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Political violence in South and Southeast Asia

Political violence in South and Southeast Asia: Critical perspectives

Edited by Itty Abraham, Edward Newman and
Meredith L. Weiss

United Nations
University Press

TOKYO • NEW YORK • PARIS

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United Nations University Press
United Nations University, 53-70, Jingumae 5-chome,
Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150-8925, Japan
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United Nations University Press is the publishing division of the United Nations University.

Cover design by Andrew Corbett

Printed in Singapore

ISBN 978-92-808-1190-2

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Political violence in South and Southeast Asia : critical perspectives / edited by
Itty Abraham, Edward Newman, and Meredith L. Weiss.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-9280811902 (pbk.)
1. Political violence—South Asia. 2. Political violence—Southeast Asia.
3. South Asia—Social conditions. 4. South Asia—Politics and government.
5. Southeast Asia—Social conditions. 6. Southeast Asia—Politics and
government—1945– I. Abraham, Itty, 1960– II. Newman, Edward, 1970–
III. Weiss, Meredith L. (Meredith Leigh), 1972–
HN670.3.Z9V568 2010
303.60954—dc22 2010015811

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Acknowledgements

This volume presents the results of a research project organized and funded jointly by the International Peace Institute and the University Nations University. The editors would like to express their thanks to these organizations for their support.

Abbreviations

AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
AHAB	Ahle Hadith Andolon Bangladesh
AIADMK	All-India Anna DMK
AL	Awami League (Bangladesh)
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
BRN	Barisan Revolusi Nasional – National Revolutionary Force (Thailand)
CBI	Central Bureau of Intelligence (India)
CHT	Chittagong Hill Tracts
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (USA)
COIN	counterinsurgency
CPK	Communist Party of Kampuchea
CPM	Communist Party of Malaya
CPP	Communist Party of the Philippines
DMK	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (India)
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation (USA)
GAM	Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (Indonesia)
GNLF	Gorkha National Liberation Front (India)
HuJI	Harkatul Jihad Al Islami
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	internally displaced person
IPKF	Indian Peace Keeping Force
IRS	institutionalized riot system

ISI	Inter Services Intelligence (Pakistan)
ISRD	institutionalized system of riot documentation
JI	Jamaat-e-Islami
JMB	Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh
JMJB	Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh
JVP	Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (Sri Lanka)
LeT	Lashkar-e-Toiba
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MAR	Minorities at Risk project
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front (Philippines)
MNF	Mizo National Front (India)
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front (Philippines)
MUI	Majelis Ulama Indonesia – Indonesian Islamic Authority
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	non-governmental organization
NNC	Naga National Council (India)
NPA	New People's Army (Philippines)
NTUF(R)	Nepal Trade Union Federation (Revolutionary)
OPM	Organisasi Papua Merdeka (Indonesia)
PKI	Indonesian Communist Party
PULO	Pattani United Liberation Organization (Thailand)
RAB	rapid action battalion
RAW	Research and Analysis Wing (India)
RNA	Royal Nepalese Army
RPG	rocket-propelled grenade
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SIT	special investigative team
TNV	Tripura National Volunteers (India)
UNP	United National Party (Sri Lanka)
URPC	United Revolutionary People's Council (Nepal)
WTM	World Tamil Movement

1

Introduction – The politics of violence: Modalities, frames and functions

Meredith L. Weiss, Edward Newman and Itty Abraham

In these days when terrorists, insurgents and militants have replaced freedom fighters, *jacqueries* and anarchists among the first order of public enemies, when wars on all kinds of terror have become ubiquitous elements of everyday political life, it is worth taking a step back to consider and evaluate the nature, roots, meanings and consequences of political violence. As the chapters that follow show, we do not seek in this volume to "explain" political violence, but to understand it better: when, where and why it is found, and the interaction between violent and non-violent politics. A consciously interdisciplinary framework enables this wide-ranging sweep, even if empirically our coverage cannot possibly be fully comprehensive. Understanding or evaluating political violence requires diverse methods and lenses, from close ethnographic readings to more macro-level historical and social scientific analyses. A deep debate among anthropologists, political scientists and historians has been fundamental to this project: over the course of two workshops and many discussions, different approaches have informed our reading of the nature, practice and victims of violence, the role of "scientific" approaches to understanding conflict and the institutional and cultural legacy of past experience of political violence. Most importantly, we analyse state and non-state actors together, and include external and subnational actors within the same frame.

Political violence is hardly a new phenomenon, however novel the public and media attention to certain of its forms makes it appear. Nor has it ever been one-sided or singular in scope: political violence has multiple

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Political violence in South and Southeast Asia: Critical perspectives, Abraham, Newman and Weiss (eds), United Nations University Press, 2010, ISBN 978-92-808-1190-2

forms, perpetrators, victims and purposes. It transpires alongside and interlaces with non-violent politics and multiple struggles for peace and justice; it is habitually a part of modern political life but never the whole story. The category of political violence, as understood in this volume, includes state and non-state behaviours; it may originate from internal or external sponsors, and takes forms that range from terrorism and guerrilla warfare to sectarian violence, police actions, riots and assassinations. Histories, memories, strategies, outcomes and effects of political violence leave powerful legacies, both as repertoires and as wounds that continue to shape the political landscape long after their immediate expression. Our hope is, in the short run, to offer a tempering corrective to the one-sided and instrumental use of the "war on terror" mindset and its underlying assumptions, and in the long run to encourage non-violent forms of conflict resolution and the pursuit of just and stable political arrangements. It is therefore crucial that we first understand where these violent strategies come from, why they recur and why political actors so often prefer them to other forms of political behaviour. In this discussion of "political violence", we consider a wide range of actions and agents distributed across an uneven and shifting topology of power. What unifies the varieties of political violence discussed here is our understanding that what we mean by political violence is both strategic and consequential: violence is a technology of modern politics.[1]

Political violence can only be defined through disaggregation. The *political* nature of the violence we are interested in may variously centre on object, location, justification, purpose or effect. The field of the political goes well beyond the formal institutions of collective public representation and executive action (such as elections and governments); it includes all arenas of social relations connected with struggles for political power, voice and rights, and that engender political subjectivities. Moreover, histories and memories of past violence, whether perpetrated directly or by external agencies, as well as indirect forms of subjugation may play into the ongoing formation of violence and political repertoires. In countries where contenders replay both the mythic and the not-so-recent past for political and instrumental purposes (for instance, the alleged destruction of Hindu temples by marauding Muslim invaders in India), political violence may take on a retributive aspect by invoking the collective loss of putative cultural identity and unity.

The kinds of *violence* we are interested in range from structural conditions of state violence against politically weak communities and citizens, often in marginal and contested sites such as border regions, to deliberate, state-sponsored, extra-legal strikes against political enemies, such as sanctioning unregulated violence against militant "extremists" and other over-identified anti-state collectives. Political violence also includes societal actions aimed at the state and the institutional mechanisms of organized governance, for instance acts of pure terror such as exploding bombs in public settings, assassinations, the execution of state officials and violent attacks on state symbols and institutions. Still other types of political violence include intra-social actions using tactics beyond those of legal and civil engagement, such as community-on-community (communal) violence, riots and pogroms against minority populations.

This collection aims to capture in the same frame both state-derived and non-state violence, as structure and as event. By doing so, we intend not to propose that these forms of violence are equal in origin, (il)legitimacy or effect, but to recognize that, taken collectively, both state and non-state actions constitute the landscape of political violence and thereby influence and shape each other and the relevant political environment.[2] We understand political violence as *consequential* and *strategic*. Hence, for instance, we take issue with conceptualizations of political violence as episodic, spontaneous or "irrational". There is no denying that unplanned, contingent violence *does* occasionally break out – riots over food prices, perceived injustices and accidental deaths, for example, which may also reflect deep-rooted grievances and anger. But in nearly every other case the riot, as the empirically robust work of Paul Brass and others has shown, is an act of targeted, staged and planned violence, with discrete ends. It is clearly, in a narrow sense, strategic. By the same token, the presumption of violence as an episodic event with a marked beginning and end works reflexively to help create the comforting illusion that a state of non-violence is the norm. Acts of violence then seem mere temporary ruptures. Accounts of violence that are structured around an action-reaction model may not be inaccurate from a narrowly empirical point of view, but the logic undergirding such an account bears examination. When we find it natural or unexceptional that an action such as the killing of a cow in India produces a collective social response that requires mass violence for its closure, we have essentialized culture in our explanation: we have fallen back on uncritical stereotypes of communities, their collective logic and the place of violence in their cultural repertoires of action. We fail to ask ourselves why every killing of a cow does not produce this "natural" response; we fail to consider whether the act of cow-killing was itself a provocation to legitimize such a response; we fail to consider the history and context within which this action may be part of an ongoing play of events; and we fail to consider the calculus of multiple interests that may be invested in this staging.

Falling back on familiar culturalist explanations for political violence reinscribes temporal and spatial boundaries around the violent event.[3] Instead, in this volume we acknowledge the co-presence of violence and its non-expression as historically produced, structuring conditions of modern political life. Hence we speak of "everyday" structural violence: a state of violence that is constant and even normalized, punctuated by incidents of especial ferocity. Such a view presents political violence as strategic in a much more profound way, by acknowledging the centrality of the state and processes of its formation, even when that same state seeks to regulate violence in the public sphere.[4] The breakdown of public order apparent in an act of spectacular political violence then seems not such an aberration: it cannot be separated from the state's desire to monopolize the production of social violence as a condition of its own maintenance, expressed as public order, the rule of law and other conditions of "normal" state behaviour.

Political violence carries a symbolic loading and set of effects quite apart from the actual pain, intimidation and deprivation it causes. It is those consequences – violence's potential to effect transformation of socio-political worlds – that make it irreversible and an appealing political strategy, and not, generally speaking, mere sadism on the part of its perpetrators. Like any other means of political engagement, violent contention requires mobilization, resources, supporters and opponents. Even when its perpetrators or targets are individuals, political violence produces a collective and public effect. Moreover, particular techniques for the practice and suppression of violence become modular, mobile political forms, caught up in contemporary global flows of experience and learning. For example, counterinsurgency strategies developed at troublesome borders drift inwards or are carried across and beyond empires, as with the origin of the concentration camp. And new, or newly popular, forms of violence emerge over time, as with the contemporary frequency of suicide bombings in contrast with earlier forms such as assassination or execution. Hence violent political strategies are dynamic and mobile: perpetrators, both state and non-state, adapt to changing resources and circumstances.

Understanding violence as we do throughout this volume – as a strategic, purposive technology of modern politics, available to state agents and opponents alike – offers insights into its temporality and spatiality. While recourse to deliberate acts of political violence is, for the most part, uncommon and never inevitable, it is both irreversible and aggregative. Forms of political contestation always feed into repertoires and memories, building up knowledge of how to perform politics and the pay-offs or costs attached to particular strategies.[5] The presence of violent action in those legacies invariably reframes the context and consequences of political engagement, even after the relationships in question have been substantially repaired. Whether as protest or its suppression, political violence offers a unique form of voice, out-shouting less spectacular forms of articulation and transforming the field of who speaks and for whom.

Violence, once enacted, shifts the parameters of the debate and the political stakes; it constitutes a message and a distinct form of expression, and engenders new terms of material discourse.

Theories of armed conflict

The approach we take here stands in marked epistemological and ontological contrast to familiar (to political scientists) and ubiquitous studies of “armed conflict”. At the epistemological level, the world-view of armed-conflict approaches takes the contemporary territorial state as a given, fixed and internationally recognized agent: as a result, these approaches identify and define all opponents of the state primarily by their opposition to the status quo. These approaches, too, take the outbreak of violence as an aberration in the normal condition of social life and privilege the analysis of armed violence against the state rather than other forms and targets of violence. At the ontological level, armed-conflict approaches are unable to see violence as a structuring condition of social existence at the macro level, or in manifested states of pain, suffering, trauma or loss at the individual level. Instead, these approaches understand violence in terms of morbidity statistics. Given no character or form other than its aftermath, violence becomes mystical and inexplicable: in a word, unreasonable. It becomes a proxy for the breakdown of “normal” politics, rather than representing a feature intrinsic to everyday forms of politics. What normal politics may be is never clear, nor is it conceivable that everyday forms of politics might include violent tactics. Even though driven by the policy imperative of identifying causal factors that might prevent or stop violence, “empirical” approaches to armed conflict are unable to see the constitutive condition of violence in the long making of the modern state, to recognize violence as a social moment with its own phenomenology or to understand a state of political violence in the absence of dead bodies. We believe such a framing impoverishes any understanding of both violence and non-violence in political life. Nevertheless, this literature offers useful insights at least into the *why*, if not the *how*, of political violence.

Since the end of the Cold War, scholars have stepped up their efforts to identify the factors behind the onset, nature and termination of armed conflict, especially as general phenomena, and particularly based on positivist methodologies, from sophisticated econometric tools to more intuitive approaches. This scholarship has generated a range of propositions regarding the causes and sources of conflict, the relationship between natural resources and conflict, the political economy of conflict and the role and potential of external actors in resolving conflict and building peace.[6] We can easily summarize the limitations of this literature, taken on its own terms. No single independent variable or set of variables has been successful in explaining the onset or durability of conflict in general terms. Social cleavages, political institutions, globalization and natural resources all offer inadequate and incomplete explanations: for every case that fits a given theory, others can be found that do not. Yet even setting aside our broader epistemological and ontological concerns, we take issue with the dominant positivist method of the armed-conflict literature for overly privileging parsimony and linear causality in seeking to explain why conflicts start, continue and stop – the key research questions guiding this approach. While these theories offer food for thought, none presents a compelling explanation, and all downplay or disregard the strategic calculations we see as central to a political violence approach. Hence the present volume takes a very different approach to understanding political violence and the social relations that produce it and in which it is embedded. We summarize the key findings of prominent theories in the well-known "armed conflict" genre and identify the points of tension among them in order to highlight what the dominant approaches *cannot* explain, the better to clarify our own approach.

Economic "greed" and globalization theories

Theories of greed suggest that economic motives are the primary driver of violent conflict. Many of these theories focus on lootable resources: economic factors are central to combatants' pursuit of war or peace; the personal greed of rebels is the major cause of conflict; resource-rich countries are more prone to armed conflict than others; and links with global commodity and financial markets influence war economies and conflict.[7] Moreover, violence itself creates opportunities for entrepreneurship and profit, as internal and transnational war economies develop.[8] Seen through these lenses, the continuation of violence rather than political "victory" is often the objective. Globalization represents two processes in these greed theories. It underpins changes in the state – particularly an erosion of state authority and public goods – which can make societies vulnerable to conflict, and also generates increased opportunities for transborder trade, both legal and illegal. As a result, greed theorists propose, many civil wars are caused and fuelled not by poverty but by a "resource curse".[9]

Lastly, their emphasis on a rigorous, "scientific" logic of explanation represents a distinctive feature of a number of economic theories of armed conflict. Collier and Hoeffler, for example, employ econometric methods to argue for the primacy of lootable resources among drivers of armed conflict.[10] Other scholars use similar methods to focus on, for instance, access to specific natural resources or other sources of finance.[11]

Common to all these theories is the idea that economic agendas and opportunities offer the most salient lens on the emergence and persistence of conflict. Indeed, data from Southeast Asia in particular (especially from the Philippines and Indonesia) suggest that even those conflicts often categorized as "separatist", "communal", "ethnic" or "ideological" do have a clear element of "greed" to them. The exploitation of mining opportunities in the Philippines has come into conflict with indigenous land rights and competition over resources, for instance, while ongoing violence in Papua, Sulawesi and Maluku in Indonesia is not just religious or ethnic in character but also understood as competition for land and resources, exacerbated by environmental degradation, settler movements and increasing intrusion of business interests. And yet critics of greed theories contest the manner in which the latter oversimplify to downplay or dismiss social and political grievances.[12] Even those who initiated the "greed versus grievance" debate have suggested that this dichotomy is no longer helpful: one must consider greed and grievance as fused motives.[13]

A related set of theories applies the greed motive not to rebel groups but to governments, arguing that corrupt governments engage in rent seeking and predation in order to enrich themselves, repay the support of allies and pay off potential adversaries. In the process, they weaken the legitimacy of the state by degrading its capacity to fulfil public service requirements and alienate groups that are not receiving the fruits of the government's corruption. As a result, groups on the periphery, if not the general citizenry, mobilize in violent opposition to the government. These studies may link state predation with more specific factors, too, such as mismanagement of resource wealth,[14] or demographic or environmental stress.[15]

Still other scholars have associated certain types of conflict with the instabilities that arise from social changes in an increasingly globalized world. Value systems have increasingly come into contact and in some cases into tension, creating the perception or fear of cultural imperialism and hegemony. Barber, for instance, notes violent resistance to modernity and the socio-economic disruption and loss of sovereignty that globalization entails.[16] Cognate theorists focus more on economic instabilities with increasing marketization rather than changes in culture and aesthetics. Amy Chua and Michael Mousseau, for instance, both see the market not as neutral but as bringing fundamental change and violent opposition.[17] All these basically economics-driven theories, however, fall short, in our view, by their substantially monocausal and episodic emphasis, as well as their inability to specify *how* political violence emerges and with what longer-term legacies.

Regime-type theories

Far more political in their focus are those theories that hypothesize regime type as the most significant explanatory variable for the onset of armed conflict. Most prominent among these studies is the work of the Political Instability Task Force.[18] This large-*N*, econometric work finds the risk of conflict highest in partially democratic or transitional states, especially when factionalism is present – as is often the case in new democracies.[19] As a corollary, the study finds that fully democratized states and fully autocratic states are generally the most stable and peaceful and least likely to experience instability. A number of other studies, too, have found that states in the process of democratizing are vulnerable to armed conflict:[20] catalysed by political liberalization and still-unmet demands, such vulnerabilities as ethnic heterogeneity, social inequalities, weak state capacity and low levels of human rights give rise to armed conflict. Other scholars have used case studies to illustrate that differences in leadership, institutional choice and economic structure explain why some democratic experiments are successful while others degenerate into civil war.[21] In other words, violence is not inevitable even in these transitioning democracies, suggesting the need for more complex understandings.

Grievance theories

A competing set of theories homes in not on economic or regime factors, but more on society – particularly on issues of minority rights, discrimination and separatism. Political grievances remain important, even if not sole, sources of violent conflict: armed conflicts in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, the Philippines, India and Pakistan, among others, cannot be understood without reference to political grievances. Edward Azar, for instance, has argued that civil wars generally arise out of communal groups' collective struggle "for such basic needs as security, recognition and acceptance, fair access to political institutions and economic participation".[22] Other analysts, too, have found that political factors, from weak state capacity to the denial of human needs, are central to many contemporary conflicts, often in conjunction with economic motives.[23] Such theories suggest that sustainable peace requires addressing underlying grievances, yet problematically they still fundamentally conceptualize violence as an aberration, and as "politics" primarily through its engagement with the state.

A prominent subset of grievance theories focus specifically on identity-based conflict, especially amid a perceived post–Cold War "surge" in civil wars. This period saw the general decline of national ideological unity as communism became discredited, formerly authoritarian political systems opened up and developing states lost superpower support for "national" projects, apparently opening the door for resurgent ethnic antagonisms. The result was increasing polarization and an acute "ethnic security dilemma" in which ethnic groups sought to protect only their own interests.[24] Gurr, Woodward and Marshall, for example, see ethnic and religious competition as especially salient catalysts for violent conflict since the 1980s.[25] Drawing upon Political Instability Task Force data, they suggest that ethnic wars are more likely to occur when the state actively and systematically discriminates against one or more minority groups in larger countries with medium to high ethnic diversity, when the country is a partial democracy with factionalism, when the country's neighbours are already embroiled in a civil war or ethnic conflict, when a country has experienced an ethnic conflict or genocide in the previous 15 years and when a country has a large youth population (a "bulge").[26] A number of scholars – most famously Samuel Huntington – focus specifically on religion and culture.[27] Huntington stressed the threat from countries and cultures that base their traditions on religious faith and dogma, identifying geopolitical fault-lines between "civilizations" defined primarily in terms of religious identity.

And yet most scholars challenge the thesis that "ancient ethnic tensions" stoke armed conflict, and a number of studies have found the correlation between ethnic heterogeneity and civil war weak.[28] Some studies find ethnic and religious diversity problematic only in conjunction with such factors as high levels of poverty, failed political institutions and economic dependence on natural resources, while others argue that where ethnicity has been important to the onset of armed conflict, it is the result of elite manipulation: extremist political leaders exploit the insecurities felt by people in divided societies in situations of political volatility.[29] We find ample evidence that elite construction or manipulation of identity is a key, and sometimes a necessary, factor in so-called ethnic and religious violence, especially in conjunction with social and economic deprivation.[30] In short, identity alone – even understood as constructed and manipulated rather than primordial – does not spark violence, but concatenates with other factors as actors decide whether to adopt violent strategies.

One set of theories that attempt to tease out these connections are those focused on the specific forms that inequality may take. Though analysts have suggested that underdevelopment is an underlying cause of violent conflict[31] – that relative deprivation sparks political grievances and violent mobilization, or that poorer countries are more likely to suffer from corrupt and poor governance and to lack capacity to address instability and militant challenges – at least as many poor countries do *not* experience violent conflict; thus poverty does not present a satisfactory explanation. Economic *inequality* within a society, however, especially across distinct identity groups or communities, may foment conflict. These "horizontal inequalities" appear to be linked particularly with conflict at moments of economic change, sometimes extending to armed conflict.[32] Not only the most deprived groups may initiate conflict, but also the relatively more privileged, who fear the loss of their position.[33] Researchers at the Centre on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity at the University of Oxford have found that horizontal inequalities are more likely to provoke conflict when inequalities are sustained and widen over time, boundaries between different identity groups are relatively impermeable, there are fairly large numbers in the different groups, horizontal inequalities are consistent across dimensions (that is, lack of political access combined with economic inequalities), aggregate incomes show little or no improvement in absolute terms, new leaders are not coopted into the ruling system and the government is not responsive to social grievances.[34] Horizontal inequality, then, is not inherently conflict inducing, but may exacerbate a tense state and societal context.

State collapse and the post-colonial predicament

Zeroing in on just one part of that equation are theories that point to the weakness or decline of the modern state as a key factor in the onset of violent conflict.[35] In the context of economic forces and policies which erode state capacity, authority and public goods, a pattern of violence by private, often criminal, groups emerges to fill a vacuum of state authority and power, often associated with ethnic allegiances and vying over natural resources or criminal opportunities. Per this view, violence is characteristic of social and political change in a context of state failure and the breakdown of public authority. Globalization is an important component, as it erodes state authority and fosters war economies and socio-economic dislocation.[36] The post-colonial state appears to be especially vulnerable to crisis and fragmentation, often related to vagaries of the colonial legacy: arbitrary territorial borders; insecure ethnic, religious or national minorities; and post-independence nationalist movements that deepen, rather than transcend, divisions.[37] Yet theories that focus so firmly on the state are as incomplete as those faulting only pathologies of society. We strive here for a more holistic view – one able to move beyond questions of *why* to *how*, and that sees violence not as an episodic aberration to be sidestepped or corrected, but as constitutive of and shaped by the polity, and thus far harder to evade or overcome.

Political violence, power and legitimacy

At the heart of most theories of armed conflict is a Weberian assumption that the state monopolizes the legitimate use of violence – however such legitimacy is understood. Hannah Arendt, for instance, saw recourse to violence as a symptom of the loss of power. Since, in her terms, legitimate power requires the consent of the governed, violence can only destroy, not bolster, power, even if commanding obedience.[38] Where, however, the state's grasp on legitimate power based on popular consent has always been fragile and incomplete, acts of violence shift away from being merely symptoms of the loss of power to becoming characteristic features of the political field. Violence, in other words, becomes a form of politics by other means.

We focus here on South and Southeast Asia for just this reason: in this region, incomplete legitimacy of the modern state is a structuring condition of contemporary politics, across a broad, contiguous swathe. This incompleteness stems partly from the aftermath of historical and geopolitical struggles, expressed most vividly in the mass violence that accompanied independence in most states of this region. We note foundational moments of mass violence, of which the partition of India and Pakistan stands as the extreme example, also the bitter struggle by Indonesians against Dutch efforts to reclaim their colony after the Second World War and the decades-long insurgency and war by the Vietnamese to free their country from foreign rule and influence. A state born in violence, and the society that is its product, cannot but remain marked by that experience, even when the violence is justified and celebrated as a historic victory of anti-colonial nationalism. With formal independence, normalized practices of domestic governance and the combined pressures of "geoeconomics and geopolitics" build upon and exacerbate the condition of already existing violence. Among these practices and pressures are institutions such as democratic elections, the limits of official ideologies of national belonging and the terms of modern sovereignty. Under such conditions, political violence, whether perpetrated by the state or by other political entities, can no longer be thought of as episodic, rare, random, localized or irrational. Rather, as the contributions to this volume will demonstrate, political violence in contemporary South and Southeast Asia is everyday, commonplace, strategic, widespread and instrumental. Not surprisingly, given this affective range, political violence is hardly a mute instrument: it is deeply imbued with political meanings, even if those meanings change over time and for different audiences. Political violence in this sense is *constitutive* of the political field rather than anomalous, as so much of the armed-conflict literature supposes.

To consider violence productive, in the sense we intend here, is not in any way to celebrate political violence or its effects. It is, however, to acknowledge that we cannot wall off the violence of politics in this part of the world from everyday political life. We can only partly glimpse the character of this violence in empirical body counts of victims of riots or the trial testimonies of and court evidence against perpetrators of targeted killings. However difficult the task of drawing lessons or abstracting from brutality and pain, we need not get caught up in a "pornography" of violence.[39] Analysing political violence as a set of practices and implications helps to illuminate why people collude or participate in these campaigns, what roles the state and its agents play in perpetrating or perpetuating violence, and why contenders prefer violent strategies to alternatives in some contexts and not in others. This exploration delves, too, into the lead-up to violence or its renunciation and the interpretation of bouts of violence; it is these interpretations that lay the ground for the next round. This volume thus contributes to ongoing debates not so much on what *causes* political violence, but on the purposes, aims, approaches, staging and short- and long-term consequences of such acts. Violence is never "senseless": it is one set of political strategies among others. Our purpose is less to apply labels and blame than to examine contexts and processes – including the reflexive function of labelling or defining political violence at the stage of interpretation. By way of both case studies and structured comparative approaches, the chapters that follow explore political violence in terms of how we conceptualize that violence – its modes and scale; structural factors, including organizational dimensions and facilitating conditions; and the ideology and objectives behind or invoked by political violence.

Conceptual dimensions: Modes and scales

A relatively straightforward approach to the study of political violence is through a demarcation of scales of violence, albeit with careful attention to the meanings violence invokes and creates, the participants involved, the range of political options available, the organizational strategies selected and the implicit histories at stake, privileging neither state nor non-state actors. Here *scale* does not mean simply the numbers killed or maimed as a result of political violence, but rather the nature of the central event of violence. Two seemingly polar modes of political violence are assassinations and riots. Assassination is among the oldest forms of political violence. While usually an isolated event, the assassination of a leading political figure – whether of the government or opposition – dramatically recasts political opportunity structures and often becomes a turning point in domestic political development. These acts may be highly stylized yet complex in their symbolism: consider what a difference it makes if a political figure is killed by a beheading, a bomb or a bullet, or by torture in a jail or while trying to escape from custody. The implications of assassination, too, may be complex, whether in terms of who succeeds this person in their political role or in the introduction of a new act into existing repertoires of violence. The impact of this killing may reverberate for a generation or more, or be forgotten almost at once. Moreover, although assassinations may appear to be clinically precise by their very nature, we find that the meanings generated by the killing occupy a far more ambiguous interpretive place, whether or not the perpetrator claims responsibility and seeks to make the intended meanings transparent. Assassination is also among the most widespread of violent political strategies, having been carried out by religious and secular actors, liberation movements, right- and left-wing extremists, military officers and civilian government officials alike.

Understanding the mode of political violence captured by assassination – the targeted killing of an individual political figure – appears to be both direct and uncomplicated. A simple understanding of the assassination puts the burden of explanation on the behaviour of the perpetrator. The narrative of the political figure's death is structured around a presumed relation between political (in)action and violent response. The reasons for the homicide are variously described in terms of revenge, punishment or retribution; the motives of the killer are understood to be sufficient explanation for the event; the only open question is how many beside the attacker were involved in the conspiracy. The chain of explanation is linear and closed, even when the attacker is found to have an unstable mental condition. In other words, even being "unreasonable" offers an adequate reason for why the assassination took place.

The chapter here by Sankaran Krishna makes this apparent clarity far more complex. Through his analysis of emblematic political assassinations in South Asia, Krishna is able to highlight a political culture – a moral economy, as he puts it – that has been entirely transformed in four decades. He argues that the worlds inhabited by Mohandas Gandhi and former Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi are marked by very different moral economies. The same event is unrecognizable across these two time periods and produces entirely different meanings and effects. Krishna's argument depends on seeing assassination as an act of political communication. He posits, "In earlier times, a political assassination was carried out . . . in the name of a larger cause or principle which was explicitly articulated . . . that was recognized, if not agreed with, by a politically attendant public." By contrast, "contemporary assassinations in South Asia wish to close the book on debate rather than inaugurating one". In 1948 Gandhi was undoubtedly India's most important political figure, yet he held no official office. Indeed, he was celebrated for his ability to operate beyond the boundaries of normal and everyday politics, leading his assassin, as Krishna shows, also to turn to "supra-legal" means. Seen in this light, Gandhi's death was the opening statement in a political debate on the constitution of the newly independent Indian state. Ironically, according to Krishna, it was precisely Gandhi's assassination that set back this debate by decades. The killing of Rajiv Gandhi by Dhanu, a Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) suicide bomber, took place in a very different communicative universe. To begin with, the perpetrator died in the act of homicide, silently. Moreover, the judicial inquiries that followed unwittingly produced an extensive critique of Indian foreign policy – which by the late 1980s was no longer bounded by the actions of the foreign ministry. We know now that the early viability of the LTTE was in no small part a product of Indian covert operations aimed at destabilizing Sri Lanka. If Rajiv's death was a result of "blow-back", Krishna concludes provocatively, the victim of the attack could be said to have killed himself: Rajiv Gandhi's assassination was a suicide, in other words. Even as assassination must now be recognized as an all-too-familiar mode of political transition across South Asia, the political violence of assassination becomes, in this chapter, a way of seeing the modern history of the post-colonial state in an entirely new way.

Equally long-standing phenomena, but very different in their methods and meanings, are riots and pogroms. Riots and other forms of collective, mass violence are nearly always planned and purposeful. The extent of bloodshed involved may vary dramatically. In some cases fewer than a hundred people may die or be injured; other incidents count thousands of victims. Riots may entail not only the death of individuals caught up in the violence, but also the destruction of property and communally important symbols, and the "cleansing" of areas to rid them of particular inhabitants for political and economic reasons. The nature of riots precludes easy analysis: aggregating the accounts of perpetrators and victims usually produces wildly discrepant accounts of the meanings and reasons for mass violence, yet, at the same time, the riot is among the most heavily narrativized actions of political violence. It is also among the most fraught of modern political acts. Whether or not the state was directly involved in a riot, such an event strikes at the heart of *raison d'état*. For a state to be directly involved in the killing of its citizens indicates a form of rule that is clearly illegitimate and contested: a civil war is in the offing. If, on the other hand, the state stands mute and inactive as its citizens kill their compatriots, it is equally culpable for not interceding to prevent or stop this deadly process. Riots yield not only death, injury and destruction of property, but also a culture of terror and mistrust that influences political actions long into the future.

Notwithstanding its material and symbolic importance, it is surprising how poorly the process of the riot is understood. All too often, as Paul Brass points out in his chapter, the riot is construed and explained away as an expression of spontaneous violence. The reasons for this are a combination of purposive efforts at mystification, to obscure both instigators and substantive meanings, and uninformed analysis following the event. Brass's chapter offers a comprehensive account of the process by which a riot takes place, drawing attention to the variety and diversity of actors involved. The institutionalized riot system (IRS), as he terms it, consists of three phases: rehearsal, production and post-production interpretation. The rehearsal stage involves a variety of bit players, from fire tenders who stoke the passions of a community to scouts and informants who keep higher-level actors informed on the state of collective thinking in various neighbourhoods. These are the individuals who provide the raw material of the potential riot to the directors of this violent drama; the latter decide when the production should come into effect, at a time and place of their choosing. The enactment of the riot is the most deliberate and strategic stage of the IRS. Again, a variety of diverse actors have specific roles to play to ensure the success of the production, from criminal elements who carry out much of the actual violence to communications specialists who fan the flames and print inflammatory accounts of the events taking place. The state now also makes an explicit appearance, via the police, whose actions or inactions are crucial to the final outcome. In most of South Asia the government's law-and-order machinery *can* stop a riot, once begun, and can usually prevent one from taking place. If a riot breaks out, in other words, it is almost always because the state has let it happen. The third stage in this process is interpretation, which Brass describes as divided between those seeking to absolve responsible parties from any blame and those uninvolved with the riot, often social scientists and academics, who offer explanations that work to reproduce the conventional wisdom of cultural difference. Reflecting on the progression of mass violence in India since independence, Brass notes that the scale of violence has increased with time. Escalation in the degree and brutality of violence, he argues, leads eventually to the physical displacement of minority populations. The sheer brutality of the riot might suggest the cowing of civil society in the face of untrammelled violence. Brass ends, however, on a positive note by highlighting the many civil society groups and collective actions that actively contest the IRS, especially by refusing to back away from attributing responsibility to its perpetrators and directors. Careful documentation, citizen tribunals and other forms of truth-telling of thousands of citizens and experts who refuse to allow the standard narrative to stand unchallenged have accompanied the rise of the riot as a strategic political instrument.

Broadening the conceptual frame, Geoffrey Robinson's contribution captures well the immense diversity of shapes and styles of "mass violence" to which Brass's lens might be applied. Assaying a range of violent forms, from riots to genocide, perpetrated by state and non-state actors alike, Robinson homes in on the variations in patterns of violence found across Southeast Asia. He finds the greatest explanatory leverage in a syndrome of broad historical conditions. The first is patterns and changes in local-level social, economic and political relations, particularly conflicts over material resources and political power, as well as the first-hand or inherited memory of past violence. For instance, clashes read commonly as cultural may be more usefully understood as linked to disputes over land or relative deprivation. The presence of exploitable resources such as oil may substantially raise the stakes, and hence the intensity of conflict. Configurations of local-level political power – from domination by key families to central state efforts to consolidate control and local bosses' perception of opportunities and threats – likewise help to shape the incidence and extent of political violence. This genealogy of political violence, and especially lived experience of it in any capacity, amplifies other local-level factors, honing resentments, reshaping loyalties and offering ballast for subsequent violent overtures: violence itself may be (though is not necessarily) self-perpetuating, and it is as much a part of how identities, loyalties and enmities form as it is an outcome of these forces. The second factor is the character of national states: states in the region have shaped and engaged in or with mass violence in ways conditioned in part by regime type (particularly the role the military plays in politics) and transitions. States in the region have at times drastically outpaced other social forces as perpetrators, instigators or facilitators of mass violence, in line with state-supporting strategic calculations. Finally, the third factor Robinson identifies is aspects of the international political, moral and legal contexts that mould the timing, scope and repertoires of mass violence in the region. These norms range from turning a blind eye to obvious predations to support for direct armed intervention and validation for both mass violence in particular circumstances and alternative structures and models for conflict de-escalation.

Robinson's chapter forces us to look closely not just at the sort of tensions or cleavages that *could* result in mass violence, but at when and how those fault-lines do turn violent. Like Brass, he finds nothing accidental or incidental in the outbreak of riots and other mass political violence: while it is impossible to rank contributing factors in a timeless way, and no outburst has a single cause, lessons of the past do suggest when state and non-state actors might resort to violence, and the forms that onslaught might assume. Moreover, no set of actors or conditions can be taken in isolation or out of context; interactions, memories, claims and contests at all levels come simultaneously into play in sparking and spreading these egregious episodes, mandating an inclusive conceptualization.

Structural dimensions

A related but differently centred approach to the study of political violence adopted in this volume is attention to more structural factors, including organizational dimensions and facilitating conditions. The primary structural feature considered here is the border, the territorial limit of the state. The colonial history of this region, in which European powers divided up land among themselves based on local administrative convenience, military victory, tussles and their resolution back in Europe, and strategic needs, paid little attention to the lived environment of peoples and communities. Territorial boundaries trumped social ones in the colonial period, fostering an understanding of national community through geography. As a result, the presence of ethnic, linguistic and kin communities divided by political boundaries is almost the norm in South and Southeast Asia. Amid the modern regime of territorially delimited political entities – the state as "container", as John Agnew and Stuart Corbridge put it[40] – control of the border defines state power. The border is among the most militarized of political spaces, a space which subjects normal rules of civic engagement to entirely different logics of control. Under these conditions, any community that violates the reach of the state by extending into another national community engenders a degree of state paranoia on either side of this cartographic excision, rendering the structural position of the borderland community extremely dangerous. Not surprisingly, border areas in South and Southeast Asia are often rife with secessionist and recidivist nationalist movements, both within and across state boundaries. Such anti-state contests may take the form of ethnic and minority struggles for autonomy or be subsumed into low-intensity inter-state conflicts, and are increasingly influenced by diasporic communities and international human rights campaigns.

The structural position of borders in a world defined by territorial division cannot be overstated. For the states produced by the defeat and withdrawal of colonial empires, national borders are relatively recent, often arbitrary and usually porous. For these reasons territorial borders become even more important to anxious and insecure successor states. In South and Southeast Asia, the region of the world that saw the presence of more colonial empires than any other, the location of contemporary borders is among the most visible legacies of the colonial experience – and yet these also demarcate important moments of post-colonial assertion. In her chapter, Naureen Chowdhury Fink explores the implications of independence in Bangladesh, the only self-defined nation-state in South Asia, created out of a struggle for ethno-linguistic identity. As Fink describes, Bangladesh continues to demarcate itself specifically in opposition to its neighbours: as Bengali/Muslim, which they are not. Yet this framing marginalizes the 15 per cent of the population who are *not* Muslim, as well as all non-Bengali ethnic groups. The state, then, is still a "container", but its walls are consciously built and actively, even violently, contested. Fink traces the rise of religious extremism and militancy in Bangladesh. Political violence, in this context, represents an option just as in and out of bounds as so many of its perpetrators and victims: it represents the assumption of non-negotiability and absolutism, yet also the recourse of those without other legitimate voice.

Yet not only the state frames the political violence within. External sponsors or supporters change the structural context and offer new facilitating conditions for political violence. The availability of such resources may indeed be decisive in some contexts. Patterns, forms, resources for and repertoires of political violence are neither static nor legible in isolation from outside influences. The pervasive effects of the "global war on terror" today, whether in the form of new international norms more tolerant of state repression or the valorization of brutal methods among non-state contenders, are only the most recent exemplar; the four-decade-long Cold War (and its specific manifestations, as across Indochina), the anti-Soviet Afghan resistance in the 1980s and the very fact of colonialism, decolonization and diaspora have all similarly affected the calculations and strategies of local political actors. Whatever their intended consequences, interventions by external agents (superpowers, regional powers, multilateral development agencies or others) may destabilize conditions and foster a culture of violence – or, more rarely, may tilt the balance in favour of state and non-state actors adopting non-violent strategies. Even so, the local remains key: who is making political demands and of whom, and what those demands are. Furthermore, resources matter only in connection with ideology, as the specific aims, constituencies and opponents of a given movement affect its choice of strategies – and if violent strategies seem most promising, the form that violence takes.

In her chapter, Natasha Hamilton-Hart pieces together the ways external forces may influence the incidence and character of political violence.

Southeast Asia has been deeply enmeshed in transnational networks and the logic of geopolitics throughout the post-war period, from its central position as a key set of "dominos" in Cold War jostling to frenzied manoeuvrings over possible links with al-Qaeda and terrorist webs today. Hamilton-Hart adopts a comparative approach to tease out issues of relative agency and efficacy, reveal alternate explanations and pose counterfactuals. The external influences she considers range from personally involved foreign actors, whether engaged in violence or (less often) in reducing it, to foreign provision of material support, including arms, and external provision of non-lethal aid, intended for non-violent purposes, to recipients who are engaged in political violence. Surveying *material* support, Hamilton-Hart finds overall that the role and influence of foreign state actors in producing political violence are significantly greater than those of non-state external actors; that external support for political violence is far more substantial when the perpetrators are state rather than non-state actors; and that external support is more likely to escalate than to reduce political violence, whether in its immediate effects or via longer-term destabilization and disruption. When it comes to *less tangible* support, however – from ideological legitimation to dissemination of texts supporting violence and confidence-building or other conflict resolution initiatives – state and non-state actors are more nearly equal in their involvement and influence. Direct external involvement in political violence across Southeast Asia stepped up in the immediate post-war period, as nationalist and anti-capitalist stirrings grew more aggressive, then as local communist movements matured and the region became a key front in the Cold War. As first the war in Vietnam, then the Cold War more broadly, waned, the nature of external involvement with political violence in the region shifted. External state support for brutal states continued, for instance Chinese assistance to the Burmese junta and American acquiescence in the violations of Indonesia's "New Order" regime and aid to harsh counterinsurgency measures in the Philippines and Thailand. Non-lethal external aid also continued to play a role in such conflicts, complementing or counteracting material support from the same or other actors, though still directed largely at state rather than non-state perpetrators. However, external actors also adopted new roles in reducing political violence (though many would have claimed such objectives all along); key examples include peacemaking and peacekeeping initiatives in Cambodia, East Timor and Aceh. Ideational influences, though – for instance the much-vaunted transmission of Islamist ideas and literature from the Middle East to Southeast Asia – seem tenuous; organic domestic factors appear clearly prevalent, for instance in Aceh and Mindanao, notwithstanding the flow of interpretive frameworks, educational opportunities, resources and inflammatory material. In short, Hamilton-Hart argues for the very real prevalence and impact of a range of external influences on episodes of political violence in Southeast Asia, but also for the deep complexity, inconsistency and contingency of those influences.

Ideological aims and attributes

However distinct these conceptual and structural lenses, they do not tell the full story. A third and final approach explores the place less of repertoires and resources than of ideology and objectives. Ideologically driven aspirants to power, for instance, may seek material support from like-minded comrades abroad; contests or clashes in one corner of the polity may be read with a distinctive gloss in another. Moreover, the specific forms of violence its perpetrators choose carry more than symbolic value; these forms reflect not only the resources and options available, but also these actors' specific aspirations and interpretive frames. Just as non-violent politics is too complex to be boiled down to a list of "root causes", the same is true of violent forms: both causes and consequences are complex, dynamic and varied.

Taking this complexity as a starting point, Vince Boudreau essays a typology of collective political violence in his chapter. Focusing less on the state than on politically oriented movements, he explores the ways in which collective political violence is embedded in a broader context of repression, opportunities and openings, cultural frameworks and potential allies and opponents. In line with other scholars of contentious politics, Boudreau considers violent and non-violent modes as analytically comparable. Importantly, though, while recruitment is key to mobilization in any movement, it is particularly tricky for those adopting violent methods, lest potential supporters be scared off or caught in the crossfire. Bystanders are not only potential recruits, but also potential targets for state or non-state forces to brand as collaborators, outsider "others" or purported traitors and attack. What shape patterns of collective violence, Boudreau suggests, are trade-offs between movement goals of recruiting new members and projecting power, and the spatial distribution of targets for enlistment and attack. At the same time, conventional factors such as distance from decision-makers, regime accessibility and past experience also inform movements' strategic choices. Boudreau proposes – and his evidence largely confirms – that the physical segregation or intermingling of the populations from which a movement recruits and which it attacks helps to determine how compelled movement strategists feel to moderate their methods or at least offer clear explanations for their strikes. He specifies such rigidity in terms of “catness”, or groups’ internal cohesion, and ethnic differentials (how far majority and minority communities diverge in language, culture and belief). Moreover, Boudreau highlights the specific choices, objectives and risks among particular forms of violent struggle. For instance, bombs detonated by someone on the scene and bombs triggered by a timing device are not equally discriminating; where actors deploy these tools (in a marketplace, in an official’s car) matters too. He thus codes violent events across Southeast Asia in terms of whether the technology of violence involved was individual (such as guns or knives) or mass (such as explosives), as well as by targeting strategy: whether the attack was in a segregated or heterogeneous site, whether it targeted members of a particular socio-cultural category or in certain occupational or political roles, or whether the target was either a specific individual or property rather than lives. Boudreau combines data from several large-scale monitoring projects and media keyword searches for an intrinsically comparative, structured, qualitative analysis, intended both to disaggregate the concept of collective political violence and to uncover its broad patterns in Southeast Asia. In actual practice, of course, the distinctions Boudreau lays out are far from tidy, even if the general patterns hold – yet the larger analytical project offers a lever on the diversity and complexity of violent political strategies.

