

---

# The Collective Dynamics of Genocidal Violence in Cambodia, 1975–1979

Peter B. Owens

*While previous research conceptualizes genocide as an outcome of complex interactions between multiple social factors, the specific ways in which these factors interact and combine with each other, and how their individual effects may be mediated through such interaction, remain to be empirically specified. Using historical accounts given by survivors of the Cambodian genocide, and drawing from insights in the collective action literature, this study presents a configurational and comparative analysis of the collective dynamics of genocidal violence. The analysis focuses on how changing local patterns of relational and cognitive collective mechanisms created distinctly local patterns of violence, affecting both levels of victimization and the targeting of different groups over time. While the expansion and consolidation of central state power accounts for a generalized increase in violence, official framing practices mediated how groups became targeted. These findings confirm and extend the insights of other meso-level studies of genocide, and demonstrate the utility of comparative configurational methods for further inquiry.*

## Introduction

Social science has endeavored to explain the occurrence and intensity of episodes of genocide and mass killing through a growing range of analytic approaches. From an initial generalized and broad engagement with the subject (Harff and Gurr 1988; Horowitz 1997; Kuper 1981), areas of analytic focus now include macrolevel political, institutional, and economic forces (Fein 1993a; Harff 2003; Krain 1997; Mann 2005), elite decision-making processes (Gagnon 2004; Midlarsky 2005; Valentino 2004), nonelite perpetrator motivation and participation (Hinton 2005; Mann 2000), and the dissemination of collective scripts or frames for violent action (Fujii 2004; Oberschall 2000; Straus 2007). In addition, a more recent body of research demonstrates that local and temporal variation in violence during genocides is associated with distinct meso-level determinants (Fujii 2008, 2009; Hagan and Raymond-Richmond 2008; Kopstein and Wittenberg 2011; Straus 2006; Su 2011; Verwimp 2003, 2004, 2005). These recent works support Bartov's (2003: 86) contention that "we cannot understand certain central aspects of modern genocide without closely examining the local circumstances in which it occurs" (see also King 2004).

A previous draft of this work was presented at the 82nd Annual Meeting of the Pacific Sociological Association, Seattle, March 2011. This research was supported by the UC Irvine Sociology Department and the Center for the Study of Democracy. I thank Ben Kiernan for his generosity in sharing the data used in the study, as well as Edwin Amenta, Stanley Bailey, Patrick Heuveline, David Snow, Judith Stepan-Norris, James Stobaugh, and Yang Su for their comments and suggestions.

Despite the promise of this emerging empirical focus, analytic challenges remain. Researchers generally conceptualize genocides as the product of interactions between a variety of factors that are rarely sufficient on their own (Fein 1993b; Tilly 2003: 103–10). However, most studies either focus on the direct effects of these factors, or privilege one or two explanatory factors and marginalize others. As a result, the specific ways in which multiple explanatory factors interact in specific meso-level contexts remains to be accounted for empirically.

In order to address this shortcoming, this study presents a fuzzy set analysis (Ragin 2000, 2008) of local and temporal variation in the emergence of violence during the Cambodian genocide. I focus on how changing combinations of cognitive and relational mechanisms created distinct patterns of violence. To address changes in local conditions over time, I utilize a sample of twenty-four historical accounts from survivors of the genocide. Results indicate that while the increasing coercive capacity of the central state was the primary vector of increasing violence, consistent with historical scholarship, variation in victimization for different social groups was mediated by changes in official crisis framing, intergroup polarization and dehumanization, and quotidian disruption. These findings confirm and extend the insights of other meso-level studies of genocide, and demonstrate the utility of comparative configurational methods in the study of its emergence.

## The Rule of the Khmer Rouge, 1975–1979

On April 17, 1975 after roughly five years of civil war in Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge army seized the capital city of Phnom Penh. Its victory would usher in one of the most violent and extremist regimes of the twentieth century: Pol Pot's Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK). The CPK sought to rapidly reshape Cambodia, now renamed Democratic Kampuchea, into the purest manifestation of agrarian socialism in the world. Instead, over the next four years Democratic Kampuchea became an indentured agrarian “prison camp state” (Kiernan 2002: 9). By its overthrow by a Vietnamese invasion in January 1979, demographic scholars estimate that between one and three million people had died from starvation, lack of medicine, and violence (De Walque 2005; Heuveline 1998, 2001). Notably, Heuveline (1998) finds that at least six hundred thousand deaths, and perhaps as many as 1.1 million, are directly attributable to physical violence (i.e., executions; see also Etcheson 2005: 118–19).

In order to best summarize the overall historical dynamics of the regime, I periodize its history into three sections. Table 1 presents a summary of these periods across three aspects: state-institutional dynamics, local-situational dynamics, and the general dynamics of victimization.

Throughout its rule, the CPK regime “combined highly centralized control and what often appears to be an unchanging character with complex regional and temporal variations” (Chandler 1991: 265; Vickery 1984). During the civil war, the CPK was a loosely bound coalition of different political factions, many with stronger ties to Vietnamese communism than to the CPK's extremist central committee, secretly

**TABLE 1.** *Historical periodization of CPK rule*

Aspects	Period I: April 1975–March 1976	Period II: March 1976–September 1977	Period III: September 1977–January 1979
State Institutional	Weak central CPK control over regional administration Tolerance of moderates within local administrative networks Extremist party control in some regions	Central CPK control expands through campaign for regional domination Targeted purges of moderates within local administrative networks Extremist party elements expand regional control	Central CPK consolidates regional administrative control Purges encompass all areas of CPK bureaucracy and party structure Extremist party elements dominate most regions
Local Situational	Creation of New/Base categories; uneven enforcement in different regions Agricultural work cooperatives organized	Increasing polarization between New and Base Collective work targets introduced to work cooperatives; food withheld if unmet	Increasing variation in degree of polarization between New and Base Further increases in collective work targets
Dynamics of Violent Victimization	Generally “peaceful” with little civil unrest Soldiers and officials of old regime targeted Isolated violence and mistreatment of workers for minor infractions	Isolated civil unrest and rebellions New people are predominantly targeted Increasing use of executions for punishment of minor infractions	Rebellions and military uprisings are widespread Both New and Base targeted Mass executions become commonplace and increasingly arbitrary

led by Pol Pot (Chanda 1986; Etcheson 1984; Kiernan 2004). After the war, administration of the country’s different regions was delegated to various autonomous local officials. While some regional administrations were closely connected with Pol Pot and the CPK center (Kiernan 2002: 169; Vickery 1984: 93), others were overseen by officials whose connections to the party center were quite tenuous (Becker 1998: 176–81). However, in March and April 1976, Pol Pot and the CPK center began to take increasingly violent repressive measures to eliminate officials seen as moderate or disobedient and consolidate centralized political control. By 1978, internecine violence had engulfed the party, and the CPK’s revolution disintegrated into a quagmire of repressive violence. The spread of violence across different regions was thus largely defined by the “CPK center’s unceasing, and increasingly successful, struggle for top-down domination” (Kiernan 2002: 26).

Central to the organization of violence in Cambodia was the categorization of the population into two “class” groups (Becker 1998: 226–29). Those categorized as “New People” were seen as contaminated by foreign capitalist influence, and were predominantly deported into the countryside from urban areas, but also included numerous non-Khmer minorities (in particular the Vietnamese and Cham; see Kiernan 2002). Rural peasants seen as uncontaminated by foreign influence were categorized as “Base People,” who would serve as the raw human materials for the CPK’s social revolution (Mann 2005: 343; Valentino 2004: 138–39). While these categories

exploited urban-rural tensions nurtured during Cambodia's civil war (Kiernan 2002: 16–25), they also reflected the CPK's peculiar notion of "class." For the CPK, class was the manifestation of an essentialist "organic purity" (Straus 2001) that could be observed, and thus changed, through an individual's actions (Kiernan 1985). For instance, if a Base peasant committed a minor infraction such as breaking a farming tool, they might be redesignated as a "class traitor" for their act of "sabotage." The CPK also subsumed ethnic, national, and religious differences within this organic notion of class (Becker 1998: 242–43; Heder 2001), with non-Khmer minorities such as the Vietnamese and Cham identified as particularly prone to class treachery (Kiernan 2002). Such volatile and shifting means through which the CPK identified its purported "enemies" eventually contributed to high levels of victimization for both New and Base.<sup>1</sup>

This victimization has been variously defined as a genocide for the CPK's targeting of ethnic minorities (e.g., Kiernan 2002; United Nations 1948), as a "politicide" for its targeting of "class" groups (e.g., Harff 2003), and as an "auto-genocide" to characterize Khmer-on-Khmer mass violence (e.g., Melson 1992; Subcommission 1979). Rather than qualify different types of violence as separate phenomena, I argue for a conceptual broadening of genocide as a term. One element that distinguishes genocide from other violence is that victims are targeted for elimination *en masse* because of their real or purported membership in some collectivity, as that collectivity is defined by perpetrators (Chalk and Jonassohn 1990: 23–26). The group-based nature of elimination is what is essential, not the specific content of a collectivity's "groupness" (Fein 1993b: 23–24; Owens et al. 2013). Furthermore, state-sponsored annihilation can be just as easily directed against groups constructed out of revolutionary ideologies as those based on preexisting categories (Conquest 1986; Harff 2003; Su 2011). In Cambodia, "class" served as the dominant "contrast conception" (Shibutani 1973) through which the CPK identified its purported adversaries, subsuming various national, ethnic, and religious boundaries. Thus, in this study I use "genocidal violence" to refer to sustained and purposeful physical violence to eliminate individuals on the basis of their purported "class" membership, as that membership was contemporaneously defined by perpetrators.

