killing. Rather, these fears constitute one element of existential threats that are prevalent in the threat system where risk acceptant behavior is preferred to avoid further risks of loss. It does not mean that the presence of these fears

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212 Séminel, *Purify and Destroy*, 47.
is equated with the onset of mass killing, but it suggests that these fears of loss provide an anchor of analysis to trace the reference points at play in the parties’ relational associations.

The ideational process involves multifaceted identity formation in that those fears are influenced by the imaginary construct of ‘the Ideological Man’ that people project to be, by politically organized and sustained practices of social engineering, and by a means of social control available at disposal. In other words, tracing the historical pattern of these fears’ development is not meant to explain such ideological, political and social facets of its emergence. And yet, episodes of mass killing exhibit a distinct pattern of development of these fears and their manifestation as threats. Threat is what binds the past and the future, projecting the fear of the future generative needs of identity onto the present reality.

1.4.2. Summary of Threat Analysis

Going back to the earlier points, these fundamental aspects of threats hampering the ideational process of identities are compounded by the points (1) (about the multiplicity of emergent threat properties) and the point (2) (about the self-organizing pattern of regularity in the threat system). The question of how to gauge these fears, in relation to the reference points, the latent attractor, and prospects of gains and losses in a time phase perspective, will be elaborated in the research methodology section below. For now, this section brings together the main points that have been discussed so far.
The following table encapsulates the nature of the relational systems at work in conflict and mass killing, concerning their mode of association and of agency.

Table 2. Characteristic differences of conflict and mass killing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Mass Killing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basis of association</strong></td>
<td>Comparison &amp; competition</td>
<td>Negation &amp; elimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mode of association</strong></td>
<td>Interactivity</td>
<td>Complete denial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Means of association</strong></td>
<td>Incompatibility with the external reality</td>
<td>Deviation from the interior design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characteristics of association</strong></td>
<td>Doubling &amp; relationally negotiating; contest of meanings</td>
<td>Forfeiting &amp; relationally imposing; cessation of meanings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>End of association</strong></td>
<td>Satisfiable &amp; finite end</td>
<td>Unsatisfiable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Value of agency</strong></td>
<td>Assertive &amp; contested</td>
<td>Non-existent &amp; defied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fear of loss</strong></td>
<td>Fears of losing tangible or intangible forms of basic identity needs</td>
<td>Fears of losing control over the future projection of the identity needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Threat</strong></td>
<td>Loss of needs at present</td>
<td>Deviation from coordinated patterns of associations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Threat has different façades of emergence, as it manifests itself as a threat-as-a-condition or threat-as-a-process. Both are equally legitimate characteristics of threat
but stem from different emphases on causation: one is by the conditional views on threat and the other by the heuristic views. The former is more concerned with the atomic view of threat that leads to singular connections between cause and effect, with threat serving as either of the two, but not both. The latter is more concerned with the transmutable view that recognizes both the manifest and latent meanings of threat, serving as an attractor to maintain the *status quo ante*. This view is not just synchronic or diachronic in nature whereby a property is seen to have a unitary value at a corresponding time; rather, it is a heuristically emergent view in that changes in a property are relationally determined in an array of multiple social relations. These are pattern-based interactions in a phase space dimension.

(2) *Conflict is more closely aligned with the exchange system whereas mass killing is based on the threat system.* The parties in the exchange system engage in pursuit of optimal gains that may be incompatible but are premised on a framework that is positive-sum in nature. On the other hand, mass killing is characterized by the threat system in which threat, as manifested as fears of loss, is self-perpetual and self-reinforcing. In the threat system, the system’s latent attractor resists and inhibits any potential deviations from an accepted pattern of coordination. Furthermore, because a negative-sum framework operates the threat system, the system is in a domain of continual loss and therefore any experiences of loss are more acutely felt as painful than those of gains in comparison to the reference points. Consequently, the system tries to avoid risks of further loss by accepting further risks and risk-seeking behavior.
(3) The relational ontology in conflict and mass killing shows a qualitative difference in how relational associations are framed. Conflict theories are premised with the able agency, however competent or powerful/less it may be. Even if relational interactions in conflict are replete with power asymmetry, parties are still able to exercise their agency. The interactivity of agent-hood and the doubling of their relationships characterize these forms of relational associations. In these settings, while frustration of needs portrays the fundamental motivational links for aggression and becomes an actionable means of solving the real or perceived grievances, the notion of frustration does not go far enough to mass killing. On the other hand, a relational paradigm in mass killing is based on the outright negation of the Other. The source of competition is no longer an externalized Object with which to compare with or compete against; it is the presence of the Other itself—a deviation from the purported design of the Self’s interior world. Situations of mass killing are thus predicated on the absence of the Other, and the meaning-making process of their relational associations is ceased.

(4) In the ideational process of conceiving one’s own identity needs, distinctions should be made between ontological needs and generative needs. Prevailing assumptions of deep-rooted conflict postulate that there are ontological needs that are both inexhaustible and satisfiable. Generativity, on the other hand, is one’s desire to have the meanings of Self and to leave an imprint on the future. Generative needs of identity are therefore needs to have control over their identity trajectories, seeking to
maintain a coherent and unfettered sense of their agent-hood. It is not just a question of being able to possess an identity, but of what identity to have and how to have it, hence a need to have a meaningful identity. Therefore, there are some fears, such as fears of reversion to the painful past of group history, of uncertainty caused by the present crisis, or of inconsistent reality with future projection, that are particularly threatening to a generative sense of identities. Those fears challenge the ideational process of the generativity by producing prospective frustrations of the future identity needs.

(5) Threats in genocidal mass killing are deeply associated with the perpetrator's imaginary construct of fears compromising their future identities. There is a difference in ‘deviation’ in conflict settings and mass killing. In the former, fears of loss are concerned with ontological needs at present. In the latter, the system becomes increasingly resistant to the coordination of new meaning making, and any deviation from accepted patterns of coordination becomes threatening. These are threats on the generative needs of identity. These needs exist within the broader spectrum of needs like ontological ones, but they are prospective and unsatisfiable in nature by any materialistic needs satisfiers. The frustration of ontological needs or value discrepancy can lead parties to compete and appropriate those deprived properties. There are, however, no needs satisfiers that exist in relation to a threat of generative needs other than to kill the source of danger. The qualitative change in the relationship between Self and Other in mass killing situations involves the way in
which the basis of competition shifts from some external, material goods or objects, to one’s interior world. Enemy identity is thus ideational and becomes ineliminable.

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1.5. RESEARCH METHODS

To understand the significance of treating threats as an alternative conceptual inquiry, a review of the methodological orientations in conflict and genocide studies is in order. While there are close overlaps between the two, it is argued that the relational approach to threats can complement our understanding of why, under some circumstances, general conflict evolves into one-sided genocidal mass killing in a continuum of a constantly mutating environment. The following discussion will first unravel how the initial debate on distinguishing the Holocaust from other cases of genocide is methodologically relevant to conflict studies.

1.5.1. Prevailing Methodological Orientations

The majority of literature on genocide studies can be grouped into two camps of theories. Moses attempts to draw connections between the diverging scholarly communities centered on either the Holocaust or on indigenous genocide in colonial contexts by characterizing previously separated strands of research into liberal and post-liberal theories of genocide.\(^\text{213}\) He devises these labels to clarify points of convergence and divergence on debates between the ‘uniqueness’ and ‘singularity’ of the Holocaust

\(^{213}\) Moses, “Conceptual Blockages and Definitional Dilemmas in the ‘Racial Century.’”
vis-à-vis indigenous genocide in a colonial era when the racial politics and discriminatory policies implemented a systematic removal of indigenous populations. While he initially developed this distinction to lay bare the incompleteness of explaining the Holocaust or indigenous genocide by relying too heavily on either structure or agency, the liberal and post-liberal discussion of genocide is still relevant today and methodologically important for a comparative analysis of conflict and mass killing.

Moses sees in the liberal theorists of genocide a proclivity to explain genocidal dynamics through the intentionality embodied in able and conscious agency. On the contrary, he posits that theorists in the post-liberal tradition try to look into structural impetus and social forces as a precipitating factor of genocide. In this thinking, exterminatory intent of the agency is diffused in structural processes without requiring substantial or explicit roles to be played by those agents. Powell succinctly comments on the strength and weakness of both liberalists and post-liberalists: “if liberal positions are too voluntaristic and take little account of how individual action is constrained by emergent social structures, post-liberal positions are too deterministic and leave little room for agency and, with it, moral responsibility.”

Liberals tend to see genocide through the eyes of perpetrators, as well as the destruction of the social collectivity as the elimination of a group of individuals who (happen to) share common attributes. For them, society is “made up of individuals and of subjectively meaningful, intentional social action” and therefore genocide constitutes mass murder of these individuals “because

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215 Ibid., 533.
of real or imputed common attributes distinct to them as members of a group.”

On the other hand, post-liberals focus on the genocidal actions’ impacts on the collectivity, emphasizing instead the structural impetus of genocide. For them, “social structures exist objectively, independently of individuals and their subjective intentions” and what is destroyed is not a collection of individuals but rather “an emergent social structure, irreducible to the individuals who make it up.” Genocide, in this sense, is tantamount to the destruction of this particular structure, for post-liberals. These distinctions between liberals and post-liberals are useful in that they clarify how ‘the object of what is being destroyed’ emerges, whether by agentic or structural forces, but such distinctions scratch only the surface level. They essentially fall short in explaining ‘the object of what is being destroyed’ itself, and they also do not differentiate it in either case. Moses says that while liberals come with a certain blindness about structural determinants of genocidal killing, post-liberals also carry their own limitations by imposing a static model of a structural outlook that avoids confronting “the problem of the exterminatory consciousness.” In this sense, the specific and distinct nature of ‘exterminatory consciousness’ is treated as though it is an isolated anomaly and a separate product from historical contexts (by liberals) or it is seen as an offshoot of the monolithic force of modernity and thus denuded of any roles played by conscious agents (by post-liberals).

Nevertheless, these liberalist and post-liberalist tendencies are prevalent and cut across a number of theoretical propositions in the field, underscoring their frameworks.

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216 Ibid., 528.
217 Ibid., 533.
218 Ibid., 528.
that can be further subdivided, as attempted by Owens et al.\textsuperscript{220} From a social scientific perspective, they enumerate five categories of analytical focus that characterize the trends of genocide studies: 1) policy decisions made by political leaders and elites; 2) motivation and participation of perpetrators; 3) macro-level international, state, and institutional dynamics; 4) construction of dehumanized identities of victim groups; and 5) local and regional variation within the cases. Despite these diverging trends, liberalist or post-liberalist orientations underlie them at a deeper, more fundamental level, providing an implicit framework (or even an assumption) that guides how the ‘exterminatory consciousness’ is made manifest.

For instance, the liberal orientation is evident within strategic conceptions of genocide and mass killing, which departs from placing emphasis on existing social cleavages or hatred,\textsuperscript{221} and the elites’ experiences of loss in the context of realpolitik and their imprudent risk minimization strategies.\textsuperscript{222} These strands of theories place more emphasis on the intentionality of able agents—in their case, the elites—than the roles of ideology\textsuperscript{223} or utopian ideals surrounding race and purity.\textsuperscript{224} However, these ideological drivers cannot be wholly discounted in genocidal systems, and they still fall within the purview of the liberal orientation.

\textsuperscript{221} Valentino, Final Solutions.
\textsuperscript{222} Midlarsky, The Killing Trap.
In contract, the post-liberal nature of scholarship has proliferated, focusing more on social processes. There is a body of copious studies on the processes in which “ordinary men” become killers,²²⁵ through hierarchical and bureaucratic structures of molding²²⁶ or banal routinization.²²⁷ Anthropological renditions try to understand an ordinary population in Cambodia that was recruited to kill, and how these individuals were susceptible to manipulation and exploitation based on cultural beliefs and traditions.²²⁸ Similar scholarship attempts to understand the interpersonal networks which influenced the extent to which people participated or were pressured into Rwandan genocide.²²⁹

Needless to say, neither liberals nor post-liberals alone can entirely capture the intricately complex interplay of agentic and structural forces that span over time and space in the cases of mass killing. They both overlook the evolving nature of genocidal systems that is but a transient façade of constantly changing human societies. Both liberals and post-liberals tend to see the sources and forces of genocidal killing, whether agentic or structural, in static properties, and there is a drawback in doing so. Regardless of liberal or post-liberal orientations, or regardless of the five different trends in genocide studies, there is a prevailing mindset that permeates through those increasingly categorical differences. There is, as Shaw warns, a methodological pitfall that occurs when an episode of genocide is seen 1) as though it was between “a single perpetrator

²²⁵ Browning, Ordinary Men.
and a single victim group” and 2) when one fails to see “complex alliances between state and non-state perpetrators and multiple targeting of a range of victims.” The crux of this problem lies in “theorizing specific types of genocidal context in the context of constantly mutating international politics.” In other words, whether one takes a view of the liberalist or post-liberalist positions emphasizing the supremacy of structure over agency, or vice versa, the singularity and linearity of causal assumptions dominate, even if one takes into account constructionist views (which are still sequential).

Methodologically speaking, this mindset skews how one approaches an inquiry of historical events. Shaw argues that much of the literature of genocide studies is predicated on biased perceptions about perpetrator-regimes as well as the narrowly defined contemporary politics of the domestic circumstances. This is because we are deeply, and quite rightly, influenced by “our historical imaginations with Nazism and by extension with totalitarianism.” We tend to assume that there are evil leaders and regimes that exist in the world to cause havoc domestically within the nation-state systems. The literature is fraught with the “prevailing actor-centric focus” and therefore it places too much emphasis on trying to identify subjectivity of perpetrators through “a specific leader and movement rather than on context and political relationship.” But such “[d]omestic categorizations reveal a mindset in which genocide is regarded as a simple

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232 Ibid., 646.

233 Ibid., 650.
pattern of violence by a single ‘perpetrator’-state or -regime against a singular ‘victim’ population group.”

Therefore, modern genocide research, according to Shaw, is akin to those of comparative politics and sociology wherein methodology would employ a detailed analysis of genocide whose scope is usually confined primarily in one domestic context. Or a comparison of genocidal characteristics is made only in relation to already established and known cases. These studies tend to focus on a selective set of cases as discrete, chronologically linear events, and therefore comparison is done “across their discrete situations, but without systematically drawing connections between them.” He argues that “the literature is more interested in transhistorical comparisons between these cases than in historical connections, prioritizing domestic and local environments rather than international contexts.”

The methodological shortcomings that Shaw identifies are aptly reverberated by Straus’s earlier survey on what he calls the “second generation” of comparative genocide studies. Although Straus does not use the liberalist or post-liberalist notions, his identification of the second generation’s methodological challenges also falls within the purview of Mose’s problematization of dichotomous liberal vis-à-vis post-liberal debates. Straus surveys their characteristics as:

Weitz turns on race and utopia; Semelin on identity and purity; Valentino on leaders’ strategic goals; Midlarsky on imprudent realpolitik and loss; Mann on democracy and ethnic nationalism; and Levene on the rise of the West and nation-states. Valentino argues against the importance of perpetrator publics; Mann, Levene, and Semelin explicitly argue otherwise. Midlarsky and Levene reject a utilitarian calculus to genocide; Weitz

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234 Ibid., 647.
235 Ibid., 648.
236 Straus, “Review.”
implies the same. By contrast, Valentino argues that genocide is the instrumental choice of leaders who want to achieve a certain goal. Mann and Levene privilege the longue durée of modern state formation and nationalism; Midlarsky and Valentino focus more on short-term conditions.\textsuperscript{237}

In his exposition, Straus rightly argues that placing a central emphasis on idealism—much like Weitz has done on race and nation or Semelin on purity of identity—overlooks “sequencing and causality.” To establish causal linkages between ideology and actions is inherently challenging, as it is difficult to “show that ideals drive the outcome rather than the other way around. If the evidence of ‘purity’ or ‘utopia’ is the extreme violence, then the argument descends into tautology.”\textsuperscript{238} The discussion of idealism may fit well with the ideological framework imposed on the victim population in Cambodia and practices of massive social engineering conducted during the collectivization era of the Soviet Union and China, as some liberal theorists would do. Such explanation is, after all, only one facet of the phenomena. As Owens et al. argue, there is overreliance on ideology\textsuperscript{239} as a motivational linkage between genocide and collective participation in the enterprise, when it could be simply one frame of interpretive schema through which life events are perceived, identified, and labeled.\textsuperscript{240} As such, the idealism discussion can inadvertently dismiss the whole gamut of dynamic framing processes wherein the ideology in question may only be one such filter being overrated and made salient and meaningful in a particular context, as discussed in

\textsuperscript{237} Ibid., 488–89.
\textsuperscript{238} Ibid., 490.
\textsuperscript{239} Goldhagen, \textit{Hitler’s Willing Executioners}; Weitz, \textit{A Century of Genocide}.
existing social mobilization studies.\textsuperscript{241} Bloxham contends, in a similar vein, that the role of destructive ideology such as Nazism should not be underestimated, but at the same time its substance, function, and impact on the collective meaning-making process and the implication for collective action should not be seen as static or permanent over time.\textsuperscript{242}

Furthermore, the political development argument, as post-liberals would make—which seeks the sources of problems in “modernity, state development, and nationalism”—suffers from what Straus calls an ubiquity of such political development in other non-genocidal contemporary societies, and therefore un-falsifiability of such claims among all the other political exigencies of the chosen nation-state systems. This creates “the frequency of the explanatory variables and the infrequency of the outcomes.”\textsuperscript{243}

Similarly, the problem with “leader-level instrumental planning” which plays prominent roles in Valentino and Midlarsky, is again ubiquitous in the name of “state interest” that is quite often present in a society while genocide is not. These methodological tendencies end up dealing with “corollary conditions” that can lead to multiple directions, such as ideology, state capacity, or past experiences of atrocities or loss, all of which cannot be denied to exist. There is also another problem about the paradigm of rational, instrumental planning. On the one hand, genocide is too costly, and one can argue that strategic considerations may very well choose mass violence as a strategy of survival even in the face of imminent failure; on the other hand, however, that does not preclude

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\textsuperscript{243} Straus, “Review,” 490.
the possibility that the “phobia, desperation, anger, and even fantasy—as per Midlarsky, and Levene, as well as Weitz and Semelin—would seem to explain why [genocide occurs].”

In other words, the search for causal origins, as it were, may reach identifiable and tangible properties, in any combination of liberalist or post-liberalist manners, but those views do not explain away the latent potentialities of other elements. The result would often be explanations that paint a logical but partial picture. For this reason, the next section will discuss the relational approach as an alternative methodological orientation. This approach inquires about the causal origins not necessarily by pinning down a particular property but by laying bare emergent patterns of how a particular causality gives rise to a specific configuration of those causal properties and not others, both synchronically and diachronically, in the given context.

1.5.2. Alternative Methodological Orientation

The relational focus proposed by Powell departs from the liberalism and post-liberalism schism by focusing on ‘the social collectivity’ that is being destroyed. This is based on his relational conception of genocide derived from Raphael Lemkin’s original functionalist view of ‘what is being destroyed.’ He additionally draws from Norbert Elias’s relational sociology by framing the conception of ‘genos’ as a type of social figuration and illustrates a relational conception of genocide:

[G]enocide is the process of violent destruction of [a] type of figuration (a self-reproducing dynamic network of practical social relations) whose

244 Ibid., 491.
organizing principle is a collective identification...Or more radically, we could understand genocide as an identity-difference relation of violent obliteration. This formula more easily accommodates cases where genociders channel violence through a fictive identification, as when people are killed for being “Jews” or “Communists” or “bourgeois” when they are not actually Jewish or Communist or bourgeois, either in their own eyes or by previously established standards.245

The critical elements of Powell’s relational approach are that it not only transcends the liberalist and post-liberalist dichotomy—as genos as a type of social figuration encompasses both a network of social agents and social institutions—but also reveals an emergent perspective on identities while genocidal killing is underway. This means that when genos is destroyed, victims are killed not merely because of their identities—their identities are also “effectively produced through the process of annihilation.”246 There is a slight but important difference between killing the victim identity groups due to their inherent identities and killing them because their imputed and fictive identities are being created through the very act of killing. To employ this identification process, one cannot neatly categorize it by “methodological individualism or holism”247 but requires a new methodological approach that closes in on the workings of social phenomena through heuristically developed fictive identities. It suggests that, unlike the liberalist or post-liberalist tendencies to identify causal origins prior to the killings, this relational concept moves away from a strict or static cause-and-effect (i.e., killings) paradigm and takes into account the transient nature of causes and effects.

246 Ibid.
247 Sawyer, “Emergence in Sociology.”
surrounding the fictive identification process that evolves over time, even *during* and
*after* the killings begin.

However, if we take Powell’s orientation of relational sociology carefully, his
functionalist view of the destruction of the social collectivity does not confine itself to
genocide. The destruction of social figuration would not be concerned only with genocide,
but applicable to intractable conflict as well. To be sure, Powell recognizes that his
relational conception is broad in scope, encompassing the violent obliteration of social
figuration not just in genocide but in other forms as well, as he acknowledges that “[t]he
shift from abuse and persecution to genocide involves a fundamental qualitative
transformation, from a relation that assigns the Other an inferior or denigrated position in
the wider figuration to which both persecutor and persecuted belong, to one that works to
deny them any position at all.”

Nevertheless, his relational conception is not without problems in distinguishing genocide from conflict or mass killing, as it falls short in
explicating what changes the degree of destruction of the *genos* in social figuration.

To illustrate how blurry such degree of differentiation can be, characteristics of
intractable conflict highlighted by Coleman are useful to present here.

Intractable conflict exhibits traits, in terms of their phenomenological manifestation, closely
overlapping with what many theorists have discussed as a key to the causation of
genocide. In the 57 essences of intractable conflict Coleman enumerates, as shown in the
table below, one can surmise that there is not a clear demarcation line that separates an

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York: PublicAffairs, 2011).
intractable form of conflict from genocide, or for that matter between conflict and mass killing, other than the intentional nature of genocide. Coleman thus rightly identifies the complexity and intricacy of actors, levels, sources, and dynamics of intractable conflict, some of which clearly mirror characteristics of genocidal mass killing. For illustration purposes, the elements that are deemed applicable to both conflict and genocide are italicized below.

Table 3. Characteristics of intractable conflict (from Coleman 2011)

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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Domination: a deep desire for power and control of others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Inequity: history of colonialism, racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, or human rights abuses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Gender: situations where men, who are responsible for the vast majority of violence, are in charge.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Divide and conquer: high-power groups (HPGs) manipulating low-power groups’ (LPGs’) ethnic differences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Cracks in the façade: conditions where HPGs’ control of historical and cultural meaning through history textbooks, media, official accounts, etc. becomes compromised.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Delegitimization of hierarchy-legitimating myths: challenges to ideologies, narratives, and policies that validate hierarchical power arrangements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Structural victimization of LPGs: denial of identity, security, and voice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Structural violence toward LPGs: unequal access to housing, health care, nutrition, education, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Lack of awareness: an insulated and inattentive HPG.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Accumulation of indignities: pervasive patterns of “civilized oppression” by HPGs against LPGs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Seismic shifts: periods of rapid social change and instability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Looking up: changes in LPGs’ aspirations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Power shifts: changes in the balance of power between HPGs and LPGs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Ambiguity of power: unclear relative status of groups in conflict, leading to more volatility.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Anarchy: the complete collapse of social order.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Dialogic poles: underlying issues rife with consequential trade-offs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Paradoxical dilemmas: issues that, when resolved, create new problems.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
20. **High centrality**: issues that have high personal or group-based importance.
21. **Truth**: issues that revolve around important, basic beliefs.
22. **Hub issues**: grievances embedded within broad beliefs, ideologies, and basic assumptions.
23. **Exclusive structures** that keep groups isolated and out of contact from each other.
24. **Inescapable relationships**: relationships from which it is virtually impossible to exit.
25. **Collapsed relationships**: relationships damaged beyond repair by conflict.
26. **Intense mixed motives**: high-stakes conflicts with a mix of cooperative and competitive goals.
27. **Intractable core**: fundamentally unresolvable issues.
28. **Polarized collective identities**: group identities based on the negation and destruction of the “other.”
29. **Conflict identities**: group identities organized around an ongoing conflict.
30. **Monolithic and exclusive identities**: all different aspects of in-groups and out-groups collapse into single entities.
31. **Frozen identities**: personal and group identities become rigid and unresponsive to change.
32. **Unconscious needs and defenses**: motives that are operative but difficult to identify and address.
33. **Intragroup divisions and factions**: internal group divisions drive intergroup conflict.
34. **Hidden agendas**: covert or criminal objectives that drive the overt conflict.
35. **Emotional contagion**: the pervasive spread of toxic emotions such as humiliation, deprivation, loss, and rage.
36. **Memorialized conflict**: conflict driven by a sense of duty and loyalty to those harmed in the past.
37. **Socially constructed volatility**: in-group processes that create rules and norms that sanction destructive emotions.
38. **Impaired cognitive functioning**: resulting from protracted, high-intensity situations.
39. **Malignant social processes**: self-perpetuating, inescapable emotional dynamics.
40. **Escalatory spirals**: basic tit-for-tat escalatory dynamics that run amok.
41. **Structuralization**: changes in social and institutional structures due to escalation that perpetuates conflict.
42. **Moral exclusion**: conditions where groups see out-groups as deserving of immoral treatment.
43. **Violent exchanges and atrocities**: a tipping point where violence justifies and begets more violence.
44. **Pervasiveness**: conflict spreads into functional aspects of life (education, cultural systems, etc.) and transforms them into tools of conflict.
45. **High complexity**: conflicts become too complex to comprehend.
46. **Multilevel**: negative aspects of conflicts link from people to groups to institutions to cultures.
47. **Multiparty**: increasing numbers of stakeholders contribute to the perpetuation.
48. **Chaotic and mercurial**: constantly changing dynamics that perpetuate conflict.
49. **Individual and community trauma**: families and communities lose the capacity to trust one another and therefore lose their ability to function and repair.
50. **Betrayal of trust**: a rupture of the basic understanding of a predictable world.
51. **Beyond posttraumatic stress disorder**: when atrocities lead to extraordinary levels of trauma that impair basic functioning.
52. **Trauma unaddressed**: when past trauma is left untreated to fester.
53. **Historical rivalries**: robust, long-term animosities among people and groups.
54. **Enduring cycles**: robust, long-term animosities among people that alternate between high and low intensity that can lead to temporary states of complacency.
55. **Destructive norms**: hostility and violence become the accepted norm.
56. **Intergenerational perpetuation**: children and newcomers are socialized into the conflict.
57. **Entrapment**: a conflict’s long duration justifies its perpetuation.

Even by a cursory comparison, there are 40 elements out of 57 that seem to overlap between intractable conflict and genocide. While closer scrutiny may actually fluctuate the number of overlaps and one can argue for or against such a number, the main assertion remains the same. Their intersections show a high degree of similitude between conflict and mass killing. This is especially true concerning what those manifestations would actually look like when they occur. If they were to be placed on a spectrum of collective violence, with one end being the least extreme conflict and the other genocide, they would occupy the vast majority of the spectrum’s middle space, a gray zone where both of their elements commingle. We need to understand the patterns and processes in which generic conflict descends a slope into mass killing—or proceeds, depending on how one looks at the continuum—a thin line that divides the two with thick descriptive differences between them.

Similarly, even if one sees genocide as a means of controlling specific segments of society, or what Campbell calls “social geometry,” such exercise of control has various
degrees from conflict to genocide. Drawing from theories of social control and pure sociology by Black\textsuperscript{250} and theories of collective violence and social control by Senechal de la Roche,\textsuperscript{251} Campbell sees that genocide as a social phenomenon is a mode of social control.\textsuperscript{252} Defining genocide as an organized and unilateral campaign of mass killing on the basis of ethnic identity, he argues that genocide is a function of social geometry consisting of such elements as immobility, cultural distance, relational distance, functional independence, and inequality. In his conceptual approach, it is a function of social geometry that handles collective grievances, which then generates a controlling response as genocide. But from the relational ontology perspective, the function of social geometry is also applicable to \textit{any} form of control and should not have to result necessarily in genocide.

This is why the relational approach, rather than the fixated orientations of liberals or post-liberals, helps to incorporate the mutability and variability of social figuration that shifts from intractable conflict to mass killing, and even to genocide.

The relational dynamics approach is not interested in the presence, or lack thereof, of particular causal factors or causal figurations at the given time (i.e. a synchronic view). It is interested in changes in how they interact with each other in engendering a kind of social relations that express themselves in a form of mass killing (i.e. a heuristically emergent view). This is the alternative orientation proposed by Powell and aptly phrased by Shaw:

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[G]enocide, even considered as the action of the perpetrators, is necessarily social, not only in that it always involves social relations among different perpetrators, but also in the sense of creating, and indeed being predicated on, perpetrators’ relations—however unequal—with the attacked population or civilian social groups. Since some of these relations are continuous and reproduced, we can talk about the social relationships of genocide and of structures in these relationships, that is, of genocide as a particular structure of conflict.²⁵³

In any intractable conflict, mass killing, or genocide, we can point to some signs or characteristics which theorists have tried to postulate in order to single one out from each other but which are also invariably present in those different forms of collective violence alike in different degrees. Consequently, some conspicuous evidence can always be fitted with their explanations. Indeed, existing scholarship provides a plethora of research theorizing some causes or elements of genocide or mass killing, but they tend to describe mechanical parts within such a “structure of conflict.” For example, Shaw criticizes that many researchers such as Weitz²⁵⁴ and Kiernan²⁵⁵ probe cases of genocide through “a thematic prism” and establishes the continuity of those themes, but do not necessarily show “a comprehensive, developmental history of genocide even in the given period.”²⁵⁶

This is due in large part to the prevailing positivist tradition. An evidentiary view pervades our reductionist logic to deconstruct causal mechanisms in visible and tangible terms. While such a view should in no way be underestimated or discarded, it is deficient

²⁵³ Shaw, “From Comparative to International Genocide Studies,” 650.
²⁵⁴ Weitz, A Century of Genocide.
in understanding a heuristic capacity of the relational system that can change values of its own causal workings over the course of its development. The relational approach seeks to theorize how those factorial intersections occur over time and space. Such an approach also enables us to view an emergent potential of latent factors in the system, taking into account both the multiplicity of causal interactions synchronically and the mutation of causal figurations diachronically. What is meant by relational is not the relationship per se, but more specifically the interactivity of the parties’ relations through which both forms of identities—inhomogeneous and imputed—can serve as both causes and effects of the killings as well.

To be sure, mass killings committed in the chosen cases were indeed aberration, if one takes into account both more destructive and less destructive times of the episodes. Purges and political repression continued in different time periods of the Soviet societies, but the Soviet machinery did not continue killing its citizens throughout the remaining years of Stalin’s era. Collective killings were much more rampant in 1967-68 in certain counties of rural China more so than other counties during the four-decade leadership under Mao Zedong. “Auto-genocide” was much more obvious and visible in a few districts in Cambodia in 1977, the extent of which did not continue at other times and spaces of the same Kampuchea’s five-year rule. However, those were dynamical shifts from ‘average’ repressive practices to more ‘extreme’ ones including systematically organized mass killings and therefore should be treated differently from ‘stand-alone’ anomalies. The relational dynamics approach aims to cast the meanings of the ‘immediate’ factors of the local and micro variations in light of the given relational
systems and contextualize why collective violence, especially the most vicious types—like genocidal mass killing—manifests at a particular point in time and space but does not persist.

It is also possible to trace decisive moments in which the decision to execute mass killing was reached by a small group of leaders and elites. Again, from a relational dynamics perspective, these discrete events were not ‘stand-alone’ anomalies embedded in history. Rather, they were reflective of shifts in how relational associations of the people involved changed their exercise of control over others. Shifts in their relational dynamics—or unconventional changes—should be weighed to analyze those immediate factors. Something conventional in their formerly accepted mode of relational associations was no longer considered as such, and what used to be unconventional suddenly, or gradually, became unquestionable in such a way that it became the newly diffused—and accepted—legitimate convention. While the decision process may be traceable to some people at some point, that decision was, unwittingly or deliberately, contingent upon or even preconditioned by the structure in place at the time and the imaginary capacity of the people then. Mass killing broadly and genocide more specifically are therefore the result of a multitude of conscious decisions by able agents, leaders and elites at the time, coupled with unintended consequences of the forces of structures and conditions that induced compliance and obedience.

Therefore, to make sense of threat is to see it in terms of unconventional shifts in one’s relational context. One may critique that the discussion of threat in terms of the relational systems would fall in a pitfall of making solipsistic conclusions that mass
killing ensues because it was designed in the mind of mass killers. Rightly so, threat was framed by a select few, articulated by narratives and stories, systematized in structure, and exercised through a coercive mode of control by which no other signs but loyalty were tolerated. However, analysis via the relational systems approach helps us to explore the configuration of those sources, means and associations in the form of threat.

1.5.3. Case Selection

The research employs a qualitative analysis of comparative case studies of three communist mass killings, namely, the former Soviet Union, China and Cambodia. Numerous writings abound on case histories of mass violence in the three communist regimes, especially around the Great Purge, the Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution, and the Democratic Kampuchea. In one estimate, the three cases of communist mass killings together took massive death tolls between 21 million and 70 million. In the Stalinist Soviet case, the collectivization of agriculture started from the late 1920s through the 1930s, and “[n]o other state in history has ever initiated policies designed to eliminate so many of its own citizens as has the Soviet Union.” The liquidation of ‘kulaks,’ whose definition varied over the course of the Stalin’s reign of terror in the 1930s and across local contexts—but is mainly considered as better-off peasants—started as early as 1930. Hundreds of thousands of the kulaks were deported and imprisoned in forced labor camps, also known as Gulags, and over time millions had died in forced deportation, in famine,

257 Valentino, Final Solutions, 91.
in camps, and in prisons. This process took place even before the Great Purge of 1937-1938, which in itself killed around 700,000 by execution. But as Jones points out, Mao Zedong’s Communist Party took more lives, in absolute numbers, while Cambodia’s Khmer Rouge killed more citizens per capita.\textsuperscript{259} According to the estimate by R.J. Rummel, 35 million people were killed under Mao’s regime, from 1949 through his death in 1976, especially through periods of the Great Leap Forward in the late 1950s through early 1960s and the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, and especially from 1967-68. In Cambodia, the radical rule of the Khmer Rouge communists between 1975 and 1979 caused the estimated total number of deaths of 2 million, almost a quarter of the total population of an estimated 8 million.\textsuperscript{260} Scholars argue that striking linkages can be drawn among these three cases, as Jones contends that “Mao’s communists were in many ways Stalin’s protégés…The Khmer Rouge, in turn, took its inspiration from both Stalinism and Maoism, but particularly from the latter’s ultra-collectivism and utopianism.”\textsuperscript{261}

Recent scholarship continues to build our understanding of contextual developments of those mass killings. Valentino brings the cases of Soviet Russia, China, and Cambodia together in the name of “Communist mass killings” as decisive examples under which the strategic logic of killing was used as part of state building, as opposed to other communist regimes that did not become as destructive.\textsuperscript{262} Kiernan sees the pattern of agrarian romanticism as an overarching ground on which the three cases developed, or

\textsuperscript{259} Jones, \textit{Genocide}, 188.  
\textsuperscript{261} Jones, \textit{Genocide}, 188.  
\textsuperscript{262} Valentino, \textit{Final Solutions}.  