Focusing upon state violence in South Asia, Sahni and Tharu argue that no matter how we define or classify subversive or secessionist groups, or indeed how they classify themselves, the state responds in a similar manner to all of them. The state, it appears, tends to adopt the same approach to all insurgencies: it calls in the military. Faced with a perceived threat to its sovereignty, the state knows only how to respond with force. Only when the military strength of the insurgent group is defeated or considerably weakened does the state begin to negotiate or consider nonviolent approaches. The small number of cases of armed insurgency that ended with negotiated settlements before military defeat – the Mizos, Gorkhas (India) and Chittagong Hill Tracts (Bangladesh) – is testament to this argument. The authors weigh in, too, on variations in the quantum of force used by the state (secessionist ethno-cultural groups face the most violence) and the limits of state violence (of which the formation of Bangladesh in 1971 stands as the most singular example). Finally, in considering the relative importance of the form of government in dealing with violent insurgency, Sahni and Tharu note that while both democratic and non-democratic governments respond with force, all cases of successful negotiated settlements have involved democratic governments. Democratic states, it would seem, may be more likely to “end the cycle of violence”, as they put it.

Conclusion

Taken together, the analyses collected here offer an understanding of political violence as a strategic and consequential technology of modern politics. We have seen that most often the state is the greatest source of political violence in both South Asia and Southeast Asia; nevertheless, it has not been able to maintain or establish a monopoly of legitimate force. Where the roots of political violence are structural, geopolitical and linked to international norms, easy solutions for amelioration are implausible. Where, however, the roots of political violence are tied to local political cultures and moral economies, change is possible and has occurred. In other words, this volume offers an understanding of political violence that helps explain its persistence in certain cases in spite of considerable evidence that the use of force is counterproductive in the long run. Such lessons are germane for state and non-state actors, for promoters and opponents of "wars on terror" and cognate interventions, and for students of states and societies alike. Forms of struggle and resistance based in modes of engagement that eschew political violence do have real power. It is sobering to realize, however, that the value of altering some actors' strategic calculus to favour non-violent means will always come up against the real benefits of a strategy of violence for others. The cumulative histories of political violence in South and Southeast Asia will not be easy to transcend.

Notes

1. What is excluded from this analysis, for reasons of convenience, is collective political action that relates to national defence and anti-colonial resistance. Even this seemingly unproblematic exclusion produces indeterminate conditions. Consider acts of violence against individuals who have been identified as foreign, illegal or undocumented aliens, in a context in which the alien is represented as a threatening and dangerous political subject. Under such conditions, it is sensible to consider this violence against unrecognized strangers as inherently political. The distinction between internal conflict and civil war presents another grey area. This endeavour has been popular of late, if largely analytically fruitless, given its emphasis on using the quantifiable outcome of violence: the rate of killing or the numbers of dead and killed in a certain period of time. Rather than focus on the violence itself, the emphasis turns to the viability of the label. Such an exercise, in our view, marginalizes the condition of violence as a purposive act, as well as failing to recognize it for its effect (in some cases) in structuring the field of the political.
2. What we do not consider political violence here are legally constituted and judicially sanctioned forms of state violence that punish convicted criminals, or varieties of individual self-protection that may involve the application of deadly force in response to threats to self and property. On the boundary of our interests, however, are those forms of state action (and their social reactions) that may deploy violence for ends deemed in

the public interest – for instance the forced relocation of communities for purposes of development (dams, highways, etc.), or the inoculation of populations to prevent the spread of communicable disease. It is impossible to determine the character of the political violence entailed in these liminal situations a priori, without understanding the power relations underlying conceptions of that public interest.

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2

Comparative assassinations: The changing moral economy of political killing in South Asia

Sankaran Krishna

> Every political assassination is a joint communiqué. It is a statement which the assassin and his victim jointly work on and co-author.[1]

Political assassinations are not what they used to be back in the old days in South Asia. On a certain gloss, this chapter may be regarded as a nostalgia piece on the altered character of political assassinations and a lament on the passing of a time when they were symbolic and discursive rather than instrumental and mute.[2] I make this argument primarily by contrasting two political assassinations, that of Mohandas Gandhi by Nathuram Vinayak Godse in January 1948 and that of Rajiv Gandhi by Dhanu in May 1991, although I will in passing deal with some other assassinations as well. To adumbrate my argument at the outset, I suggest that the moral economy within which political assassinations are embedded in South Asia has undergone a profound change. In earlier times, a political assassination was carried out by an individual in the name of a larger cause or principle which was explicitly articulated before, during and especially after the act. There was an emphasis in the rhetoric that justified the killing of a leader on principles that were recognized, if not agreed with, by a politically attendant public. The assassin drew attention to the moral code that s/he was operating out of, and in a fundamental sense the corporeal elimination of the victim was seen as the act that inaugurated an animated debate about the desired direction or destiny of the polity. Such an assassination emerged out of an understanding of politics as ideally the responsible wielding of power in the interests of the

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Political violence in South and Southeast Asia: Critical perspectives, Abraham, Newman and Weiss (eds), United Nations University Press, 2010, ISBN 978-92-808-1190-2

nation or community or the common weal. It occurs because the leader is seen to have betrayed the national interest in some egregious manner and is therefore deserving of a violent death at the hands of a patriot. Such assassinations, in other words, were primarily communicative acts whose main purpose was suasion, with the killing itself seen as both symbolically justified and politically necessary to set the stage for a discursive engagement about the state of the body politic.

In contrast to assassinations such as Mohandas Gandhi's, I argue that today the killing of political leaders in South Asia is embedded in a different moral economy. There seems to be an absence of concern with demos, and the moral principles governing, justifying and explicating the act are either not articulated or lack the clarity that such acts possessed at an earlier time. The figure of the suicide bomber – mute before the act and dead after it – symbolizes the new form of assassination. The corporeal elimination of a particular leader is the primary point of the assassination. This is seen as necessary or useful in the attainment of a political goal. The act is secondarily a deterrent to others who may, like the victim, be inclined to pursue policies that are detrimental to the interests of the group from which the assassin emerges. In other words, the assassination is not a prolepsis to a discursive engagement or conversation about the political and moral world we inhabit. Contemporary assassinations in South Asia wish to close the book on debate rather than inaugurating one, which is why the rhetorical afterlife of the assassin is zero.

I chart this shift in the moral economy of assassinations in South Asia by focusing on the killings of Mohandas Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, acts separated by over four decades of post-colonial politics. I suggest that, in many ways, Mohandas Gandhi's killing was the last of a certain kind of assassination – it was a communicative or discursive act similar to those of the so-called terrorists who killed various colonial officials and administrators in the last decades of British rule over South Asia. The spate of assassinations that has characterized South Asia in more recent decades is embedded in a different moral economy. The motives of the assassins are not explicit, their identities are not fleshed out and there is a veritable surplus of suspects, all of which greatly muddies the discursive terrain of such killings. The aura of the state, especially as reflected in its monopoly over the deployment of legitimate violence, has greatly diminished. The state is caught in a mimetic spiral with various rivals (insurgencies and secessionist movements, intelligence agencies and transnational "terrorist" outfits, to name three), and assassinations are increasingly seen as an outcome of political intrigue and covert operations gone awry. To put it baldly, assassination has moved from a realm where it was a sign of a broken contract between a concerned individual in civil society and the leader, to one where it is seen as a likely outcome in the routine conduct of statecraft. This contrast between the two eras of assassinations allows me, among other things, to meditate on the altered character of South Asian politics in the post-colonial era.

On moral economy

Before examining the two assassinations that serve as my archetypal instances, I should elaborate on what I mean by a moral economy. The term gained popularity after its brilliant deployment by James Scott in his explanation for why peasants riot in Southeast Asia.[3] Drawing on a vast historical literature on peasant rebellion, but especially the works of Karl Polanyi and E. P. Thompson,[4] Scott argued that peasants rose violently against landlords when they felt a certain implicit moral code that guaranteed at least the physical survival of all members of a community, or a right to subsistence, was increasingly transgressed under the changes wrought by modernity. The alienation of communal lands into private property, the collapse of a previous world of *noblesse oblige*, monetization and commodification, the colonization of Southeast Asia and its insertion into a world economy as a periphery, and a host of other changes had rent the fabric of community.

Scott uses the term "moral economy" to refer to the web of relationships that knit a society together, embedding its members in exchanges marked by reciprocity and obligations to each other, even as it was also characterized by great inequality. Morality is not some transcendent ethic but is rather emergent from and a sediment of enduring and slowly changing ideas of obligations and responsibilities that govern the interactions between different groups and classes within society, especially those between elites and subalterns. In other words, morality is socially structured and reproduced, temporally contingent and a product of a transactional economy that constitutes people from different class locations into a form of community.

I bend Scott's notion of a moral economy in the direction of seeing how and why the meaning of assassinations has changed in South Asia, the new relations that connect leaders and the people, and what these tell us about the nature of post-colonial politics in our time. I argue that there has occurred a fundamental rupture in the meaning of political leadership, and in the bonds that cohere state and people in post-colonial South Asia. Briefly, the significance attached to the killing of political leaders has changed in fundamental ways here. An assassination has come to be regarded as one possible outcome in a repertoire of strategies and moves available to the various players involved: it has lost its aura, in other words.

The idea of a moral economy also allows me to de-moralize[5] the discussion of assassinations. I am less interested in the ethical propriety of the actions of individuals such as Godse or Dhanu, or in making the case that assassinations in an earlier period were “more moral” than those in recent times. Rather, my focus shifts to placing each of these assassinations within the socio-political universe from which it emerged, and assessing how the implicit pacts that unite the leaders and masses have changed over time. Viewed from this perspective, the two assassinations that anchor this chapter reflect two different moral economies, or two different sets of expectations regarding relations between rulers and the ruled. The idea of a moral economy thus becomes a critical means by which I can use assassinations as a bellwether to chart the altered character of South Asian politics in our times.

Gandhi, Godse and the last moral assassination

Mohandas Gandhi, widely described as the father of the nation, was killed at 5 pm on 30 January 1948, as he walked towards a prayer meeting at Birla House in New Delhi. His assassin, Nathuram Godse, a 37-year-old Chiptavan Brahmin from Pune, Maharahstra, walked right up to him, bowed deeply and shot four bullets at point-blank range.[6] Godse immediately dropped the gun, raised his hands above his head and called for the police. He made no attempt to escape then or later. Gandhi died about 20 minutes after the shooting. Witnesses claimed that his last words as he collapsed to the ground were “Hey Ram.”

The trial of Godse for Gandhi’s murder combined the events of 30 January with an unsuccessful attempt on Gandhi’s life by Godse and his accomplices 10 days earlier, also in Delhi. A group of 12 men, including Godse, were charged with conspiracy to kill Gandhi through the bomb blast of 20 January and the successful attempt on 30 January. Godse was the only one of the 12 charged with murder. Among the 11 co-accused was Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, who is today regarded as the intellectual founder of the idea of “Hindutva”.

Godse’s trial proceeded in two phases. The first began on 27 May 1948, at a special court in the Red Fort in Delhi. Built by the Emperor Shah Jahan in the seventeenth century, the Red Fort is arguably the centre stage of India’s political theatre. Every Independence Day (15 August) Indian prime ministers have addressed the nation from here. It is worth recalling that only two trials had taken place at this venue prior to that of Godse et al.: that of the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, by the British for the revolt of 1857, and the courts martial of three officers of the Indian National Army (led by Subhas Chandra Bose) in 1945, who were charged with treason against the British during the Second World War.

Godse, while pleading guilty to the charge of murdering Gandhi, conducted his own defence. The verdict of the Red Fort trial was announced on 10 February 1949: Godse was sentenced to death by hanging, as was his closest accomplice, Narayan Apte. Savarkar was acquitted. The seven accomplices who were sentenced to prison terms at the Red Fort trial submitted appeals; these were heard at a second trial, held at the Simla High Court in May and June 1949. Two more of the accused were acquitted at this trial. Godse did not appeal his conviction in Gandhi's murder at this second trial, though he did appeal the charge of conspiracy. On 22 June 1949 the court in Simla reconfirmed the death sentences of Godse and Apte, and they were hanged at Ambala jail on a Tuesday morning, at 8 am on 15 November 1949.

The high point of Godse's defence at the Red Fort trial was his reading of a written statement on 8–9 November 1948, explaining why he killed Gandhi. The prosecution objected to this on the grounds that it would inevitably pertain to matters other than the killing of Gandhi. The justices overruled this objection and allowed him to proceed. Both in the choice of venue for the trial and in permitting Godse to read out his statement, one discerns the willingness of the state (at least some parts of it) to stage a profound morality play that befitted the status of Gandhi as a "Mahatma" and father of the nation.

The text of Godse's courtroom statement was banned in India for many years under a law inherited from the colonial period which was revoked only in the 1960s. The first English-language publication of Godse's statement appeared in November 1977 in a book published by his brother, Gopal Godse. According to Gopal, when Nathuram finished reading his statement and the justices had returned to their chambers:

> the police pounced on the correspondents and snatched their notebooks. They did not stop at that. They tore down the notebooks into pieces and warned the pressmen of severe consequences if they published the true account of Nathuram's speech. The press was forced to toe [*sic*] the Government's instructions and accordingly disjointed and distorted reports were carried by newspapers.[7]

In his statement, Godse outlined his differences with Gandhi and the reasons for killing him. The latter's emphasis on *ahimsa* or non-violence emasculated Hindus and left them impotent in their dealings with Muslims. After detailing his political and ethical differences with Gandhi's philosophy, which he saw as reaching a suicidal culmination in the partition of India's sacred geography, Godse argued that the tipping point for him was Gandhi's decision in early 1948 to fast for the cause of Hindu-

Muslim amity. Godse saw this as an effort on Gandhi's part to pressure the already thoroughly compromised Nehru regime to cede to Pakistan funds that were due to it as per agreements on the transfer of power. In succeeding sections of the statement, Godse constitutes himself as rational, well read and historically minded. He displays a close reading of Gandhi's writings and is knowledgeable about his beliefs and principles. The decision to kill Gandhi emerges from an intimate and agonistic ratiocination with the mental world and political actions of one's adversary.

Godse's soliloquy constructs a self that is autonomous – not a follower but a person capable of independent thought and evaluation of his nation's well-being. He is clearly frustrated at the assumption that he must have been a tool of people like Savarkar with established credentials as thinkers and intellectuals. Godse talks of a process that:

> painfully opened my eyes about this time to the fact that Veer Savarkar and other old leaders of the Mahasabha could no longer be relied upon by me and the Hindu youths of my persuasion to guide or even to appreciate the fighting programme with which we aimed to counteract Gandhiji's activities inside and the Muslim League outside. I would not have referred to the above details . . . but for the learned prosecutor's opening speech in which he painted me as a mere tool in the hands of Veer Savarkar. This statement I felt to be a deliberate insult to my independence of judgment and action.[8]

Godse seeks to step outside the by-now-irrelevant shadow of the likes of Savarkar, and this effort would be completed by an act that did not have their sanction, namely Gandhi's killing.[9]

Godse goes on to rebut earlier evidence in the trial that showed Savarkar had blessed Godse and wished him success in his attempt on Gandhi: "I was neither so superstitious as to crave such blessings, nor so childish as to believe in such fortune-telling."[10] He is constructing here a self that is rational (not superstitious), adult (not childish) and independent in judgement and action (not someone else's tool). These constitute him as a sentient individual who knew what he was doing and why. His rhetoric fashions a self that makes him worthy of the crime he has committed. His life hitherto had been unexceptional in every sense, and the courtroom was his place to emerge as an equal adversary of Gandhi. To put it differently, this was Godse's moment to emerge as fully alive in order that he could be hung until dead.

Godse scrupulously excludes personal reasons ("there was no enmity between Gandhiji and myself on any personal grounds", as he observed at one point[11]), and foregrounds his love for his nation and his pain at its vivisection as the primary reasons for his actions. Further, he suggests that the import of his actions was not for an earthly court to decide –

there was a transcendent morality to them that left him with a clear conscience:

> There now remains hardly anything for me to say. If devotion to one's country amount to a sin, I admit I have committed that sin. If it is meritorious, I humbly claim the merit thereof. I fully and confidently believe that if there be any other court of justice beyond the one founded by the mortals, my act will not be taken as unjust. If after death there be no such place to reach or go, there is nothing to be said. I have resorted to the action that I did purely for the benefit of humanity . . . There was no legal machinery by which such an offender could be brought to book and it was therefore that I resorted to the firing of shots at Gandhiji as that was the only thing for me to do.[12]

Godse here argues that the status of Gandhi as "Mahatma" – an extralegal and supra-political entity – had rendered him immune to the usual legal or political sanctions. You could neither defeat the man in an election nor take him to court for his actions, and yet he continued to influence the course of the nation's politics profoundly. Gandhi was, at all times but especially then, a strange political being. He had not been elected to any position within the Congress Party (let alone government) for some years. Yet, despite a growing disillusion with his ideas and beliefs on the part of people like Nehru and Patel, he still commanded their attention and they came to him repeatedly for advice and counsel. During the violence of partition he had literally single-handedly allayed tensions in the eastern part of the country and in Delhi (with Mountbatten calling him a one-man boundary force), while the Punjab went up in flames. Godse argues that killing Gandhi was the only way to limit his influence as the usual forms of political audit – elections or the courts – were not relevant in this case. In a paradoxical sense, then, Gandhi's very status as being beyond politics necessitated a supra-political response by his adversary in the form of an assassination.

Godse ended his statement with a reminder to the present audience, and those in times to come, that this was an act of morality and not one of politics or crime:

> It is a fact that in the presence of a crowd numbering 300 to 400 people I did fire shots at Gandhiji in open daylight. I did not make any attempt to run away; in fact I never entertained any idea of running away. I did not try to shoot myself. It was never my intention to do so, for, it was my ardent desire to give vent to my thoughts in an open Court. My confidence about the moral side of my action has not been shaken even by the criticism levelled against it on all sides. I have no doubt honest writers of history will weigh my act and find the true value thereof on some day in the future.[13]

It is significant that Godse returns to the fact that there was no question of his escaping or killing himself after the deed. The whole point of the assassination for him was that it began with the killing of Gandhi – it did not end with it. The event that preceded the soliloquy, the physical act of killing Gandhi, was necessary to lend his statement the grandeur and gravitas that he wanted for it. To my mind, it is this communicative or discursive priority that marks the death of Mohandas Gandhi as encapsulating a certain moral economy that prevailed at that time.

In suppressing the circulation of the soliloquy, then, the government of India had shown that it fully appreciated the point of Godse's act. The best punishment for him would be not the gallows (to which he willingly went – indeed, his fear was that the *ahimsa*-besotted Gandhians would deny him martyrdom by reducing his death sentence to life imprisonment) but rather the muzzling of his message. But Godse seems to have had a more acute sense of history on this matter, for he was confident that his time would come "some day in the future". For those privileged to be in the courtroom on those days, the impact was palpable. Justice Khosla observed in his now famous pronouncement that had it been left to the audience in the court that day, Godse would have been declared "not guilty" by an overwhelming majority.

At one level, Godse's assassination of Gandhi had much to do with his own desire to lend a purpose or meaning to an unremarkable life. However, it is also clear from his statement that Godse wished to inaugurate a dialogue on what he considered to be the paramount questions of his time: the role of morality in politics (he judged India, and Gandhi in particular, to be inadequate in the realm of *realpolitik*), the essence of India (which he deemed to be Hindu, not secular), the recovery of India's sacred geography (through the reversal of partition) and the ways in which the new nation should deal with the issue of "minorities". Ironically, the very act of Gandhi's assassination – the shock and worldwide outrage that it produced – ensured that it would be decades before a dispassionate debate about such issues would be possible. As with so many other ventures in his life, Godse failed yet again in this attempt to situate the assassination as a stage for a discussion about the nation and the common weal. The sense of moral outrage that someone so saintly could be gunned down reverberated throughout India and the world at large. In this, as with so many other matters political, Gandhi's intuition for the jugular proved to be uncanny. The orchestration of his own violent death (more on this in the conclusion of this chapter) contributed a great deal to the longevity of his message within India and the rest of the world. To put it in Nandy's insightful terms:

> If Gandhi in his depression connived at it [his assassination], he also perhaps felt – being the shrewd, practical idealist he was – that he had become somewhat of an anachronism in post-partition, independent India; and in violent death he might be more relevant to the living than he could be in life. As not a few have sensed, like Socrates and Christ before him, Gandhi knew how to use man's sense of guilt creatively.[14]

To return to the theme of a moral economy, Gandhi's death was seen in India as proof that the nation still had a long way to go before it could emulate his ideals or live up to his expectations. His assassination was seen as a sign that we were yet to prove ourselves worthy of having had such a person in our midst. The debt the nation owed Gandhi had increased exponentially now that he had sacrificed his life for it – and any assessment of the state of post-colonial India would have to include its distance from or proximity to his professed ideals. The assassination, in other words, tied the departed leader and the nation closer than ever before.

Post-colonial assassinations as disenchanted killing

On 27 December 2007 Benazir Bhutto, former prime minister of Pakistan, was killed as she left an election rally at Liaqat Bagh in Rawalpindi, Pakistan.[15] She was 54 years old and had returned to Pakistan, after a decade in exile, on 18 October 2007. Soon after, William Dalrymple wrote an op-ed piece in the *New York Times* titled "Bhutto's Deadly Legacy" in which he tied Bhutto's assassination to her own actions, specifically Islamist militant groups that she had "allowed to flourish" during her two terms as prime minister in the late 1980s and early 1990s. He noted:

> It was under Ms Bhutto's watch that the Pakistani intelligence agency, Inter-Services Intelligence, first installed the Taliban in Afghanistan. It was also at that time that hundreds of young Islamic militants were recruited from the madrassas to do the agency's dirty work in Indian Kashmir. It seems that, like some terrorist equivalent of Frankenstein's monster, the extremists turned on both the person and the state that had helped bring them into being.[16]

Revealing an unusually hard-eyed perspective, especially as it was not even a week since the murder, Dalrymple went on to note that

> contrary to the commentary we've seen in the last week, she was not comparable to Myanmar's Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Ms Bhutto's governments were widely criticized by Amnesty International and other groups for their use of

> death squads and her terrible record on deaths in police custody, abductions and torture. As for her democratic bona fides, she had no qualms about banning rallies by opposing political parties while in power. Within her own party, she declared herself president for life and controlled all decisions. She rejected her brother Murtaza's bid to challenge her for its leadership and when he persisted, he was shot dead in highly suspicious circumstances during a police ambush outside the Bhutto family home ... obituaries painting her [Benazir] as dying to save democracy distort history. Instead, she was a natural autocrat who did little for human rights, a calculating politician who was complicit in Pakistan's becoming the region's principal jihad paymaster while she also ramped up an insurgency in Kashmir that has brought two nuclear powers to the brink of war.[17]

Dalrymple's piece is exemplary of the new moral economy that governs the domain of contemporary assassinations in South Asia: far from being a tragic or regrettable episode, it is seen as a consequence of the leader's own past actions, and even as in some ways a befitting end to an amoral and instrumental conduct of politics. Dalrymple here zeroes in on something that has characterized the analysis of assassinations in South Asia going back at least to Mrs Gandhi in October 1984: the notion that the killing of the leader was an outcome of encouragement and support provided to militants, insurgents, freedom fighters, terrorists or various other non-statist organizations in the conduct of statecraft. Such groups were supported by leaders to destabilize either state-level regimes within the country or neighbouring regimes within the region. Such use of what one might term ethnic militancy in the conduct of domestic and foreign policy has become the norm in post-colonial South Asia, and assassinations have come to be regarded as a likely outcome of such politics.[18] I elaborate on this theme in the next few paragraphs by focusing on the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi.

At about 10.20 pm on 21 May 1991, former Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi was killed in a bomb blast when he was about to address an election rally in the small town of Sriperumbudur, about 40 kilometres outside Madras. The suicide bomber responsible was a young Sri Lankan Tamil woman named Thenmozhi Rajaratnam, also called Dhanu. In the following weeks evidence accumulated to indicate that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was behind the assassination. A camera found at the bomb site contained a sequence of pictures showing Dhanu waiting to garland Rajiv Gandhi, approaching him in a queue with others, waiting behind a young schoolgirl as she recited a poem for Rajiv Gandhi, then a photograph of Dhanu bending as if to touch Rajiv Gandhi's feet, followed by a final photograph of an explosive blast. The photographer was killed, but the fortuitous recovery of the intact camera[19] helped the Indian police to break the case.

To date, no group or party has claimed responsibility for the assassination, and the LTTE has consistently denied any responsibility. The inquiry by a special investigative team (SIT) of the Indian Central Bureau of Intelligence (CBI) under D. R. Karthikeyan documented evidence to show that the bombing was the work of the LTTE, and court verdicts have upheld the finding. The SIT showed Dhanu and her accomplices were members of that organization, and that they had been in communication with their leadership in Jaffna both before and after the assassination.

We do not know why Dhanu assassinated Rajiv Gandhi. She did not leave a suicide note explicating her motives, nor was she alive after the act to enlighten us about them. While there are celebrations of various martyrs by the LTTE on the birthday of its leader, V. Prabhakaran, there is no information on Dhanu at its website. Given that it does not accept responsibility for the assassination in the first place, this is not surprising. Dhanu may well be celebrated and revered as a martyr within the LTTE's political universe, but that is one which is disconnected from a larger Sri Lankan Tamil public and is perhaps confined to those within the militant group and its cadres. In one of the few academic essays touching on her, Darini Rajasingham-Senanayake talks of an interview with Dhanu conducted some time in 1987. She describes her as the commander of the women's wing of the LTTE and, at that time, the highest-ranking woman officer in the organization and a "front-line fighter with many battle honours". Rajasingham-Senanayake observes that Dhanu was:

> a highly intelligent and articulate woman [who] listed an account of violence committed by the state and the Sri Lankan military against her community. She insisted that she was fighting for the honour and liberation of her people. I had gone to interview her regarding the position of women in the LTTE. She told me that women's liberation was necessary but could only be achieved after the war for Eelam . . . was won. The woman problem would detract from focusing on the cause and could hence only be sorted out later . . . Dhanu was a modern political agent fighting for a nation state and the right of her community's self-determination.[20]

This brief snippet tells us that, like Godse, she was a nationalist and had a principled set of reasons for doing what she did. However, given the circumstances of the assassination, there remains a discursive void that that contrasts with the volubility of Mohandas Gandhi's assassination. As we shall soon see, this void is filled with political rhetoric of a different sort, one that partakes of a different moral economy altogether.

It is by now well documented that the Indian government, through its intelligence agency Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), trained and assisted Tamil militants in Sri Lanka, including cadres of the LTTE, in the period from roughly 1981/1982 to at least mid-1987. This policy of aiding

Sri Lankan Tamil militants began during Mrs Gandhi's second term as India's prime minister (1980 to October 1984) and carried on once Rajiv Gandhi assumed the premiership in November 1984. Even after the induction of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) into Sri Lanka in August 1987, and after a hot war between the IPKF and the LTTE commenced in October that year, India continued to arm and train Tamil militants from other rival groups as a counter to the LTTE. Throughout this period, the India central government wished to keep its lines of communication with Sri Lankan Tamil groups open, and did so through the mediation of the two regional parties that have dominated Tamil Nadu's state politics in recent decades: the All-India Anna DMK and the DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam). While the AIADMK served this purpose from 1980 to 1987 (at the end of which its leader M. G. Ramachandran died), the DMK did so in the last years of that decade. Training for such militants had been imparted in different parts of India, and they constituted a critical part of India's "twin-track" policy towards the Sri Lankan regime as it sought to pressure the latter to fall in line with Indian interests in the region and settle its ethnic question by constitutional means. Though the initial exposés regarding the training of Sri Lankan Tamil militants appeared as early as 1983 in the press, they were denied by the Indian government all through the 1980s and early 1990s.

Such denial was standard practice until, in the aftermath of Rajiv's assassination, various national leaders, police officers, bureaucrats and regional politicians found it necessary to divulge the details of the training and assistance in order either to escape responsibility or blame others for his death. Details about the training were disclosed to the SIT and the Jain Commission that was constituted to look into certain aspects of the assassination, and were outlined in parliament, in the popular media and in a variety of other contexts. It can be fairly surmised that the LTTE feared that a return of Rajiv Gandhi to the premiership after the parliamentary elections of May/June 1991 could complicate its quest for a sovereign Tamil nation. In a meeting with two LTTE intermediaries in March 1991, Gandhi is said to have indicated that his support for the Sri Lankan Tamil cause did not go as far as the creation of a separate nation-state of Eelam, and would be within the parameters outlined by the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement signed in July 1987. This agreement provided for a considerable degree of federalism and provincial autonomy, but stopped well short of the LTTE's aspirations for a sovereign nation-state. We do not know if this was the trigger that led to Rajiv's assassination. What we do know is that the LTTE was a crucial tool in Indian foreign policy towards Sri Lanka, and it assassinated an Indian prime minister. It was a clear instance of what today is routinely described as "blow-back" – that is, militant or insurgent outfits supported by a particular state turning their guns on their erstwhile sponsors as their interests diverge at a later point in time.[21]

The post-assassination milieu is marked by different political parties and factions trying to pin the blame on others and disown their responsibility. For example, the leak of the Jain Commission's final report on the assassination of Rajiv occasioned the collapse of the Gujral regime on the grounds that its ally, the DMK, was named in the report for allowing Sri Lankan Tamil militants a free rein in the state of Tamil Nadu in the two years prior to his assassination. In response, a DMK MP and cabinet minister, Murasoli Maran, detailed the extent of Indian government support for Sri Lankan Tamil militant groups all through the 1980s, while his party had ruled the state for just over two years (January 1988 to March 1991). He divulged that even during the war between the LTTE and the IPKF in northeastern Sri Lanka (October 1987 to March 1990), the central government under Rajiv Gandhi had asked the DMK to keep its lines of communications with the LTTE open and used it as a mediator with that organization. At one point in the debate, Maran produced a photograph showing Dhanu being trained in the use of armaments near Dindigul in Tamil Nadu, allegedly by the Indian intelligence agency RAW some time in 1986.[22]

The SIT's investigation, and the court cases that followed it, were in camera and received minimal press and media coverage. Unlike the Mohandas Gandhi assassination trial, which was held in an open court, there was a notable deficit of drama or spectacle in the proceedings. With the main assassin having been killed, and the distant orchestrators of the act absconding, the proceedings could only be technical and narrow. The real "action", as it were, happened under the auspices of the two judicial commissions of inquiry set up to probe other aspects of the assassination – the Verma Commission to inquire into why security had collapsed that evening, allowing the assassin to gain such close access to Rajiv Gandhi, and the Jain Commission which was tasked with investigating if there was a wider conspiracy behind the assassination.[23] There are a number of points about the functioning of such commissions that make them fascinating theatres of the altered moral economy of assassinations in South Asia.

Firstly, such commissions are appointed by the ruling party in government. The Verma Commission was appointed by the caretaker regime of Chandrasekhar immediately after the assassination, and the Jain Commission was appointed by the Narasimha Rao regime that took over government after the elections of May/June 1991. Since there was an ongoing criminal investigation by the SIT, the brief of these two independent judicial commissions became a rather complicated matter. They could not consider evidence or query individuals directly under the purview of the

SIT, as it would interfere with the latter's investigations. There were fears that any findings of these judicial commissions that were publicized would prejudice the prospects for a fair criminal trial of the accused. There were turf battles regarding witnesses, governmental records and other matters. The central government, and especially the intelligence agencies (the CBI and RAW) and the External Affairs Ministry, were unwilling to release requested documents, files and reports as they would reveal details about the state's security apparatus and classified information. For the decade that followed, the SIT and the Jain Commission were frequently at loggerheads with each other and with the government. Crucially, from the very outset, given their uncertain legal status and their inability to do anything beyond recommend a further criminal inquiry into any findings they may arrive at, these judicial commissions became political theatres in which all manner of allegations may be made. They become alternative sites for the morality play that Godse's trial had produced – but with none of its drama or credibility.

Going back at least to the Thakkar Commission which investigated the assassination of Mrs Gandhi in October 1984, such judicial commissions have become a site for the continuation of intra-party rivalries and inter-party politics. The proceedings of the Jain Commission became a means by which different factions within the Congress Party sought to lay the blame for the assassination on their rivals. It was also the place where the Congress Party tried to connect it to the DMK regime of Karunanidhi. As we have already seen, the swift and predictable response from the DMK was to disclose chapter and verse about the extraordinarily close links between the Congress and its ally the AIADMK and the Tamil militant groups, including the LTTE, all the way back to the early 1980s.

Secondly, the Jain Commission (like the Thakkar Commission mentioned above) seemed to strain against the facts to establish the role of foreign governments and international conspirators in the assassination. There was a desire to uncover far-reaching conspiracies involving the intelligence agencies of the United States, Israel, Pakistan or China, international arms dealers and various others as behind the assassins. It is impossible to assess the veracity of such claims. These judicial commissions have neither the resources nor the legal standing to investigate them. There is, however, an interesting element of post-colonial narcissism in this refusal to accept the fact that the assassination may have been provincial rather than worldly in its impetus and impact.

Finally, securing the moral status of the fallen leader becomes a rather difficult task given this moral economy. State secrets, covert operations, amoral dealings with militant outfits in neighbouring countries that have caused many civilian deaths and terrorist bombings, extremist outfits spinning out of the control of state leaders – all these do not add up to a heroic narrative of political leadership culminating in martyrdom. The assassinations of Mrs Gandhi in 1984, Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 and Benazir Bhutto in 2007 are only three in a spate of assassinations of political leaders in South Asia that resulted, at least in part, on account of relations with militant or insurgent outfits. Despite efforts to endow these deaths with the aura of self-sacrifice and ennobling motives, they seem more explicable as a consequence of amoral *realpolitik*.

The moral economy of assassinations in South Asia has changed palpably – there is, if you will, a disenchanted air about recent assassinations. The absence of a dialogue over opposed principles or national destinies, the utilitarian and instrumentally rational character of the elimination of the leaders and the equally expedient use of the death of the leader by parties, factions, successors and others for their own ends all combine to create a space that is bereft of the symbolism that enchants the political realm. Max Weber's pessimistic prognosis about life in a rational, secular, bureaucratized world can be extended to the domain of political assassinations as well. They too occupy a de-moralized space, one in which neither assassin nor victim can claim the ethical high ground.

Conclusion: A surplus of suicides?

Mohandas Gandhi, in his last days, had become obsessed with the idea of a violent death. He was convinced that the only way his message would endure and his life would be rendered meaningful was if he were either to die at the hands of an assassin, and a Hindu at that, or because of a self-inflicted act such as a fast or a refusal to take his medicines. Just hours prior to his death, he spoke to Manu, his teenaged assistant:

> If I die of a lingering illness . . . it will be your duty to proclaim to the world, even at the risk of making people angry with you, that I was not the man of God that I claimed to be. If you do that, it will give my spirit peace. Note down this too, that if someone were to end my life by putting a bullet through me – as someone tried to do with a bomb the other day – I met his bullet without a groan, and breathed my last taking God's name, then alone would I have made good my claim.[24]

Gandhi became deliberately reckless about his security at prayer meetings, and refused Sardar Patel's orders to expand the number of police personnel at his meetings. Ironically enough, the apostle of non-violence had come to realize in his last hours that the meaning of his political and ethical life might critically depend on how he died. And in this, violence, and the equanimity with which he countenanced it, became central for the longevity of his message. Such an acknowledgement of the centrality of violence to his message of non-violence is a curious paradox – one that seems to have escaped any attention in scholarship on Gandhi.

There is enough to suggest here that Gandhi's assassination was in many ways a suicide. There was a wilful neglect of personal security, and an expressed desire to die a violent death at the hands of an assassin. More distantly, it was presaged by the many fasts that Gandhi undertook in the final months of his life. These have invariably been interpreted either as soul-force seeking to change the world through personal pain (in a curious admixture of Christianity and lessons learned from his own mother), or the creative reinterpretation of the moral structures underlying British law by engaging in a process of *reductio ad absurdum* of that very legal process. None of these interpretations is necessarily invalid, but I submit they are perhaps incomplete. From my point of view, those multiple fasts undertaken by Gandhi can be seen as rehearsals for his eventual suicide. Gandhi was an astute enough political player to sense that if fate would not will him an executioner, he might have to provide one himself. In the end, Gandhi wanted to die either at the hands of an assassin or by not coming out alive from a fast. Either way, though others might find important distinctions between those two modes of death, what unites them is they are both acts of suicide.

I have said enough in the above to suggest that Godse too was a suicide. An energetic but ultimately pointless life required an act to render it meaningful – and the act of killing Gandhi provided the means to accomplish that. Godse was fully aware that in killing Gandhi he would be virtually ensuring his own death. In fact, his insistence on receiving the death penalty confirms the death-wish that animated his actions. Paradoxically, the taking of Gandhi's life was the only method he could think of that would ensure his own longevity, albeit a post-corporeal longevity. Suicide was, weirdly enough, the method by which Godse, like Gandhi, sought to have an afterlife within India's public memory and culture. He had to be hung until dead in order that he may emerge fully alive.

It is not difficult to establish the suicidal aspects of Mrs Gandhi's death. There is the fact that the Sikh bodyguards who killed her were reinstated in close proximity to her on her own insistence. Despite the counsel of her closest advisers as well as that of the heads of intelligence and security, Mrs Gandhi's wishes in this regard prevailed. Her speech on the evening before her death at an election rally eerily anticipated her own death.[25] One could argue that Mrs Gandhi was a spent political and personal force after the death of her younger son, Sanjay Gandhi, in an air accident in May 1980. Her return to power through the ballot box in the elections of January 1980 represented both the apogee of her political career and the beginning of its decline. By October 1984 she had done enough to ensure that political succession stayed within the family. There was little else to do but orchestrate a sufficiently dramatic death – one that would show her to be above ethnic nationalism but yet needing it to secure her nationalist credentials. Dying at the hands of her Sikh bodyguards would also atone for the grievous assault on the Sikhs' holiest shrine, the Golden Temple at Amritsar, conducted at her behest. What better way to die than at the hands of men who were her protectors, and whom she had trusted with her own life? Given the nature of Mrs Gandhi's entire political career – that is, using ethnicity both to confound and to produce the nation – her suicide was orchestrated to perfection. Her life would have to end by showing the dangers of ethnicity and its simultaneously vital role in the production of the nation which had to gird itself eternally against the seductions of ethnicity. The pogrom against the Sikhs that followed, especially in Delhi, demonstrated the horrific dangers of the game that she had played all her life and into her death as well.

Rajiv Gandhi's handlers never tired of telling everyone how difficult a person he was to protect. He would often take the wheel of his prime ministerial automobile and speed ahead of the surrounding entourage of cars and motorcycles, driving at break-neck speed. A senior police officer told me that he would literally push aside policemen who made a barricade around him and plunge into the adoring crowds at election rallies.[26] On that night in Sriperumbudur, some newspapers as well as inquiry commissions reported that on observing Dhanu standing behind the barricade with a garland in her hand, he actually beckoned her to break the barricade and approach him. In a longer time frame, Rajiv's was a suicide in the sense that his was a death foretold and one that he did nothing to deflect. Mrs Gandhi's personal secretary, P. C. Alexander, recalls in his memoir an incident that occurred at the AIIMS hospital in Delhi in October 1984 even as Mrs Gandhi's bullet-ridden body lay dead on the operating table there. Alexander happened to walk in on a tense scene between a tearful Sonia Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi. It was clear to Alexander that Sonia was telling Rajiv what was obvious to everyone: if he chose to accept the premiership that was on offer upon his mother's death, his own violent death was only a matter of time. She was pleading with her husband not to take up the premiership as Alexander gently let himself out of the room.[27] Yet Rajiv Gandhi was no longer in a position to accede to his wife's request and walk away from the premiership. The next seven years were basically an extended apprenticeship in impending widowhood for Sonia Gandhi.

As Benazir Bhutto was readying to return to Pakistan in October 2007, many wondered how long she would last. The motorcade that followed her landing in Pakistan was blasted by a suicide bomber: 140 people were killed and she herself narrowly escaped. In the weeks that followed she criticized the Musharraf government for providing her with inadequate security, and observed that in the event that she was killed by an assassin, Musharraf ought to be held responsible for his laxity. With so many indications that a violent death was impending, Benazir Bhutto still chose to return to Pakistan. If not a suicide, one can at least aver that she had an implacable death-wish by this point in her life.

And finally Dhanu: she is the only one routinely spoken of as a suicide. She triggered the bomb that took her own life along with that of Rajiv Gandhi and 16 others. What little we do know about her tells us that she was a leader, committed to a nation for her people, and a warrior. Hers was the most conventional of suicides in the degree of intentionality that accompanied it. Yet if one steps beyond this narrow obsession with intentionality, Mohandas Gandhi, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto were all suicides too, as was Nathuram Godse. I offer this as a plausible conclusion to a chapter on the disenchanted nature of political killing in our time. I fear, however, that I am vainly trying to re-enchant a domain of politics that is possibly beyond redemption.

Notes

1. Nandy, Ashis (1980) *At the Edge of Psychology: Essays in Politics and Culture*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 70. While I have chosen this epigraph primarily on account of its appositeness for what follows; it is also a way of expressing my thanks to Ashis Nandy for all that I have learned from his work over the years.
2. By qualifying assassinations with the word "political" I am excluding from the focus of this chapter the murder of politicians or celebrities done in order to gain notoriety (as was the case with the attempt on US President Reagan in his first term in office) or the acts of deranged individuals (as was the case in John Lennon's killing).
3. Scott, James (1976) *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
4. Specifically, Polanyi, Karl (1957) *The Great Transformation*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press; Thompson, E. P. (1971) "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century", *Past and Present* 50, February; Thompson, E. P. (1966) *The Making of the English Working Class*. New York: Vintage.
5. For a brilliant series of essays on the purchase offered by a refusal to drop a moral anchor and instead view politics as an endless effort to corral the meaning of morality itself, see Bennett, Jane and Michael Shapiro (eds) (2002) *The Politics of Moralizing*. New York: Routledge.
6. The significance of the caste and regional qualifiers – Chitpavan Brahmin, Pune, Maharashtra – is quite profound but I cannot elaborate here. Interested readers may consult Nandy, note 1 above, to get a sense of them. In this essay Nandy writes that Gandhi was shot four times, but in Tushar Gandhi's recent book he reports that he was shot thrice. Gandhi, Tushar (2007) *Let's Kill Gandhi: A Chronicle of His Last Days, the Conspiracy, Murder, Investigation, and Trial*. New Delhi: Rupa and Co., p. 129.

7. Godse, Nathuram (1989) *May It Please Your Honour*. Pune: Vitasta Prakashan, pp. 25–26.
8. Ibid, p. 54.
9. It is quite possible that during the trial Godse exaggerated his growing differences and impatience with Savarkar in order to ensure that the latter would not be imprisoned for his role in Gandhi's murder. Godse showed such concern for all his co-conspirators and tried to take on himself as much of the blame as possible. Nandy, note 1 above, makes clear that filial piety was a strong element in his make-up, and displacing such devotion on to a father-figure like Savarkar seems very plausible.
10. Godse, note 7 above, p. 61.
11. Ibid, p. 144.
12. Ibid, pp. 155, 157.
13. Ibid, pp. 160–161.
14. Nandy, note 1 above, p. 93.
15. Liaqat Bagh was named after Pakistan's first prime minister, Liaqat Ali Khan, who was, ironically, assassinated at that very park on 16 October 1951.
16. Dalrymple, William (2008) "Bhutto's Deadly Legacy", *New York Times*, 4 January.
17. Ibid. There are some pro forma complimentary phrases in Dalrymple's assessment of Benazir Bhutto that I have excised in order to keep the quote from getting too lengthy. They do not in any way mitigate his caustic assessment of her role in setting the conditions for her own killing.
18. For a detailed analysis of the way in which "ethnicity" constitutes both the adversarial principle and the possibility condition for the production of "nation", and the ways in which this dyad of ethnicity/nation has culminated in a spate of assassinations in India and Sri Lanka, see Krishna, Sankaran (1999) *Postcolonial Insecurities: India, Sri Lanka and the Question of Eelam*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
19. The camera was recovered by the Indian Police Service officer who was in charge of security that night, R. K. Raghavan. He was blinded in one eye by the flash of the bomb and recovered full sight only months later. He cordoned off the assassination area until a thorough search could be made, and it was then that the camera was recovered. Raghavan was beaten up twice that night by Congress Party hoodlums, ostensibly in retaliation for the death of their leader. Author's interview with R. K. Raghavan, 24 May 1993, Madras, India.
20. Rajasingham-Senanayake, Darini (2004) "Between Reality and Representation: Women's Agency in War and Post-conflict Sri Lanka", *Cultural Dynamics* 16(2/3), pp. 153–154.
21. These last two paragraphs are a highly condensed version of an argument I have developed at length in *Postcolonial Insecurities*, note 18 above.
22. See http://parliamentofindia.nic.in/lsdeb/ls12/ses2/0405089817.htm. In a recent book on Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, the director of the CBI, Vijay Karan, recollects meeting the Tamil Nadu chief minister, Jayalalithaa Jayaraman, soon after the event. He had barely finished briefing her on the state of the investigation when her first question to him was: "When are you going to arrest Karunanidhi?" Karan, Vijay (1998) "Foreword", in Rajeev Sharma, *Beyond the Tigers: Tracking Rajiv Gandhi's Assassination*. New Delhi: Kaveri Books, p. xvi. It is easy to forget a rather simple fact: in the aftermath of an assassination, it is in hardly anyone's interest to get to the bottom of things, while it is in the interest of many to minimize their own errors or complicity and exaggerate those of others. From the least significant police constable on duty to the highest levels of the state, once an assassination has occurred finding the truth about what happened pales in comparison to the need to ensure one's own survival in the blame game that inevitably follows.