Previous social scientific research on violence in Cambodia focuses on the cultural and psychological logics of participation (Hinton 2005). Here I leverage the historical insights mentioned in the preceding text to explore a different empirical question: uneven temporal and geographic distribution of violent victimization among Base and New "class" groups. While the spreading coercive capacity of the central CPK seems to account for a generalized increase in violence across the country, does it explain its uneven application against two seemingly polarized groups? Why did the CPK's revolution eventually victimize both friend and foe?

1. Kiernan's (2002: 458) estimates show that while victimization of New people was larger both in terms of percentage of the total population (29 percent) and in raw numbers (approximately 879,000); the Base population also suffered enormous losses (16 percent, approximately 792,000).

## Explaining Genocidal Violence

The study of genocide and mass killing in the social sciences is increasingly moving toward an engagement with a diversity of underlying, contributing processes that occur at multiple levels of analysis. Early works focused on broad and generalized societal types (Harff and Gurr 1988; Horowitz 1997; Kuper 1981). More recently, tests of state-level hypotheses find that episodes of genocide and mass killing are strongly associated with social upheaval and warfare, autocratic regimes, preexisting social divisions, exclusionary ideology, and economic marginalization (Fein 1993a; Harff 2003; Krain 1997). Supplementing these findings, other works suggest that mass violence can occur along multiple and contingent trajectories of state development (Mann 2005) and conflict escalation (Harff 1998, 2001). Likewise, studies of elite decision-making processes emphasize the escalation and radicalization of violent policies over time (Gagnon 2004; Midlarsky 2005; Valentino 2004; see also Mann 2005). Studies of nonelite perpetrators and supporters focus variously on the role of ideological and institutional incentives (Mann 2000), social-psychological dynamics and group pressures (Kelman and Hamilton 1989; Waller 2007), and how violence becomes actionable as either collective frames or cultural scripts (Fujii 2004; Hinton 2005; Oberschall 2000; Straus 2007). In addition, an emerging body of meso-level research focuses on variation in local and regional environments, and their effects on individual and collective participation (Fujii 2008, 2009; Hagan and Raymond-Richmond 2008; Kopstein and Wittenberg 2011; Straus 2006; Su 2011; Verwimp 2003, 2004, 2005). This focus on local and regional factors addresses itself to the important question of how meso-level mechanisms can mediate the effects of larger state and institutional processes (Tilly 2003: 20–22).

While the development of this meso-level emphasis is promising, significant analytic challenges remain. Current research has yet to empirically specify ways in which multiple theoretical factors interact and combine in specific meso-level contexts, and how such concatenation is linked to the variable emergence of violence. As Cress and Snow (2000: 1070) note, the explanatory strength of individual factors “does not reside solely in the strength of their association with a particular outcome, but in the more complex ways they interact with each other.” To address this lacuna, this study draws from Tilly’s (2003: 20) theoretical emphasis on how “recurrent small-scale mechanisms” can “combine variously to generate very different outcomes.” I focus on two types of mechanisms: *cognitive* mechanisms, which “operate through alterations of individual and collective perceptions”; and *relational* mechanisms, which “change connections among social units” (Tilly 2003: 20–21). In identifying these collective mechanisms, I balance attention to insights from the genocide and collective action literatures with an examination of historically specific social processes (Bradshaw and Wallace 1991; Walton 1992).

### *Moral Distancing*

Moral distancing is derived from Fein’s (1979, 1993b) contention that for a group to become a target of genocidal violence, its members must first be excluded from

the “universe of moral obligation” (see also Gamson 1995; Kelman and Hamilton 1989; Waller 2007: 201–12). Such exclusion generally involves the creation and/or activation of “us-them” social boundaries and the subsequent widening of political and social space between groups. Through this exclusion, moral impediments against violence and mistreatment are removed, and perpetrators are absolved from moral responsibility for their actions.

### *Political Coercive Capacity*

This measure is derived from arguments that the emergence of mass violence is determined by the situational capacity of dominant institutions to instigate and coordinate violent participation. State and military institutions are often the primary enablers and orchestrators of genocidal events (Fein 1993b), and provide uniquely coercive means through which to mobilize potential perpetrators (Kelman and Hamilton 1989). However, coercion is not just physical: dominant institutions channel behavior through their consolidation as ideological structures (Abrams 1988), creating durable patterns of political behavior (Bourdieu 1994). Thus, it follows that participation may also be coerced through the official routinization and legitimation of violence, and the channeling of moral responsibility away from individual perpetrators (Kelman and Hamilton 1989; Waller 2007: 247–50). Because processes of cognition and meaning making are inextricably bound to the coercive capacity of state and other institutions, we should expect a high degree of interactivity between this capacity and the specific claims-making activities of such institutions, potentially influencing both the form and directionality of violence (e.g., Straus 2006).

### *Crisis Framing*

Frames are cognitive and social structures that situate and connect events, individuals, and groups into a meaningful and interpretable narrative (Snow et al. 1986). Collective action frames focus attention on situations considered problematic, suggest lines of action to address them, and provide motivational rationales for action through their diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational attributes (Snow and Benford 1988). Frames also construct, maintain, and transform group “identity fields” through the imputation of characteristics to relevant sets of actors (Hunt et al. 1994). Here I use Oberschall’s (2000) concept of a “crisis frame” to describe collective framing processes that alter the salience and content of intergroup boundaries through the construction of a zero-sum conflict between two or more groups. Crisis frames bring dormant in-group fears of domination by an out-group to the surface in order to mobilize violent retributive action against them, creating a “kill or be killed” dynamic (Oberschall 2000; Straus 2006). When such conflicts are officially framed as a “war,” they have the additional effect of removing social and legal sanctions against violence (Straus 2006; Su 2011). Crisis frames may draw from or heighten the salience of preexisting group boundaries, but can also develop radically new boundaries (Hunt et al. 1994).

### *Systemic Disruption*

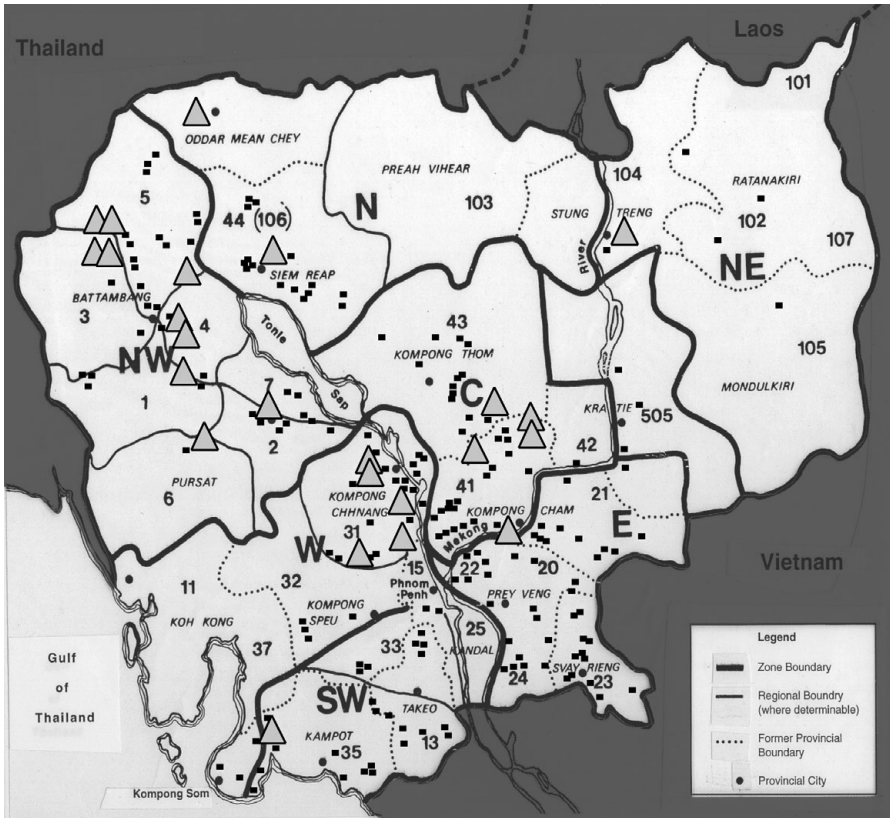
Systemic disruption draws from the “quotidian disruption” and “breakdown” concepts employed by collective action scholars (Buechler 2004; Snow et al. 1998). The measure refers to the degree to which both the material and social routines of a particular locale are thrown into disarray, introducing new sources of grievances and potential for genocidal mobilization. The concept of “quotidian” is rooted in the “specious present” where “doubts, uncertainties, and inhibitions are not at the forefront of consciousness, and action is largely habituated and routinized” (Snow et al. 1998: 5). Collective experiences of disruption create a “problematic present,” where routine action is stymied, and uncertainties emerge. Such disruptions include events that “throw a community’s routines into doubt and/or threaten a community’s existence,” disrupt “the immediate protective environment,” and create “dramatic alterations in subsistence routines” or “dramatic changes in existing structures of social organization and control” (Snow et al. 1998: 6, 9, 14). I contend that within a revolutionary authoritarian milieu such as Democratic Kampuchea, severe quotidian disruptions may eliminate perpetrators’ “suspension of doubt” (Snow et al. 1998) regarding victim groups. As such, this measure provides an extension of findings that large-scale political or economic disruptions may act as “triggers” or “accelerators,” changing the course of conflicts in the presence of facilitative conditions (Ahmed and Kassinis 1998; Fein 1993a; Harff 1998, 2001, 2003; Krain 1997).