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for that matter, for his coverage of more than twelve cases since the 15th century.\textsuperscript{263} Nevertheless, besides this theme of state building, the synthetic connection across the three cases is not presented.

Others focus on each case separately. For instance, Naimark treats the Soviet case extensively and labels it as a case of genocide in light of the central authority’s acknowledgement of reasonable prospects for what transpired as the Holodomor in the early 1930s.\textsuperscript{264} While the mass killing in the Chinese case is largely disputed and the label of genocide is not invoked, Su establishes the communal model of mass killing based on his research in the two provinces of coastal China during the Cultural Revolution period.\textsuperscript{265} The nature of genocide in Cambodia is discussed by a number of historians and anthropologists,\textsuperscript{266} the qualification of the term genocide is contested by others such as Midlarsky who distinguishes Cambodia as a case of politicide based on the difference in projected full-scale destruction between the Vietnamese and Khmer victims.\textsuperscript{267}

However, the rich descriptive accounts in most of the relevant literature tend to explain a turn-by-turn progression of events and do not engender the historicity of mass killing as a manifestation of the twentieth century Communist state building experiments despite variance in time and space. Or it is precisely because of the great variance in

\textsuperscript{263} Kiernan, \textit{Blood and Soil}.
\textsuperscript{266} David P Chandler, \textit{The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics, War, and Revolution Since 1945} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991); Craig Etcheson, \textit{The Rise and Demise of Democratic Kampuchea} (Boulder: Westview, 1984); Hinton, \textit{Why Did They Kill?}.
\textsuperscript{267} Midlarsky, \textit{The Killing Trap}. 
temporal and spatial contexts that those descriptive accounts gloss over the continuity and discontinuity of mass killing as an expression of the threat system across time and space. As Jones frames it, the common perception is that the mass killings of the three cases are often lumped together, with the lineage of the communist saga of mass killing beginning from Stalinist Russia, transmitted through Maoist China, and then inherited to the Khmer Rouge.²⁶⁸ In this strand of arguments, while it is not wholly inaccurate, there is a presupposition that communist totalitarian systems and paranoiac dictators somehow makes sense to explain such an irrational scale of massive destruction. This is tantamount to displacing sources of inexplicable evil to equally inexplicable figures, whether they were manifested in the world’s most savage dictators or most extreme communist utopia. Therefore, our human systems’ proclivity to mass killing, under certain circumstances and with certain threats, is vastly overlooked or even willfully neglected.

The three cases under consideration are undeniably not in a homogeneous category. The campaigns of mass killing happened in different geographical regions, consisted of different ethnic and national groups, at different time periods. To suggest explicit similarity across the three cases simply under the rubric of communist ideology, dictatorial leadership, or by the outcomes of destruction wrought upon the peoples is to commit the same methodological mistakes discussed in the previous sections. While there are markedly significant similarities across the campaigns waged by the three regimes, differences also exist in how killings and purges became a conventional exercise of exerting social control over impending changes or deviance. The following chapters on

²⁶⁸ Jones, Genocide.
the case narratives therefore aim to provide not only descriptive accounts of what happened, but also the accounts in light of the theoretical framework of threats developed earlier. These threats developed initially in the context of conventional and unconventional methods employed at the time to control the social deviance and changes. The threat system, in its political and practical sense, is explored through its continuity and discontinuity through the cases, while seeking the pattern of how a threat-driven and threat-inducing system might emerge.

Given these conditions—and unlike other repressive regimes’ exercise of power and massive violence employed by other forms of extremism—these three cases serve as the contexts in which the theoretical models presented earlier can be tested for several reasons. First, the cases of communist mass killings are the epitome of historical instances in which the breakdown of the relational associations (i.e., interactive and doubling-relationship) was underway and thus worth treating as theoretical testing cases to explore how threats waxed or waned during their social engineering stages. The basic premise evident in the relational systems to compete or compare, both in relative and social terms, was wholly negated, and the victims as a group—that is, based on ‘class,’ albeit arbitrarily categorized—were no longer part of the Self’s identity. Second, they represent cases in which perceptions and labels of enemies were wholly constructed from the same national identity group. These three cases demonstrate that “neither preexisting differences, prejudices, discriminatory practices, nor long histories of conflict between victims and perpetrators are a necessary condition for even the most extreme levels of
violence.”\textsuperscript{269} There were ethnic lines that were later emphasized, as in the Soviet or Cambodia cases, but they were not the primary default lines of categorization. Unlike the boundaries of ethnicity, race, nationality, or religious affiliations, enemy making was entirely manmade. Preexisting social cleavages were different from other cases such as the Holocaust or Rwanda, making it more suitable for the testing of identity construction based on self-ascribed threat narratives, experiences and memories without relying on previously prevalent divisive lines. As discussed by scholars, “politicide,” the killing of groups on the basis of social and political affiliations, has been absent in the definition of genocide under the UN Convention,\textsuperscript{270} and thus has received relatively scant attention in genocide studies compared to more ‘mainstream’ genocide cases. In this sense, the study aims to treat these formerly unattended cases of genocide and mass killing as sociological and theoretical cases to be studied in more explicit connection with threats and identity.

It is probably unlikely that there will be another episode of communist mass killing of the same magnitude in the near future. As a historical inquiry, however, those cases provide a window of insight into most vicious aspects of human capacities, if and when the system is threatened and becomes genocidal. The basis of the selection was not due to the fact that their regime type was or was not communism. Rather, they were the systems of asserting total control over populations and provide the bounded cases in which the threat model could be most lucidly tested. In addition, three cases are argued to exhibit ideological and methodological consistency, despite vast temporal and spatial differences. In one sense, investigation into the processes of identity formation across

\textsuperscript{269} Valentino, \textit{Final Solutions}, 92.
\textsuperscript{270} Harff and Gurr, “Toward Empirical Theory of Genocides and Politicides.”
those cases that vary in time and space are assumed to produce generalizable findings about the postulated processes of the threat model.

Therefore, the objective of the case descriptions will elucidate the continuity and discontinuity of mass killing as a conventional means of control in each of the given cases, by first identifying the lineage of Stalinist Russia, Maoist China, and Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge from the perspective of social engineering. Then, the discussion will explore the instances in which their social engineering resorted to mass killing in order to control what appeared as deviance in their societies at the time.

1.5.4. Methodology

As with other comparative historical work, the study is conducted by the collection of secondary resources. There is a plethora of the literature concerning the descriptive accounts of the cases, as well as their analyses and historiographies, and the voluminous resources provide ample opportunities to explore the conceptual framework of the threat system elaborated earlier. This study employs a comparative analysis of the three cases, and this approach is preferred to a single case study method for a kind of inquiry this study aims to undertake, for mainly two reasons. First, the purpose of the research is not to discover an undiscovered primary causality of events in a given case—historians have accomplished such a task. This study is more interested in probing one of the theoretical constructions—threat—in light of an already existing body of conflict theories and genocide studies and in the spectrum of conflict, mass killing, and genocide, using the Marxist revolutionary episodes of the cases as the probing ground. The cases
provide theoretically cogent contexts to explore comparative theory construction and the testing of that theory. The scope of the case studies is not to delve into the Marxist-inspired, nationally adopted revolutions as a whole. It is to trace socialization processes of threat as a mode of communication, as an operational principle of social relations, and as a fundamental framework of social systems that endangered constantly mutating boundaries of social identities, the process through which the use of deadly force was turned into an acceptable and legitimate means to fulfill their generative values of the identity needs. It is an analysis of the latent attractors in the relational dynamics of the cases.

Second, the conceptual frameworks developed earlier are general models, and therefore their application to a single case does not serve the purpose. The threat model is to a large extent applicable to instances of any episodes of conflict or genocide, as threat is ubiquitous, albeit at varying degrees. One can find aspects of needs deprivation, relative deprivation, processes of social identity formation, or pieces of collective narratives and memories concerning threats and prospective generative needs in almost any cases of violent conflict, mass killing, or genocide. The applicability of such causal postulation is expected. The application of the theoretical models to a single instance of historical episodes, therefore, does not yield much theoretical value. Rather, the purpose is to explore patterns of socialization processes within which the complex interplay of causal factors reveal deeper insights into the role of threats in identity formation in the genocidal system. Furthermore, the exploration is interested in the transference, adaptation, and evolution of such patterns across the three cases. In other words, the cases
are discrete, in their temporal and spatial stretch, but the analysis will delve into not only trans-historical comparison of the cases but also historical connections between them. It is more about recasting the applicability of the theoretical models in a pattern-based causation in a phase space perspective, rather than singular connections between independent and dependent variables.

The method of analysis follows the tradition of comparative historical analysis notably represented by Theda Skocpol’s work. Specifically, it uses the process tracing technique, with embedded units of analysis (i.e. three types of fears and credible and attributed threats) within multiple contexts (i.e. each of the chosen cases). Process tracing is a qualitative analogue to time-series analysis and consists of identifying the linkages between the postulated processes and the actual outcomes in the events under study. Collier explains that process tracing “is defined as the systematic examination of diagnostic evidence selected and analyzed in light of research questions and hypotheses posed by the investigator. Process tracing can contribute decisively both to describing political and social phenomena and to evaluating causal claims.”

Mahoney describes various types of process tracing as “causal-process observation” (CPO), and the present study falls under what he calls Mechanism CPOs, as shown in Figure 16. Other research in genocide studies, such as Midlarsky or Valentino, would be categorized as Independent Variable CPOs, by which they assess

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271 Theda Skocpol, States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).
whether a cause occurred in a posited manner. This study is more focused on the pattern-based interactions of the properties, and therefore the emphasis on Mechanism CPOs is more appropriate to delve into intervening events and processes.

![Diagram of causal-process observations](image)

Figure 16. Types of causal-process observations (from Mahoney 2011)

The theoretical models developed earlier serve as the postulated mechanisms within which the units of analysis are focused and analyzed whether imputed patterns of causal interactions did or did not occur. Threat as a conceptual subject is the unit of analysis, but within each context of mass killing the postulated mechanisms include embedded units of analysis that concern threats at the group and individual levels from the Threatening and the Threatened. Then, such analysis will follow the parameter of
Mill’s System of Logic, in terms of the “method of agreement” in which a common set of relevant causal factors are observable across different cases with similar outcomes.

There is inherent limitation in regards to the reliance of secondary resources in case studies. Post hoc construction of causal postulation is inherently susceptible to empirical refutation and may lack robust reliability. They are not considered “raw data” and implicitly or explicitly influenced by underlying theoretical assumptions and value judgments of historians or scholars who produced them. However, the present study seeks, as a theory-testing exercise, to elaborate on a transmutable and heuristic causation of pattern-based interactions of threat properties, which is a new theoretical exploration, and therefore less concerned with robust empirical reliability. The study intends to overcome the validity limitation, as Lustick guides, by grasping different schools of historiography of given cases while seeking similarities that cut across those different historiographical biases and assumptions, in order to increase the validity of the views presented in particular secondary resources.275

Stages of process tracing

Process tracing mechanisms in this study involve two layers: on a manifest and latent levels. Post hoc conjectures of the cases are necessarily descriptive and hypothetical. Therefore, this study will trace events and phases of mass killing on a manifest level as part of the broad spectrum of political violence, ranging from repression to actual commission of mass killing. The point here is to find the progression of such

forms of violence over time and space. Causal postulation of the mutability and variability will then be overlay with theoretical lenses which delve into the underlying mechanics on a latent level. This view is captured by the figure used earlier (see Figure 17). What is essentially knowable, in retrospective historical analysis, is the tangible and visible part of the events, which can be likened to the phenomena above the horizontal line in the figure below. The first layer of the process tracing mechanisms will identify such key events in manifest forms.

Figure 17. Manifest and latent levels

The second layer analysis of the causal postulation will employ the following guiding mechanisms to conduct process tracing analysis. Based on the preceding formulations of the threat model, as well as the imputed processes of the socialization of threats, these are guiding questions for process tracing:

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276 See Figure 10 earlier.
1) *Identification of Reference Points:* this is the exploration of the baseline of the relational systems by identifying the policy orientations and benchmarks of the policy goals.

a) Analysis 1: Appraisals

i) The main question is: What kind of appraisal processes did the groups undergo (i.e. in terms of primary and secondary appraisals)? This question encompasses other derivative explorations, such as: Who did the appraisal? What were seen as the novel changes, and hence, what dangers were associated with them? What were the means and the system by which threats were made meaningful and credible? What commitment and promise were generated by the Threatening and perceived by the Threatened?

b) Analysis 2: Prospects

i) To understand what prospects were at stake, we first need to evaluate whether the decisional frame occurred in the domain of gain or loss. What were the conditions under which these domains operated? Subsequently, what were the conventional methods of risk-averse or risk-accepting behavior that were at disposal in the respective domain of gain and loss? The exploration at this stage should uncover, in theory, both the sensible perception of pains experienced by the parties and their rational base to minimize or avoid further losses and pains.
2) **Evaluation of Loss**: this is the exploration of the interpretive schema that the parties employed to measure whether their purported policy goals have achieved or failed.

a) Analysis 1: Conditional Threat (Threat-as-a-condition)

i) While conflict and mass killing are distinct, they are not completely exogenous of each other. There are elements of both in either situation, and the difference lies over a spectrum. That means there would be, in theory, some properties functioning as conditional factors, either as a cause or a consequence, in terms of what it does from whom to whom (i.e., A’s undertaking or B’s reaction) and what it is (i.e., action caused by threat or action causing threat). What were the modes of relational interactions involved (i.e. narratives, memories, social sites) that changed social boundaries, as a matter of a cause or a consequence of threat?

b) Analysis 2: Heuristic Threat (Threat-as-a-process)

i) In contrast to changes that happen in some defined properties that are essentially separable from each other over a synchronic or diachronic span, what were pattern-based changes in those properties as a set (i.e., changes from \{A, B\} to \{A*, B*\}, instead of A to A* or B to B*)? There was invariably some emergence of the novelty, not as a matter of nonlinear causality, but in a heuristically emergent manner (i.e., phase space). That would mean, in theory, a single property can possess two corresponding meanings at different levels at single time (i.e., hysteresis). What were manifest and latent forms of existence for threat properties?
ii) As political violence shifts its state from conflict to mass killing, the orientation of the system also shifts from the exchange system to the threat system. In such a case, immediate experiences of loss are more acutely felt as painful than overall net value assets. How did the self-consuming relational associations (i.e., negative-sum) occur, as the system sought to avoid further loss by accepting further risks of loss? How did the internal causation of latent attractors play out, inhibiting changes and deviation while reverting back to the status quo ante, such that self-perpetuation of the system was established?

3) **Fears of Losing Generative Needs**: this is the exploration of identity gauge, by analyzing the relational ontology and its ideational process.

a) Analysis 1: Shifting Relational Ontology

i) As the relational ontology of conflict moves away from the interactive and doubling nature of the relational associations, did the characteristics of frustrated needs shift at all? The basic framework of the contentious relational association shift, in theory, from grievances in conflict to fear in mass killing. If so, did those characteristics exhibit any changes, as supposed by the conceptual framework, from frustrations of present ontological needs to prospective frustrations of future identity needs? Consequently, there is a purported shift in the substance of what is at stake. The parties in conflict would be threatened by the prospects of their undesirable interactive and doubling relational outcomes; on the other hand, in mass killing, any
prospects of emergent (i.e., meaning deviant) meanings of the relational associations are threatening because they challenge one’s needs to have the meanings of Self and to leave an imprint on the future (i.e., generativity). What constituted such deviation from an accepted pattern of coordination, which functioned as threat?

b) Analysis 2: Fears of Loss

i) Based on previous formulations, there are imputed fears of loss that frustrate the generative values of the future identity needs, undermining a coherent and undeterred sense of one’s agent-hood in a synchronic and diachronic span of time and space. Based on the transactional views of ideation, there are some fears—such as fears of reversion to the painful past of group history; fears of uncertainty caused by the present crisis; or fears of inconsistent reality with future projection—that are deemed to cause the loss of the imagined reality of one’s identity even if he still possesses the same identity. Can we discern any of those fears at stake in connection with identity and mass killing in the cases?
CHAPTER 2: THE SOVIET UNION

The Marxist worldwide revolution adopted by Vladimir Lenin and later inherited by Joseph Stalin was the historic Communist experiment of creating a new socialist society that had never yet been realized, which eventually resulted in the calamitous costs in terms of unprecedented human death tolls. The revolutionary powers of the three cases under discussion—the Communist regimes in the former Soviet Union, China, and Cambodia—emerged in the vestiges of armed struggle against the old regimes, respectively. In some respects, the revolutionary nature of the communist takeovers in Russia, China, and Cambodia fall within the purview of other revolutions that preceded them, such as the English Revolution of 1640, the American Revolution of 1776, the French Revolution of 1789, as well as others that qualify as revolution, such as the Meiji Restoration of Japan in 1868, Shingai Revolution of 1911, among others. Notwithstanding disparate time periods and contextual backgrounds, these events appear to arise as a result of confluence of the relationship between agency and structure, peasants and landlord, and elites and the state. Although the degree of such conjecture varies, their histories of revolutionary struggle share some marked resonance across the cases. While ideologies, such as communism in the aforementioned examples, provided the basis for revolutionaries to mobilize under the same banner, often nationalism intertwined with the feverish ideological goals of revolutionary politics played a key
role.¹ Appeals to nationalism could supersede and often replace missionary and ideological zeal of the initial universal appeals of the revolutions. The republican ideals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that stressed democratic principles as well as the communist ideals in the twentieth century that arose during the Russian revolution were in fact molded into nationalist aspirations.² Sociopolitical methods of population control, which involved organized campaigns of forced deportations, had been practiced long before the Bolsheviks took over the seat of power in 1917.³ In this sense, the Stalinist iron fist was not a signature or isolated hallmark of one Communist regime but rather a variant of historical products deeply rooted in the preceding traditions of autocratically controlling the masses.

However, by 1939, the former Soviet Union led by Stalin had consistently wrought disaster upon its own populations—intentionally or by accident. The scale of mass deaths that resulted from massive social engineering and forced deportations in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was unprecedented. To explore the role of threats in identity formation, two aspects particularly stand out. One is the shift in the Stalinist totalitarian lethality that was clearly derived from the historical precedents but departed from his predecessors, within Russia and otherwise. The other is the progression of the Soviet experience that turned out to be yet another precedent for what was to transpire in neighboring China and later in Cambodia. This perspective helps to explore

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² Ibid., 17.
³ See the discussion of how “ethnic cleansing” was rather a customary practice of the Empires’ population control in the Tsarist Russia or in the Ottomans in David L. Hoffmann, Cultivating the Masses: Modern State Practices and Soviet Socialism, 1914-1939 (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2011).
the historical continuity and discontinuity of how the masses were controlled, with Stalinist Russia as a passing benchmark, spanning across the imperialist era of the nineteenth century to communist politics in the twentieth century.

For this reason, this chapter will deal with the onset of the Russian Revolution in 1917 leading up to the Great Terror of 1937-38, with a specific focus in contextualizing the progression of the Stalinist brutality from precedents to antecedents. The deaths caused by the Stalinist regime were not all due to the commissioning of intentional killing by the state apparatus. There were millions of deaths caused by structural operations, such as in forced labor camps or during deportations and catastrophic famine. This study is not designed to account for the deaths of the Soviet Union in toto. Instead, it lends close scrutiny into the USSR’s formative years and the stages of how undertook a series of policy mishaps, meager gains, and attempts to curtail impending risks and losses. Its pattern shows a perpetuating exercise of the Party’s control over dissidents and deviants and a reinforcing mechanism of political control by the regime on the basis of identity. Complex interactions of events can easily obfuscate the pattern that runs from the onset of the Russian Revolution in 1917 to the Great Terror of 1937-38, but the analysis will trace the development of the increasingly systemic lethality tied to threats within this broader spectrum of political control.

Before discussing the Russian Socialist development and its connection with mass killing, there are two elements that deserve special attention in order to problematize prevalent conceptions of the sources of mass killing in Russia. The massive death tolls are often associated with the dictatorial rule and paranoia of Stalin as well as the
communist ideological inclination to realize utopia. While it is certainly irrefutable that what transpired in Russia cannot be dissociated from the roles of Stalin and the Communist ideological fervor, it is also important not to conflate the roles of the dictator and ideology as exclusive causes of killing. A dictatorial despot was not unique to Russia in the twentieth century, and Communism did not continue to kill its subjects en masse, certainly not at the onset. To associate the Russian episode of mass killing almost exclusively with the persona of Stalin or the Russian socialist application of Marxism fails to appreciate the pre- and post-Stalinist methods of political control and social engineering that gave rise to the Chinese and Cambodian versions, different in shape and form but remarkably resembling in its predecessor’s pattern.

The following case narrative is organized in three sections. In the first section, the discussion will identify the reference points of the Soviet system by exploring the deviation of the Communist practices in Russia from orthodox Marxism. In the second section, the time periods of Soviet Russia will be subdivided into three stages of escalation, characterized as the relentless struggle for control, dominance, and legitimacy. These stages are earmarked by the shifts through which the regime gradually developed the threat system and the characteristics of relational associations shifted from conflict to mass killing. The first period is the regime’s struggle against national dissidents and rebels in the Civil War and during the period of decossackization. The second is its struggle against peasant dissidents and various populations’ disenchantment through collectivization and dekulakization. The third is its purges of internal deviants within the Party and military machinery to ensure purity of control and loyalty to the Party. This
three periodization also reveals a shifting pattern of enemy identification—both externally and internally—at each turn of the periods. Accordingly, the Party leaders were responding to different threats, at each corresponding turn. The results, in terms of policy implementation, were not all failure. The consequences, however, were self-reinforcing and self-perpetuating and will be addressed in the final section.

2.1. DEVIANT PATH OF RUSSIAN SOCIALISM

Before discussing the case events in the three periods, it is important to contextualize the specificity and uniqueness of the Bolshevik deviation to identify the baseline of the systemic reference points that permeated throughout the Soviet era. From the threat analysis, this point of departure is essential to see: (1) how the Bolsheviks, and later Leninists, became more radical and centralized; (2) how the collective violence became more excisionary; and (3) how the use of political control to address deviation went through transitions.

The first key question is whether the birth of Leninism, or an offshoot of Marxist ideology as carried out by the Bolshevik Party, is likened to the foreshadow of what awaits in the Stalinist years of repressive violence. For one, the takeover of Leninist Marxism was a product of historical exigencies at the time. There were definitely roots of violence that grew into what was observed in the late 1930s, but the type of violence practiced by the early Bolsheviks, in and of itself, was not a testimony to what was going to occur. Therefore, ideological imprints and violent practices cannot be dissociated from the Stalinist violence but cannot be seen as the original causes.
For Marxists, the realization of the communist utopia was undeniable and considered to be only a matter of time until it was attained. By the time Stalin rose to uncontestable power within the Soviet Party bureaucracy, 70 years had passed since the birth of communist ideas and another 50 years would pass until the demise of the Democratic Kampuchea. In this span of time, Marxist inspired revolutionaries across disparate times and origins, from Eastern Europe to the Mekong River, tried to achieve the unfinished moral and political transformations and overcome capitalist malaise, thinking that they would bring about socialism so as to liberate the masses of the working class. For Marxists, the progress as a result of class struggle was a historical necessity. History was seen to proceed in sequential stages, in a scientifically proven manner, from capitalism through socialism and then to communism. Capitalism was seen as a necessary stage for communism but its mode of production was doomed to exhaust its possibilities; therefore it was to be replaced by socialism, as a transitory stage, in due course. The class struggle, in the modern time, was to take place between those who owned factories and those who worked for the owners as a means to carry out these transformations. This sequence was governed by the laws of historical development and, in their view, bound to happen.

However, the laws of historical development as envisaged by Marx and Engels were a special knowledge. It was still cryptic and unavailable to the masses. In fact, when the revolutionary fervor of socialism was on the rise at the end of the nineteenth century, especially among the intelligentsia, the idea of socialism was still a mirage. There was no one to articulate as yet, in Russia or elsewhere, a coherent vision of what a socialist
society would look like and how it would operate. The idea of a society just for all, rather than for the privileged few, captured the minds of the people at the time but such a world image was still nebulous. It simply escaped the imaginary capacity or the frame of their minds at the time.⁴

For orthodox Marxists, Marxism provided only a limited guide to the question of governance especially in the context of multicultural and multi-class society where not only workers and capitalists, but also peasants and nomads, resided together. In Marxist thought, the historical progress was deemed to arise from advanced industrial societies with a large segment of the working class population, such as Germany and Great Britain. Marx in fact did not provide clear answers to the question of how to deal with the peasantry and the presence of nationalism because he had originally assumed that the revolution would be carried out in an industrialized society, with minimal or no roles attributed to the peasants.

Contrary to such a presupposition, it was in tsarist Russia, with the large agrarian population and the small working class, where the first communist-led soviet emerged in the world and socialist experiments began. In February 1917, the aggrieved peasants and soldiers launched a revolt and brought down the Russian monarchy. The February Revolution was won by a new liberal regime, and after their triumph, their eyes were set to military offensives against their external enemies, the German Empire and the Habsburg monarchy. It was the Germans who dispatched Lenin from his exile in Switzerland to Petrograd to incite a revolt from the inside, so that he and Trotsky would

take Russia out of the war equation. With Trotsky and a small but reliable contingent of disciplined Bolsheviks, Lenin led a coup in October that year.\(^5\) At that time, the Russian states were made up of the peasants from Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, along with nomads from the Caucuses and Central Asia. The peasantry, instead of the working class, was the predominant majority of Russian society. Preserved by century-old traditions and customs of village communities and a communal way of living, they were less attuned to the Western ethics of individualistic maximization of profit seeking and profit making. From a Marxist perspective, the Russian states at the time lacked the necessary economic and industrial conditions for revolution. But the First World War and the collapse of the imperial order in Europe gave Lenin a historic opening to wage revolution.

The Bolsheviks, after their successful coup to seize power, were thus confronted with the challenges of performing capitalist work and building industrialized societies where preindustrial peasant lives had dominated before they could envisage socialist experiments.\(^6\) In other words, the incipience of Russian Marxism had more to do with the populist attraction, rather than an inheritance from Western Marxism. In the dying days of imperial Russia, Lenin and his associates gained their populist momentum by appealing to Marxism because it provided a rational pathway of historical developments. People were attracted to its claims seemingly backed by the laws of historical necessity and a scientifically proven path toward revolution, as well as the guarantee of its coming.\(^7\)

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\(^6\) Ibid., 10.

\(^7\) Brovkin, *Russia after Lenin*, 4.
Lenin adopted his own path toward implementing socialism in Russia. Despite claiming the bearer of the Marxist proletarian revolution, Lenin’s deviation from orthodox Marxism foreshadowed constant struggle of threat-inducing and threat-driven destruction of society. As will be elaborated further in this chapter and onward, this specific Party-People relationship permeated through the communist regimes under discussion, serving as the fundamental frame of reference in their relational systems.

2.1.1. Leninist Course of Development

In the early days of the Marxist formation in Russia, there were mainly three distinct political parties: the Socialist Revolutionaries, the Mensheviks, and the Bolsheviks. Until the revolution in 1917, the Bolsheviks were the least influential of the three. The Socialist Revolutionaries claimed 1 million members by 1917, whereas the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks amounted to 200,000 members, respectively. The Socialist Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks shared the same concern, to promote the well being of their constituency who were the workers. Their claim to represent the working class was genuine, seeking to represent the interest of the working class as a party on the national level, advancing the interests of trade unions and mutual aid funds. They marked a clear difference from the Bolsheviks in that the latter was more concerned with representing the interest of the Party. In effect, the Bolsheviks replaced the working class priorities. For the Mensheviks, to represent the wishes of the working class majority in socialism required democratic principles, and socialism and democracy were intricately
complementary in their visions of social renovation.⁸ On the contrary, the Bolsheviks as a group were not a political party per se because they did not have the constituency to represent. The Bolsheviks were “first and foremost a conspirational organization formed top-down and controlled by a small cohort.”⁹ It was a small, tightly knit organization wherein handpicked revolutionaries at the local level committee elected the Central Committee leadership, thereby centering on the leadership of Lenin.

In orthodox Marxist ethics, the fundamental objective of the betterment of society rested on the well being of individuals and the promotion of their rights, despite their emphasis on the working class over an individual. Like the Mensheviks, the idea of one’s prosperity and society’s prosperity were intimately linked. However, in Bolshevik ethics, the claim of individual rights is trampled by those of the collectivity. The Bolsheviks did not see the rights of an individual favorably. In fact, such a claim was seen almost as treacherous egotism. For them, to possess the proletarian consciousness was commensurate with prioritizing the interests of the collectivity over those of individuals. In other words, Bolshevism ended up distorting the original premise of the two value systems in that it neglected, first of all, the interests of the people who the revolutionary party was supposed to serve as well as the interests of the working class that it was professed to serve but without actually serving them.¹⁰ However, the Socialist Revolutionaries engaged in mass agitation and propaganda activities towards the urban working masses to invoke their historical mission as the cause of the revolution. Russian

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⁸ Ibid., 5.
⁹ Ibid.
¹⁰ Ibid., 7.
peasants also viewed the redistribution and re-division of all land, especially of their landlord’s land, as appealing.\textsuperscript{11}

It should be noted that Leninism took another deviant course and that Bolshevism and Leninism are not synonymous. Up to 1917, what was later known as Leninism was not an officially sanctioned doctrine of the Bolshevik Party. Bolshevism had predicted that, before the revolution, any attempts to carry out the revolutionary struggle would bring about a transitional period that was bourgeois-democratic in nature. Leninism professed to adopt Marxism voluntarily in the context of the Russian revolution. That is to say, the Bolsheviks had maintained that after toppling the autocratic rule of the tsarist regime, they would institute parliamentary bourgeois, in accordance with the laws of historical development in staged increments, transitioning through the capitalist stage and then to the eventual process of socialist development. There was inherent tension of those who pursued orthodox Marxism vis-à-vis Leninism. Marxism was appealing to those who believed in the laws of historical stages of development and the scientific proof of its ultimate inevitability of the revolution. On the other hand, Leninism appealed to those who were driven by the urge to finish the revolution in a more expeditious manner than what the laws of history had professed. Marxism for them was a narrative and vision justifying that their means and ends were not baseless and in fact made sense. Leninists placed the primary emphasis on themselves, however, and viewed themselves as the vanguard of the people. They therefore justified themselves entitled to the socialist

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., 4–5.
revolution by altering or even bypassing the capitalist stage of development. It was un-Marxist in that a party, instead of the masses of the working proletariat, was endowed with power and privilege to seize control and dictate the necessary steps for developing socialism in due course.

Lenin took inspiration from Marx but assimilated it to his time in Russia, transforming it to what came to be known as Marxism-Leninism. Lenin had no intention of leaving the task of the socialist revolution in the hands of the working class men. For him, those workers would only operate with trade union consciousness because, he believed, they were more concerned with their wages and benefits and would not forge a ‘proletarian consciousness.’ Instead, the Party, for Lenin, would have to manage the business of the state and the organization of the government. Lenin therefore viewed the party as the principle agent that would assume the role that Marx had asserted was the working class men. One cannot misconstrue Lenin’s conception and perception of the masses. He did not lead the vanguard party to serve the interest of the people; that was the Mensheviks’ purpose. For him, it was given that the Party was already representing the will and interest of the workers, despite the fact that, in practice, the Bolshevik Party and the Central Committee were composed of himself and his close associates. Hoffman argues:

The fundamental drive in Lenin’s personality was not pursuit of a positive vision of the future, but rather a destruction of the existing order. Lenin must be seen not so much as a creator of something new, but as a destroyer of the old. He profoundly hated the society in which he lived. He despised the liberals and intellectuals. He was disdainful of the peasants

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12 Ibid., 8.
and patronizing towards the workers. He hated the Russia of his time—its institutions, social order, and culture. His lifelong ambition was to use his words to smash it to atoms, and he did.\textsuperscript{13}

At the onset, the Bolsheviks made a compromise on those peasant and national questions, although Marxism had assumed the attachment to nationalism would cease once communist modernization began to take place. The new Bolshevik regime allowed the peasants to keep their own land or the land that they had seized from former landlords to cultivate and sell their own crops. In the Marxist-Leninist politics of population control, the revolution was waged in the name of the peasants, although they were in reality subjugated as the object of control. It was a patriarchal and utilitarian attitude, but still not genocidal. It was unorthodox because communism aspired for collective ownership instead of a market economy and Marxism envisaged a world without national recognition.\textsuperscript{14} These compromises were rescinded until the ‘second’ Soviet revolution, which was collectivization and, consequently, dekulakization.

The inherent contradiction of the Bolshevik party was therefore treating the working class as the inherent driver of the revolution, but at the same time relegating them as unfit because of their ‘petty bourgeois consciousness.’ As a result, it was possible for the Bolshevik party to endorse the revolutionary ethos of the working class as the true bearer of the revolutionary banner but to disdain them because they were not seen as being imbued with the true proletarian spirit. There was a profoundly adverse and contradictory sense of a patronizing and utilitarian treatment of workers, those who the

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 9–10.
\textsuperscript{14} Snyder, \textit{Bloodlands}, 11.
party had risen to protect and fight for but those who were denied their wishes for well-being because they were seen as backward masses.\textsuperscript{15} This model of governance came to a gridlock when the masses of workers rejected and did not advocate for that ‘proletarian consciousness’ or the wish for socialism, as in later in the 1920s when the New Economic Policy was launched.

Thus, the Russian application of Marxism, in its quest towards heavy industry, brought about the implication of class categorization that would become so central and pertinent to later episodes of communist revolutions in China and Cambodia, in that the Russian version created a precedent, albeit addressed in different ways, that groups from peasants and national groups became enemies of their own people.