23. Justice Verma was then a sitting judge of the Supreme Court and refused any expansion of the brief of his commission beyond looking into why there was a security lapse that night in Sriperumbudur and how it could be prevented in the future. When asked to widen its ambit to include conspiracies involving external powers, he demurred, noting that any expansion of this brief would necessitate his having to step down from the bench of the Supreme Court as the criminal investigation into the assassination might conceivably end up in that court. The Verma Commission report is mostly factual and dry. It pinpoints specific lapses in security and apportions responsibility for the lapses by naming some and exonerating others on duty that night; and offers suggestions on how such lapses may be prevented in the future. It became a crucial document in various bureaucratic in-fights and manoeuvring in New Delhi after its publication. See *Report of the One-Man Commission of Inquiry Headed by Justice J. S. Verma, Supreme Court of India, to Enquire into the Assassination of Shri Rajiv Gandhi, Former Prime Minister of India, on 21st May 1991 at Sriperumbudur*, 1992, New Delhi, available at http://openlibrary.org. To get a flavour of the incredibly disorganized and thoroughly politicized nature of the Jain Commission's interim report, see Swami, Praveen (1997) "An Unstated Political Agenda", *Frontline* 14(18), 6–19 September. According to press reports, the interim and final reports of the Jain Commission are wordy (the interim report presented in August 1997 to the home minister comprised 17 volumes and 5,280 pages!), badly written, poorly organized, replete with every kind of innuendo and allegation, and clearly political and not investigative documents. The commission was presided over by a retired justice, Milap Chand Jain, and its reports better reflect the prevailing balance of political forces within the Congress Party, and between the various political parties, in the capital than they do the results of a professional inquiry.
24. Gandhi, note 6 above, p. 120.
25. "Every drop of my blood, I am sure, will contribute to the growth of this nation and make it strong" were her words at an election rally in Bhubaneshwar, in the state of Orissa, the evening before her assassination. Quoted as the opening lines of the *Thakkar Commission of Inquiry on the Assassination of the Late Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi, Interim Report*, 1985, New Delhi, p. 3, available at http://openlibrary.org.
26. Raghavan, note 19 above.
27. Alexander, P. C. (1991) *My Years With Indira Gandhi*. New Delhi: Vision Books.

3

Forms of collective and state violence in South Asia

Paul R. Brass

Virtually all forms of collective and state violence have been endemic in India for a long time. They have ranged from riots, pogroms, police killings and massacres to retributive genocide; insurrectionary movements based on tribal, ethnic, religious and regional identities; agrarian-based class warfare (in which Maoist and other militant groups are termed "Naxalite" by the authorities and most commentators); and state violence, including state terrorism to counter several of the above forms. Most of these distinct forms of violence are regionally or locally confined: tribal movements, particularly in the northeast, insurrectionary movements in Punjab (in the recent past) and Kashmir, Naxalite violence in pockets in Bihar and Andhra, and violence labelled Hindu-Muslim in the northern and western parts of the country. The focus of my research on collective violence in India during the past 20 years has been primarily on the latter, though I have also done work on retributive genocide in Punjab at the time of partition in 1947 and insurrectionary movements in Punjab in the 1980s and early 1990s. My principal publications that set forth the arguments to be summarized and elaborated further below, as well as the some of the ethnographic and statistical data to support them, are *Riots and Pogroms* (1996), *Theft of an Idol* (1997), *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India* (2003) and *Forms of Collective Violence: Riots, Pogroms, and Genocide in Modern India* (2006).

Political violence in South and Southeast Asia: Critical perspectives, Abraham, Newman and Weiss (eds), United Nations University Press, 2010, ISBN 978-92-808-1190-2

Institutionalized riot systems

The centrepiece in my construction of the process of riot production is the institutionalized riot system (IRS), whose workings I have described in more or less detail in all these books and collections of my essays and papers. I want now to fill out as fully as I can the elements of the IRS. Every IRS contains a multiplicity of specialists and roles of all kinds, which come into action at different stages in the production of local riots. Here I make use of my metaphor of riot production as a drama. Like any play, the drama of riot production proceeds in three stages: rehearsal, production and post-performance interpretation. It should be noted here that not all plays succeed; some never make it to the final stages of production for various reasons. In theatre it may be because the play is not popular and does not appeal to the crowd for whom it is designed, which may occur because it is simply an inferior production or because the audience is not prepared to accept a production of this type. Along the way, the producers may also decide that the time is not ripe.

Rehearsal

In the first stage, an array of rehearsal specialists come into play, including centrally a category that I call "fire tenders", those who arouse and keep aroused the passions of the populace in anticipation of a new production. They include politicians, particularly sitting members of the state legislative assembly from the city constituencies in which these riots commonly occur, and members of the municipal corporations as well as their rivals and other aspirants for their positions. They have several roles. They keep alert to the sentiments of their constituents and the activities of their rivals, particularly with regard to any type of local incident that might be used by their opponents, or themselves, to advantage in a future election, especially when elections are in the offing. They receive information, coordinate activities of their party workers, go to scenes of actual or potential conflict and make speeches that can either dampen, arouse or inflame local sentiments.

Others who become involved in the rehearsal stage are "respectable" people such as university and college professors. These people claim to be peace activists when, in fact, they are themselves drawing undue attention to incidents that allegedly endanger the peace. Their role supplements that of the politicians. They provide a veneer of legitimate concern that they convey to the authorities about such incidents. Their role is important because of their status, which allows them access to the senior civil and police officers of the city.

But there is a lower-level set of specialists, less respectable, who report incidents either to the more respectable people or to the politicians. These include scouts and informants who report incidents of various types, rumour-mongers who magnify or manufacture them, propagandists who create messages to be conveyed to the press and the public, vernacular journalists who publish these messages in the form of "news" and poster plasterers. What are the incidents that are reported, conveyed and spread in these ways? Of course, they are of the type that allegedly will cause a riot if not properly dealt with: an elopement of a Hindu girl and a Muslim boy; the ubiquitous local conflicts over sites claimed by adherents of the two religions as either a temple or a mosque, a Hindu worship site or a Muslim gravesite; the finding of a dead cow – whose deaths are sometimes more carefully attended to than those of human beings, to determine whether or not they have been poisoned; rights and convenience of access to Muslim gravesites and Hindu cremation grounds when they lie adjacent to each other; disputes over processions of one community that pass through the neighbourhoods of the other; or the finding of a piece of meat near a Hindu worship site or the proverbial pig in the mosque.

It is important to recognize, however, that such local incidents exist everywhere, in every city and town in India, and some villages as well, where Hindus and Muslims live side by side. One must ask, therefore, why and how some incidents are chosen to represent broader issues worthy of extra-local attention. All, or at least a great many, of these incidents are known to the politicians and the respectable classes who are not directly involved in them, and they are continually kept informed about them. Whether or not they choose to get involved is determined by whether or not they consider that it is worthwhile to elevate the incident – that is, whether they can gain some benefit from it by arousing the sentiments of their voters and raising it to a more passionate level through speeches, staged demonstrations at the site and visits to the authorities to demand action.

This means, in effect, that there must be, in addition to the everyday foot soldiers who report all incidents of these types, those who are more politically sophisticated, whose function is the location of sites of local conflicts with potential for transformation and magnification into politically useful confrontations. These are likely to be local party workers who themselves aspire to higher positions in the party or wish to be useful to their elected political leader; they are likely to know the full details of the local situation, how far it can be exploited, who are the principal actors. They may also then recruit other persons to come on to the scene to make the situation worse. I am thinking here, by way of example, of the characteristic sudden appearance on a disputed site of an idol to a Hindu god, and/or the claim to ownership by a Muslim of the same site, and the necessary appearance of a *pujari* to perform worship for the sake of the new representation of the deity, and so on.

Yet another important role required to build up anticipation for a performance is the focusing of outside attention on the site. By outside, I mean initially outside the neighbourhood to adjacent localities, then to the city as a whole, and at times beyond that to the region, the state and the entire country, and the local, state and national governments. This is the role of the media. In north Indian localities it means especially the local vernacular media, most of which are "yellow" journals; then to the broader vernacular newspapers with a more extensive regional coverage; and ultimately to the country as a whole through the English-language newspapers. In the rehearsal stage, however, the role of focusing attention belongs to the vernacular newspapers that have only a restricted range, to the city and its adjacent areas in the district. The owners and reporters of these local media are often directly linked to the political activists in their communities.

Enactment

In the second stage, which I call the activation or enactment phase, the production specialists take up their roles. There is some overlap of types of persons who play roles in the different stages of riot rehearsal and production, but there are also some new participants with distinct roles. Recruiters, including professors and college and university students, are deployed to bring out the crowds, often of students from local colleges. Other recruiters bring in criminals from the slums to kill, burn and loot. Lumpen elements now also participate in the violence, looting, arson, destruction and rape. Illegal manufacturers of bombs and other forms of explosives enter the picture, providing the means for the more dramatic actions. The politicians appear at this stage also as speech-makers, organizers, instigators, inciters and rescuers of perpetrators, who are freed from jail through their intervention and protected from prosecution for their actions. Lawyers stand ready behind the politicians to assure perpetrators they will be released from jail and, if necessary, defended in court. Government functionaries sympathetic to one side, usually Hindus sympathetic to the militant Hindu anti-Muslim ideology, also perform necessary roles: these may vary, depending on the situation, from inaction (standing aside) to helping one side and/or themselves participating in the killings. State government ministers may support and guide the local-level riot producers or may procrastinate, failing to give orders to the local administration to prevent, contain, control or stop the rioting until the work has been done. In such situations, the roles of the district administrations are critical. They usually do not act to prevent and control riots unless the ministers specifically give the orders for them to do so.

Then there are the communications specialists. These include, as just noted, rumour-mongers, poster plasterers and the vernacular media to print rumours and false, inflammatory reports. I have noted elsewhere that these papers must be considered a part of the institutionalized riot systems of northern India. Moreover, they have almost free rein without competition during riots in which widespread and prolonged curfews are imposed. At such times the more respectable, less inflammatory, more reliable English-language and companion vernacular-language presses are not readily available in streets closed to newspaper vendors. But the vicious "yellow press" is circulated widely and freely.

Ultimately, the role of a partial, prejudiced, anti-Muslim police force must also be considered crucial in the production phase of riots that involve large-scale killings in contemporary India. I will here emphasize two aspects of the police role in large-scale riotous violence labelled "Hindu-Muslim". First is the administration of curfews in a prejudicial manner that causes untold misery in affected areas and provides opportunities for the police and/or Hindu crowds in collusion with the police to inflict misery and death upon Muslims, including many law-abiding persons who become confined, largely defenceless targets for attack. Second, whether in curfew areas or in wider public spaces, in virtually all post-independence riots in India, especially in the last two decades, most of the killing is done by the police and most of the dead are Muslims. Further, the police have perpetrated several notorious and horrendous massacres of Muslims, including two infamous ones in one of my three research sites, namely Meerut city in 1982 and 1987.

Interpretation

This brings me to the third stage in riot production, namely the post-performance phase of interpretation and explanation. In the case of theatrical productions, this is the phase of critical analysis. In the case of the production of violence, the central activity on the part of the riot producers and their accomplices, witting and unwitting, is to avoid the fixing of responsibility on the actual planners, organizers and perpetrators of the violence through blame displacement. This is a game common in all societies in connection with all kinds of disastrous events. In the United States we call it the game of "spin". And we have a vast array of spin-doctors within and outside government to do the work. In contemporary India, similar activities come into play after every major riot.

So, we have now to consider the roles played by explanation and interpretation specialists, the spin-doctors of riot production. They, of course, include all the members of the respectable and articulate classes who have participated in the previous stages of riot production: the politicians and the press especially. But here, the sphere of those complicit in the toleration and perpetuation of such riots widens to include those who are not directly involved and who even loudly proclaim their abhorrence of the rioting. For example, the English-language press that does not participate directly in the instigation and activation of collective violence now becomes implicated through the ways in which it reports upon how the riots happened. Although from time to time very insightful and accurate reports are published, for the most part the respectable papers, and particularly their editorial writers, conclude that the riots were a shameful reflection on the state of the nation, particularly on Hindu-Muslim sentiments of antagonism; that the riots themselves were a spontaneous uprising of feelings over particular events that intensified those antagonisms; that, in short, the public were responsible. Or generalized statements will be made concerning the deplorable activities of some organizations or particular politicians. There is even a standard list of organizations that are named, some of which everyone knows are involved, such as the leading militant Hindu organizations. But then, in order to maintain balance, several Muslim organizations are named, even though they may not have had anything to do with the violence produced.

Also involved in the perpetuation of violence from time to time are some – not all – of the commissions of inquiry appointed to look into the circumstances that produced these riots. Although these commissions are usually headed by judges, sometimes retired Supreme Court justices, they are appointed by the government of the day, which may or may not have been involved directly in the production of the riots to be investigated, but certainly does not want to be blamed for them in any way. So in those times when riots were produced as a consequence of internal conflicts within the ruling Congress or even instigated directly by Congress ministers and important local party leaders, the chairmen of such inquiry commissions would, of course, be chosen, if not to be on the side of the Congress, at least to be known for their secular credentials, a label associated with Congress nationalism.

Nowadays, where and when the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) has been in power and riots have occurred under its watch, the heads are likely to be persons who can be counted upon at least not to be anti-Hindutva, and at best to be sympathetic Hindu judges. Where such reliable judges cannot be found, or where the public outcry is sufficient to require the appointment of a more highly and widely respected and impartial judge, whose final report directs blame against the government that appointed him and his committee, the method of choice is simply to table the report. The objective is to obfuscate the dynamics of the process of riot production and displace blame away from the perpetrators, or, when the report does not do so to the satisfaction of the government of the day, to file away the report.

A second group of explanation and interpretation specialists in India and elsewhere are the social scientists, who also for the most part explain it all away and play a great role in the process of blame displacement. They do so in several ways, of which the most prominent is reversion, with more or less sophistication, to the spontaneity argument and/or to innate tendencies in human nature.[1]

Forms of collective violence: Problems in their study and the importance of process analysis

My purpose in constructing the framework of the IRS was to draw attention away from the misguided conventional understandings of riots and to stress their organized character. Indeed, at the very heart of the process of riot production is the effort, in the explanation phase, to make it appear spontaneous, to hide its essential character as an organized form of violence. This masking is inherent in the connotation of the label itself, that of "riot", which conjures up images of wild, disruptive, tumultuous and violent crowd behaviour – all of which do, in fact, ultimately enter into the picture.

There are many other forms of collective violence, all of which are subject to similar distortions that arise from the very attempt, especially in the social science literature, to label them precisely. Distinctions are made, for example, between riots and pogroms, ethnic cleansing and genocide, and the latest obfuscatory label for the turmoil in Iraq, which our government and press decided early on should best be called sectarian conflict rather than civil war, ethnic cleansing or genocidal killings, all of which appeared to be in progress at times. I want to stress that precise labelling of this sort in the social sciences is as much a form of obfuscation as the labels produced by governments and the so-called "free press".

Instead of using precise labels, we need to conceive of the various forms of collective violence in process terms, on a moving scale from riots to pogroms, ethnic cleansing, genocide and civil war. At every stage the perpetrators and explainers of the violence, from local politicians and gangsters to the press and heads of state, choose the terms that put them in the most favourable light and absolve them from responsibility. So they prefer to call pogroms riots, genocide ethnic cleansing or mere unintentional massacres and, as just said, civil wars sectarian conflict or, even better, mere insurrections against the state. In fact, however, these are all fluid terms that cannot and should not be precisely defined.

Collective violence moves from one form to another, with the labelling itself being part of the process, designed to hide what is truly happening.

But we can and must mark the progression from one blurred form to another, while at the same time noting that it all begins and ends, in fact, with labelling. For the progression itself begins with labelling, the first stage precedent to all forms of collective violence being the use of categorical terms to define the "target" for harm or destruction, whether it is an ethnic or religious group or an economic category, such as the term *kulak* for the peasants to be eliminated under Stalin's regime. And this initial labelling also begins the simultaneous process of obfuscation, for every form of categorical definition disregards intra-group differences as well as the presence of interspersed populations, or seeks to purify the categorical groups by eliminating difference and to solidify groups which are homogenizing territories through intimidatory killings or outright ethnic cleansing. When the objective is group solidification and homogenization, breakdown of inter-group linkages becomes mandatory: no intermarriage, elimination of associational linkages, intolerance of all forms of eclecticism and the like.

A fundamental change in the use of violence for the above purposes takes place at another crossroads, with the rise of leaders openly espousing violence. Up to a point in the life of a society in disintegration, the use of violence, however widespread, is not condoned or is excused for cause or, in a very fashionable and very irritating term in common use nowadays, is described as "senseless". This latter is one of the most obfuscatory terms in current use, the near-universal coinage of press, politicians, university presidents and heads of state after every riot or massacre or suicide bombing. Virtually all forms of collective violence, far from being senseless, have strategic purposes: intimidation of the other, consolidation of one's own group, forced migration, etcetera.

Another step in the progression comes with escalation in the brutality and scale of violence. Both have occurred in India, something not captured by statistics on the incidence of riots and the numbers of deaths, etc. Increased brutalization takes many forms: rape followed by killing of women; quartering of men, women and children; burning alive of households with all members; televised sawing off of the heads of captives; the various forms of killings used by insurgents in Iraq today mentioned in the press but rarely described in detail. While it is certain that the killers take great pleasure in what they do in imposing the utmost agony upon their victims, the strategic character of such forms of killing also ought to be evident.

And these several precedent steps all point towards and, ultimately, if the next stage is reached, build towards displacement of peoples. Displacement occurs initially in small steps. Selected areas of a town are attacked with such viciousness that the inhabitants are forced to flee. In India they may flee to their native villages or relatives in the countryside or, as in Delhi during the 1984 Sikh riots, Gujarat in 2002 and Sri Lanka during the civil war, they were placed in IDP (internally displaced person) camps. One of the markers of this transition is the increased ratio of killings to injuries. Riots produce more injured than killed, pogroms increase the ratio in favour of killings, massacres produce only deaths and no injured except those who miraculously survive, genocides leave no survivors.

We now arrive at the next stage, the deliberate use of violence as a mechanism of ethnic cleansing. Note that we were at one point in that stage in Iraq – that is to say, in precisely the situation of the British in India at the time of partition, watching the enactment before our eyes of ethnic cleansing accompanied by genocidal killings virtually every single day of the week. Notice also please the failure of the press and our contemptible political leaders to identify clearly what was going on; at first they avoided the term civil war in favour of sectarian conflict/violence, but I have rarely, and only recently, seen any reference to what was close to happening, namely a rapid transition into wholesale ethnic cleansing and the early stages of retributive genocide. Also to be noted here is the way in which labelling draws our attention away from catastrophic violence, as in Darfur, where the UN's Kofi Annan at one point stated that what was happening there was not genocide, presumably because it did not fit the 1944 definition of genocide, a legalistic statement; but the problem is in the very labelling itself, or rather the misuse of labelling as a device for so-called scientific precision or the framing of legal briefs.

We arrive here at the point that leads to the final solution, transgression of traditional boundaries of what is permissible – not just rape, for example, but systematic use of rape not only for pleasure but to disgrace an entire people, especially the men, who have become enfeebled, unmanned, unable to protect their women and female children. But this kind of action is merely one of many types that add up, finally, to a general and complete release of passion in a revenge and retaliation cycle, leading to disintegration of all restraints.

Now, there is nothing inevitable about this progression. A country, such as the United States at various times in its history, at least since after the Civil War, may experience only riots, of which there have been various forms, no doubt, but few that have gone beyond what might reasonably be called riots (organized, of course); a few in the past did, of course, include outright massacres of blacks, and many ended in lynchings of individuals. Nor do I intend to imply that India as a whole has moved on a path towards Armageddon. The national disgrace of the anti-Sikh riots of 1984 in Delhi was a case of malfeasance on the part of the central government that allowed this to happen under a dithering home minister, who later became prime minister and then dithered even more disastrously in 1992 while the mosque at Ayodhya was torn down, precipitating massive riots over large parts of the country that ended in the deaths of several thousand people.

In any case, in India's federal system riots are, as it were, a state subject. Most states in the Indian union which have experienced extensive riots and riot periods have moved along the scale from riots to pogroms to outright police massacres. But under certain political conditions they have also moved back from further escalation or have undergone long periods in which few large-scale riots or pogroms occurred. At the same time, the state of Gujarat has definitely moved beyond the stage of mere riots and pogroms to that of state-sponsored massacres, extreme brutalization of the minority population, displacement of tens of thousands of Muslims into IDP camps, open espousal and justification of violence and granting of complete impunity to the perpetrators. And this government remains in power today, eight years after the perpetration of this great pogrom.

But this schema of progression should not be treated as something to be reified and quantified and systematized and put into some political science theory of collective action or game theory or uncertainty reduction or what have you. It is all indeterminate, with no clear boundaries, and the order may be altered and things will change as they always do, because the people who engage in such actions are aware that we are watching them and will change their tactics to avoid being hauled up before a tribunal or the UN court or whatever agency has any potential authority or power to punish them for their atrocities. But we ought to be watching them and, most especially, documenting in detail what they do and how they do it, so that one way or another the perpetrators will be hauled up. And we have had a lot of those perpetrators in our own government and in our armed forces in recent times, and we had them in Vietnam as well.

Further thoughts on the progression in the forms of violence

It is possible to refine even further the progression outlined above. Take, for example, the progression that leads to the ultimate ends of either ethnic cleansing or genocide, or some combination of the two. These ends are often preceded and/or accompanied by various other intermediate consequences of inter-group violence, such as displacement, relocation and deportation of selected targeted populations. When such violence is directed towards that end, it is of a different sort entirely from the killings that take place in ordinary rioting. Tambiah has noted that such "displacement of people" involves "forced evacuations by burning homes, intimidations, targeted killings", whose end is "the abandonment of localities in populous cities [and] also the capture of the same territorial space by the winners (usually the larger of the rival groups living in the locality in question)".[2]

Thus the great, total cross-migration in 1947 of Hindus and Sikhs on the one hand, and Muslims on the other, to the Indian and Pakistani sides of the new borders, respectively, that took place in the weeks and months immediately before and after the partition decision announcement at independence on 15 August was preceded by several expulsions of vulnerable groups at particular places. Most notable in this case was the forcible expulsion of Sikhs and Hindus from the northwestern Rawalpindi division of Punjab in March 1947. These so-called riots, along with the building violence in the most contested cities of Amritsar, Lahore and Multan in the centre of Punjab, themselves represented "an escalation of violence" compared to earlier riots. They were, in effect, "a curtain raiser" to the denouement of August–September.[3] They thus constituted both escalation and premonition. These are critical stages, testing grounds as it were, for the authorities, which must either act decisively with massive force or expect further escalation.

Hence, Hansen considers March 1947 "the beginning of the process of ethnic cleansing". It was marked, as he puts it, by a change "in the nature of violence from traditional violence to genocidal violence".[4] That is, in contrast to mere sporadic, precisely targeted killings, what began to happen were "genocidal massacres where whole or parts of villages were destroyed". And, of course, though it was masked and denied later and has not been exposed until recently for the lie it was, "the violence was neither unorganised nor spontaneous".[5] Rather, one should say, it was even more organized than the violence that is associated with mere riots. It was, in hindsight, a beginning, but it is also the case that it was a beginning because of a lack of foresight or an unwillingness or incapacity to act to prevent the denouement.[6] In Punjab in 1947, on the eve of the glorious day of independence, there was in fact no effective authority to stop the escalation. Indeed, on the contrary, many of those at the highest levels of government in both the new states were deeply implicated in the final ethnic cleansing and genocide that resulted.[7]

But there is even a further progression between ethnic cleansing and the most extreme form of genocide practised by the Nazis against the Jews. This was preceded by pogroms labelled riots by the Nazis, followed by displacement, deportation and relocation, leading ultimately to total extermination that spared none – women or children – and offered no possible alternative. In the Nazi case, "ordinary police" were given instructions to make targeted cities, indeed entire regions, *judenfrei* (free of Jews).[8] This was done in some cases through the notorious "deportation trains"[9] and in other cases by straight-out "open-air massacres"[10] of assembled Jews by either the ordinary police or the *Einsatzgruppen*. But the South Asian experience with ethnic cleansing and retributive genocide has been a step or two removed from this all-inclusive extreme, for beautiful women were taken and bartered and used,[11] many times even married into the other side, especially Hindu women to Muslim men, and it was possible for some men also to escape death by conversion to Islam or to "become a Hindu", though these were not always safe options and often, especially in the case of circumcision of adult Hindu men, was little more than a grotesque, painful and dangerous mutilation.[12]

Ashis Nandy has made a further distinction that is worth noting. The German killers of Jews carried out their assignments often, if not mostly, with a "sense of detachment", as Browning has noted,[13] though Kogon once remarked that in the camps the predominant affect at the condition and fate of the Jews was expressed in laughter.[14] Somehow, Nandy finds solace in this distinction between the Nazi killings of Jews and the passionate killings engaged in by Indian mobs.[15] However little solace I find in the distinction, there is certainly a quantum leap in organization – and, of course, state direction – from even the retributive genocide in Punjab in 1947 to the extermination of the Jews during the Second World War. There is yet a further distinction to be noted once a genocidal project has been undertaken under state direction, namely the possibility of resistance and refusal to participate. Few anywhere in Nazi-controlled Europe had either the desire or the courage to protest. When they did so, their protests were ignored.[16] Under the Nazis, even Jewish rabbis felt compelled to cooperate with the selection of those scheduled for death and those to be given "work permits" that would save their lives for a short time.[17] In South Asia, on the contrary, outright opposition to the riots, pogroms and massacres and the consequent displacement of peoples has been continuous, often vociferous, and in India has lately taken encouraging new forms that will be discussed in the conclusion.

While there is no certainty in this progression, which may be stopped by various means, especially force directed at the actual perpetrators and state action to reverse the process, it has been too often a clear precursor in South Asia. It was so in Sri Lanka especially in the 1983 riots and in the expulsions of Sinhalese and Muslims from the Jaffna peninsula in the 1990s, leading to their displacement into IDP refugee camps. Such displacements have occurred from time to time as a consequence of riots and pogroms in various parts of India, notably after the 1984 anti-Sikh riots in New Delhi and the 2002 pogroms against Muslims in Gujarat state, where the IDP camps remain. But even in many smaller riots in cities and towns in northern and western India, the consequences have been the displacement almost entirely of Muslims from their areas of concentration to outlying areas or back to their ancestral villages. When this is done at the behest of real estate developers, who take advantage of such rioting for their pecuniary purposes, it is not necessarily a precursor of outright ethnic cleansing in a broader area. However, it often is, and was the case especially in Bombay, where both Masselos and Tambiah have noted the collusion between the Shiv Sena and real estate developers directed towards the "dispossession and displacement" of Muslims from slum areas, sometimes countered "by Muslim gangs on a lesser scale".[18] Tambiah does not hesitate to call the aims and consequences of the 1992–1993 riots in Bombay "ethnic cleansing".[19] I have found similar instances of such collusion between real estate developers and rioters instigated by the BJP in my own research in Kanpur city.

Similarly, when forced displacement is done for electoral advantage by such organizations as the local militant Hindu parties, the BJP and the Shiv Sena, it may or may not presage large-scale ethnic cleansing. Thus, in my own research in Aligarh town in Aligarh district, I found a deliberate (apparently) effort to use riots to force Muslim voters out of outlying areas of the city constituency, where the BJP politicians alleged they were voting illegally to their disadvantage. However, even when such displacement for either pecuniary or political reasons is partial and limited to specific material or political ends, when permitted by a failure of the authorities in the first instance, followed by a subsequent failure to reverse such displacement, it is sufficiently ominous.

Comparative relevance of the construct of the IRS

I believe my arguments concerning organization, preparation, planning and deliberation are relevant to several forms of collective violence. I read a bit of the literature on Russian pogroms as I was developing my views on riots years ago, and found it at once absorbing and deficient. The main issues seemed to focus on this very question of definition: the prime question was whether the tsar himself and his personal advisers in the state apparatus were behind the pogroms or whether they were local and spontaneous. It seemed to me that the historians working on these pogroms should have been asking different questions, particularly my questions. Were there local institutionalized riot systems in place in the pogrom-ridden cities and towns of Russia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? If so, under what circumstances did they come into being and become activated? Some recent work on these pogroms has found my work and arguments on India as well as those of other colleagues relevant to understanding them.[20] It has also seemed to me, and others have also said to me, that there are substantial similarities in the planning and organization of the genocides in Rwanda and Burundi that bear comparison with my description of the process of riot production in India. That does not mean that a riot in Aligarh is the same as genocide in Rwanda, which would be a travesty of my position.

The history of riots in the United States and other Western countries also needs to be looked at with fresh eyes. From the nineteenth century right up to the present, black-white riots have been largely conceived within the framework of black-white antipathies, and the black ghetto riots of recent times in the framework of black rage at their condition. It has seemed to me that the element of deliberate organization and planning and the political connections were never adequately explored, least of all in the voluminous and famous Kerner Commission (the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders) studies that brought together numerous contributions from American social scientists, most of whom, I think, failed to tell us anything about the dynamics of riot production. Here, Steven Wilkinson is at the forefront in drawing explicit comparisons between riots and pogroms in India, the United States and elsewhere in his recent work, some of it not yet published.[21] He does not use my term, the IRS, but his work suggests it would not be inappropriate to do so.

But, to return to South and Southeast Asia, Christopher Wilson's Australia National University dissertation[22] illustrates two very important features of collective violence in Indonesia that correspond well with my own findings in India. The first is that there can be no hard-and-fast distinctions among the forms of collective violence variously called riot, pogrom, massacre, genocide, etc. On the contrary, they shade into each other and, if not dealt with firmly, tend to cross the imagined boundaries between such categories as they expand in scale, in the selection of victims and in the atrocities perpetrated. This dissertation provides, indeed, an example of how riots and massacres in different places can expand to become virtual military confrontations, leading to retributive violence as revenge and retaliation are sought for successive acts of violence and culminating in ethnic cleansing, which is what, in effect, was the end of the violence described. But, rather than use these terms, Wilson has preferred to consider the expansion of such violence and ethnic cleansing as taking place in phases that he labels initiation, escalation, dispersion, political exploitation and religious war. Not all these categories would be applicable in every comparable case, but the merit of this approach is that it avoids spurious attempts to categorize and pinpoint precisely the particular form of the violence being enacted in each phase.

The most impressive aspect of the research carried out for this dissertation and the presentation of it is the way in which the author has followed events that transpired over a considerable period of time in several different areas, ultimately encompassing an entire region. I am not aware of anything in the literature that has done this so well or, indeed, at all. But even more important, he has developed a scheme to encompass the transformation of events in both their scale and the nature of the issues, precipitating events and composition of the perpetrators of the violence that might be profitably applied elsewhere. Wilson's research demonstrates the interconnectedness of the various occasions of violence he has studied without falling prey to, indeed showing the utter inadequacy of, other approaches and popular understandings that see such events as occurring spontaneously in one place after another by some kind of mimicry or as if violence spreads like a viral infection.

Equally noteworthy for Indonesia is the recent book by Sidel, which documents and analyses several phases of rioting in different parts of the archipelago. While he has developed his own framework attuned to the specific conditions of Indonesia, there is much in his work that is consistent with Wilson's and mine. First, of course, is the organized character of all the forms of violence that he discusses. Second, he notes the presence in the "mobilizational processes" among what he calls the "protagonists" of violence of my "fire tenders" and "conversion specialists". Third, he is attuned to the issue of blame displacement, noting how each riot "resulted in a bewildering flood of commentary and analyses variously blaming social inequality, government policy, Chinese/Christian hegemony, or elite conspiracy" for the violence.[23] He also takes note of several kinds of transformations in the forms of violence that have occurred in successive waves: from riots that led more to destruction of property of victims, Chinese or Christian, than killings, moving to pogroms in a later period with extensive killing, culminating in regional ethnic cleansing, and most recently to "religious violence", characterized by both the author and the participants as *jihad*. Fourth, he notes the close connection of ostensibly inter-ethnic or inter-religious violence with elections and election outcomes that would distribute resources and even territorial boundaries between religious groups. Such violence in these respects has similar consequences to the riots I have studied in India, namely consolidation of opposed communities in order to determine the election outcome and the consequent redistribution of resources between communities.

But the clearest example of both the role of the IRS in riots and the progression in the forms of collective violence over time comes again from South Asia, from Sri Lanka, where the progression has run across almost the full range of possibilities. Tambiah has noted the first stages in this progression in a series of four riots, the first in 1958, followed by three in succession two decades later in 1977, 1981 and, of course, the grand culmination of the series in 1983. What distinguishes this particular progression from earlier riots in Sri Lankan history is that they were specifically ethnic riots, and more specifically attacks by "segments of the Sinhalese population against the Tamils".[24] In Tambiah's description of this series, it is noteworthy that each riot in the series took different forms. Notably, each successive riot involved greater organization, more direct involvement of the police and armed forces, the implication of government ministers and increased destruction, brutalization and loss of life. Thus in 1958 the police and armed forces "saved many Tamil lives and earned their reputation as upholders of law and order; in 1977 they turned indifferent; but from 1981 onwards they have become a party to the riots, frequently figuring as the prime villains".[25] In 1981 "the police and armed forces did not intervene to prevent Sinhalese mob attacks on the Tamils until the declaration of the state of emergency on August 17, many days after the attacks had begun".[26]

Finally, in 1983, there was nothing less than "the first *massive breakdown* [original italics] of law and order among those entrusted with its preservation to occur during Sri Lanka's history as an independent nation-state".[27] The 1983 riots were also characterized by "systematic destruction of shops and commercial and industrial establishments, many of which employed Sinhalese labor". Further, these riots were widespread, beginning first in Colombo, then extending "in ever widening waves" to numerous other towns in the country where there were "the largest concentrations of Sri Lankan Tamils (outside their own areas of dominance in the north and east) and of the Indian Tamils in the tea plantations".[28] Further, these riots were prolonged, extending from the initial attacks on 24 July to 5 August.[29] Tambiah concludes: "In sum, the 1983 riots were a kind of pogrom, which was motivated, purposive, systematic, and organized." Tambiah does not use my term, the IRS, for the organization of the riots of 1983, but he provides ample evidence for it. Among the participants he identifies are "certain Sinhala politicians and their local agents, organized crime figures and smugglers, and small businessmen seeking to eliminate rivals". He also notes the role of "riot captains" in organizing mobs and of Buddhist monks, who "played a role in inciting crowd action, sometimes as supportive witnesses and orators"[30] – in my terms, the "conversion specialists". Finally, supporting the view of the 1983 riots as being in reality pogroms, Tambiah notes, as have others, "firm evidence of planning and direction, the participation of certain politicians (especially from the ruling party) and government employees (minor staff, laborers, technicians), and the use of government vehicles and buses".[31]

Obeyesekere takes a similar view to Tambiah concerning the progression of what he calls "the institutionalization of violence" in Sri Lanka, also marking the 1977 riots as the turning point. He too points especially to the role of Cyril Matthew, minister of industries and also president at the time of the Jatika Sevaka Sangamaya (National Workers Organisation), the largest trade union in Sri Lanka, from which "thugs" were recruited to enact much of the violence committed in those riots. Also implicated, according to Obeyesekere, were two other ministers, the prime minister himself (R. Premadasa) and the minister of transport, a Muslim MP, with their political bases in the slums.[32]

In his analysis of the 1983 riots/pogrom, Tambiah makes a comparison between those events and the anti-Sikh riots in Delhi in 1984. But India has since provided an even more apposite parallel in Gujarat in 2002. The justification for the 1983 pogrom was the killing by Tamil militants of 13 Sri Lankan army personnel (presumably all Sinhalese) by Tamil militants in northern Sri Lanka, then under the occupation of the army in the early stages of the civil war. Since there was some apparently spontaneous crowd violence when the bodies of the victims were brought to the airport and the cemetery, then removed by the army, the ensuing organized violence could be taken also as "spontaneous". Similarly, the explosion and consequent death of some 60 people (all presumed Hindu) in a train compartment at Godhra train station in Gujarat provided an excuse for the launching of a massive state-directed assault on the Muslim population in widespread areas of the state, barefacedly masked as a spontaneous uprising of the Hindus of Gujarat. In Sri Lanka a central government minister (Cyril Matthew) was said to have provided overall direction to the pogrom of 1983. In Gujarat the entire government, including its chief minister, Narendra Modi, was clearly directing matters.

One last point about the 1983 riots that is also consistent with my findings and those of Wilkinson in relation to large-scale collective violence involving Hindus, Muslims and the state in India is the close connection between these events and the opportunities to gain political advantage from them. Tambiah notes that the 1983 riots took place at a time of intra-governmental conflict among "three major factions … contending for power", who were jockeying for position in an anticipated struggle to find a successor to President Jayawardene. In this impending struggle, Cyril Matthew, the principal government figure behind the extension of the violence, was one of the key figures.[33] How this would have affected the succession is not clear and needs further elucidation,[34] but the general pattern of riot production as part of the process of gaining political advantage over factional rivals or other parties has been made clear in my work and that of Wilkinson in India.[35] In Gujarat and elsewhere, electoral calculations have been of primary importance in the timing of riots. In Punjab at the time of partition, and in Indonesia and Sri Lanka as well, issues of boundaries and control of territory have been critical in the deliberate enactment of riots, pogroms, massacres and genocide.

Insurrectionary violence and civil war

Where the state remains in relatively firm control over its population, and ethnic minorities remain relatively dispersed and powerless, the progression may not move beyond riots and pogroms, enacted at particular times for the narrow purposes mentioned above, especially temporary political advantage. Where, however, there is a concentrated population of a discontented minority, one alternative move is towards insurrection or outright civil war. For discontented minority populations in India, confronted with the power of a huge state with a formidable military force – in addition to the armed police and other paramilitary formations – civil war is out of the question. But rebellion and insurrection are possible and have been continuous in the northeastern tribal regions of the country since independence. In Kashmir a major insurrection has been in progress now for two decades. In Punjab an insurrectionary movement was active for a decade from 1984 until 1993. These conflicts have different origins and trajectories from the progression outlined above, and have not followed consequent upon riots and pogroms.

In Sri Lanka, however, where a full-scale civil war was waged for a quarter-century after the 1983 riots, there was a connection with and progression from riots and pogroms to civil war, and the two were interconnected. The 1983 rioting was, at least in part and probably more than in part, a calculated response on the part of the Sri Lankan government ministers involved to pay back the Tamil population for the killing of 13 Sinhalese military by a landmine planted by a Tamil guerrilla force. The rioting in response to the killing of the Sinhalese troops began on 24 July. From this point on, what had been an insurrectionary movement became a full-scale civil war between armed forces in control of contested, but separate, territories. After 1983 there were no large-scale riots or pogroms directed at the remaining Sri Lankan Tamil population living in Sinhalese-majority areas, though they continued to be scapegoated at times, as happened with the forcible removal of Tamils from Colombo after an LTTE bombing in that city in the latter stages of the civil war.

Conclusion: On the importance of truth-tellers

At the end of most of my presentations on the subject of collective violence in India, those in the audience who have been moved by it, especially young secular Indians, invariably ask, with some anguish, what can be done. Although I have never considered myself a policy analyst, I have come to feel obliged to deal in some way with this kind of response. With regard to the IRS, I have described a situation of widespread complicity at all levels in society with the systems of riot production. Is there then no antidote?[36]

There has gradually been developing in India a counter-system to the IRS that I call an institutionalized system of riot documentation (ISRD). Its components are, in several ways, mirror opposites of the IRS. It is, first of all, an extra-local system. It is manned by educated, secular, patriotic men and women who deplore the violence, understand its roots better than most people and consider it their moral duty to investigate and document the circumstances that lead to the production of particular occasions of large-scale violence and to identify the individuals and organizations that are most deeply implicated in it. They include individual scholars, human rights organizations, retired Supreme Court justices, social scientists, historians and anthropologists.

A central figure in this system is Asghar Ali Engineer, a secular Muslim, who has headed for decades now the Centre for the Study of Society and Secularism in Bombay (Mumbai). He personally visits every site in India where a major riot has been produced, reports on them in his journals and online, and publishes an annual survey of all such riots in the *Economic and Political Weekly*. He has also written and/or edited nearly 40 books on various political and religious subjects, of which several deal directly with Hindu-Muslim riots. His works are required reading for anyone who wishes to understand how riots are produced in India.

But Asghar Ali is not alone. There are human rights organizations in India that send teams to sites of major violence, usually comprising Hindus, Muslims and sometimes Sikhs and Christians as well. These teams usually arrive at the immediate end of a riot as soon as curfew has been lifted. They publish sizeable pamphlets and articles in human rights journals on major riots that go far beyond the reports that appear in the newspapers, and stand as correctives to their false or incoherent reporting. Among these organizations, the best known is the People's Union for Civil Liberties.[37] Especially noteworthy in this connection was the massive response of the ISRD in the aftermath of the 2002 Gujarat riots, documented by a wide range of individuals and organizations, whose total production of print on the killings is said to have reached approximately 16,000 pages.

Another type of forum for truth-telling that is brought into being after the most horrific riots is the *ad hoc* court put together by human rights and civil liberties groups, usually headed by a retired Supreme Court justice, that gathers eye-witness testimony and publishes its conclusions in a substantial volume at the end of its proceedings. These courts are called citizens' tribunals. Such *ad hoc* courts have a dual function. First, they are there to document what has happened and present the results as truthfully as they can. Second, they are there to make sure that the officially appointed commission of inquiry, if one is appointed at all, does not obfuscate the origins of the violence and the identities of the principal perpetrators.

The third important group comprises those social scientists, historians and anthropologists who seek to refocus our gaze in a world dominated by symbol specialists, populated with simulacra, representations and justifications of all sorts which serve to divert our gaze from actualities to rationalizations, asking the wrong questions and therefore naturally coming up with untrustworthy results. There are many such scholars in India and some in the West in this third group. I consider myself part of it. What distinguishes this group especially is the questions they ask, which I consider to be the right questions: not why a riot has happened, but under what circumstances it has happened and how it is done – that is to say, not to provide a causal explanation in the scientific sense of an "if, then" proposition, but to expose a process to full view; not to displace blame, but to pinpoint responsibilities.

Notes

1. I find such arguments very prominent in the works of Donald Horowitz and Ashutosh Varshney.
2. Tambiah, Stanley J. (1996) *Leveling Crowds: Ethnonationalist Conflicts and Collective Violence in South Asia*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, p. 176.
3. Hansen, Anders Bjorn (2002) *Partition and Genocide: Manifestation of Violence in Punjab: 1937–1947*. New Delhi: India Research Press, p. 110.
4. Ibid., p. 115.
5. Ibid., pp. 180–181.
6. There was, however, sufficient warning coming from Jenkins, the British governor of Punjab, as I have pointed out; see Brass, Paul R. (2003) "The Partition of India and Retributive Genocide in the Punjab, 1946–47: Means, Methods, and Purposes", *Journal of Genocide Research* 5(1), pp. 71–101. One British officer saw clearly what was happening, and in his own area of authority, Bahawalpur state, took firm and immediate "action against communal violence". Moreover, as Mark Tully has noted, Penderel Moon "criticized the authorities in Amritsar for not opening fire during the riots in the Punjab in March 1947"; Tully, Mark (1998) "Introduction", in Penderel Moon, *Divide and Quit: An Eyewitness Account of the Partition of India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. xiv.
7. Parenthetically, we have been at that stage in Iraq, where the "world's only superpower", which has created the mess there, lacks either the power or the will to prevent further mass slaughter. As in India in 1947, everyone in authority and with power is to blame

and all have played the blame game: the Democrats and Republicans blaming each other and the Democrats seeking to blame the Iraqis for their failure to achieve specified goals or benchmarks at certain specified points.