### **Data and Method**

For my analysis I utilize twenty-four open-ended interviews with survivors of the Cambodian genocide, conducted by historian Ben Kiernan in 1979 and 1980 in Cambodia, Thailand, and France. This sample of twenty-four is drawn from roughly five hundred interviews conducted by Kiernan. The five hundred interviews, and thus my subset of them, are not representative in a statistical sense. However, Kiernan’s data represent the most comprehensive existing collection of survivor accounts on the genocide, drawing from both rural and urban sources. The interviews are not publicly available at this time, so I contacted Kiernan to see if he would be willing to share a sample of the interviews with me. He agreed and assembled a subset of twenty-six interview transcripts. After close reading, I determined that twenty transcripts matched my selection criteria of accounts that presented a consistent local or regional picture of conditions throughout the entire period: 1975–79. Six accounts that did not meet these criteria were dropped from the analysis. These accounts were supplemented by four additional interviews published in a separate text (Kiernan and Boua 1982: 338–62), which were selected using the same criteria of consistent local accounts that covered the entire period. This yielded a final sample of twenty-four accounts.

Because the selection process was nonrandom, there exists the possibility of sample bias, which I assess in the following text by examining the geographic and demographic characteristics of the sample. The geographic distribution of the twenty-four





**FIGURE 1.** *Geographic representation of informant sample*  
 Additional Key:  $\triangle$  Informant Location ■ Mass Burial Site

informants across the country is presented in [figure 1](#).<sup>2</sup> Although representation is low in the eastern, southwestern, and northeastern areas, the locations of the informants are relatively consistent with the agriculturally productive central regions that the Khmer Rouge pushed much of the population into during its rule. These locations also match fairly well with the best available regional indicators of violence, specifically the locations of mass graves uncovered by investigators.<sup>3</sup>

2. Original map drawn by Margaret Pitt, courtesy Ben Kiernan (Cambodian Genocide Program 2010). Map has been modified by the author to show the locations of informants and mass burial sites. Burial site locations are approximate and are drawn from another map (Cambodian Genocide Program 2001). Otherwise all other features are as originally shown.

3. Forensic evidence on the causes of death for victims found in mass burial sites is incomplete, but demographic and historical estimates using available data find that as many as 1.1 million people were killed by violent causes (i.e., execution) during the Khmer Rouge period—roughly half of the total estimated death toll (Etcheson 2005: 118–19; Heuveline 1998). This demonstrates that direct physical violence played a dominant role in accounting for overall patterns of mortality during this period.



**TABLE 2.** *Characteristics of informant sample (N = 24)*

	Frequency	Proportion of Sample (%)	Cambodian Population (%)
Gender			
Male	15	62.5	49.97
Female	9	37.5	50.03
Age			
0–19	1	4	55
20–34	10	42	22
35–54	9	38	17
55+	2	8	6
Unknown	2	8	—
Ethnic Background			
Khmer	19	79	90
Cham	4	17	3
Chinese	1	4	5
Pre-1975 Employment			
“Acceptable” to Khmer Rouge			
Farmer/Small Trader	6	25	85.2
Fisher	1	4	2.1
“Impure”/Urban			
Student	4	17	—
Teacher	3	13	—
Shopkeeper	1	4	4.7
Other			
Raising Children	1	4	—
No Occupation	1	4	1.5
Unknown	7	29	—
Khmer Rouge Class Designation			
New	13	54	39 <sup>a</sup>
Base	11	46	61 <sup>a</sup>
Location of Interview			
Cambodia (1980)	13	54	—
France (1979)	8	33.5	—
Thai Refugee Camp (1979)	3	12.5	—

Note: Blank cells indicate that demographic data is unavailable. All population estimates are based upon census data for pregenocide Cambodia (Migozzi 1973) except: <sup>a</sup>estimates based upon demographic estimates for postgenocide Cambodia (Kiernan 2002: 458).

Table 2 presents a summary of descriptive characteristics of the sample. It is extremely difficult to obtain reliable population data for Cambodia during this period (Heuveline 1998, 2001). Because the 1962 Cambodian census data presented in Migozzi (1973) contains the most reliable data available prior to the genocide, I refer to them for purposes of comparison. Migozzi does not provide data on the racial and ethnic composition of the population. The best alternative source for ethnic and racial composition data are Kiernan’s (2002: 458) estimates; I also use Kiernan’s estimates of the Base and New populations for 1975. In comparing the sample with these estimates, several differences are notable. The sample underrepresents women by almost 13 percent relative to the 1962 population. Because men were disproportionately victims of mortality (Heuveline 1998), the expected bias would be female overrepresentation. This disproportionate targeting of men could mean that male and female accounts will have important differences with regard to the reported level of

violence.<sup>4</sup> The Cham minority is somewhat overrepresented in the sample, consistent with Kiernan's effort to capture the experiences of minority ethnic groups. Because Cham communities were specifically targeted by the state for violent repression relatively early in the regime's history, this may slightly overestimate violence levels against the New class in Periods I and II, because Cham were predominantly classified as New (Kiernan 2002). By adjusting standard errors for intragroup correlations (Longest and Vaisey 2008), you can control for such group-based differences. About a third of informants did not provide information on their previous occupations, but because prior occupation was largely determinative of what class designation would be given to an individual, this shortcoming is largely corrected for by the relatively even split in the Khmer Rouge class designation data.

Coding the accounts began with a preliminary line-by-line or "open" coding, commonly employed in grounded theoretical approaches (Charmaz 2006). As the coding became more elaborated, I drew from relevant concepts such as moral disengagement (Fein 1993b; Kelman and Hamilton 1989; Waller 2007), collective action framing (Snow et al. 1986), and symbolic coercion (Abrams 1988; Bourdieu 1994) to orient my exploration of the data. Over time, I connected and refined these orienting concepts with elaborated codes through an iterative verification process (Ragin 1994). Despite the open-ended nature of each account and the relative invisibility of the interviewer in the transcripts,<sup>5</sup> consistent patterns of speech did appear throughout the interviews relating to the local conditions and events. My preliminary line-by-line coding was largely an effort to isolate these patterns and compare their prevalence across the sample. This does hold out the possibility that the failure to mention a particular mechanism in an account will be coded as the absence of the mechanism, and may be a source of potential bias in the accounts. However, because the patterns of speech that became operationalized were highly consistent throughout my final sample, I was able to infer that consistent lines of questioning on certain core topics and processes were likely to have been used with all informants.

To assess how independent measures interacted and combined to create changing dynamics of violence, I utilize the technique of fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (Ragin 2000, 2008) through the Stata "Fuzzy" command (Longest and Vaisey 2008). Qualitative-comparative analysis (QCA) is based on the conjunctural logic of set relations, which allows that multiple "pathways" leading to an outcome may exist, as opposed to the linear and additive assumptions of correlation (Ragin 1987). Set relation analysis in QCA compares the relative presence of independent measures and dependent outcomes across different cases, seeing how these measures interact and

4. It is important to note that there is no mention in the sample accounts of any form of rape or other gender-based violence against women. This type of violence has not figured prominently in most historical research on the Khmer Rouge period due to a dearth of available statistics, as well as a sense that harsh CPK punishments for "moral offenses" forestalled such behavior (GBVCR 2013).