\textbf{2.2. Oscillations between Gains and Losses}

The foregoing discussion has touched on the features of Russian Socialism in terms of its diverging path from orthodox Marxism. This characteristic went through three periods of radicalization. They are, namely, decossackization after the October Revolution; dekulakization during the collectivization; and the Great Purges. The radicalization in the three areas—the Party-constituency relationship, intensification of excisionary violence, and exercise of terror—can be examined more closely by looking at the three periods. In each of the periods, there were domains of gains and losses, and yet the Soviet systems fell in the path of the self-reinforcing and self-perpetuating cycles of the threat system.

\textsuperscript{15} Brovkin, \textit{Russia after Lenin}, 6.
2.2.1. The 1st Stage: Revolution and Control

In the first period of the shifting phases of manifest killing, the Soviet Union practiced the policy of decossackization in 1919-20 aimed at eliminating Cossacks in the border regions as a separate social class. With a constantly fluctuating frontline against the Whites during the Civil War, the Bolsheviks carried out decossackization to target Cossacks in the Don and Kuban regions, who were deemed inimical to the Red Army. In one estimate, between 300,000 and 500,000 from a total population of three million Cossacks were either massacred or forcefully deported from the regions as a result of the 1919-20 decossackization policy. It was the Bolsheviks’ first deliberately excisionary policy against a defined grouping, although the policy itself was not permanent and quickly rescinded. Even if the Cossackry was never eliminated as a class, the policy was reversed when the objective of the relational associations between the Bolsheviks and Cossacks lied elsewhere (i.e., Civil War) and when the purpose was fulfilled by one side’s triumph. The system was still in a conflict mode, not yet in a self-organizing mass killing, where the contentious parties retained their agent-hood. It was also the first period in which the revolutionary identity was forged in confrontation with the counterrevolutionary one (i.e., Cossacks) and the boundaries of the ingroup (i.e., the Bolsheviks) were emerging.

Emergence of Excisionary Violence

The February Revolution of 1917 ousted the tsarist autocracy and instituted the Provisional Government appointed by a committee of the former members of the Duma, the councils elected by groups of workers, peasants and soldiers, as well as soviets throughout urban and rural Russia. At the outset, those newly elected members of the Provisional Government were less socialist in nature. By April, however, they were replaced by the more visible presence of Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary leaders. But the competence of the new regime remained undependable. The Provisional Government’s liberal goals and aspirations to respond to the interests of war-weary people and recover from the war-stricken cities and towns unfortunately proved to be futile, as their capacity to handle state governance was much less than that of the old regime’s autocracy that it had replaced. The demise of the old regime autocracy and its resultant political vacuum generated large swaths of peasants, workers, and soldiers who were formally under direct autocratic rule but now suddenly free. They formed their own collective networks that were beyond control of the newly centralized bureaucracy after February. Thus, the Provisional Government lacked the requisite authority to maneuver and contain the political crises caused by waves of attacks and revolts against privileged Russians, landowners, bourgeoisie, and intelligentsia, and was thus unable to reverse the slow disintegration into anarchy. The problems were compounded by the dissolution of the police and the former Imperial administration to maintain the civil order. The last days of the war-torn and dying tsarist regime were therefore replaced by rampant chaos of popular revolts, which essentially undermined the political bases and credibility of the
new Provisional Government further and, in turn, continued to unleash more repressive measures to quench growing popular dissent and revolts.

It was against this backdrop that the Bolsheviks pushed aside the Provisional Government in October 1917. Amidst the deepening crises of the cities and countryside during the spring and summer of 1917, the Bolshevik Party successfully expanded its popular support, by proclaiming outright opposition to war and rallying for bread, land, workers’ control and peace, which were succinctly phrased in their slogan, “all power to the soviets.”17 The Bolsheviks thus increased their elected positions in soviets, especially northeastern Russia, and faced no substantial resistance from military units or groups in their October coup when they emerged in the center of power.

Although the Bolsheviks faced no immediate military opposition in their takeover, they were confronted with challenges to maintain their grip of state power and subsequent political opposition. After the Bolshevik coup, there were interests even among the socialist parties, soviets and workers’ unions to set up a coalition of socialist governments represented by soviets, rather than a one party-state system. Long overdue elections were also supposed to take place and universal suffrage, at least in principle, was going to be implemented in order to elect the national Constituent Assembly. This was contrary to where the Bolsheviks were headed. To their apprehension, in November and December of the same year, the Socialist Revolutionaries still exhibited the staunch support from masses of peasant votes in the assembly, in apparent support for a liberal-democratic government. That form of government would have been tantamount to an

outright rejection of what the Bolsheviks had acquired and, in essence, would nullify their coup.

The Bolsheviks soon disbanded the Constituent Assembly by mobilizing Red Guards and erasing the influence of the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries in the soviets. Local Bolsheviks, soldiers, or Red Guards ousted non-Bolsheviks from local soviets by very often manipulating elections or disbanding the soviets with majority non-Bolshevik members. They instituted a new government that was ostensibly elected by the lower soviets who were essentially under discretion of the Bolsheviks. The executive committee was thus set up by those that were the favorites of the Bolsheviks, in charge of administering and implementing the central command structure of the Party-dominated Council of Peoples’ Commissars.

However, the Communists fared no better than the previous autocratic power in administering the country, given the deepening social and economic instability coupled with the dissolution of the former imperial armies. Outside the border, the German military threat was still prevalent and continued through 1918. Within the border territory, counterrevolutionary forces led by the former tsarist military officers rebelled in Siberia and along the southern border. On the western front, Western expeditionary forces posed threat of military incursion. Against this backdrop, the Extraordinary Commission to Combat Counterrevolution and Sabotage (Cheka), or secret police services, was established to bring back discipline and control over Russian society in the immediate aftermath of the October Revolution. The Cheka was an autonomous agency—which was followed by later infamous secret police organizations like OGPU (Joint State Political
Directorate) and NKVD (People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs)—granted unquestioning authority to charge any counterrevolutionary subversion with any means possible. As such, the Bolshevik party which started out as a small conspirational cluster of revolutionaries in 1917 soon became a large party with much more concentrated power at the center by mid 1918. Local soviets no longer elected members of high committees and instead became subordinate organs of the upper levels. As a group that arose from the vestiges of the Civil War, the Bolsheviks not only considered the bourgeoisie and the Whites as enemies, but also treated non-Bolshevik socialists, such as Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries as enemies to be repressed. By the summer of 1918, the Bolsheviks became increasingly intolerant of any hint of potential sabotage and regarded anyone perceived to be in opposition as counterrevolutionary. These counterrevolutionary elements, as perceived by members of the Cheka, Party-organized workers’ committees, or Red Army units, that became subjected to coercive sanctions included peasants.

In fact, at the nascent stage of developing the socialist Party-state, the peasants proved to be a major stumbling block. Largely a self-organized and self-sufficient network of social groups, the peasant population constituted the large majority of Soviet Russia and was not voluntarily or easily placated to show allegiance to the new regime’s governance. It was even more complicated by the removal of the former aristocratic strata of landholders in the aftermath of the revolution, as their disintegration created new entitlement problems with regard to land ownership. The peasants received an increased and widespread redistribution of the land, and they wished to keep the new arrangement without any intervention by the Party directive.
Social unrest was marked by counterrevolutionary revolts. The early stage of these revolts were waged by workers’ armed Guards, scattered partisan peasant-turned militias, and former imperial military units. Under the supervision of then Military Commissar Leon Trotsky, compulsory conscription was instituted, and soon the recruits were drawn from the war-weary peasantry. In the end, the peasants constituted over four-fifths of the five million Red Army soldiers by 1921. By the end of 1921, the Red Army prevailed over the White armies and achieved the defeat of the counterrevolutionary military threats. Although the peasants detested both the Red and the White, the Communists eventually won the favor of the popular sentiment as the White victories were thought to be more detrimental due to perceived fear of returning to the old aristocratic rule of the landholdings they had appropriated. The peasants turned to the Bolsheviks as the lesser of two evils. Furthermore, during the course of successive defeats of the White armies, the Red Army consolidated its military structure under the centralized command of the Bolshevik-Communist dominated Party. This centralized structure then absorbed other irregular military units and peasant guerrilla forces that were active during the transitional and anarchic period immediately following the Russian Revolution.

After the 1917 revolutions, the revolutionary movement envisaged by Lenin met a backlash in 1920 when the Bolsheviks failed to take Warsaw, and Poland at large, which was left in a power vacuum created by the defeat of the German Empire and of the Habsburg monarchy. Lenin and his revolutionaries needed to scale down the scope of ambition by focusing on creating a socialist state in their own proper. Therefore, the
failure of instigating Europe-wide revolution turned out to be a justification to exercise more political control in their own territory, as they concentrated political control in their hands by banning other political parties and any potential dissidents and rivals as reactionary.18

*Decossackization*

The Cossacks who were subjected to the policy of decossackization resided in the Don region where Soviet power seized control in early 1919 after defeating the anti-Soviet Don Army, of which the Cossacks constituted a large segment. On 24 January 1919, a circular was issued by the Orgburo (Organizational Bureau) of the Central Committee that they would require “the wholesale destruction of all the upper elements of Cossack society.” However, the scope of the decossackization policy was still loosely defined at the beginning. Its meanings varied from how one defined the Cossackry. Before the Civil War, Cossacks were granted special privileges, military equipment, and landholdings in exchange for their military service to the tsarist regime. From the Bolshevik perspective, decossackization prior to 1919 meant elimination of those special entitlements that implied the elimination of the need to maintain Cossack’s life-long military service and their rising military expenditure on weaponry and benefits. By contrast, the 1919 policy was not simply intended to cease the judiciary and economic privileges afforded to the Cossackry, but the elimination of the ethnic population itself.19

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In the midst of the Civil War, the Bolshevik regime employed its massive and targeted violence against the Don and Kuban Cossacks, grouping them as a single collective entity. The meaning of “Cossackness” shifted to symbolize counterrevolutionary or anti-Soviet, which essentially facilitated “racialization”\(^{20}\) of a group that used to be defined not by ethnicity but by its military service to the tsarist regime.

The Orgburo’s “mass terror” circular in January was rescinded only after a month and a half of circulation when it met staunch resistance. After decossackization commenced, the Red Army was forced to retreat from the Don and the policy was reversed. It was a reflection of the shift in the policy attitude toward the Don Cossacks from “enemy element” to “normalization.” Many scholars often conflate this short period (January 24—March 16) that the policy was officially in place with the months that followed, when the policy was continued in practice but in an unofficial context. Based on the central circular, in the span of a few months, the local Bolsheviks in the Don and Kuban regions executed thousands of Cossacks before the decossackization was halted.

Although the decossackization policy demonstrates Bolshevik ruthlessness, the origin of the policy cannot be solely attributed to Bolshevism. However, at the same time, it was a state sanctioned policy that specifically targeted a defined identity group for the first time since October of 1917. In hindsight, decossackization was the first policy experiment of Soviet Russia to control an identified population. It was still not genocidal, however, because the Soviet system at the time still employed opposing practices—decossackization and the Piedmont Principle. These experiences of managing national

\(^{20}\) Weitz, *A Century of Genocide*. 166
groups became the bedrock against which the subsequent policies of population control were assessed and implemented.

The process leading up to the January circular instituting decossackization was not necessarily straightforward. As of 1919, when the Soviet control was achieved in the Don, the policy orientations on how to govern the Don Cossacks were divided as to whether the Soviet leaders should win over Cossacks or suppress them as anti-Soviet elements. The Revolutionary Military Council of the Red Army was ready to incorporate whole units of the Don Cossack Army into their regiments, although Trotsky, then Military Commissar, and other leaders opposed this idea by insisting that Cossack regiments should be disarmed and their officers should be surrendered to the Red Army.21 These divided opinions stemmed from their recent memory during the Civil War when they paid high prices to secure the Don area’s strategic location. The former imperial army’s general Alekseev banded the Volunteer Army of four thousand strong that was comprised of former tsarist officers and the local Don Cossacks. They were joined by General Anton Denikin of the White armies and the ataman of the Don Cossacks, General Kaledin. In early 1918, these Volunteer Army forces regained the Don area from the Soviet power. But in February 1918, the Bolsheviks pushed back the Whites and took control of Ekaterinodar, the capital of the Kuban Cossacks. Then, the Germans came in to aid the new ataman of the Cossacks, General Krasnov, who declared “an independent democratic republic” in the Don area.22

Given the Civil War experiences in the region, it was strategically vital for the Soviet government that Cossacks in the Don territory, along with any local organizations, be placed under the Soviet government’s supervision and control, whether through disbandment or incorporation. In the end, bearing arms was permitted to only reliable groups, and Russian peasants were going to distribute the confiscated land from Cossacks.  

Despite numerous uprisings and peasant rebellions across the border regions of the newly constituted Soviet regime, with the Don region being one of them, the eliminationist policy of decossackization with regards to the Don Cossacks did not come about without reason. After all, Cossacks were viewed as “a counterrevolutionary monolith,” although such a view was not a wholly accurate depiction of the reality of the Cossack population. The population of the Don Cossacks was not entirely opposed to the Soviets, and Cossack loyalty for the Red or White Armies during the Civil War varied. In the upper Don area, the younger generation of Cossacks were not interested in insurgent activities to overthrow the newly constituted Soviet power or the northward expedition for territorial expansion. They were rather more interested in preserving their communal traditions and village lives from intervention of the Communist rule. While it was true that Cossacks made up a significant portion of the White armies in the Civil War, there were also a sizable regiment of Cossacks fighting with the Bolsheviks against the anti-Soviet Don Army. Being less ideologically aligned, those Cossacks were pragmatically motivated to side with the Red Army. Even some Cossacks from the

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23 Murphy, “The Don Rebellion March-June 1919,” 322.
northern stanitsas went against their families and fathers who had supported the White troops, instead aligning themselves with the Reds. Indeed, about “one-fifth of all Cossacks under arms” took part in the Red Army and their services aided in the advance into the Don territory and their eventual triumph over the Whites. There were also reports on the popular sentiment of the people welcoming the Red Army when they entered the cities.

However, despite some robust Cossack support for Bolshevism, the deeply entrenched stereotypes placed on the Cossackry and the Cossack regions, were more influential in steering the course of policy formation. This was especially pertinent after the brief retreat of the Soviet power from the Don region, due to widespread rebellions and insurgency, in 1918.

The anti-Soviet military and political leadership held a romanticized and paternalistic image of Cossacks as Russia’s paladins of order and statehood, loyal but in need of political tutelage. This image led the leaders of various anti-Soviet movements to seek out Cossack regions as their base of operations. In fact, it had been these officers and politicians, rather than Cossacks themselves, who had been largely responsible for the original overthrow of Soviet power on the Don in spring 1918. The self-proclaimed Don Host leadership then sought to realize this idealized image of a Cossack Vandée by forcibly conscripting Cossacks to serve and defend a cause portrayed to them as their own.

These views from both the anti-Soviet contingents and the Soviet regime, were reinforced by another simplified account of Cossacks as “lackeys of the Imperial regime.”

26 Holquist, “Conduct Merciless Mass Terror,” 130.
27 Ibid.
Over the course of 1918, Soviet officials increasingly described their opponents generically as “Cossacks,” rather than “counterrevolutionaries” or “Krasnovites” as they had done at the beginning of the year. And, while Cossacks served in great numbers in the Red Army, they became increasingly invisible as Cossacks. In Soviet usage, “Cossacks” came to mean only those serving in the anti-Soviet Don Army, while Cossacks serving the Soviet cause became generic “Red Army men.”

As such, the Cossackness lost its genuine form, detached from its national and cultural heritage, as its meaning was transfigured in such a way that they were defined only in relation to the Soviet power. In a sense, such labeling was not even new or specific to the Cossackry. Such stereotypical influences are common attributes in wartime aggression, and conditions surrounding the Cossacks were certainly not an exception. However, once the quasi-biological notion of Cossackness was used as a label to denote the entire group, rather than as a judiciary boundary of the identity, a counterrevolutionary “element” became synonymous with the “Cossacks.” It was then no longer possible to eradicate such an element by simply altering it; it needed to be weeded out. The meaning of counterrevolutionary elements changed—“Counterrevolution was no longer revealed through any concrete counterrevolutionary act; counterrevolutionary was implying what Cossacks were.” The identity boundaries were thus drawn, and the physical extermination of “an element” was substituted as a viable recourse to previously accepted judiciary alterations.

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28 Ibid.
29 The Imperial era of the tsarist regime used the military statistics which essentially categorized vast populations into manageable hierarchy, labeling in elements, based on their reliability and potentials for service to the Russian state. These statistics were used in deportations of Jews and other minorities during the First World War.
The decossackization policy needs to be seen in the context of the raging Civil War between the Reds and the Whites at the time, with the war fronts constantly fluctuating back and forth. Within this constantly changing environment and the implementation of the decossackization policy, there were competing organs of command structure. There were Don Bureau, the Southern Front, and the Bolshevik Party’s Orgburo, which was a part of the Central Committee. At first, the instruction of how to deal with counterrevolutionaries by the Southern Front was more cautious and reserved than the Central Committee circular had hoped for.

The Southern Front issued the following instructions on January 22, showing some moderation in the use of control over the targeted area and population:

> [M]ass terror in the occupied territories is entirely undesirable and intolerable, playing into the hands of Krasnovite fear-mongering and complicating our position. Terror is to be employed against only the leading actors of the White guard camp, [while] the suspicious and unreliable elements are to be subject to arrest and dispatch to Borisoglebsk or Balashov.\(^{31}\)

However, S.I. Syrtsov, who was chairing the newly constituted Don Party Bureau, convinced the Orgburo to create its own directive two days later, on January 24, 1919. The contrast was stark in that the specificity of the targeted area and subjects were removed and the whole Cossackry was now subjected to this Central Committee’s directive:

> Recent events on various fronts in the Cossack regions—our advance to the heart of Cossack settlements and demoralization among the Cossack forces—compel us to give Party officials directions on the nature of their

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\(^{31}\) Quoted in Ibid., 133.
work in establishing and consolidating Soviet power in the specified regions. Considering the experience of a year of civil war against the Cossackry, we must recognize the only proper means to be a merciless struggle against the entire Cossack elite by means of their *total extirpation*. No compromises, no halfway measures are permissible. Therefore it is necessary:

1) To conduct *mass terror* against wealthy Cossacks, extirpating them totally; to conduct merciless mass terror against all those Cossacks who participated, directly or indirectly, in the struggle against Soviet power. To the middle Cossackry it is necessary to take all steps that guarantee no further attempts on its part to rise against Soviet power.

2) To confiscate grain and compel storage of all surpluses at designated points, both in terms of grain and all other agricultural goods.

3) To take all measures for helping the poor who are arriving to settle [and] organizing resettlement where possible.

4) To level the non-local outlanders with the Cossacks in land and all other concerns.

5) To conduct total disarmament, executing anyone who is found with weapons after the date of their surrender.

6) To issue weapons only to reliable elements from among the outlanders.

7) To leave armed detachments in Cossack *stanitsy* until the establishment of total order.

8) All commissars appointed to this or that Cossack settlement are urged to demonstrate maximum firmness and implement the present instructions without deviation.

The CC orders the instruction to the People’s Commissariat of Land be conducted through all relevant Soviet institutions to work out, in short order, practical measures for the massive resettlement of the poor to Cossack lands.

The Central Committee RCP (emphasis added)\(^{32}\)

A number of contrasts can be drawn between the more selective practice of social control issued by the Southern Front on January 22 and the Orgburo’s all-encompassing approach on January 24. Given that the male Cossack population on the Don were

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\(^{32}\) Quoted in Ibid., 134.
universally mobilized militarily, due to their historical and cultural backgrounds, it was possible that a broad interpretation of “struggle against Soviet power,” however indirectly, was applicable to the entire Cossack population. At the time, it meant that there were 5,605 poor Cossacks, 4,770 in the middle class, and 3,125 wealthy Cossacks, who would have been subject to such “total extirpation.”\(^{33}\) In one estimate, between 300,000 and 500,000 from a total population of three million Cossacks were either massacred or forcefully deported from the regions as a result of the 1919-20 decossackization policy.\(^ {34}\)

There was discrepancy in the extent of implementing the Orgbiuro’s decree by the Southern Front, mainly because of the Southern Front’s reluctant and rather feeble attempt, despite the clear indication that it be implemented with utmost decisiveness and no hesitation. For example, on the basis of the central directive, the Southern Front instituted revolutionary tribunals across the soviets of the Don to mobilize arrests and execution of counterrevolutionary Cossacks. Dissatisfied with how these “regular” revolutionary tribunals were operating, superior officials in Khoper and the Upper Don districts set up “extraordinary revolutionary tribunals” to oversee the regular ones and handle all new or dismissed cases. There were regional variance in how the actual implementation of mass terror was conducted, with some regions such as Khoper and the Upper Don districts more rigidly following the central directive, while other districts were less firm. The Cossack population also resisted, as those who had fought on the side of the anti-Soviet Don Army now took arms to engage in rebellion against the Soviet

\(^{33}\) Ibid., 135.
\(^{34}\) Gellately, Lenin, Stalin, and Hitler, 71.
power. Quite bloody anti-Soviet uprising ensued, which eventually led to the collapse of the Southern Front in the summer of 1919.

It was the Veshenskaia uprising that prompted the Center’s staged retreat from the policy of total extirpation of Cossacks to that of eliminating a social class of Cossacks that began in mid-1919. Revolutionary tribunals continued to rampage upon the Cossackry but, compared to the period between February and March when the policy was in full swing, their activities were significantly curtailed. The Center now rescinded its earlier decision “for the elimination of Cossacks as Cossacks” while merciless repression and retribution was carried out against anyone in opposition to the Revolution. The Central Committee shifted from “punishing Cossacks for who they were to punishing them for what they had done.”35 The Veshenskaia rebellion did not cease by the summer and the Red Army failed to suppress it. As the Soviet power was compelled to retreat from the Don, the internal bickering among the central authorities over why the policy failed in the first place began, without necessarily identifying who had ordered it.

For the Cossacks, their main interest was to obtain reassurance from Moscow that the Soviet government would not seize their properties and that the Red Army would not infiltrate the Upper Don area. However, the state sanctioned policy of decossackization in 1919 was implemented, albeit only for less than three months. While the underlining drive between the 1919 decossackization and the 1929 dekulakization remain largely consistent and uniform in pursuing a fundamental Bolshevik desire to create ‘a new man’ and idealized image of society, as Holquist argues, the policy should not be seen as a

prototypical model of what was going to follow in Soviet terror practices, but rather as actual Soviet power in practice. And for this reason the Civil War and the years 1917-21 were not “antechamber” but decossackization policy was probably the first embodiment of the Soviet regime’s unflinching commitment to restructuring the population element by political control.\textsuperscript{36}

The reversal of the policy can be attributed partly to the internal conflict between the Southern Front, the Don Bureau, and the Central Orgburo as to who possessed the actual control. Seeing the Don as a more malevolent region than others, the Center did not relegate the territorial organ, the Don Party Bureau, of which Syrtsov was more extreme than other officials, to administer the region. Instead, the Center formed the Civil Administration as part of the Southern Front to take charge, and therefore the military detachment was put in charge of carrying out policies on the Don. As the Veshenskaia uprising raged on, involving much of the Upper Don district where decossackization was high, the policy review was prompted. The Southern Front, which was opposed to the view held by the Don Bureau, took this opportunity as a sign to rescind Don Bureau’s more extreme policies and take more moderate administrative power in the region. Sokolnikov, who was a member of the Southern Front’s RMC, reported to the Central Committee that it was not possible to complete decossackization as dictated by the circular issued by the Orgburo.\textsuperscript{37} Sokolnikov’s presentation was adopted by the Orgburo, which put the decision of cancelling the decossackization circular in front of the entire Central Committee on March 25:

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 127.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 145.
Immediately inform all responsible Party and Soviet leaders of your region that the CC has reviewed its directive and directs Party workers to cease the implementation of mass terror. Take absolutely no measures which might complicate relations and lead to an uprising. Economic measures—especially requisitions—should be pursued with the utmost caution and circumspections […] Removing individual counterrevolutionaries who are harmful is of course necessary. The Veshenskaia uprising should of course be suppressed with all decisiveness and mercilessness, but repressions ought not be extended indiscriminately to stanitsy that have not rebelled. It is of course necessary to employ more severity towards the southern Cossackry, but not to excess.38

While this was certainly not the complete reversal or removal of eliminationist attitudes—as the enemy contingents in rebellion were still subjects of merciless repression—the shift in reversing the whole Cossackry to a particular segment of Cossack enemy was noteworthy. The Cossackry was no longer seen as a counterrevolutionary monolith—the difference in their loyalty to Moscow, their participation in military activities, and their socio-economic backgrounds even within the Cossack group was recognized. Two weeks later, the Southern Front issued an order that nullified all its previous orders on decossackization policies, which were namely “Order #171 on revolutionary tribunals, Order #248 on confiscating carriages from Cossacks and Order #369 on confiscating saddles from the Cossack population,” by instructing that the new policy would employ merciless suppression of any uprising or active counterrevolutionaries but not in peaceful regions.39 The Don Bureau, represented by Syrtsov, continued to press hardline measures against Cossacks, and Syrtsov even traveled to Moscow to make appeals in front of the Central Committee to that effect. But

38 Ibid., 146.
39 Ibid.
this attests to the fact, even within the Soviet power, there were parties to conflict, albeit internally, against the external forms of conflict (i.e., rebellions and civil strife, Cossacks, etc.).

In other words, the Soviet regime itself was not a monolith, as it would later change in policies on dekulakization in 1929. 1919, however, was still a nascent stage for the Bolshevik Party to ascend to the monopoly of power. The conflict represented by the Southern Front and the Don Bureau, in terms of their disagreements and not in armed confrontation against each other, was still present in the early history of the Soviet power. Thus, it was possible to separate counterrevolutionary ‘intent’ from the ‘act’ of counterrevolution. Perceived presumption that enemy elements possess counterrevolutionary intent was enough to preempt the attack to root it out at the beginning of 1919, but later the shift was made in such a way that the essence of the counterrevolution was refined and narrowed to connote an observable form of the act itself.

**Ideational process of identity**

Decossackization was the first explicitly identity-driven policy with excisionary violence, but such was not the comprehensive policy orientation of Soviet Russia toward foreign or non-Russian national groups. Moscow’s policies in regards to identity were not unitary, especially in the wake of the Bolshevik consolidation of power during and after the Civil War. While massive repression was practiced against an identity group such as
the Cossacks, the Bolsheviks also employed the Piedmont Principle, a practice that promoted ethnic and national diversity in the cross-national border regions of the Soviets.

As Weitz discusses the role of racialized politics in Soviet Russia’s ethnic and national purges\textsuperscript{40} in the formation of the Soviet identity amidst heavy industrialization and russification, the Bolshevik regime and Stalinist Russia can be characterized by double-pronged approaches to national identity politics. This was a contradictory dilemma that stemmed from the desire to create the new soviet men and women vis-à-vis the Soviet’s multinational state systems, which contributed to an increased sense of xenophobia.\textsuperscript{41} At the onset of the Soviet state in the 1920s, the central leadership was committed to creating a multinational state and encouraging policies backed by nationalism, as was exemplified by the Piedmont Principle.\textsuperscript{42} Thus, the early Soviet policies on administrative control of border territories, land possession, and resettlement were characterized by particular ethnic hostility along identity group lines. Martin discusses them in terms of two Bolshevik concepts, one being a Soviet ideologically based xenophobia and the other the Piedmont Principle. In essence, Martin means that the Soviet tried to exert Soviet influence abroad by creating cross-border ethnic ties.\textsuperscript{43}

Practical policy zigzagged between massive repression that included ethnic cleansings and efforts to incorporate the Cossacks into the Soviet world. But a barrier had been broken, which demonstrated how easy it was to move from social to biological understandings, especially within the intensity of civil war and the determination to create the new man and

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 832.
woman. Similar trends were at work later in the 1920s, when “popular ethnic cleaning” led to expropriations and expulsions of Russian colonists in Kazakhstan and Kirghizstan, actions supported by the republics’ governments.  

This contradictory tension was most acutely experienced in the border regions where multinational groups resided. In the nascent years of nation building in the 1920s, the border regions were also ongoing stages for low-intensity guerrilla warfare and occasional partisan uprisings against the central Soviet authority. The Civil War and the subsequent foreign incursion clearly demarcated the line of enemy identities, these ongoing guerrilla fighting and skirmishes involved ambiguous border crossings and foreign and domestic support.

Most famously, the Basmachi rebellion in central Asia, which continued into the mid-1930s, relied heavily on clan and ethnic alliances linking northern Afghanistan and Soviet Central Asia. Major uprisings also flared up in other Soviet border regions: in Chechnia and Dagestan from 1920 to 1922, in Karelia in 1921-22, Georgia in 1924, Yakutia in 1924-25 and 1927-28, and Adzharistan in 1927 and 1929. Throughout the early 1920s, the Soviet secret police reported ongoing “political banditry” across the Polish-Ukrainian frontier. This deepened Soviet fears of surreptitious foreign penetration and focused on Soviet xenophobia on the largely non-Russian border regions.”

While the Soviet’s ideologically and politically oriented xenophobia was increasingly encouraging suspicions of ethnic or national symbols or expressions of the groups, the Piedmont Principle encouraged a flamboyant proliferation of national institutions. In the 1920s, the latter tendency was more commonly observed.

44 Weitz, “Racial Politics without the Concept of Race,” 11.
It would take a series of domestic- and foreign-policy shocks to eventually provoke an abandonment of the ethnophilia of the 1920s and a turn toward the ethnic cleansing of the 1930s. In both the 1920s and 1930s, however, the adopted policy was based on the extract same premise: the Bolsheviks’ strong belief in the political salience of cross-border ethnic ties.\textsuperscript{46}

In the early stages of Soviet society, social engineering did not encompass the question of ethnicity, due to a premise of “national in form, socialist in content.” The deliberate targeting of the Don and Kuban Cossacks in the policy of decossackization was not on the basis of ethnicity or national identity, but rather on the security of the Soviet control in the regions concerned. But once politicized, such identity groupings became salient. What changed these dynamics and raised the ethnicity question as one of the primary categories of social engineering was the experience of Don Cossacks during and after the Russian civil war as well as the suspicion of national minorities that came from ethnic backgrounds of Polish and German origin throughout the 1920s.\textsuperscript{47} Then, in the 1930s, the beginning of collectivization fuelled the conflation of class and ethnic differences and the categorization practice took its own course as forced deportation began in March 1930. In the course of socialist construction, there were changing facets of enemies from class antagonism to ethnic hostility as the primary demarcation line.\textsuperscript{48} An ensuing practice of exercising political terror became more radical, because “[w]ith Socialism built, extermination was the only way to cope with those who had not yet

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 832.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 1129.
redeemed themselves.” In this process, the ethnicization of social categories quickly intensified the drive of Soviet purification and purge policies shifted their orientation from “cleansing certain spaces to cleansing peoples in toto.”

Political terror was used as a way to pacify or purify the peoples but it proved to be counterproductive. The means used to control disloyal or unreliable elements produced more enemies, further destabilizing the control. The Reds emerged victorious, only because of their sheer lead over the military advances and bureaucratic administration over the Whites. But they were eventually left with war-weary soldiers, disgruntled and hungry populations throughout the territory.

2.2.2. The 2nd Stage: Regression and Control

The second period was marked by the policy of dekulakization that was initiated in 1929 as part of comprehensive collectivization of Russia’s vast farmland. After a period of respite from the liberal economic planning of the New Economic Policy (NEP), the Soviet brutality was once again manifested a decade after decossackization. In 1929, Stalin issued the policy of dekulakization to purposefully dispossess, deport, or even execute better-off peasants or former landlords, who were seen as saboteur of socialist state building or grain hoarders during the NEP years, while carrying out massive collectivization. Unlike the visible and tangible identity markers used during the Civil War, such as the Cossackry or the Whites, the 1929 dekulakization marked the beginning of excisionary violence against more arbitrary groupings, “counterrevolutionary”

49 Ibid., 1131.
50 Ibid., 1133.
elements. It was the beginning of shifts from substantive to ideational enemy identities. The communist regime began to search for such hidden enemies under a new label that previously did not exist.

By the end of 1930 full-fledged dekulakization had swept through the country, and it is estimated that 1.5 million peasants had been expropriated. 63,000 heads of households had been either imprisoned or executed. Furthermore, deportations took “540,00 kulaks to the Urals, 375,000 to Siberia, more than 190,000 to Kazakhstan, and over 130,000 to the far northern regions.”51 The category of who belonged to kulaks was only loosely defined, but such an arbitrary practice of identity labeling was legitimated in the name of promoting “proletarian consciousness.” From the regime perspective, it appeared that they would face risks of incurring only meager gains or even more losses of control by failing their socialist experiments or they could change the course and minimize the loss by carrying out massive collectivization. They chose the latter; they chose the risks of failing collectivization over the risks of losing their political control, and they succeeded in the plans. As such, dekulakization represented not only shifts in enemy identities from substantive to ideational, but also the shifts in the Perpetrator-Self identity toward more exclusive ‘ingroup’ categorization without hesitating risks to do so.

Experimental Moderation: The New Economic Policy

When the New Economic Policy (NEP) was introduced in March 1921 at the Tenth Party Congress, the country was still reeling from the ravages of the Civil War and

51 Suny, The Soviet Experiment, 245.
the NEP was seen as a temporary solution to redress declining economic conditions and widespread unrest and rebellions of workers and peasants. War Communism, as dubbed by Lenin, was no longer available as emergency measures of distributing foodstuffs under full control by the state like during the Civil War. Many accepted the NEP but thought it was a retreat to capitalism and a concession to the peasantry. With the NEP in place, Soviet Russia was a worker’s state politically, but it was run by a state capitalist economy. Between 1921 and 1928, when the NEP was instituted, it was a time for gradual recovery but inadvertently steered the Soviet Union toward the second period of atrocious political control, dekulakization.

Under the NEP some signs of economic performances were positive, as had been hoped for by the central planners. It proved to demonstrate some decent signs of increased agricultural and industrial productions and population growth. The industrial workers revived the mechanization of their production, facilitating the urbanization of the cities and populations, and more importantly class-consciousness among the working class, although it was still a loosely defined and disorganized identity. By 1926, the state of most economic indices and capital investments reached its prewar level, and the hungry and disgruntled peasants and the populations emerged from famine-stricken devastation in the early 1920s.