8. Browning, Christopher R. (1992) *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*. New York: Harper Collins, p. 121; for example, the entire district of Lublin was made *judenfrei* with the slaughter of "at least 83,000 Jews" by such means by one ordinary police battalion of 500 men, pp. 141–142.
9. Ibid., p. 27.
10. Ibid., p. 32.
11. See for example, among many other recent sources, Major, Andrew A. (1995) "'The Chief Sufferers': Abduction of Women During the Partition of the Punjab", *South Asia* XVIII, p. 61. He notes that "large-scale abduction and sale of girls seems to have been part of a systematic process of 'ethnic cleansing'".
12. David Gilmartin, for example, refers to the forced "Hindu conversions to Islam" in the Noakhali/Tippera riots in Bengal in October 1946. Gilmartin, David (1998) "Partition, Pakistan, and South Asian History: In Search of a Narrative", *Journal of Asian Studies* 57(4), p. 1086. On the possibility and often the futility of these options, see, among the usual academic sources, the fine recent Indian film *Earth*.
13. Browning, note 8 above, p. 127.
14. Kogon, Eugen (1950) *The Theory and Practice of Hell: The German Concentration Camps and the System Behind Them*, trans. Heinz Norden. New York: Berkley Publishing. But, of course, the German forces also engaged in the utmost brutality against the Jews in both round-ups and, as Kogon notes, in the camps as well.
15. Nandy, Ashis (2002) "Telling the Story of Communal Conflicts in South Asia: Interim Report on a Personal Search for Defining Myths", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 25(1), p. 14. "Even though in a few instances they came close to it, these were not industrialized, assembly-line killings, of the type in which the twentieth century specialized, and killers and victims involved in them had not been reduced to being cogs in a killing machine." Does Nandy really want us to believe that personally cutting people up into pieces with swords, burning them alive and, nowadays, the revival of the great mediaeval practice of cutting off people's heads, filmed for TV wherever possible, is more agreeable than the German gas chambers?
16. E.g. as in Oslo, when a protest of "Norwegian Protestant bishops" failed to prevent the deportation of "531 Norwegian Jews, men, women and children" to Birkenau. Gilbert, Martin (1985) *The Holocaust: A History of the Jews of Europe during the Second World War*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, p. 499. More successful was the subterranean action of "Danish sea captains and fishermen" who transported 5,919 Jews and "part-Jew" to Sweden (p. 499), as well as protests from Italy and Italian troops in France and from Bulgarians (pp. 543–547).
17. Ibid., p. 223.
18. Tambiah, note 2 above, p. 255. See also Masselos, Jim (1994) "The Bombay Riots of January 1993: The Politics of Urban Conflagration", *South Asia* XVII, especially pp. 87–90.
19. Tambiah, ibid., pp. 255–264.
20. See, for example, Hamm, Michael F. (2005) "Jews and Revolution in Kharkiv: How One Ukrainian City Escaped a Pogrom in 1905", in Jonathan D. Smele and Anthony Heywood (eds) *The Russian Revolution of 1905: Centenary Perspectives*. London: Routledge.
21. Wilkinson, Steven I. (forthcoming) "A Constructivist Model of Ethnic Riots", in Kanchan Chandra (ed.) *Ethnicity, Politics and Economics*.
22. Wilson, Chris (2008) *Ethno-religious Violence in Indonesia: From Soil to God*. Abingdon: Routledge.

23. Sidel, John T. (2006) *Riots, Pogroms, Jihad: Religious Violence in Indonesia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, pp. 102–104.
24. Tambiah, Stanley J. (1986) *Sri Lanka: Ethnic Fratricide and the Dismantling of Democracy.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, p. 13. In other words, Tambiah deliberately excludes from this series the Sinhalese-Muslim riots of 1915 and the JVP insurrection of Sinhalese youth in 1971. Though the latter also involved attacks on Tamils, they were not principally and explicitly oriented to ethnic targeting.
25. Ibid., p. 26.
26. Ibid., p. 21.
27. Ibid., pp. 25–26.
28. Ibid., pp. 21–22.
29. Ibid., p. 19.
30. Tambiah, note 2 above, pp. 99–100.
31. Ibid., p. 96.
32. Obeyesekere, Gananath (1984) "The Origins and Institutionalization of Political Violence", in James Manor (ed.) *Sri Lanka in Change and Crisis.* New York: St Martin's Press, p. 160.
33. Tambiah, note 24 above, pp. 32–33 and 48–49.
34. Presumably the riots provided an advantage to the "hardliners" within Jayawardene's government. Ibid., p. 27.
35. See especially Wilkinson, Steven I. (2004) *Electoral Competition and Ethnic Riots in India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
36. Ashutosh Varshney claims that he has one, which I think is worthless and have commented upon elsewhere.
37. Others, past and present, have included the Sampradayikta Virodhi Committee (Committee Against Communalism), the Indian People's Human Rights Commission and the Committee for the Protection of Democratic Rights.

4

Mass violence in Southeast Asia

Geoffrey Robinson

Any study of "mass violence" in Southeast Asia needs to account for an extraordinary range of historical experience. At a minimum, it must offer an explanation of communal riots and pogroms, rebellions, left-wing insurgencies, forced displacements, massacres, genocides and civil wars occurring in widely disparate cultural, geographical and political contexts. It must explain not only why violence occurred, but also why large numbers of civilians became party to it. Crucially, it must also provide a convincing explanation of the key *variations* in the patterns of violence – including variations in type, timing, location and target. This chapter is an attempt to provide such an account.

Substantively, the chapter focuses on several cases of mass violence that illustrate most clearly the broad range of experience in the region in the past half-century: the mass political killings in Indonesia (1965–1966), the genocide in Cambodia (1975–1978) and East Timor (1975–1978), the intense ethnic and religious violence across Indonesia (1995–2005) and the widespread violence and forced displacement that followed the vote on East Timor's independence (1999). Drawing upon the existing secondary literature and on my own research, the chapter argues that these cases, and the variations within and across them, can best be understood by examining patterns and changes in three broad historical conditions: the nature of social, economic and political relations at the local (that is subnational) level; the character of national states; and the international political, moral and legal context.

Political violence in South and Southeast Asia: Critical perspectives, Abraham, Newman and Weiss (eds), United Nations University Press, 2010, ISBN 978-92-808-1190-2

In making this argument, I do not mean to suggest that there is a single model or set of factors that can easily explain all kinds of mass violence. The historical experience is clearly too diverse and complex to allow anything like a single causal explanation. Nor am I suggesting that there is a distinctively Southeast Asian pattern of mass violence. In fact, I am strongly inclined to doubt that there is. I am simply arguing that it is possible to make some sense of the patterns and variations in mass violence in the region by thinking in terms of these three broad historical conditions, and of the ways in which each is shaped or constrained by the others. While I am reluctant to present a too-tidy ranking of the relative importance of these conditions, I think it is fair to say that the salience of local relations in shaping violence in modern Southeast Asia has generally been limited by the broader historical conditions discussed here – the character of the national state and the international context. If I am right about this, a similar approach may help us to account for the patterns of mass violence elsewhere, and to answer two pressing historical and policy questions. First, under what historical circumstances is mass violence of different kinds most likely to occur; and second, what are the prospects for preventing such violence and for stopping it once it has begun?

Local conditions

There is no disagreement among analysts that local conditions are vital in generating and shaping mass violence. Virtually every study of the problem in Southeast Asia locates the roots of violence in some underlying social, economic or political dynamic at the subnational level. The central question is which kinds of local conditions have been the most important in shaping violence, and in what ways have they done so. Of equal importance is the question of whether these local conditions operate independently to shape mass violence, or are rather contingent upon broader historical conditions.

Here, the comparative approach offers important clues. It reveals that three sorts of social, economic and political dynamic have consistently been important in shaping violence across the region: conflicts over material resources, struggles for local political power and the experience or memory of past violence. These three dynamics, I believe, help to explain a good deal of the geographical distribution of violence, as well as the targeting of particular groups. At the same time, as discussed in more detail below, the evidence strongly suggests that these local dynamics do not on their own give rise to predictable patterns of violence, but become salient only under certain, quite specific, historical conditions.

By some accounts, the single most common root of violence in Southeast Asia over the past century has been conflict over access to and control of material resources, such as land, water, minerals, oil and natural gas.[1] Protracted conflict over access to land appears to lie at the heart of the mass killings in Indonesia in 1965–1966.[2] It seems to explain, for example, why the violence was so much worse in Java and Bali – where population densities were higher, access to land more restricted and fights over land reform more bitter – than anywhere else in the country. While the violence has often been framed in terms of a cultural clash (between *santri* and *abangan* communities), it was more obviously a fight over land. Likewise, in Cambodia conflict over land, together with resentment at high taxes, low agricultural prices and government repression, appear to have been critical elements in both the rapid rise of the Khmer Rouge in the early 1970s and the willingness of poor and embittered peasants to carry out acts of extreme violence against wealthy or privileged Cambodians.[3] While these conflicts over land cannot, on their own, explain the genocidal violence in Indonesia and Cambodia, neither can that violence be understood without reference to them.

The same is true of conflicts over other valuable natural resources, of which there have historically been a great many across the region. The decades of violence in Aceh and West Papua, for example, can be traced in part to conflicts over such resources, specifically oil and natural gas in Aceh and gold and other minerals in West Papua.[4] Moreover, the very similar pattern of violence in both places – heavy-handed counterinsurgency campaigns by Indonesian forces that have resulted in tens of thousands of casualties – is in large measure related to the unusual value of the resources involved and the dynamic of conflict that has been the result. So vital are these resources that, at least since the 1970s, the central government has felt it necessary and appropriate to use extreme force to secure them. In doing so, it has succeeded not only in stirring resentment about the channelling of revenues and profits out of the regions, but also in generating both great anger and bitterness at the brutal behaviour of the Indonesian security forces and widespread support for armed independence movements – Aceh Merdeka and the Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM). What has distinguished the conflicts in Aceh and West Papua from those over land in the 1960s, then, is that they have set a substantial majority of local people not against their immediate neighbours but rather against the central Indonesian state and the large foreign investors who are seen to be its allies.

Finally, contests over material resources have arguably been central to other kinds of violence in the region, including the virulent ethnic and religious violence of the late 1990s and early 2000s in Indonesia. The widespread attacks on Chinese-Indonesians and their places of business in the period 1994–1998, for example, cannot be understood without some reference to underlying material conflicts, which have a very long history. Simply stated, Chinese-Indonesians were targeted in part because they have long been perceived to be disproportionately wealthy and to have gained their wealth at the expense of "native" Indonesians.[5] Attacks on Chinese-Indonesians and their businesses were as much manifestations of class resentment in a time of economic crisis as they were a simple matter of "ethnic" animosity. The argument here is not that class is necessarily more important, or more real, than ethnicity, but that conflicts and violence that are *expressed* in ethnic or religious terms may at the same time be conflicts over material resources. That matters because it has powerfully shaped the pattern of violence – influencing its likely targets and perpetrators, as well as its geographical distribution, and of course its longer-term political and social consequences (a subject to which I will return below).

At the same time, it is clear that conflicts over material resources – no matter how intense or deeply rooted they may be – cannot explain all of the violence in Southeast Asia, nor its distinctive patterns and variations. It cannot explain, for example, why in a place like Aceh mass violence has ebbed and flowed over time. Nor can it explain why places with very similar material resource bases, and with what would appear to be a similar potential for conflict over those resources, have not always experienced mass violence. Finally, it cannot account for the fact that mass violence has frequently occurred in areas where there is no significant conflict over material resources at all. Clearly, conflict stemming from access to and control over material resources is only a small part of the wider story, and becomes salient only under certain conditions.

Studies from across the region suggest that one of those conditions is the configuration of political power at the local or subnational level.[6] Here we see three recurring patterns. First, where local "bosses" or families exercise substantial control over the political and economic scene – as in the Philippines, Thailand and more recently in Indonesia – we see a pattern of persistent but relatively low-level political violence. Much of that violence is directed either at intimidating or disposing of local political rivals, or at protecting particular economic enterprises. Thus, in the Philippines for example, we see local bosses mobilizing thugs not as part of a broad state plan to defeat communism, nor to prevent the secession of a province, but to ensure victory in the next local election, to crack down on trade unionists who are interfering with production at the boss's factory or plantation, or to get rid of a business rival. This is certainly violence, but it seldom degenerates into what we might call "mass violence".

This pattern can easily turn to mass violence, however, where central government authorities seek to rein in one or more local bosses and to establish something like central government control over the locality or region. In such circumstances, violence can quickly escalate as local bosses or potentates use their well-established networks, including locally recruited militias, to protect their autonomy and prerogatives. That dynamic accurately describes much of the violence that flared in the late nineteenth century as colonial authorities sought to extend their reach into parts of Southeast Asia that had for centuries existed as autonomous political entities. It also describes well the dynamic as the region's independent states have sought to impose their authority in places like the highlands of Burma, southern Thailand, southern Philippines, East Timor, Aceh and West Papua. In all of those places, the result has been violence in which the locality – which in some cases has the qualities of a "local state" – has fought for its autonomy against the centre.[7]

Finally, mass violence may result where established local bosses either experience a threat to their power base or perceive a unique opportunity to expand their power. The nature of these threats and opportunities can influence both the likelihood of violence and its patterns. Among the most important challenges to local power configurations in Southeast Asia have been those stemming from demographic change, which in turn has often been the result of voluntary or forced migration. The arrival of substantial new populations has sometimes threatened long-standing local potentates, as members of the new population have competed for economic and educational opportunities, or for political and administrative office. There is an emerging consensus that it was precisely this kind of demographic shift that underlay much of the religious violence in Indonesia in the late 1990s and early 2000s, especially in West Kalimantan, the Moluccas and Central Sulawesi.[8] There, the preceding decades had seen a gradual but decisive erosion of the dominant political and economic position of one communal group – Christians in Maluku, Dayaks in West Kalimantan, etc. – and had set the stage for conflict along communal lines. That fundamental demographic shift, then, laid the basis for religious conflict and, eventually, for open violence between two groups that until then had lived in relative harmony.

But it needs to be asked: how did the individuals involved in this terrible violence come to think of themselves as primarily members of one or another religious or ethnic group? For that matter, how have any of those involved in mass violence in Southeast Asia come to identify themselves so strongly with one or another communal or ideological group that they have been prepared to kill or die in its name? The answer is not as obvious as it may appear. Geertz notwithstanding, we know enough about the question of identity to be suspicious of any suggestion that a sense of belonging to any particular group is natural or primordial.[9] And there are certainly many different paths that might lead to such a powerful sense of belonging.

The Southeast Asian evidence suggests that one of the most important of these paths to belonging is the experience, or the memory, of violence itself. Past violence has an enduring impact, shaping social and political identities, creating and deepening some bonds of loyalty while weakening others, and providing both justification and models for future violence.[10] Violence, then, has its own history, or genealogy, with a variety of long-lasting social and political consequences.

At the simplest level, those who have direct experience of violence – whether as victim, perpetrator or witness – are invariably transformed by it. In the stories they tell about their reasons for supporting the resistance, for example, East Timorese and Acehnese almost invariably relate a personal experience of extreme violence – a beheading, a rape, an instance of torture – often committed against a family member. In many cases, too, they say that after their experience of violence, they were prepared to sacrifice their lives and to kill. The same is true of many of the minority groups fighting the Burmese army, of Muslims in southern Thailand and of members of the New People's Army in the Philippines.[11] Even those who have not experienced violence directly can be, and frequently are, influenced by the stories and memories of violence related by others. What this tells us is that it is often violence itself, and not necessarily some underlying economic or political grievance, that inspires loyalty and further acts of aggression.

But the experience of violence transforms people in varied ways. The nature of the violence endured, and the context in which it occurs, can serve to solidify, or even create, some bonds of loyalty while fracturing others. Young men in the Burmese, Indonesian and Philippine armies apparently experience a profound deepening of their sense of camaraderie and loyalty through the experience of armed combat with rebels, separatists and communists. But that experience might at the same time alienate them from friends and relatives who have chosen to fight on the other side. Young Christian men who are mobilized by local religious leaders to fight their Muslim neighbours, and who experience extreme violence in the process, are likely to identify more strongly as members of that Christian group after the fight than they did beforehand, and in the process forsake old friendships and relations with Muslims. And the men and women who experience violence at the hands of central government security forces are more likely to come to think of themselves as members of the regional or national group that is (or appears to be) the object of government operations, and set aside, at least for a time, the many differences that once separated them.

In other words, the evidence from Southeast Asia suggests that mass violence must be understood not only as an *outcome* to be explained by reference to a set of exogenous variables, or as the natural consequence of age-old primordial loyalties, but as a vital part of the process through which identities, loyalties and enmities – national, ethnic, religious, class and others – are formed, solidified or broken, and through which both the motivations and the models for future violence are forged.

At the same time, it needs to be stressed that the power of violence to shape identity – and to motivate violence – is seldom, if ever, automatic. Many communities, perhaps most, have histories of violence, or "traditional" models or cultural templates of violent behaviour, yet go for long periods without ever experiencing further mass violence. Clearly, something else is needed for such experiences, memories and traditions to become relevant in the production of new violence. Among the most important agents in that process are the individuals who consciously encourage acts of mass violence through the evocation, or outright fabrication, of such memories, experiences and traditions. Sometimes described as "entrepreneurs" of violence, these individuals, and the "violence specialists" they mobilize, have a capacity to stimulate a sense of identity and enmity, and to provoke mass participation in violence in situations that might otherwise have remained reasonably peaceful.[12] In the Southeast Asian context, such "violence specialists" have included the notorious *preman* (thugs for hire) of Indonesia, as well as a range of semi-official militia groups and paramilitary organizations. But the "entrepreneurs" who organize and mobilize them have more often been "respectable" urban middle-class figures, including political party officials, academics, bureaucrats and religious leaders of all denominations. Indeed, virtually all of the mass violence in modern Southeast Asia has been stimulated and shaped to some considerable degree by the provocation and encouragement of such people, who, by virtue of their respectability, their authority and their access to resources, have been uniquely placed to mobilize large numbers of people to do their bidding.

In sum, these dynamics – related to conflicts over material resources, to local configurations of political power and to the experience and memory of violence itself – appear to explain a good deal about past patterns of violence in Southeast Asia. But it is clear that they have not operated independently, and that they have been salient only under certain historical conditions. My contention here is that two factors have been determinative in shaping violence in the region: first, the character of states, and second, the international environment.

State character

In saying that the character of states has been crucial in shaping mass violence in Southeast Asia, I am making two related claims. The first is that historically all states in the region have shaped and conditioned mass violence in some way – whether as perpetrators, as facilitators or as models of violence. The second is that states of different kinds – military-dominated states, decentralizing states and democratizing states – have influenced mass violence in distinctive ways. In its simplest terms, the argument here is that mass killing, genocide and forced displacement have most often occurred under military-dominated states, while local ethnic and religious violence (including riots, pogroms and so-called "local wars") has occurred almost exclusively in decentralizing or newly democratizing states. While much of the evidence from Southeast Asia on this score is broadly consistent with the existing literature about the role of states in mass violence, some of it casts doubt on the conventional wisdom and so may be relevant to wider debates.

Historically, virtually all of Southeast Asia's modern states have shaped mass violence in three distinct ways. First, and most obviously, they have at some point been the principal perpetrators or instigators of mass violence, whether in the form of forced displacement, mass killing or genocide. Whatever else may be said about the genocides in Cambodia and East Timor, and the mass killings in Indonesia in 1965–1966, for example, there is no doubt that state security forces either killed or mobilized "civilian groups" to kill most of those who died. In the current anxiety and preoccupation with the threat of "terrorist" violence in the region, it is worth remembering that from the mid-1960s to the late 1990s, the Indonesian and Cambodian regimes between them killed at least 4 million people, while over the same time span Southeast Asia's Islamist terrorists killed perhaps a few hundred. More than anything else, this record poses a serious challenge to the common claim that mass political violence is best understood as the product of immutable and deeply rooted societal conflicts that have resurfaced in the absence of a strong state. The evidence suggests rather that such violence is often the result of strategic calculation by political and military leaders.

Second, even where they have not been the principal perpetrators of mass violence, Southeast Asian states have played a critical role in facilitating and provoking it. They have done so, for example, through the production and dissemination of inflammatory propaganda, through the mobilization of ostensibly civilian militia groups and through their inaction in the face of extreme or unlawful violence by their own security forces. In all of these ways, states have made mass violence much more likely to occur, and have contributed to its spread as a preferred political strategy among non-state groups. The mass killings of 1965–1966 in Indonesia are perhaps the clearest example of this pattern, but there are many others.[13] The pattern poses a challenge to two pieces of conventional wisdom about the conditions that give rise to militia or paramilitary violence: first, that militias are spontaneous manifestations of older, "traditional" models of warfare, and second, that they tend to arise where states are weak.[14] The evidence from Southeast Asia suggests that while militias are likely to reflect, and even to embrace, the traditions of a given society, satisfactory explanations for the rise and behaviour of such groups are unlikely to be found in such traditions or cultural traits. The evidence also makes clear that militias do not arise primarily where states are weak but, on the contrary, where they receive political, ideological and logistical encouragement from state, and in particular military, authorities.[15]

Finally, and less obviously, Southeast Asian states have served as a vital link in the formation and spread of violent societal norms and modes of political action. Through the power and example of states – and through their unparalleled institutional reach – distinctive forms, repertoires and discourses of violence have become normalized, and have been employed by non-state actors in their own conflicts even where the state has not played a central role. East Timor and Indonesia again provide the clearest examples, with the dramatic spread of violent local militia groups during the late "New Order". Those groups consciously emulated the style, organization and repertoire of the Indonesian military, and they adopted much of the latter's violent institutional "culture".[16] Most importantly, like the military, they sought to resolve social and political problems through the threat or use of violence.

Looking more closely at the role of states in mass violence in Southeast Asia, a number of additional patterns emerge. In particular, the historical record suggests that there is some correlation between states with certain characteristics and the type and prevalence of mass violence that occurs in a given society. The first observable pattern is that states in which the military has historically played a dominant role have experienced substantially more mass violence of all kinds than states that have been under civilian control. The clearest examples here are Indonesia and Burma, which have been effectively under military control since the late 1950s, and the Philippines and Thailand, which have experienced prolonged periods of military dominance over the same period.[17] These are without question the countries that have experienced the greatest levels of mass violence not directly related to foreign invasion or international war.

The natural question is why military states have tended to be associated with greater levels of mass violence. The most obvious answer is that military institutions are, above all, designed to organize violence, so that where they control or dominate the state they are likely to organize it principally along those lines. Moreover, whatever else they may think, military men and women are trained and socialized to believe that violence can be used to address a wide range of problems, most notably the problems of disorder and insecurity. It is little wonder, then, that states dominated by the military tend to resort to violence when such problems arise.

The answer also appears to be related to the process of state formation. To the extent that state formation has occurred under military auspices – as in Indonesia and Burma – the Southeast Asian experience suggests that the propensity for high levels of violence is especially marked, and may well outlast the period of formal military dominance. The reason seems to be that, over time, the laws, institutions and norms of these states, and the societies over which they preside, come to reflect those of the military. As a consequence, the use of violence – and of particular forms and discourses of violence – becomes deeply embedded in the society itself, and so survives long after the military as an institution has been formally removed from power.

This is possible, even likely, because ideas about violence travel easily through time and space, so the violence of the past readily comes to shape the violence of the future, both within a particular locale and beyond it. Over time, and through the practice of war, institutions like armies, militias and guerrilla forces develop distinctive styles and repertoires of violence. As these institutions move to new theatres of operation – or as their methods come to be known through training, propaganda or personal networks – these repertoires are easily transferred, re-enacted and sometimes refined.[18] When Indonesian army forces landed in East Timor in 1975, for example, they brought with them a distinctive style of violence that had been developed in the campaigns against Islamic rebels in West Java in the 1950s and against real or alleged communists in Java and Bali in 1965–1966. It entailed, first, the mobilization of local civilians into armed militia groups and, second, the deliberate use of terror tactics, such as decapitation, dismemberment, public display of corpses, torture and rape. The same methods were later employed, with only minor alterations, by Indonesian forces in Aceh, in West Papua and again in East Timor in 1999.

It is worth noting that these observations run against the tide of a common argument about the political conditions favourable to genocide and mass killing. This argument maintains that states with utopian or revolutionary ideologies are more likely to commit genocide or other forms of mass killing than other states.[19] The experience of Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge certainly appears to support that view. On the other hand, the genocide in East Timor in 1975–1979 and the mass killings in Indonesia in 1965–1966 – both of which were committed by a decidedly anti-revolutionary Indonesian regime – suggest that a utopian ideology is not in fact a necessary precondition to genocide or mass killing. Indeed, those cases suggest that the key factor is instead military dominance of the state. That conclusion, moreover, is arguably supported by the Cambodian example. After all, before it seized power in 1975 the Khmer Rouge had fought a protracted insurgency for more than a decade. In its structure, and in its readiness to resort to violence to solve the country's problems, it was the quintessential military regime.

If genocide and mass killing are most common in military-dominated states, the region's modern history suggests that decentralizing and democratizing states are much more likely than others to give rise to localized ethnic riots, pogroms and other forms of communal or societal violence. It is conspicuous, for example, that the period of intense ethnic and religious riots and pogroms in Indonesia coincided with the decline of the "New Order" in the mid-1990s and with a period of deliberate and meaningful decentralization and democratization after Suharto's forced resignation in 1998. In that period alone, Indonesia experienced dozens of anti-Chinese riots and at least six protracted local conflicts between various religious or ethnic groups, which together resulted in some 10,000 deaths and untold destruction.[20] Unlike the mass violence of the previous decades, these episodes were not organized by the Indonesian military or its proxies, but were carried out primarily by local men armed with rudimentary but deadly weapons. The reasons for this pattern are worth examining briefly.

One explanation, advanced by van Klinken, is that the communal violence stemmed from struggles for power in areas where control of local political and bureaucratic office had historically been the most prestigious and important prize. Those struggles were precipitated, he argues, by the decisive moves towards decentralization adopted by Indonesian leaders shortly after the fall of Suharto in 1998.[21] The key figures in these local power struggles were not revolutionaries or Islamist "terrorists" but small-town, middle-class functionaries – including bureaucrats, politicians, university officials and religious leaders – all of whom saw in the new, unstable situation either the opportunity to expand their position *vis-à-vis* another group or a threat to their existing position. Both the opportunity and the threat created a situation in which such leaders apparently believed that the mobilization of followers along ethnic or religious lines, and the deployment of violence against others, might prove efficacious in the achievement of their goals.

The move towards a more democratic political system, which was occurring at the same time, accentuated these tendencies. As in other democratizing states, the new situation in Indonesia provided ample opportunity for civil society to behave in decidedly uncivil ways – all in the name of democracy. In addition to secular political parties and non-governmental organizations working to advance human rights, the new arrangement provided opportunities and incentives for the mobilization of militias, paramilitary groups and parties which appealed to communal loyalties. Under the circumstances, it was hardly surprising that political conflicts should have taken a violent turn.

A number of other scholars have likewise highlighted the importance of uncertainty and change in this period in creating the conditions for mass violence. Jacques Bertrand has argued, for example, that the years before and after Suharto's resignation constituted a "critical juncture" in which long-standing political arrangements became a subject of debate and dispute, thereby generating a sense of anxiety, but also of opportunity. In that context, a range of local power brokers, including bureaucrats, academics and religious leaders, sought to mobilize local client networks either to defend the prerogatives of their group or to seize a new measure of power.[22] The significance of uncertainty in generating the violence of these years has been further elaborated by John Sidel.[23] But where van Klinken and Bertrand largely emphasize the *political* uncertainty of the period, Sidel suggests that historically rooted anxieties about religious identity and authority claims were of equal or greater importance.[24] Focusing on the phenomenon of religious violence from 1995 to 2005, he argues that significant shifts in the forms and patterns of that violence – from riots (1995–1997) to pogroms (1999–2001) to *jihad* (2001–2005) – can best be understood by reference to the historical sociology of Islam in Indonesia, and to the anxieties about Islamic identity and position that were stimulated by the dramatic changes of these years.[25]

Contrary to the claims of some analysts, then, the surge in communal violence in Indonesia from 1995 to 2005 did not stem from the unleashing of "age-old" passions and grudges in the absence of a strong state. Nor was it simply a local reprise of a global trend of ethnic cleansing or Islamist terror. Rather, it was the result of a shift in the locus of political authority – from centre to locality, and from established elites to potential upstarts – which threatened to disrupt existing arrangements for the distribution of power among ethnic and religious groups. It was also arguably the product of deep anxieties about religious identity that stemmed from dramatic changes in the fortunes of Islam in Indonesia during this period. The new arrangements provided both the opportunity and the motive for individuals and groups either to protect their old prerogatives or to assert a claim to new ones. In that new context, communal violence was not inevitable, but it was far more likely than it had been before.

To sum up, states in Southeast Asia have historically played an important part in shaping mass political violence, and they have done so even where the state itself has played no direct role as perpetrator. And yet it is self-evident that states do not operate in a vacuum, that their behaviours are to some extent constrained or influenced by other states, and by an ever-changing system of international rules and norms. The historical experience of Southeast Asia, I believe, points to the critical importance of the changing international context in shaping mass violence, and in explaining significant patterns and variations in violence across the region and over time.

International context

I do not mean to suggest here that international actors, rules and norms have determined in some linear fashion when and where mass violence has occurred in Southeast Asia, nor precisely the forms that it has taken. Rather, I am arguing that the timing and character of mass violence in Southeast Asia have been shaped by such forces to a much greater degree than is commonly argued in individual case studies from the region, and in studies of mass violence generally. The connection is especially clear in the case of state-sponsored violence, most notably for genocides and mass killings. But I think a strong case can be made that changing international political and moral contexts, and associated legal regimes, have also shaped the actions and repertoires of non-state actors in Southeast Asia, including political parties, religious organizations and civil society groups.

First, and most obviously, international actors have influenced the course of mass violence in Southeast Asia through their overt or covert support for the perpetrators of such violence. Where powerful states and institutions have provided military and economic resources to the perpetrators, or have turned a blind eye to their abuses, mass political violence has almost always continued and worsened. The 1965–1966 massacre of between 500,000 and 1 million alleged communists in Indonesia, for example, was undoubtedly facilitated by the policy of deliberate silence and non-interference adopted by the United States and other states, and by the immediate provision of material and propaganda assistance to the new regime.[26] Likewise, the Indonesian invasion of East Timor in December 1975, and the ensuing genocide from 1975 to 1979, would almost certainly never have happened without the clear political support and military backing of the United States and many other states.[27] Other examples include the impact of continued Western support for the Khmer Rouge after 1979 in prolonging the civil war in Cambodia and delaying any chance of bringing the perpetrators of the genocide to justice.[28] Similarly, the disturbing silence of the international community in the face of widespread violence by Indonesian security forces during the New Order, notably in Aceh and West Papua, unquestionably contributed to the perpetuation and deepening of that violence.[29]

Second, both states and international institutions have played crucial roles in shaping the contours of mass violence in Southeast Asia through direct military intervention. In some instances such intervention has directly contributed to a worsening of the violence. The French and Dutch attempts to reclaim their former colonial possessions after the Second World War, and the later US interventions in Laos and Vietnam, are the most obvious cases in point. Somewhat less obvious, but still important, was the secret US bombing of Cambodia from 1969 to 1973. According to some analysts, that campaign drove millions of Cambodian peasants in the eastern parts of the country into the arms of the Khmer Rouge, and moreover contributed to the strength and ultimate victory of the Pol Pot faction of the party. In that way, the bombing campaign helped to set the stage for the Cambodian genocide.[30]

Paradoxically, direct military intervention by foreign powers has also been one of the few demonstrably successful mechanisms for bringing an end to mass violence, including genocide. The clearest example of this pattern was the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in early 1979, which resulted in the swift defeat of the Khmer Rouge and ended the genocide. Similarly, the UN-sanctioned military intervention in East Timor ended the widespread post-ballot violence in late 1999 and averted what would certainly have been a major humanitarian disaster. Indeed, an examination of the violence of 1999 in East Timor against the backdrop of the 1975–1979 genocide in the territory suggests that the crucial difference between the two – the factor that arguably prevented a second genocide in 1999 – was swift and effective armed international intervention.[31]

These cases suggest, then, that under certain historical conditions, outside military intervention can be effective in stopping or even preventing genocide and other forms of mass violence and in remedying major humanitarian crises. The examples of Cambodia and East Timor, moreover, also offer clues about what those historical conditions might be. Specifically, they suggest that armed intervention is more likely to succeed in averting mass violence where the violence that is the target of intervention is overwhelmingly one-sided; the principal perpetrators of the violence are constrained by other factors, such as extreme economic vulnerability or political weakness; and the outside force is sufficiently robust, and has a clear mandate, to defeat the principal perpetrators swiftly, without being drawn into prolonged combat. Needless to say, it is extremely rare to find all of these conditions met in one place, and that may explain why armed humanitarian interventions, even when they happen, so often fail or degenerate into civil war. At the same time, the fact that the conditions were met both in Cambodia in 1979 and in East Timor in

1999 provides some basis to believe that, when the conditions are right, armed interventions can succeed in stopping genocides and other kinds of mass violence.

These observations point to a third dimension of the international context that has been critical in shaping the contours of mass violence in Southeast Asia in modern times – the normative political and legal environment. That environment changed markedly during the twentieth century, and those changes have in turn been reflected in the shifting patterns of violence in Southeast Asia during the same period.

In the early twentieth century, for example, the presumption on the part of powerful states that colonialism was both legitimate and desirable provided a normative and legal foundation for the use of violence against colonial peoples, and left few avenues for redress by the colonized beyond insurrectionary movements inspired by Marxism-Leninism or by various "traditional" systems of thought. The result was a pattern of violence characterized on the one hand by heavy-handed state repression, and on the other by occasional acts of violent rebellion or resistance by the colonized. That pattern helps to explain the striking fact that in the final decades of colonial rule in Southeast Asia, violence *among* local peoples – in the form of ethnic riots and religious pogroms – was far less common than it had been in earlier centuries, and than it would again become in the late twentieth century. But state violence and repression persisted: the much vaunted "peace and order" of late colonialism was the peace of the graveyard.

In marked contrast to the prevailing international norm and legal regime in the decades before the Second World War, the early post-war years saw a vigorous and successful challenge to the very idea of colonial rule worldwide. That new environment arguably helped to give rise to distinctive patterns and forms of violence. Notably, it encouraged the idea that mass violence was both a legitimate and an effective means of achieving independence. The fact that other peoples, in Asia, Africa and elsewhere, were using violent methods – including what colonial powers liked to call "terrorism" – to good effect inspired Indonesians, Burmese, Vietnamese, Laotians and others in the region to take up arms against their colonial rulers. The idea of national liberation and the methods of guerrilla war also served as the inspiration and model for later movements against new Southeast Asian states, most notably the Hukbalahap and the Communist Party in the Philippines, the Communist Parties of Thailand and Burma, Fretilin in East Timor, the OPM in West Papua and Aceh Merdeka in Aceh.

The view that violence was justified in the name of national liberation, however, was immediately challenged by a view – especially common among former colonial powers – that state violence was necessary to the maintenance of "political order". During much of the Cold War that norm strongly favoured covert and overt support by powerful Western states for anti-communist regimes, many of which were dominated by military authorities. That tendency not only gave rise to a great deal of violence in itself, as the new military regimes sought to control or suppress dissent, but also ensured that even the worst cases of mass violence would go unanswered – by powerful states and by the United Nations – unless the perpetrators were understood to be communists. The same tendency also doomed the ideal of non-alignment that gained some strength in Southeast Asia in the mid-1950s, before being overpowered by the dubious claim that non-alignment was tantamount to support for communism. Taken together, the increasingly polarized normative and political environment helped to generate the internal insurgencies and counterinsurgency wars that were the distinctive form of mass violence in Southeast Asia from the late 1940s through the 1980s. Indeed, at some point in that period such wars engulfed virtually every country in the region, including Malaysia, Burma, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia and East Timor.

By the late twentieth century the political and legal environment had changed yet again, and that change also reshaped the course and patterns of mass violence in Southeast Asia. The distinctive, even if not the dominant, norm of this period was the ideal of the universality of human rights; the principle that all people possess certain basic rights, whatever their ideology, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status or gender. The shift in thinking among states and international bodies was accompanied by – and by some accounts was the result of – a marked deepening in the strength and autonomy of international institutions, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the ICRC, as well as the system of international human rights and humanitarian law more generally.[32]

One significant check on this shift was the insistence by key Southeast Asian states – most notably Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Burma – and the regional Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) that the international norms and covenants in question were, in fact, Western concoctions that did not take sufficient account of "Asian values" and which therefore could not be accepted as universal. A related impediment to the adoption of the universalist norm, which implicitly justified outside intervention in the affairs of sovereign states, was the persistence of an ASEAN norm which insisted on the principle of non-intervention in the affairs of member states and the preservation of consensus within the group.

Notwithstanding these regional impediments, the new international political and legal environment fundamentally changed the terms of debate with respect to the use of violence for political ends. For one thing, by raising questions about the legitimacy of violence as a political method, it encouraged at least some non-state actors to adopt non-violent approaches. At the same time, the ideal of universality – and the growing body of statutory and customary law that emerged to support it – shifted the ground beneath the feet of states by explicitly challenging their sovereignty and providing their opponents with an internationally recognized vantage point from which to question the state's use of violence. The clearest example of this important shift occurred in East Timor, where, starting in the 1980s, the independence movement more or less abandoned the strategy of armed resistance in favour of a peaceful, diplomatic approach that highlighted infringements of internationally recognized human rights.[33] The calculation, which proved to be correct, was that – whatever Indonesia and ASEAN might say about the matter – such an approach would win much broader international support for the cause of independence than the continuation of a strategy of insurrectionary violence that had its roots in an earlier period.

Difficult as it may be now to recall those times, in the late twentieth century the new norms and institutions had substantial influence on state decision-makers and non-state actors alike, especially when compared to their weakness at the height of the Cold War and in the decades before the Second World War. The new consensus crucially affected the posture and actions of key states and institutions, and thereby influenced the course of mass violence in Southeast Asia. By the late 1990s, for example, the idea of "humanitarian intervention" – intervention on behalf of a people threatened by their own government – had won the favour of powerful states and international bodies, including the United Nations and NATO, and even among ASEAN states. A consensus emerged, if only briefly, that armed humanitarian intervention might be a good thing, and moreover that it could succeed. That idea contributed to a surprising Security Council vote in September 1999 in favour of the armed intervention which brought an immediate end to the widespread violence and forced displacement in East Timor.[34] It was also evident in the progress made, largely under UN auspices, in bringing the perpetrators of the Cambodian genocide to justice.

The most recent shift in the international political and legal environment has been triggered by the events of 11 September 2001 and the US government's response to those events. As in previous periods, the shift has profoundly influenced the pattern of violence in Southeast Asia. Following the US lead, a broad consensus has emerged, at least among states, that security must come first, and that human rights and humanitarian law cannot be considered absolute or universally applicable. Southeast Asian states, most notably Burma but also Indonesia, the

Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore, have eagerly embraced this new norm and used it to justify repressive measures against real or alleged enemies.

At the same time, some of the opponents of those states have explicitly rejected (if they ever accepted them) the ideal of universal human rights, and have instead adopted a language of confrontation and a practice of dramatic violence in the pursuit of political and religious goals. That approach has served as a kind of inspiration to a variety of Muslim opposition groups in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and even Cambodia. While there is little evidence that such groups are directly controlled by international Islamist movements like al-Qaeda, it is undeniable that the methods used by those movements – including "terror" – have provided models and inspiration for local groups. The point is not that the recent religious violence in Southeast Asia has been masterminded by al-Qaeda – that is almost certainly not the case – but that international movements have provided an idea of what is possible and what may work in achieving one's religious, political or military objectives. In that sense, the international Islamist movement of the early twenty-first century is not so different from the national liberation movements and human rights movements that learned and gained inspiration from one another in previous eras.

Conclusions

Existing studies of violence in Southeast Asia tend to focus on a single locale or sequence of events within a given country. Even broad comparative studies of violence in a single country are relatively rare. One reason for this tendency is that the basic work of unearthing and interpreting the historical evidence about violence is still being done, and few scholars have the necessary expertise or the stamina to do that work in more than one country. But the problem also stems from a convention in Southeast Asian studies to frame explanations in terms of distinctive national histories and the presumed uniqueness of local conditions.

There is much to be said for such close-grained approaches. They help us to build up a clear picture of what happened and to develop arguments that are sensitive to unique histories, cultures and social formations. They can also highlight the critical role of individuals, and of historical contingency, in shaping the character of mass violence. At the same time, there are some things that such approaches cannot do. In particular, as I have argued elsewhere, they cannot account well for broad similarities and variations in the patterns of violence across societies and over time.[35] A comparative approach which considers conditions like the character of states and the international context – conditions which can and do change, sometimes quite dramatically – provides better answers. In any case, that is my claim.

The comparative approach adopted in this chapter has yielded a number of conclusions about violence in Southeast Asia which may also have a wider relevance. First, it confirms the importance of conflicts over material resources, and over political power at the subnational level, in shaping the geographical distribution and the nature of mass violence. It also makes clear that violence should be understood not simply as an outcome to be explained by reference to a set of exogenous causes, but as a critical element in the process of shaping the identities, enmities, motivations and methods of future violence. At the same time, the approach adopted here reveals quite clearly that these local social and political dynamics do not operate independently, but become salient in the production of violence only under certain historical conditions.

Among the most important of those conditioning factors, I have argued, is the character of states. More specifically, I have made the case that, at least in modern Southeast Asia, all states have influenced mass violence in three distinct ways – as perpetrators, as facilitators and as models of violent behaviour. I have also argued that states of different kinds have shaped violence in different ways, with military-dominated states more likely to generate mass killing, genocides and forced displacement, and weakly democratic and decentralizing states more commonly giving rise to localized ethnic and religious violence.

These findings shatter a widely discredited but still common claim that mass violence is best understood as the result of age-old ethnic or religious conflicts that have resurfaced in the absence of a strong state. They suggest instead that, far from being the natural by-product of "primordial" passions freed from state control, mass violence is often the result of strategic calculation and orchestration by state leaders and their proxies, and that the pattern of such violence is frequently shaped by the norms and cultures of key state institutions, especially military institutions. They also show that civilian militia forces, and other "societal" agents of violence, do not necessarily arise where states are weak – or independently of state influence – but often where they receive political, ideological and logistical encouragement from state, and in particular military, authorities.

Noting that states do not operate in isolation, I have also argued that the international legal, political and normative environment has been crucial in facilitating, shaping and limiting mass violence in Southeast Asia. Against the grain of "realist" analysis, for example, the evidence from the region suggests that international institutions and norms have significantly influenced the incidence and patterns of mass violence, including genocide and mass killing. The evidence also reveals that a crucial factor in facilitating mass violence has been the absence of timely and meaningful international intervention, and it highlights the unique conjuncture of historical conditions that have inhibited or encouraged such intervention.

These preliminary conclusions may help us to assess the prospects for preventing mass violence, or stopping it once it has begun. Here the evidence from Southeast Asia is mixed. On the one hand, it suggests that under certain historical conditions, mass violence – including genocide – can be prevented and even stopped. On the other hand, it makes clear that the chances of ending violence through local intervention, or on a case-by-case basis, are quite limited. To the extent that mass violence is shaped by the character of states, and by the prevailing political and legal environment, meaningful solutions will have to address, or at a minimum work in tandem with, a set of historical conditions that are extremely difficult to change.

Notes

1. See Peluso, Nancy Lee and M. Watts (eds) (2001) *Violent Environments*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
2. Robinson, Geoffrey (1995) *The Dark Side of Paradise: Political Violence in Bali*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
3. Kiernan, Ben (1996) *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia Under the Khmer Rouge, 1975–79*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
4. On Aceh, for example, see Robinson, Geoffrey (2001) "*Rawan* is as *Rawan* Does: The Origins of Disorder in New Order Aceh", in Benedict Anderson (ed.) *Violence and the State in Suharto's Indonesia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program Publications, pp. 213–242.
5. See Reid, Anthony and Daniel Chirot (eds) (1997) *Essential Outsiders: Chinese and Jews in the Modern Transformation of Southeast Asia and Central Europe*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press; Coppel, Charles (1983) *Indonesian Chinese in Crisis*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.
6. See, for example, Sidel, John T. (1999) *Capital, Coercion and Crime: Bossism in the Philippines*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press; Robinson, note 2 above.
7. On Burma see Smith, Martin (1991) *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity*. London: Zed Books. On Thailand see Winichakul, Thongchai (1994) *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-body of the Nation*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press. On Aceh see Robinson, note 4 above.
8. See, for example, Bertrand, Jacques (2004) *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia*. New York: Cambridge University Press; van Klinken, Gerry (2007) *Communal Violence and Democratization in Indonesia: Small Town Wars*. London: Routledge.
9. For a different view, see Geertz, Clifford (1973) "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States", in Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, pp. 255–310.