5. All interview transcripts were written as a monologue on the part of the informant, with no prompts or questions on the part of the interviewer shown in the documents. For an elaboration of debates on issues of representation and voice in oral historical research, see Dunaway and Baum (1996) and Thompson (2000: chs. 7 and 8).

combine to produce similar outcomes. Because such relationships are often asymmetric and complex, the logic of set analysis reflects the multifaceted nature of many social processes. Factors that may not be sufficient on their own to produce a particular outcome might still be necessary for that outcome to occur; in such cases, all that is needed is the presence of some additional configuration of factors to generate the expected outcome. This makes the method extremely useful in assessing complex patterns of interaction between independent factors and outcomes, particularly in analyses of small-N data (for elaboration, see Ragin 1987: 10–16).

The addition of fuzzy set membership into QCA allows for fine-grained assessment of independent factors and outcomes by allowing for different degrees of membership in a particular set, rather than the dichotomous present or not present distinctions of “crisp” QCA (Ragin 2000, 2008). Crisp QCA set membership is coded either as 1 (present) or 0 (not present), but fuzzy set membership can be coded anywhere between 1 and 0. In cases such as the present one, being able to distinguish between a stronger or weaker presence of independent measures and outcomes, rather than simply their presence or nonpresence, is extremely useful for a more detailed analysis of social dynamics.

### *Operationalization of Independent Measures and Outcomes*

All independent measures are focused on local-level mechanisms that encouraged or facilitated violent participation on the part of Khmer Rouge soldiers and officials. Violence during the genocide was predominantly carried out by armed soldiers, who were under the charge of local CPK cadres; thus, the military and political-administrative aspects of the CPK were the only observable institutional entities present in the interviews. All measures are coded on a five-point fuzzy-set scale. Both independent and outcome measures are assigned a single letter for representation in the analysis. For specific coding guidelines and examples, see Appendix Tables A1–A4.

*Moral distancing* (M) refers to the degree to which the Base and New populations were subjected to different “class”-based polarization regimes by soldiers and administrative officials within a given local context. Distancing was commonly manifested through physical separation between Base and New, but also includes the degree to which privileges, food, and work assignments were distributed unequally according to status. *Political coercive capacity* (T) refers to the degree to which the local administrative and military structure of a particular locale was penetrated by extremist elements of the central CPK. This manifested itself in the accounts primarily through forcible changes in the administrative leadership of a village, moving from relatively decentralized regional and local governance to eventual consolidation and domination by agents of the central CPK. The presence of *crisis framing* (R) was assessed by noting whether or not the informant observed the invocation of a crisis frame (Oberschall 2000) by a local administrative official or soldier in their particular locale. Because political “education” sessions were mandatory in many villages, most informants were regularly exposed to revolutionary rhetoric and slogans by local

officials and soldiers. These “educational” sessions often acted as a political barometer for a village, and were used to draw public attention to new “threats” to the revolution. Crisis frames were coded on the degree to which these threats were located as specifically internal to the village population, as opposed to vague external sources of threat. Some informants also overheard conversations of officials and soldiers where such frames were invoked. The presence of *systemic disruption* (D) was assessed by noting whether or not there was some event that threatened a community’s existence, dramatically altered subsistence routines, or dramatically changed local structures of social organization and control.

*Class-based violence* (X), as the outcome of interest, is split between the New and Base groups in order to track changes in the directionality of victimization. Levels of violence are coded 0 for no violence, 0.25 for sporadic, low levels of violence (e.g., 1–10 individual killings per year), 0.5 for consistent, low levels of violence (e.g., more than 10 individual killings per year), 0.75 for sporadic killings of large groups (e.g., 1–3 killings of groups of 11 or more, per year), and 1 for consistent killings of large groups (4 or more killings of groups of 11 or more, per year). Because violence was not equally present at all times and places in Cambodia, and the two “class” groups were not always targeted with equal force, it is also important to analytically account for low levels of violence. Low class-based violence is assessed through the creation of a separate fuzzy set for low violence ( $x$ ) out of the high violence fuzzy set (X) using the following calculation:  $x = 1 - X$ . Thus, using the principles of fuzzy set membership, a case with a high level of membership in the high violence set (i.e., 0.95) would have a correspondingly low level of membership (i.e., 0.05) in the low violence set.

Throughout the coding process, almost all informants tended to reference time periods in some fashion when describing their experiences, generally with reference to a particular time of year (e.g., early 1976, late 1978), if not a specific month and year (e.g., October 1978). It thus became clear that interrogating the interviews on the basis of temporal dynamics was empirically valid. Drawing from this insight, the fuzzy-set model is divided into the three historical periods noted in [table 1](#), with all independent and outcome measures coded separately for each time period. Because not all accounts were equally specific in their references to time, the duration of each period is broad, so that all temporally referential information could be included. As a result, the final analysis contains four analytic models for each time period: two models for each class group, one for high violence outcomes, and one for low violence outcomes. This yields a total analytic framework of twelve models. The unit of analysis for each model is the population of an informant’s local community within a given historical period.

## Results

The results of the fuzzy set analysis of the twelve analytic models are presented in [tables 3–5](#). The significance of a solution’s set membership coefficient in the positive

**TABLE 3.** Fuzzy set results on the presence of moral distancing (M), political coercive capacity (T), crisis framing (R), and systemic disruption (D) in low violence outcomes (x)

	Period I	Period II	Period III
Group			
New	m * t * r * d (0.563 / 1.000)	—	—
Base	t * r * d M * r * d (0.807 / 1.000)	T * r * D M * r * d (0.518 / 1.000)	—

Note: Coverage and consistency scores are shown, respectively, in parentheses below each solution.

**TABLE 4.** Fuzzy set results on the presence of moral distancing (M), political coercive capacity (T), crisis framing (R), and systemic disruption (D) in high violence outcomes (X)

	Period I	Period II	Period III
Group			
New	—	M * T * r * d (0.417 / 0.962)	m * T * R T * R * D (0.500 / 0.929)
Base	—	—	m * T * R * D (0.458 / 0.846)

Note: Coverage and consistency scores are shown, respectively, in parentheses below each solution.

(Y) versus negative (1 – Y) outcome sets is determined using Wald’s F-test, and standard errors are adjusted for intragroup correlations by gender. The solutions in tables 3 and 4 are logical reductions of the significant solutions for each period.<sup>6</sup> All empirically represented solutions are shown in table 5. The asterisk in between each letter denotes logical “and,” meaning that the formula shown is a specific combination of conditions that are linked with their respective outcome. Lowercase letters denote a low level of set membership (< 0.5), and uppercase denote a high level of set membership (> 0.5). Sections with no result (—) indicate that there was no sufficient set of conditions to account for the outcome. The coverage and consistency<sup>7</sup> of the reduced solutions are displayed, respectively, below each solution in tables 3 and 4.

In Period I a combination of low levels of all independent factors (m\*t\*r\*d) was perfectly consistent with low violence levels against the New. In contrast, low levels

6. QCA eliminates logical redundancy between multiple significant solutions by employing the Quine-McClusky algorithm (Ragin 1987).

7. Coverage is the proportion of cases with both the stated solution and a high outcome measure (> 0.5), compared to the total number of cases with a high outcome measure. Consistency is the proportion of cases with the stated solution that also share a high outcome measure. Stated together, consistency measures how effective a particular solution is in achieving a high outcome measure, whereas coverage determines how empirically generalizable a solution is among all high outcome cases.