However, consequences of the NEP turned out to be more detrimental than expected, economically and politically. The economic performance when the NEP was introduced was disastrous. In the aftermath of the Civil War, large swaths of the Volga and other regions suffered from widespread famine, which eventually claimed 5 million
deaths by hunger. The famine was exacerbated by poor harvests in 1920 and 1921, coupled with similarly poor industrial and agricultural outputs in 1921 at just 21 percent and 60 percent of the prewar level, respectively. The market-based economy created by the NEP and a bountiful harvest in 1922 began to reverse the trend, and by 1924 agricultural output climbed back to its prewar level. However, the peasants were still not prospering as much as they did during prewar years. Contrary to what the NEP had anticipated, the peasants had now greater control of agricultural resources, which were needed for trade surpluses and industrialization for building socialism, and kept their grains more at home to the detriment of the towns and cities. This created a toll on Soviet industrialization. The rapid pace of industrial development and mechanization was achieved in the first three years of NEP, but the actual industrial output did not exceed that of the prewar level. It was not conceivable to achieve socialism without heavy industrialization, which, in turn, required greater inputs from the agriculture not only to feed the population but also in terms of raw materials to export in exchange for foreign machinery. Thus, the NEP was, on the one hand, an unwelcomed necessity, but on the other hand it unexpectedly created more problems.

The market-based economy system that the NEP introduced eventually created the disequilibrium of supply and demand, due in large part to widening capacity gaps between industrial and agricultural sectors. It was also due to quasi-capitalists in the communist state that were suspicious of a laissez-faire system to allow markets to set prices without interference. After the revolution of 1917, there were only petty producers

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52 Ibid., 166–7.
of marketed crops, unlike the larger noble landowners who used to produce a disproportionate share of agrarian products in the market. The old aristocratic, rich-peasants’ landholdings were expropriated and redistributed among petty peasant producers.

Private land property was thus dismantled, but the level of impoverishment of small peasants, who were growing in size in the 1920s, did not change. There were also shortages of industrial goods with prices high enough for the peasants to sell their grains, as agriculture regained its output while industrial output lagged behind. The masses of the underdeveloped peasants were less inclined to purchase manufactured goods without high incomes from the sale of their crops. These petty producers were thriving at a near subsistence level, and they withheld their grains when the prices of sales were not favorable. They were more incompatible with a market-oriented economy than before 1917. Therefore, the NEP was essentially incompatible with small peasants who still operated with strong communal ties, which stifled individual entrepreneurship and resulted in lower overall production levels.

In addition to problems rooted in the economic situations of Soviet peasants, there were inherent contradictions embedded in the premise of the NEP. The market economy that was created as a result of the policy was structurally incompatible with the socialist design of institutions, where state-owned and bureaucratized management of the market essentially defy the very essence of market-based economic principles. Products were not being sold because they were too expensive, due to ineffective market functions. The cost of production was ineffective and thus became expensive. Inefficient management of
workers shot up the price higher as well, even though the workers were not highly paid. This posed a fundamental dilemma to the Old Bolsheviks who had set out to achieve ‘socialist industry.’ Still following the Marxist doctrine and being inspired by it, they could only evaluate the current conditions with what they were supposed to have achieved, namely superior labor productivity. But they were compelled to realize the imminent prospects of failed socialist experiments after their successful socialist revolution in Russia.53

Again in the 1920s, the peasant question in Soviet Russia posed an inherently critical contradiction. In theory, the workers were told that they were a ruling class of the new revolutionized order and that the government would be at the service of workers and peasants. Quite the contrary, the working conditions were worse off than those before the 1917 revolution. The workers were paid—even after months of delayed payments—almost a third of what they used to get paid before the war. The job security was also less stable. They could be fired for petty digression or disobedience or were fined for voicing a slight political offense or dissent. In the end, they faced the same economic problems they did before, only treated with disdain and contempt by new bosses. As such, any attempt of dissent or protest was met with ruthless suppression by the GPU (State Political Directorate).54

In the minds of the workers who organized strikes, it was a logical conclusion to demand better and more generous treatment within their economic rights and interest, especially because the NEP meant to restore market-based economic activities. They thus

53 Brovkin, Russia after Lenin, 188.
54 Ibid., 179.
bargained for higher wages, eight hour working conditions, insurance and other benefits, just as any trade union would do in other capitalist societies. However, these demands were antithetical to what the Bolsheviks could accept. For them, “the economic struggle of the working class” was the banner that they had used to usurp power and establish their authority to govern a fledging socialist state. The call for such struggle meant a revival of their original struggle, only that this time the roles were reversed—they became the target to which this demand was directed. To let the workers demand for their economic rights was tantamount to acquiescing their organized movements against the Bolshevik Party themselves. It was almost a reversion of their existential identity as the vanguard of the working class proletariat, if they could not provide for their constituency what they had apparently advocated for in the beginning.55

The NEP inadvertently became an embodiment of vindicating capitalism and the superiority of private enterprises to a socialist mode of production. This led to the strengthening of the Stalinist path toward dictatorship.

Collectivization & Dekulakization

After the NEP reached its apogee by 1926, the tide changed quickly as grain and food procurement fell below demand in 1927. The 1927 harvest fell short by several million tons compared to that of 1926. Industrial production also fell in that year, curtailing foreign imports that were much needed for the planned industrialization of socialist state building. The prospects of new economic growth were dire without new

55 Ibid., 176.
investments in the form of industrial and agricultural goods. At the Fifteenth Party Congress in December 1927, the resolutions led by Stalin were adopted, calling for a Five-Year Plan of economic development, as a “socialist offensive” to carry out the collectivization of agriculture, and also for the liquidation of capitalist elements in the cities and countryside. These capitalist elements, or grain hoarders, were thought to be kulaks.

In 1927, the level of discontent was high and the workers’ ceaseless protest was increasingly prevalent and unpredictable. By the end of 1928, spontaneous protests, rallies, and strikes against the Communists were on the rise, even with increasing incidents of assaults on Communism and instances of deliberate obstruction of factory machines. Their demand for better wages, on-time payment, and better factory conditions were similar across the expanse of Russia.56 Subsequently, the food-supply chain was dysfunctional, given the unrest, disturbance and turmoil of the social and economic spheres, which further exacerbated these already tense situations. The Bolsheviks responded by laying blame on the kulaks as grain hoarders who obstructed the supply chain and causing food shortages. They mobilized class-conscious workers, as in 1918, to enforce the kulaks to comply with the “proletarian dictatorship.”57

The category of “kulak” was never precisely defined. Later in 1930, the term could mean “counterrevolutionary activists, who were to be imprisoned, sent to camps, or shot; the “arch-exploiters,” or the richest kulaks, who were to be exiled to remote parts of Russia or Kazakhstan; and the loyal kulaks, who were allowed to resettle on new lands.

56 Ibid., 174–75.
57 Ibid., 185.
outside the collective farms.”\(^{58}\) The use of the Soviet official lexicon of class enemies started to fill the press against the kulaks, as the saboteurs, wreckers, terrorists, and enemies of the people. The propaganda thus called for intensified class struggle and made increasingly hostile reference to kulaks that infiltrate petty bourgeoisie consciousness obstructing the construction of the socialist state. The Bolsheviks found scapegoats to deflect rising discontent among the workers and peasants for high unemployment, delayed payments, declining living conditions, and rampant frustration among the workers.\(^{59}\)

In 1928, the Bolshevik Party was increasingly steered away from the NEP, with Stalin’s influence leaning left and away from Bukharin, the figurehead of the Right and the most ardent defender of NEP programs. By the beginning of 1930, it was estimated that more than sixteen hundred armed rebellions had taken place. With the looming prospect of another civil war, Stalin decided to implement the process of forceful collectivization.

But the change in Stalin’s position did not go uncontested among the Party leadership. Bukharin was the main vocal objection to the forcible implementation of collectivization and forceful seizure of grains. The Right wing of the Party leadership, called Bukharinists, was in favor of continuing the NEP. They opted for keeping the mixed economic system as is and for exploring alternative plans without altering the basic premise of the system itself. They wanted to keep the basis of market-oriented farming and economic activities in the countryside, while slowly and gradually inducing

\(^{59}\) Brovkin, *Russia after Lenin*, 188.
peasants to develop collective farming, rather than individual farming, by use of economic incentives. They still believed that any progress toward socialism could be achieved by less coercive enforcement although the process may take more time to proceed. This line of Bukharin, who was a close confidant of Lenin and “darling” of the Old Bolsheviks, was in fact consistent with what Lenin had planned: “The transition to collective cultivation must be carried out by the proletarian state power with the utmost caution and gradualness, by force of example, without the slightest constraint on the middle peasantry.”

As such, the Right faction in the Bolshevik Party leadership represented a group who upheld the NEP as a fundamental Leninist pathway to socialism. It was an opposition voice to Stalin, who favored to discontinue the NEP and proceed with more rapid progression to socialism. This debate within the Party leadership was not only whether they preferred the Bukharinist or Stalinist transition to socialism, but also the way in which Bolshevism as an ideology would handle the mounting political and economic crisis that engulfed Russian society at large. This is because, regardless of left or right, all Bolsheviks had shared ground in terms of their socialist vision. They all believed private property should be abolished, albeit unspecified timing, and that collective agricultural production was superior to private farming, and that industrialization needed to be paid for by the products that peasants would produce. The way in which the opposition and contradictory views and opinions were dealt with, however, created a precedent of political control.

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60 Quoted in Suny, The Soviet Experiment, 240.
61 Brovkin, Russia after Lenin, 205.
Stalin made a speech at a conference on 27 December 1929, which was later seen as the triggering commencement of the dekulakization process. Subsequently, the Politburo issued a resolution called “On the rate of collectivization and state assistance for the organization of kolkhozy [collective farms]” on 5 January 1930, which was later adopted by the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People’s Commissars of the USSR in the name of “On measures for the reinforcement of the socialist restructuring of agricultural production in the regions subject to blanket collectivization, and for fighting kulaks” on 1 February 1930.

The decision to organize wholesale collectivization was made to carry out dual purposes. On an ideological front, the elimination of private farms was to eliminate the imprint of capitalism in the countryside, and subsequently establishing in its stead centrally planned, collectivized farms would give the state control over grain requisition and other agricultural resources, which were needed to pay for advancing heavy industrialization. However, the Soviet leadership proceeded with collectivization in an extreme haste without hesitating to employ excessive coercion, in the form of dispossession, deportations, or even executions, all of which were used to eliminate ‘kulaks.’ Thus, collectivization stripped the kulaks of their entitlements and their land.

Collectivization was, as it turned out, the centerpiece of the Bolshevik Party’s massive and sweeping attempt to engineer the entire Soviet society by abolishing private property and transforming the peasantry to be placed under state-owned collective farms.

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63 Hoffmann, *Cultivating the Masses*, 270.
There was a rational base in carrying out this policy as doing so coincided with the drive for heavy industrialization and a planned economy. The move from capitalism toward socialism, reversely speaking, necessitated this implementation, and the kulaks bore the brunt of the impacts. Needless to say, the process of collectivization brought destructive havoc on the kulaks, as well as destruction of rural elites, traditional cultures, and religious customs. As such, the target of change was not only in the livelihoods of the peasant life, but also their mentality and consciousness as well.⁶⁴

By the end of 1930, 1.5 million peasants had been expropriated after full-fledged dekulakization had swept through the country. 250,000 households were subjected to forced deportations and a resulting collectivization of their land. According to a NKVD estimate, 63,000 heads of households had been either imprisoned or executed. Furthermore, deportations took “540,00 kulaks to the Urals, 375,000 to Siberia, more than 190,000 to Kazkhstan, and over 130,000 to the far northern regions.”⁶⁵ From the policy implementation perspective, it worked such that the excisionary violence motivated reluctant peasants to join collectivized farms for fear of losing everything.

Forced deportation practices were already underway. At the end of 1929, the Committee for Resettlement issued a circular “On organizing the arrangement of resettlers into labor collectives,” directed to the People’s Commissariats of Agriculture of the USSR republics. This document promoted planned resettlement of populations based on collectivization so that it was deemed possible to reorganize agricultural production by transferring labor forces from overpopulated areas to uninhabited lands. In this way,

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⁶⁴ Ibid., 269.
⁶⁵ Suny, The Soviet Experiment, 245.
policies of Soviet Russia intersected on multilateral layers—collectivization, dekulakization, and forced migration. In other words, in 1929 economic activities of the kulaks were already restricted, in terms of state-organized grain purchases and tax collection, but the Central Committee increased its cleansing policy against the kulaks almost at the same time as the policy of cleansing of the border regions.  

Therefore, the intensity of excisionary violence was increased with the collectivization and accompanying dekulakization in order to carry out the wholesale restructuring of the social order. To collectivize agricultural production, the Bolshevik Party headed by Stalin chose to liquidate the kulaks as a social class. To do so, they utilized existing social categorization and methods of social excision available at the time, namely forced migration and labor camps. Therefore, the construction of a new social order and of economic structures hinged heavily on the centralized removal of the old ‘hindrances.’ However, dekulakization was not carefully organized. From the dispossession of their properties, deportation of tens of thousands of the kulaks, to the consequent chaotic vacuum, the effects of these policies were not accounted or adequately planned for. As an offshoot of this process, the labeling of the kulaks left a lingering and stigmatized marker of the class identity, by which people were associated with whether they were real or merely purported kulaks. The Party leadership responded to this crisis by instituting the passport system, which further exacerbated the categorization process.  

66 P. M. Polian, Against Their Will: The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004), 69.  
67 Hoffmann, Cultivating the Masses, 278.
The comparison should be highlighted between the 1919 decossackization and the later policy of dekulakization in 1929. Decossackization was the first policy of the Executive Committee specifically targeting a defined group of national populations. Genocidal rhetoric apparent in the official policy of decossackization was later rescinded by the Central Committee. It was not genocidal but presaged what was to come. The trend changed in dekulakization, and this shift deserves attention.

2.2.2. The 3rd Stage: Radicalization and Control

The third period of radicalization involved the notorious Great Purge, most ferociously conducted in 1936-38. Before 1934, with the dismal consequences and social unrest stemming from the rapid collectivization, the communist party had loosened their production targets and reinstated more moderate economic and social policies. The collectivization was a success as a planned policy and in its ruthless implementation but the consequences were devastating. At the same time, by 1934, the targets of political control shifted more inwardly. Large-scale purges of the Party officials and the Red Army officers were now carried out, as well as extensive repression on peasants, known today as the Great Purges of 1936-38. 3.6 million were in special settlements and 1.3 million were deported to forced labor camps by the end of the 1930s, while 681,000 were executed in 1937-38 alone. The rate of purging political and military leaders was also excessively high. By the end of the Great Purges, only 40 percent of those who had joined the Party before 1933 survived. 98 out of 139 members and candidates of the Central Committee were either purged or killed in 1937-38. 1,108 out of 1,966 delegates
to the Party Congress were arrested on counterrevolutionary charges. 4 out of 10 members of the Politburo did not make it to 1939. In 1934, the ratio of the party elites who had joined the Party before 1921 was 81 percent, but that proportion dropped to 19 percent in 1939, in mere five years. The Red Army was not an exception. 15 out of the 16 army commanders, 60 out of the 67 corps commanders, and 136 out of the 199 divisional commanders were purged. 68

Unlike the first period in which the enemy identity was derived from externally substantive categories, the regime delineated exclusively narrow boundaries of what would constitute in-group. Thus, even people who were considered within the ‘in-group’ (i.e., the old Bolsheviks) previously were now excised from the newly defined boundaries. However, this new group of ‘out-group’ was ideational—it existed by name only and therefore ineliminable. Consequently, the relational dynamics in this period were unstable in that the Self identity did not have its mirroring (or interactive-doubling identity) image to anchor its meanings.

*Self-organizing Mechanisms and the Great Terror*

The country was being developed economically and militarily, at least on the Party ledger, but social and political conditions were moving backward, especially when compared with the tsardom and even the NEP era. The consequence was the tendency to rely on more despotic and old antecedents, which were rejected in the first place in the

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early phase of socialist development. The Great Purges of the 1930s was the most sweeping application of terror at peacetime in history. The domestic elite was pitted against other elements of the same society to carry out the arrests and murders of thousands of Party and non-Party officials alike, especially targeting all remnants of the Old Bolsheviks.

From the beginning of 1935 through the summer of 1936, the lower echelon of the Party members were purged through arrests or exiles to forced labor camps. This wave of purges was sparked by a circular that was issued on 18 January 1935 by the Central Committee, in which the command was directed to all party organizations to root out counterrevolutionary elements following the 15-16 January trial of Zinoviev, Kamenev, and others associated with them. They were convicted on the basis of conspiring against Moscow by inciting young Leningrad oppositionists abetting Kirov’s 1934 murder. It was conspirational, but fictional suspicion was created one after another to trace the original blame of former “ex-oppositionist circles.”

Although forms of “exemplary violence”—likes of which can be seen in burning villages and summary executions and so forth—were rather common place occurrences during the Civil War between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in the late 1910s, like any other war conducted at the time, the “excisionary violence—the forcible removal of specific segments of the population and the isolation or elimination of these groups”—was what was rampant in Communist Russia. In the first period, decossackization was the

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central movement within which the Soviet commissar carried out the purported weeding out of the Cossackry. Red Terror was undertaken by both the Red and White armies and is a case of “exemplary violence,” which includes public executions, bulldozing villages, and hostage taking.\textsuperscript{72} In this way, the Red Terror engulfed during the Russian Civil War engendered a condition in which both excisionary and exemplary violence were intensified as a matter of state practices which in turn facilitated the categorization of ethnic differences as a way to find their targets.\textsuperscript{73} In the second period, dekulakization marked as the feature of demarking identity boundaries and social categories with labels and passports, targeting kulaks to be eliminated as a class. The functions of the Soviet concentration camps changed during Soviet era. Before the Soviet context, the concentration camps were instituted primarily during wartime or colonial conquest to excise and contain foreign elements, but the Soviet concentration camps were created during peacetime to serve the double purpose of quarantining elements of perceived threats to society but also of reshaping the content and contour of society.\textsuperscript{74} In the third period, “anti-Soviet elements” were framed and applied to the internal Party members and officials, including the military elites, during 1937-38. As such, the targets of enemy identification and collective movements in each periodization are different, but the grouping of categorization gradually shifts inwardly from remnants of imperialist Russia and rivals of the Bolsheviks, to peasants and the populations protected by the Bolsheviks, and eventually to the internal Party leadership.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 260.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 267.
In other words, the impetus of exemplary and excisionary violence was already present before the Bolsheviks came to power. In fact, by the end of the 1920s, the Soviet authorities had consolidated the use of such violence through the Civil War and in areas in the Caucasus and in the border regions of the USSR. Not to mention, the increasing use of forced labor camps facilitated the use of such violence. The idea and discourse of forcibly removing the harmful elements of the society were therefore made substantiated in the name of social renovation, which necessarily required eliminating or removing of deviance from the centralized agenda. The new world order was possible by stamping out what was deemed old.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Ibid., 269.
CHAPTER 3: CHINA

Chinese Communists under Mao’s reign organized a series of state sanctioned campaigns that claimed, in one estimate, as many as 60 million lives, as a result of either direct torture and killings or indirect consequences of forced deportations or famine. At the minimum, the death toll of the catastrophic era of the Communist rule under Mao Zedong reached a staggering figure of 46 million. Estimates are 6 to 10 million deaths from direct actions, while 20 million are estimated to have died inside the prison systems, which implies that tens of millions or more had passed through these systems as “counterrevolutionaries.” A failed state project, the Great Leap Forward of 1958-61, adds deaths caused by man-induced famine of 20 to 43 million.¹

After the Communist victory and founding of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the Communist Party, like its Soviet predecessor, also went through a series of turbulent phases in the road to building a socialist country. The Chinese case presents another pattern of oscillation between periods of gains and losses that were played out by radical leftists, moderates, and various other opponents, as well as the peasantry, in their struggle through cycles of repression and respite. Although no less destructive than Stalinist lethality, Maoist China was different from its Soviet counterpart

in some important respects. The Chinese method of population control departed from that of Soviet Russia in terms of how the archenemy of the respective regimes—counterrevolutionaries—was framed and dealt with. Rectification movements in China tended to focus more on reforming the thoughts and minds of people, rather than behavioral compliance as was the predominant strategy in the Soviet case. Nevertheless, the Chinese example also generated a self-inducing process of framing the counterrevolutionary identity that turned out to be remarkably similar to the Soviet counterpart. Like the Soviets, this was due to an inherent challenge of the revolutionary ethos before and after the revolutions, concerning the governing dynamics of the Party-people relational systems.

The history of the Chinese campaigns after 1949 independence, a series of which culminated into the Cultural Revolution in 1966, can be seen as a continuum of developments. Dating back to 1921, when the Chinese Communist Party began as one of the movements inspired by the Bolshevik revolution, the initial impetus took a form of—and remained as—a patriotic war against intruding enemies who were constantly defined and redefined over time. Before the Chinese Communists’ victory in the civil war, they expanded their support bases to the countryside and among rural peasants, just as the people were increasingly disenchanted with the Nationalist Party’s corruption, poor governance, and lack of decisive offensives against Japanese imperialists. As opposed to the Russian counterparts at the time, China lacked a significant population of working class, industrial proletariats. With having won the broad base of peasant support as a result of land and tax reforms in the 1920s, however, the Communists were gaining new
recruits from the broad stratum of workers, urban middle classes, and intellectuals. For these new recruits, the appeal was not Marxism-Leninism; rather, they joined the communist movement because it fulfilled their nationalist aspiration to fight for the cause in the name of China.²

In the post-1949 period, this social relation between the newly emerged ruler and the ruled was unique to China at the time and manifested itself through a series of class struggles, thought reform movements, and rectification campaigns. At any given point in time, the relational systems between the ruler and ruled was such that the existing condition was in constant anticipation of the resurgence of the Old, the definition of which is malleable across time and space. Politically, power was seized and the regime under the new revolutionary concepts emerged, but the control of the State was not the final end for such a movement, whether they realized it or not. It was more about constantly making sure to deconstruct the “concepts” on which the Old State was based.³ However, this aversive tendency was futile because the concepts of the Old can be only seen when they surface in observable forms. The socio-political events initiated and organized by the Chinese Communist Party under Mao Zedong’s reign, such as the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, are often described as discrete events, compartmentalized as if they existed independently of each other. However, seen in the light of shifting social relations in the changing relational systems, all campaigns and social mobilization by the Party should be placed in a continuum of progression carried out by the regime, desperately at times and moderately at other times.

² Hook 1967, 456.
Communist China’s attempts to create a socialist state, and the mass atrocities that occurred as a result, were not devoid of the Soviet Union’s myriad influences. The model of Stalinist Russia heavily cast its shadow, for good or for naught, on Maoist China, and the CCP’s history of identity creation was in many ways a dual response—for and against—to the Soviet model. The common ground that brought the two regimes together was their shared ideology, but their interpretations and applications of this ideology followed diverging paths. In this sense, the CCP was driven by a different kind of threat, but the patterns of each case’s threat-creation exhibit remarkable similarities. Put differently, one can see the history of the Chinese mass killing episodes in its own light, but when placed in the spectrum of the history of communist political control dating back from the Soviet era, it will elucidate a new light on their developments especially around the theme of threat.

From the Rectification movement that started in Yenan in 1942, as well as a series of thought reforms and reeducation campaigns such as the Three-anti and Five-anti movements in the early 1950s, the Anti-Rightist campaign in 1957, and Socialist Education Movement in 1961 followed by the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese Communists attempted to modify social relations and construct the boundaries of the Chinese communist identity. They exhibited both characteristics of radicalization and de-radicalization, one dormant while the other was manifest, in their efforts to do so. But the basis of the relational dynamics did not change, and over time the systems, either through radicalization or de-radicalization, operated within a parameter of emerging threat systems. Amid changing socio-political problems, the systems became constrained in
such a way that the only way to maintain unity between the systems was to make the imagined threat real by acting on it. By tracing a series of the experimental political campaigns unleashed by the Communist Party of China to address political exigencies, in response to the emerging social, political and economic challenges that gripped the Party leadership over the span of four decades, the history of the Chinese case presents a vivid example of slow and yet incremental slides into the threat system in which the political solutions to the existing threat later became in themselves a new threat.

3.1. HISTORICAL CONTINUITY FROM THE SOVIET UNION

The Soviet Union’s official contacts before 1949 were established first with the internationally recognized Nationalist government led by Chiang Kai-shek. Stalin initially neglected his fellow communist revolutionaries in China as “China’s margarine communists.” He did not believe these Communists would win their war. For him and the Soviets, a shared ground on communist ideology was less important than securing their own national border and interests. However, the Communist takeover of China changed the landscape. In December 1949, having consolidated the communist triumph at home, Mao Zedong traveled to Moscow to forge an agreement between the two socialist states, resulting in the Alliance and Friendship Treaty in February 1950 after two

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months of delays. This agreement facilitated the Stalinization of the People’s Republic of China on its economic, social, political and ideological fronts, albeit at different paces.

Largely influenced by the Confucius tradition, it was culturally sensible for the Chinese Communists to revere their Older Brother who teaches the Younger Brother. The initial influence of Marxism was transmitted before the Chinese Communist Party rose to power in 1949. In the 1920s, the successful overthrow of the Russian monarchy by the Bolshevik revolution inspired Chinese intellectuals to embrace an anti-imperialism stance. It was in fact the Communist International, or Cominterns, through which the young revolutionary intellectuals of the CCP took the Leninist approach and applied it to an organizational structure. Even after 1949, Mao Zedong publicly acknowledged the position of the Soviet model:

   The Communist Party of the Soviet Union, under the leadership of Lenin and Stalin… learned not only how to make the revolution but also how to carry on construction. It has built a great and splendid socialist state. The [CPSU] is our best teacher and we must learn from it.  

   Despite different geographic spans and temporal periods, the leaders of the two largest socialist states shared comparable life experiences. Both Stalin and Mao devoted their entire lives to the realization of communism in their countries, even from the early days in their political careers when the revolutionary struggle appeared doomed. Stalin initially joined the Socialist Democratic Party before it split into the derivative groups of the Menshevik and Bolshevik parties in 1903. Stalin stayed with the latter and became a

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7 Quoted in Ibid., 1.
member of the Central Committee, even while the party was still small with a somewhat bleak future. For Mao, he was one of the founding members of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921 when the communist movement in China experienced the fledging defeat by the Nationalist Party. Both Stalin and Mao had been ostracized politically in their road to undisputed power, with one exiled to Siberia in the 1910s and the other taking part in the retreating Long March between 1933 and 1935. Both of them emerged in the vestiges of civil war, and the parties they were part of survived, almost miraculously, to emerge eventually in dominance after the long power struggle.  

The PRC turned to the Soviet Union in 1952 for its economic aids to consolidate their first Five-Year Plan in China, which was to start in 1953. China in the 1950s was following the drive of ‘Revolutionary Stalinism’ of the 1920s and early 1930s. The industrially backward state and heavily agrarian style of Chinese society necessitated—or so it seemed at the time—economic solutions similar to what Stalin had pursued. China had a prospective and hopeful outlook that she would receive extensive support from Soviet Russia on economic and technical areas but such a plan turned out to be disappointing. What China counted too much on from her neighbor was a model of the Stalinist economic planning before it failed. By the 1930s, almost twenty years before the Chinese communists adopted the Soviet model, the Soviet leadership had “abandoned shock-like, unbalanced development strategies…and had settled on bureaucratically controlled and more balanced economic development.” When the Chinese Communist

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Party was driven by, rightly so, the revolutionary frenzy in China, the ‘older brother’ had already moved on to “Bureaucratic Stalinism.”

3.1.1. Maoist Divergence from the Stalinist Path

When the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was founded in 1920, the early history of the CCP was heavily influenced by the Bolshevik revolution in neighboring Soviet Russia. Like its Soviet counterpart that cast off imperial and bureaucratic remnants of the aristocracy and made a transition to a modernized country under the rule of the proletariat, the Chinese revolutionaries also sought a radical leftist departure from the age-old traditional systems and humiliating experiences of subjugation and domination by foreign powers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. At the outset, the early CCP cadres were indeed following the orthodox route to pursue national revolution through the urban working class instead of the peasantry. Even the young Mao Zedong, at the Third Congress of the CCP in 1923, upheld a gradualist approach by saying that “National revolution in China must be after the world revolution. Socialist revolution in the industrial sector was even further off.” His idea then was that, like the orthodox Marxists, the rapid development of the capitalist class would build ground for a Chinese version of the proletarian masses, expanding their sizable presence and potential for revolution. According to Mao, only if they had failed to achieve such a possibility would

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Ibid., 35.
he and the CCP be ready to accept peasants’ roles in waging the revolution, instead of relying on capitalists or the working class.\(^\text{10}\)

However, the Chinese revolutionary model underwent a process of filtering foreign concepts and was certainly not a blind replication of Soviet Russia. In fact, the adaptation of either Revolutionary Stalinism in the 1920s or Bureaucratic Stalinism (post-1930s) turned out to be a mismatch. One of the two main diversions, which later proved to be so decisive as to separate Maoism from Stalinism, was that Chinese Communists focused more on the role of the peasantry as the main revolutionary forces, instead of relying on the working class as the vanguard of revolution in orthodox Marxism. This was partly due to the economic realities in Soviet Russia and China at the time. Around the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, China was less economically developed than Russia, with a much smaller size of workers and instead much more reliance on the agrarian economy and rural peasants. Furthermore, although this predominant majority of the Chinese population was more deprived and destitute of basic needs than the Russian peasants, they constituted the “only possible successful revolutionary force”\(^\text{11}\) in China because of its sheer size. The preponderance of the peasant communism in China marked a shift from the Soviet experiences, especially as Stalinist Russia was compelled to change its course from ‘revolutionary’ and ‘bureaucratic’ Stalinism precisely because of the contentious issue of how to contain the peasant problems. The peasants were the potential saboteur of the revolution and therefore the population to control in the USSR,

\(^\text{10}\) Kiernan, *Blood and Soil*, 518.

\(^\text{11}\) Ibid., 513.
whereas they drove and worked with the party apparatus to extend and perpetuate control in China.

Besides the different ideological imprint of the peasant roles, the economic model employed by the CCP eventually led to unexpected outcomes as well. Both socialist countries started out with more or less similar economic outlook, in that they were both largely subsistent agrarian peasant societies with a small industrial sector, albeit in different time periods. The key economic differentiation was the fact that, in the Soviet case, heavy mechanization was underway and a plenitude of unfarmed land reserves throughout the country was available, and therefore these factors mutually reinforced each other. Mechanization facilitated the use of arable land reserves and such use was made possible by the mechanization of agricultural practices, allowing the Soviet Union to expand the size of production. By increasing output, any agricultural surpluses in the rural area could be used to purchase foreign technology and to pay for industrialization. Such was the model for creating demands of new labor in industrial sectors and shifting it from increasingly efficient farmland.\(^\text{12}\)

On the other hand, China did not have reserves of arable land, as compared to Soviet Russia, and was operating at its near maximum level of the land’s natural capacities. Consequently, the growth of economic and industrial development was possible almost entirely from Soviet loans, which were main sources of financing industrial developments. China was contractually bound, therefore, to start repaying the Soviet loans, primarily in the form of raw materials and agricultural products. This was a

dual dilemma for the Chinese model of economic development. While they created an industrial sector that relied heavily on foreign investments, mainly from the Soviet Union, their agricultural sector, at near maximum capacity, was without a prospect for a substantial increase in output. Despite the centralized requisition quota imposed by the CCP in late 1953, they would not be able to pay for industrialization and its expansion without increased agricultural production.\(^\text{13}\) It was an infeasible arrangement for the CCP to maintain an equilibrium of agricultural output to pay for its loans while satisfying an increase in industrial development.

Against this backdrop, then Prime Minister Zhou Enlai proposed an economic model used by Yugoslavia consisting of a mix of a market economy and central planning, but with a reduced role of the central and administrative authority of bureaucratic Stalinism. Vice-Chairman Liu Shaoqi suggested a replication of the Soviet NEP to carry out economic planning.\(^\text{14}\) However, these recommendations were not acceptable to Mao. In his view, Tito digressed from the socialist path and therefore he was a traitor, and Mao did not accept the idea of the NEP because Stalin had rescinded it and Bureaucratic Stalinism was unable to create truly egalitarian and anti-bourgeois society. In other words, for him to accept those suggestions would have been tantamount to both a digression from the revolutionary cause and a regression to capitalism in the countryside.\(^\text{15}\) The emerging rift in economic application was thus imminent.

\(^{13}\) Ibid.
\(^{14}\) Ibid., 36.
\(^{15}\) Ibid.
3.1.2. De-Stalinization and the Chinese Path

Another element that propelled Maoist China to take its divergent path away from the Stalinist model was the de-Stalinization policy initiated by Nikita Khrushchev in February of 1956. In the closed session of the Twentieth Congress of the USSR, Khrushchev revealed the Stalinist crimes and denounced the policies previously sanctioned by Stalin. Khrushchev’s historic indictment of Stalinist crimes committed under his rule caused a stir among socialist states worldwide, and this brought an unnerving challenge especially to the Chinese leadership who had aspired for the Stalinist model. Khrushchev made this abrupt move because of domestic political reasons, but his attack on Stalin’s “cult of personality” indirectly implicated China. Mao had forged the CCP based on his own cult and, rightly, took this as a personal challenge against him. From the Chinese perspective, the legitimacy of their governance was put to question, in light of what they considered a Soviet revisionist deviation from a socialist path. The change in course that Moscow took gave the Chinese Communists a chilling prospect for what could happen to them if they were to ‘fail’ in their revolutionary cause and give in to revisionism. Furthermore, Khrushchev took a “peaceful coexistence” policy with the West and denied Soviet aids to Mao.