10. See Peluso, Nancy Lee (2006) "Passing the Red Bowl: Creating Community Identity through Violence in West Kalimantan, 1967–1997", in Charles Coppel (ed.) *Violent Conflicts in Indonesia: Analysis, Representation, Resolution*. New York: Routledge, pp. 106–128.
11. See, for example, Smith, note 7 above.
12. There is an extensive literature touching on the role of elites and those they employ to stimulate mass violence. See, for example, Tilly, Charles (2003) *The Politics of Collective Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Brubaker, Rogers (2003) *Ethnicity Without Groups*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; Brass, Paul (1996) *Riots and Pogroms*. London and New York: Macmillan/NYU Press; Tambiah, Stanley (1997) *Leveling Crowds: Ethnonationalist Conflict and Collective Violence in South Asia.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
13. See Cribb, Robert (ed.) (1990) *The Indonesian Killings, 1965–1966: Studies From Java and Bali*. Clayton, Vic.: Monash University; Robinson, note 2 above.
14. See Sluka, Jeffrey A. (ed.) (2000) *Death Squad: The Anthropology of State Terror*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press; Davis, Diane E. and Anthony W. Pereira (eds) (2003) *Irregular Armed Forces and Their Role in Politics and State Formation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
15. Robinson, Geoffrey (2002) "People's War: Militias in Indonesia and East Timor", *South East Asia Research* 9(3), pp. 271–318.
16. See Ryter, Loren (2001) "Pemuda Pancasila: The Last Loyalist Free Men of Suharto's Order?", in Benedict Anderson (ed.) *Violence and the State in Suharto's Indonesia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program Publications, pp. 124–155.
17. On Indonesia see Crouch, Harold (1978) *The Indonesian Army in Politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. On Burma see Callahan, Mary P. (2003) "When Soldiers Kill Civilians: Burma's Crackdown in 1988 in Comparative Perspective", in James Siegel and Audrey Kahin (eds) *Southeast Asia over Three Generations*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program, pp. 331–346. On Thailand see Anderson, Benedict (1998) "Murder and Progress in Siam", in Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World*. London: Verso, pp. 174–191.
18. For an elaboration of this argument in the cases of Aceh and East Timor see Robinson, note 4 above; Robinson, note 15 above.
19. For variations on this argument see Valentino, Benjamin (2004) *Final Solutions: Mass Killing and Genocide in the Twentieth Century*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press; Weitz, Eric (2003) *A Century of Genocide: Utopias of Race and Nation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; Fein, Helen (1990) "Genocide: A Sociological Perspective", *Current Sociology* 38, Spring, pp. 1–7, 32–50.
20. The six major episodes occurred in West Kalimantan (twice), Central Kalimantan, Central Sulawesi, Maluku and North Maluku. The figure of 10,000 encompasses all deaths from collective violence between 1996 and 2002, other than those killed in East Timor, West Papua and Aceh. See van Klinken, Gerry (2007) "Communal Conflict and Decentralization in Indonesia", Occasional Papers Series No. 7, University of Queensland, Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, July, pp. 1, 4.
21. The agendas of these local political leaders, van Klinken writes, "[a]ll revolved around the widely anticipated decentralizing reforms of those years. The central issue in each conflict . . . was communal control over local state offices whose powers had increased or were about to increase." Ibid., p. 8. Also see van Klinken, note 8 above.
22. Bertrand, note 8 above.
23. Sidel, John T. (2006) *Riots, Pogroms, and Jihad: Religious Violence in Indonesia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

24. Sidel writes: “[R]eligious violence should be understood as reflecting not the strength and solidity of religious faiths, identities, and solidarities but their perceived fragility and vulnerability in the face of competing – religious and non-religious – forms of consciousness, association, and mobilization.” Ibid., p. 16.
25. Sidel writes, for example, that the shifting forms of violence reflected “sociological and political changes that variously enabled and constrained the possibilities for articulating, representing, mobilizing, and promoting Islam”. Ibid., p. 11.
26. Robinson, note 2 above, pp. 282–286; National Security Archive (2001) “CIA Stalling State Department Histories”, available at www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB52/.
27. See Commission on Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in East Timor (CAVR) (2006) *Chega!*. Dili: CAVR; Nevins, Joseph (2005) *A Not-So-Distant Horror: Mass Violence in East Timor*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press; National Security Archive (2001) “East Timor Revisited: Ford, Kissinger and the Indonesian Invasion, 1975–76”, available at www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB62/.
28. Shawcross, William (1979) *Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia*. New York: Pocket Books.
29. Amnesty International (1994) *Power and Impunity: Human Rights Under the New Order*. London: Amnesty International; Amnesty International (1993) *“Shock Therapy”: Restoring Order in Aceh, 1989–1993*. London: Amnesty International.
30. Kiernan, note 3 above.
31. Robinson, Geoffrey (2008) “People Power: A Comparative History of Forced Displacement in East Timor”, in Eva Lotta Hedman (ed.) *Conflict, Violence and Displacement in Indonesia: Dynamics, Patterns, Experiences*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program Publications.
32. See Robertson, Geoffrey (2000) *Crimes Against Humanity: The Struggle for Global Justice*. New York: New Press.
33. See Niner, Sarah (2000) *To Resist Is to Win: The Autobiography of Xanana Gusmão*. Richmond, Vic.: Aurora Books; Kohen, Arnold (1999) *From the Place of the Dead: The Epic Struggles of Bishop Belo of East Timor*. New York: St Martin’s Press.
34. Robinson, Geoffrey (2010) *“If You Leave Us Here, We Will Die”: How Genocide Was Stopped in East Timor*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
35. Robinson, note 2 above.

5

On the borderlines: Politics, religion and violence in Bangladesh

Naureen Chowdhury Fink

The borders of new states represent sites of contention on two different levels: physical and intellectual. The physical border challenges the government of the state to extend its authority and meet its obligations to citizens within the territory which it encapsulates; to match its "juridical" authority with "empirical authority" and fulfil the criteria for independent statehood.[1] Moreover, governments are charged with its protection and ensuring that it is not breached by illicit movements of people or goods. On the intellectual level, borders present a need for the creation of a national identity that justifies political independence, the very *raison d'être* of the borders. This involves the creation of a national narrative and posits choices regarding the nature of the new state and its institutional structure, as well as political mechanisms for managing the state-society relationship. The physicality of the new boundary and its intellectual basis also force new social and political decisions. Benedict Anderson's "imagined community" becomes all too real as those living in the border areas or enclaves on either side of the political boundary are forced by the appearance of a barrier to identify themselves with a national enterprise and relinquish bonds of community shared with those across a political boundary.[2]

Weaknesses in addressing the physical challenges, including poor governance, service delivery and security oversight, as well as unresolved questions on the intellectual level regarding a national narrative and identity, have created a basis for political violence in Bangladesh. Since achieving independence from Pakistan in 1971, questions of state

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Political violence in South and Southeast Asia: Critical perspectives, Abraham, Newman and Weiss (eds), United Nations University Press, 2010, ISBN 978-92-808-1190-2

structure, political ideology and the role of religion have been fiercely debated among Bangladeshis. They have contributed to a confrontational relationship between key political actors whose differing views on issues of institutional structures and ideology have often been expressed through acts along the spectrum of political violence, including street agitations and strikes (*hartals*), violent protests, assassinations, bombs and the intimidation of political opponents by armed groups or *mastaans*. Incidents of terrorism, or attacks on civilians deliberately inflicted to generate widespread fear in the hope of effecting political change, though relatively new in Bangladesh, may also be seen as the extreme end of this spectrum.

This essay takes as its point of departure the installation of democratic government in Bangladesh in 1991. It will examine the role of both types of challenges – physical and intellectual – to Bangladesh as a state and an idea, and how conflicts about these have contributed to a confrontational political culture in which the use of violence has been normalized to express political differences. The first challenge examined is the search for a national identity, and how this has generated a strongly emotive nationalist narrative to underscore the *raison d'être* for the political borders of 1971. However, unresolved questions relating to state authority and national identity continue to fuel a confrontational political culture, which will be examined in the following section. Though this discourse has been largely secular, the increasing salience of religion in public and political life in Bangladesh poses a challenge to both the ideological and the physical legitimacy of the state and its borders, which will be examined in the third section. The fourth section explores the role of regional dynamics and how their engagement poses challenges to the Bangladeshi border that contribute to the persistence of political violence in the country.

Research for this study was undertaken through a series of field trips to Bangladesh, the United Kingdom and within the United States which elicited numerous interviews with academics, key policy-makers, representatives of the government and civil society and experts on and from the region, over the course of a year and half. An extensive review of the relevant literature also informed the substance of the chapter, as did the author's professional engagement in researching multilateral responses to security issues.

The evolution of modern Bangladesh and the search for a national identity

A conversation with the director of a folk-art foundation established by Bangladeshi artist Zainul Abedin elicited the following explanation for its establishment: Abedin believed that since Bangladesh had achieved its independent political identity in 1971, it should make every attempt to preserve the cultural traditions that underpinned this desire for independence.[3] However, not everyone agrees on what the identity of the new nation and its citizens ought to be, with some favouring a secular nationalist one while others wish to retain Islam as a prominent element. Both facets were important in underscoring the desire for independence. However, the unresolved nature of the question has fuelled the confrontational rhetoric of key political actors and proved a continuing basis for much political violence in the country.

The partition of Bengal in 1905 and then the partition of India in 1947, followed by the violence which accompanied the emergence of Bangladesh in place of East Pakistan, have lent its borders great emotive significance and engendered a strong and widespread sense of nationalism.[4] As the only state in South Asia whose independence was achieved through a successful struggle based on an ethno-linguistic identity, Bangladesh is unique. Indeed, the majority of the Bengal borderland is a completely new international border and does not follow any prior demarcations. The relative ethnic and religious homogeneity of Bangladesh, with nearly 85 per cent of its population of approximately 140 million people being Muslim, has allowed its citizens to relate themselves more readily to a "nation" and Bangladesh as a nation-state. Yet, as Sofia Uddin points out, nationalism requires pageantry and symbolism, and traditions that create an inalienable bond between the land and the people; a legitimation of a people's claim to territory and status as a nation-state. Flags, national anthems, narratives of war and victory, collective loss and rebirth as an independent nation – these are all accessories to complement political independence, and in Bangladesh they reflect a sense of pride in the culture and heritage of *Sonar Bangla*, or "Golden Bengal".[5]

As a result of this history, Bangladesh's national identity emerged in opposition to the Islamic identity of Pakistan and the Hindu identity of West Bengal. This Bangladeshi (as opposed to *Bengali*) identity is based on what Ali Riaz has called "confessional territoriality" – that is, based on the territorial boundaries of the new state, Bengali culture and Islam.[6] Moreover, as Iftekhar Chowdhury has observed:

> After experience had indicated a distinct set of interests for Bengali Muslims, their basic strategy in countering threat perceptions from one community was to seek an alliance with the other. The perceived threats were seen to be to one or the other of their attributes – to their *Bengaliness* or to their *Muslimness.*[7]

Each of these attributes is associated with one of the two dominant political parties. The left-of-centre Awami League (AL) was led by

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, a charismatic man credited as being the founding leader of the state and affectionately called *Bangabandhu*, "friend of Bengal". Under his leadership, the fundamental principles guiding the new state were to be secularism, nationalism, democracy and socialism.[8] Scarred by the violence which accompanied the partitions of 1947 and 1971, secularism was seen as a means of erasing communal boundaries and creating a space accommodative of the Muslim majority as well as the significant Hindu minority, Christians, Buddhists and tribal communities. He was assassinated alongside his whole family, other than two daughters who were abroad at the time, at his residence in August 1975. Since 1981 the Awami League has been led by his daughter Sheikh Hasina, and continues to be associated with the principle of secular nationalism and a favourable disposition towards diverse ethnic groups – what is perceived as a "pro-liberation" stance.

The right-of-centre Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) was founded by Ziaur Rahman, a decorated war hero who remains revered for his bravery in 1971 and his role in leading Bangladesh to independence. He served as president from 1977 until his assassination in 1981. Influenced by Cold War politics which led to Western suspicion of socialist India, as well as the need to engage with Islamic countries unhappy at the dismemberment of Pakistan, President Zia propagated a more religious brand of nationalism, emphasizing an Islamic identity making Bangladesh distinct from West Bengal and India.[9] Under his leadership, "*Bismillah-ir-Rahman-ir-Rahim*" (In the name of Allah, the most Beneficent, the Merciful) was inserted into the preamble of the constitution and the principle of secularism was replaced with "absolute faith and trust in the Almighty Allah". Furthermore, socialism was redefined as economic and social justice.[10] This top-down process was continued by the government of General Ershad, which declared Islam to be the state religion in 1988 and sought to establish a "mosque-centred" society.[11] Supporters of the BNP are associated more with a religious Muslim perspective which some have considered "anti-liberation" and opposed to the evolution of the Bangladeshi state, a sentiment that has been heightened by the BNP's association with religious parties believed to have actively opposed Bangladeshi nationalism and independence.

Jamaat-e-Islami remains the country's most influential religious party.[12] Its carefully worded objectives call for an Islamic state, to be achieved through a democratic process in which a more religiously observant society will vote them into power. However, its reputation in Bangladesh has been coloured by its pro-Pakistani stance in 1971 and accusations of collaboration and war crimes perpetrated against pro-Bangladesh activists and intellectuals. Consequently, in a bid to gain public legitimacy, Jamaat has focused on providing much-needed social services and medical care to build up its popular base, adopting a strategy similar to that successfully pursued by Hamas and Hezbollah in developing a broad base of support among the downtrodden. This has been possible through impressive organization supported by well-organized funding: membership dues, investment in the private sector and external funding. "Jamaat has not pressed an Islamic agenda too overtly, but its ministers have acquired a reputation for being competent and incorrupt, which would serve it well if disillusionment with the major parties spreads."[13] In the 2001–2006 BNP-led government it played a crucial "kingmaker" role in giving the government the necessary parliamentary majority, and held two ministerial portfolios, agriculture and social welfare, which allowed it to develop a strong relationship with rural constituents. Yet despite 30 years of active political organization, it has never been able to win more than 17 seats in the 300-member Jatiya Sangsad (parliament), and in the most recent election lost all but two parliamentary seats, including those of its senior members.

The relationship of each party to the history of independence and, consequently, the borders of the new state continues to fuel deep-seated differences among their respective supporters. For those who recall 1971 and were closely involved in the events leading up to independence, the ferocity of Pakistan's attempts to keep the state together belied the bond of religious unity. Bangladeshis who recall the struggles of the language movement in the 1950s and the perceived abandonment of the eastern front during the 1965 war with India recall the desire for independence, juridical and empirical. Policies of the central government in Pakistan which left the more populous eastern wing under-resourced and under-protected (particularly during the Indo-Pakistani war of 1965) and Pakistani declarations suggesting that the syncretic religious practices in the east were "un-Islamic" left Bengalis smarting. Recent traditions, nationalist symbolism and rituals, such as the 21 February *Ekushey* commemorations of those who died for the recognition of Bengali as a national language in Pakistan, are vital parts of transferring these values to later generations, and consequently reasserting the border each time they are upheld. For those in Bangladesh who believe in a stronger religious identity for the state and its citizens, these very symbols of nationalism present a dilution of this ideal and the prospect for unity with co-religionists in other countries, whether spiritual or political.

However, for many young Bangladeshis, especially those living abroad among the diaspora, 1971 and independence are distant memories. New borders and communities are formed as religion provides a more common denominator among different ethnic and national groups in the new country, threatening to supersede the common bonds of ethno-linguistic heritage or territoriality which informed a more secular nationalism. In the quest for assimilation in the new country, *bidesh*, notions of *desh* or "home", are left behind more easily than religion.[14]

The politics of violence

Though Bangladesh achieved its territorial and political sovereignty nearly four decades ago, it has made unsteady progress in consolidating democratic institutions. As Rounaq Jahan has pointed out, politicians have increasingly become autocratic in behaviour; key institutions like the civil administration and judiciary have become politicized and lost their autonomy. The rule of law and both horizontal and vertical accountability have eroded.[15]

These failures have contributed to the creation of a permissive environment for the emergence of violent political actors, ideological and religious militant groups and civil unrest. Consequently, non-state actors, as well as those believed to be patronized by factions within ruling governments, have been able to contest the legitimacy of the state or government and threaten its physical integrity through acts of violence. As Edward Newman has argued, while weak states may provide an enabling environment for the emergence of violent political actors, or certain types of terrorist groups, additional variables like support from local actors need to be identified.[16] In Bangladesh, the political parties and their supporters are widely believed to support – either explicitly or implicitly – violent actors who serve the purpose of intimidating opponents or consolidating political support. Though noteworthy progress has been made in Bangladesh on a number of development indicators through initiatives such as micro-credit programmes, non-formal education for women and stipends to promote secondary school attendance and family planning programmes, the persistence of violence continues to constrain the ability of Bangladeshis to pursue development in a safe and secure environment with a responsive and accountable government. As a result, it is also unsurprising that where the use of violence in *competing* for state power has been widely condoned, groups *contesting* the state and its power have also adopted violent means.

Although the BNP and the AL have alternated periods in power through four elections since 1991, none has been without controversy or allegations of vote rigging by the losing party. Both parties have rigorously made use of parliamentary boycotts and general strikes in order to protest the actions of the ruling party. In 2001, for example, the BNP and its coalition allies boycotted parliament despite appeals from the Speaker to attend sessions dedicated to two important questions of government. Following the landslide electoral victory of the BNP in 2001, the Awami

League boycotted parliament, alleging a rigged election, and though it returned to serve as the opposition, again boycotted parliament in 2003–2004. Perceiving no role for a "loyal opposition" in the parliament, political disagreements in Bangladesh were expressed through walkouts from parliament or *hartals* (general strikes) which more than often resulted in an economic and social standstill the country could ill afford, in particular small businesses and those earning daily wages.[17] Indeed, a recent UN study found both parties nearly equal in their calls for *hartals*, though it also noted that the public were now less convinced of their effectiveness.[18] Consequently, politics has developed into a "winner-take-all" system with little or no role for the opposition, and the essential tools of political discourse – debate and dialogue – were replaced by confrontational tactics.

With the stakes of electoral victory high, political parties have resorted to the use of money and muscle in their campaigns. As van Schendel notes, the *mastaan*, or armed criminal, has gained prominence as an intermediary between the worlds of criminality and politics, and been used to further political campaigns and messages.[19] Notable Bangladeshi academic and economist Rehman Sobhan observed:

> The patronage extended by a political party to *mastaans* or hoodlums derives from the dependence of many political figures on these forces to ensure their election and the retention of their political authority in their constituency area. Many politicians now increasingly use *mastaans* as a political resource in the contention for political office and state patronage to access public resources. The resultant nexus between politicians, business, the *mastaans* and law enforcement agencies is now embedded into the social structure of Bangladesh.[20]

Reports of intimidation and violence against minorities and political opponents introduce the notion of violence as an increasingly "normal" political tactic and means of resolving conflictual ideologies. This is reflected in the violence associated with student politics in Bangladesh, where the activities of student wings of the major political parties often bring the pursuit of academic progress to a grinding halt. Political opportunism and the interpretation of politics as a zero-sum game have shaped events at institutions of higher education. Though student political activism is itself commendable, the adoption of violent confrontational tactics by the student wings of dominant political parties, including the Islami Chattra Shibbir representing Jamaat, has contributed to the politicization of academics and created an intimidating environment for many teachers and students on university campuses. It is also important as student political leaders often go on to have prominent roles in politics on a national level; and it has compromised not only the security of

Bangladeshis but the quality of education and religious interpretation available to students. Imtiaz Ahmed observed that:

> Militancy and extremism, after all, are first and foremost intellectual exercises, which only later express themselves through violence. However, the complicity of the state, particularly the activities of some of the actors and agencies within the government, cannot be ruled out in the birth of "academic-extremists".[21]

The rise of religious rhetoric in violence

Send in the jihadists

In recent years, concerns about political violence, *mastaans* and *hartals* have been paralleled – at times even eclipsed – by the emergence of militant groups espousing violent religious extremism. Groups like the Harkatul Jihad Al Islami (HuJI), associated with Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda, as well as Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Ahle Hadith Andolon Bangladesh (AHAB) emerged in the mid-1990s following the return of fighters to Bangladesh after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan.[22] They questioned the legitimacy of the secular government, declared their opposition to democratic political processes and proposed a violent transformation of Bangladesh into their interpretation of an Islamic state. The objectives of these new groups call for the establishment of an Islamic state and the imposition of *Shari'a* law. Unlike Jamaat, they reject the democratic political system as a means of achieving this. As such, they challenge the legitimacy of the state and the nationalism which gave rise to its independence. A web posting purportedly by the JMB and recently cited by the Council on Foreign Relations declared:

> We are inviting all the concerns of Bangladesh to abstain [from] the so called election system and also inviting to conduct the country under the rule of Allah because the constitution of Bangladesh directly contradicts with the Holy Quran and Sahih Hadith. This is the reason, Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh, is committed to establish the rule of Allah in this country under the system of *Qital*.[23]

These groups – in particular the JMB and JMJB – are believed to be responsible for a number of attacks on cultural events and the judiciary, and a series of nearly 400 bomb blasts in all but one district of Bangladesh in August 2005. The HuJI has been blamed for an attack on the British high commissioner in May 2004, while the JMB and its associates have been held responsible for an attempt on the life of Sheikh Hasina at a rally in 2004, which critically injured many, including senior AL party leaders, one of whom died from her injuries.[24]

Bomb blasts and protests against Bengali cultural events, artistic traditions and representatives of the secular government signify a rejection of nationalist values and the state as a legitimate political entity. The physicality of the explosions and protests moves beyond an intellectual exercise in opposition and threatens the physical integrity of the state and one of the foremost responsibilities of a modern government, the protection of its territory and people. Groups like the HuJI, JMB and JMJB have been associated with al-Qaeda, whose objectives are more universalist in seeking to revive an Islamic caliphate that will unite the Muslim *umma*, or community, irrespective of political boundaries. However, to date their actions have focused on attempts to effect political change within Bangladesh. Widely circulated reports of government patronage for such groups, particularly when Jamaat was present in the BNP-led government of 2001–2006, have underscored the normalization of violence as a mode of consolidating power and effecting political change. It thus comes as little surprise that groups expressing wholesale opposition to the state and its political leadership should also adopt these same violent methods of political expression.

Borders imagined

The rejection by militant groups of the secular state warrants an exploration of the alternatives proposed. Many of these remain in the realm of the ideal and in highly subjective interpretations of history; they include imagined communities of faith which fail to acknowledge sectarian or ethno-cultural differences even within the Muslim *umma* itself. They have often been imagined in opposition to the “other”, whether symbolized by Hindu India or the Christian “West”, or, for diaspora populations, imagined notions of the homeland their parents or grandparents left behind, rather than their contemporary environment. This latter group are especially important as they relay both ideas and resources across political borders back into Bangladesh from places like the United Kingdom, the Middle East and Southeast Asia; such ideas, often more radical than those found within Bangladesh itself, are imported back from those abroad deemed a social or financial success.

Sayid Qutb, whose writings influenced the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood and continue to shape the ideas of many Islamists today, rejected the notion of nationalism as a remnant of *jahiliyya*, or the time of ignorance before the Prophet Muhammad conveyed the teachings of Islam.[25] Moreover, nationalism contravened ideas regarding the indivisibility of the *umma*; *fitna*, or divisions among the faithful, are also proscribed by Islam. These ideas were reflected in Jamaat's support for the indivisibility of Pakistan and rejection of the nationalist enterprise in Bangladesh.

To note the recent rise in religiosity or religious sentiment in public life is not to say that religion has been historically absent from the region. Yet in Bangladesh, Islamic practices have long reflected a moderate and inclusive system of belief and practice inspired by the Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence and Sufi practice. Bengali culture has been enriched by the interplay of numerous civilizational and religious influences, and contemporary social practices are strongly rooted in the multicultural history of the region. Monuments and history reflect the rotation of power between Hindu, Muslim and, at times, Buddhist rulers.[26] The "secularism" which Sheikh Mujib promoted in 1972 was in fact reflective of this tradition and its translation into Bengali as *dharma nirapekshata*, which literally translates to "religious neutrality".[27]

> Secularism does not mean the absence of religion. Hindus will observe their religion; Muslims will observe their own; Christians and Buddhists will observe their religions . . . religion cannot be used for political ends.[28]

However, by the early nineteenth century the more orthodox teachings of the Deobandi school and the Wahabbi movement had reached Bengal and introduced a more fundamentalist Islam espoused by the Faraizi movement. Furthermore, it introduced the idea of Mecca, or the Arab world, as the locus of authentic Islam in place of religious practices informed by Bengali culture. Bangladesh has not been immune to the influx of contemporary "petrodollars" from the Middle East and the development of a transnational ideology of "militant *jihad*" further fuelled by geopolitical events. Reports indicate that vigilante militant groups have taken over law-and-order functions in rural pockets, holding village religious courts known as *salish* and issuing legal judgments or *fatwas* along with punishments not sanctioned by the state.[29] However, one academic commented that the surge of religious orthodoxy may be ascribed to "the growing pains of modernity; a reaction against [Bangladesh's] own progress" and a response by local authorities to challenges mounted against local power structures.[30]

In Bangladesh, the ascendancy of Mecca as a locus of influence has been supported by migration and the movement of people and ideas across borders. Remittances of funds and observations of "authentic" Islamic practices in the Middle East shape the religious organizations, charities and education in the home country. In place of the Islam practised in Bengal, informed by regional languages, practices and traditions and based on Hanafi and Sufi thought, groups like the JMB and HuJI would impose the more conservative and rigid mores promoted by the Wahabbi school of Islamic thought. Furthermore, their articulation of the ideal religious community has a regional dimension as it rejects modern political borders. The ideal Islamic state they call for is a path towards the unification of the *umma* and therefore challenges the notion of modern political borders. For example, Hizb-ut-Tahrir in Bangladesh argues:

> So it is not permitted for the Ummah to only be unified upon her belief while remaining divided politically: as the Prophet ordered his companions to give their allegiance to the Khulafa one after another, and that if two leaders were given allegiance at any one time then the latter should be killed.
>
> The call for the Khilafah is the call for the protection of the Ummah. It is the call for the implementation of Islam based upon political unity in order this Ummah can take its place as witnesses upon mankind. If the Ummah was united under the banner of Islam, the believers would be able to strengthen one another, rather than being like the froth on the sea. The combined land mass, resources and manpower of the Muslims from Pakistan to Egypt to Turkey would be used in order to make the word of Allah and His Messenger most high, rather than used against the Ummah to support the enemies of Allah and His *deen* . . .[31]

However, it is noteworthy that these declarations fail to expound on details regarding the administration of such a state, or how such a caliphate would coexist with the geopolitical realities of the modern world and engage in international affairs. There are no references or manifestos that address how such a state would manage the administration of the state and its bureaucracy, how it would implement service delivery for its citizens or engage in international affairs and trade. Furthermore, though the rhetoric of militant religious groups recalls the "golden age" of Islam, as exemplified by the Abbasid period, none references the importance of the state patronage for the sciences and arts that facilitated the intellectual developments underpinning this period.

In a nation whose citizens are both religiously devout and democratically inclined, there exists a complex dynamic that cautions against the assumption that religiosity is synonymous with support for terrorism or violent extremism. Although the people in Bangladesh may be religious in their personal sphere, there were few large-scale demonstrations in the wake of, for example, the Danish cartoon crisis or the elections in Gujarat, in contrast to what might have been expected, and the spate of bombings in 2005 elicited widespread disapprobation. Reports of violence against minorities have often prompted vocal activism by civil society groups, and the rituals and festivals of multiple religions, including Durga Puja, continue to be celebrated in Bangladesh.

However, one long-time observer told this author that he believes Bangladesh *has* undergone a worrisome change and has become a "rougher, tougher, place".[32] Among concerns cited by analysts and observers is the increased incidence of Islamic dress mirroring that worn in the Middle East, such as the *burqa* or *hijab*, rather than that indigenous to Bengal, such as the sari for women and *lungi* for men. More alarmingly, the violent protests against equal inheritance rights for women mounted by the Islami Okiya Jote, an Islamist party and a junior coalition member in the 2001–2006 BNP government, and reports of women being punished by village elders for perceived transgressions against Islamic law indicate the potential for violence of such transformations.

Nonetheless, the 2008 elections in Bangladesh and the Awami League's landslide victory reflected an overwhelming reaffirmation by Bangladeshi citizens of a national identity based on a secular and accommodative brand of nationalism.[33] Furthermore, Bangladesh possesses a number of strong – or potentially strong – counter-forces to this threat.[34] Its people have overwhelmingly expressed their preference for democratic and pluralist government despite several periods of autocratic rule. In developing its own unique responses to political challenges, such as the caretaker government system to oversee elections and adapting its systems of government when necessary, Bangladesh has shown a capacity for state renovation which defies predictions of state failure. Innovative NGOs like BRAC and Grameen, civil society groups and the media in Bangladesh have pushed a quiet revolution promoting women's rights, development and education. Nationalism and the memory of 1971 serve as a potent check on religious politics. Through elections and popular movements, Bangladeshis have shown themselves to have little tolerance for mass violence in the name of religion, though they may be personally pious.[35]

Opposing "the other"

This idealized Islamic community which militant groups in Bangladesh have advocated has also been imagined in opposition to the "other". Values associated with the "Christian West",[36] such as democracy, freedom of speech, the empowerment of women and religious freedom, have met with virulent protest among Islamists, some violent and some peaceful, notwithstanding that many of these values underscored anti-colonial movements in the region. Within South Asia, the "other" has largely been represented by "Hindu India", and several observers neglect the extent to which actions among the religious right are perceived as a threat to

Islam and therefore considered a *casus belli* for militant Islamist groups in the region.

However, within parts of India too, an ideal of religious purity shapes perceptions and engagements with others. For example, the espousal of Hindutva by militant Hindu groups and right-wing parties like the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) reasserts the notion of a Hindu motherland as it is claimed to have existed prior to the Mughal ascendancy. Though this ideology is not intended to make an impact beyond the political borders of modern India, it reflects the desire for the re-establishment of a utopian existence, and the rhetoric of exclusion threatens the country's at times fragile inter-communal relationships. Exemplifying the ideology of such groups, their vision of a religiously exclusive community and their hostility to other groups, the BJP's website proclaims:

> Thus, the seeds of today's Hindu *Jagriti*, awakening, were created the very instance that an invader threatened the fabric of Hindu society which was religious tolerance. The vibrancy of Hindu society was noticeable at all times in that despite such barbarism from the Islamic hordes of central Asia and Turkey, Hindus never played with the same rules that Muslims did. The Communist and Muslim intelligentsia, led by Nehruvian ideologists who are never short of distorted history, have been unable to show that any Hindu ruler ever matched the cruelty of even a moderate Muslim ruler.[37]

Though the underlying causes of violence in South Asia are complex and multifaceted, as indicated in the discussion above and elsewhere in this volume, the quest for the development of a religiously exclusive community, protected from the "other" by a boundary, may be identified as a proximate cause for the tensions which create a permissive environment for violent extremism.

Within the Bangladeshi diaspora resides another set of imagined borders, those of a homeland left behind by parents and grandparents. For many Bangladeshi immigrants, however, the tensions between *Bengaliness* and *Muslimness* are less than those between them and the identity of their host country. As one representative from a cultural organization promoting the secular nationalist narrative of Bangladesh explained, "For a teenager in the UK, it is easier to find out about your Muslim identity than it is to learn about your Bangladeshi identity or history; there are few organizations about the culture and history of Bangladesh but it's always easy to walk into a mosque or Islamic centre."[38] Moreover, younger generations in Bangladesh and within the diaspora are less familiar with, and influenced by, the history of 1971; their perceptions are shaped by more recent conflicts in Kashmir, Bosnia, Chechnya, Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan. Interpreted as an attack on Islam and the Muslim *umma* as a whole, these conflicts have prompted widespread anger and forged a common bond among Muslims in geographically disparate locations who perceive themselves as commonly affected by the events. Advances in media technology and communications mean that attacks in one of these locations can be edited and disseminated broadly through video or internet footage, and analysts of *jihadist* communication on the internet have reiterated that such images have a powerful impact in drawing recruits to militant groups. Thus the political boundaries that divide actors dissolve even as they rush to protect a set of imagined, though perhaps no less emotive or salient, borders.

Unresolved questions regarding the national identity of the new Bangladeshi state, and consequently the rationale for the political border, also pose a challenge to its ability to accommodate a multiconfessional society. Orthodox religious groups may not pose a threat of violence to a state or its citizens. However, they pose a challenge to the many hard-won freedoms and achievements of the young state, to the legal framework of government, the role of women and minorities in public spaces, the nature of education and social dynamics, the space for pluralism and critical thinking in the public arena; threatening violence to the *state* if not its citizens. In short, widespread religious radicalization would challenge vital civil liberties and human rights associated with a modern democratic state. Maneeza Hossain, writing about increasing religious radicalization in the country, calls this trend “cultural radicalization” and argues that Islamists in Bangladesh have created a “fictionalized monolithic Islam”.[39] Moreover, such radicalization challenges the legitimacy of a physical border that divides a religious community but also, on the intellectual level, the legitimacy of the political border and the nationalist entity in encapsulates; instead radicalized groups posit a basis for identity that rejects the value of the border on both levels.

Regional dimensions of political violence in Bangladesh

Sites of conflict

The potential of borders to generate disputes is not unique to the Indo-Bangladesh border. Throughout South Asia, unresolved questions of political demarcations reflect ongoing conflicts regarding identity and political authority. The borders in the region have been under regular challenge by regional conflicts and the incursion of external actors into the domestic politics of states. For example, there is widespread belief in Bangladesh that the Indian intelligence service, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), has been active in fomenting unrest in the Chittagong

Hill Tracts, and that Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) has provided active support to Islamists and militant groups.[40] In Kashmir, for example, the undecided question of political allegiance and the reluctance of either India or Pakistan to relinquish territory – and the vision it exemplifies, either of a secular union or a homeland for South Asian Muslims – have perpetuated six decades of conflict and at least three wars. This has, however, degenerated into an asymmetric conflict no longer carried out by armies but by proxies, mercenaries and ideologues, as well as regular military forces. The Afghan-Pakistan border remains unrecognized by those who still see a possible "Pashtunistan", so rudely interrupted by the British in search of empire and victory in the "Great Game". Conflicts over borders – the desire for them and consequently independent nation-states and political identities as well as a rebellion against them and what they embody – have also been ongoing in Sri Lanka, the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh and Assam in India.

Do these conflicts pose an insurmountable challenge to the development of a regional identity or a more cohesive "Southasia"? Is it possible that these borders, so jealously guarded and reinforced through the development of national symbols, imagery and histories, may one day give way to a new identity?

The creation of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), first proposed by Bangladesh under President Zia, speaks to this possibility. However, its efficacy remains hampered by the state of hostility and mutual suspicion between India and Pakistan.[41] Indeed, these tensions have served to reassert national identities and generated decades of conflict, including at least three wars. Nonetheless, post–Cold War Europe witnessed changes unimaginable in their speed and decisive rejection of a nearly five-decade-long history of division; could South Asia ever follow suit? Ayesha Jalal challenged the divisive power of the post-colonial nation-states in South Asia, arguing that, in a brutal irony, the inhabitants of South Asia "earned the trappings of citizenship by further constraining their freedom to develop historically evolved multiple identities". In place of the nation-state and its strong central administration, she has argued for "layered sovereignties" and "de-centered democracies" accommodative of the multiple identities of the region's inhabitants.[42] Nitish Sengupta, writing on the partition of Bengal beginning in 1905, goes further in imagining a "loose confederation between Bangladesh, India and Pakistan".[43]

Borders interrupted

The above discussion has dealt primarily with the intellectual questions regarding national identity arising from the establishment of borders –

that is, statehood. However the physicality of the borders may also be challenged by those for whom they pose a division to a historical community. Kinship ties in South Asia cross political borders, and shared rituals and social mores create a familiar language of behaviour and practices drawing the region together; in many places they challenge the rationality or viability of physical divisions. The post-colonial partitions of the subcontinent, which may have otherwise had little impact, meant that outlying villages and towns on the borderlands found themselves suddenly on the wrong side of familiar homes of friends and family, marketplaces and the routines which had shaped their existence for preceding decades.

An even more extreme form of political division is highlighted by the existence of "enclaves" or islands of sovereignty in a foreign land across the border. Van Schendel describes the schizophrenic identities emerging in these spaces, where inhabitants might identify themselves with the state of which their enclave is a part, through "proxy citizenship" in the surrounding state or, in many cases, none at all. However, he points out that when both these prove untenable in times of violence and movement, inhabitants of the enclaves develop an identity and culture indigenous to the enclave itself, though it is both "problematic" and "unstable".[44] Thus it is not only the physicality of the border being challenged by the need of these citizens to traverse it in the course of their daily lives, but also the national identity which the sovereign spaces the border encompasses is supposed to generate. Cut off from the rituals and symbols designed to reaffirm a sense of belonging and nationalism, van Schendel points out that "[i]n the enclaves, the absence of the state is mirrored by the absence of nationalism".[45]

Bangladesh's strategic position, on major routes between Southeast Asia and the troubled regions of Central and West Asia, makes it an ideal transit route for the illicit movements of goods, people and services. Reports suggest that its ports have been used as entry points by al-Qaeda members seeking a safe haven following 11 September, and some experts believe that members of Jamaat-e-Islami, perpetrators of the Bali bombings in 2002 and 2005, have sought transit through Bangladesh.[46] The reported movement of narcotics, small arms and contraband also highlights the challenge posed by the borders to the central government, of extending its writ to the territorial limits of the state and of defending its borders against a wary and suspicious neighbour. The limited presence of political and law-enforcement agents has transformed many border areas into what van Schendel described as "transnational nexuses of illegality". However, van Schendel and Itty Abraham further note that these patterns of movement pre-date the emergence of the state and the label of "illicit" is generated more by the counterpoint it poses to the state, assumed to have a monopoly on the licit.[47]

Borders often emerge as a tangible manifestation of new political identities, hard won through negotiation, violence or political turmoil. In postcolonial South Asia these have been especially guarded as states continue to negotiate their boundaries, identities and relationships. Hard-won independence has been jealously guarded at borders which remain intensely securitized and politically "high". As the political descendant of the lines dividing India and Pakistan, the embodiment of the "two-nation theory" which consequently erected formidable barriers between the subcontinent's inhabitants, the Indo-Bangladeshi border bears the scars of its Indo-Pakistani forerunner. The tension is especially explicit in northeast India, where the movement of Bangladeshi migrants in search of economic opportunity or familial reunion has led to violent confrontations with local inhabitants, Bodos, who have also targeted Muslim inhabitants on the assumption of their "foreign" Bangladeshi status. This case exemplifies both physical and intellectual challenges to the border, as many Muslim settlers argue they came to the region prior to Bangladesh's independence and legally obtained Indian citizenship, though they are still treated by the indigenous communities as illegal infiltrators.[48]

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to point out that the borders of Bangladesh remain contested sites and face challenges that are both intellectual and physical. Their legitimacy and purpose are challenged by the movement of people and goods, and also within the state they encompass. They raise questions about the identity of those living within it, and their relationship to the borders and the people beyond them. In Bangladesh this is exemplified by the debates over national identity: whether it can accommodate multiculturalism or whether it is defined by a specific religion and territorial assignment. These debates are reflected in the positions taken by political parties, and the deterioration of governance and political discourse exacerbates tensions arising from differences on these issues. The admission of violence as a political tool by parties and their supporters in the contest over state power has created a permissive environment for the use of violence by groups *competing* for state power as well as those *contesting* the state and the legitimacy of the government.

The case of Bangladesh demonstrates that the border has the potential to serve as a great unifier, a cherished prize in the struggle for political independence, or an instigator of conflict for those still debating the consequences of victory. Furthermore, it illustrates the violence and conflict that accompany the centralizing forces of nation- and state-building, as nationalism constructed a monolithic and homogeneous identity for citizens to supersede all other identities and marginalize “the other”.[49] Nonetheless, predicted by Henry Kissinger to become an “international basket case” at its inception, Bangladesh and its people have shown a remarkable resilience in the face of overwhelming obstacles and a capacity for state renovation in the quest for better governance. The state is still sufficiently young, and its recent course of renewing and renovating its institutions of governance suggests it still has an opportunity to address the structural conditions and replace the politics of extremism with a mature and multifaceted identity able to manage the violence arising from the negotiations of boundaries.

Notes

1. Jackson, R. H. (1987) “Quasi-States, Dual Regimes and Neo-Classical Theory: International Jurisprudence and the Third World”, *International Organization* 41(4), pp. 519–549. Jackson argued that juridical statehood, or recognition of political independence, was accorded to states as a norm which accompanied decolonization in the 1960s and 1970s but did not in many cases meet the criteria of statehood for *empirical* states, those which demonstrated among other things a strong central government and state bureaucracy.
2. In his seminal work, Anderson argued that a nation or community is socially constructed by those who imagine themselves to be part of a broader community or nation. “It is imagined because the members of even the smallest community will never know most of their fellow-members, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” Anderson, Benedict ([1983] 1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, p. 6.
3. Interview, museum director, Sonargaon, Bangladesh, 2008.
4. Chowdhury, Iftekhar A. (2009) “The Roots of Bangladeshi National Identity: Their Impact on State Behavior”, Working Paper No. 63, June, Institute of South Asian Studies, Singapore.
5. Uddin, Sofia M. (2006) *Constructing Bangladesh: Religion, Ethnicity and Language in an Islamic Nation*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
6. Riaz, Ali (2004) *God Willing: The Politics of Islamism in Bangladesh*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
7. Chowdhury, note 4 above.
8. Though these were identified as four guiding principles for the new state in the constitution, it was later reworded so that secularism was defined as “with absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah” and socialism as “meaning economic and social justice”.
9. It should also be noted that the relationship between the AL and the BNP was based on contradictory political ideologies, the former espousing the left and the latter the right, giving the BNP a more Western and capitalist orientation. Its stronger association with religious parties has really come about following the alliance with Jamaat in the 2001–2006 government.
10. Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, English translation, available at http://aceproject.org/ero-en/regions/asia/BD/Bangladesh%20Constitution%201972.pdf.
11. It was noted by some Bangladeshi interviewees that this was a top-down process and not a result of popular demand.

12. Subsequent to modifications to its constitution required by the Election Commission in 2008, such as acknowledging the 1971 war of liberation and allowing the membership of non-Muslims, it has officially been renamed Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islam.
13. Datta, Sreeradha (2007) "Islamic Militancy in Bangladesh: The Threat From Within", *Journal of South Asian Studies* 30(1), p. 153.
14. In Bengali, *bidesh* means "abroad" while *desh* means "home country".
15. Jahan, Rounaq (2008) "The Challenges of Institutionalizing Democracy in Bangladesh", Working Paper No. 39, Institute of South Asian Studies, Singapore.
16. Newman, Edward (2007) "Weak States, State Failure and Terrorism", *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19(4), pp. 463–488.
17. Hossain, Akhtar (2000) "Anatomy of Hartal Politics in Bangladesh", *Asian Survey* 40(3), pp. 508–529; Ganguly, Sumit (2006) "A New Challenge for Bangladesh", *Yale Global Online*, 30 March; BBC News (2006) "Bangladesh's Cycle of Strikes", June, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/5075328.stm; BBC News (2006) "Strike Again Paralyses Bangladesh", November, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/6168152.stm; BBC News (2006) "Bangladesh Strike Sparks Clashes", December, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/6203328.stm; BBC News (2006) "Bangladesh Approaches Zero Hour", October, available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/5400784.stm.
18. UN Development Programme Bangladesh (2005) *Beyond Hartals: Towards Democratic Dialogue in Bangladesh*. Dhaka: UNDP.
19. Willem van Schendel describes them as mediating between the worlds of criminality and state. Van Schendel, Willem (2004) *The Bengal Borderland: Beyond Nation and State in South Asia*. London: Anthem Press, p. 172.
20. Sobhan, Rehman (2004) "The Structural Dimensions of Malgovernance in Bangladesh", *Economic and Political Weekly*, 4 September.
21. He further argues that links between academicians and politics, business and religious extremists have contributed to the poor quality of religious interpretation in higher education institutions in Bangladesh and allowed for the replacement of a regionally informed Islam, reliant on the Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence, by a more orthodox Wahabbist strain from the Middle East. Ahmed, Imtiaz (2008) "Social Capital Amongst Extremist Mediocrity", *Himal Southasian*, September, available at www.himalmag.com/Social-capital-amidst-extremism-and-mediocrity_nw1946.html.
22. It should be noted that the exact relationships between these groups are unclear, with many citing overlaps of membership and ideology among them. For example, Anwar Ali of the *Daily Star* newspaper in Bangladesh reports that "The JMB is, however, learnt to be the youth front of the Al Mujahideen, the parent organisation that began working in the mid-1990s and still remains obscure." Furthermore, he states: "Jama'atul Jihad, Jama'atul Mujahideen, Ahle Hadith Andolon Bangladesh (Ahab), Ahle Hadith Jubo Shangha, Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), Harkatul Jihad, Hizbut Tawhid, Tawhidi Janata, Islami Jubo Shangha, Islami Shangha, Al Falah A'am Unnayan Shanstha and Shahadat-e al Hiqma are believed to be missions of the Al Mujahideen." See www.thedailystar.net/2005/08/19/d5081901033.htm. Additionally, though Jamaat denies any association with these groups, others believe that the JMB and JMJB draw inspiration from Jamaat, and that many of its senior leaders were members of Shibbir. John, Wilson (2008) "The Bengali Taliban", *Terrorism Monitor* 6(10), available at www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=4926.
23. The CFR report on the August 2005 bombings may be found at www.cfr.org/publication/8767/bangladesh.html and the web posting it quotes is on www.jihadunspun.com/index-side_internal.php?article=103816&list=/home.php&.
24. The AL has been vocal in its accusations of BNP/Jamaat complicity in the August 2005 grenade attacks threatening the life of Sheikh Hasina. However, the JMB is also

believed to be responsible for the first suicide bombings in Bangladesh, in November 2005, which killed two judges.