**TABLE 5.** Empirical solutions by historical period and victimized group

	Solution	F	
Period I			
New (x)	m*t*r*d	2177.78*	
	m*T*R*d	0	
	M*t*r*d	13.99	
	M*T*r*d	2.43	
	Base (x)	m*t*r*d	1193.39*
		m*T*R*d	6.25
		M*t*r*d	29070.25**
		M*T*r*d	3128.01*
Period II			
New (X)	m*t*r*d	14.44	
	m*t*r*D	2.25	
	m*T*r*d	0.13	
	m*T*r*D	0.69	
	M*t*r*d	3.52	
	M*T*r*d	108.16***	
	M*T*r*D	14.06	
	Base (x)	m*t*r*d	69.10***
		m*t*r*D	110.25***
		m*T*r*d	4.47
m*T*r*D		400*	
	M*t*r*d	900*	
	M*T*r*d	252.46*	
	M*T*r*D	9506.25**	
Period III			
New (X)	m*T*r*D	3.86	
	m*T*R*d	5852.25**	
	m*T*R*D	95.06***	
	M*t*R*d	1.65	
	M*T*R*d	17.02	
	M*T*R*D	564.06*	
	Base (X)	m*T*r*D	0.84
		m*T*R*d	1.71
m*T*R*D		1056.25*	
M*t*R*d		0.32	
	M*T*R*d	0.09	
	M*T*R*D	0.21	

Note: High violence outcomes are indicated by (X); low violence outcomes are indicated by (x).  
 \*\* p < .01; \* p < .05; \*\*\* p < .10

of class-based distancing and coercive capacity do not play a central role in low Base violence, which was constituted through either inconsistent levels of distancing and low levels of all other factors, or high distancing with inconsistent state power, low disruption, and low crisis framing ( $r^*d*[t+M]$ , where “+” is logical “or”). Period II’s results depict a growing schism in violence dynamics between the New and Base. Rising levels of violence against the New are associated with an increase in both moral distancing and political coercive capacity. However, this increase in New violence is not linked to an increase in the presence of crisis framing or systemic disruption. In contrast, violence directed against the Base in Period II generally remained low, and was associated with fluctuating levels of most measures ( $r^*[T^*D + M^*d]$ ). Period



III's results reflect the maelstrom of repression and violence that defined the final years of the CPK. While both high and low levels of moral distancing are associated with high violence against the New class ( $T^*R^*[m+D]$ ), declining class polarization is specifically associated with increasing violence against the Base ( $m^*T^*R^*D$ ). High levels of political coercive capacity and systemic disruption were constitutive of violence against both groups, but disruption figures more centrally in Base violence. Increasingly salient official crisis frames form the primary distinction between low Base violence in Period II and high Base violence in Period III.

For both the Base and New, the conditions that led to changing levels of violence were highly conjunctural, with no single factor acting alone in constituting either high or low levels of violence. I will now explore the specific ways in which the four independent mechanisms interacted and combined with each other to produce changing local patterns of violence, using excerpts and insights from the informant accounts to illustrate these processes.

### *New Victimization*

Despite the significant violence that accompanied the Khmer Rouge's forced urban evacuations and population transfers in 1975, many survivors' early experiences in the countryside gave few indications of the massive violence to come. So Davinn, who prior to April 1975 studied medicine at Phnom Penh University, reports that after being forcibly evacuated from Phnom Penh in 1975, village life under the Khmer Rouge was initially "not so hard." City evacuees often received equal treatment with local peasants, and Davinn adds that "we had freedom. If we needed something, we just let the Khmer Rouge know." At this time, many villages were still being administered by officials and soldiers who had little knowledge of the central CPK's extremist agenda.

As the CPK began its campaign to expand control over local administrations in March 1976, class-based polarization regimes became increasingly prominent, and violence against the New increased. This distancing was sufficient to constitute New victimization in the context of increasing political coercive capacity, as illustrated in the account of Hong Var (Kiernan and Boua 1982: 338–44). Var tells that most of the people in their village were evacuees from Phnom Penh. Discipline was very harsh: "people who were caught simply complaining were executed; if a person accidentally broke a plowshare while working in the fields, he would be accused of being negligent with the property of *Angkar* and would be shot." However, Var notes that "it was considerably worse for the Phnom Penh people... than for the local peasants." Mistakes made by the city people would lead to their certain execution, while the same offense by a peasant would often be overlooked.

Intergroup polarization was enabled, and became sufficient to constitute increasing violence, through the increasingly coercive presence of extremist CPK leaders in local administrative institutions. Consistent with historical scholarship, political coercive capacity remains the focal situational factor that pushed violence from relatively sporadic levels (the exemplary executions of soldiers and officials noted by many

survivors) in Period I to truly genocidal proportions (mass executions) in Periods II and III. For instance, So Davinn recounts that violent victimization increased only after their village was taken over by extremist CPK forces early in 1978, when a new group of cadres arrived from the Southwest Zone of Kampuchea. These new officials arrested all the cadres who had been in place since 1975, accusing them of being “agents of the enemy Vietnamese.” They then began a series of “large-scale” executions, targeting mostly men, some of whom were arrested apparently without having committed any infraction at all. Many other New accounts depict a similar dynamic: at some point in Periods II or III, local administrations were replaced, often violently, with new extremist leaders who began campaigns of violence and intimidation against the local populace.

Official crisis framing also tended to exacerbate violence against the New. These frames often characterized internal dissent as a spreading “sickness” within the country, or linked internal dissent with foreign threats to CPK sovereignty. However, in areas where strong polarization regimes remained in place, violence tended to remain focused on the New and did not target the Base. Sah Roh’s experiences exemplify this trend. Talo village, where she was located, was a “pure Khmer Rouge base” where the local cadres and peasants had always worked together. As soon as the urban evacuees arrived in 1975, they were forced to give up all personal property, and had to submit to biographical examinations of their pasts. In 1978, the local cooperative chief was replaced by several cadres from the Western Zone, who then began a series of large executions. At this time, around three thousand evacuees from the Eastern Zone<sup>8</sup> arrived in the village. At a work meeting, the new cadres told villagers that these evacuees were “sick” and had to be “cleaned up completely.” The evacuees started to be executed, sometimes as many as five hundred in one day, and Roh tells that none were spared, “not even small children.” Before the arrival of the Eastern Zone evacuees, only “state officials, teachers, police, soldiers” were killed, but after their arrival Roh overheard that “all the ‘4/17 [New] people’ would not be spared – all were to be killed.” Larger executions of New people began, including the wives and children of officials and soldiers who had been previously killed.

We should note here both the presence of an official crisis frame linking dissent with a spreading “sickness,” exemplified by the arrival of Eastern Zone deportees, and the massive disruption that the arrival of these deportees caused, effectively doubling the village’s population. However, the spread of violence is not linked in Roh’s account with a decline in social polarization between the Base and New. Rather, a thick boundary was maintained between the two groups. In areas where local polarization regimes endured, violence remained focused against the “enemies” of the regime: the New. This demonstrates that, even in the presence of strong crisis frames, social polarization acted as a key mediating factor in determining the directionality of violence. In areas where moral distancing declined in Period III, however, violence against both Base and New became much more likely.

8. Presumably these individuals were deported in the wake of an ongoing uprising in the Eastern Zone between 1977 and 1978 (see Chanda 1986: 247–55; Kiernan 2002: ch. 10).

*Base Victimization*

The increasing presences of moral distancing and political coercive capacity in Period II, which contributed to increasing levels of New victimization, were associated with low levels of Base violence. By and large, the Base remained the nominal allies of the Khmer Rouge, and local officials had no incentive to target them. Hong Var tells that “the peasants in [the village] really liked the Khmer Rouge... [they] had high hopes for the revolution as far as their living standards were concerned.” Local Base populations were often given considerable control over the New by local officials: as Yon Sau recounts, in his village “Base groups were put in charge of the New by local cadres, and supervised their work teams.” Srey Pich Chnay, a former art student at Phnom Penh University, recalls a Base peasant saying to him: “You used to be happy and prosperous. Now it’s our turn” (Kiernan and Boua 1982: 346).

However, the Khmer Rouge quickly lost Base support in many areas during later periods, as local working and eating conditions became increasingly harsh and the Base lost many of their earlier privileges. As Tae Hui Lang recalls:

Towards the end of 1976, the local leaders of the Khmer Rouge were replaced, including a number of people who had once been schoolteachers. They were accused of being “traitors” and disappeared. From the end of 1976, the [Base] people and the urban dwellers began to be treated equally. From then on, everyone received the same low ration of food, and the [Base] people became very hostile to the Khmer Rouge. (Kiernan and Boua 1982: 361)

But violence against the Base remained predominantly low in Period II when there was no invocation of an official crisis frame, even in areas where Base people became increasingly restive. Long Nem’s account is illustrative: in their village, the confidence of the Base population in the revolution was shaken by executions of soldiers and teachers in 1976, growing food difficulties, and doubt in revolutionary rhetoric. By early 1977, “few Base people believed in the revolution.” This eventually manifested in a small, localized rebellion. Although Nem’s account does not go into great detail regarding this rebellion, the “action failed” and the fifteen Base people involved were executed. Although those responsible for the uprising were executed, there was no official framing of a generalized internal threat, and no further violence was targeted against the Base. Rather, threats remained outside the village, in the form of “Vietnamese aggression.”

However, Base violence levels sharply increased in Period III. Here the accounts indicate important interconnections between declining levels of intergroup polarization, the consolidation of CPK coercive capacity, and an increase in official crisis framing by new CPK officials. This is illustrated in the account of Som Sarouen, who says that the “most terrifying years” were 1977 and 1978, in which the village was taken over by extremist CPK forces from the Southwestern Zone. The Southwestern Zone forces arrested and replaced everyone in the village administrative network. Under the old village administration there had only been targeted killings of New

people identified as soldiers, but the Southwest Zone troops began to arbitrarily kill “truckloads” of people, both New and Base, particularly targeting the Cham minority, of whom Sarouen says ten families were killed in 1978 alone. In 1975–76 the New people had been regarded as “enemies,” but had not been killed; the Southwest Zone cadres now told the people that enemies of the regime had become “Khmer bodies with Vietnamese minds.”