The Chinese Communists saw de-Stalinist deviation as a betrayal to Marxism and the Soviets forfeited the leadership of the worldwide communist states, which should now be relegated to China.\(^16\) Mao’s response to de-Stalinization was a rejection of the Soviet model under Khrushchev for political and personal reasons. From then on, the rift

\(^{16}\) Shu-kai, “Significance of the Rift between the Chinese Communist Regime and the Soviet Union,” 68.
caused the Chinese to distrust the Soviet model and created an impaired confidence in it. The ideological rift between Khrushchev and Mao also created ripple effects within China’s internal leadership question. Despite Mao’s attempts to control discipline among his fellow leaders, some deliberately skipped the reference to Mao Zedong Thought in their participation at the Eighth Party Congress in September of that year.¹⁷ Khrushchev’s purges of Stalin’s long-time circle, namely Vyacheslav Molotov, Lazar Kaganovich, and Georgy Malenkov, in 1957 were, in Mao’s eyes, testimony to an ideological affront of the alleged Soviet revisionism and to a prospect of what it can do to Mao’s own projection, either to himself or to his style of governance, were it to occur in China. Moreover, Mao saw the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 as a sign that the Soviet leadership had lost the “sword of Stalin” in the wake of Khrushchev’s new direction. Although Mao was willing to consider liberal economic models to not repeat the policy mistakes of Russia, those two external happenings convinced him to move away from Soviet Russia in ideological and political dimensions.¹⁸

Thus, the CCP post-1956 was in a period of undergoing ideological and strategic evolution from its prior ‘apprenticeship’ under the Soviet leadership in the worldwide communist movement. The departure was further accentuated by the fact that the Soviet application in China only resulted in futile results. The design of the first Five-Year Plan from 1953 was modeled after Soviet experiences, but its shortcomings raised questions about the adoptability of the Soviet economic planning. Furthermore, relatively smooth

and less violent experiments of socialist transformation, namely, the Chinese collectivization in the mid-1950s, compared with the Soviet collectivization two decades earlier, cast doubt on the legitimacy of the Soviet model. As a result, the Chinese leaders found greater confidence that they could devise their own path of socialist movements.\textsuperscript{19}

The departure of Maoist China from Stalinist Russia in its pursuit of socialist state building began in tangible economic forms. On the domestic front, Mao’s Great Leap Forward can be framed as his direct challenge to Khrushchev’s course of de-Stalinization that further reinforced Mao’s radical economic policies and accentuated the difference in his ideological stance from the Soviet leaders. After a brief setback of his political leadership, Mao returned to his supreme seat of leadership by March 1958, and he resurrected his personality cult with the help of Lin Biao and the People’s Liberation Army, creating a buffer to shield him from any potential accusations against him.

Consolidation of power was finalized at the Beidaihe Politburo meeting held in August of that year where Mao delegated the supreme decision making power to himself, announcing more radical economic policies while reversing more liberal economic policies taken at the Eighth Party Congress in 1956.\textsuperscript{20}

\textbf{3.2. Oscillations between Gains and Losses}

The Chinese version of the oscillation between gains and losses can be discussed also in three periods. The first period is in the formation of the Communist consciousness


\textsuperscript{20} Lüthi, “Sino-Soviet Relations during the Mao Years, 1949-1969,” 40.
during the Yenan era in the early 1940s. The second period takes place during the Maoist experiments such as the Hundred Flowers Campaign and the Great Leap Forward. The third is the process leading up to the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, when attempts to regain political control led to dissolution of the very control itself.

3.2.1. The 1st Stage: Rectification and Discipline

In China, the pursuit of the Party unity and control was achieved through organizing a series of political campaigns. Chinese campaigns or mass movements were designed to generate planned changes among target populations. While there is not a complete tally of all the campaigns, for there were campaigns on a various scale, it is estimated there were more than 150 over two decades, including the ones by small organizations. Of those campaigns, a few stand out as key turning points in increasing the level of the regime control in terms of more radicalized repression and killings. The three distinct periods illustrate the progression of these radicalized trajectories over time. The first period was the Rectification Movement in Yenan area in 1942-44. The second period marked the tumultuous decade of the 1950s when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) experimented Three-anti and Five-anti campaigns in 1951, the Hundred Flowers Campaign in 1956, and the Anti-Rightist Campaign in 1957. Finally, the self-organizing pattern of ever-perpetual and reinforcing mechanisms of violence had been established by 1966, the year when the Cultural Revolution officially commenced.

The first organized campaign by the CCP to disseminate its disciplinary control was the Rectification Movement in 1942-44. After the Long March, having been defeated by the Kuomintang and driven to the mountainous areas of Yenan, a regional capital of Shaanxi province, the Chinese Communist Party had to go through its internal identity struggle. During this period, the Tsunyi Conference in 1935 affirmed the beginning of Mao Zedong’s ascendancy in the Central Committee and the Party began the process of internalizing Marxist theory and concepts gleamed from the Soviet movement. While the period after 1949 saw a series of constant campaigns, this Rectification movement proved to be the archetype of what followed, a model to be noted as the first organizational reference point.

The emphasis of the methodology was placed on thought remolding and reeducation, rather than coercive behavior compliance. It was not associated with any conventional excisionary violence, and the methods used during the movement, such as study sessions, criticism and self-criticism, and public confessions, became the precedent for subsequent CCP campaigns thereafter. The Rectification Movement paved the way for a Chinese model of rectifying deviant elements by involving mass participation. The basis of the relational associations was thus didactic and not (yet) excisionary.

*The Rectification Movement in Yenan*

Domestication of communist thought and discipline was a matter of urgent necessity at the time in order to maintain the ideological and organizational unity of the

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movement. Before the rise of Mao, his predecessors like Chiang Kai-shek and Sun Yat-sen desperately tried to modernize China but, in the eyes of Mao, failed. They were unable to graft foreign concepts into Chinese soil. There were limits in promoting advanced industrialization in the pre-modern agrarian society without relying on foreign-born industries or technologies. Despite Sun Yat-sen’s attempts, Western traditions and democratic aspirations could not take root because of the age-old traditions of imperial rule that was resistant to exogenous change. Marxism-Leninism was then heralded as a new formula, or so it seemed, to emancipate the crippled society from foreign domination as well as Japanese imperialism and to protect their borders from further crumbling. However, in this Yenan era, there was little to sustain the ideological unity of cadres coming from diverse backgrounds other than a shared experience of anti-Japanese struggles and a shared commitment to a generic vision of a strong and independent China. Noumoff highlights the basic inspirational tenet for the Chinese revolutionaries, local or urban. That is, both the illiterate peasants and urban intelligentsia came to possess their shared commitment to the establishment of a new world system replacing the old for their own respective reasons—with one side desiring to gain a better lot of the land and the other side seeking the restoration of tenets such as national unity, independence, prestige and self-esteem of the Chinese identity as a nation.\(^\text{23}\) Regardless of these motives, there was enormous growth of Party members during this period, from approximately 40,000 in 1937 to somewhere between 800,000 and 900,000 in 1942, a twenty-fold growth in just over a five-year period and was still projected to continue. The size of the Party

membership in fact reached 4.5 million at the end of Chinese independence in 1949, and it later grew to 12.7 million by 1957.\textsuperscript{24} Thus, during the Yenan period, except for high-level senior cadres or the minority group who had studied in Russia, Marxist-Leninist thought was virtually a foreign concept and there had been no systematic ideological trainings for the increasingly growing movement.

There was also a growing schism in the leadership that put the party unity at risk. During this period, Mao was locked in a power struggle with the internationalist camp of the CCP, who had studied at the Sun Yat-sen University in Moscow. Known as the 28 Bolsheviks and headed by Wang Ming and Qin Bangxian, this group advocated the application of the Soviet method of revolution. Mao on the other hand countered this group by emphasizing that the conditions in China were different from those of the USSR and that the methods amenable to the Chinese context should be adopted. Mao thus discounted the internationalists’ inclination to rely on the works of Marx and Lenin alone as they did not address the issues China was grappling with at the time. From Marxism-Leninism to Maoism, the transformation of Mao’s philosophy can be found in one of the speeches made in the Yenan era. For him, Marxism-Leninism was a science that guaranteed a path to the proletarian revolution and therefore a guide to action. In so saying, he despised so-called Marxists who did not put the theory into actual experimentation or application.\textsuperscript{25} The Rectification movement was thus the beginning of a Maoist emphasis to implement ‘mind over matter’ in a tangible form. Mao instituted a

\textsuperscript{24} Noumoff further explains “Of this number only 1,740,000 were categorized as industrial proletarians, representing 13.5 per cent of total Party membership. The problem is complicated by the fact that only 35 per cent of the 11,000,000 industrial workers held employment in industry prior to 1950” (225).

re-education system through which the Party line and ideology could be imbued on certain cadres by the indoctrination of Mao Zedong Thought. He promulgated that “the entire Party must be transformed into a “school of endless learning” (wuqi daxue).” In effect, it was also meant to deter the internationalists as well. Against these experienced and often more senior cadres, Liu Shaoqi, who later became the PRC President and himself a target of the purge during the Cultural Revolution forty years later, criticized that they were divorced from the masses and indulged in privileges based on their long party membership.

Another element that called for the need to instill discipline within the Party was the CCP inclination to use guerrilla tactics in their armed struggle against enemies. There was a need to strengthen the chain of military command throughout many isolated villages in North China conducting guerrilla warfare. But the blind obedience to party directives far removed from the front lines was not ideal to their military strategy. Guerrilla fight, which became one of the central tactics of Maoist struggles, required a level of flexibility and autonomy to produce maximum results, with a minimum central directive and control. This was possible only if the local military units were firmly grounded on the shared ideological outlook and goals of the revolutionary movement. To this end, the Party leadership prescribed an unprecedented scale of a centrally organized campaign to educate cadres. Cadres went through exercises of small group study and thought reform, as well as criticism and self-criticism sessions in order to inculcate the Marxist-Leninist principles and models of how they would be applicable to China. Those

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sessions entailed four stages, which were “airing, counter-attack, rectification, study and self-criticism,” and it was based on the emphasis reiterated by Zhou Enlai and Liu Shaoqi, “the principle of using words not hands.”\textsuperscript{27} It was a methodology to analyze the past and present problems for the Party membership.\textsuperscript{28}

Thus, the movement from February 1942 and onward was mainly concerned with three overarching objectives: 1) thought reform of the Party members through re-education; 2) mass mobilization for production; and 3) redressing “right” or “left” deviations from the Party lines.\textsuperscript{29} The underlying purpose of the CCP propaganda and the Party line was to establish the way in which the Communist Party, presumably “the vanguard of the people,” and the masses were connected. The aim was to ensure that the people would come to realize their needs as interpreted by the Party and the Party would then reflect the basic needs and aspirations of the people.\textsuperscript{30}

\textit{Prototype of disciplinary control}

In retrospect, this period of CCP regrouping proved to be the incubating time for what would later become Maoism, the Chinese mutation of the Marxist theoretical origin with more involvement of the peasantry and with more emphasis on mind over matter. The peasants were now incorporated in the making of the revolution as Mao recognized

\textsuperscript{27} Noumoff, “China’s Cultural Revolution as a Rectification Movement,” 225.
during this time the potential of peasant mobilization and how this could play to the Party’s advantage against the failing Nationalist government that was weakened by foreign incursions. It was thought that peasants had the potential of carrying out what the urban proletariat would normally do in the process of socialist state building.

Unlike the Old Bolsheviks in the early Chinese communist movement, Mao was thus able to integrate foreign concepts of Marxist-Leninist principles with nationalist aims. This prototype of reeducation and learning systems was then constituted as the essential part of the CCP practice and was recurrent throughout the subsequent developments of the CCP. The General Education Committee was created above the Politburo and the Party Secretariat to run the Rectification Campaign. The CCP Politburo Standing Committee would organize programs of reeducation in order to (re)assert the unity of the cadres and the Party establishment. The Yenan era also served as a base for the CCP to mount a nationwide united front with the Kuomintang against the imperial Japanese incursion. Thus the erstwhile adversary, the Kuomintang, tacitly recognized the base area of the CCP to be in Yenan and acknowledge the CCP’s transformation from a mere soviet to an organized region of the national government in late 1937, having transformed from an insurgent rebel movement to solid rulers of the region that encompassed 23 counties and more than 1.4 million residents. It was a transformation from a rebellious class movement to an organized political movement under the banner of national unity and independence.


The rectification movement was successful in the sense that the Party orientation was consolidated under Mao Zedong’s leadership and the Party thoughts and organization were now centralized. It served as a process of internalizing the revolution in a Chinese way.\textsuperscript{33} It was therefore a political mobilization of a formerly fragmented organization to unite under the same administrative umbrella, more so than purely indoctrinating new and old party cadres to be genuine Communists with Marxism-Leninism infused in their minds. The process of thought remolding became the key to establish the unity of the Party discipline and ideology.

In this process, the CCP did not start out with purges. Internal dissidence was handled by thought reform through ideological molding, and purge was neither the objective nor the main tactic. The movement was more concerned with defining the applicability of orthodox Marxist texts in the Chinese context, especially through Mao’s interpretations. At this time, the intention of “the struggle” was not to eliminate, but to reconstruct and instill the principles by which they were expected to resolve problems within the Party. In fact, cadres who were subjected to criticism were not necessarily expelled from the Party organization nor demoted, as exemplified by Wang Ming, the leading figure of the Old Bolsheviks. It was not designed to purge those criticized in that sense. Rather, they were required to “struggle” through their errors by persevering and enduring psychological stress. The methodology of the campaign did not include expulsion, imprisonment, or execution, which were more common in the period of intra-Party power struggles later and, surely, the Cultural Revolution. Instead, the rectification

\textsuperscript{33} Noumoff, “China’s Cultural Revolution as a Rectification Movement,” 223.
in the 1940s was an effective means to imbue leadership training and establish Party unity and cohesion.\textsuperscript{34}

At this stage of development of Chinese communism, the degree of success of the Rectification Movement was a departure from traditional models of controlling deviance but it was still not destructive. From the perspective of Chinese traditions which placed an emphasis on face-to-face relationships, obedience to familiar personal authority, and a range of face-saving practices to avoid any shaming or embarrassment, any new movements such as Communism needed to strike a proper balance between those cultural techniques and a radical shift toward socialist policies, which necessitated changes in the continuity of village life. It was necessary to both supplant and supplement tradition-oriented personal and communal relationships with the new Party doctrines to create a strong united orientation under the Party rule. It turned out that the practices of criticism and self-criticism were effective because it destroyed, without physical force, traditional hierarchical relationships or leadership conceptions and bridged value systems between the urban and rural, the educated and illiterate, and the new and old. Thus, new group norms and organizational principles were forged and rewarded.\textsuperscript{35}

The Rectification Movement was thus the first of a series of Communist ways—in a non-lethal manner—to deconstruct the traditional values and norms of leadership to attain and exert its form of control over the new constituents. Chen argues that as a result of rectification campaigns and methods of criticisms and self-criticisms, the methodology to maintain party control and allegiance was established, mainly by a means of relentless

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 108.
stamping out of any deviations in thoughts and actions. Thus, the thought remolding gave way to behavior control in enforcing orders and decrees of the Party apparatus.\textsuperscript{36} It became a basis of a method to transform the nascent party with a united set of ideological goals and an army with unwavering loyalty to the Party in the face of enemy Japanese imperialist forces and conflicting personal bonds arising from Confucius traditions.

\textbf{3.2.2. The 2\textsuperscript{nd} Stage: Liberalization and Control}

With the Communist victory in 1949 and without immediate foreign or imperial enemies to rally against, the subjects to rectify through CCP campaigns shifted inwardly. The first set of major campaigns in the post-1949 era—the Three-anti (corruption, waste and bureaucracy) and the Five-anti (anti bribery, tax evasions, theft of state property, cheating on government contracts) Campaigns in 1951—were initiated in order to increase efficiency of the Party management and encourage more frugality in the wake of rising costs of the Korean War. The CCP was targeting maladies of the organizational inefficiency by inviting widespread popular participation but were not exterminatory against particular groups as a class enemy. During these campaigns, 4.5 percent of the cadres were charged. It was, however, the beginning of using the “red” and “black” credentials, a practice of arbitrary labeling, the affect of which reverberated through later movements.

The campaign tide changed after Khrushchev took the de-Stalinization course in 1956. The ideological and political basis of the CCP model, which was following the

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Stalinist one, was challenged, and Mao responded by attempting liberal experiments. The Hundred Flowers Campaign in 1956 was unleashed in hopes that constructive debates and criticisms on economic and social policies would be aired, but the results were more destabilizing. Harsh criticisms from intellectuals and cadres were mounted against the fundamental legitimacy of the Party rule and leadership, rather than the effectiveness of their policies. Those outspoken elements were labeled “rightists”—to connote anyone who opposed the Party line—and became subjects of repression in the Anti-Rightists Campaign in 1957. Although there were in general few executions, the cadres and people began to extol the revolutionary and “red” credentials and between 400,000 and 700,000 were labeled counterrevolutionaries and sent to forced labor camps.

As such, risks of losing political control from internal dissidents increased, now that the Communist Party was no longer waging ‘revolution’ to overthrow capitalism. Those risks were met by targeting more ideational deviant categories and, in turn, creating new boundaries of in-groups. However, the methods with which these campaigns were carried out were still modeled after the Rectification Movement in the 1940s. The targeting of the rightists and suppression of potential dissidents became more excessive, as rebound of the liberal Hundred Flowers’ period, but they were still not mass killing in that the excision did not lead to near certain death.

*Three-anti and Five-anti*

After the challenging years of the Yenan era, the Communists’ victory in the civil war founded the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 and the Central Committee
unleashed a series of new mass mobilizations to assert its organizational control. The Three-anti and the Five-anti movements were arguably the first mass mobilizations to weed out deviant activities from party politics and peasant life in the post-1949 era. “Three-anti” refers to three forms of anti, which are corruption, waste and bureaucracy. “Five-anti” was later introduced to cover bribery, tax evasions, theft of state property, cheating on government contracts, and stealing economic information. Before these campaigns were launched in 1951, there had been already others, such as the agrarian reform movement, the Resist America Aid Korea movement, and the counterrevolutionary suppression movement.

The Three-anti and Five-anti movements were also non-lethal but, with the changing nature of the Party control, increased the level of repression as the campaigns followed one after another. When the Hundred Flowers campaign was unleashed in 1957, followed by the Anti-Rightist movement, coercive repression began to be the new baseline of controlling counterrevolutionary elements. In the post-1949 logic of the CCP, these campaigns served dual purposes. One was to achieve the purported aims of each campaign, as their titles literally suggest, but the other was to mobilize the masses and strengthen the Party’s capacity to do so. For the Party cadres, it was through these campaigns that they could gauge the extent of their influence over the matters of people’s social, economic, and political life. In this respect, intensification of the repressive measures from Three-antis, through the Hundred Flowers, to the Anti-Rightist illustrated the shifting facet of control.
July 1951 marked the launch of the campaign to eliminate “counterrevolutionary” elements, followed by the three-anti and five-anti movements. The general target was elites of urban populations, and the intent of the movements was to subordinate them under the Party line. What constituted “counterrevolutionary” was vaguely defined. Although Mao did not initially elaborate on what would constitute “three-evils” or “five-evils,” his speech at the third session of the National Committee on October 23, 1951, became the basis of where the movements were derived. Anything that goes against the Party line was deemed a sign deviant enough to be labeled as counterrevolutionary.

While there is no clear number, the few available sources suggest an extensive scale of mass repression. According to one figure, 3,000 arrests were made over one night in Shanghai, 220 public executions in one day in Beijing, and in Guangzhou, 89,000 arrests and 23,000 executions occurred over a period of ten months. On charges of tax evasion, more than 100,000 small business owners were interrogated in Shanghai alone, and 300,000 were imprisoned nationwide. While Mao himself later spoke of the figure of 800,000 as the number of counterrevolutionaries who were executed, it is estimated that one million were liquidated in the cities. The liquidation was probably concentrated in urban areas, with the ratio being three-to-one when compared with rural areas. As Tang shows, corruption was framed as an act symbolizing bourgeois ideology and met with severe punishments. In one episode, it was exposed that two senior cadres in Tianjin had

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37 Margolin, “China: A Long March into Night,” 482.
received a bribe of 20,000 Yuan and as a punishment Mao Zedong had them executed as a public demonstration showing CCP’s readiness to stamp out bourgeois ideology.\textsuperscript{38}

With the outbreak of the Korean war, and post independence in general, there was an increasing emphasis on thrift in the attitude of the party cadres and citizens and the overall need to revamp economic production to catch up with the growing ledger of the war budget. Even before the launch of the three-anti movement, there had been efforts to tackle corruption, waste, and bureaucracy, but the 1952 campaign was different in its scope to cover the nation-wide movement. At the beginning, the motivational drives for these campaigns were primarily pragmatic and economic. In the course of the Korean War and its rising cost, there was a practical need to reduce all non-military expenses. It was also seen as necessary to encourage the entire population to increase their productivity. As such, it was proposed that a massive campaign should be waged to fight against corruption, waste, and bureaucratism, so as to save any unnecessary expenditure on a nationwide scale. Later, three-antis were expanded to five-antis so that small businesses were also targeted.\textsuperscript{39}

The Three-anti movement was started following the December 1951 directive by the National Committee in which corruption and waste were identified as enemies of the “people’s organization” and deemed bureaucratism as being the breeding ground for these behaviors. A month later, in January 1952, it was reported by the Minister of Finance and Chairman of the Production and Thrift Supervisory Committee that


\textsuperscript{39} Chen and Chen, “The ‘Three-Anti’ and ‘Five-Anti’ Movements in Communist China,” 5.
preliminary investigations exposed more than 1,600 violators in 27 departments of the Party administration. The authors took caution because the figures came from government sources, and realized that the reality could be more pervasive in terms of the actual number of offenders investigated but dismissed in the reporting. It seems that what was uncovered was only the tip of the iceberg, and the Party resorted to exercising self-examination and confessions, encouraging that those who bring to light the guilt of others would receive reduced penalties or even rewards. What followed was mounting revelations of corruption and waste engaged by party officials of all ranks. These exposures were contrary to the original aim of the movement. The nationwide struggle against “vestiges of feudalism and Kuomintang reaction” was initially to prop up mass support by organizing shared experiences for the people to engage in the patriotic struggle for the “people’s democracy,” which would, in turn, divert attention from the shortcomings of the new regime. By inviting mass participation, it was also designed so that people would own the process rather than being coerced into the campaigns.

Furthermore, there was a concern among the Communist leaders that, unlike their revolutionary experiences that were forged during the years of fighting against the Kuomintang and the Japanese in the impoverished mountain areas, the younger recruits who joined the Party around or after the Communist victory in 1949 were less steeled due to a lack of discipline; hence, the fear of bureaucratism, despite the fact that it was an inverse expression of the fear of reticent relaxation and of moral deterioration of the Party.

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Ibid.
It was estimated that in the end less than 5 percent of government personnel had been charged during the three-anti movement.\textsuperscript{41} There were a variety of punishments and they were not necessarily excisionary. It varied from dismissal to imprisonment to summary execution. From the organizational standpoint, purges served functional roles in that they regulated the purity and unity of the Party and facilitated the upward mobility of the remaining cadres.\textsuperscript{42} As a result of this organizational filtering, for instance, in April of that year in North China, 8,000 new cadres were selected for vacant positions in industry, and in Hopei province, 4,000 new recruits were trained to be special cadres in mines and factories. As such, the three-anti movement was the first sweeping movement of internal cleansing of the Party, without necessarily the intent of obliterating the entire class of leadership. In fact, the top echelon of leadership was left unaffected by this movement. In fact, no governor of the provinces, top military officials or generals, or members of the Central Committee were subjected to accusation.\textsuperscript{43}

Soon three-anti was expanded to five-anti, and the two movements started complementing each other as two wheels of the same vehicle. The “five-evils” were bribery, tax evasion, fraud, theft of state assets, and leakage of state economic secrets. “While the target of the “three-anti” was the corrupt elements in the government and Party, the “five-anti” was directed against the “bourgeoisie” —merchants, industrialists and business people in general.”\textsuperscript{44} Some argue that the expansion to five-anti was partly due to face-saving measures to restore public confidence in the Party, after so much of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[41] Ibid., 7.
\item[42] Ibid., 8.
\item[43] Ibid., 9.
\item[44] Ibid., 10.
\end{footnotes}
the Party image was tainted by the three-anti movement, and also to divert public attention to new targets. This new line of attack emerged, saying the struggle against the three-antis constituted in essence a struggle against “the corrupt and degenerate ideology of the bourgeoisie.” Now merchants and business people were retroactively accused as the roots of all evils, and the scope of five-anti was sufficiently broad enough to apply to virtually any merchant or industrialist and accuse them on the basis of making ‘excessive’ profits. The accusation of profiteering was enough to indict and, subsequently, charge for tax evasion and calculate how much tax delinquency was done after such accusations.45 These people were put on public trials in a variety of ways, including denunciation meetings, public trials, investigation teams, and confession sessions to disclose unidentified offenders. In this way, just as the Land Reform in 1940s gave an opportunity for the peasants to wage a struggle against their former landlords, this time the five-anti movement organized the urban population to struggle in another class war against the bourgeoisie. The non-proletarian class, therefore, was targeted and eliminated one after another, by not necessarily eradicating the entire bourgeoisie but by getting rid of their ideology and influence over the masses.

These movements were, from a tactical standpoint, a means to reassert the Party’s control and authority, with the participation and endorsement of the masses that supported them. The Party was reconstituting itself to replace the purged bourgeois elements, or bad elements, with more loyal activists and proletarian elements.

Hundred Flower and Anti-Rightist Campaigns

The Hundred Flowers Campaign, which began in late 1956 and reached its height in May-June 1957, paved the way for this cycle of mass repression, followed by the Anti-Rightist campaign. This movement was inextricably related to the de-Stalinization course instituted by Khrushchev. After the Hungarian Revolution in October 1956, Mao sensed that Bureaucratic Stalinism had its limits to address internal deviance and conflicts by being too rigid and ineffective. Against this backdrop, Mao was willing to experiment with liberal policies. When senior officials such as Liu, Zhou, and Chen Yun took the opportunity to make alternative suggestions such as the reintroduction of a NEP-based market economy for countryside peasants, Mao decided to launch the Hundred Flowers Campaign in 1956-57.

Initially, the Campaign was meant to be a space for party cadres and technical members of the Party to express constructive criticisms and grievances of the Party systems and policies in China. Furthermore, non-Party intellectuals were especially encouraged to participate in the movement. With an ancient adage, “Let a hundred flowers bloom, a hundred schools of thought contend,” the Campaign started with the optimism to facilitate a flourishing of creativity and a unity of different expressions.

The initiation of this Campaign was reflective of the shift the Party was undergoing at the time. Having consolidated the rapid socialization movements of agricultural, industrial, and commercial activities in 1955-56, the Party was in the “socialist high tide” and concluded that they had achieved “the basic victory of socialism
over capitalism” by 1955. It was thought that they had passed the initial phase of class struggle and therefore moved on to a new phase to consolidate further unity in support of socialist state construction among the Party and non-Party members alike. It was a task of resolving “contradictions among the people” — meaning unity in people’s divergent interests within the communist society. It was a different task from overcoming “contradictions with the enemy,” which they had already achieved, or so they believed. It was further emphasized that, given people’s basic support of socialism, their views and interests rested on a legitimate ground even if they may differ from one another and therefore, persuasive methods should be used to address those contradictions. Mao explicitly invoked the precedents of the Rectification movement in the 1940s as a model to follow.

The Campaign was at its peak starting in May 1957. The first few weeks of the Hundred Flowers were indeed greeted with an optimism of liberalization. Intellectuals engaged in academic debates on, for example, the role of Marxism-Leninism in philosophy, heredity, periodization of history in China, and journalistic approaches. They held a series of academic conferences on such issues as water conservancy as well as policy concerns and preferences. In the first half of 1957, before the Campaign became intense, these debates were indeed ‘healthy’—from the Party standards—just as “fragrant flowers” were blooming, stimulating informed interactions on technical subjects without compromising the legitimacy of the Party authority. These forums and conferences were

47 Ibid., 185.
organized and even encouraged by Party officials, and often the content was then
publicized through the official media outlets. By early May, the movements expanded
from the central ministries to provincial levels, involving various administrative organs to
engage in the three-stage process of the Campaign: “1) mobilization of cadres and study
of documents; 2) examination of problems and criticism from below; and 3)
summarization of experiences.”

However, contrary to Mao’s initial optimism, the relaxed approach of the
Hundred Flowers soon proved to be disastrous and backfired. Criticisms expressed by the
Party cadres and non-Party intellectuals went well beyond the limits of acceptable Party
boundaries. The barrage of criticism was directed not only at the Party policies but also to
the leadership of the regime, and as a result, questioning the fundamental legitimacy of
the Party rule. In the face of mounting criticisms that seemed threatening to the control of
the Party control, at least from Mao’s perspective, he quickly rescinded the movement in
June 1957. Effectively, the most active period of the Hundred Flowers Campaign was
only one month. Those Communist intellectuals who had experienced the Yenan period’s
rectification movement were prudent and stayed quiet. But the cadres who joined the
Party with or after the 1949 victory and liberation took the brunt of the repercussion from
their outspoken criticisms of their own Party, only to be the victims of the Anti-Rightist
suppression. Such sudden termination of the Campaign implied that it was no longer
possible to revert to any experiments of liberal economic policies or reintroduce
Bureaucratic Stalinist control of the Party administration because the bureaucracy needed

48 Ibid., 193.
those experienced cadres who had just expressed their extensive dissatisfaction during the Hundred Flowers Campaign. 49

With the abrupt end of the Hundred Flowers came the launch of the Anti-Rightist Campaign in June 1957. The Party was now on the defensive. The new movement aimed at restoring the trust and control that were undermined by the liberal atmosphere of the Hundred Flowers, by refuting ‘rightists.’ The methods used in the Anti-Rightist campaign remained largely the same—studying documents, criticism and self-criticism, debates, refutations, and wall posters. However, while the Hundred Flowers largely dealt with the Party cadres and non-Party intellectuals, the ‘pool’ of the rightist targets was expanded to broader social groups including workers and peasants. The initial attacks on key rightists paved the way for more systematic targeting of rightist phenomena—a shift from targeting individuals to targeting their views. This was a corollary of a loose conception of what the ‘right’ consisted of basically meaning any criticisms that undermined the Party authority. By the summer of 1957, the Party unleashed massive counteroffensives in search of this vague rightist identity not only in government organs and higher intellectual circles, but also factories, mines, schools, and urban and rural districts of cities and counties. The rate of executions during the Hundred Flowers and Anti-Rightist campaigns was relatively low, in Chinese standards, but an estimate of between 400,000 and 700,000 cadres were labeled rightists and sent to forced labor prisons or camps in remote areas for more than twenty years to repent and to be reeducated. 50

The Anti-Rightist Campaign’s ‘counterattacks’ against the rightists and the new orientation toward anti-liberalization had served two functions for the CCP. One was that Mao initially allowed people to express their grievances, but these expressions were used as the targets of repression and their liberal thoughts were ruled out. With this reversal of policy, the central directive’s position changed in that the initial (and optimistic) assumption about a basic consensus on socialism came to naught and instead the Party was in danger of encroaching on the influences of the bourgeois intellectuals and rightist views. Some argue that this was not planned because it would have demonstrated Mao’s hyper-phobia. Whether intended or not, the shift from the Hundred Flowers to the Anti-Rightists in a matter of mere few months did create new baselines of how much the CCP was willing to take in order to single out potential deviant elements. Secondly, from the perspective of the regime apparatus, the Anti-Rightist Campaign brought the orthodox party control back in line and reunited the Party coherence in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet’s Twentieth Party Congress and in the face of mounting criticism unleashed during the Hundred Flowers. In so doing, Mao effectively increased the legal regulation and control over security activities by the Party organs and enforcement and execution of such services.51

While the campaigns shifted from one to another on a manifest level, the politics of labeling categories of people reached a stage on a latent level. Maoist methods of campaigning under the slogan of “Never forget the class struggle” were now permanently based on these classification practices. Unlike the Three-anti and Five-anti periods in

which targeted signs of the campaign activities such as corruption or bureaucratism were associated with tangible items or behavior, the Anti-Rightist movement began to crack down on the *perceived* representations of targeted people. Therefore, the subsequent campaigns began to use ‘rightists,’ ‘counterrevolutionary,’ ‘red,’ or ‘black’ labels. According to Maoist logic, the distinction between the “red” and “black” categories was arbitrary but the existence of these labels superseded this fact. The category of the “red” included such groups as workers, poor and middle class peasants, party cadres, soldiers and any martyrs of the revolution, whereas the “black” group consisted of landowners, rich peasants, counterrevolutionaries, and right-wingers. Those who initially did not fall in to these arbitrarily binary categories, such as intellectuals, capitalists, and the marginalized elements of the society, were later increasingly labeled, as members of the “black” category.52

Later, during the Cultural Revolution, these shifting categories were labeled as blacks, and those stigma stayed with the condemned no matter how they repented later. Once condemned, they became the subjects of accusations in later campaigns, and true rehabilitation did not take place. Therefore, the practice of the Maoist methods always had new categories to hunt down, almost every year in different labeling since 1957, but the logic of the Maoist society was precisely the reverse. The Party hunted members of their own society down not because there were enemies of the people per se, but because the Party needed enemies during that period to maintain its assertiveness and legitimacy. The policy of constantly searching for the targets to struggle against was the only viable

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52 Ibid., 486.
way to maintain the unity and cohesion of the masses. Campaigning was the measurable
and sustainable way to gauge the extent of strength and reach of Party influence.

3.2.3. The 3rd Stage: Regression and Radicalization

Mao’s attempts to surpass Stalinist models and achieve rapid and massive
collectivization, known as the Great Leap Forward, began from 1958 to 1961. The
outcomes were fatally disastrous. Peasant way of life was disrupted by newly imposed
people’s communes, unrealistic production targets and poor reallocation of resources
diminished the harvests, and famine resulted. The estimate of death toll ranges from 20
million to 40 million. The retrenchment in the aftermath of the Great Leap Forward
stripped Mao of his Party secretary position, and instead Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping
released people from the communes and loosened economic and social policies. The
Party cadres were now in disarray, being castigated for having loyally and
enthusiastically promoted the Great Leap’s propaganda and goals.

With the backing of the People’s Liberation Army and the overzealous Red
Guards who were mostly made up of students, Mao instigated the Cultural Revolution in
1966 to remove “capitalist inroads” and restore the Maoist orthodoxy within the Party by
mobilizing the masses against the Party bureaucracy. In the post-Great Leap retrenchment,
the revolutionary identity of the Chinese Communist Party was at stake. Mao preferred to
dismantle the intransigent Party bureaucracy to recreate more disciplined communist
‘ingroups’ rather than allowing further encroachment of capitalist inroads or apologists of
moderation. Risks of failing the revolutionary cause by remaining in status quo was seen
more costly than risks of disrupting the organizational hierarchy and unity of the Party, especially in the post-Great Leap retrenchment period.

During the period of the Cultural Revolution, it is estimated that 60 percent of the Central Committee members and 75 percent of the provincial Party secretaries were purged. Between 3 and 4 million cadres out of 18 million were expelled or imprisoned. An estimated toll of deaths run between 492,000 and 1,970,000 in total, whereas between 1968-71, impacts of the Cultural Revolution in the rural regions were severely affected and an estimate of 36 million had undergone some form of political persecution, with the death toll between 750,000 and 1 million. The official record sets that 4,200,000 were persecuted, 1,728,000 were killed, while 237,000 were killed in factional armed battles in the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution.