25. In his writings, which include *Ma'alim fi-l-Tariq* (*Milestones*), Qutb, an Egyptian author, theorist and Islamist who was executed by Gemal Abdel Nasser's regime in 1966, advocated a complete system of Islamic morality and government under *Shari'a*. Western "innovations" such as nationalism, civil liberties and liberal social mores were considered by him as dangerous reflections of *jahiliyya*, or the pre-Islamic period of "ignorance" before Islam was revealed.
26. See for example Baxter, Craig (1998) *Bangladesh: From Nation to State*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press; Hassan, Perween (2007) *Sultans and Mosques: The Early Muslim Architecture of Bangladesh*. London: I. B. Tauris.
27. Lintner, Bertil (2004) "Religious Extremism and Radicalism in Bangladesh", in Satu Limaye, Robert Wirsing and Mohan Malik (eds) *Religious Radicalism and Security in South Asia*. Honolulu, HI: APCSS, p. 2.
28. Quoted by Mohsin, Amena (2004) "Religion, Politics and Security: The Case of Bangladesh", in Satu Limaye, Robert Wirsing and Mohan Malik (eds) *Religious Radicalism and Security in South Asia*. Honolulu, HI: APCSS, pp. 467–489, at p. 470.
29. Riaz, note 6 above.
30. Interview, British academic, February 2007. This view has been echoed in Uddin, note 5 above, and is underscored by the reaction of traditional rural authorities to the forces of modernity in using the *salish* or *fatwa* to reassert their leadership positions challenged by NGOs and globalization.
31. See www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org/index.php/EN/wshow/570.
32. Interview, senior Western diplomat, Dhaka, February 2008.
33. The Awami League is also the party which signed a peace accord with separatist groups in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, leading to the perception that the AL's leadership will be more accommodative and favourable to a Bangladeshi identity that encompasses diverse ethnic and religious groups.
34. For a more in-depth analysis on this point see Fink, Naureen Chowdhury (2010) *Bombs and Ballots: Terrorism, Political Violence and Governance in Bangladesh*. New York: International Peace Institute.
35. Fink, Naureen Chowdhury (2008) "Bangladesh in the Twenty-first Century: Democracy, Development, Terrorism, and its Counterforces", paper presented at Bangladesh in the Twenty First Century conference, Kennedy School of Government, Cambridge, MA, June.
36. The quotation marks reflect the perception of the "West" as a Christian entity, or India as a Hindu entity, by those who disregard the wide national, religious, ethnic and cultural diversity within them, and are not intended to suggest a judgement either way.
37. See www.bjp.org/history/htvintro-mm-1.htm.
38. Interview, Bangladeshi-British cultural activist, London, 2008.
39. Hossain, Maneeza (2007) *Broken Pendulum: Bangladesh's Swing to Radicalism*. Washington, DC: Hudson Institute.
40. Interviews conducted with political analysts, military officers and government officials, Bangladesh, February 2008 and February 2009.
41. For more on the role of SAARC in combating terrorism see Rosand, Eric, Naureen Chowdhury Fink and Jason Ipe (2009) *Countering Terrorism in South Asia: Strengthening Multilateral Engagement*. New York: International Peace Institute.
42. Jalal, Ayesha (1995) *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia: A Comparative and Historical Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 248.

43 Sengupta, Nitish (2007) *Bengal Divided: The Unmaking of a Nation (1905–1971)*. New Delhi: Penguin/Viking.

44. van Schendel, Willem (2002) “Stateless in South Asia: The Making of the India-Bangladesh Enclaves”, *Journal of Asian Studies* 61(1), pp. 115–147.
45. Ibid., p. 144.
46. Interview, Australian terrorism expert, New York, April 2008.
47. van Schendel, Willem and Itty Abraham (eds) (2005) *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things: States, Borders and the Other Side of Globalization*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, p. 5.
48. See http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7654012.stm.
49. Saigol, Rubina (2006) “The State and Its Limits in Counterterrorism: The Experience of Pakistan and Sri Lanka”, in Imtiaz Ahmed (ed.) *Understanding Terrorism in South Asia: Beyond Statist Discourses*. New Delhi: Manohar.

6

External influences on political violence in Southeast Asia

Natasha Hamilton-Hart

It matters whether we see particular instances of political violence as essentially local in origin and scope, or significantly influenced by external forces. It matters because the perception of external involvement can trigger – and legitimate – responses that would not otherwise be accepted. For example, during the Cold War the ability of anti-communist governments in Southeast Asia to depict domestic communist or leftist movements as supported by either Moscow or Beijing summoned material aid from Western governments and served the domestic political function of further stigmatizing these movements. Likewise, current representations of Southeast Asian groups accused of terrorism as "al-Qaeda linked" perform a number of functions, including escalating the perceived threat posed by these groups, displacing their local grievances and paving the way for foreign involvement in various types of counterterrorism action.

Conversely, defining political violence as a domestic matter tends to shift attributions of responsibility and patterns of response. It domesticates responses to the problem and may also smooth relations with foreign actors. Malaysia's establishment of diplomatic relations with China in 1974, for example, required an understanding that the ongoing low-level communist insurgency in Malaysia was no longer supported by China. Similarly, the close relationship between the United States and Indonesia since 1965 was made politically easier for both sides by mainstream public perceptions that denied or downplayed American involvement in political violence in Indonesia.

Political violence in South and Southeast Asia: Critical perspectives, Abraham, Newman and Weiss (eds), United Nations University Press, 2010, ISBN 978-92-808-1190-2

This chapter's focus on external influences is not intended to displace Southeast Asian actors, but to show how they have often worked with, and against, external players. Rather than covering in detail the dynamics of complex "cases" of political violence, the approach here aims to draw out some general lines of similarity and difference in the forms of external influence on major episodes of political violence in Southeast Asia since 1945. A comparative approach helps resolve some of the difficulties inherent in determining how much of a role should be attributed to external actors in any particular case of political violence. Local actors generally play crucial, if not primary, roles, so determining the impact of external forces is often a hazy process. Would the violence have occurred without any external input? Would its form or consequences have been significantly different? Despite the contestability inherent in such counterfactual questions, there is a vast gulf between, for example, directly supplying the tools of violence and serving as an imagined symbol. A comparative perspective allows us to see this gulf more starkly and therefore to make more meaningful assessments of the relative importance of different kinds of external influence, and to identify which external actors have most influenced political violence on the ground in Southeast Asia. A comparative framework also highlights the wide variation in the magnitude of the violence to which external actors are in some way linked. Without constructing a moral hierarchy of violence and suffering, for many purposes it is significant that deaths resulting from "noted" cases of political violence can be counted in single digits in some instances, while other instances have claimed hundreds of thousands of lives.

A rough typology of external influence

In its most clear-cut form, external influence involves foreign actors actually carrying out acts of political violence. Almost as direct, and much more frequent, has been external influence in the form of providing arms and other material support that directly enable local actors to carry out acts of violence. Much more infrequently, it has involved an external actor intervening forcibly and thereby bringing about a reduction in levels of political violence. This chapter reviews the major instances of such direct, material forms of external involvement in political violence in Southeast Asia, starting in the period of decolonization after the Second World War and reaching a peak in the mid–Cold War years. Even allowing for some empirical uncertainty arising from incomplete declassification of intelligence and other state archives, three conclusions about this form of external influence are clear:

- the amount of lethal, direct support for political violence coming from foreign state actors dwarfs the level of support tendered by non-state actors
- in terms of lethality, external support for acts of political violence carried out by state actors has been more significant than external support for non-state perpetrators of violence
- direct, material external involvement in political violence has served more often to escalate than reduce violence, whatever its rationale.

More open to contested interpretation are forms of external action that involve supplying material aid that is directed to non-violent purposes when those receiving such aid are implicated in political violence. Most actors engaged in political violence also do other things. Not only is this apparent in the range of functions carried out by even the most oppressive states, but also the large numbers of insurgent groups and sometimes-violent political movements that run civic action or social welfare programmes make it difficult to demarcate support for violent action from support for non-violent action. Bitter debates over the effects of economic sanctions (and their opposite: maintaining aid, investment and trade relations) reflect both the contested moral issues involved and real uncertainty as to the effects of either sanctions or aid.

The cases covered below include instances of external influence that has taken this material but indirect form. The attempt to assess the effects of non-lethal aid and support is based on an examination of how the external actor delivered support, the channels through which it flowed, the conditionalities attached to its use and the domestic players whose hands it strengthened in specific contexts. The tentative conclusion regarding non-lethal material assistance to perpetrators of political violence is that such assistance in most cases supported their capacity for violence rather than being a constraining factor, although in a few cases it is arguable that donors effectively used their leverage to reduce levels of political violence. Unsurprisingly, material assistance from governments to governments (or component parts of them) overwhelmingly dwarfs external assistance directed either from or to non-state players.

Also falling into the category of material but indirect influence on political violence are actions which materially alter conditions on the ground so as to make violence more (or less) likely. A prime example would be tangible destabilization, whether in the form of physical destruction, provocation or political intervention, which paves the way for increased levels of political violence. As discussed below, the US bombing of Cambodia is not only an instance of political violence carried out by an external actor (to the extent that the bombings destroyed civilian lives and infrastructure), it is also a plausible case of indirect influence on later political violence carried out by local actors, as the destabilization and political effects of the bombing probably served to strengthen the hand of the Khmer Rouge at a critical juncture.[1]

A third category of external influence on political violence falls at the other end of the spectrum from direct, material involvement in acts of violence, but is worth considering if only because it has attracted so much attention. This category consists of intangible influences, such as legitimation and ideational inspiration. Much play has been given recently to notions of "al-Qaeda as an ideology" and "radicalization", but if such diffuse and intangible forms of influence are to be considered, a much wider array of actors, ideas and dissemination channels need to be examined if we are to avoid being misleadingly selective. Extending diplomatic support to perpetrators of political violence, disseminating texts (written, audio or visual) that encourage acts of political violence or simply standing as a model or symbolic source of inspiration can all be considered examples of intangible support for political violence. Intangible influences may also run in the opposite direction and serve to end or reduce violence, as when diplomatic confidence-building initiatives or grassroots peacebuilding succeed in reducing levels of conflict.

The cases below suggest that, in contrast to material influences, where state players clearly dominate, the balance is more even when it comes to intangible influences: a range of non-state actors have given moral support, legitimation and inspiration to both state and non-state perpetrators of political violence, and the most significant sources of external influence on non-state perpetrators have often been intangible. Nonetheless, even in these cases, the primary motivations and ideological orientations are almost always localized in application, if not in origin.

How should we decide whether an external influence has been significant? To ask whether the violence would have taken place at all without the external influence is generally not a useful benchmark for establishing whether there has been significant influence. One could argue, for example, that an external source that supplies the tools or technology of violence is not a critical factor enabling violence if alternative suppliers or tools would be used in any case. Or one could maintain that a government bent on using violence to suppress opposition would continue to do so even if isolated diplomatically. However, the bar for considering whether external influence has been significant should not be whether the violence would have occurred without the involvement of a foreign player, but whether a foreign player was involved, and in what way. The prosecution charge of aiding and abetting a crime does not extend to arguing that the crime would not have occurred without such aid; what matters is that it was given.

Deciding what counts as political violence is not always clear-cut. As noted by the editors, the term describes part of a spectrum of violence, and the line separating political from other forms of violence may sometimes be blurred. This essay excludes military-to-military violence, but does include acts that have been carried out in the course of war when these acts target civilians or their livelihoods.[2] In several cases the targeting of civilians during war is clear; other cases (generally where a real or ostensible military target is also involved) need to be argued in light of the specific details relating to them. At the other end of the spectrum, this essay also excludes "ordinary" criminal violence, whether perpetrated by state or non-state actors. The potential grey area here arises when such violence may be politically tinged. Again, each case needs to be examined on its merits, but the general principle employed for deciding whether the violence is political is whether it is intended to target individuals or groups because of their political or ideological affiliation. Thus the torture of political prisoners counts as political violence, but police or military violence carried out for private purposes does not. Similarly, a vigilante action or pogrom against politically or ideologically defined foes counts as political violence, mob violence against an alleged thief does not.

Direct external involvement in political violence: The immediate post-war period

The first wave of external involvement in political violence in post-war Southeast Asia began when Allied troops returned to the region in significant numbers in the final months of the Second World War. In several cases these troops were involved in acts of violence against local populations for identifiably political reasons: to support one local political group against another and (in the case of returning British, Dutch and French forces) to combat pro-independence groups. In the latter case, some of the violence could be classified as military-to-military, but the line is blurred both by the mixed nature of the pro-independence guerrilla forces, which drew extensively from a civilian base, and by the political cleavages separating pro-independence groups engaged in violence from their local and foreign opponents.

In the Philippines, returning US troops involved in defeating the Japanese also acted to defend landowners against rising peasant demands. They actively disarmed the militia group with which they had earlier cooperated in anti-Japanese actions, the Hukbalahap, more often known as the Huks, a left-wing peasant group which presented demands for both independence and social reform.[3] These American actions are considered by a leading scholar of the Huk rebellion as "unquestionably . . . part of the repression which pushed peasants into rebellion" in 1946.[4] From 1946 until more effective, and less abusive, military action in the early 1950s significantly reduced the strength of the Huk movement, the Philippine government used the military, constabulary and private paramilitaries against the rebels and their supporters. In addition to casualties claimed in the early years of the rebellion, the Philippine government asserted it killed over 6,000 Huks and wounded nearly 2,000 between 1950 and 1955.[5] The Philippine government's suppression of the rebellion was decisively aided by large amounts of American support. This included American military and other security personnel directing several operations in the Philippines, collaborating closely with their Filipino counterparts and trainees, providing weapons and other military supplies, and direct financing of parts of the military budget.[6] The Huks, for their part, do not seem to have received military aid from outside sources after their wartime cooperation with the Americans ended.

In Vietnam, French forces returning to take control of their former colony were engaged in fighting what is now known as the First Indochina War by the end of 1946, with increasing military support from the United States.[7] As the opposing Viet Minh coalition developed more regularized and organized forces, much of this fighting can be considered war rather than political violence, but French personnel were also engaged in obviously political acts of violent repression and the use of force against Vietnamese civilians, both directly and through local political actors. From 1950 the Viet Minh received critical military support from China, which played a key role in the eventual defeat of French forces in 1954. However, the Chinese deployed in Vietnam were technicians, logistics engineers and military advisers who directly supported the Viet Minh war-fighting capacity, and thus should not be considered as external actors directly involved in political violence.[8] To the extent that such outside military support strengthened the hand of the Communist Party (then called the Vietnamese Workers' Party), the leading force in the Viet Minh, and gave it leeway to pursue acts of political violence – such as the violence accompanying the land reform programme of the 1950s – the external involvement should be acknowledged. However, Chinese military support was probably not the decisive factor in maintaining communist political dominance.[9]

The immediate post-war period also saw British forces deploying in Malaya for what must be considered political purposes. The British military administration in Singapore ran the initial post-war government, and military and police personnel rapidly returned to the rest of Malaya, where they began to take action against the Malayan Communist Party (CPM) and its associated anti-Japanese guerrilla forces, with which the British had cooperated during the war. In 1948 a full-fledged emergency was declared, which saw the extensive deployment of British and other

Commonwealth military and police forces, along with political centralization and eventual efforts to address the material grievances that lay behind the degree of support the insurgency had been able to gain from sections of the population.[10]

British troops also deployed in parts of Indonesia on behalf of the returning Dutch, where their initial role of taking the surrender of the Japanese military rapidly developed into open confrontation with Indonesian nationalists. Much of the violence that occurred involved not only highly irregular Indonesian nationalist forces, but also significant civilian casualties in actions such as the British shelling of the city of Surabaya.[11] However, the British soon left the field to the Dutch, who engaged in sporadic warfare against Indonesian nationalists until conceding sovereignty to the new republic at the end of 1949.

Direct external involvement in political violence: The Cold War

Although overlapping with the post-war decolonization process, a second wave of violence involving direct action by external forces can be distinguished. While to some extent the violence associated with attempts to prolong colonial rule was supported by the context of the developing Cold War, the second wave of involvement by external actors was more directly tied to the projection of the Cold War to Southeast Asia. In this second wave, external military and intelligence forces allied themselves with local actors in what were at least nominally independent Southeast Asian governments, taking sides – and active roles – in violent internal conflicts.

Malaysia

British support, including police and military aid, for Malayan forces fighting the communist insurgency continued after Malaya's independence in 1957 until the emergency was officially declared over in 1960, although increasingly operations were controlled and conducted by local forces.[12] The communist insurgency officially continued at a low level until a peace agreement was signed in 1989, but the violence associated with the emergency occurred mostly between 1948 and 1958. Despite the common perception – which persists in some quarters in Malaysia – that the local "communist terrorist" groups were materially supported by China, the CPM received no financial or military support from China until the early 1960s. Until then, whatever influence the Chinese exercised appears to have been through ideological inspiration and the supply of printed materials.[13] This changed after the Chinese promise of financial support in 1961, which was the decisive factor behind the CPM's decision to resume armed struggle less than two years after its effective military defeat and formal decision to focus on political strategies.[14] Largely for logistical reasons, the Chinese did not supply weapons directly to the CPM, which after its return to an armed strategy in the 1960s relied on black-market purchases, mainly of US weapons recycled from the conflicts in Cambodia and Vietnam.[15] Somewhat paradoxically, despite the financial support and easy access to arms from the 1960s, most CPM violence from then until a formal peace agreement in 1989 was directed far more at its own cadres and in occasional skirmishes with the Thai military than in insurgent actions against the Malaysian state. In the words of the CPM leader, from 1961 onwards "the CPM had managed only intermittent strikes south of the Thai-Malaysia frontier. In the 1970s, our movement was fast becoming paralysed by self-destructing rivalries and ill-conceived front line decisions."[16]

Indonesia

In Indonesia, the main Cold War episode which saw foreigners actually carrying out acts of political violence was the US effort at subversion in 1957 and 1958. In these years the United States, with the help of the United Kingdom, the Philippines and Malaysia, provided logistics support and weapons to rebels fighting the Indonesian government.[17] Confirmation that American personnel were direct participants in the conflict came with the shooting down of a US pilot in May 1958 after he had carried out a bombing raid against an Indonesian city – an action that was gratuitous in military terms and inflicted an estimated 700 civilian casualties.[18]

Although this single act of bombing a civilian target inflicted three times the casualties of all acts of non-state terror (excluding militia violence) in Indonesia since 2000, the regional rebellions of 1957–1958 were not the major instance of political violence in Indonesia during the Cold War. Less than a decade later, one of the twentieth century's worst episodes of mass killing occurred in Indonesia, which saw hundreds of thousands killed in the months following October 1965 and extending into 1966. The pretext for the killings was ostensibly a failed coup attempt which the Indonesian military immediately blamed on the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), and which paved the way for the military takeover of government. For the purposes of this chapter, two aspects of these killings are significant: first, although there was significant civilian and paramilitary involvement in the killings, in most areas they were decisively instigated and orchestrated by the Indonesian military; second, while Indonesians were the primary actors, foreign support for the killings came in both intangible and material forms.[19] Primary foreign involvement came from the United States, and consisted of prior training and material support for the military in its development of a capacity to take over government, direct and explicit diplomatic encouragement to take "robust" action against the PKI, the provision of names of PKI members to the military, the supply of weapons and logistics support to units of the military engaged in the killings, and explicit approval of the anti-communist violence.[20] American allies, in particular the United Kingdom, played similar but smaller roles. The PKI did not mount effective physical defence against the violence unleashed on its members and – contrary to psychological warfare disinformation campaigns by both Indonesian and foreign intelligence services at the time – was not armed by the Communist Party of China.[21]

The support given by the United States to the Indonesian military from the early 1960s until the partial suspension of military-to-military cooperation in the 1990s (later resumed as part of the "war on terror") means that there is a direct link between the United States and the ongoing political violence that the Indonesian state directed at its opponents for the next 30 years. Mass imprisonment of suspected communists or sympathizers, the routine use of torture against them, extra-judicial killings and military operations that both targeted non-combatants and used them as human shields in conflict areas make the Indonesian state the primary perpetrator of political violence in the country.[22] In this period, the United States, the United Kingdom and other Western countries were the major suppliers of weaponry and equipment used by the Indonesian military, much of it supplied on a concessional basis. The United States also had an active military training programme, with much smaller exchanges and training provided by the United Kingdom and other Western allies. Although there were occasional statements from these countries that weapons supplied would not be used in domestic conflict areas, and that the training would make the military more professional and less abusive, there is no credible evidence that either concern was ever seriously pressed upon the Indonesian military until a partial shut-down of material supply and training in the 1990s.[23]

This Western complicity in state-directed political violence occurring within Indonesia therefore extends to another major episode of political violence involving the Indonesian military: its subversion and invasion of East Timor in 1975, followed by 24 years of occupation that culminated in a final wave of state-supported violence in 1999. An estimated 200,000 East Timorese died in this period, almost one-third of the country's 1975 population. Indonesia thus stands as a major foreign perpetrator of political violence in another country, and its Western backers provided military support for most of this time. The United States remained the largest supplier of weapons to the Indonesian military, with the United Kingdom being the second most important source.[24]

Thailand and the Philippines

Like Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines were under authoritarian, military-backed governments for much of the Cold War period. In Thailand the military exercised effective control of government for most of the time from 1948 until it began to reduce its role in the 1980s (with the exception of military governments in 1991–1992 and 2006–2007). The Philippines was effectively under martial law from 1972 until Marcos was ousted from power in 1986. In both countries there were significant levels of violent repression against dissidents, torture and extra-judicial killings carried out by the state itself and paramilitaries closely associated with the state.[25] These states also faced both communist and non-communist insurgencies in which armed groups were responsible for some of the political violence directed at civilian targets. Although the death toll from these insurgencies, especially the ongoing conflict in the southern Philippines, has been cumulatively very high – an estimated 120,000 people died in the conflict in Mindanao between the late 1960s and 2000 – the intensity of the killings does not match the kind of bloodbaths seen in Indonesia, East Timor or Indochina. The insurgencies and the broader pattern of human rights abuses in both the Philippines and Thailand are significantly related to authoritarian, military-backed rule. And, until well into the 1980s, external involvement in the form of American support for these authoritarian governments was significant.

A case can be made that the military takeover of Thai politics after an early and shaky post-war democratic start occurred in part as a result of the support given by the United States directly to the Thai military, with which it had cultivated close relations from the late 1940s.[26] Millions of dollars in military aid, training, equipment and logistics support were channelled to the militaries of both the Philippines and Thailand, in addition to the military spending and direct presence associated with American military bases and facilities in both countries. While this military aid could potentially have provided leverage to reduce military, police and paramilitary violence directed at non-combatants in these countries, there is no evidence that this was ever seriously attempted.[27] In addition to military aid, the CIA maintained close ties with Philippine military, police and intelligence personnel, at a period when the use of torture and extra-judicial killing by these agencies was particularly high, even by the standards of authoritarian regimes.[28]

In comparison, opposition movements which engaged in political violence in Thailand and the Philippines appear to have had limited military support from outside. China is regularly cited as a source of arms for the communist insurgencies in Southeast Asia, but very little detail on the amounts of military aid is available and the evidence we have suggests that, with the exception of Vietnam and Cambodia, China supplied only modest amounts of support to communists in the region and, except for the years of the Cultural Revolution, mostly preferred to maintain friendly relations with the governments fighting communist insurgencies than to provide much support to these groups. The New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines, which developed rapidly in strength in response to Marcos's rule, followed a policy of decentralized self-reliance at the local unit level.[29] After two abortive attempts in the early 1970s to supply the NPA with arms shipments, Beijing preferred to develop its relationship with the Marcos government, which became cordial after Imelda Marcos's successful visit to Beijing in 1974.[30] Support from China and Vietnam to the Thai Communist Party was more significant, aided by the overland accessibility of Thai insurgent groups operating in the border areas from the early 1960s to the late 1970s.[31]

Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia

While political violence claimed a high death toll in other parts of Southeast Asia during the Cold War, in no country did the intensity and extent of non-combatant casualties come close to matching the loss of civilian life and livelihoods in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. The casualties of political violence in these countries in the interrelated conflicts of the 1960s and 1970s reached into the millions, with the single most extensive "episode" of killing being the deaths exacted by the Khmer Rouge government of Cambodia from 1975 to 1978. In terms of how direct and critical the external involvement in political violence was, however, the civilian deaths associated with the American war in Vietnam are the single most significant case of external involvement in political violence in Southeast Asia. As measured by the numbers of foreign military and security personnel engaged in political violence, amounts of military aid expended and the decisiveness of foreign support for local perpetrators of political violence, American actions in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos stand unparalleled in the region.

Although the roots of American involvement were laid earlier, we can date US involvement in political violence in Vietnam from 1954.[32] From this date, American military and security advisers were present on the ground, and the United States began providing large amounts of lethal aid to successive governments in Saigon. Although combat troops were not officially deployed until 1965, and the air war – which exacted a devastating toll in civilian lives and livelihoods – had yet to commence, American involvement during the 1950s included a large training programme for the South Vietnamese security apparatus, intelligence operations and covert action. The greater part of the political violence in Vietnam was, until 1965, unquestionably carried out by Vietnamese actors in both North and South, but the degree and type of external involvement differed markedly in the two parts of the country.

In the North, violence was used by government actors against target groups for political purposes, although we still lack a full and credible account of such actions. Reports of North Vietnamese atrocities, particularly against the Catholic population and in the land reforms of 1953–1956, were exaggerated in American news media at the time (and in many cases entirely fictionalized), but recognizing such distortions should not be taken to mean that political violence by the communist government was necessarily minimal.[33] Political violence by the government in the North, however, cannot for the most part be directly linked to external forces, and existed at a level that did not undermine its ability to mobilize widespread support. The return to an armed strategy by the communists in the South of the country after 1959 involved more of what can be called political violence, although it included military targets. The infiltration, supply of weapons and leadership influence in the South by the communist government in the North can only be called an "external influence" if one clings to the view that South Vietnam was an independent country, but Hanoi's foreign patrons can be counted as indirect foreign influences. Although China only reversed its attitude to support the Hanoi government's strategy of pursuing armed revolution in the South after 1962, it maintained a significant supply of weapons and other material aid to Hanoi in the period 1956–1963.[34] And both China and the Soviet Union provided large-scale military support to the Vietnamese communists after the conflict escalated to open warfare involving American troops from 1964, albeit with decreasing amounts coming from China in the 1970s, and the Soviet Union playing an increasing role in military support and supply.[35] The Vietnamese communist military effort could not have been sustained without Chinese and Soviet support, but the degree of external involvement in what could be called communist political violence was probably low.

In contrast, violent repression, use of torture and widespread politically directed murder by the government in Saigon could not have been sustained without external support. From the time Ngo Dinh Diem was installed as head of government in the South in 1954 until the collapse of Republic of Vietnam in 1975, American political, military and other lethal forms of support – in addition to an extensive economic aid programme – were critical for the survival of successive Vietnamese governments in the South. In addition to a large military aid programme and the training of 85,000 police personnel, the United States also explicitly trained Vietnamese security forces in techniques of torture and violent intimidation.[36]

After the deployment of large numbers of American and other allied combat troops and with the use of air power between 1965 and 1973, foreign players involved in the anti-communist effort began to take on more significant roles as actual perpetrators of political violence. Officially, of course, Americans and other troops contributed by countries such as Korea, Australia and New Zealand were there to fight a war, not to engage in political violence. It would not be accurate to describe all Vietnamese casualties during this period as victims of political violence. On the other hand, there is ample evidence that war crimes and political violence directed at non-combatants were not isolated and aberrant incidents.[37] Massacres of civilians, torture of prisoners and widespread destruction of civilian livelihoods were integral parts of the American war fought in Vietnam. In addition to the massacres and other abuses by ground troops, the use of air power, especially intensive bombardments of civilian areas in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, ensured that political violence was always central to the war.

Laos "absorbed more bombs per square mile than any country in the history of warfare ... [and] the Hmong people – non-literate, migratory hill farmers in the most remote reaches of northern Laos – suffered one of the highest mortality rates of any people in any modern war".[38] The United States intervened covertly in Laos from the 1950s, playing a role in developing the conditions for civil war in that country, and later armed, funded and gave full logistics support to the Hmong leadership, which forcibly recruited combatants from the Hmong population. By the early 1970s more than half of these combatants were boys under the age of 14, and the United States directly supported the coercive tactics used to recruit these children.[39] On the other side of the conflict in Laos, the communist Pathet Lao forces received critical military support from both North Vietnam and the Soviet Union, mostly in the form of weapons, Vietnamese fighting forces and airlift support from the Soviet Union. How much of this was directed to purposes that can be called political violence rather than conventional warfare is difficult to determine, but it is clear that the scale of such external military support did not come close to matching the destructiveness of American air power.

Similarly, in terms of non-combatant casualties, the US bombing of Cambodia dwarfed attacks on civilians carried out by the Vietnamese forces that infiltrated Cambodia. Vietnamese infiltration was largely in order to transport military personnel, weapons and equipment from North to South Vietnam, and was not primarily directed at attacking infrastructure or civilians in Cambodia. In addition, the Vietnamese were operating in small-scale guerrilla warfare units, not carrying out intensive bombardments from the air. In contrast, new information released in the 1990s showed that "from October 4, 1965, to August 15, 1973, the United States dropped far more ordnance on Cambodia than was previously believed: 2,756,941 tons' worth, dropped in 230,516 sorties on 113,716 sites".[40] Civilian deaths from the American bombing of Cambodia, previously estimated at between 50,000 and 150,000, were therefore almost certainly higher than this.

Vietnamese infiltration and American air attacks were not the only external factors contributing to violence on the ground in Cambodia. Political violence carried out by successive Cambodian governments against a range of opposition groups and internal enemies marked Cambodian politics for much of the time after independence in 1954, with conditions effectively amounting to civil war from 1967.[41] Sihanouk received military assistance from the United States until the end of 1963, when he terminated the US programmes in favour of deepening relations with China.[42] In 1958 Sihanouk had declined an offer of Chinese economic and military aid, saying his government already received adequate aid from France and the United States, but maintained close and friendly relations with China, aside from a period of tension during the height of the Cultural Revolution. At least from 1963, the United States was already providing some support to non-communist insurgent groups in Cambodia, and would go on to provide increasing levels of material support to Lon Nol, the general who deposed Sihanouk in 1970. Despite the close ties between the Communist Parties of Cambodia and Vietnam, the Vietnamese communists did not support the Communist Party of Kampuchea's (CPK) decision to begin an armed struggle in 1968, preferring to see Cambodia's revolution deferred until Vietnam had resolved its own war. Similarly, China, which officially did not have direct ties to the CPK at this time, asked the North Vietnamese to urge the CPK to avoid an armed struggle with Sihanouk.[43] After the Lon Nol coup in 1970, the Chinese tried to persuade the Khmer Rouge to cooperate with Sihanouk but, while increasing their public rhetoric and condemnation of the US invasion of Cambodia that year, still refrained from delivering substantive support directly. Motivated by Lon Nol's support for US attacks on the Vietnamese using Cambodian territory, Vietnam became more directly involved in the civil war, despite increasing moves to eliminate pro-Vietnam cadres by the CPK. Despite the growing distance between the CPK and the Communist Party of Vietnam, from 1970 to 1972 it was Vietnamese forces "that bore the main brunt of fighting Lon Nol's troops".[44]

Spurred by competition with Hanoi, China committed itself to supporting the Khmer Rouge militarily in 1974, and rapidly increased the level of support after the Khmer Rouge victory the following year.

The violence and devastation suffered by Cambodian society, already extreme, escalated further under the Khmer Rouge, with an estimated 2 million people killed, mostly through torture, execution, starvation, enforced overwork and disease. Most of these deaths can be linked to the use of force by the Khmer Rouge between 1975 and the end of 1978, although this figure presumably also includes deaths due to military skirmishing along the Cambodia-Vietnam border in this period, and is likely to be inflated by the refugee exodus from the country. The Khmer Rouge – in this period – appears to have done its deadly work without the direct involvement of outside players.[45] The Chinese, however, did provide significant support to the regime, pledging $1 billion in military and economic assistance to the victorious Khmer Rouge in June 1975. Their assistance was instrumental not only in helping the Khmer Rouge seize power, but in resisting Vietnamese pressure for the next three years.[46]

The Vietnamese invasion at the end of 1978 brought about the end of mass slaughter by the Khmer Rouge, but did not return the country to peace. Instead, Cambodia was faced with more than a decade of continued conflict as the Khmer Rouge fought on against the government installed by Vietnam, with the assistance of several external powers. In this period the country was flooded with weapons and landmines, most of which ended up claiming the lives of civilians. The sources of such lethal support were China, the United States and the United Kingdom, with the active support of Thailand and Singapore. For 12 years these countries provided lethal aid to anti-Vietnamese Cambodian groups, including the provision of military training, mines and weapons to the Khmer Rouge as well as the so-called "non-communist resistance", even after the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops in 1989.[47]

After the Cold War: Changing patterns of direct external involvement

Direct foreign involvement in political violence dropped considerably with the withdrawal of US forces from Vietnam and the end of its air war in the region. While foreign state actors continued providing significant military support for perpetrators of political violence, such aid declined as Cold War conflicts wound down. Non-state perpetrators of political violence became proportionately more significant, but their external sources of support remained very limited. In a few cases, mentioned below, external actors began to play a role in reducing levels of political violence.

The major exception to this drop-off in direct support for regimes responsible for large-scale political violence is ongoing Chinese military and economic support for the military government of Burma. Until 1967 China had pursued friendly relations with the Burmese government, rather than support the pro-Beijing Burmese communist revolutionary movement.[48] This changed for about a decade, when China began supporting the Burma Communist Party in the late 1960s until the late 1970s, after which the Chinese policy reverted to prioritizing relations with the government in Rangoon. Particularly since 1988, when most Western countries reduced aid and economic relations with Burma as the military took direct control of the state after using lethal force to suppress large civilian demonstrations, China has emerged as the main source of military supplies to the Burmese government, with some transactions taking place on concessional terms.[49] Although ethnically based insurgent movements and other groups have intermittently been perpetrators of political violence, the government has used far more deadly force against the civilian population, as well as being responsible for widespread forced labour and torture.[50]

Elsewhere in Southeast Asia, by comparison with the Cold War years, state perpetrators are responsible for proportionately less of the violence, although state violence far from ended with the Cold War, most notably in regions where central governments have faced insurgencies, such as Aceh in Indonesia and the southern provinces of Thailand and the Philippines.[51] In addition, more general state-directed and state-sanctioned political violence in the form of extra-judicial killing and torture remains significant in some countries, particularly the Philippines and Thailand.[52] These states have received increased military and intelligence support from the United States since 2001.

Non-state perpetrators of political violence have also been significantly active in these countries. In Indonesia (and its annexed territory of East Timor until 1999), non-state perpetrators of violence have included state-supported paramilitaries and gangs, armed insurgent resistance movements and a range of armed civilian groups engaged in communal conflicts and sporadic acts of terrorism, many with opaque political loyalties and ties to different parts of the state. Their activity has come to account for a greater part of the political violence, compared to the dominance of state actors until 1999.[53] No attempt is made here to describe the many "conflict areas" in Indonesia since the 1990s, but a general observation can be made regarding the degree and type of external involvement in these conflicts: the non-state perpetrators of violence received very limited external military support in the form of personnel, training or weapons. For the most part, insurgent and other armed groups appear to have used home-made weapons, leaked or seized weapons from the Indonesian police and military, and weapons acquired through the thriving small-arms black market in Southeast Asia.[54] Relatively small numbers of insurgents and others gained training in Libya and Afghanistan, with some possibly receiving training, weapons and equipment from non-state groups in the Philippines.

The group responsible for the small number of high-profile bombing incidents in Indonesia since 2002, Jemaah Islamiyah, appears to have received some funding, training and equipment from its connections to similar groups using violent tactics, including the al-Qaeda network formerly based in Afghanistan, as well as sympathetic groups elsewhere in Southeast Asia. The most credible of studies of Jemaah Islamiyah, however, conclude that the movement has been primarily locally controlled, financed and operated.[55]

The insurgents and other violent non-state groups in the southern areas of both the Philippines and Thailand are responsible for significant loss of civilian life, particularly as violence in southern Thailand escalated from 2004.[56] However, these groups do not appear to have received significant external lethal support. They have primarily been armed from domestic sources or via the regional small-arms black market, in which arms left over from American and Chinese supplies to Cambodia in the 1970s and 1980s are still abundant, in addition to new production that leaks from China and other countries.[57] Some arms and training have also allegedly been supplied in the past to Philippine insurgent groups by Libya and al-Qaeda, and some individuals received military training in Afghanistan.

The cases of direct, material foreign involvement in political violence in Southeast Asia discussed above suggest that most such involvement has served to escalate levels of violence. This judgement cannot rest on the claims of those involved, who almost invariably asserted they were acting to promote peace. Their efforts in this respect, however, were in most cases so inept or obviously insincere that it is hard to make the case that this was the real thrust of foreign military and security involvement. To be sure, in some cases foreign support succeeded in helping bring about at least a temporary end to open conflict, as rebel groups and dissidents were effectively crushed. Ending such conflicts promoted political stability and economic development. But in terms of whether more or less blood would have been shed, the most plausible contention is that fewer lives would have been lost, and fewer people maimed, if foreigners had not supplied weapons, military training and troops on the ground and in the air.

In a handful of cases, however, direct foreign military involvement has on balance reduced levels of violence. In addition to the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, three cases of relatively successful (albeit flawed) military-backed peacemaking stand out. In Cambodia, after an internationally brokered peace settlement in 1991, foreign military influence shifted in the direction of reducing levels of violence, with the deployment of UN forces to oversee the new political settlement and transition to democracy starting in 1992. In East Timor, as violence erupted in the wake of the popular vote in favour of independence in 1999, international forces with a UN mandate eventually moved in and provided a degree of security until East Timor officially regained its independence in 2002. And in the Indonesian province of Aceh, a political settlement was finally bolstered with the support of foreign military observers in 2005 and 2006. In addition to the role of external state actors in these peacebuilding initiatives, non-state actors have at times been involved in brokering negotiations.[58]

Indirect and intangible external influences

Most of the conflicts and episodes of political violence discussed in the previous sections were also subject to indirect and intangible external influences. It is necessarily more difficult to trace the effects of such influences on levels and patterns of violence, but some attempt can be made by looking at how different forms of non-lethal but material aid have been directed, at the material sources of destabilization and at the content of diplomatic interventions.

In the case of the countries receiving significant military support from foreign governments during the Cold War, economic and diplomatic support was generally also forthcoming from the same sources. Thus the major recipients of US military aid and intervention on their behalf – the anti-communist governments and militaries of Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and South Vietnam – also received considerable American economic aid and largesse. Bilateral grants, technical assistance, access to the US market and facilitated access to international lending sources dominated by the United States greatly favoured the anti-communist governments of Southeast Asia, with benefits also flowing to their populations, though not in all cases.[59] Similarly, although at lower levels in absolute terms, economic aid and support flowed from the Soviet Union and China to communist governments and parties in Southeast Asia, although Chinese support to communist groups in Southeast Asia (with the significant exception of ongoing support for the

Khmer Rouge) had largely ended by the end of the 1970s, and turned to outright hostility in the case of Vietnam.

In what ways did such aid influence levels and patterns of political violence in Southeast Asia? As noted above, the states receiving external economic aid were often also responsible for high levels of violence directed against their political opponents. Nonetheless, it does not follow that all the economic aid they received from outside sources directly contributed to state violence. Rather, its effects appear to be mixed. On the one hand, the generous access to aid and financial resources afforded to the governments of Suharto and Marcos, for example, almost certainly cemented their hold on power and can thus be seen as a background enabling factor with respect to regime violence.[60] Similarly, Soviet economic aid to Vietnam made it less necessary for the Vietnamese government to accommodate and compromise with its opponents, and thus reduced constraints on state violence against its real and imagined political opponents. However, only at certain critical junctures is it plausible to say that external support was a decisive factor in regime maintenance. The successive governments of South Vietnam between 1954 and 1975, which were almost entirely dependent on US support, are the most prominent examples of dependence on external aid. As a recent study of American support for Ngo Dinh Diem puts it, "It was in the United States that Diem won his post", and it was the United States that allowed him to remain in it for as long as he did.[61]

In the cases where external support was instrumental, but not clearly decisive, in strengthening the position of perpetrators of political violence, it is hard to say whether violence would have increased or decreased had the hold on power of these governments been less secure. In the case of the Philippines, human rights abuses and levels of political violence related to insurgencies increased under, and due to, Marcos's rule, and decreased after he was deposed. It is equally clear that had the Indonesian military not been leading the killings in Indonesia in 1965–1966, no bloodbath of similar magnitude would have occurred, despite propaganda efforts to assert the likelihood of an equally bloody communist massacre if the PKI had not been "crushed" violently.[62] However, in many other cases the counterfactuals stand on weaker ground. In Indonesia, for example, it is hard to say whether the regime's ongoing record of political violence in the 1970s and 1980s would have been better or worse if Suharto had had less of a grip on power. Would the Burmese military government be more or less abusive in the presence of a tightened (or weakened) sanctions regime? There is no consensus on this point. What we can be confident of is that, at certain moments over the last 60 years, there would have been different perpetrators and different victims had large amounts of economic assistance not been delivered to state perpetrators of political violence.

In comparison with the billions of dollars in economic aid received by state actors, aid to non-state perpetrators has been far more modest, although concrete estimates of amounts are hard to come by. There are numerous references to Chinese aid to the communist insurgencies of Southeast Asia, at least until the 1980s, but remarkably few details. In some cases these assertions are clearly unfounded, such as claimed ongoing Chinese aid to the Indonesian Communist Party decades after that party had been wiped out in Indonesia.[63] As discussed above, China appears to have started providing finance to revolutionary communist groups in the early 1960s, but in most cases such finance was probably relatively minor in absolute terms. Probably the clearest case of Chinese aid being pivotal in the choice of strategies was that noted above, of Chinese financial backing and strong exhortations to the CPM to resume its violent struggle in 1961. In addition to finance (an undisclosed amount, but enough for the CPM not to have to worry about its finances), the Chinese enabled the CPM to run a radio broadcasting service, with full Chinese technical and financial backing, based first in China and then in Thailand.[64]

Other non-state groups involved in political violence are likely to have received modest amounts of material aid from external, mostly non-state, sources. The separatist insurgencies in the southern Philippines, Aceh, Burma and southern Thailand appear to have relied mostly on their own resources, often operating in the illegal economy, but also allegedly receiving funds from foreign charities and individuals. In the case of non-state perpetrators of political violence who have been more narrowly focused on violent tactics – the militias formed to fight in communal conflict areas in Indonesia, for example, and those responsible for acts of terrorism – references to external funding in even the most alarmist accounts speak of financing in tens of thousands of dollars, not millions. These funds may have directly financed particular instances of terrorism or violence, but again domestic sources appear to predominate, as these groups are also known to have turned to crime (as well as apparently legitimate business activities) to finance themselves.[65]

The final material external influence on political violence considered here is the destabilization that can be attributed to earlier foreign interventions. In some cases a plausible link can be made between earlier foreign intervention and the subsequent escalation of domestic conflicts or the rise to power of domestic perpetrators of political violence. In this respect, the major cases are the military incursions by Kuomintang forces into Burma in the 1950s, the US bombing of Cambodia in 1965–1973 and, more indirectly, US subversion in Indonesia in 1957–1958, which strengthened the political position of the Indonesian military.[66]

Intangible influences such as diplomatic lobbying, the transnational flow of ideas and legitimating activity by external parties are often difficult to analyse in terms of their impact on levels or types of violence. There have been many concerted efforts by outside parties to inspire and legitimize political violence in Southeast Asia, both during times when the violence was ongoing and in the preceding periods. Inspiration may also be unintentional, as ideas may travel without the express direction of their originators and events may inspire action in unanticipated ways. The effects of such intangible factors are generally impossible to pin down, however, and it is in most cases difficult to argue that patterns of violence would have been *significantly* different without external diplomatic support or ideational inspiration.

The most important cases where outside actors gave diplomatic support for the perpetrators of massive political violence include Western governments' endorsement of the actions of the Indonesian military in 1965–1966, reflected both in communications at the time and in their subsequent diplomatic rehabilitation of Indonesia.[67] Also with regard to Indonesia, ongoing diplomatic support and public massaging of its human rights record – including its invasion and occupation of East Timor – were forthcoming from the governments of the United States, Japan, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand.[68] As stated by the US ambassador to the United Nations after the Indonesian invasion, "The Department of State desired that the United Nations prove utterly ineffective in whatever measures it undertook. This task was given to me, and I carried it forward with no inconsiderable success."[69] Chinese and Southeast Asian diplomatic support for Burma's military government (including ASEAN's decision to admit Myanmar in 1997) marks another case of intangible state support for state perpetrators of violence, although recently the ASEAN position of "constructive engagement" has been coupled with half-hearted attempts at diplomatic distancing.