Such population purges often occurred in the wake of disruptive local events, as Pech Sovannareth recounts:

In January 1977... the people of Chicheng and Kompong Kdei [had] rebelled, and drove out or killed the old leaders.... These rebels arrived [in Sovannareth's village], and [Khmer Rouge] soldiers were disarmed, mingled, and worked with the people. Then a new group of soldiers arrived two or three days later and arrested all the old cadres and soldiers and the [rebel] people, and took them in trucks to Siem Reap to be killed, “to study.” These new forces began arresting the people and killing them, for the first time since the 1975 wave.... They said they were real, “strong” socialists; all others were “traitors” (Kiernan, interview).

Local disruptions often led to official framings of the Base as “traitors,” blurring the collective boundaries between ally and enemy, and making generalized violence much more likely.

Official crisis frames, in the form of strong, credible narratives of threat from internal enemies, are a central factor in explaining the spread of violence to both Base and New in Period III. These narratives of threat acted as powerful situational mechanisms that, when present, challenged the fixity of previous distinctions between New and Base groups, suggesting that the Base might harbor equally counterrevolutionary sentiments. This demonstrates that official crisis frames can not only heighten the salience of existing collective boundaries (Oberschall 2000), but also rearticulate and transform established protagonist and antagonist identity fields (Hunt et al. 1994) through changes in their diagnostic attributes, producing important shifts in the organization of violent victimization. The extension of the central CPK's coercive capacity across different regions, while operating as the primary vector of increasing violence, does not account for the shifting directionality of violence between Periods II and III. Collective processes of moral distancing and crisis framing help account for these changes in group victimization.

Of course, resonance is a central factor in explaining the effectiveness of framing processes: frames must make credible claims about existing social conditions. Here the cognitive effects of strong systemic disruptions in Period III play a key role, in that they provided an experiential basis for making frames of spreading internal dissent salient with local soldiers and authorities. The occurrence of uprisings and rebellions, mass food shortages, and other highly disruptive local events, in the context of the CPK's ongoing campaign to consolidate political control, would certainly resonate with official statements that the revolution was being sabotaged by internal “treachery.”

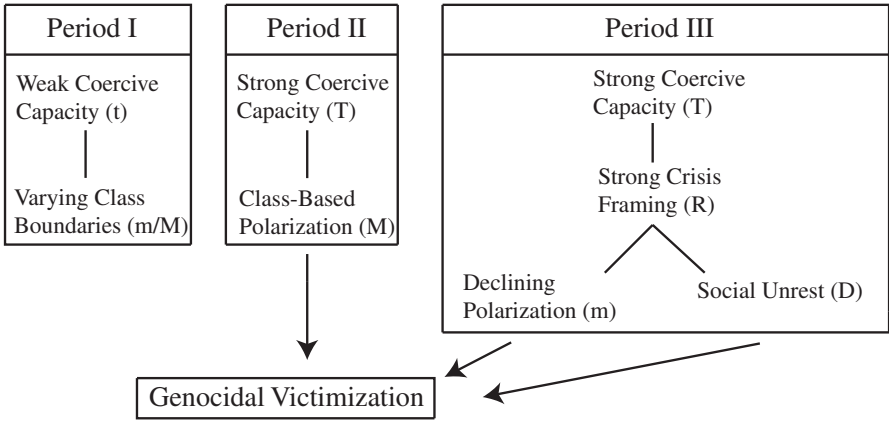


FIGURE 2. Substantive historical model of New class victimization

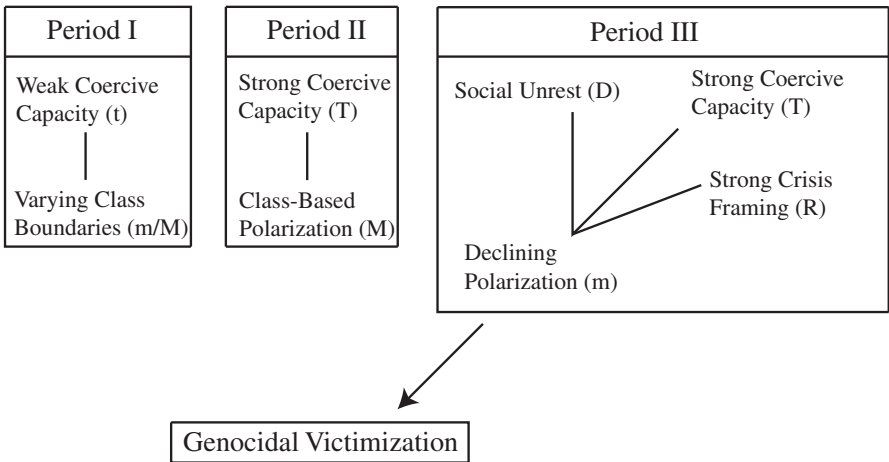


FIGURE 3. Substantive historical model of Base class victimization

The distinct microdynamics of genocidal violence for the New and Base are illustrated in the “substantive historical models” in figures 2 and 3. For the New, the purported enemies of the Pol Pot regime, there were multiple pathways to genocidal victimization throughout Periods II and III. For the Base, however, there was only one sufficient pathway to genocidal victimization in Period III: the conjunction of increasing political coercive capacity, local quotidian disruptions, and salient official crisis frames in the context of declining intergroup polarization. This specific concatenation of meso-level mechanisms resulted in the realignment of collective boundaries such that any individual could be seen as a potential “enemy” of the regime.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Historical scholarship indicates that genocidal violence in Cambodia spread as the coercive arm of the CPK state extended its reach across different regions. But why did violence so rapidly shift from the purported enemies of the regime to its potential base of support? The findings of this study suggest that this transformation is accounted for, in part, by the official invocation of crisis frames that became salient in the wake of strong quotidian disruptions and declining intergroup polarization, realigning group boundaries and broadening collective potential for victimization. This illustrates that perpetrator and victim group boundaries during genocides are not always stable constructs. Rather, such boundaries operate as “contrast conceptions” (Shibutani 1973) that are managed, negotiated, and potentially transformed in light of emergent events and available frames of meaning (Hunt et al. 1994). Boundaries are dynamic products of boundary “work,” rather than static properties of actors (Lamont and Molnar 2002), and exclusionary ideologies (Harff 2003) function as both a resource and constraint in their construction, maintenance, and transformation. Framing processes are critical in accounting for how broader ideologies are negotiated and understood at the meso-level, and therefore in explaining how these emergent understandings influence the subsequent organization of intergroup violence. This insight is especially important for clarifying the relationship between genocide and revolutions (e.g., Melson 1992), because revolutions rarely go according to plan.

In this way, this study extends recent efforts to apply a collective action perspective to genocide. Understanding how genocide and other mass violence spreads and evolves within specific meso-level contexts, and identifying the mechanisms that facilitate these processes, remains an important challenge for social scientific inquiry. The role of broader political and institutional forces in genocides remains central, and I have only indirectly accounted for them in this study. A related shortcoming of my data is that it gave me little access to the characteristics of perpetrators in different areas (who they were and why they committed violence, or not), and the specific policies decided upon by military and administrative institutions in different geographic regions. The meso-level approach advocated for here should thus serve as a supplement to others in the field.

Lastly, the continued use of configurational comparative methods such as QCA may help genocide scholars to more firmly link their theoretical arguments regarding the causal complexity of genocide with their analyses. Genocide is generally conceptualized as an outcome of interactions between multiple contributing factors that are rarely sufficient on their own, but researchers have not employed methods that empirically account for this interaction. As a result, the precise combinations of conditions that account for the emergence of violence across different areas can only be accounted for indirectly. Methods such as QCA allow for recognition of causal complexity, identifying the precise concatenations of mechanisms that produce important variations in the dynamics of violence. Having proven to be of great utility in the Cambodian case, use of QCA and other configurational methods would likely be fruitful in exploration of other cases.