Leading up to the Great Leap Forward

New economic policies were decisively put forward at the Third Plenum in the fall of 1957, and they turned into the Great Leap Forward in 1958. At the Third Plenum, the prevailing view was that the Anti-Rightist rectification struggles were largely successful in restoring the Party leadership roles and Mao saw it as a victory on political and ideological fronts. He made a leap of judgment that this success could be translated to peasant enthusiasm and a readiness for greater transformation of agricultural production and development. Thus, the CCP tilted to a radical economic strategy. It

53 Ibid., 524.
55 Su, Collective Killings in Rural China During the Cultural Revolution, 37.
marked the definitive departure of Maoist China from the Soviet model of Five-Year development plans. It is regarded that the Great Leap Forward consolidated a new, Maoist model. That is, Mao cast aside the bureaucratic aspect of Stalinist control and instead emphasized a revolutionary aspect by encouraging the mass mobilization of the peasants. In practice, the Great Leap Forward was a policy of decentralization. The Central Committee boldly experimented with the decentralization of their control to allow local Party cadres to achieve maximum economic targets. The aim was to encourage the self-sufficiency of rural communities so that they could advance rural industries and increase agricultural surpluses, which would then bring the final phase of their communist state within reach. Thus, under the slogan of “three years of hardship and a hundred years of happiness,” this utopian vision was fused with the revolutionary fervor nationwide.⁵⁶

The Great Leap Forward was a radical campaign to restructure agricultural production that exceeded any previously held standards of economic and social developments. The campaign style of the Great Leap Forward can be summarized with five emphases: “(1) a more flexible and rapid policy making process, (2) a campaign against “waste and conservatism,” (3) the assertion of Party control over every aspect of policy, (4) the denigration of the role of specialists and intellectuals, and (5) decentralization of power to the provinces.”⁵⁷ Given Khrushchev’s policies of de-Stalinization, the Great Leap Forward was a deliberate challenge to the alleged digression of the Soviet leadership from the Marxist course of socialist economic development.

Consequently, Mao had revised the drive for collectivization by mobilizing mass labor, only for a greater extent this time, so that China would surpass Stalinist economic achievements and reach the final state of communism before the Soviet Union. However, the quotas of grain procurement were set at the rate based on the bountiful production of 1958, along with unrealistic measures of human productivity in communes and uncoordinated planning and working arrangements.

*Retrenchment of the Great Leap*

The disastrous results of the Great Leap Forward emerged quickly due in large part to the disruption of the peasant life by the People’s Communes. In August 1958, the CCP mandated the formation of groups of thousands or even tens of thousands of families as a commune where every aspect of living became communal. In order to fulfill unprecedented agricultural production targets, these communes were mobilized to engage in colossal irrigation projects and to use untested communal farming methods instead of traditional ones. Simultaneous growth of modern, industrial sectors was called for, and therefore people created small, rudimentary furnaces—even in their backyard—to produce steel out of kitchen tools, utensils, or any metal products they could find. It was proclaimed that “the human will is the master of all things.” With such a slogan, all private land was abolished and market activities ceased, while people were not allowed to leave their communes.\(^{58}\)

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Mass mobilization of people by the communes without proper training and careful planning was clearly not sustainable and unsurprisingly disrupted both agricultural and industrial production. Nevertheless, on the Party record, rosy pictures of the Great Leap were continually painted by local Party cadres who were eager to surpass—for fear of reprimand—the imposed production targets and they reported inaccurate numbers. On paper, the record-breaking results of the Great Leap were reported one after another by those cadres, with the trajectory of the Great Leap performance showing booming success. As a corollary, the targeted quotas of grain production were increased based on their fraudulent reports. The production target was raised from 195 million tons of grain in 1957 to 375 million tons in 1958. But in actuality, it is estimated that the grain production was 182 million tons in 1957, 200 million tons in 1958, and had decreased to 144 million tons by 1960.59 To make matters worse, the Party transferred people from communes to other more needy regions where production quotas were not met or more manpower was needed for massive engineering projects. Those who labored on industrial projects did not generate agricultural products and therefore had to be fed by the state, compounding the already scarce stocks of grain.

As such, already during the fall of 1958, looming prospects for famine were evident in the country as a result of ever increasing quotas of grain requisition, misappropriation of production resources due to lack of planning. While these poor reallocations and mismanagement continued to deteriorate the food scarcity of the cities and villages alike, the PRC was exporting grain mainly to the USSR during those years.

Net grain exports reached 2.7 million tons in 1958 and 4.2 million tons the following year. Meanwhile, the deaths associated with the famine of 1959-61 were estimated to have claimed 20 million and 43 million lives.

The Great Leap Forward’s massive failure intensified the stake of Mao’s leadership. Many argue that Mao’s personal incapacity to admit policy failures and responsibility only delayed the end of the movement and, by not admitting these failures, he made it more difficult to return to any sensible options of economic planning, which was exacerbated still by the leadership challenge at the 1959 Lushan conference. At this meeting in July and August, the disastrous results of the Great Leap were discussed among the CCP leaders and Mao was subjected to criticisms of the failed policies. The most vocal critique came from Peng Dehuai, the first Defense Minister of the PRC, bringing to light the shortcomings of rapid economic growth and the subsequent imbalances and dislocations. Although Peng simply called for a readjustment of the development policies by slowing down the pace, Peng and his associates were framed as “right opportunists.” At Lushan, the leadership crisis ended with the dismissal of Peng’s top PLA position, which was then replaced by Lin Biao, a loyal supporter of Mao.

Like the Hundred Flowers Campaign, the Great Leap Forward also generated consequences that amounted to unexpected problems. An initial set of problems was addressed by engendering another set of problems that required entirely new configurations of solutions, but the bureaucratic system was such that it was incapable of

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60 Margolin, “China: A Long March into Night,” 495.
catching up with the constantly trans-morphing threats that were centered on the legitimacy of the Party control. Both the Hundred Flowers and the Great Leap Forward demonstrated that they address partial roots of the problems. By allowing the solicitation of criticisms of the Party organization, leadership, and policies from external non-Party members, the Hundred Flowers backfired and instead caused more serious social and political unrest and instability. Likewise, the Great Leap Forward, without the necessary bureaucracy to guide and discipline mass mobilization, also generated economic collapse and organizational malfunctions, although both campaigns started from a rational base to further expand the momentary successes while minimizing risks of impending loss. Policies of risk acceptance to avoid further loss created more risks in this case.

*Intensified Control*

In the early 1960s, the post-Great Leap retrenchment left major scars on the credibility of the Party leadership, scars that affected both those that had actively promoted it or those that had viciously spoken against it upon realizing its imminent failure. Those who were enthusiastic in the movement could not accept the blame and balked at the post-Great Leap policies, while those who were bitter in the Great Leap period were grievous of the unfair blame they were privy to. The extent of the destabilizing effect of retrenchment was felt in other dimensions as well. Communes were abandoned and massive economic and social projects were suddenly closed. The sudden change in the course of the CCP policy incapacitated the party command system and the local work teams and traditional peasant structure were used to enforce order and
stability—a major blow to the CCP’s social engineering. After the futile results of the Socialist Education Movement, by 1965 Mao was convinced that he had no longer held a definitive grip of power in the regime and Party apparatus, except for the People’s Liberation Army.

During the period of the Cultural Revolution, it is estimated that 60 percent of the Central Committee members and 75 percent of the provincial Party secretaries were purged. Between 3 and 4 million cadres out of 18 million were expelled or imprisoned. During the Cultural Revolution, an estimate put the death toll between 492,000 and 1,970,000, whereas between 1968-71, impacts of the Cultural Revolution in the rural regions were severely affected and an estimate of 36 million had undergone some form of political persecution and the death toll reached between 750,000 and 1 million. The National Record posits that during the Cultural Revolution, “4,200,000 were detained and investigated; 1,728,000 killed, among which 13,500 were executed as a counterrevolutionary; 237,000 died in the mass factional armed battles.”

It was increasingly apparent to Mao that his initial aims would not be achieved and that only the deployment of the PLA was left as a viable option. Regaining domestic order was becoming a priority, given the Czechoslovak crisis and to avoid the possible Soviet incursion in the name of restoring the order in Chinese soil. The Soviet troops were also in the build-up stage, and the tension along the Sino-Soviet borders was on a

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63 Teiwes, Politics and Purges in China, 382.
66 Su, Collective Killings in Rural China During the Cultural Revolution, 37.
By the spring of 1969, the course of action was going to be turned. At the Ninth Party Congress in April of that year, only 30 percent of the original Central Committee members from 1956 were still present. Other veteran cadres were purged.\textsuperscript{68}

For the Cultural Revolution to be accepted with such zealously, at least in its initial launch, mass support was indispensable. It was primarily due to the fact that the Party’s credibility was still high. The Cultural Revolution was waged in the name of Mao. Despite its setbacks and shortfalls of the Great Leap Forward, the name and credibility of the CCP proved to still be respected enough to mobilize people. The personal authenticity and charisma of Mao, well followed and backed by the PLA, assured the initial acceptance of the propaganda of what the Cultural Revolution had purported to achieve.\textsuperscript{69}

There are other factors that aided the push on assaults and gaining support from various sectors of the Cultural Revolution proceeded by Lin Biao and the Cultural Revolution Group. The first is the inherent contradiction of the Party ideology and the power vacuum created while the campaign was underway. It was time for opportunists and careerists to mobilize, regardless of where their true allegiance to the revolutionary cause lied, because they would be able to climb up the ladder toward successful career by engaging in the massive purges of the revolution and bringing down existing party leadership. They were willing to commit any accusations they deemed necessary to rise above, even if they despised the very ideological principles they were supposed to cherish. They were ready to express their revolutionary zeal by fiercely targeting “the enemy of

\textsuperscript{68}Ibid., 176.
\textsuperscript{69}Ibid., 109.
The disorganization and decentralization of the Red Guards, as well as the factionalism that split the Red Guards and the Revolutionary Rebels are evidence of ideological disunity and structural dysfunctions, all in the name of the purity and unity they were aspiring to achieve.

Another factor is the atmosphere itself that was created by an intense escalation of the violence and confusion in the first two years of the Cultural Revolution. The constant barrage of accusations and the call for struggle against the bourgeois headquarters of Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping created a vacuum of leadership or terror that even the most admired, top leadership could not contain. If the most prestigious and senior communists could not contain such a void, the mid-level and low-level echelon of leaders could not have opposed the Party establishment.

At the height of the Cultural Revolution, despite the rampage violence unleashed by the frenzied Red Guards and the spillover from in-fighting, there were differences in the way in which the purges were conducted in Maoist China and Stalinist Russia. The Cultural Revolution unleashed an uncontrollable amount of persecution and repression but it was not the extermination of the entire echelon of the party leadership and older generation, as was the case in the Soviet Union in its Great Purges in the 1930s. It would be worse, “had the Soviet model been followed in this instance, the great majority of the post-1976 CCP leadership would not have been still alive.” Therefore, the degree of implementation was different, but the pattern followed a remarkable similar path.

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70 Ibid., 153.
71 Ibid., 174.
The definitive end of the Cultural Revolution is contested. Some see the Ninth Party Congress as the marked end of the Cultural Revolution. However, the subsequent leaders of the CCP posit that the revolution ended only after the death of its instigator in 1976 and the removal of the radical Cultural Revolution Group and remaining associates. As such, the incipience of the ‘cultural revolution’ cannot be considered without Mao at all. Rodziński argues that the desire to regain party control was the prime motive and it was Mao alone that was responsible for engendering and unleashing it.\(^{72}\)

However, White discusses that there are several trends of explanations about the Cultural Revolution. One is to see the Cultural Revolution as an expression of egalitarian-collective ideals; as a result of power struggle; as a result of Mao’s personality; as an exercise in symbols; as a result of conflicting development needs; as a result of recurrent administrative policies. What White supplements is a lens of patronage model that takes into account student-residents, workers and managers. That way she aggregated the Cultural Revolution in the minds and eyes of the stakeholders involved. She argues that the Cultural Revolution took different meanings to each participant who engaged in what they saw as revolutionary activities. The Cultural Revolution cast different meanings to different groupings of people. For the Party organization, it was a pathway to actualizing political aspiration to implement socialist ideals of equality, responsive government, and the proletariat’s dictatorship. But for many Party leaders, it was their struggle to stay in power and garner more of it by bringing down others. For many youth who took part in the Red Guards, it was their assertion of self-worth by traveling, being revolutionaries,

\(^{72}\) Ibid., 106.
and politicking. However, in the great span of China, there was a silent majority who managed to take no sides and not participate actively.

White also dismisses the role of Mao, Socialism, or the Chinese cultural tradition as the single most important explanatory cause of the Cultural Revolution. In her view, they can be seen as necessary but insufficient causes. Mao served as a catalyst of policies, but he was one of the cogs of the underlying or overarching social systems that were already in place. Explanations about Socialism also do not explain why particular years in China, amongst more years and other communist societies. The Chinese cultural tradition is also a weak explanation primarily in that it is not static and it still does not explain variance.

As such, it was a movement, chaotic and so decentralized, wherein stakes of different groups led it out of control of even those who started it. As White says, “the perceived meaning of this event could change at different times like a kaleidoscope, even for a single person.”73 Here we see dichotomies of revolutionary fervor at both the macro and micro dynamics of the Cultural Revolution, which took a life of its own in respective personal cases. This stands in contrast to the Stalinist centralization of the hierarchical command structure that was in place in Soviet Russia and Cambodia. Centralization of means and ends was much more thoroughly conducted, whereas in China preservation of the local diversity, and hence the local cadres, left room for a variable interpretation and application of the CCP’s main objectives. But still White, through her meso-level group analysis, identifies three major elements of violence—the practice of labeling people,

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reliance on the constant monitoring of people, and the relentless demands of strict compliance.  

While some regard the Cultural Revolution as the peak of the Maoist divide from traits of Stalin or the Soviets, there are some similarities between the Cultural Revolution and the Great Purges in Soviet Russia in 1936-38. The theme of a conspirational struggle was indeed directly borrowed from the Stalinist era. On the other hand, Maoist purges were carried out by mobilizing the masses and by calling out that a new bourgeoisie was emerging within their own Party, unlike the Stalinist class-conspiracy theory.  

74 Ibid., 307.  
CHAPTER 4: CAMBODIA

Cambodia between April 1975 and January 1979 was an apotheosis of the Democratic Kampuchea’s genocidal state apparatus whose scope of destruction lies beyond the parameter of the UN Convention’s definition of genocide but still deserves a distinct recognition in its own light due to its purported wholesale destruction of targeted identity groups.¹ The Khmer Rouge emerged in the vestiges of nationalist and post-colonial struggles and the civil war that had ravaged the country. Armed uprisings and guerrilla insurgency during the era of Prince Norodom Sihanouk, after Cambodia’s independence from the French rule in 1953 and through 1970, had already destabilized the country. From the outset Prince Sihanouk took a politically calculated approach to pitting his neighbors to fight against each other, exploiting their interests and ambitions to his advantage. Sihanouk called it “extreme neutrality.”² His strategy allowed the regime to sustain, for the time being, but with a high price. It engendered political and social grounds that were conducive to the leftist aspiration and the rise of communists in the territory.³ And the war raged on when the military chief Lon Nol staged a coup d’état in 1970 and established the American-backed Khmer Republic. Cambodia was a pawn of the Vietnam War between the communists in North Vietnam and the alliance of the U.S.

¹ Scholars attributed ‘politicide,’ ‘urbicide’ or ‘Cambodia’s holocaust’ to capture the nature of destruction brought upon its populations.
³ Shawcross, Sideshow.
and South Vietnam. The U.S. carpet-bombing campaigns in the Cambodian territory created a vacuum, not only of the Viet Cong forces that had been based in Cambodia but also local population and infrastructure. Consequently, this void was filled by the Khmer Rouge and the Cambodian people became communists to fight for their national liberation.

The death toll during the Democratic Kampuchea (DK) era reached an estimated 1.7 to 1.9 million out of the country’s total population size of 8 million in April 1975, when the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) led by Pol Pot and followed by Red Khmers, also known as the Khmer Rouge, toppled the Khmer Republic’s government and took over the capital city, Phnom Penh. The Cambodian case marks one of the worst genocides in recorded history, given that almost one out of four citizens were eliminated, roughly 21 to 24 percent of the entire population, the highest rate per capita. Massive purges of the Khmer communist party cadres, military officials, and former regime officials were effected by mass killing, as well as deaths induced by privation, disease, and famine. For the Khmer Rouge, those who resisted “their” revolution were unredeemable enemies, and they included any segment of the population, even of ethnic Khmers, who resided in Phnom Penh as of April 1975. They were deemed complicit with the Republican forces, just by virtue of being in or from the cities, regardless of whether they were civilians, refugees, or combatants. The Khmer Rouge’s conception of enemyhood can only make sense when we take into account the underlying relational systems between the Khmer Rouge and the Vietnamese. CPK’s ferocity against its enemies, domestic or abroad, was closely linked to its relations with Vietnam. For example, as
many as 310,000 ethnic Vietnamese in Cambodia crossed the Mekong river to flee to their home country in 1970. Additionally, in 1975 the Khmer Rouge drove out 150,000 Vietnamese. During their rule, especially after 1977, the communists eliminated the remaining 10,000 to 20,000 Vietnamese within the Cambodian border.⁴

Even by the standards of the previous two cases, the communist mass killing in Cambodia presents a staggering picture—both in terms of its per capita death and of the completeness of destroying every facet of existing social systems. Still, the nature of the revolutionary struggle, for which terror and excisionary violence were employed to no limits, was not unique. Clear resemblances can be gleaned from the Stalinist and Maoist legacies. However, the geopolitical preconditions for the rise of the Khmer Rouge alone do not explain why they resorted to such an extreme level of lethality and why such brutality persisted or even intensified throughout the four years of their reign.⁵

This chapter traces the continuity and discontinuity of the communist threat systems in Cambodia, especially focusing on relations between Phnom Penh and Hanoi. The evacuation of the capital was successful in the sense that the population transfer was executed in accordance with the military and strategic plan. However, the plan itself, for the purpose of gaining and maintaining control over the city and the populace, was “self-defeating.” The loop of a self-consuming vicious cycle was created. In the process of seeking more control, the Party deployed more unceasing force, and more people were adversely affected and therefore were driven to resist the party even more. Like Kiernan

⁴ Kiernan, Blood and Soil, 549.
judges, “[i]n the end, it was enemies created by the regime itself…[those] people alienated by the regime’s attempt to destroy perceived enemies, who brought about its downfall.”

4.1. The Roots of Cambodian Communists

The proclamation of the Democratic Kampuchea as a communist state was not made until 1977. Till then, the name of the Khmer Rouge was veiled with secrecy and the code name “Angkar,” or an organization in Khmer language, was used to refer to the leadership structure. Although it is questionable whether the Democratic Kampuchea was legitimately a communist state, it was not communism per se that gave the Khmer Rouge unlimited license for slaughtering people en masse. Still, the pattern of exercising political control and building peculiar identity systems closely followed the two communist predecessors in China and the USSR. Yet the Khmer Rouge went farther on a deviant course from any of its predecessors. This section traces the lineage of such transmission from the Chinese, the Soviet Russia, and Vietnam.

4.1.1. Sino-Khmer Influences and Deviation

There is not a clear record that details the connections between the Communist Party of Kampuchea’s (CPK) Central Committee and the People’s Republic of China (PRC), especially in the formative years of the Cambodian Communists in the 1950s and 60s. According to a Vietnamese Communist leader, Hoang Van Hoan, China’s influence

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on Asian Communist regimes after 1949 was prominent, as Chinese advisers trained Viet Minh from 1950 until the Geneva accord of 1954. In addition, 30,000 troops from the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) aided the North Vietnamese in their fight against South Vietnam from 1965 through 1970. Likewise, Chinese influence was the backbone of foreign support during the DK era as well as the basis for the political mobilization and economic planning necessary to carry out the Khmer revolution. After the alliance with the Vietnamese Communists went into temporary severance in 1973, the CPK turned to China as the new “Big Brother.” Shortly after the Khmer Rouge victory in April 1975, Chinese aids began providing technical expertise in May, with at least 4,000 Chinese engineers and technicians sent to Cambodia. The PRC also promised to make other kinds of aid worth 1 billion dollars. When the Cambodian leadership and Pol Pot made the first official visit to Beijing in September 1977, they received high acclaim and the two-state friendship was officially characterized as “indestructible.”

Margolin argues that while we should not downplay the explicit roles of agency played by Pol Pot and the top leadership clique in accounting for the criminality and sources of madness of the Khmer Rouge, their rise to power and exercise of extreme brutality cannot be detached from the mixture of domestic histories and international relations at the time, both Comintern movements and fears of foreign incursions. And it was the Maoist Chinese model, rather than the Stalinist one, that the Cambodian

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9 Ibid., 615.
Communists owed more for designing their state building.\footnote{Ibid., 624.} Moreover, it was rather the ‘disdainful’ Chinese Communist ‘underperformances’—or so it appeared to the Khmer evaluation—that underlay the Khmer socialist state building. The CPK tried not only to emulate, but also surpass the Chinese ‘failures’ so as to build a perfect socialist society in their soil before their predecessors could. While the Cambodian history of mass killing under the Pol Pot regime is an episode that can stand on its own, it can be also seen, as will be argued in this chapter, as a culmination or continuation of the trans-historical threat systems-in-making when placed in a longer historical time spectrum. The extreme haste with which the Khmer Rouge engaged in their utopian state building can be explained in this regard. Their hasty revolution took place in the framework of a self-perpetual and reinforcing mechanism that was carried over from China. Margolin highlights the intensity of such hastiness:

> The Cambodian tyrant was incontestably mediocre and a pale copy of the imaginative and cultivated Beijing autocrat who with no outside help established a regime that continues to thrive in the world’s most populous country. Yet despite Pol Pot’s limitations, it is the Cultural Revolution and the Great Leap Forward that look like mere trial runs or preparatory sketches for what was perhaps the most radical social transformation of all: the attempt to implement total Communism in one fell swoop, without the long transitional period that seemed to be one of the tenets of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy. Money was abolished in a week; total collectivization was achieved in less than two years; social distinctions were suppressed by the elimination of entire classes of property owners, intellectuals, and businessmen; the ancient antagonism between urban and rural areas was solved by emptying the cities in a single week.\footnote{Ibid., 577.}
The recorded origin of initial contacts between the Chinese and Cambodian Communists dates back to the 1960s. Etcheson notes that Hu Nim and Phuok Chhay, who were senior officials in the CPK, were leading the Sino-Khmer Friendship Association and were ardent supporters of the Cultural Revolution in the mid-1960s. It is believed that Hu made ties with the Chinese radicals when he visited China for a month during 1965, just before the start of the Cultural Revolution, and came back with the same Chinese line denouncing the post-Stalin Soviet Union as ‘revisionist.’ Although evidence is not conclusive, it appears Pol Pot and his associates visited China, whether coordinated or uncoordinated with Hu’s visit, for an extended period of months in the 1960s. It was at this time when Pol Pot witnessed the Cultural Revolution first hand.\(^\text{12}\)

In addition to this party-to-party relationship between the CPK and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), PRC Prime Minister Zhou Enlai and his moderate factions maintained a state-to-state relationship with the Sihanouk’s regime through the 1960s. According to Etcheson, the precise nature of internal politics in PRC and CPK are not known, but the timing of the power struggle in the two regimes was not wholly irrelevant.\(^\text{13}\) By the beginning of 1976, the Gang of Four led by Mao’s widow, Chiang Ch’ing, had secured undisputable control among the radicals and were targeting to purge Deng Xiaoping, who had been purged at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution along with Liu Shaoqi but reinstated as the favorable successor to Zhou Enlai. After Zhou and Mao’s deaths in 1976, in January and September, respectively, Deng Xiaoping and his faction made their move against the Gang of Four and arrested them in October. Just as


\(^\text{13}\) Ibid., 176.
the Cultural Revolution was coming to a close as such in 1976—or failed, in the Khmer eyes—waves of purges by Pol Pot were intensified against any potential elements that could sabotage their revolution.

In areas of economic and political transformations, the departure of the Khmer Rouge’s revolutionary approaches from the Maoist model transpired in terms of the degree to which the DK leadership implemented their socialist experiments. To be sure, there were some resemblances in the organizational methodology. The DK unleashed its collectivization campaign following the model of the Chinese Great Leap Forward and engaged similarly in the production of rice, cotton, and steel, literally in the backyards of citizens, along with collective irrigation projects. The Khmer Rouge, however, planned to carry these projects out with extreme haste. The Great Leap was also resonant in how cooperative lives were organized in Cambodia, such as through the mandatory collective canteen, communal childcare, communal share of agricultural tools, massive hydraulic projects, and the extensive cropping of only one or few crops. These communes were organized to engage people collectively in a variety of activities in a relatively autonomous structure.\textsuperscript{14} Even the organizational principles were similar to Chinese policy, in terms of imposing unrealistic target of requisition quotas, strict compliance with unreasonable work schedules, and blind faith in the maximum rate of human productivity.\textsuperscript{15} Also, like the Great Leap, they also wanted to eliminate the difference between the rural and the urban, the peasants and the workers. But the Great Leap was never intended to be a movement that was anti-industrial, anti-cities, or anti-workers. The

\textsuperscript{14} Jackson, “The Ideology of Total Revolution,” 59.
\textsuperscript{15} Margolin, “Cambodia: The Country of Disconcerting Crimes,” 627.
Khmer Rouge, however, tried to industrialize the countryside by destroying the workers and any vestiges of industries. The DK resemblance to the Chinese Cultural Revolution was also superficial. While the methodology of mobilization to destroy remnants of foreign influences appeared similar, the protagonists were different. The main stakeholders were workers, students, and soldiers in the Cultural Revolution, but the Cultural Revolution never involved the mass of peasants. Those urban workers were following the original tenets of the Cultural Revolution, “seizure of power by proletarian revolutionaries,” and upon seizure of control other workers from the countryside flocked to the city to bandwagon with the movement and demand their own housing and jobs, creating a vacuum of authority to their advantage. This kind of spiraling out of control did not happen in Cambodia. And it was the poorest peasants who were mobilized against the workers and urban population.

It is clear that Mao’s Great Leap Forward and Great Proletarian Revolution supplied many Khmer Rouge concepts: Cambodia’s great-leap-forward rhetoric; the forced movement of people from the cities; large communes, communal dining halls, and nurseries; labor surpluses that were expected to produce massive production gains; the emphasis on rice and irrigation; the attention to basic manufacturing in each commune; the desire to abolish personal interest as a prime motive for human behavior; the puritanical reaction against bourgeois consumerism; the primacy of willpower over weapons and machines; the superiority of common sense over academic and technical learning; the overwhelming power of heroic labor; and manual labor as a means of self-rectification.

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17 Ibid., 272.
However, the Chinese Communists never engaged in emptying the cities or deporting the entire populations to the countryside where, in China, insurgency could often emerge. The Chinese similarly did not eliminate money, the markets, or the entire class of intellectuals as the Khmer Rouge did. Each campaign in China was followed by a return to more traditional and less radical methods, thereby reducing the intensity of lethal repression, and often the impetus of this return came from the CCP itself. By contrast, the CPK did not go through this clear pendulum-like pattern of alternating between radical lethality and less radical measures. Even the ways in which repressive controls were exercised exhibit similarities in China and Cambodia, in terms of self-criticism, biography and confessional accounts of the past. Nonetheless, Cambodia went a step further in these exercises, by conducting certain reeducation practices that almost certainly ended in death. In China and Vietnam, massive campaigns of repression came in waves, and the target was, after all, to intimidate a small percentage of the total population. In other words, the Cambodian versions of the Maoists were actually “a degenerate version of [Bureaucratic] Stalinism” in terms of vicious brutality, turning to radical threat-reducing measures more so than even the Chinese.\(^{19}\)

The model of Chinese experiments and especially their failures thus cast a strong influence on the Cambodian vision toward modernizing their country. China served as a reference point not to repeat, or better yet, the point to outdo so as to redress the loss in the past. In fact, the Khmer elites made no secret of their contempt in the earlier experiences of the Soviet, Vietnamese, and Chinese models, and especially the

catastrophic failure of China’s Great Leap Forward. Sihanouk attended a discussion in which Khieu Samphan, Ieng Thirith, and Zhou Enlai discussed Cambodian communism and Zhou gave direct warnings for the revolutionary haste.

In Peking in 1975, we visited Zhou Enlai—already seriously ill—in his hospital room. I heard him advise Khieu Samphan and Ieng Thirith not to try to achieve total communism in one giant step. The wise and perspicacious veteran of the Chinese revolution stressed the need to move “step by step” toward socialism. This would take several years of patient work. Then and only then should they advance toward a communist society. Premier Zhou Enlai reiterated that China itself had experienced disastrous setbacks in the fairly recent past by trying to make a giant leap forward and move full speed ahead into pure communism. The great Chinese statesman counseled the Khmer Rouge leaders: “Don’t follow the bad example of our ‘great leap forward’. Take things slowly: that is the best way to guide Kampuchea and its people to growth, prosperity and happiness.” By way of response to this splendid and moving piece of almost fatherly advice, Khieu Samphan and Ieng Thirith just smiled an incredulous and superior smile. Not long after we got back to Phonm Penh, Khieu Samphan and Son Sen told me their Kampuchea was going to show the world that pure communism could indeed be achieved at one fell swoop. This was no doubt their indirect reply to Zhou Enlai. “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.”

There was not only the contempt but also a sense of being on a superior mission that drove the radical leftists so as to vindicate Cambodia’s standing and prove to themselves and to the outside world of their righteousness. As such, the Khmer revolutionaries, having internalized Maoist China’s proletarian revolutionary principles, extended centrally organized socialist experiments even further. While the Chinese radicals never

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ceased completely the fundamental social practices to allow monetary exchange and commodity trading, the Khmer radicals proceeded with the complete elimination of social institutions by abolishing money, markets, commodities exchange, and virtually all private property.21

Therefore, the hastiness of the Khmer revolution was a symbolic manifestation of radicalization from its precedent. The DK brutality was, in and of itself, radical, but the extent to which they were radical can be gauged in relation to their reference point—Maoist experiments and their failures. The Khmer Rouge embraced two features of Maoism—the doctrine of self-reliance and the primacy of human will and ideological purity.22 However, it was by overstretching these two concepts that they became radicalized. Despite the mechanical and operational similarities, what differentiated the Khmer Rouge from the prior communist movements was derived from complete national independence from any vestiges of foreign influences. Any symbols and signs of foreign footprints were detested. What underlay this philosophical xenophobia was the fear of foreign infiltration into the purity of the national identity and self-concept, and therefore even communist ideology was nationalized and was not adopted as such because it was still a foreign ideology with foreign origins. In the Chinese version of communist development, their emphasis on self-reliance was out of necessity, due in large part to the widening schism with the USSR as a result of Yenan isolation. However, the Khmer Rouge’s isolation was self-imposing. They accomplished virtually complete isolation

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21 Ibid., 65.
from any foreign ties from 1975-76. This was a reflection of the fear that Vietnam or Thailand may infiltrate the border, threatening their shaky grip of power. This contrast was a radical departure because both Lon Nol and Sihanouk did not share the same ideological bearings with the Khmer Rouge, although they shared the same antipathy toward potential Vietnamese penetration.\textsuperscript{23} Such deviation from Maoist principles, in our eyes, was in actuality a way to vindicate their own cause from the Khmer perspective.

\section*{4.1.2. Khmer Deviations from the USSR and Marxism}

It is questionable if the CPK could be considered as the heir of Marxist-Leninism at all because all the signs indicate otherwise. There is a question of whether the DK revolution was a communist revolution in the first place. DK did call itself ‘communist’ explicitly, from 1977, and such a proclamation was accepted by other communist powers. It is not enough for DK leaders to say they were communists simply by proclaiming they were Marxist-Leninists. It is a sensible question to ask why a regime that was non-communist in practice called itself communist in nature.\textsuperscript{24} In comparison to Russia and China, Cambodia was economically even less fit to aspire to a socialist transition. The size of Cambodia’s industry and its working class was almost entirely underdeveloped, and the country was not rich in the natural resources to facilitate rapid modern industrialization. Even the peasantry, which was the main force of revolutionary struggle in the Chinese case, was small in size and poorly educated or trained. The economic

\textsuperscript{24} Vickery, \textit{Cambodia, 1975-1982}, 256.
system before the rise of the Khmer Rouge was a bureaucratic proto-capitalist system at best in the hands of a few.\textsuperscript{25}

From the Marxist perspective, the urban proletariat would be the key actors in revolutionary struggles, but the Khmer Rouge engaged in the elimination of skilled laborers and workers from the cities who were largely inherited from the Lon Nol era. Their antipathy toward the remnants of the old societies could not have been explained by Marxist principles, as the very proletariat in whose name Marxist-Leninists would carry out socialist modernization was eliminated. The Khmer Rouge’s emphasis on rural peasants carries some resonance with the Maoist reliance on the peasantry, but the PRC did not attempt socialist experiments at the expense of existing factory workers. The Khmer Rouge, however, did the opposite.

Therefore, Cambodia was communism by name but a mixture of “nationalism, populism, and peasantism” in actuality.\textsuperscript{26} In fact, the DK experiences revealed, retrospectively, Marx’s view that “without a sufficient level of productivity, communal production relations would only result in stagnation and decline in the mode of production—from which class distinctions would reemerge.”\textsuperscript{27} These digressions from orthodox Marxist paths were evident in how the DK utilized their population as labor resources. First, the urban population was not ready for—or fully, rationally compatible with—the Marxist model of labor. Former townspeople of more than one million people had never developed a skill or capacity necessary to engage in Marxist projects on

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 263–4.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 290.
\textsuperscript{27} Marx quoted in Ibid., 269.
communal farming, working efficiently and collectively in under-developed or undeveloped areas. Instead of serving as human resources expected to produce at the maximum productive capacity, this former urban population not only failed, quite understandably, to produce economic surpluses but also consumed what was already scarcely left. The idea of transferring the urban population created unexpected consequences, at least in their eyes. The misused urban population turned out to be a drain of food and resources, because they, having had no experiences, could not have been expected to produce much. From the Marxist perspective, it would have been wiser if they had been relocated to forced labor camps, as was the practice in Russia or China, so they could at least keep producing industrial or agricultural outputs. There was a need to repair damages from the war and bombings, too. Consequently, even the Base People, who were regarded as the privileged class, faced declining standards of living amidst these conditions, eventually creating the grounds for resentment and a lack of cooperation, which, in turn, resulted in further physical coercion by the Khmer Rouge.28

Linkages with Stalinism can only be deduced, because Pol Pot had never made in his writings or speeches an acknowledgement of the Stalinist model. It is speculated that Pol Pot, Ieng Sary, and Khieu Samphan were exposed to Stalinism in their early education in France when the Stalinist legacy was at its height in the 50s. Indeed, some overlaps in the pattern of social engineering can be highlighted. Stalin was committed to carrying out the restructuring of the traditional institutions and authority, while at the same time constructing a new communal and collective society where the peasantry was

28 Ibid., 270.
reintegrated. Pol Pot followed virtually the same path, although in Stalin’s case he was subjected to setbacks in the post-collectivization retrenchment. Elimination of the segment of the old society also shows similar patterns. In Stalinist Russia, between 1929 and 1936, the policy of dekulackization resulted in the wholesale extermination of kulaks and their families. In the case of Pol Pot, he went further by targeting entire segments of the old society population, rather than just one class category.