The record of Western government apologists for major human rights violators has been fairly well aired in the case of Indonesia and the Philippines. In contrast, the support bestowed by China, Western actors and the non-communist governments of Southeast Asia on the perpetrators of horrendous political violence in Cambodia has undergone a peculiar transmutation in mainstream accounts. Thus the concerted diplomatic lobbying on behalf of what amounted to the rump Khmer Rouge government, orchestrated by ASEAN, the United States and China from 1979 until 1990, is routinely described as "ASEAN's finest hour" and analysed in terms of the opportunity it gave the regional grouping to demonstrate cohesiveness and promote a shared identity.[70] In this period the actions of China and the United States in particular, in backing the Khmer Rouge and obstructing attempts to forge a political solution, were decisive in prolonging the conflict.[71]

Intangible state support for non-state perpetrators of political violence is rarely decisive. Historically, the major instances of such support seem to be the publications and doctrinal training given by China to insurgent communist groups in Southeast Asia, with the flow of published material from China to Southeast Asia and the maintenance of "fraternal" relations between the Southeast Asian communist groups and those of China and the Soviet Union. Such influences shaped the language and sometimes the tactical behaviour of Southeast Asian communists, particularly in navigating the Sino-Soviet split. On the other hand, most communist movements in the region were primarily influenced by local conditions and generally emerged out of movements with strong roots in peasant societies, which generally ensured a flexible and selective adoption of party doctrine emanating from China or the Soviet Union.[72]

Much has been made of the impact of external ideational factors on militant groups with an Islamic identity in Southeast Asia.[73] Clearly, flows of literature mostly from the Middle East have circulated among many such groups, and appear to be more popular in the last 10 years, in contrast to the more secular and ethnic bases of mobilization in earlier periods. However, in the case of the main insurgent movements in Aceh (until the 2005 peace settlement) and the southern Philippines, the religious basis for mobilization (to the extent it exists) appears to be organically entrenched, emerging out the lived experience of a religious and socio-political identity, and not the product of exposure to imported "radical" ideas. In many conflicts with a religious dimension, domestic political conditions and manipulation have been far more significant factors in explaining the violence than foreign ideational influences.[74]

As the notion of "al-Qaeda as an ideology" has increasingly displaced images of hierarchical, ordered international terrorist organization, so it has become more common to assert that the external link to Southeast Asian terrorist and militant violence consists mainly of affective ties, education, mental frameworks for action and, in some versions, incitement to violence through the circulation of inflammatory material.[75] It is obvious that there is an active flow of ideas through the transmission of texts, educational circuits and, in fewer cases, shared combat experience, linking several violent non-state movements in Southeast Asia with outside actors, particularly in the Middle East. What to make of this linkage is less obvious. Many of the texts and influences that resonate with violent groups also circulate among groups that are entirely non-violent, some of which are committed to the democratic process and constitutionalism.[76] And even if there is a sense in which terrorist acts in Southeast Asia have been framed or inspired by terrorism elsewhere, there also seem to be as many points of difference as of similarity in the ideational maps of these kindred groups. An interpretive study of the imagery and ideas of al-Qaeda, for example, does not easily match what we know of Jemaah Islamiyah.[77]

Conclusions

Some conclusions about the relative importance of different types of external influence on political violence emerge. First, state perpetrators and state supporters clearly predominate, in terms of both the scale of violence and in how direct and material the external link has been to violence in Southeast Asia. We can distinguish two types of direct, material external involvement in major cases of political violence in Southeast Asia, starting from the period of decolonization after the Second World War and continuing, at much lower levels, in the post–Cold War period. The first type of external involvement consists of foreign actors on the ground actually carrying out acts of violence. The second type consists of material foreign support for acts of violence: the training of police, militaries, paramilitaries, insurgents or other violent actors, the provision of technical advice, intelligence and logistical support for such groups and the supply of weapons and other lethal equipment.

In terms of periods, such direct, external influences on political violence in Southeast Asia have been concentrated in two phases: during the decolonization process after the Second World War, and in the middle years of the Cold War in Asia, particularly from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s. After then, the numbers of foreign actors directly responsible for violence on the ground – and the casualties they inflicted – significantly declined, with the exceptional case of Indonesian violence in East Timor. Direct, lethal support for violent action carried out by local players generally accompanied these interventions, and continued in many cases after the withdrawal of foreign personnel. Since the mid-1970s, external involvement in political violence has mostly taken the form of weapons supply, military aid and indirect or intangible forms of support.

A second conclusion is that, in contrast to the clear predominance of state actors in providing material support for violence, non-state actors have more often employed less tangible means to incite and legitimize – and in some cases delegitimize – violence. This corresponds with the vastly discrepant material resources available to the different types of actor. Publishing, educating and otherwise disseminating ideas are of course not the exclusive preserve of non-state actors, but they are at least less unequal in this sphere than in terms of their ability to deploy physical force or distribute weaponry. Even in the flow of small arms, which account for many of the casualties of political violence, state agencies are probably responsible for the bulk of the initial supply to the small-arms market in Southeast Asia, although redistribution tends to flow through private actors. Overall, while political violence often calls attention to the role of non-state actors, the experience of Southeast Asia confirms the primacy of states as agents of lethal violence.

Notes

1. This argument has been most strongly put forward by Ben Kiernan. For a summary of his case see Kiernan, Ben (1993) "The Impact on Cambodia of the U.S. Intervention in Vietnam", in Jayne Werner and Luu Doan Huynh (eds) *The Vietnam War: Vietnamese and American Perspectives*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, pp. 216–229.
2. Definitions of state terrorism generally place primary emphasis on civilian targeting. See the discussions in Selden, Mark and Alvin So (eds) (2004) *War and State Terrorism: The United States, Japan and the Asia-Pacific in the Long Twentieth Century*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
3. Benedict Kerkvliet's account of the Huk rebellion is generally considered the standard text, focusing on the experiences and aspirations of the rebels. Kerkvliet, Benedict (1977) *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. For an insider view, from a rebel who later surrendered after believing that the movement – in its insurgent form – had lost the support of the peasantry by 1954, see Taruc, Luis (1954) *Born of the People*. New York: International Publishers. On Taruc's change of position see Kerkvliet, ibid., p. 247.
4. Kerkvliet, ibid., pp. 267, 110–112.
5. Ibid., p. 245.
6. For summary overviews, including some detail on personnel, amounts of military aid and techniques, see Bonner, Raymond (1987) *Waltzing with a Dictator: The Marcoses and the Making of American Policy*. New York: Times Books, pp. 34–38; Kerkvliet, note 3 above, pp. 243–245; Pommeroy, William (1974) *An American Made Tragedy: Neo-Colonialism and Dictatorship in the Philippines*. New York: International Publishers.
7. Rotter, Andrew (1987) *The Path to Vietnam: Origins of the American Commitment to Southeast Asia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
8. See Chen, Jian (1993) "China and the First Indo-China War, 1950–54", *China Quarterly* 133, pp. 85–110. Stalin turned down Ho Chi Minh's 1950 request for Soviet military and financial support; the Soviet Union only became an important source of military aid from the 1960s.
9. For a general account see Duiker, William (1995) *Sacred War: Nationalism and Revolution in a Divided Vietnam*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.
10. Stubbs, Richard (1989) *Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare: The Malayan Emergency, 1948–1960*. Singapore: Oxford University Press.
11. Anderson, Benedict (1972) *Java in a Time of Revolution: Occupation and Resistance, 1944–1946*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
12. Stubbs, note 10 above.
13. A government report on the communist threat that by no means aimed to downplay its seriousness or its foreign connections made no mention of any military aid from China.

14. The CPM leader is clear in attributing the 1961 decision to return to arms to the promise of Chinese support, and states explicitly that it received no outside financial or military assistance prior to this, aside from medical treatment for some CPM tuberculosis sufferers. See Chin, Peng (2003) *My Side of History*. Singapore: Media Masters, pp. 424–434, 515.
15. Ibid., p. 453.
16. Ibid., p. 455.
17. Kahin, Audrey and George Kahin (1995) *Subversion as Foreign Policy: The Secret Eisenhower and Dulles Debacle in Indonesia*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.
18. Roosa, John (2006) *Pretext for Mass Murder: The September 30th Movement and Suharto's Coup d'Etat in Indonesia*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, p. 181.
19. The most comprehensive and credible study of the 30 September 1965 coup attempt is Roosa, ibid. Also on the killings see Robinson, Geoffrey (1995) *The Dark Side of Paradise: Political Violence in Bali*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press; Cribb, Robert (ed.) (1990) *The Indonesian Killings of 1965–1966: Studies from Java and Bali*. Clayton, Vic.: Monash University Centre of Southeast Asian Studies; Farid, Hilmar (2005) "Indonesia's Original Sin: Mass Killings and Capitalist Expansion, 1965–66", *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 6(1), pp. 3–16.
20. Roosa, note 18 above, pp. 176–201. Further evidence of US support for the killings and the military takeover of government more generally, based on US archival sources, is provided in Simpson, Bradley (2008) *Economists with Guns: Authoritarian Development and U.S.-Indonesian Relations, 1960–1968*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
21. There were undoubtedly personal ties connecting the Indonesian communist leaders with the Communist Party in China, and some Indonesians (along with communists from most other Southeast Asian countries) underwent training in China in the early 1960s. It is not clear what this training consisted of, but most evidence points to the PKI being committed to its political strategy.
22. There is a large and mostly credible literature on human rights abuses both during the military-backed "New Order" government (1966–1998) and in the conflict areas of Timor, Aceh and Papua since then. See, for example, successive reports of Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. An overview is given in Roosa, John (2003) "Violence and the Suharto Regime's Wonderland", *Critical Asian Studies* 35(2), pp. 315–323.
23. Nairn, Allan (2001) "U.S. Support for the Indonesian Military: Congressional Testimony", in Richard Tanter, Mark Selden and Stephen Shalom (eds) *Bitter Flowers, Sweet Flowers: East Timor, Indonesia, and the World Community*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 163–172; Curtis, Mark (2004) "Complicity in a Million Deaths", in John Pilger (ed.) *Tell Me No Lies: Investigative Journalism and Its Triumphs*. London: Vintage, pp. 501–515; Nevins, Joseph (2005) *A Not-So-Distant Horror: Mass Violence in East Timor*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
24. Nevins, ibid., pp. 51–60, 64–66; Kiernan, Ben (2004) "War, Genocide, and Resistance in East Timor, 1975–99: Comparative Reflections on Cambodia", in Mark Selden and Alvin So (eds) *War and State Terrorism: The United States, Japan and the Asia-Pacific in the Long Twentieth Century*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 199–223.
25. For example, Bowie, Katherine (1997) *Rituals of National Loyalty: An Anthropology of the State and the Village Scout Movement in Thailand*. New York: Columbia University Press.
26. Fineman, Daniel (1997) *A Special Relationship: The United States and Military Government in Thailand, 1947–1958*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press.
27. See Bonner, note 6 above, for a careful but critical account of the mixture of outright support, tacit acquiescence and token censure by American officials of state-directed

political violence in the Philippines. Authors such as Pommeroy, note 6 above, ascribe even more responsibility to the United States.

28. Given the CIA's active propagation of torture techniques developed since the 1950s to many developing countries, its close institutional ties with Philippine security agencies and the use of particular torture techniques by these Philippine agencies, there is a suggestive case that the CIA actually trained individual Philippine torturers. See McCoy, Alfred (2006) *A Question of Torture: CIA Interrogation, From the Cold War to the War on Terror*. New York: Owl Books, pp. 75–78.
29. Abinales, Patricio (1997) "State Building, Communist Insurgency and *Cacique* Politics in the Philippines", in Paul Rich and Richard Stubbs (eds) *The Counter-Insurgent State: Guerrilla Warfare and State Building in the Twentieth Century*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, pp. 26–49, at p. 33.
30. Malay, Ricardo S. (2003) "Now It Can Be Told: '71 NPA Arms Deal with China Failed", *Asian Journal Online*, 11 December, available at www.asianjournal.com/cgi-bin/view_info.cgi?code=00002334&category=HI.
31. Tsui, Chak Wing David (1995) *China and the Communist Armed Struggle in Thailand*. London: Sangam Books. Although not significant sources of weapons (despite an early post-war plan by the CPM to supply arms to the Vietnamese communists), there were quite close fraternal ties among the communist parties of Southeast Asia, and particularly close ties between the Thai and Vietnamese communists in the early post-war period. See Goscha, Christopher (1999) *Thailand and the Southeast Asian Networks of the Vietnamese Revolution, 1885–1954*. Richmond: Curzon Press.
32. More than a billion dollars of American military aid was given to the French in their fight against the Viet Minh, but probably the greater part of this was directed to war-fighting rather than political violence – although the line, as so often, is blurred.
33. In contrast to anti-communist claims of hundreds of thousands of deaths in the land reform campaigns, a later scholarly estimate puts deaths at most likely around 5,000, with 15,000 being the upper band of the estimate. See Moise, Edwin (1976) "Land Reform and Land Reform Errors in North Vietnam", *Pacific Affairs* 49(1), pp. 70–92. On the reports of atrocities against the Catholic population see Jacobs, Seth (2004) *America's Miracle Man in Vietnam: Ngo Dinh Diem, Religion, Race and U.S. Intervention in Southeast Asia*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
34. Chen, Jian (1995) "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964–69", *China Quarterly* 142, pp. 356–387; Guan, Ang Cheng (1997) *Vietnamese Communists' Relations with China and Second Indochina Conflict 1956–1962*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
35. Chen, ibid.
36. McCoy, note 28 above, pp. 60–66.
37. For a brief review see Chomsky, Noam and Edward Herman (1979) *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism*. Boston, MA: South End Press, pp. 304–345; see also Hersh, Seymour (2004) "The Massacre at My Lai", in John Pilger (ed.) *Tell Me No Lies: Investigative Journalism and Its Triumphs*. London: Vintage, pp. 85–119.
38. McCoy, Alfred (2002) "America's Secret War in Laos, 1955–75", in Marilyn Young and Robert Buzzanco (eds) *Companion to the Vietnam War*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, p. 284.
39. Ibid., p. 302.
40. Owen, Taylor and Ben Kiernan (2007) "Bombs Over Cambodia: New Light on US Air War", *Japan Focus*, 12 May, available at www.japanfocus.org/products/details/2420.
41. For an account of the period to 1975 see Kiernan, Ben (2004) *How Pol Pot Came to Power*, 2nd edn. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
42. Morris, Stephen (1999) *Why Vietnam Invaded Cambodia: Political Culture and the Causes of War*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, p. 40. Sihanouk resumed ties

with the United States in 1969, in the context of increasing violent conflict with the Cambodian communists.

43. Zhai, Qiang (2006) "China and the Cambodian Conflict, 1970–1975", in Priscilla Roberts (ed.) *Behind the Bamboo Curtain: China, Vietnam and the World Beyond Asia*. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, pp. 369–403. The absence of direct ties between the CPK and China is contradicted by the report of the Malaysian communist leader of his conversation with Pol Pot in 1975, in which Pol Pot claimed Chinese support from the late 1960s. See Chin, note 14 above, p. 454.
44. Zhai, ibid., p. 388. On the CPK's increasing hostility to the Vietnamese see Morris, note 42 above.
45. See, for example, Hinton, Alexander Laban (2005) *Why Did They Kill? Cambodia in the Shadow of Genocide*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press; Kiernan, Ben (1996) *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975–79*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
46. Zhai, note 43 above, pp. 391–395.
47. Pilger, John (2004) "Year Zero", in John Pilger (ed.) *Tell Me No Lies: Investigative Journalism and Its Triumphs*. London: Vintage, pp. 120–157.
48. Barnouin, Barbara and Yu Changgen (1998) *Chinese Foreign Policy During the Cultural Revolution*. London: Kegan Paul, pp. 74–75. According to another source, however, the Burmese communists had a large presence in Beijing in the early 1960s. See Chin, note 14 above, p. 428.
49. Ruland, Jurgen (2001) "Burma Ten Years After the Uprising: The Regional Dimension", in Robert Taylor (ed.) *Burma: Political Economy under Military Rule*. London: Hurst, pp. 137–158.
50. On the political violence engaged in by the military government of Burma/Myanmar – both in the course of fighting insurgencies and in more general abuses of human rights – see International Labour Organization (1998) *Forced Labour in Myanmar (Burma)*. Geneva: ILO; Asian Human Rights Commission (2006) *The State of Human Rights in Eleven Asian Nations: Bangladesh, Burma, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand*. Hong Kong: Asian Human Rights Commission; successive reports by Human Rights Watch, New York.
51. Human Rights Watch (2007) "'It Was Like Suddenly My Son No Longer Existed': Enforced Disappearances in Thailand's Southern Border Provinces", March, available at http://hrw.org/reports/2007/thailand0307/; International Crisis Group (2003) "Aceh: How Not to Win Hearts and Minds", 23 July, available at www.crisisweb.org; Sukma, Rizal (2004) "Security Operations in Aceh: Goals, Consequences and Lessons", Policy Studies, East West Center, available at www.eastwestcenter.org.
52. Franco, Jennifer and Patricio Abinales (2007) "Again, They're Killing Peasants in the Philippines", *Critical Asian Studies* 39(2), pp. 315–328; Amnesty International (2006) "Philippines: Political Killings, Human Rights and the Peace Process", ASA 35/006/2006, 15 August, available at http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engasa350062006; Human Rights Watch (2007) "Scared Silent: Impunity for Extrajudicial Killings in the Philippines", June, available at http://hrw.org/reports/2007/philippines0607/.
53. Wilson, Ian Douglas (2006) "The Changing Contours of Organized Violence in Post–New Order Indonesia", *Critical Asian Studies* 38(2), pp. 265–297.
54. Vermonte, Philips Jusario (ed.) (2004) *Small Is (Not) Beautiful: The Problem of Small Arms in Southeast Asia*. Jakarta: CSIS.
55. There is a large and very uneven literature on terrorism and religious violence in Indonesia and the rest of Southeast Asia. In a separate review of some this literature, I have argued that the most convincing studies suggest that most of these groups are domestic in focus and origin, with relatively modest material support from external actors. There

is, however, clearly an external dimension that includes exposure and training in the Afghanistan conflict for some of those involved. See Hamilton-Hart, Natasha (2005) "Terrorism in Southeast Asia: Expert Analysis, Myopia and Fantasy", *Pacific Review* 18(3), pp. 1–23. Notable studies of these non-state actors include Sidel, John (2006) *Riots, Pogroms, Jihad: Religious Violence in Indonesia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press; Hasan, Noorhaidi (2006) *Laskar Jihad: Islam, Militancy, and the Quest for Identity in Post-New Order Indonesia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Southeast Asia Program Publications; International Crisis Group (2002) "Indonesia Backgrounder: How the *Jemaah Islamiyah* Terrorist Network Operates", Asia Report No. 43, 11 December, available at www.crisisweb.org.

56. Human Rights Watch (2007) "No One Is Safe: Insurgent Attacks on Civilians in Thailand's Southern Border Provinces", August, available at http://hrw.org/reports/2007/thailand0807/.
57. Vermonte, note 54 above.
58. Lahdensuo, Sami (2006) "Building Peace in Aceh", Crisis Management Initiative, available at www.cmi.fi/files/AMM_report.pdf.
59. For an overview of the economic and political effects of US Cold War policies in the region see Stubbs, Richard (2005) *Rethinking Asia's Economic Miracle: The Political Economy of War, Prosperity and Crisis*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
60. For example, Bonner, note 6 above; Winters, Jeffrey (1996) *Power in Motion: Capital Mobility and the Indonesian State*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press; Winters, Jeffrey (2002) "Criminal Debt", in Jonathan Pincus and Jeffrey Winters (eds) *Reinventing the World Bank*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
61. Jacobs, note 33 above, p. 25.
62. Roosa, note 18 above.
63. Harris, Lillian Craig (1985) *China's Foreign Policy Toward the Third World*. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, p. 73.
64. Chin, note 14 above.
65. International Crisis Group, note 55 above; Abuza, Zachary (2003) "Funding Terrorism in Southeast Asia: The Financial Network of Al Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiya", *NBR Analysis* 14(5).
66. Callahan, Mary (2003) *Making Enemies: War and State Building in Burma*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press; Kiernan, note 1 above; Kahin and Kahin, note 17 above.
67. Roosa, note 18 above; Winters (1996), note 60 above.
68. Nevins, note 23 above, pp. 66–72; Curtis, note 23 above.
69. Quoted in Nevins, ibid., p. 72.
70. Liefer, Michael (1989) *ASEAN and the Security of South East Asia*. London: Routledge; Acharya, Amitav (2000) *The Quest for Identity: International Relations of Southeast Asia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
71. In particular see Haas, Michael (1991) *Cambodia, Pol Pot, and the United States: The Faustian Pact*. New York: Praeger.
72. For example, Kerkvliet, note 3 above; Taruc, note 3 above; Mortimer, Rex (1974) *Indonesian Communism Under Sukarno: Ideology and Politics, 1959–1965*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
73. For example, Ramakrishna, Kumar (2004) "'Constructing' the Jemaah Islamiyah Terrorist: A Preliminary Enquiry", Working Paper 71, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Singapore.
74. Sidel, note 55 above; McCargo, Duncan (ed.) (2006) *Rethinking Thailand's Southern Violence*. Singapore: Singapore University Press.
75. On al-Qaeda as a loose network linked by ideology see Burke, Jason (2004) *Al-Qaeda: The True Story of Radical Islam*. London: Tauris. For studies relating to Southeast Asia

see Leheny, David (2005) "Terrorism, Social Movements, and International Security: How Al Qaeda Affects Southeast Asia", *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 6(1), pp. 1–23; Hasan, note 55 above; van Bruinessen, Martin (2002) "Genealogies of Islamic Radicalism in Post-Suharto Indonesia", *South East Asia Research* 10(2), pp. 117–154; Ahnaf, Muhamnad Iqbal (2006) *The Image of the Other as Enemy: Radical Discourse in Indonesia*. Chiang Mai: Asian Muslim Action Network/Silkworm Books.

76. Bubalo, Anthony and Greg Fealy (2005) "Joining the Caravan? The Middle East, Islamism and Indonesia", Lowy Institute Paper 5, Longueville Media for the Lowy Institute for International Policy, Alexandria, NSW; International Crisis Group (2004) "Indonesia Backgrounder: Why Salafism and Terrorism Mostly Don't Mix", Asia Report No. 83, 13 September, available at www.crisisweb.org.
77. For an interpretive study see Devji, Faisal (2005) *Landscapes of the Jihad: Militancy, Morality, Modernity*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

7

Recruitment and attack in Southeast Asian collective violence

Vince Boudreau

In the politics that has followed 9/11, as during the Cold War, it has become common to connect sets of claims or orientations with forms and tactics of struggle. Religious fundamentalism in particular has often been presented as explaining cataclysmic, suicidal approaches to struggle by virtue of its sustaining beliefs. Yet the approach fails to account for the differences in forms of struggle among movements that seem inspired by similar ways of thinking or to incorporate some of the most interesting insights on the relationship between tactics of struggle and larger political processes. The trade-offs in the choice between these alternatives should be clear. If patterns of violence depend primarily on ways of framing struggle, then the analysis should concentrate on those frameworks, and interpret their tractable connections to different kinds of struggle. If, on the other hand, dynamics of struggle are embedded in broader political processes, we should concentrate on process, including the nature of repression, opportunities for advocacy within the polity, the character of social connection in society, the availability of potential allies or countermovements and the cultural frameworks available for struggle. I adopt this latter approach in this chapter.

Violence, in this reading, is a collective tactic pursued because it promises to serve a collective purpose. This purpose may range from addressing member anger and frustration to pressuring adversaries, intimidating bystanders or recruiting new supporters. Rather than situating the resort to violence in the realms of unbridled human passion or ideology, or attempting to analyse violence as a coherent and distinct social

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Political violence in South and Southeast Asia: Critical perspectives, Abraham, Newman and Weiss (eds), United Nations University Press, 2010, ISBN 978-92-808-1190-2

phenomenon, I assume that nothing analytically essential separates violent from non-violent forms of struggle. Armed insurgency, suicide bombings or the execution of “class enemies”, while perhaps abhorrent to our sense of humanity, can be apprehended using the same tools we use to understand strikes, demonstrations and sit-ins. The key to understanding collective violence lies not in the peculiarity of violence *per se*, but in the particular influence violence has on more general patterns of collective action.[1]

I argue that patterns of collective violence in Southeast Asia are closely influenced by trade-offs between efforts to recruit supporters and to strike at adversaries. In particular, I argue that the more separate or separable targets of movement violence are from communities targeted by activists for recruitment, the less calibrated or discriminate that violence will be. Conversely, when movement activists attempt to recruit among populations that live in close proximity to potential movement targets, activists will be more likely to calibrate, moderate and explain violence. Efforts to strike a balance between these partially conflicting objectives can appear as different modes of violence, different targeting strategies or combinations of the two.

This work begins with a general discussion of collective tactics, and then considers the difference that violence makes in movement approaches to those tactics. It then moves to a mainly suggestive review of several importantly different patterns of movement violence in contemporary Southeast Asia. The chapter concludes with some considerations for further study and research.

Collective tactics

Tilly has persuasively argued that activists formulate tactics from a finite repertoire that emerges in relation to broad historical change and activist innovation and is then reproduced and diffused socially.[2] Why activists choose one or another item in that repertoire is, however, a separate question. Many have attempted to formulate answers by defining movement types in relation to movement actions – a choice that evades problematizing the selection process itself, and tends towards circularity. But others do ask why activists adopt one or another tactic, often looking at interactions between patterns of repression, opportunities, movements and counter-movements, or ideas about success. Tarrow helps us sort through these alternatives by suggesting that the selection process is constrained by the movement’s social character: movements strive to project power in ways that maintain or expand their support.[3] They make demands of authorities and credibly threaten to raise costs associated with ignoring those demands – but can only deliver on those threats to the extent that they maintain some measure of social support. It becomes important, therefore, to think about movement activity as producing two separate kinds of effects: one on movement targets and adversaries, and one on potential or actual movement supporters.

As movements strike at adversaries, they project power and inflict costs on those who oppose or ignore them. In direct forms of struggle, actors seize resources, or punish those against whom they feel aggrieved. Other forms of power projection include demonstration (where movements express grievances and demonstrate commitment and power), civil disobedience (where activists hamper or disrupt adversary activity) and withdrawal (where movement collectives set themselves apart from putative authorities). Often, powerful relationships exist between movement efforts to accomplish external goals and the amount of disruption (including violence) they threaten or inflict, but scholars have been divided on this question. A robust tradition links goal accomplishment positively to movement disruption.[4] Others argue that more moderate and non-violent patterns of protest, and particularly those that tap into widespread social norms, have the greatest chance of accomplishing their goals.[5]

But collective tactics also aim to solidify and expand movement support, because both movement claims and movement claim-making processes influence recruitment dynamics. Early rational-choice work described selective incentives, including side payments or the distribution of seized resources, as the key mechanisms binding movement supporters to the collective effort.[6] Such incentives often were only tangentially related to collective objectives, but they cemented support and sustained struggle. More recent scholarship draws attention to what Elizabeth Wood has called "in-process" incentives, including feelings of empowerment and elation connected with successful struggle,[7] or efforts to create a collective life that resonates with broader movement goals.[8] Others have made the process by which activists frame a grievance and mobilize consensus around a course of action an explicit element of their analysis.[9]

In the abstract, it is easy to think about externally directed threat and support as balancing against one another. Overly weak threats may fail to stir people to action, whereas overly strong or violent threats may frighten or offend supporters. Actual politics predictably complicates this abstract simplicity. The distance a movement constituency lies from the halls of power may influence the tactics it embraces: generally well-represented groups may be less open to radical struggle than marginalized people. Variations in a government's liberalism, democracy or brutality may also make populations more or less amenable to radical forms of struggle. Instructively, radicalism in more prosperous, liberal societies has often been linked with activists' frustration and their isolation from the social and political mainstreams, or to confrontations with authorities and counter-movements.[10] As we complicate the picture, it becomes increasingly difficult to generalize about trade-offs between degrees of radicalism and the strength of social support. Nevertheless, the consideration of these trade-offs is important to historically grounded and comparative explanations of why movements adopt one or another pattern of activity.

Thinking about these trade-offs as relationships between kinds of tactics under different macro-political conditions is one way to proceed from this point. Such an analysis may suffice when one compares significantly different contexts or examines the impact of macro-political change in one place. But targets of movement pressure and movement recruitment may, across contexts, also be more or less separate from one another, and this will surely influence tactics as well. Particularly when we specifically consider political violence, how successfully movements discriminate between those they wish to attack and those they seek to recruit will matter, and so the environmental challenges to that discrimination process (as they vary across cases) should influence forms of struggle. I here argue that violent tactics, and the internal movement processes that select movement tactics, are strongly influenced by the puzzles posed to this effort to discriminate by the spatial relationships between movement targets, governmental authorities and potential recruits. Naturally, this geography is itself influenced by patterns of collective struggle, but is not reducible to that struggle.

A great deal of the literature on social movements addresses policy reform movements, in which activists seek to convince government to take action to alleviate grievances.[11] In such cases, social groups mainly compete with one another for government attention, rather than take direct action or attack one another (although we have seen such attacks in civil rights movements, anti-abortion struggles and free speech cases, to name a few). Outside liberal and industrial societies, however, social struggles less often target limited reforms, and in their advocacy for different regimes or distributions of power, social groups often enter more directly into conflict with each other or into partisan struggles with the state.[12] Under such circumstances, the customary position of the bystander in policy reform movements (that they are potential recruits for movements or counter-movements) is augmented by another set of considerations: that they are also potential targets of attack, as collaborators with government, ethnic or national "others", or traitors to some cause. Movements thinking about the social impact of their collective activity must particularly consider individuals who stand in an ambiguous relationship to movement objectives and adversaries, and whether they first encounter a movement as a threat or as a champion. In order to appreciate why movements choose one or another violent tactic, we need to anticipate who will likely fall victim to that tactic – either intentionally or inadvertently – and what this means for movement politics. The analysis requires that we consider factors influencing the relationship between movement recruitment processes and movement attacks. Likely candidates include the spatial relationships between potential recruits and potential targets (including the balance between local and distant sources of support), and the strength of the boundaries between movement supporters, bystanders and opponents.

Where there is a greater or more rigid (i.e. less fungible) segregation between populations that movements attack and populations from which movements recruit, there will be less pressure to moderate attacks or make them discriminate (in the sense of zeroing in on specific targets), and less compulsion to explain or legitimize the activity. To identify categorical fungibility, I rely on two measures compiled by the Minorities at Risk (MAR) project: what Charles Tilly has called "catness" – a group's degree of internal cohesion[13] – and an ethnic differences index, which uses linguistic, cultural and belief differentials to estimate the difference between minority and dominant populations. I assume that political orientations are more fungible than those based on religious belief, language, physical characteristics or culture. Hence, in conflicts between members of the same religion, language or national group activists will have a comparatively easier time imagining recruiting broadly from the population into the movement, and this ease will influence movement politics. Where a set of national, ethnic or religious orientations is central to movement identification, movement activists will more likely recruit among those who have those identifications, and concentrate and direct them towards specific political programmes. This is not to say that fundamental shifts in identity do not occur, or do not take place as part of larger movement recruitment processes: for instance, contemporary "*balik*-Islam" movements in the Philippines convert adherents from Christianity to Islam as part of political recruitment.[14] It does not imply that identities are rigid and fixed. I merely assume that where movements mobilize in ways framed by ideas about existing social or cultural differences, recruitment will primarily take place within those categories rather than across them, and patterns of struggle will reflect that recruitment pattern.

This assumption, it bears mentioning even at the expense of a brief digression, pulls somewhat against another set of compelling arguments: that apart from accomplishing goals and recruiting supporters, collective violence may also be used by those seeking to mobilize and enforce categories of identity[15] or to discourage collaboration with authorities.[16] For either reason, violence can target individuals who are not movement

Table 7.1 Descriptive statistics for group cohesion for selected movements

Movement/conflict name	Catness	Index of ethnic difference
GAM	3	2
Mindanao Muslims	5	5
Southern Thai Muslims	7	8

Source: MAR (2005) "Minorities at Risk Project", Center for International Development and Conflict Management, College Park, MD.

adversaries. Rather than attempting either to refute or to incorporate these arguments, in this chapter I merely keep them in mind, and look for elements of the empirical record that may be more consistent with these assumptions than with those I develop here. My instinct is that organizational factors may explain when one or the other works most powerfully – that where strong organizations and routine processes cannot discipline or steer communities, violence may be called forth to do the job. Civil war may provide one such clear context, but other factors may also matter. I'll approach the question as a largely empirical matter.

Table 7.1 presents indicators of group catness and the "ethnic differential index", with variables running from 0 (weakest) to 10 (strongest).

Spatial relationships between movement targets and movement recruits depend on a number of factors, including patterns of settlement, patterns of support between local movements and national communities, and whether or not a geographically separate (often transnational) base for recruiting movement support exists. I selected cases for this study to illustrate the impact of different combinations of these explanatory factors. Figure 7.1 illustrates the interaction of these two sets of considerations, and indicates where several prominent Southeast Asian movements fall in relationship to these factors. I begin each of the case discussions that follow with an explanation of this positioning. In the figure, values plotted along *x* and *y* axes are conceived of in continuous rather than ordinal fashion, so that one can conceive of movements drifting from one point to another across the grid, although this level of specification and dynamism lies beyond this chapter.

The two movements that do not appear in the MAR data are the Philippine communist insurgency and the ethnic violence in Central Sulawesi (identified, following convention, with the name of the largest city in the area, Poso). Because Philippine communists have no distinct religious, cultural, linguistic or physical identifications, I plot that movement highest on the *y* axis in Figure 7.1, indicating the weakest categorical distinctiveness. Like Mindanao's Moros, Muslims in Poso differ from Christian residents in their religion, their region of origin and some aspects of their culture. Linguistic differences are less distinct than those that divide

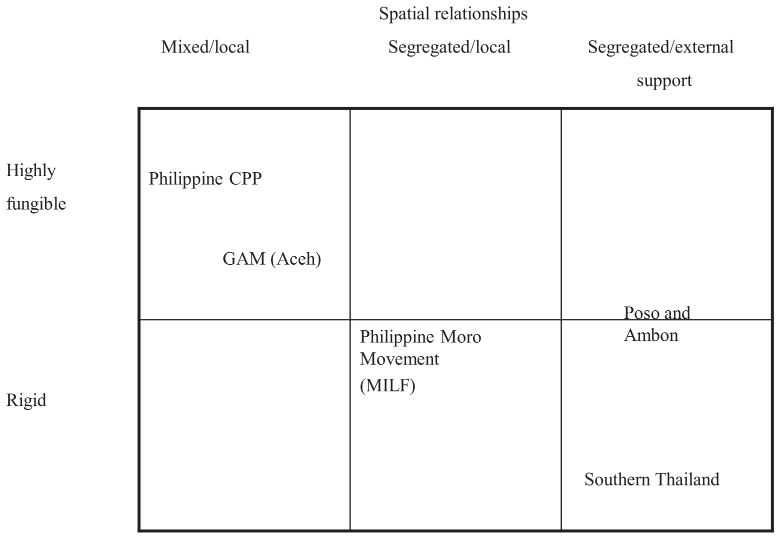
Spatial relationships
Mixed/local
Segregated/local
Segregated/external support
Highly fungible
Rigid
Philippine CPP
GAM (Aceh)
Philippine Moro Movement (MILF)
Poso and Ambon
Southern Thailand

Figure 7.1 Movements in political geography

southern (Malay) Thais from the Buddhist majority, and perhaps even less than those that distinguish Philippine Moros from Christian communities in Mindanao. The placement of the Poso conflict reflects these comparisons.

Approaches to movement violence

This work seeks to do more than simply record the situations most likely to lead to collective violence, or to the greatest degrees of collective violence. By connecting patterns of collective violence to organizational processes, and particularly to the balance between movement efforts to project power and recruit support, I hope to reveal how policies of conflict resolution or prevention might gain traction in social reality. To reveal these patterns, however, we need first to decide about the things most worthy of attention in the analysis of this violence.

Violent forms of struggle can be more or less discriminate, depending both on the mode of violence itself and the strategies for targeting victims. In general, guns are more discriminating than bombs, and bombs detonated by someone watching nearby are more discriminating than those simply triggered by a timing device. Similarly, a riot – even one purposely produced by professionals – will likely be less discriminate than a coordinated attack by guerillas. At the same time, any mode of violence will also be influenced by targeting strategies: a bomb detonated in a marketplace will likely be less discriminating than one thrown into a church, and that last bomb will discriminate less than a booby trap in a government official's car. Indiscriminate technologies of violence will take specific kinds of victims in social situations that segregate populations, such as people who are at prayer, in segregated neighbourhoods or at specific kinds of worksites. (Of course, in this definition the idea of discrimination is itself horribly contingent on broader political beliefs: a fire in a mosque is only discriminating if it is politically *sufficient* to hurt Muslims but not Christians – rather than targeting Muslim combatants or government officials.) Hence, as we assess discrimination in the use of violence, we account for both the technology of violence and the targeting strategy.

I interpret violence in terms of whether the technology of violence is individual (i.e. the use of hand-held weapons such as guns, knives or other personal weapons) or mass (most commonly here explosives, but theoretically also including chemical and biological agents). In addition, I consider the impact of targeting strategies in discrimination. While in this chapter I will not undertake systematic coding of violent events using this scale, I produce it below to demonstrate the general thinking that underscores the qualitative analysis, and will use the descriptive terms generated by Table 7.2 to help situate the qualitative discussion in this scheme. The scheme relies on a five-point scale recognizing the following degrees of discrimination:

5 indiscriminate (violence in a mixed and heterogeneous crowd such as a market or a town square)
4 indiscriminate categorical (i.e. a strategy designed to hit anyone who belongs to a particular socio-cultural category)
3 discriminate functional (i.e. a strategy that targets individuals playing a particular occupational or political role)
2 discriminate personal (i.e. attacks on specific individuals based on something they have done or are believed to have done)
1 attacks on property.

Scores for targeting strategies are multiplied by two in cases of mass technologies of violence, but not for individual-level violence. Table 7.2 demonstrates this scoring system, and gives examples of the kinds of violence that would fall into any category.

To tease out the broader patterns of movement violence, I initially rely on conflict summaries and supplementary reports from several established monitoring projects: the Minorities at Risk project, the International Crisis Group (ICG) and the Uppsala Conflict Data Project. I augment information from these summaries with several focused keyword searches using the Newswire database at Lexis-Nexis. For each case, guided by the conflict summaries, I choose among three search terms

Table 7.2 Types of violence

	Indiscriminate 5	Indiscriminate categorical 4	Discriminate functional 3	Discriminate personal 2	Property 1
Individual (×1)	Mob violence and riots Deaths	Shootings or raids at churches or other categorically sorted gatherings	Stabbings or shootings of teachers, government officials, monks, priests or imams	Assassinations of targeted individuals	Vandalism (short of arson)
Mass (×2)	Bombs thrown into general markets, on or near buses or transportation terminals, shopping malls, etc.	Mosque or church burnings or bombings Explosions set at establishments selected based on their clientele	Targeted explosives or arson designed to kills specific kinds of people	Bombing or arson at a specific person’s home or office	Arson or bombing with care taken to limit human injury

designed to capture a range of violence: "bomb", "attack" and "assassination". I used these terms, in combination with country (e.g. Thailand) or conflict (e.g. Aceh) names, on the Lexis-Nexis wire report database. These searches are not designed to be comprehensive, but rather to discover and confirm broad patterns of activity, often suggested by the conflict summaries (including specific moments of increased or altered conflict activity). At this stage and for this chapter, the effort remains essentially qualitative.

The cases

Before discussing the details of any of the individual cases, it seems appropriate to make one global observation. There are vast differences in the patterns and strategies of collective violence in the different cases. In a world where there has been great emphasis on the ability of people, technology and ideas to spread across borders, not to mention the suspicion that several large global movements lie behind much violence, this demands close attention to conditions on the ground in each conflict. Figure 7.1 groups the cases to suggest a comparative framework that cuts against alternative case presentations. For instance, large regional autonomy movements building on decades of secessionist sentiments exist in both Aceh and Mindanao, but fall in different sectors of our diagram – suggesting divergence in expected patterns of collective violence. Similarly, in terms of ethnic alliances, the conflict in southern Thailand is similar to the Moro struggle in Mindanao: in both, regionally concentrated ethnics fight central authorities with different ethnic and religious identities for some level of local autonomy or independence. Nevertheless, these two fall in different diagram quadrants. Moreover, two struggles fall within the national boundaries of the Philippines and two take place inside Indonesia, undercutting any suspicion that similar state policy (or other national-structural variables) might produce convergence in co-national cases. Alternate explanations, such as the importance of national context, regional separatism[17] or local-cosmopolitan alliance patterns in producing converging patterns of violence, can be assessed based on whether conflicts in the same quadrants of the diagram generally describe similar, or different, patterns of collective violence.

Southern Thailand and Poso

In the two cases in Figure 7.1's lower right-hand corner (southern Thailand and Poso) conflict occurs across substantially different groups and communities, often physically separated and in any event frequently sorted apart by religious practices. The Thai case is coded as slightly more divided than Poso, because of substantial language differences between cosmopolitan Thais and Malay speakers in the south. In each conflict, one or both sides receive substantial support and recruits from outside the immediate conflict area. In southern Thailand the insurgency draws both material support and safe haven from across the Malaysian border, while in Poso Java-based Islamic militias soon joined, and changed, what was an initially localized and communal pattern of violence. While we will examine these cases as illustrating mainly similar configurations of explanatory factors, one important difference between them deserves mention. External support in Poso is derived from actors positioned in the national centre, drawn from dominant ethno-religious groups in Indonesian politics. In southern Thailand local struggles were distinct from those same cosmopolitan majorities. If this pattern of alignment exerts a strong influence on patterns of struggle, we should find divergence between cases I have grouped together (Poso and southern Thailand) and convergence (as we noted earlier) between the Thai and southern Philippines examples.

In Thailand, 2004–2007 was marked by strong and sustained conflict in several primarily Muslim provinces bordering on Malaysia. The area has a fairly long history of separatist assertions and periodic armed struggle against the Thai state. Earlier spikes in collective violence in 1993 and 1997 were led by organized movements like PULO (Pattani United Liberation Organization) and the BRN (Barisan Revolusi Nasional, or National Revolutionary Force), which articulated formal movement demands in periods of national reform that in part created opportunities for stronger representation.[18] While some think that former BRN and POLU members have engineered the more recent activity, no organization has taken responsibility for the fighting. This strange organizational absence has prompted questions about possible al-Qaeda involvement in the struggle, but scant evidence points in that direction.[19] Still, the movement clearly draws strong support from across the Malaysian border, and this has allowed it to mobilize significant and sustaining resources without building formal movement organizations, and particularly mass organizations, in southern Thailand.

An overwhelming amount of the attacks strike people seen as serving or collaborating with the Thai state's hegemonic project. While Buddhists are often killed by this movement, violence has (strikingly) taken more Malay/Muslims: even accounting for those killed by state authorities in counterinsurgency operations or by anti-insurgent militia, it is still clear that the movement has targeted local Muslims as well as Buddhists (suggesting that the case may require some explanation of violence as disciplining a movement's base, as argued by Sidel and Kalyvas[20]). In November 2006 Human Rights Watch quoted a study by the Thai Journalist Association and Prince of Songkhla University, to the effect that:

> insurgent groups are responsible for most of the 5,460 violent incidents in the southern border provinces of Thailand between January 2004 and August 2006 which resulted in 1,730 deaths and 2,513 injuries. Civilians – including government employees and local officials – have been the principal targets of daily attacks, totaling 60 percent (or 1,873) of the victims, followed by police (16 percent, or 481), soldiers (12 percent, or 373), and others (12 percent, or 369). The study found that the majority of victims were Muslims; 924 Muslims were killed and 718 injured, compared with 697 Buddhists killed and 1,474 injured. The religion of the remaining victims is unknown.[21]

Attacks on students and teachers in Thai schools have been an important component of this insurgency, but government officials in the local bureaucracy have also come under fire. A preference for these civilian targets, and for hitting the police rather than soldiers, illustrates a tendency to avoid massed and armed confrontation and seek instead a war of hit-and-run attrition, with particular emphasis on making it exceptionally dangerous for people to undertake certain activities or professions (teaching, administering the government) seen as extending Thai hegemony.[22] These targets represent distinct choices, and are far different than movements that mainly target combatants or, in other cases, elected officials.

A great deal of the violence in this area involves bombs, arson or some combination of the two, and even attacks with guns have tended to be raids and ambushes, often linked to a bomb attack. A guided keyword search of Lexis-Nexis wire reports on the search terms "Thailand and bomb" yields 98 stories of different bombings from mid-January 2007 to mid-July of that year. Several reports describe clusters of one or more devices in close coordination. Fully 51 reported bombs triggered by remote control, mainly to hit passing patrols or security details, but also aimed at teachers and their escorts, as well as monks. Seven bombs were booby traps, designed to hit police or soldiers in ways described below. Of the 98 reports, 16 occurred in more open public places, where a variety of people, on any side of the political dispute, might gather. Four such attacks took place in markets or grocery stores, four in or outside mosques, five in food stalls and tea-shops (three of these outside mosques following Friday prayers) and two attacks took place at Muslim schools. None of these bombs was detonated by remote control, meaning that the attackers considered anyone in the area to be fair game.

To single out specific kinds of victims, insurgents have developed two main techniques. The first is the roadside bomb, with a cell-phone trigger set off by someone watching a target's approach from near at hand. Such bombs often target soldiers, police, paramilitary units or guards escorting teachers to school. Often, initial explosions wound the target or disable vehicles, but insurgent snipers are on hand to engage those who survive the initial attack. The technique is only approximately accurate, because timing problems in cell signals mean motorized targets moving quickly are often missed. In 2007, moreover, Thai soldiers acquired the capacity to block cell-phone signals and prevent detonations. More recently military reports suggest that rebels are countering these measures by using less precise pressure-sensitive devices in places where soldiers are likely to pass, which would also take far more unintended victims. The second technique combines close-targeted attacks with bombings. Typically, insurgents hit an unprotected and often civilian target – beheading or shooting a local official or setting fire to a restaurant, home or tea-shop. Then, before leaving, they booby trap the scene of the attack, so that responding security forces meet a subsequent explosion when they arrive. Neither of these attack styles appears frequently in other movements we examine. Nor, interestingly, are they characteristic of anti-Muslim attacks in the region (which police and government officials often describe as rebel efforts to polarize). Muslim attacks are far more likely to involve bombs in less discriminate targets like mosques or their surrounding restaurants or tea-shops after Friday prayers. In the first half of 2007 no bomb targeting Muslims is reported to have utilized cell-phone detonating technology.