## Appendix Tables

**TABLE A1.** *Moral distancing coding*

<i>Level of Set Membership</i>	<i>Coding Guideline</i>	<i>Examples from Accounts</i>
< 0.5	Work assignments, food rations, and social privileges are divided relatively evenly between New and Base	<p>“The city evacuees received equal treatment to the locals.”</p> <p>“Members of all social groups, urban and rural, complained bitterly. Sarun says any such person who complained and didn’t ‘struggle in their work’ was executed by the Khmer Rouge.”</p> <p>“From the end of 1976, the ‘old people’ [Base] and the urban dwellers [New] began to be treated equally. From then on, everyone received the same low ration of food, and the ‘old people’ became very hostile to the Khmer Rouge. Nevertheless, they continued to do what they were told out of fear.”</p>
> 0.5	Work assignments, food rations, and social privileges are clearly uneven between “class” groups	<p>“Urban evacuees were treated differently from what were called ‘the people of the bases’ or the ‘old people’... in 1975–76 the ‘old people’ lived in different villages and were given a higher ration of food than the urban dwellers. As a result, they had enough to eat whereas the city people were always hungry.”</p> <p>“The local villagers were supporters of the Khmer Rouge; they had been through the war with them and had been taught to hate city dwellers who they regarded as ‘oppressive.’ The Khmer Rouge treated peasants as a separate group, distributing more food to them than to the city people, and assigning them lighter tasks.”</p> <p>“It was considerably worse for the Phnom Penh people in Andaung Klong than for the local peasants. Mistakes made by the city people would lead to their certain execution, and they all lived in constant dread. The same offense by a peasant would often be overlooked....”</p>

**TABLE A2.** *Political coercive capacity coding*

<i>Coded Level of Set Membership</i>	<i>Coding Guidelines</i>	<i>Examples from Accounts</i>
< 0.5	<p>Initial village leadership remains intact</p> <p>Work assignments and food rations are benign</p> <p>Little to no punishments for infractions</p> <p>Presence of Vietnamese cadres (inability of CPK to eliminate “foreign influence”)</p> <p>No presence of Southwest Zone forces (the central CPK’s shock troops)</p>	<p>“The Northwest [Zone] troops [who controlled the town for the first three years] were locals, though not from our village... they chatted with us, it was happy. They taught us to sing songs every night, helped us with planting and transplanting. The people were not concerned, the Khmer Rouge were kind and loose....”</p> <p>“Local Khmer Rouge cadres... ‘didn’t cause any trouble’ for Davinn; he says they were ‘humane’; ‘they knew what was right and what was wrong.’ Many of these cadres were part Vietnamese.”</p>

TABLE A2. *Continued*

<i>Coded Level of Set Membership</i>	<i>Coding Guidelines</i>	<i>Examples from Accounts</i>
> 0.5	<p>Replacement/liquidation of village leadership by extremist forces</p> <p>Work assignments and rations become extremely harsh</p> <p>Repression and violence becomes commonplace</p> <p>Elimination of foreign cadres</p> <p>Presence of Southwest Zone forces</p>	<p>“Very early in 1979, a new group of cadres arrived from the Southwest Zone of Kampuchea. They arrested all the cadres who had been in place since 1975, accusing them of being ‘agents of the enemy Vietnamese.’”</p> <p>“Early in 1977, a new group of male and female cadres from the Southwest Zone arrived in Preah Net Preah. They were very tough, and began a large-scale series of arrests and executions. Anyone who had in any way been connected with the former Lon Nol government disappeared, including former village chiefs and schoolteachers and people who had been Lon Nol soldiers even for just one day.”</p> <p>“In June or July 1978, a new group of male and female cadres arrived from the Western Zone. They arrested all the cadres from the Southwest. Stepping up repression even further, the new rulers were so tough that they even arrested members of the <i>chalat</i> [work supervisors] and killed them... there were a huge number of deaths.”</p>

TABLE A3. *Crisis framing coding*

<i>Coded Level of Set Membership</i>	<i>Coding Guidelines</i>	<i>Examples from Accounts</i>
< 0.5	<p>No crisis frame is invoked</p> <p>If invoked: threats are externalized, diagnosed as outside of immediate local environment</p> <p>Threats are identified as vague and foreign in nature</p> <p>Solution is to improve work ethic, be vigilant, “struggle harder,” etc.</p> <p>Threat is not “contagious”: not spread through kinship or social contact</p>	<p>“At one point [the local political leader] ‘came on particularly strong’ about the Vietnamese and also said to all the returnees: ‘We can’t trust any foreign countries, including China,’ saying that they were all enemies of Kampuchea.”</p> <p>“Attacks on Vietnam began in August 1976. Accused Vietnamese of aggression against ‘their Democratic Kampuchea.’ In 1977 they said Vietnam was even more strongly attacking Democratic Kampuchea... they said that they could not coexist with Vietnam. Either Vietnam or us had to go. They proclaimed this in the co-op as on the radio in early 1977.”</p> <p>“The other major theme stressed... in November and December 1976 was that ‘imperialism and the CIA want to destroy us, and we must struggle against them by working hard.’ People were encouraged to develop hatred for these enemies, who were described as the main threat to Kampuchea.”</p>
> 0.5	<p>Threats are framed as internal, within local contexts</p> <p>Threats are attributable to specific domestic actors or groups</p> <p>Solution is to eliminate all identifiable threats</p> <p>Threat is “contagious”: spread through kinship structures or social contact</p>	<p>“In 1978, [the local cadres] said they would clean up all the internal enemies. They only talked of enemies, nothing but. Whatever shortage or breakage raised the question of enemies. Just a cow eating the rice, an ox-cart disappears, or if you took too long going to the toilet, it was ‘enemies.’”</p> <p>“After killing [their] parents, children [were] taken too, not allowed to live. ‘Dig out the grass, dig out the roots,’ they said.”</p> <p>“The Khmer Rouge told us that we had ‘hidden enemies’ inside of us.”</p>

**TABLE A4.** *Systemic disruption coding*

Coded Level of Set Membership	Coding Guidelines	Examples from Accounts
< 0.5	No local disruptions present If present: disruptions occur outside of immediate local environment Disruptions within local environment do not significantly alter or challenge patterns of work, subsistence, or social control	“Early in 1977 there was an outbreak of fighting [nearby, along the Thai border], I heard shots and saw planes fly past, heard six large [artillery] guns firing, Khmer Rouge troops came through the town heading to the front.” “At the end of December 1978 some people heard shots from Phnom Penh.... It was then said that there were ‘enemies’ nearby, and the returnees were organized to do guard duty.... [They] had no idea what was happening in Phnom Penh, nor that Vietnamese troops were approaching the city.”
> 0.5	Disruptions occur within immediate local environment Patterns of work, subsistence, and social control are significantly altered or challenged	“There was a rebellion attempted in July 1977. Some Base people knew that they were being lied to when cadres said that Vietnam was taking over <i>Kampuchea Krom</i> ... they no longer believed [in the revolution]. But the action didn’t work, and fifteen were executed.” “The year 1976 was even harder than 1975. Early that year, groups of ten families were organized to eat in communal dining halls.... Usually one person received three spoonfuls of porridge, plus salt. Their diet [now] included no vegetables.... Also around this time, three thousand to five thousand unmarried men and women... were recruited into ‘front line’ work teams.... People too sick to work had their rations reduced to two spoonfuls of porridge per meal.”

**References**

Abrams, P. (1988) “Notes on the difficulty of studying the state.” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1 (1): 58–89.

Ahmed, A., and E. V. Kassinis (1998) “The humanitarian early warning system: From concept to practice,” in J. L. Davies and T. R. Gurr (eds.) *Preventive Measures: Building Risk Assessment and Crisis Early Warning Systems*. Lanham, MD: Rowmanand Littlefield: 203–11.

Bartov, O. (2003) “Seeking the roots of modern genocide: On the macro- and microhistory of mass murder,” in R. Gellately and B. Kiernan (eds.) *The Specter of Genocide: Mass Murder in Historical Perspective*. New York: Cambridge University Press: 75–96.

Becker, E. (1998) *When the War Was Over: Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge Revolution*. New York: PublicAffairs.

Bourdieu, P. (1994) “Rethinking the state: Genesis and structure of the bureaucratic field.” *Sociological Theory* 12 (1): 1–18.

Bradshaw, Y., and M. Wallace (1991) “Informing generality and explaining uniqueness: The place of case studies in comparative research,” in C. C. Ragin (ed.) *Issues and Alternatives in Comparative Social Research*. Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill: 154–71.

Buechler, S. M. (2004) “The strange career of strain and breakdown theories of collective action,” in D. A. Snow, S. A. Soule, and H. Kriesi (eds.) *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*. Malden, MA: Blackwell: 47–66.

Cambodian Genocide Program (2001) “Provincial Genocide Sites (1975–1979),” <http://www.yale.edu/cgp/maps/maps7579/country.jpg> (accessed February 10, 2010).