There is, however, an element of radicalization from distant influence of Stalinism. In the Cambodian case, class categorization went a step further than the Soviet or Chinese cases. When an enemy, counterrevolutionary element was identified, the criteria for identity categorization was limited in scope in Russia and Cambodia, emphasizing the boundary of who would belong to their ‘in-group.’ By contrast, the Chinese practice of categorization emphasized who were the ‘out-group.’ In this case, it was far more feasible to organize the rectification and reeducation of those who were potential class alien elements but who were still inside the boundary of the in-group. However, the Stalinist regime focused on narrowly defining who would belong to inner circles as trustworthy in-group members and reliable, genuine communists. Pol Pot, likely with the benefit of hindsight, and determined not to repeat the failures of Mao in eliminating potential rivals, appears to have opted for a more radical version of the original Stalinist discipline. In the DK period, those who were allowed to survive were so

30 Quinn, “Explaining the Terror,” 235.
31 Dallin and Breslauer, Political Terror in Communist Systems, 7.
narrowly defined, so it was an even more radical version of in-group identification than in the Stalinist case.

The scale of purges of top echelons of the communist party leadership could make sense in this trend. The most degenerate version of Stalinist control was the standard for the Khmer Rouge. In Russia, it is estimated that more than two-thirds of the Central Committee leadership, which accounted for 98 out of 139, were targets of purges, along with more than half of the military officers at more than 35,000 between 1934 and 1939. In overall scale, the total number of those who were arrested in this period of the Great Purge was estimated to exceed seven million.\textsuperscript{32} Similarly, the purges in Cambodia show a remarkable resemblance to the Stalinist precedents in that many of the victims of the Tuol Sleng prison between 1977 and 1978 were former party cadres and officials who were forced to write confessions, like the Kulaks, before being executed. By 1978, most of the Khmer Rouge leadership had been liquidated to such an extent that the Party politics and decision making were concentrated on the “Gang of Six,” who were Pol Pot, Ieng Sary, Son Sen, Khieu Ponnay, Ieng Thirith, and Yun Yat. There were other members of regional leadership who were close such as Ta Mok and Khieu Samphan in assisting their roles.\textsuperscript{33}

What was most starkly different was the way in which the Khmer Rouge tried to operationalize their political mobilization. In order to ensure ideological conformity, they relied on the use of brute physical force in inducing control. The process of pursuing the social transformation of the entire society was similar, but the pattern did not follow the

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 29.
\textsuperscript{33} Quinn, “Explaining the Terror,” 236.
use of almost any social or political institutions—schools, media, local governments, rallies, banners, or photos—to impart revolutionary ideologies and inculcate the populace under the new thoughts. In other words, centrally organized messaging by the means of public indoctrination, like those used in other Communist experiments, was largely absent.  

Thus, in terms of political mobilization, the Cambodian radicals exhibited far less organized movements, unlike neighboring Communists in Vietnam or even China. There are testimonies from political refugees that the practice of reeducation, as was seen in the Chinese case, in the form of political study sessions and indoctrination, were rare and, when they did occur, poorly organized. It appears that, even if organized, the cadres tasked with organizing such sessions were also far from being competent and the impacts would be less than negligible.

This was the nature of the post-Stalinist, post-Maoist Khmer Rouge practices, drawing eclectically from remnants of various philosophical systems, such as from Lenin, Stalin, and Mao, but from no single coherent sources. In this regard, the Khmer Rouge took a deviant course from Marxist-Leninism or Stalinism, considering the extreme haste and physical force used, family-based decentralized collective leadership, or the elimination of the urban proletariat in whose name communism would actually stand. It appears that Pol Pot and his close associates followed the path of Maoist ideology but employed Stalinist practices in its implementation. Quinn puts it succinctly: “Pol Pot was implementing Mao’s plan with Stalin’s methods.”

35 Ibid., 244.
36 Quinn, “Explaining the Terror,” 236.
4.2. Oscillations between Gains and Losses

While the methods employed to achieve the goals of the revolution were inherited from their predecessors, the Khmer Rouge intensified these approaches, which can be grouped in four major frameworks: 1) complete isolationism, while ensuring complete self-reliance and independence; 2) absolutization of the dictatorship of the proletariat but with the poor original peasants; 3) total economic transformation at an unprecedented haste; and 4) total transformation of social lives and values by restoring original Khmer society and values. 37 These characteristics were more radicalized in comparison to the precedents, and the underlying reasons for such radicalized shifts can be better understood in the broader context of the Khmer struggle against their archenemy, the Vietnamese. Unlike the Soviet or Chinese struggles, the Khmer Rouge were confronted with ‘multiple enemies’ on ‘multiple fronts’ at the same time. When Cossacks, kulaks, or bureaucrats were subjected to repressive measures, they were targeted based on the (relatively) defined scope at a given time and within finite temporal periods. By contrast, the Cambodian Communists targeted not only officials of the former regime, but also civilians—workers, soldiers, and peasants alike—from cities and foreign enemies all at the same time during the four-year reign. At the bottom of this Khmer Rouge radicalization in the face of the multiple enemies laid their relational associations with the Vietnamese. Put differently, the Khmer-Vietnamese relations served as the bedrock of the

threat-systems-in-making, underlying other layers of the CPK antagonism to other Khmer-born class enemies within the country.

Historian Michael Vickery has a hypothetical inference, due to the lack of evidence, about how a young group eventually took over the leadership. An original branch of the Cambodian Communists in KPRP had close affinity with their Vietnamese counterparts, but they were gradually pushed sideward by the rising group of French-educated young communists who would eventually ascend to the DK leadership. These foreign-trained young communists were likely much keener on the nationalist questions of Cambodia than others and therefore more averse to close bonds with their Vietnamese “brothers.” Furthermore, they most likely felt they were more entitled to take up the leadership and take command of the party business because of their superior education in France.  

As such, there were signs of inverse reflections of the Kampuchean communist leaders’ zealous hatred toward the Vietnamese, as they collaborated with the Vietnamese more closely to achieve the independence of Cambodia from foreign influence. At the fundamental level, the Khmer Rouge leadership believed that the problems hampering the achievement of their goals were derived from Cambodia’s long humiliating history of subjugation and subordination at the hands of the foreign power. They feared that dependency on international economic, cultural, or social capital would further deteriorate the Cambodian position, in addition to various political and military setbacks.

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feared by the United States, Vietnam, and Thailand.\textsuperscript{39} There was an underlying and unspoken fear that Vietnam would usurp Cambodia after the United States was expelled from Indochina. Thus, self-reliance meant complete isolation from any and all international connections and no formal alliance with outside powers. Even the Chinese connection was muted and no formal written documents have been exchanged. The rhetoric of self-reliance and independence was not necessarily new in the communist world in their application of Marxism. But what separated Cambodia and other communist radicals was that the Khmer revolution followed "the doctrinaire literalism with which they applied these abstract principles without regard for the awesome costs to Cambodia in terms of diplomatic isolation, economic devastation, and massive human suffering."\textsuperscript{40} In this logic, after the fall of Phnom Penh in April 1975, the Khmer Rouge proceeded with premeditated plans of completely vacating the cities, destroying commodities and goods of Western origin, burning books and libraries as they were seen as ties to the old regime, and abolishing money and all financial activities including trading and banking. The insanity of these measures was, however, a perfectly logical conclusion, at least in their minds, from the doctrinal literalism of the Kampuchean application of Marxist principles.

Overall, the Khmer radicalization process developed in stages with the first period being the Khmer Rouge’s uneasy alliance with the North Vietnamese in their struggle against the Khmer Republic in the early 1970s. The second period was marked by the break with the Vietnamese alliance from the Paris agreement in 1973 through 1975 when

\textsuperscript{39} Jackson, "The Ideology of Total Revolution," 42.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 44.
the Khmer Rouge captured Phnom Penh. The third period was the post-1975 era when the power struggle pitted against Pol Pot and the purges intensified, especially against those of the Vietnamese origin and with any suspected ties with them. The perpetuating and reinforcing mechanisms eventually led the Khmer Rouge to a fruitless war against Vietnam in 1977, which was the beginning of the end of the DK.

4.2.1. The 1st Stage: Khmer-Vietnamese Alliance

Like the Soviet and Chinese Communists, the Khmer Rouge did not start out as a self-consuming killing machinery, at least in practice. The Khmer Rouge’s evolving pattern of destructiveness was forged amidst constantly shifting political and military alliances against enemies of the given time, even before the Democratic Kampuchea era of 1975-1979, and cannot be assessed in terms of state-sanctioned policies or state-organized campaigns as in the Soviet or China, respectively. While the history of friction and fragmentation within the Communist Party of Kampuchea is scarcely documented, it is during the period of revolutionary strife before 1975—during the Khmer Republic under Lon Nol—that the prototype of how the Democratic Kampuchea later exercised its control over its enemies and populations, emerged. Still at this time, the Khmer Rouge was one of the parties in an entrenched conflict vying for power in Cambodia.

Despite the fact that the early roots of the Cambodian Communists stemmed from the Khmer People’s Revolutionary Party (KPRP) that was placed under the direct patronage of the Vietnamese Communists since 1951, the Khmer Rouge harbored deeply-seated antipathy toward their fellow comrades from Hanoi. They suspected that the
Vietnamese were ultimately interested in swallowing Cambodia and expanding Hanoi’s influence throughout the whole Indochina. When American-backed general Lon Nol carried out a coup d’état in 1970 and ousted Prince Norodom Sihanouk from the throne, the Vietnamese Communists allied with the Khmer Rouge in the name of anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggle against Lon Nol’s Khmer Republic. Hanoi-trained “Khmer Viet Minh” flocked to Cambodia to join the revolutionary cause for national liberation. The Khmer Rouge’s political and military alliance with the North Vietnamese Communists proved to be only an expedient means for their survival at the time. Even while the alliance was in place, the Khmer Rouge’s purged more than 1,000 Khmer Viet Minh as early as 1971, out of uneasy suspicions against Hanoi’s intention, although it was still not outright exterminatory practices.

Insipience of the Khmer-Vietnamese alliance

The early history of the Khmer-Vietnamese Communist relations is still covered in a veil.41 From the 1930s through 1954, the Communists in Cambodia were one of the branch sections of the Indochina Communist Party (ICP) that was under full ideological control of the Vietnamese Communists. The Khmer People’s Revolutionary Party (KPRP) was founded in 1951 as part of the ICP, at the height of the colonial struggle against French rule. Son Ngoc Minh was the first leader of the KPRP, in fact a close follower of the Vietnamese patronage, and later proved to become a rival to the emerging

Khmer Rouge faction. Naturally, the KPRP ties with the Vietnamese in the founding years were remarkably close. The Vietnamese Communist Party took care of armaments, political education, logistics, and other organizational handlings so the early communists in Cambodia were effectively devising strategic plans and conducting their programs under direct tutelage from the Vietnamese brothers.

In 1954, however, a schism began to emerge. By the end of 1953, the royal government of Norodom Sihanouk had already been granted full independence and international recognition, but the Geneva Accords signed in July 1954 to end military hostilities in Indochina tipped the balance of the Khmer-Vietnamese relational dynamics. In accordance with the agreement, the French and the Viet Minh forces agreed to withdraw from Cambodia by the end of 1954. With respect to the Cambodian Communists, who were at the time belligerent elements of the Sihanouk regime, they were not represented to participate in the negotiations of the Agreements. All the Viet Minh forces were withdrawn without prior consent or consultation with their Khmer counterparts. Furthermore, in this exodus of the Viet Minh to Hanoi in 1954, approximately 5,000 Khmer communist cadres, soldiers, and their families accompanied the retreating Vietnamese and were then given further ideological and military training in Hanoi, who were then called “Khmer Viet Minh.”\textsuperscript{42} Consequently, the regions under KPRP control suddenly saw a mass withdrawal of the Vietnamese support. By the end of 1954, the Khmer Royal Forces of the Sihanouk regime filled the void, and the KPRP was forced to go underground.

\textsuperscript{42} Morris, \textit{Why Vietnam Invaded Cambodia}, 36.
This was a major setback and it appeared to the Khmer partners that the Vietnamese Communists had betrayed and abandoned them, as if they were a pawn, by reaching out to Sihanouk and making a political deal.\(^{43}\) This was the beginning of the split among factions of the Khmer Communists as well. Those who left for Hanoi and remained there eventually became increasingly pro-Vietnamese. When they eventually returned to Cambodia in the late 1960s and early 1970s to join the Khmer revolutionary struggle, those repatriated communists from Hanoi with the links and skills with the Vietnamese proved to be real alternatives to the Khmer Rouge leaders, “most of whom had come to Communism only after the Indochinese war or while studying in France.”\(^{44}\)

For a few hundred Khmer Communist guerrillas who disobeyed Hanoi and stayed in the jungles after 1954, those repatriated compatriots appeared as traitors to the Cambodian revolution.\(^{45}\) It was against this backdrop that the KPRP changed its name to the Kampuchean Workers’ Party in 1960, which was later revised (in 1977) as the founding of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK). The revision in the founding dates reflected the Khmer Rouge leadership’s clear choice whether to “defer to or to assert an identity independent of the Vietnamese communists”\(^{46}\) and they chose the latter. The intimate collaboration between the KPRP and Hanoi up to 1954 thus came to naught with one side emerging to bear a deep grudge against the other.

From the North Vietnamese perspective, when Prince Sihanouk came to power, Hanoi saw no trouble in keeping him in the throne as long as the Viet Minh were allowed

\(^{43}\) Mosyakov, “The Khmer Rouge and the Vietnamese Communists: A History of Their Relations as Old in the Soviet Archives,” 42.


\(^{45}\) Shawcross, _Sideshow_, 238.

\(^{46}\) Morris, _Why Vietnam Invaded Cambodia_, 37.
to continue using Cambodian territories to fight against the pro-American South Vietnam. Sihanouk’s anti-imperialist and anti-American stance, with the legitimacy and power associated with being the head of state, was a far more useful asset than the KPRP. Indeed, Sihanouk gave a tacit approval to North Vietnam by granting the use of his eastern territory to launch attacks against the South and to build bases along the so-called Ho Chi Minh Trail, as well as the access to the Cambodian port, Sihanoukville, for the passage of ammunition and arms delivery to their troops. The Khmer Communists, on their side, had been fighting to topple the “feudal regime” of Sihanouk and to establish their own socialist society instead. In 1960, Pol Pot cast his views and evaluations of the situations in the country in the planning of the party strategy of the KPRP. At the party congress during this period, he called for a national-democratic revolution as the main goal of the party. This meant that they would even go against the interests of Hanoi to overthrow Sihanouk. After this congress, Pol Pot became deputy chairman of the party. By the next congress, held in 1963, also in an undisclosed location, Pol Pot assumed the position of the general secretary, constituted the new Central Committee, with four of the twelve seats being occupied by his fellow young radicals. But the Vietnamese Communists scrapped the local Cambodian counterparts’ desires and instead sided with

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47 It was Sihanouk’s “neutrality” policy, or perfectly rational double-standard at the time, for the survival of the regime, to allow the North Vietnamese to use the Cambodian soil as a base for their fight against the U.S. “imperialism” and South Vietnam, while tacitly allowing the American bombardment against the Viet Cong to continue as long as Vietnamese are the strategic targets.

the regime. In the mid-60s, they did not even allow the Khmer Viet Minh in Hanoi to return to their home country to engage in what was deemed to be “illegal work.”

Nevertheless, the attitude of the Cambodian Communists toward their Vietnamese counterparts was still not overtly antagonistic at this time and there was no clear evidence of open hostility in the 1960s. On the contrary, the rift between the Khmer and Vietnamese Communists was actually reversed and tension was loosened in the mid-60s, for political convenience. Sihanouk’s own domestic issues and the emerging power faction consisting of generals Lon Nol and Sirik Matak made Sihanouk’s support to North Vietnam weak. The Vietnamese consequently recalled the old ties with the Khmer Communists despite reservations. Their dilemma was to work with the Khmer Rouge leadership which openly criticized Hanoi’s policies towards the Cambodian monarch but which was not a potent ally to begin with. Hanoi debated whether to send back the Khmer Viet Minh who had come to Hanoi to be trained so that the party consolidation in Cambodia could be carried out under the direct Vietnamese influence. Fundamentally, this was a question for Hanoi of whether to recognize—even for the time being—Pol Pot as the emerging, legitimate communist leader of the party to partner with or to create a new communist party in Cambodia run by their Hanoi-educated Khmers. They chose the former. Even if Pol Pot was no more reliable than Son Ngoc Minh, who was too weak and unpopular, Hanoi opted for strengthening the communist movement in the region, but not internal fragmentation.

49 Ibid., 43.
It was a “marriage of convenience” between the Vietnamese and the CPK. For the CPK, the Khmer Communists were keen, like China’s defiance of the post-Stalinist Soviet authority, to achieve their revolutionary goals without depending upon political and military assistance from the Vietnamese Communists. But in the end it was only the Vietnamese who could supply them with the resources and backing to continue waging the armed struggle to achieve their ends. Furthermore, compromise with Hanoi gave Pol Pot a time and opportunity to sustain, and even strengthen, his authority in the party administration. It is known that Pol Pot visited Hanoi at least twice, in July 1965 and November 1969, to have political discussions with the Vietnamese Communist politburo about the direction of the CPK movement. It appears that they were willing to seal the suspicion and distrust deeply held against Hanoi, as an expedient means, to forge the strategic alliance to carry out their revolution, which was far more important at the time.

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**Gains from uneasy alliance**

Despite the Vietnamese backing, the CPK went through unsuccessful armed campaigns during the period 1968-70 against the ruling regime of Sihanouk. The communist guerrilla forces sustained heavy losses and the chances of overtaking power seemed increasingly remote. The frontline CPK forces and the North Vietnamese communist forces were closely operating inside Cambodia together to resist not only the monarchists, but also the South Vietnamese and the U.S. bombings before 1970.

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51 Ibid., 38.
The decisive turn of events again tipped in favor of Pol Pot and his communist forces. In March 1970, their archenemy Prince Sihanouk was overthrown while traveling to Beijing by a military coup of Lon Nol. In response, Sihanouk formed an alliance with his former enemy, the communists. This was the pivotal turning point, as it was “in the eyes of thousands of peasants, the Khmer Rouge turned from enemies of Sihanouk into his protectors. The [Pol Pot’s] revolutionary army started growing, and communists’ bases among the masses increased considerably. The goals of purely communist reorganization were set aside for the moment, and the slogans about protecting the legitimate chief of state and of national independence came to the fore.”52 This anti-Lon Nol and Sirik coalition was called FUNK (National United Front of Cambodia, in English). The provisional government in the FUNK-liberated area was called GRUNK (Royal United Government of Kampuchea, in English). The Cambodian insurgency in the FUNK coalition consisted of three groupings: the Khmer Rumdoah (Sihanouk’s loyal supporters), the Khmer Viet Minh (the repatriated Khmer communists from Hanoi), and the Khmer Rouge.

Soon after the coup, the North Vietnamese government joined forces with FUNK, denounced the Lon Nol regime as the conspiracy of the United States53 and upheld Prince Sihanouk as the figurehead of resistance coalition. They shared the same basic objective with the Cambodian insurgency, albeit in the short-term, that the republican government of Lon Nol be removed. Their forces entered Cambodia at the request of Pol Pot’s deputy.

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53 Michael Vickery investigated the CIA files after the freedom of information act and found no clear evidence that the US government was aware of the Lon Nol plans ahead of the coup. The coup caught everyone by surprise, including Vietnam and China (find citation).
Nuon Chea, and, by the end of March, the Viet Cong forces began major offensives against the Khmer Republic-controlled areas, and within four months their military superiority swept through and seized control of a half of the Cambodian territory. More than 1,000 Khmer Viet Minh soldiers also infiltrated back into Cambodia in the liberated zones.\(^{54}\) Those Khmers from Vietnam, having undergone political and military trainings and education in the Vietnamese-Khmer Friendship School in Hanoi, were better prepared for a Marxist-Leninist revolution and military combat than their fellow compatriots in Cambodia. This was the source of later fomenting further suspicion and alarm by the CPK,\(^{55}\) but it was the political necessity to seek the assistance of the Vietnamese origin to achieve their ends. It was said that the CPK forces, according to some estimates, had reached 125,000 by 1970, of which only 10,000 were armed and was overall poorly disciplined as a military force. The repatriated Cambodian returnees from Vietnam were indeed necessary assets.

After the March coup, Prince Sihanouk and his new FUNK alignment with Red Khmers were fighting against two enemies, American imperialism and the Khmer Republic led by the coalition of Lon Nol and Sirik Matak. It appears that Pol Pot and his associates made their military base closer to the Vietnamese operation, in rural Kratie, between June and September 1970, suggesting that the Khmer and Vietnamese Communist forces were fighting side by side. According to one of the testimonies recovered in the camp of Phnom Santhuk in 1970 reads, “we were taken into the thick forest near Phnom Santhuk…[where] we trained in combat drill and tactics, and studied

Vietnamese. Our group held daily meetings in which we discussed our ideas, in Vietnamese. I also taught some of the Vietnamese to speak Khmer.”

Hanoi’s primary target was first and foremost South Vietnam, and therefore the political realignment to work with the Sihanoukists made sense for them to put the Lon Nol-led Khmer Republic under control so as to contain the potential expansion of the U.S. and South Vietnam front. Just as much as the CPK, most Vietnamese Communists saw the collaboration with the CPK as a matter of practical expediency as well as long-term obligation for the shared cause. Like their Cambodian counterparts, however, they also had the independent stance towards their partners in Cambodia. A document from around the same time period asserted: “We should make [the Cambodian revolutionaries] realize that their existence depends on ours. Our helping them is one of our international obligations. On the other hand, Cambodia is our staging area. The Cambodian revolution is weak, and its organization loose.”

Rift in the Khmer-Vietnamese relations

As the fighting continued for the next two years and as the Khmer Rouge kept building up its size through recruitment, clashes between the Khmer Rouge forces and the Viet Cong forces increased. In October 1970, a political training session was conducted for several days in Phnom Santhuk, according to a document captured, which foreshadowed the political program of what would follow in the DK era, even before the full withdrawal of the Vietnamese communist forces from Cambodia in 1972. It asserted:

56 Ibid., 207.
57 Ibid., 209.
We should not tolerate the regime of the imperialists, feudalists, and capitalists, which causes endless suffering to the people. We should serve the interests of farmers and workers, the suppressed people…We had to co-ordinate with Vietnam in order to struggle against the American imperialists. However, we must protect our independence, our individual characteristics, shape the future of our people, preserve solidarity in our anti-American efforts, and be free from intervention in internal affairs.  

Still at this time, the “intervention in internal affairs” did not refer to Vietnam. It was directed to American bombings, but the same logic was increasingly applied to then allies. According to a Party decision made at the Party Congress in September 1971, the Khmer Rouge now relegated that “Vietnam was the long term ‘acute enemy’ of Kampuchea.” This was strategically bizarre considering that the republican forces still outnumbered those of the communist ones, of which more than three-quarters were made up of Vietnamese troops. Regardless, fighting between the Khmer Rouge and the Vietnamese communist forces broke out in late 1972 and 1973 while secret purges of Hanoi-trained Khmer Viet Minh were organized by the Nokorbal (State Security) branch of the CPK. In fact, those who returned from Hanoi to join the cause of Cambodian liberation turned out to be the earliest victims of targeted purges as early as 1971. Inter-ethnic tensions of Khmer-Viet relations had also risen, and a pogrom of 1,500 Vietnamese was carried out by the Lon Nol regime as well.  

By late 1972, the rift between Red Khmers and Vietnamese Communists was more apparent. Despite the internal fragmentation at the Central Committee of the CPK  

58 Ibid., 208.  
that was split along the line of the increasingly hostile anti-Vietnamese group vis-à-vis those claiming for the need of cooperation, the expulsion of the Vietnamese compatriots came to surface. After the party decision to expel the Vietnamese from Cambodia, however, its implementation procedure was still moderate at the beginning:

[T]he KCP “domestic” cadres (i.e., those not trained in Hanoi), especially those at regional and sector levels, to open negotiations with Vietnamese troop commanders and Party cadres, calling upon them to leave Cambodia. If the Vietnamese refused, “popular demonstrations” against them would be organized by the KCP “domestic” cadres. If the Vietnamese still refused to leave, the KCP “domestic”-led armed forces would attack the Vietnamese.  

As such, three of the four North Vietnamese military units in Cambodia withdrew back into Vietnam. This ignited the backlash against the remaining Vietnamese presence. The Khmer Rouge forces went against the long-held Vietnamese control and administration and explicitly demonstrated against Hanoi, dismissed any Sihanoukist clique and any prospects for Sihanouk return, and began purges of pro-North Vietnamese Cambodians from the organization. In the southwestern part of Cambodia, where a unit of Vietnamese forces was still left behind, fighting broke out between Cambodian and Vietnamese units.

The rift between the Khmer Rouge and the Vietnamese that became more decisive through negotiations of the Paris peace agreements in 1973. The accord concerning the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam was signed between the United States, South Vietnam, North Vietnam, and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam. At the

conclusion of the Paris Agreement in 1973, the Vietnamese agreed to withdraw from Cambodia, like they did in 1954 at Geneva. The Khmer Rouge refused to join the negotiations for fear of Sihanoukist resurgence. They also saw no reason to comply with the Vietnamese wishes to come to the table as their guerrilla forces had a firmer grip of the liberated zones and they also cynically suspected that Hanoi was fearful of their early victory over Lon Nol and of losing Cambodia as a satellite. On the Vietnamese side, they were offended by their counterpart’s blatant refusal and drastically reduced military and political assistance when the Viet Cong forces made up of a three quarter of the communist insurgency at the time and were controlling the Ho Chi Minh Trail through which the Khmer Rouge were totally dependent on transporting military and economic supplies from China. Curtailing of the Vietnamese assistance also left the Khmer Rouge vulnerable to the massive U.S. carpet-bombing campaigns under the code name Operation Freedom Deal that lasted through August 1973, which crippled the Khmer Rouge strongholds in eastern zones and sorties and tonnage rates intensified in the last six months of the campaigns—after the Paris negotiations.

4.2.2. The 2\textsuperscript{nd} Stage: The Democratic Kampuchea

The second period of the Khmer radicalization was brought upon by reengagement with Vietnam. In 1974, the relations between the two parties came closer, once again, for strategic reasons. It appears that, having failed to garner other external support, especially from China, Pol Pot could not have sustained the struggle against the

Khmer Republic without Vietnamese support and turned to Hanoi. His rhetoric extolled the Vietnamese as if the Cambodian Communists had forgotten all their prior accusations against Vietnamese or pro-Vietnamese elements.

However, the Vietnamese influence was kept at bay. The Khmer Rouge took over Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975, two weeks before the Viet Cong captured Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam. They ensured the early takeover of Phnom Penh before the fall of Saigon as a symbol of the Khmer independence from Vietnam and as a victory of seizing the country without relying exclusively on Vietnam. The Vietnamese were closer to their vision, inherited from Ho Chi Minh, of unifying all parts of Vietnam under the authority of Hanoi, as well as the whole of Indochina under Vietnamese domination to create a federation of socialist states. But Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge leaders emphatically refused to go with this vision in 1975 by taking Phnom Penh first before the Viet Minh took Saigon.

*Consolidating the regime control*

In April 1975, the Khmer Rouge successfully routed the Lon Nol regime, but the regime was not the only opposition to the Khmer Rouge. There were other groups that contested and rebelled against the Khmer Rouge takeover, such as various Eastern Zone units and a large number of civilians. From the regime perspective, “[t]hese had to be dealt with as Lon Nol and Phnom Penh had been.”\(^6^4\) For the CPK, the initial campaigns of population politics proved successful, with the first being the emptying of the cities.

\(^6^4\) Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime*, 68.
The Khmer Rouge decision on the city evacuation was unprecedented from prior communist experiences, but it was a radicalized experiment from Maoist Chinese models. From the 1973 setbacks the Khmer Rouge emerged as more potent guerrilla forces, and the Vietnamese withdrawal marked a new turn for the CPK to follow more close alignment with the Chinese model. Freed from Vietnamese supervision, and from the Soviet-Vietnamese course of movements, the Khmer radicals began the implementation of domestic policy inspired by Maoist campaigns of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution and implementation of radical commune lives at the expense of traditional village life. Thus, the Red Khmers were increasing their grip of command, and by May 1973, the CPK issued a decree to collectivize agriculture in those liberated zones, which foreshadowed the collectivization of the DK era and the beginning of mass deportations of civilians. Some 40,000 were deported from Takeo Province to the eastern zones near the boarder with Vietnam. Kratie, which was one of the first towns to be overtaken and liberated by the CPK, was entirely emptied by the population transfer.

According to a CPK cadre who spoke in 1980:

In 1973 at the time of co-operativization in areas where there were a lot of poor people, we went immediately to higher-level co-operatives, where there were fewer [poor], people stayed at lower-level co-ops. This was a Central Committee directive…The line from above was correct but at the lower level the implementation was ultra left or right. The leftist errors and rightist errors [occurred] countrywide.66

The 1975 forced deportation of Phnom Penh lied along this continuum. The total evacuation of the city dwellers forcefully transferred 2 to 3 million from Phnom Penh to the countryside. It was the beginning of the Cambodian version of shifts from substantive to ideational enemy identities. Although the classification of “Base people” and “New people” emerged on the basis of tainted foreign influences, large-scale slaughter of the city population was spared even in the wake of mass evacuation. Nevertheless, with the emergence of the new categorization—New vis-à-vis Base People—came more stringent internal Self categorization. The legitimate boundaries of the in-group became restrictively narrow. This way, almost the entire Khmer people from deviant backgrounds (i.e., urban, intellectual, etc.) were now excluded—just over one week after Phnom Penh’s fall—from their formerly acceptable in-group category. Risks of social disturbance by forcefully transferring the urban populations to the countryside were deemed less costly than risks of confronting potential dissent from the newly emerging ‘out-group’ elements of the Khmer people.

Although the total evacuation of the capital was shockingly spectacular, the cost of human lives was relatively low. According to some estimates, of a total city population of 2 to 3 million at the time, the direct or indirect victims of the evacuation were around 10,000, and most of those who survived were “neither robbed or searched.”\(^{67}\) Notwithstanding the causalities brought upon by the immediate evacuation, it proved an effective path from the Central Committee’s perspective to consolidating power in the urban setting.

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After emptying the cities of not only the urban population but also of ethnic foreigners such as Chinese and Vietnamese, the CPK was able to effectively control the population as they had planned. Without towns and urban centers, citizens were no longer able to organize themselves or assemble, without towns, and they were no longer able to have private communication or agglomerate publically like before, effectively ceasing the exchange of information or news or any ideas. Thus there was no possibility to stage a demonstration against the Party or develop any base among the dispersed population. It was a vacuum of power and of the people in which no dissent was possible.68

After the fall of Phnom Penh, the party cadres from all over the country gathered at a party assembly on 20 May 1975. The assembly was designed to disseminate the center’s plans to all those provincial officials and implement them in their respective regions. Although no documents from the meeting were produced, Kiernan reconstructed the meeting deliverables through interviews of the former cadres who participated. At the assembly, Pol Pot made the following eight points:

1. Evacuate people from all towns.
2. Abolish all markets.
3. Abolish Lon Nol regime currency and withhold the revolutionary currency that had been printed.
4. Defrock all Buddhist monks and put them to work growing rice.
5. Execute all leaders of the Lon Nol regime beginning with the top leaders.
6. Establish high-level cooperatives throughout the country, with communal eating.
7. Expel the entire Vietnamese minority population.
8. Dispatch troops to the borders, particularly the Vietnamese border.69

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68 Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime*, 64.
69 Ibid., 55.
Similar to the Cultural Revolution in China during which the Chinese radicals sought to eradicate the ‘four olds’—thoughts, culture, customs, and habits from old regimes—the Khmer Rouge led by Pol Pot launched an onslaught against social, political, cultural, and religious institutions upon which the traditional Khmer society was based, in order to create a ‘new socialist man.’ The new socialist world was centered on the ‘organization’ (Angkar) and it subsumed all individuals.

April 1975 was marked as Year Zero, the beginning of new Khmer history. All remnants of civilizations were to be destroyed, and purges of former Khmer Republic officials, KPRP members, and any suspects tied with foreign subversions, especially with Vietnam, raged on. Social institutions and practices, such as family, landholdings and agricultural cultivation, as well as the monarchy were all destroyed and transformed. Individuals were cut off from family ties by being sent to separate communes or forced to be segregated by gender. Children and teenagers were separated from their families, often to be sent to ideological trainings elsewhere. Peasant farmers lost their plots of land which they had cultivated for generations in a matter of a few days.

It was ironic that without the repute of the archenemy of Pol Pot, Prince Sihanouk, the Khmer Rouge had probably not won the support of rural peasants. In 1976, however, with the death of Zhou Enlai, the principle supporter of Sihanouk, and the public revelation of the role of CPK and Pol Pot in Cambodia in 1976, any role for Sihanouk and the monarchy within the power dynamic was abolished.70 In all, an approximate

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figure of at least 1.6 million was decimated during the four year period of the DK era, which killed both “New People” and “Old People.”^71

4.2.3. The 3rd Stage: Post-1975 Radicalization

The third period of the Khmer radicalization entailed a period of ostensibly close diplomatic relations with Vietnam in the first part of the DK era, especially in 1976, but this temporary lull was precisely the period during which the Khmer Rouge were building up their seething hatred toward Hanoi, whose rupture emerged in 1977 in a form of full military offensives. Having consolidated the victory from the Khmer Republic and removed any and all potential subversive elements from the city populations, the DK regime was suddenly left with no ‘obvious’ enemies within their border. In their rhetoric they had ‘routed’ pro-imperialist Khmer traitors as well as the American imperialists. Notwithstanding the varying degree of open confrontation with Vietnam, this period saw shifting identity boundaries of “enemy of the people” from substantive ones to more ideational. The enemies were no longer drawn from non-Khmers or non-communists, but from the old comrades of the CPK itself, especially those who had followed Pol Pot and fought against the Vietnamese troops in eastern zone. Internal purge rates of the Khmer Rouge increased in 1977-78 when the war with Vietnam intensified.