- (2010) “DK Zones (English),” <http://www.yale.edu/cgp/maps/bigmap02.gif> (accessed January 15, 2010).
- Chalk, F., and K. Jonassohn (1990) *The History and Sociology of Genocide: Analyses and Case Studies*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Chanda, N. (1986) *Brother Enemy: The War after the War*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Chandler, D. P. (1991) *The Tragedy of Cambodian History: Politics, War, and Revolution since 1945*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Charmaz, K. (2006) *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Conquest, R. (1986) *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Cress, D. M., and D. A. Snow (2000) “The outcomes of homeless mobilization: The influence of organization, disruption, political mediation, and framing.” *American Journal of Sociology* 105 (4): 1063–104.
- De Walque, D. (2005) “Selective mortality during the Khmer Rouge period in Cambodia.” *Population and Development Review* 31 (2): 351–68.
- Dunaway, D. K., and W. K. Baum, eds. (repr. 1996 [1984]) *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*. Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.
- Etcheson, C. (1984) *The Rise and Demise of Democratic Kampuchea*. Boulder, CO: Westview.
- (2005) *After the Killing Fields: Lessons from the Cambodian Genocide*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Fein, H. (1979) *Accounting for Genocide: National Response and Jewish Victimization during the Holocaust*. New York: Free Press.
- (1993a) “Accounting for genocide after 1945: Theories and some findings.” *International Journal of Group Rights* 1 (2): 79–106.
- (1993b) *Genocide: A Sociological Perspective*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Fujii, L. A. (2004) “Transforming the moral landscape: The diffusion of a genocidal norm in Rwanda.” *Journal of Genocide Studies* 6 (1): 99–114.
- (2008) “The power of local ties: Popular participation in the Rwandan genocide.” *Security Studies* 17 (3): 568–97.
- (2009) *Killing Neighbors: Webs of Violence in Rwanda*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Gagnon, V. P. (2004) *The Myth of Ethnic War: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Gamson, W. A. (1995) “Hiroshima, the Holocaust, and the politics of exclusion: 1994 presidential address.” *American Sociological Review* 60 (1): 1–20.
- GBVCR (2013) “Rape during the Khmer Rouge,” <http://gbvcr.org/rape-during-the-khmer-rouge/> (accessed February 6, 2010).
- Hagan, J., and W. Raymond-Richmond (2008) “The collective dynamics of racial dehumanization and genocidal victimization in Darfur.” *American Sociological Review* 73 (6): 875–902.
- Harff, B. (1998) “Early warning of humanitarian crises: Sequential models and the role of accelerators,” in J. L. Davies and T. R. Gurr (eds.) *Preventive Measures: Building Risk Assessment and Crisis Early Warning Systems*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield: 70–78.
- (2001) “Could humanitarian crises have been anticipated in Burundi, Rwanda, and Zaire? A comparative study of anticipatory indicators,” in H. R. Alker, T. R. Gurr, and K. Rupesinghe (eds.) *Journeys through Conflict: Narratives and Lessons*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield: 81–102.
- (2003) “No lessons learned from the Holocaust? Assessing risks of genocide and political mass murder since 1955.” *American Political Science Review* 97 (1): 57–73.
- Harff, B., and T. R. Gurr (1988) “Toward empirical theory of genocides and politicides: Identification and measurement of cases since 1945.” *International Studies Quarterly* 32 (3): 359–71.
- Heder, S. (2001) “Class, nationality, and race in communist crimes against humanity: Theoretical and historical reflections on Marxist racism and violence,” in A. Kimenyi and O. L. Scott (eds.) *Anatomy of Genocide: State-Sponsored Mass Killings in the Twentieth Century*. Lewistown, NY: Edward Mellen: 129–85.
- Heuveline, P. (1998) “‘Between one and three million’: Towards the demographic reconstruction of a decade of Cambodian history (1970–1979).” *Population Studies* 52 (1): 49–65.

- (2001) “The demographic analysis of mortality crises: The case of Cambodia, 1970–1979,” in H. E. Reed and C. B. Keeley (eds.) *Forced Migration and Mortality*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press: 102–29.
- Hinton, A. L. (2005) *Why Did They Kill? Cambodia in the Shadow of Genocide*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Horowitz, I. L. (1997) *Taking Lives: Genocide and State Power*, 4th ed. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.
- Hunt, S. A., R. D. Benford, and D. A. Snow (1994) “Identity fields: Framing processes and the social construction of movement identities,” in E. Larana, H. Johnson, and J. R. Gusfield (eds.) *New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press: 185–208.
- Kelman, H. C., and V. L. Hamilton (1989) *Crimes of Obedience: Towards a Social Psychology of Authority and Responsibility*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Kiernan, B. (1985) “Kampuchea and Stalinism,” in C. MacKerras and N. Knight (eds.) *Marxism in Asia*. London: Croom Helm: 232–50.
- (2002) *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975–79*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- (2004) *How Pol Pot Came to Power: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Communism in Cambodia, 1930–1975*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Kiernan, B., and C. Boua (1982) *Peasants and Politics in Kampuchea, 1942–1981*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.
- King, C. (2004) “The micropolitics of social violence.” *World Politics* 56 (3): 431–55.
- Kopstein, J. S., and J. Wittenberg (2011) “Deadly communities: Local political milieus and the persecution of Jews in occupied Poland.” *Comparative Political Studies* 44 (3): 259–83.
- Krain, M. (1997) “State-sponsored mass murder: The onset and severity of genocides and politicides.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41 (3): 331–60.
- Kuper, L. (1981) *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Lamont, M., and V. Molnar (2002) “The study of boundaries in the social sciences.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 28: 167–95.
- Longest, K. C., and S. Vaisey (2008) “Fuzzy: A program for performing qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) in Stata.” *The Stata Journal* 8 (1): 79–104.
- Mann, M. (2000) “Were the perpetrators of genocide ‘ordinary men’ or ‘real Nazis’? Results from fifteen hundred biographies.” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 14 (3): 331–66.
- (2005) *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Melson, R. (1992) *Revolution and Genocide: On the Origins of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Midlarsky, M. I. (2005) *The Killing Trap: Genocide in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Migozzi, J. (1973) *Cambodge: Faits et Problemes de Population*. Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique.
- Oberschall, A. (2000) “The manipulation of ethnicity: From ethnic cooperation to violence and war in Yugoslavia.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23 (6): 982–1001.
- Owens, P. B., Y. Su, and D. A. Snow (2013) “Social scientific inquiry into genocide and mass killing: From unitary outcome to complex processes.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 39: 69–84.
- Ragin, C. C. (1987) *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- (1994) *Constructing Social Research: The Unity and Diversity of Method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- (2000) *Fuzzy-Set Social Science*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- (2008) *Redesigning Social Inquiry: Fuzzy-Sets and Beyond*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Shibutani, T. (1973) “On the personification of adversaries,” in T. Shibutani (ed.) *Human Nature and Collective Behavior: Papers in Honor of Herbert Blumer*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction: 223–33.
- Snow, D. A., and R. D. Benford (1988) “Ideology, frame resonance, and participant mobilization.” *International Social Movement Research* 1 (1): 197–217.

- Snow, D. A., D. M. Cress, L. Downey, and A. W. Jones (1998) "Disrupting the 'quotidian': Reconceptualizing the relationship between breakdown and the emergence of collective action." *Mobilization* 3 (1): 1–22.
- Snow, D. A., E. B. Rocheford, Jr., S. K. Worden, and R. D. Benford (1986) "Frame alignment processes, micromobilization, and movement participation." *American Sociological Review* 51 (4): 464–81.
- Straus, S. (2001) "Organic purity and the role of anthropology in Cambodia and Rwanda." *Patterns of Prejudice* 35 (2): 47–62.
- (2006) *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power, and War in Rwanda*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- (2007) "What is the relationship between hate radio and violence? Rethinking Rwanda's 'Radio Machete.'" *Politics and Society* 35 (4): 609–37.
- Su, Y. (2011) *Collective Killings in Rural China during the Cultural Revolution*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities (1979) "Analysis prepared on behalf of the sub-commission by its chairman of materials submitted to it and the commission on human rights under decision 9 (XXXIV) of the Commission on Human Rights." Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations.
- Thompson, P. (2000) *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tilly, C. (2003) *The Politics of Collective Violence*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- United Nations (1948) "Convention on the prevention and punishment of genocide," <http://www.hrweb.org/legal/genocide.html> (accessed January 27, 1997).
- Valentino, B. A. (2004) *Final Solutions: Mass Killing and Genocide in the Twentieth Century*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Verwimp, P. (2003) "Testing the double-genocide thesis for central and southern Rwanda." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 47 (4): 423–42.
- (2004) "Death and survival during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda." *Population Studies* 58 (2): 233–45.
- (2005) "An economic profile of peasant perpetrators of genocide: Micro-level evidence from Rwanda." *Journal of Development Economics* 77 (2): 297–323.
- Vickery, M. (1984) *Cambodia, 1975–1982*. Boston: South End Press.
- Waller, J. (2007) *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Walton, J. (1992) "Making the theoretical case," in C. C. Ragin and H. S. Becker (eds.) *What Is a Case? Exploring the Foundations of Social Inquiry*. New York: Cambridge University Press: 121–38.