Dormant hostility during the lull in Khmer-Vietnamese relations

In 1976, it appeared there were no open hostility between Phnom Penh and Hanoi on the surface level. On special occasions such as the promulgation of the Cambodian constitution in January 1976 or the first anniversary of the Khmer Rouge victory in April 1976, Hanoi leaders delivered the official and public greetings. In return, the Khmer Rouge leaders sent congratulatory messages to the anniversary of reunification of Vietnam as the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in July 1976. Beyond these diplomatic exchanges, commercial airline services were also established between Hanoi and Phnom Penh in September 1976. Thus, manifest forms of the formal ties between the governments of Vietnam and Cambodia seemed to be on a track of recovery.\textsuperscript{72}

Beneath the surface, however, skirmishes along the border still continued. Vietnam did not make those clashes public as they believed that the Khmer forces were not seriously intending to infiltrate their territory. On the Khmer side, their forces were still recovering from the debacle of the 1975 raid on Phu Quoc Island of Vietnam. But the scale of military offensives intensified in 1977.

On April 30 of 1977, with the occasion of the second anniversary of the reunification of Vietnam, the Khmer Rouge units crossed the territory and carried out systematic attacks on several villages and towns in the border provinces within southern Vietnam. In the same month, the Khmer Rouge announced a directive of mass arrests and executions of all ethnic Vietnamese and others suspected of ties with Vietnam in the eastern zone of Cambodia. By October 1977, the Vietnamese began their retaliation by

\textsuperscript{72} Morris, \textit{Why Vietnam Invaded Cambodia}, 91–96.
building guerrilla forces made up of Cambodian refugees in southern Vietnam and infiltrate them into the Cambodian territory through multiple fronts to incite uprisings under their command. The camps of these guerrillas, called the liberation army of Cambodia, were set up secretly in the eastern zone. Of all the armed uprisings, the one waged in May-June 1978 by Sao Phim, the military and political chief of the eastern zone, only affirmed the Center’s suspicion of alleged Vietnam influences in the border regions. Pol Pot and his clique thus concluded that the eastern zone was now saturated with traitors to Hanoi, and therefore they mobilized their loyal military units from the southwestern zone to the east, along with the security apparatus, to carry out the elimination of those traitors, leading to the rate of mass killing of the CPK cadres all time high. There was, however, no evidence of imminent danger of the Vietnamese invasion or internal subversion in Cambodia, other than prisoners’ confessional accounts extracted by torture that they were acting in coalition as agents of CIA or Vietnam.

By mid-1978, the Cambodian ‘liberation army’ expanded its recruits from not only former CPK cadres who had participated in uprisings but also those Khmer refugees who had escaped fearing Pol Pot’s purges. By this time, self-consummation of the systems had reached such an extent that moderated exercises of political control, as was practiced in previous time periods, was no longer feasible. It was in the end an exogenous force that brought down the Khmer Rouge. The Vietnamese soldiers and Cambodian rebels seized Phnom Penh on January 7, 1979, toppling the DK government and thus ending one of the most ferocious self-consuming killing machineries in history.
CHAPTER 5: THREAT ANALYSIS

This chapter integrates the hitherto discussions of the case narratives and presents a synthesis of themes, events, and patterns in light of the threat analysis. At the end of Chapter 1, the method of analysis to guide the process tracing was presented. It was postulated that the threat analysis would focus mainly on three key themes, which were, namely, the questions concerning the reference points, the meaning of loss, and the fear of losing generative needs. The discussion here will elicit insights from the cases in conjunction with those themes.

As discussed at the onset, threat is not the single most important cause of instigating mass killing, and neither is it an outstanding source of conflict. To be sure, mass killing requires a multitude of causal factors, thereby creating multiple constellations of causal interplays. And to find the cause(s) of mass killing is not the scope of the present study’s analysis. Even more, this study tries to move away from a unitary causal perspective that rests on singular connections between postulated causes and purported effects, because such a causal orientation can very easily be snared in a pitfall of a circular logic. Rather, the analysis of threat seeks a pair-interaction of properties and their pattern-based interactions in a heuristically emergent manner, wherein both the manifest and latent forms of the novel emergence is possible. This view posits that threat, functioning not only as a cause but also as a process, is intimately
connected to the identity needs to have a stable and meaningful trajectory of their own history. In mass killing, the socialization of threats is concerned with the fear of losing the generative needs of identity.

One’s identity projection—to have Self’s meaning of identity and to leave its imprint into the future—can be perpetuated and reinforced by accepting risky political action to redress looming crises and to sustain the path of the identity projection, even if chances of success are deemed low. This is the pattern of the self-organizing system that is driven by threat while inducing threat at the same time, where any potential deviation from these very self-controlling dynamics is inhibited from occurring. When mass killing becomes one mode of asserting control over potential deviation from the design of generative identity needs, the socialization of threats can be self-reinforcing and self-perpetual, until and unless exogenous dynamics overtake such internal causation of the threat system. In fact, the demise of the Stalinist and Maoist systems was marked by the deaths of their principal designers, and the Khmer Rouge was brought down by the Vietnamese invasion into the territory.

Each case exhibits the three periods in which the regimes went through fluctuating gains and losses and exercised different levels of political control accordingly. The socialization of threats emerged heuristically over these three periods and led to the threat system. In this continuum, the threat system transitioned from 1) threat-as-a-condition to threat-as-a-process and 2) conflict to mass killing. The following section provides a summary overview of key junctures of these three periods within each case,
highlighting the variability of political control on a manifest level as well as on a latent level.

5.1. PATTERNS TOWARD MASS KILLING: MECHANICS

The three cases illustrate that mass killing was never sine qua non of their regimes’ operations from the outset or the principal logic of exercising political control, at least until later periods. This pattern did not follow a simple or single trajectory line of escalation but evolved through distinct stages and phases. It went through processes of ebb and flow. In the cases concerned, the communist totalitarian systems present a pattern of discernible escalations of repressive violence over three time periods, each intensifying its level from the one prior.

During the three periods, threat-as-a-condition was attempted. In those instances, “threat” took various forms. As a conditional factor, it meant novel changes in terms of either gains or losses for the regimes and the regimes’ reactions to them. It can be characterized as iterations of ‘action-outcome,’ with each action within the purview of conventional methods available at a given time. Such methods evolved, as the regimes went through both the successes and failures of their socialist experiments and changes in Self-identity, such that mass killing became part of the system’s operation. The following discussion will touch upon the mechanics of such radicalization.
5.1.1. On a Manifest Level: Three Periodization

The level of control within the communist regimes increased over time as a result of exercising more repressive measures, from those shorn of excisionary killing practices to those committing mass killing ungrudgingly. For the regime leadership, it was essential for the one-party state system to sustain coherent and united party organs and cadres to maintain the Party’s stability. This was especially the case when small numbers of marginal insurgents with the banner of communism came out of their bitter civil wars in Russia, China, and Cambodia after defeating their belligerent enemies so that their ‘revolutions’ could continue. The three periods in which the level of the regime control oscillated while carrying out their socialist policies or experiments, can be represented in the figures below.

![Figure 18. The Soviet path of control](image-url)
In the Soviet case, the figure shows the shifting domains of gain and loss of political control over time. The trajectory reflects the regimes’ standpoint oscillating between gains and losses, and increasing the overall amount of regime control over time. It shows whether successes or failures of the given projects or experiments were deemed successful and whether the regimes were able to wield greater control over the populations—even if that meant an increase in the expended cost in terms of human lives.

Likewise, the intensity of the Chinese Communists’ brutal force increased through the three periods, each intervened by setbacks and retrenchment. For the Party’s barometer of stability, the increase in exercising political control appeared successful, even for the time being, in bringing the results they intended. In the Chinese case, the booming period of increasing political control began in the 1940s with the Rectification movement, the Anti-Rightist campaign in the 1950s, and finally the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s.

Figure 19. The Chinese path of control
As for Cambodia, the oscillation of the Khmer Rouge’s political control was a shorter interval than those in the Soviet or China, although such short intervals still defy a simplistic picture of the Khmer Rouge’s progression and shows instead the variation in the level of their brutality. While they constantly sought more control and struggled not to lose what was gained, their fluctuating actions were also influenced by calculating risks and gains in the respective domains of gains and losses. From the regime perspective, they were making steady progress in their exercise of control through each phase.

![Figure 20. The Cambodian path of control](image)

In each domain of loss, the regimes were challenged with prospects for further decline of their political control. These prospects—whether they appeared in the form of a resurging market-based economy in the NEP, de-Stalinization impacts in China, or the withdrawal of Vietnamese support in Cambodia—posed conditional threats hampering
the promising path toward socialist victory. There were risks of either continuing the futile socialist experiments and facing the further dwindling of their political control by not changing the course of action (risk 1) or failing to employ more coercive and controlling methods (risk 2). In the domains of loss, the regimes were inclined to be more risk averse (risk of further failure) by being more risk acceptant (risk of further coercion). Thus, the exercise of political control meant an increase in targeting ‘sources of malaise,’ and such targeted actions toward given enemies proved to be successful in their own standards at the time. On an event basis, action-outcome cycles generated the regime’s maneuvering through which they explored to overcome given challenges and proved to themselves quite successful. But over all, on the manifest level, the regime control measures increased their lethality. That is to say, continuous cycles of threat-as-a-condition and action-counteractions engendered the threat systems.

5.1.2. On a Latent Level: Transition to the Threat Systems

The three communist regimes’ brutal repression and exercise of their political control were thus presented as part of fleeting phases. Why did the increase in regime control lead to an actual increase in violence? They were only manifest forms of their forces at work. To answer this question, radicalization mechanics on a latent level should be discussed. Recalling the earlier analogy, the figure of a tip of the iceberg is used here again. The three periodization scenarios presented in each case are tantamount to the phenomena lying above the horizontal line in the figure below. Beneath the line was what was at stake to have engendered the threat systems. From the systems driven by threat-as-
a-condition cycles, the new systems emerged and operated in the framework of threat-as-a-process. This shift can be described by transitions of the reference points, framed by the baseline of what was an unacceptable cost in terms of the political control.

![Diagram](image)

Figure 21. Manifest and latent levels

*Shifting Reference Points*

In the earlier section, the three periodization scenarios were traced in terms of the extent to which the regimes were able to, or so they believed, exert their purported control over their subject populations. Here the standpoint is reversed. Regardless of how much control they believed they had, the analysis based on shifting reference points and changing net value assets of gains and losses reveals a different picture. The reference points here can be seen as the parties’ own self-evaluation of their own control—hence their own self-image of the party identity in light of the given ideological, political, economic, and military conditions at the time. In contrast to increasing control of the three communist regimes on the manifest level, the reference points from which their future gains and losses were assessed were decreasing constantly on the latent level.
When we look at one period of gain and loss separately, the shifts in the reference points can be characterized as below (Figure 22a and 22b), as related but independent shifts from one reference point “R” to the next “R’.”

The Bolsheviks’ decossackization policy (1919-20), the CCP’s Rectification Movement (1942-44), and the CPK alliance with the Vietnamese (through 1973) all afforded new political opportunities that were previously unavailable. The Red Army consolidated the power base in what was the most volatile region in the battle against the former tsarist forces and the White Army during the Civil War. In China, in the face of mounting offensives by the Japanese imperial army against the Communists, there was a surge in the party membership as well as in the need to maintain disciplinary unity and ideological coherence amongst the new recruits. The thought remolding in the Rectification movement provided the requisite trainings then for the new cadres whose revolutionary consciousness was not necessarily derived from Marxism-Leninism. This time period consolidated the Maoist reliance on mass line as well. For the Cambodian Communists, the Vietnamese patronage was necessary for their immediate political objectives, to fight against the monarchists or the republicans, for the CPK forces and organization were in disarray in much of the 1960s and early 70s. All of these practices involved coercive control but were not eliminationist in nature. The level of coercion was still within the conventional parameter of repression and control at the time. Yet they served as the baseline of excisionary violence that was to come later against future counterrevolutionary elements.
When the regimes experienced unexpected impediments, in a form of setbacks or losses, their reference points shifted downward as in Figure 22a. The credibility of their party identity as the legitimate hair of revolutionary struggle was challenged, and the future projection of maintaining their stable and coherent path of identity legacy was put to question. For example, although Lenin’s liberal NEP experiments proved partially successful in recovering from the emergency measures of War Communism during the Civil War, the NEP threw the Bolsheviks back into the capitalist malaise from which they had originally aspired to depart. The CCP’s identity and Mao’s leadership were also challenged when ‘the leader’ of the socialist bloc, Khrushchev, announced abruptly a departure from Stalinism at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956. For the Chinese who had emerged from their Civil War and were in a nascent stage of socialist state-building modeled after the Soviet example, de-Stalinization was a major ideological and political throwback. The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 as well as the party cadres’ and intellectuals’ hidden grievances aired through the Hundred Flowers Campaign in 1956 both revealed a more fragile base of the Party leadership than Mao had expected. In Cambodia, the signing of the Paris agreement on January 23, 1973 meant that the Khmer Rouge was left as the only standing antagonist to receive the brunt of American bombardment after. Undoubtedly the new isolationist conditions and the ravages of the American air raids left the CPK uncertain of their future survival. In all these circumstances, the three cases experienced downward shifts of the reference points of their identity image, as depicted in Figure 22a.
What seemed to be a previously reasonable gain would suddenly look more grim (i.e., shrunk value area in the new gains frame), while the new prospects for further losses loomed much larger (i.e., expanded value area in the new losses frame).

In these conditions, it is posited that the parties would not hesitate to take risks to lessen the experienced loss or to avoid further loss. Indeed, the three regimes resorted to more radical measures. Stalin unleashed the decossackization policy, favoring more rapid collectivization over moderate NEP-oriented economic planning. The Party became more intransigent in their unflinching commitment to the path of socialist restructuring of the society. The basis of mass mobilization in the Chinese case did not change but in the wake of increasing dissent, the Anti-Rightist Campaign became more punitive and aggressive in the methods of “struggle,” which involved confessions and self-criticisms, intensifying the arbitrary identity-labeling practices. In Cambodia, the total emptying of
the city population in Phnom Penh was rationalized on the basis of avoiding impending American bombing, but the forcible population transfer en masse of the capital and other major cities made it possible to retain control without the foreign subversion. These scenarios fit in the upward shift of the reference points as in Figure 22b, now presenting a larger share of gains at the new domain as well as a smaller one for losses (compared to 22a). There were risks of failure despite the use of more coercive political control, but these methods were successful from the regime standards.

However, there is a conundrum even in these ostensible gains. The functions of gains and losses work in such a way that the pain caused by impending losses is more acutely felt by the stakeholders than is the corresponding value of impending gains. This suggests that even when the regimes increased the level of political control through their gains, as in Figure 22b, the looming prospects for seemingly more detrimental losses were still larger than what they had just achieved. In other words, the reference points continue to shift downward in terms of the parties’ continued assessment of their own perceived prospects in relation to the total net value asset for gains. This is captured in Figure 23. In contrast to the increasing, upward shifts in the level of the regime control on the manifest level, the evaluation of the reference points vis-à-vis prospects for further loss posits that the regimes were in the continuous domains of losses, on the latent level, even when they exerted more control on an event-by-event basis.
Figure 23. Systemic shifts of reference point

When we see each period of gains and losses individually, shifts in such event-based reference points provide partial pictures of temporary gains or losses (such as $A \rightarrow B$; $B \rightarrow C$; or $C \rightarrow D$, etc.). The course of taking either radical or moderate policy actions was sensible in that particular context. But over the iterative processes, the systemic reference point shifts project an overall net decline (i.e., $A \rightarrow C \rightarrow E$). Despite the actual increases in political control (i.e., Figure 18—20), there are ever-increasing perceptions of loss. The self-organizing principle of these systems reinforces and perpetuates the party’s perception of loss, thus inviting more risk-tolerant behavior to avoid further loss. Similar patterns can be pointed in the oscillation between gains and losses in the third period of each case. By this time, Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot had overcome policy mishaps and failures of their prior experiments and established their undisputed power as despots. The Party thus purged their own members from the top echelon to lower ranks, in search of more tightened actual control but in effect increasing more prospects for further loss.

When the reference points are systematically shifting downward as such, a latent attractor of the systems—aversion to change and the tendency to fall back on default
states of *status quo ante*—became ever more apparent. The result was the self-perpetuation of the systemic reference points and self-reinforcement of the controlling mechanisms and methods used.

5.2. PATTERNSTOWARD MASS KILLING: SHIFTING IDENTITIES

The preceding discussion was primarily concerned with the mechanics of how the radicalization of the threat systems emerged. Besides this, there were other important changes in terms of the parties’ relational dynamics, for the systems to make such a transition and for mass killing to be one of the means of such relational associations. Furthermore, these changes involved the substance of identities at stake. Now the discussion will touch upon how the social collectivity—objects of elimination—shifted just when the self-perpetuating and self-reinforcing mechanisms of the threat systems were emerging. This process can be observed through the relational ontology of the parties as it shifts from conflict to mass killing.

5.2.1. On a Manifest Level: From Conflict to Mass Killing

As discussed, the patterns of oscillation between the domains of gains and losses reflected the transient nature of political control. More specifically, its staged escalation showed shifts from conflict to mass killing. Here, it is useful to recall Table 2 of Chapter 1, which delineates the characteristic differences between conflict and mass killing, in order to illuminate what that shift means in the relational systems on a manifest level.
From the first through the third periods, the relational associations exhibited the transmutability and variability of conflict and mass killing marked by intensifying levels of repressive violence. First, when there was an identifiable figure of external enemies, it was conflict between the parties and it ended when the purpose was served by one of them. Secondly, in the middle stage, the relational systems began to change as the external enemy identity was no longer present. The new out-groups were neither genuinely within the Communist Party nor completely external. It was an emergent identity within newly created in-group boundaries. Thirdly, in the last stage, the enemy identity was completely within the in-group, boundaries of which were even newly redefined.

In the first period (Decossackization/Civil War—the NEP in Soviet Russia; the Rectification Movement—de-Stalinization/Hundred Flowers in China; alliance with Hanoi—Paris agreement in Cambodia), the parties were in conflict. In each of the respective cases, the communists were engaging in competition or comparison with an identifiable group of enemies who existed beyond the boundaries of ‘in-groups’ as they were broadly defined (i.e., the communists). The Bolsheviks were fighting against the last remnants of the former tsarist regime including the Whites and the Cossacks, none of whom were communists. The Chinese Communists were less concerned with the backgrounds of new recruits. Although the Chinese were less endowed than the Russian peasants to embrace Marxist-Leninism, the sweeping thought remolding campaigns in the name of national liberation and the fight against foreign influences was quite successful in delineating new in-group boundaries. Similarly, the Cambodian Communists were also
loosely defined as those who fought against the Khmer Republic government, rather than as the Marxist-Leninists.

At this stage, these competitive or comparative means of the relational associations were still interactive in nature. Group boundaries of who was inside and outside the group and who was pitted against whom were still broadly defined between the belligerents. The basis of defining identity boundaries was whether one group was in opposition to the other exogenous groups. In this sense, the relational associations were still operating with, in Redekop’s language, the interactive doubling of the parties. Their identities necessitated competitive enemies for the boundaries of their in-group identity to be clearly demarcated in relation to the others.

And all of these modes of associations were finite as the contention ended when the purpose was served. The Bolsheviks did not kill off the entire Cossackry but they won the Civil War and established the first socialist state in history. The Chinese Communists followed suit and gained national independence while expanding the ideological bases of communism in a society where it was barely thought to be applicable for. The Cambodian Communists were still small and their guerrilla tactics were only possible with Vietnamese assistance in the face of the American-backed Lon Nol regime and the U.S. bombings. But their reluctant alliance with Hanoi made sense only to stand against the common enemies. In every case, the nature of contention laid in the incompatibility of objectives.

In the second period, previously potent archenemies were no longer available as out-groups. The Bolsheviks were now fighting with civil strife and unrest resulting from
dysfunctional performances of the NEP. The Chinese were struggling to contain the widespread discontent or rightist views expressed by the cadres and intellectuals. The Khmer Rouge were confronted with the problem of administering the newly conquered urban Khmer populations. Their socialist experiments had to redress challenges caused by such groups who were neither fervent communists nor openly hostile exogenous enemies. The enemy identity began to shift from substantive to ideational in the sense that it was now constructed from formerly non-existent or irrelevant categories, such as kulaks, rightists, or New People. It was no longer a competition with the identifiable group of external enemies. Rather, the idea came from a counterrevolutionary saboteur who could ruin the Party authority from within. The boundaries of the social collectivity started shifting inwardly as such. The interactive nature of conflict began to diminish, as the power asymmetry pitted against the newly defined, arbitrary enemy identities whose agent-hood was not devalued.

In the third period, the ‘out-group’ targets were wholly ideational. They were new deviant elements from in-groups. Formerly interactive doubling nature of the relational association with the enemies was replaced by the complete denial of their existence. In the Soviet case, the Party exhibited the radicalization process of purification over time. This drive of Soviet purification was derived from “a universal-particularistic axis, combining the modern European ethos of social engineering with Bolshevik Marxist eschatology”\(^1\) to aspire to a conflict-free and harmonious society.

[E]nemy groups previously considered to be differentiated, reformable, and redeemable were now viewed as undifferentiated, unreformable, and irredeemable collectives. This totalization of the Marxist sociological paradigm challenged the commitment to the primacy of nurture over nature in the ongoing social engineering project.²

The totalization of the Soviet purification practice was reverberated less in China but more in Cambodia, but regardless of the degree, fundamentally, the doubling and interactive agent-hood was increasingly dismissed from the relational associations as the regimes progressed over the three periods.

5.2.2. On a Latent Level: From Conditional to Heuristic

The Marxist regimes in the three cases faced inherent challenges of class categorization. The communist practices of identity denigration—whether it was decossackization, dekulakization, anti-rightists, the black, New People, or “Khmer bodies with Vietnamese minds”—gradually treated the enemies as an irredeemable monolith through the three periods. The intransigence of counterrevolutionary identity was then institutionalized as a product of nature, rather than of nurture, by myriad state-sanctioned practices, such as passport control or the “red” credentials or people’s communes. On the manifest level, it appears as though it was only the enemy identity that changed from substantive to ideational categories (i.e., from Cossacks to kulaks, from kulaks to Bucharinists or Trotskyists; from the black category to counterrevolutionary; from former Khmer Republic officials to New People, from city dwellers to those in eastern zones.

close to Vietnam, etc.). However, much more crucial to how these threat systems evolved in each case was the change in Self-identity against which this enemy identity was pitted.

As such, the Marxist ethos of a classless society created the fundamental contradiction in the relational associations. To realize a classless and harmonious society from that which was ‘fraught’ with irredeemable, nature-based identity (i.e., kulaks, the black, New People), it was necessary for the regimes to create a new, singular, and independent revolutionary identity, free from the doubling or interactive agency that did not depend on other identities. Nevertheless, such a revolutionary identity was not definable. A viable means to gauge the party coherence and unity without such conspicuous enemies was to see who deviated—who were their new ‘out-groups’ if not the Whites, the Kuomintang, or the Khmer Republicans. Yet such revolutionary identities would be definable only in relation to the castigated ones, which were often baselessly non-existent. The truly authentic (i.e., loyal) revolutionary identity was verifiable only in opposition to what was labeled as counterrevolutionary—the one which was, paradoxically, too arbitrary and indefinable (i.e., kulaks, the black, New People). Therefore, the singular and independent revolutionary identity system they purported to create was contingent upon the negation of an identity that did not exist.

Consequently, when the threat systems emerged over the three periods, Self-categorization of who constituted the in-group became more exclusionary, and this exclusiveness was projected onto shifts from substantive to ideational identities on the enemy side. Those who were labeled as kulaks, rightists, or New People were actually the same people before or after the labeling was applied. What changed were the labeling
practices. They were made objects of elimination when the boundaries of Self-identity changed and precluded them. In other words, the Parties tried to eliminate the labels, but such label-based identity was *ineliminable* because it was always ideational and never substantive. As the regimes went through the processes of escalatory repressive violence, the substantial meaning of their identity changed—from something in opposition to an identifiable external enemy to the oppositional identity that was ineliminable.

In the threat systems wherein the mechanical operations were predisposed to avoiding a further loss of political control, the generative needs of Self-identity also shifted. The purposes of identity fulfillment shifted from achieving something external to validating the coherent path of identity and keeping that meaning intact. The locus of identity configuration shifted inwardly; the question was who belonged to the outside, and it then evolved to who belonged to the inside. In this identity negotiation, the Self was constantly seeking a mirroring identity (i.e., interactive & doubling identity) to anchor its own self-conception. The parties were in pursuit of validation to legitimize such generative values of identity.

5.3. **Threat Systems in Historical Context**

From the threat perspective, the three cases were part of the broader threat-systems-in-making. The cases of mass killing in the former Soviet Union, China, and Cambodia illuminate a historical pattern of shifting reference points. In a traditional research method, especially in the field of genocide studies, those three cases would have been treated as comparable but separate episodes. There have been mainly two types of
approaching the comparative cases. In most cases, those communist cases would be discussed due to the same dependent variable, which was the scale and scope of mass killing that took place, despite various differentials such as national, political, or historical contexts. As discussed earlier, this was one of the major shortcomings of inquiry, as a selection of cases based on the sheer similarity of the dependent variable leads to a tautological argument because, while conflict and mass killing are distinct, they are interrelated and therefore specifying a causal origin at a specific level in the long spectrum of political violence is difficult to pin down.

Another type would be a way to lump together the three communist cases due to the fact that each regime espoused the communist ideology. While this was true, each regime developed its own variant of Marxism and the communist ideologies that were adopted as part of their national agendas were not exactly the same. There were shared ideological imprints derived from orthodox Marxist approaches, but the applications and implementations were nationalistic and politicized differently in the given contexts. Thus, it was not the ideology of communism per se that killed people en masse.

The threat analysis provides, instead, a pattern in which national variants of communist revolutionary ideals exhibited a similar course of trajectories and development despite starkly different temporal and geographical exigencies. That is, the three cases were distinct in terms of their development but, from this pattern-based analysis, they present one coherent path of historical development of political control, using mass killing as one form of repression. It is a history of political control that began from the Soviet as the initial reference point and trans-morphed through China and then
Cambodia. The Stalinist model was, in its own light, ‘success’ in perfecting the use of political control. The subsequent ‘failure’ of Maoist China as a result of using more moderate political control by involving mass participation helped the Khmer Rouge to perpetuate and reinforce the intensity of communist methods of control. The totalization of political control during the Democratic Kampuchea was more thorough than the Soviet case because it was radicalized after the broader threat-systems-in-making shifted to the domain of loss during the Maoist Chinese period. The three cases present their own distinct manifest forms of political control of the same latent force as part of the broader threat systems as depicted in the figure below.

![Figure 24. Trans-historical shifts of the regime reference point](image)

Communist leaders wielded political control in a rationally calculated or structurally automated manner during the regime takeover and the mobilization periods. What permeated through the communist episodes of political control was that they were all engaged in state building of their own under the name of political and ideological
projects, other than the killings per se. Political control was not used in the form of a reactive or remedial response by the Communist elites; it was used as a proactive move to further consolidate the control of power and assure the legitimate survival of the cause. Their practice of purging was more proactive rather than reactive, even if it was not even tactically necessary to indulge in purges in some cases. Through purging, purifying and reintegrating, however, the socialist polity was being built as a result of coercive restructuring. It was a project as a means and an end in itself.

Threats created a false state of security that only further threats could maintain. At this stage, there emerged a contradictory balance in the use of control. On the one hand, the communist regimes employed political control to monopolize control over the structures and individuals, which necessitated the regularity and predictability of the subjects. On the other hand, the communist regimes, at the core of their state-building projects, were predicated on constant change, an incessant pursuit of drastic transformations of the social structures, economic behavior, and the creation of new ideological men. Communist usage of political control was therefore in a paradoxical bind. Their social engineering was unleashing exercises of enormous control in search of fixity amidst constantly changing contexts, regardless of whether those novel changes were brought upon as intended or not. Consequently, while the systems sought the creation of something that did not exist, in its pursuit they necessarily generated alienation and resistance among the (newly) deviated. The use of political control therefore had a rational base, in order to contain and control deviation and enforce
compliant behaviors, but the destruction of the social hierarchy and the communist party hierarchy created the ground for social vacuum conducive to mass killing.

The threat systems were run by people who engaged in an ideational process to constantly create and recreate their fictitious identity based on the fictitious doubling of the relational associations. The fundamental system was a world free from oppression, wherein the oppressed rose to reverse their ‘ideological identity’ to be free, but instead they nurtured a ‘political identity’ to be the new oppressor. This ideational process was made salient and was exacerbated by a self-generating identity system where the legitimacy of one’s identity was derived from contrasting with ‘what it is not’—which was too nebulous and therefore ineliminable. The Communist regimes constantly searched for a source of legitimacy and stability within their inherent in-group identity, paradoxically resorting to the alienation of their own people so that the new deviants could be contrasted with new in-group identity. Generative values of such identity systems are inherently unstable, because the legitimacy of those fictive identity needs exists in the future and is therefore essentially unsatisfiable.

5.4. Future Research Agenda

The present study has attempted a theory-testing exercise of the conceptual model of the threat system under the rubric of the ‘mechanism causal-process observation’ (CPO).\(^3\) Instead of the Independent Variable CPO, which seeks the presence, or lack thereof, of a postulated cause of the given outcome, the Mechanism CPO employed here

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\(^3\) See Table 16 earlier.
was interested in explaining intervening processes and functions. However, despite attempts to expand the conceptual understandings of threat formations, the exploration is not without limitation. In sketching out future paths to further develop this exploration of threats, there are several considerations to make the present findings of the threat system even more robust.

First, the ‘negative’ cases should be introduced to comparative analysis of the three cases. As elaborated in Chapter 1, the comparative approach was preferred to a single case study, but the case selection covered only the episodes of mass killing wherein the postulated causal mechanisms did occur (i.e. ‘positive’ cases). Instead, those negative cases would be the ones in which those suggested models did not occur, meaning that despite the conditions conducive to generating the threat system mass killing did not ensue, as contrasts to the three cases in question. In concrete terms, such cases can be other communist or totalitarian regimes that did not follow suit the postulated model of the threat system, and examples could be drawn from Bulgaria, Hungary, and/or Vietnam. To be sure, these cases did entail the substantial number of death toll as a result of organized concentration camps or collectivization practices. Nevertheless, the different nuance should be noted in terms of the deaths from structural operations and those effectuated by mass killing of identifiable human groups systematically organized by states. Mass deaths in conflict systems and mass killing in the threat system should be differentiated in the broad spectrum of political violence. For this reason, it would be a worthwhile agenda to include those potential ‘negative’ cases—

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4 Estimated deaths of 50,000 to 100,000 in Bulgaria and 80,000 to 200,000 in Vietnam. See Valentino, *Final Solutions*, 75.
they may well not be—in the future comparative analysis in addition to the three communist regimes analyzed here. In so doing, the research would add Mill’s method of difference, and the combination of the two comparative logics (i.e., along with the method of agreement employed in this study) would be able to strengthen more valid causal associations and processes of the cases.

Second, besides exploring the patterns and processes of the threat system *in making*, the future research should identify equally paradoxical patterns and processes of how the threat system would diminish its effect or cease to exist, once it has occurred. The present study explored the transmutability and variability of repressive political control during the lifespan of the communist regimes, with a special focus on the periods leading up to the threat system formations. Variation was crucial, because mass killing was not static throughout and exhibited its varying degrees of manifestation depending on how the regimes tried to control the newly defined deviant groups at the given time. However, it was beyond the scope of analysis, for the time being, to explore how such threat-based identity formations dwindled and how de-escalation of the threat system occurred. There are some emerging research on how mass atrocities end by the World Peace Foundation, but their analytical focus through case-based analysis is still centered on evidentiary record, or snapshots, of what happened when those mass atrocities ended rather than tracing endogenous shifts, if any, from murderous systems. In addition to exploring the emergence of the threat system, as was attempted in this study, it is worth

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exploring the demise of the threat system in order to paint the picture of the totality of threat-driven and threat-inducing identity formations in the future.

Third, another area to strengthen theoretical contributions of the threat system is to find empirical implications of threats. This study has developed an extensive discussion on the framing processes of the reference points by delving into the domains of gain and loss in the respective cases and evaluating the corresponding meanings of loss. In other words, it analyzed how the reference points can be created, by largely discussing successes or failures of intended objectives of the socialist experiments. As a future agenda, if we can find indicators or measures to gauge the reference points in quantifiable terms, then research opportunities would expand to 1) measure changes in the reference points, 2) find correlations between the reference points in the domains of gain or loss and observable forms of violence, and 3) find correlations between the particular reference points and the specific degree of violence at different levels of social apparatus.

For point #1, we can identify movements of the reference points shifting from the domain of gain to that of loss, or vice versa, and different timings of such shifts. Once we quantify the measures of the reference points as such, it is possible to see when moderate (such as rectifications) or radical forms of political control (such as purges ending in death) are more prevalent in which domain of gain or loss (for point #2). Furthermore, it is also possible to see linkages of how the particular reference point leads to a specific act of violence from the top leadership level to the populations (for point #3). These empirical implications would be concerned with the changes observable on the manifest level and may not unravel the shifts in the identity boundaries at the ideational level.
Nevertheless, the combination of such empirical findings and qualitative analysis of the generative needs of the parties involved in the threat system can illuminate our understandings of what novel changes and their interpretations are threatening to induce mass killing.
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BIOGRAPHY

Tetsushi Ogata is Director of the Genocide Prevention Program at the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University. He has, among others, organized a series of genocide prevention workshops that trained officials from UN member states between 2007-10; facilitated the launch of national committees for genocide prevention in member states of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region in Africa; collaborated with the European governments to advance their policies on genocide prevention through organizing the Genocide Prevention Advisory Network; and supported the leading governments in the communities of genocide prevention and the Responsibility to Protect to launch the Global Action Against Mass Atrocity Crimes, a global network of atrocity prevention focal points around the world. He has also served as Secretary-Treasurer of the Executive Board of the International Association of Genocide Scholars. He received his B.A. in Liberal Arts, with concentration in international studies, from Soka University of America in 2005 and his M.S. in Conflict Analysis and Resolution from George Mason University in 2008.