We can therefore characterize the violence in southern Thailand in terms of a mixed pattern of discriminate and indiscriminate violence. Overall, stronger efforts were in evidence to discriminate among Buddhist targets of attack, with "indiscriminate-categorical" violence more commonly deployed against Muslims. We return to this point later in the chapter.

Conflicts in Central Sulawesi (Poso) did not initially target state security forces, but concentrated on strikes between different local communities. As in southern Thailand, networks of activists and militants from outside the area play key roles in directing and sustaining the conflict. Initial communal violence between Muslims and Christians in Poso followed the regime transition of 1998. The unrest began with mainly Christian attacks on Muslim communities, apparently in retaliation for the steady erosion of Christians' traditionally dominant local position following state-sponsored Muslim migrations from Java.[23] Soon, however, external political forces began to involve themselves in the struggle. Most publicly, the Indonesian Islamic Authority (MUI or Majelis Ulama Indonesia) in 2000 called for *jihad* to protect Muslims against Christian attackers.[24] In Aceh, in contrast, the MUI intervened in 1999 to urge both sides to avoid violence and seek a negotiated and peaceful settlement. By 2000 Jemaah Islamiyah (and several affiliated Java-based militia) had entered the conflict, and many attacks originally considered strictly communal have recently been attributed to JI specialists, including the beheadings of three Christian schoolgirls in 2005, attacks on churches and central markets, and the murders of several church officials in separate incidents.[25]

Lexis-Nexis keyword searches for "Poso" and one of our search terms (bomb, attack or assassination) from 1999 to 2006 produce 53 separate reported incidents, although some of the greatest violence took place in several multi-day-long episodes that appear (due to the limitations in our data source) as single events. Of these stories, 31 reported bombing incidents, a higher ratio than in any other conflict we examine here. The southern Thai insurgency has the second-highest frequency. Very few of these attacks target government officials or soldiers, although as authorities made stronger efforts to arrest and prevent a by then predominantly Muslim-initiated series of attacks in 2005 and 2006, more and more bombs targeted police outposts or civil servants. Still, and even at these later points in the conflict, most bombs targeted neighbourhoods, religious sites, refugee camps or commercial establishments[26] identified with Christian or (in the early years) Muslim communities.

Several immediately striking elements of these attacks exist. First, the Poso violence divides into at least three distinct phases. In the first, communal violence between Christians and Muslims mainly entailed the use of small and personal weapons – knives, home-made guns, bows and arrows and, on occasion, home-made and thrown bombs. Organized gangs seem to have initiated and led this violence, often descending on villages described as predominantly Christian or Muslim, and prompting countermeasures and the organization of responding gangs. By 2001 government authorities had brokered a truce between Christian and Muslim communities, but also reported the arrival of Muslim militia (Laksar Jihad and other Jemaah Islamiyah affiliates). From this point forward, mob and gang violence drops off steadily, as does the reciprocal nature of conflict initiation. Instead, violence comes to be dominated by bombing activity, punctuated with personal-level attacks – stabbings, shootings and beheadings – conducted in ways that seemed designed to maximize horror and fear. Severed heads are periodically left in public places, and shootings begin to cluster around public or religious holidays, such as New Year or Christmas. In 2004, along with the partial shift in targets mentioned above (to police and government figures), attacks diminish in frequency but become, per attack, more deadly.

Second, after the external militias join the fight, there is an immediate and somewhat surprising drop in the attacks' deadliness. In the new bomb-prominent pattern, most devices used are described as low-level explosives, and a surprising amount of them are placed in abandoned lots or on empty streets late at night. In fact, in 2002–2003, nine of the 13 bombs reported exploded without producing casualties, and the remainder were small enough to cause mainly injuries. While small bombs of this nature continued to be detonated into 2005, they began more frequently to be accompanied by bigger bombs set in crowded places like public markets, and would more often take more and more victims. Another important aspect of this shift was the remarkable string of arms caches discovered beginning in early 2004. In many of these reports, authorities expressed gratitude for civilian help in discovering the weapons, a clear sign of some isolation between the purveyors and organizers of violence and the general society. The rise of a more reckless and indiscriminate pattern of attack seems accompanied by waning civilian support and even community moves to turn in weapon caches – another indication that, in this case, the violence seeks to strengthen and discipline a movement's control over its base.

Third, the matter of detonating and targeting the bombs is in general far less discriminate than in Thailand; where Thai placements were, particularly against Buddhist targets, indiscriminate functional, in Poso we more often see indiscriminate or indiscriminate-categorical placements. There are no reports of detonation devices or strategies designed specifically to ensure that a higher level of deadly force is focused on individuals or people discharging a specific job or function. Explosives are set with timing devices or, on occasion, are thrown into offices or crowds from speeding motorcycles. Device placement often ensures that mainly Christians, or more rarely police or government officials, will be injured. But in most cases this entails merely setting a device outside an office or near a house. We never see any of the more sophisticated targeting strategy that marks Thai efforts to single out police or soldiers, nor any effort really to discriminate among different occupational sectors. While small but indiscriminately placed bombs, in the Poso pattern, will kill fewer people, they do perpetuate the idea of communities at war with one another.

By 2007 there were signs that violence in Poso was again shifting. Most of the formal militia had by then returned to Java, although, as the ICG reports, efforts by JI affiliates to train a cadre of local militants had borne fruit in the creation of new cells dedicated to sustaining the violence in the area.[27] Police efforts to discover and break these cells had, by then, begun to pay off. But as counterterrorist activity mounted, insurgents themselves began more and more to shift their attention to retaliating against authorities. It is not clear, at this writing, whether this marks the beginning of the end of this violence, or whether it marks a shift to a pattern of more institutionalized struggle against state authorities. Still, the ICG specifically analysed how shifting recruitment patterns may have influenced the pattern of violence in Poso. According to ICG analysts, 2007 was a recruitment and consolidation phase for JI. Hence, while attacks generally diminished to accommodate popular opinion:

> operations that can be both religiously justified and popular enough to attract new recruits cannot be ruled out. For many, opposition to bombings like the 2004 Australian embassy attack and the 2005 Bali bombings (Bali II) is based less on principled opposition to killing civilians than a sense that tactically, the costs outweigh the benefits.[28]

The southern Philippine insurgencies: MILF

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), one of the Mindanao-based Moro separatist movements in the Philippines, illustrates the impact of a different combination of causal factors in this study. While, as noted, ethnic relations between Mindanao insurgents and the national majority are similar to those in southern Thailand, with the degree of ethnoreligious distinctiveness at least as great as in Poso, Moros have never been able to rely on the same degree of external support as Malay Thais received from Malaysia-based sources or Muslims in Sulawesi received from Java-based groups. In the early 1970s Sabah provided Moro groups with a base of logistical support, but Philippine government diplomatic offensives and more specific agreements between the government and Malaysia soon greatly diminished this support.[29]

The MILF began as a breakaway faction of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), originating in the late 1970s but only formally announcing itself as an independent separatist group in 1984. Hence the MILF shares with the MNLF a history of early struggle against Philippine central authorities. Those struggles began with small skirmishes between Muslim and Christian settler communities in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which soon escalated into armed and violent militia-based conflict. The focus shifted towards security force and government targets in response to constabulary attacks on Muslim towns, and by 1975 a full-scale conventional war was raging in Mindanao; most of the 100,000–150,000 people who died in the Mindanao wars did so in these initial years of fighting. The MNLF signed the Tripoli Peace Agreement with the Philippine government in 1976, but the agreement was never truly implemented as a framework for peace. Hence from the mid-1970s through 1996, military conflict and efforts to negotiate a settlement rose and fell.[30] The transition from the Marcos to the Aquino governments and Fidel

Ramos's subsequent election to the presidency provided occasion for fresh peace negotiations and cease-fires – but the war continued. In 1996 the government, negotiating at the time with the MNLF but not the MILF, signed what was to have been a comprehensive peace agreement, but the MILF remained in an insurgent posture, and soon undertook both political and military offensives to underscore this fact.[31] By this time, moreover, the Abu Sayyaf, formally announced as an insurgency group in 1995, was also active in Mindanao, mainly concentrating on bombings, kidnappings and raids on villages. Joseph Estrada, elected president in 1998, at first continued negotiations with the MILF, but adopted a more military posture against this group and the Abu Sayyaf. By 2000 the government was again committed to a primarily military approach to the problems in Mindanao.

Over the long haul, the MILF has more generally pursued a battlefield strategy against regular security forces than has any other organization in this study. The MILF trains its soldiers in large military camps, relies on deep, broad support among the population and does the bulk of its fighting using regular MILF soldiers. In 1996 *AsiaWeek* reported that of the 100,000 people killed in the Moro insurgencies, 50 per cent were rebel soldiers, 30 per cent were AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) troops and 20 per cent were civilians.[32] Nevertheless, the movement has periodically targeted civilian populations via different techniques. The MILF was far more likely to use bombs against people than the other main Philippine insurgency, the Communist Party of the Philippines/New People's Army (CPP/NPA). Bombs placed in public were often set to detonate in specifically Christian neighbourhood sites (like churches) and generally clearly identified as moves to retaliate against some anti-Muslim violence someplace else, usually by the government or security forces. The attacks aimed above the heads of the actual victims, and sought to deter the Philippine government and establish for the MILF a reputation as defenders of Muslim interests everywhere. When no recent and egregious attack on Muslims had taken place, and particularly when negotiations with the government were near at hand, such attacks were rarer.[33]

A look at bombings over some sample time periods illustrates this pattern and underscores some distinctive elements of this violence. In the three months between January and March 2003 (a period of heightened MILF insurgent activity), wire reports generated in Lexis-Nexis searches attribute 18 bomb attacks to the MILF. Of these, five major attacks targeted roads, bridges and power infrastructures, designed to give the fighters a battlefield advantage and disrupt broader economic activity in the area. Eleven were placed in public areas, like markets, airports, passenger vans and shopping malls, in Christian neighbourhoods or towns. Of these 11, two were large, damaging explosions explicitly associated with AFP attacks on Muslims elsewhere. Only one specifically targeted AFP soldiers. One was linked to fundraising efforts (an explosion in a bus company that had declined to pay "taxes" to the organization). The Uppsala Conflict Data Project writes:

> During 2003 the conflict between the government and MILF escalated again, especially in the first six months. Numerous clashes and a couple of major offensives conducted by the military resulted in approximately 700 casualties (compared to less than 100 in the previous year).[34]

From 1987 to 1988 (a period of relative inactivity for MILF forces) Muslim separatists were held responsible for five bombs in the Philippines – one at an airport, two at major department stores in largely Christian towns and two grenades thrown into army barracks. Again, all three attacks targeting civilians were retaliations for military attacks on Muslim communities. (During this same time range, for purposes of comparison, eight stories described CPP/NPA bombs: one was a booby trap set in a police officer's car, three were grenades thrown at military installations, two were small pill-boxes detonated at rallies and two were larger explosions set to take out bridges or construction equipment.)

Several things stand out in this pattern of violence. First, while bombing is a central part of the Moro repertoire of violence, we can identify two distinct kinds of bomb attacks. One, in close association with battlefield strategy, mainly targets infrastructure and is significant in influencing the balance of forces on the battlefield. In most cases these explosions have produced very few casualties. Unlike what we observed in southern Thailand, these bombs are not accurately triggered by remote control – and so cannot be expected to take out specific victims. Most employ some form of timing device, and typically use mortars and other conventional weapons for fuel. On other occasions, what I have described as bomb attacks are grenades or RPGs (i.e. weapons with mainly battlefield uses, repurposed as bombs). When military activity ebbs, these sorts of attacks also fall off. A second type of bombing has been directed at social targets. Regardless of battlefield calculations, Muslim insurgent groups respond to prominent attacks on Islamic communities or interests by hitting Christian targets. These explosions have often been fairly powerful, and tend to be what I have called "indiscriminate categorical": designed to take anyone who happens to be in public spaces like shopping malls or airports, in predominantly Christian areas. In this sense, the social violence of the contemporary era feels a great deal like the violence with which the Mindanao wars began in the late 1960s and early 1970s: attacks on more or less segregated communities that were violent enough to take substantial lives and only discriminate enough to ensure that Muslims were mainly killing Christians and Christians were mainly killing Muslims.

In two ways, at least, the story of collective violence in Mindanao is more complicated than the account I have provided here. First, after its rise to prominence in the mid-1990s, the Abu Sayyaf has pursued a strategy quite distinct from the MILF's. Apparently less concerned with recruiting mass membership or broad support, the Abu Sayyaf combines frequent kidnap-for-ransom operations with powerful bombings of public targets in Christian neighbourhoods, and periodic ambushes or (when forced to) battlefield engagements with soldiers. But the effort seems designed more to polarize and sustain terror than to recruit mass support.[35] Second, in a related point, the internationalization of terrorist networks has meant that JI forces from Indonesia have begun to train in Mindanao camps, and may be passing on their own approach to militant resistance. While MILF groups initially expressed a willingness to cooperate with government efforts to track down JI and Abu Sayyaf forces, there is widespread suspicion that broader cooperation among these groups exists.[36]

The Philippine Communist Party and the Gerakan Aceh Merdeka

Both the Marxist CPP/NPA and the GAM in Aceh deploy strategies of collective violence in places where movement members are separated from the general population by more potentially malleable political distinctions than those discussed so far. Moreover, and despite some support for each movement from extra-territorial sources, they each must recruit the bulk of their resources from local populations. For both reasons, we would expect that these movements would, to the extent they can, temper their use of violence to make it as discriminating and precise as possible.

The CPP/NPA broke from the older but politically moribund Partido Komunist Pilipinas in the late 1960s, and by the end of the decade had deployed a small number of student cadres into the countryside, in pursuit of a new protracted people's war strategy that adapted Maoist principles to Philippine conditions. President Marcos's declaration of martial law in 1972 proved a tremendous boon to the movement, because it drove a broad range of legal and semi-legal organizations underground and into the countryside. As Philippine politics polarized over the course of the Marcos regime, the CPP/NPA grew steadily stronger, building a fighting force that worked in concert with a complex of mass and front organizations, useful both as a recruitment ground for movement cadres and as instruments to pressure the government towards political reforms.[37] Following the transition to procedural democracy in 1986, the movement faced internal debates about how to position itself in the new dispensation, and by the early 1990s had splintered into several (often warring) factions.[38] After losing strength throughout the 1990s, however, the movement began to rebuild – and, despite a steady series of assassinations of movement organizers that began in 2005, was stronger in 2007 than at any time since before the splits.

Between 10,000 and 12,000 deaths have been associated with the CPP/NPA's more than 35 years of insurgent struggle – a figure that is roughly 10 per cent of estimates for the Moro wars. Given the disparity, it is surprising how much more relative attention the Marxist insurgency has received. In the CPP/NPA insurgency, incidents of mass-scale, indiscriminate movement-initiated violence have been comparatively rare. Bombs rarely appear in the CPP's arsenal, and where they have been used they target infrastructure (bridges or power installations) or business interests – that is, following a pattern similar to one strand of the MILF strategy. More commonly, movement-directed violence takes the form of targeted assassinations, often of specific military or police officers, or armed encounters, ambushes or raids directed against security forces. As we expected, the CPP/NPA is far more likely (three times more likely) than other group in this study to claim responsibility for or publicly explain an assassination. Also, more than a few NPA attacks occur in concert with, or in response to, violence inflicted on legal or semi-legal mass-movement organizations, such as labour unions. In general, the patterns of violence suggest a significant level of discrimination.

In fact, the case in which the movement has used violence least discriminately is instructive in this connection. Between 1985 and 1987 NPA units, apparently put in a panic by rumours of military spies within their organization, conducted a series of trials and summary executions. The victims of these purges, called "deep-penetration agents" by the party, were often killed by the dozens and buried in mass graves. Nor were these public or explained executions, but rather largely secret affairs, the news of which leaked out only gradually as survivors escaped. While cadres often went through the motions of a trial, the numbers of people killed, and the speed with which the murders spread, were less calibrated and less discriminate than any other movement use of violence over its 30-year history.[39] But in this case, significantly, the *internal* matter of the purges was separate from *external* considerations of recruitment.

A Lexis-Nexis search for "Philippines and ambush" covering July 2004 through July 2007 yields 62 stories reporting NPA ambushes, almost all against security forces. For comparison, only 13 ambushes in this series are attributed to the MILF (*all* against soldiers), while 14 are attributed to the breakaway Abu Sayyaf group – divided between attacks on soldiers (four), attacks on businesspeople and foreigners (five) and unspecified attacks on villages. During that same period, a search for “Philippines and bomb” turns up only four stories – two describing bomb attacks on roads and power stations, one on a police outpost and one roadside bomb designed to take out a government convoy, but which missed the target and injured five civilians instead. That is, CPP/NPA violence overwhelmingly clusters around what we have called “discriminate functional” and “discriminate personal”, no matter whether the technology is at mass or individual level.

Like the CPP, the GAM does not represent a local population with a significant linguistic or religious differential with central Indonesian authorities; the conflict is, rather, based on historical ideas of a separate political identity, exacerbated by the general pattern of Javanese exploitation of outer-island resources. Consequently, in this study the comparison between the GAM (an Islamic and regionally based separatist movement) and the CPP/NPA (a national Marxist revolutionary movement) is critical. Arguments that explain patterns of violence based on Islamic approaches to struggle, or on the dynamics of regional separatism against central authority, predict divergence between these cases, and greater similarities between one or another of them and other cases. The framework we follow here, however, leads us to expect greater similarity.

In the early 1990s, initial and rather low-level GAM attacks combined strikes against Javanese settlers with attacks on soldiers and police. The state response in 1992 and 1993 was a campaign of secret killings that, according to one government source, claimed more than 1,000 victims by 1994. Many government attacks and arrests targeted villagers and civilians, and the campaign has been described as an effort to terrorize the population into inactivity. Aceh’s NGO Forum reported that, up to November 1998, “2,687 people were still listed as missing in the three regencies; 4,563 people had been tortured; 173 women raped during the nine-year military operation”.[40] Hundreds of thousands left Aceh as refugees during the 1990s – many for camps in Malaysia, fewer to seek training in Libya. While some low-level GAM-inspired attacks occurred in the mid-1990s, the period featured government prosecutions of GAM members, more general military campaigns to terrorize the population and efforts within the GAM to develop a more nationalist, less Islamist framework.[41]

Things changed following Indonesia’s 1998 regime transition. Initial violence is reported as “villager” attacks against soldiers and police, often resulting in several security force deaths. But military sources also report that GAM exiles in Malaysia and Libya returned in those first post-

Suharto years. The movement soon adopted more concerted patterns of well-armed attacks on security forces.[42] From 2003 to 2007, a Lexis-Nexis keyword search for "Indonesia and ambush" yields 21 stories describing GAM-initiated actions: 17 targeted soldiers or police, and four targeted civilians, politicians or private contractors. An even longer search, from the year 2000 to September 2007, for the search terms "Aceh and bomb" produced stories about only 18 incidents. Strikingly, these incidents produced very few injuries or deaths, and indeed a fair number take place late at night or at some distance from human activity – in vacant lots and the like. Four bombs are set outside police or military outposts, while three explode outside government offices (these last all take place late at night, and in no case produce any casualties). The bombs that hurt or killed the most people exploded in 2003 and 2004, in the middle of an upsurge in fighting between the GAM and the Indonesian government, and were set to disrupt and punish participants in observations of Indonesian independence; in other words, the greatest violence here was aimed at disrupting pro-government civic observances (what we have called discriminate functional). Instructively, two GAM members caught by security forces, "reportedly said they had conducted between five and 10 bombing operations in Aceh in the past, mostly blowing up bridges during rebel ambushes on government forces".[43] That is, apart from bombings in general producing few casualties, explosions seem mainly to have battlefield applications, supplementing more conventional troop activity.

Throughout this period, and despite the fact that a 2004 human rights report takes the GAM to task for rights violations,[44] the violence seemed more generally calibrated and, particularly after the 1998 transition, worked in concert with a political strategy that included alliances with human rights and democracy activists in the national capital. Over the course of the struggle, estimates of total casualties are around 10,000 people killed, and all estimates describe the number of civilians killed by military efforts as far outstripping those killed in GAM-initiated operations – particularly in the middle 1990s. Periodically, pressures generated by human rights groups give the GAM some breathing room, as when national protests required General Wiranto to withdraw riot police from the area in 1999, and when later efforts to place the region under martial law were turned back by political forces in Jakarta.[45] Yet these alliances were not in evidence during the 1990s, and so the development of the GAM's generally calibrated strategy of violence, a strategy that certainly made it more attractive to human rights groups, developed mainly in consideration of local rather than national political considerations.

Conclusions and synthesis

Several preliminary points emerge from this analysis. First, and most broadly, the research presented here urges a more fully political understanding of strategies of collective violence used by these movements – that is, an understanding embedded in broader organizational and movement politics. Interpretations of these strategies, moreover, are not simply reducible to levels of violence or quantities of victims. Indiscriminate violence can still be used at rather low levels, and the costliest conflicts in this study, in Muslim Mindanao, deployed a mainly mixed strategy of discriminate and indiscriminate violence. This suggests that people interested in policy research should think about movements in terms of the organizational pressure points they might offer for those wishing to ease tensions or resolve conflict. Moreover, the question of discrimination of violence (or the interaction of its discrimination and intensity) seems a potentially fruitful analytic entry point for future research.

That said, the broad expectations laid out at the start are partly confirmed, but also complicated by these cases. As we move in the ascending arc described in Figure 7.1, from the conflict in southern Thailand to those waged by the GAM and the CPP, we find violence becoming generally more discriminate – leaning more on battlefield encounters and ambushes than bombs, and placing bombs in ways that mainly seem to minimize non-combatant casualties and to target security and government officials. In Poso we see some of the least calibrated violence in the study – although often at rather low levels. The bloodiest, communal phase of the Poso conflict ranged between what I have called indiscriminate and indiscriminate-categorical modes of violence, with large gang-led mobs attacking whole villages based mainly on the religion of their inhabitants. Even when levels of violence diminished, its nature remained in the indiscriminate range – so that smaller bombs began to explode in public settings, taking fewer victims but in general serving to sustain notions of communal conflict and the possibility of violence.

In southern Thailand, things are more difficult to read. On the one hand, the insurgency has produced some of the most precise strategies for targeting specific kinds of victims, and a ready willingness to experiment with different modes of delivering violence. Yet discriminate technologies are deployed at targets selected on functional lines – students, teachers and monks fall to precisely targeted devices almost as often as do police and soldiers. This violence has pushed people (Muslims and Buddhists alike) away from the project of extending state hegemony to the Malay-Muslim south.

Anti-Muslim violence in the area, however, looks very different. While some strikes clearly single out individuals targeted as government informers or collaborators, a second pattern of indiscriminate-communal violence (as, for instance, bombs set in tea-shops near mosques on Fridays) is also in evidence. From this distance it is difficult to discern whether these latter attacks are mainly initiated by militia or security forces allied with the state, or by insurgents seeking to polarize local society or discipline their bases of support. Certainly there are abundant charges running in both directions. Still, looking at the interaction of both patterns of violence, it seems that efforts to recruit Thai-Muslim support into struggle organizations have been of secondary concern, at least in comparison to efforts to police the movement's rejection of Thai institutions and connections. It may be that, having failed to mobilize a strong uprising against central authorities in the 1990s, Malay-Muslim insurgents set out to create a more polarized environment in which insurgent struggle would attract or maintain greater support (an interpretation in the Sidel/Kalyvas tradition). They may, on the other hand, be playing primarily to sources of support in Malaysia. In comparison, the often indiscriminate-categorical MILF responses to Philippine government attacks on Muslim communities (high-casualty attacks on public places in mainly Christian areas) have been seen as, and operate effectively as, efforts to protect Muslims from state violence and deter future anti-Muslim moves. In this way, this indiscriminate-categorical violence helps solidify the movement's base of Muslim support.

Generally, the more segregated or distant recruitment populations are from targets, the less incentive a movement will have to moderate, calibrate, explain or admit responsibility for its acts of violence – and in this sense, we need more explicitly to consider the role of external sources of support in the analysis. In Poso and southern Thailand, the need to discriminate among victims to protect local recruitment potentials is partly mitigated by external sources of support – sources largely unavailable to the MILF, the CPP and the GAM. But the material also suggests important variations in the character of that support, as indicated above. Violence in Poso was framed as, and played to, a national audience, drumming up support for the idea that Islam was under attack. But the violence on the ground seemed less designed to reshape immediate social and political relationships in Poso than in southern Thailand. Despite the strong logistical support available to Muslim-Thai insurgents from across the border, efforts seem consistently designed to shift social and political relationships in the southern provinces – and that also influences what violence in those provinces looks like. Finally, the logic of a finely balanced calculation between striking at adversaries and recruiting support seems *least* capable of explaining violence in places where movement organizations are weak or where conditions approaching generalized civil war undercut routine movement connections to mass bases. While the point needs further specification and investigation, these factors may represent something approaching scope conditions for the dynamics I suggest here.

Fears of the ruthlessness of terrorist organizations are, in substantial measure, reversed in these studies. In Poso, for instance, the rise in JI activity in the area corresponds to a period of at least partial reduction in the scope of violence, and the increased frequency of acts designed not to take lives but to sustain a climate of terror. That is to say, even groups identified with a general support for ruthless attack will adopt more restraint in deference to political/organizational considerations. In Poso, far more dangerous conflict corresponds to the mobilization of religious gangs by local power brokers. The real costs of JI activity in the area lie in it sustaining, rather than escalating, the conflict. Indeed, the comparison between southern Thailand and Poso is also instructive in this connection: in some measure, more prominent JI efforts to recruit into a movement tempered the level of violence while sustaining the idea of a concerted attack on Islam in Indonesia.

There is, obviously, much work to be done on this topic. This initial, qualitative analysis suggests the need for a broader and more systematic quantitative study of conflict in these countries that will also take in other important regional cases, such as the Abu Sayyaf. At this writing, that effort is under way. At the same time, important shifts are also afoot. In Mindanao, transnational terrorist networks have established increasingly strong encampments, and seem to be broadening their influence to include new bases of operation and alliances. These developments merit close attention. I hope to have been able here to describe a framework that may be useful in that effort.

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8

Subversion, secession and the state in South Asia: Varieties of violence

Varun Sahni and Shamuel Tharu

> To totalitarianism, an opponent is by definition subversive; democracy treats subversives as mere opponents for fear of betraying its principles.[1]

The sovereign territorial state is a totalizing actor at the best of times. At the worst of times, when it feels threatened, the state may respond with force and violence. Yet the sovereign state is inherently susceptible to perceiving threats. The seeds of subversion are everywhere, waiting to sprout at an opportune moment. From a totalizing perspective, all social groups supposedly subordinate and subsumed are *always* potentially subversive. This presumption is reflected in state responses to a wide variety of violence, be it left-wing or right-wing insurgency or ethno-cultural movements. In this chapter we shall substantiate this argument in the concrete contexts of South Asia and develop an understanding of these cycles of violence.

South Asia today is marked by three sometimes overlapping, violent political aggregations. Many of the oldest form, *ethnic movements*, can trace their roots back to the beginning of the post-colonial period. They have continued to ebb and flow over six decades along the peripheries of the nation-state. The next form to develop, *left-wing groups*, have been operating over varying terrains and with varying intensities since at least the 1960s. The persistence of feudal land structures amid modernist development projects deepened existing income inequalities and created new fissures among old classes. Most recently, the rise of *right-wing groups* since the 1980s has evoked two kinds of explanations. As part of a

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Political violence in South and Southeast Asia: Critical perspectives, Abraham, Newman and Weiss (eds), United Nations University Press, 2010, ISBN 978-92-808-1190-2

global trend, this surge has been attributed to the social dislocation and income inequalities accompanying the pursuit of a neo-liberal agenda by governments. Alternatively, at the regional level, it has been explained as the outcome of the initial resort to religious majoritarianism by governments to quell and delegitimize the persistent ethnic/regional discontent that has plagued them since independence.

Despite the increasing political influence of state-sponsored political parties, religious movements have not managed to displace or undercut ethnic/regional movements in the region. The reactionary and exclusionary politics of religious parties should be analysed as the latest phase – but only one of many facets – of the perpetual struggle between state elites and discontented and marginalized social groups as the forces of neo-liberalism have exerted new kinds of economic and administrative pressures on the states of the region. The more direct reaction to such pressure has been from left-wing groups.

The chapter is divided into six sections. In the first section we clarify our conception of the state and analyse its securitizing role. In the second, we categorize insurgent groups into three types depending upon the nature of grievances and the ideological bases from which the groups operate. The third section focuses upon the ultimate goals of insurgency and settles for the conventional dichotomy of secession (breaking away from the state) and subversion (overthrowing the state and taking over state power). The fourth analyses subversion both from above (overt) and from below (covert); the latter is an important but oft-ignored strategy of insurgency. The fifth assesses various insurgent groups' propensity to violence, focusing on three cases: the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka, the Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). The final section asks whether any of these distinctions regarding the forms and types of insurgency have any impact upon state responses.

The state: Totalizing and securitizing

What is the importance of considering the state as a totalizing actor? The primary reason is the intellectual and theoretical coherence that such a view enables. The state is an observable entity both internally and externally. The nation-state serves as a mechanism for taming collective sentiments, by uniting a people with a collective political will. It was this capacity that permitted democratization not only in the West, but also in more recently sovereign and liberalized post-colonial states.

Our central theoretical problem is what happens when the nation-state runs into a paradox, becoming a central actor in the process of globalization while "ethnic" forms of belonging no longer coincide with the boundaries of the state. Prevailing theories remain based on an assumption that a system of action (such as the state) needs a life world as its basis of solidarity or trust or identity. Communication theories still hold some idea about rationality of action, cultural theories about the centrality of symbolic elements which are needed to create social cohesiveness, and modernization theories about the social-psychological prerequisites of modernity (which range from the capitalist spirit to the democratic spirit) that sustain modernization. All deal with the social basis of a political system such as a state. Theories of nationalism in particular were based on the observation of a close association between symbolic units and systemic units: the state identified with the people. This association was historically never realized, but it worked as an *idée directrice* over centuries. Although there has been a sustained and convincing critique of the multi-polarity of the state, the fact that the state's unitary nature is its directing idea is of immense value to us, especially if we are interested in studying how the state responds to challenges to this definitional foundation.

Georges Sorel argued over 60 years ago that violence could demystify the ideological construction of established order, thereby making change a possibility.[2] Violence is conceived as a strategic choice to obtain a certain goal. These attempts to change the established order take on various forms depending on the aims and strategies of the contending groups. It is important to note, however, that violence is not the only strategy employed by these groups. Later in the chapter we will differentiate between the various strategies employed by insurgent groups, in order to sieve the violent from other strategies. This distinction will help us to reach an understanding of the propensity to violence of different kinds of groups and to analyse states' responses in some depth.

The insurgents: Ideologies and identities

For the purposes of this chapter, we have identified three categories of insurgents based on the nature of their grievances and the ideological bases from which they operate. Our first taxonomic cut would be a bifurcation of groups into the ethno-cultural and the ideological. The latter can be further subdivided into right-wing and left-wing groups, giving us in all three broad classes of insurgents.

Due to overlaps in practice and discourse we considered the possibility of conceptualizing these three groupings along an oscillating continuum. However, as shall be seen below, there is a distinct difference in the way in which these groups are organized and in their propensity to use violence. Given our focus on how the state responds to such movements, the magnitude of their differences only underscores the similarity of the response.

Identity: Ethno-cultural groups

Ethno-cultural insurgents are embedded within a cultural group (i.e. they are local or national, not expansionist) and have specific grievances against a more powerful dominant group. The violent activity of these groups is directed at a well-identified local enemy, and the local population often acknowledge the legitimacy of the group as "freedom fighters" or "resistance" against that enemy. Members of the local population serve the group, often willingly and readily as volunteers. These groups are usually involved in legitimate social and political activity in addition to terrorist activity. The grievances of the community motivate the organization and actions of these groups. They may hold extreme views of the specific conflict situation, but otherwise have an orthodox world-view. They may claim legitimate powers of the state or other acknowledged authority (for example, the power to issue *fatwas* or to form an army).

Ideology 1: Right-wing groups

Ideological groups are often transnational and expansionist and have more cult-like elements than their grievance-driven counterparts. Their world-view is not limited to the particular conflict situation. These groups have leaders who profess or imply spiritual or other special significance (i.e. the personality of the leaders may be key to the nature of the group). The identity of the "enemy" is vague or even imaginary (e.g. "invading Muslim Mughals" or "democratizing liberals"). Although the lines between ethno-cultural groups and right-wing extremists are quite blurred, a distinct demarcation emerges in their propensity to use violence. Ethno-cultural violence in South Asia is based on demands for rectification of exclusivity in the status quo that marginalizes a particular ethno-cultural community. Right-wing groupings in South Asia are, on the whole, extremely exclusionary and at conflict with the status quo. This orientation affects the groups' propensity to violence and selection of targets.

Ideology 2: Left-wing groups

Left-wing groups represent a curious mix of the discourse and practice of the first two groupings. For example, the Maoists usually appeal to an ethno-cultural group with distinct grievances, usually with another ethno-cultural grouping serving as the securitized "other" (landlords of specific castes, ruling castes, etc.). However, this political aggregation is usually articulated in terms of much larger transnational linkages to general ideals (world socialism) or specific locations ("China's Chairman, Our Chairman"). Similarly, these groups usually lay claim to the "legitimate powers of the state".

Aims of insurgency: Territory or authority

What do insurgent groups want? In simple terms, they wish in some specific way to diminish the sovereign territorial state. However, we can draw another dichotomy here. While some groups are interested in breaking away from the state (secession), others seek to overthrow the state (subversion). In other words, some groups want some of the state's territory; others want all its authority.

Subversion: Taking over the state's authority

Subversion, like terrorism and insurgency, has no universally accepted definition. For scholars such as Charles Townshend, the term is so elastic as to be virtually devoid of meaning, and its use does little more than convey the "enlarged sense of the vulnerability of modern systems to all kinds of covert assaults".[3] How then do we use it meaningfully? Subversion is an overturning or uprooting. Present in all languages of Latin origin, the term originally applied to such diverse events as the military defeat of a city and a severe gastric disorder. But as early as the fourteenth century it was being used in the English language with reference to laws; in the fifteenth century it came to be used with respect to the realm – the origin of its modern use. Nowadays "subversion" refers to attempts to overthrow structures of authority, including the state. In this respect it has supplanted "sedition" as the name for illicit rebellion, but with a different connotation: sedition suggests overt attacks on institutions; subversion something much more surreptitious, such as eroding the basis of belief in the status quo or setting people against each other.[4]

A British home secretary explained in 1978, "subversive activities are generally defined as those which threaten the wellbeing or safety of the state and which are intended to undermine or overthrow the parliamentary democracy by political industrial or violent means".[5] Recent writers in the post-modern and post-structuralist traditions (particularly feminist writers) take a broader view. It is not, they argue, the realm directly which should be subverted, but dominant cultural forces such as patriarchy, individualism and scientific rationalism. This expansion owes much to the ideas of Antonio Gramsci, who stressed that communist revolution required the erosion of the particular form of "cultural hegemony" in any society.

Secession: Taking away the state's territory

Secession is the act of withdrawing from an organization, union or political entity, usually based on specific issues. Technically, the term applies only to a declaration of independence from a federal, not unitary, state. Surprisingly few political theorists have paid sustained attention to this problem. One exception has been Frederick Whelan, whose search for a satisfactory legitimation for secession ended in pessimism: "it appears that our only choices are to abide by the arbitrary verdicts of history or war, or to appeal on an ad hoc basis to other principles, none of which commands general respect".[6] For purposes of this chapter we shall use the more general meaning of secession, which would include the desire for independence even from unitary states.

Ethno-cultural groups in South Asia have consistently demanded autonomy or secession, regardless of grievance or motivation. Ideological groups, on the other hand, do not seek to withdraw from the state. Their objective is usually the overthrow of the state or undermining its nodes of power. But how do these groups proceed? What is their strategy? In the following section we delineate two broad insurgent strategies: subversion from above and subversion from below. This approach will enable us to analyse the conditions under which ethno-cultural and ideological movements resort to violence and how the state responds.

Strategies of insurgency: Overt and covert

Although insurgency is typically described as political-military strategy, relatively little analytical attention has been paid to the non-violent aspects of the phenomenon. To be sure, during the 1960s and 1970s specialists did consider the role played by underground political structures in revolutionary (typically Maoist) insurgent movements. However, even at the height of US policy interest in insurgency, far greater consideration was given to its armed components. Today, with a major insurgency embroiling US forces in Iraq, American soldiers and scholars have begun mining earlier accounts of insurgency and counterinsurgency in the hopes of extracting lessons applicable in the current environment. Such interest is understandable, but the results are bound to be disappointing unless analysts expand their focus to include a broader range of tactics. Subversion, defined by the US Department of Defense as "[a]ction designed to undermine the military, economic, psychological, or political strength or morale of a regime", is a tool that has been employed by nearly every insurgent movement. For them, subversion is the political equivalent of guerrilla warfare techniques on a battlefield: an asymmetrical approach that cannot defeat the state directly, but contributes to its inability to maintain public safety, promote economic development and build a democratic order.

Rajesh Rajagopalan has identified three broad but distinct stages in the evolution of insurgency: "the political-preparatory stage, the guerrilla war stage and the conventional war stage". He writes:

> Most armies get into counter-insurgency operations during the second (guerrilla) stage of an insurgency. In this stage, rebels conduct hit-and-run operations designed to harass the superior government forces and cut the lines of communication between strongholds such as cities. As the relative capabilities of the opposing forces shift in favour of the rebels, they conduct larger-scale operations and begin to hold territory. Eventually, when the rebel forces are strong enough, they form a conventional army with large units and heavy weapons such as tanks and artillery and engage government forces in set piece, positional battles designed to deliver the final blow. This "war of movement" represents the third stage of the insurgency. In theory, at this stage the rebels will be strong enough to defeat the government's forces on the battlefield. On the other hand, for the rebels, knowing when to make this transition to positional war can be critical and difficult. If the transition is made too hastily, they can be defeated on the battlefield, derailing the entire insurgency.[7]

Rajagopalan's insight is mirrored in a symposium conducted by the RAND Corporation in 1962 among NATO military counterinsurgency experts.[8] They distinguished between two genealogies of insurgent movements, the "orthodox" and the "unorthodox". The first step is the most difficult for revolutionaries taking an orthodox approach: creating a strong party. The second step is to spread the main issue to the masses in an effort to create a broad popular front. After these generally legal and non-violent steps, the revolutionaries can move into actual military operations. Selecting a region both far removed from the centre of government, and thus difficult to control, and in which their party is already strong, they will initiate guerrilla warfare, initially on a small scale. To avoid becoming what Mao Zedong calls "roving bandits", the guerrillas must obtain bases, either within or outside the country's borders. These bases also become centres for the political organization through which the insurgents gain control of the population and win their support.

Militarily, the next step is to organize units of growing size (platoon, company, battalion, even division), until eventually the insurgent forces include regular troops, local units (which generally form the core of the local defenders), guerrilla companies (which operate in enemy territory) and militia. This set-up grants flexibility to strike as appropriate until insurgents and legitimate forces are closely enough matched for the former to mount a major, decisive attack. If the government's side is weak, a negotiated victory may come even without such a last-ditch battle.

In the "unorthodox" pattern of guerrilla warfare, a group of impatient revolutionaries omit the time-consuming phase of building a strong party. They attract attention to themselves through blind terrorism – random bombings and assassinations – to win latent supporters to their cause. Then more targeted violence allows them to isolate counterinsurgents from the rest of the population and terrorize the people into silence. Once the "battle of silence" is won, the guerrillas can operate freely. From here on the unorthodox pattern follows much the same lines as the orthodox. As in the latter, the creation of the insurgents' party is the crucial task, and requires popular support.[9]

These general patterns of insurgent genesis and evolution enable us to examine in detail the conditions under which subversion from above and subversion from below are conducted.

Subversion from above (overt)

Particular conditions enable subversion from above: overt subversion. Such subversion goes hand in hand with organized military action, but also requires the ability to provide an alternative state mechanism, as discussed above. What else would such strategies entail?

Intelligence

As a general rule, guerrillas, if they are to survive, must have better intelligence than their enemy – which requires that they have the support of the people. At the beginning of hostilities, the population typically are divided into three distinct groups: a small segment already willing to support the guerrillas, a large neutral group and a small segment that is actively hostile to the insurgents. It is the task of the guerrilla leader to identify those already friendly to their cause and use them to control the majority and neutralize the hostile minority.

Location

An ideal site for guerrilla operations would be an island with poor communications, easy access to the sea and either a mountainous interior (with year-round rains) that could grow enough food for both the insurgents and the people or dense forests. Given sufficient funding for arms and supplies (sourced locally or externally), merely inhospitable and inaccessible terrain like dry mountains would also suffice. Again, the key factor is local support.

Support

Guerrillas require three types of support: economic, technological and physical. Economic support can come in a variety of ways, including extortion, internal fund gathering and external donations. Technological support – namely weapons and communications systems – is essential, whether from a foreign power or a black market. Physical support, whether by externally trained guerrillas or internal recruits, is also necessary.

Cause

There are two entirely different situations in which guerrilla war, terrorism or insurgency is initiated. In the first, militants capitalize on existing resentment (people's hatred of an oppressor, or their desire to recover lost privileges or property) to capture an independence movement already under way. The second is the culmination of years of planning and organization, as in the case of al-Qaeda.

Development

The genesis of different kinds of insurgent groups has been described above. It is important to note, however, one interesting condition of subversion from above. The insurgent starts out with nothing but a cause and grows to strength, while the counterinsurgent often starts with everything but a cause and gradually declines in strength to the point of weakness.

Base

A (political) base is secure once the insurgents have either won over or neutralized the people of the area to the point at which they refuse to cooperate with the enemy even after the insurgents leave, thus offering a stronghold in an area that the enemy occupies sporadically. In a related fashion, even a base in a strategic location must be easily abandoned. No base must be crucial, lest it work at cross-purposes to the structure of guerrilla warfare.

Armed force

Last, but definitely not least, is the presence of an effective and armed insurgent force, without which overt subversion is impossible.

Subversion from below (covert)

Much work has already been done on subversion from above or overt subversion.[10] In contrast, covert subversion, or subversion from below, remains relatively understudied.

Covert subversive actions can be grouped into three interrelated categories: establishing front groups and penetrating and manipulating existing political parties; infiltrating the armed forces, the police and other institutions of the state, as well as important non-state organizations; and generating civil unrest through demonstrations, strikes and boycotts.

Front groups

To gain public credibility, attract new supporters, generate revenue and acquire other resources, terrorist and insurgent groups need to undertake political activities that are entirely separate, or appear to be entirely separate, from their overtly violent activities. Sometimes this is achieved by infiltrating political parties, labour unions, community groups and charitable organizations. Working in and through existing organizations – which provide a façade of legitimacy that might otherwise be unattainable – terrorists and insurgents can bolster political allies, attack government policies and attract international support. For those situations in which infiltration is too difficult, terrorists and insurgents may establish their own front groups – organizations that purport to be independent but are in fact created and controlled by others. Front groups, notes John Tompson, "can draw the sting of disapproval away from the cause and re-direct it against the state or institution that the terrorists are attacking".[11] Today groups as diverse as al-Qaeda, Lashkar-i-Toiba in Jammu and Kashmir and the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eeelam) operate through political, social and charitable fronts.[12]

Infiltration

Terrorists and insurgents can derive at least five significant benefits from state institutions. The first is information: infiltrating organs of the state, particularly the security forces, can help generate invaluable information about the government's capabilities, intentions and weaknesses. Such infiltration thus might be considered a form of intelligence collection against the state. Second, penetration can give terrorists and insurgents opportunities to plant false information, redirect the state's potentially lethal gaze, force the authorities to misallocate resources and otherwise derail the state's campaign. This too is a type of intelligence operation; like counterintelligence carried out by government intelligence services, it (secretly) aims to disrupt the organization and operations of enemy forces. Third, successful infiltration may lead to opportunities to steal government funds, weapons, equipment and other resources. Fourth, penetration allows insurgents and terrorists to "talent spot" potential recruits and identify candidates for blackmail or bribery. Finally, infiltration can contribute to the terrorist and insurgent strategy of weakening and delegitimizing the incumbent power. Just as infiltrators can help derail the state's counterterrorist or counterinsurgency campaign, so too can they degrade the state's ability to provide key public services by misdirecting resources, stealing funds and spreading false and divisive rumours among those in the government workforce.

Finally, it must be mentioned that insurgent infiltration is not limited to state institutions. Insurgents have systematically infiltrated universities, where they reportedly occupy top academic and administrative positions. Commerce and industry are also often penetrated by insurgents, who regularly establish affiliated front companies to rake off illicit earnings.

Civil unrest

As with infiltration, fomenting riots, organizing strikes and staging demonstrations can have a corrosive effect on the power, presence and capabilities of the state. Such unrest is, first and foremost, an affront to governmental authority. The failure to suppress it can have damaging political repercussions for the state by demonstrating that it is incapable of living up to its fundamental responsibility to maintain public order. At the same time, however, overreaction by security forces can play into the hands of terrorists and insurgents by seeming to confirm their claims about the fundamentally repressive nature of the state.

Civil unrest can prove useful in a variety of other political and operational ways. Large-scale discord can deplete the resources of the state by forcing the authorities to deploy additional police, pay overtime and, in some cases, send troops into the streets. With security forces otherwise occupied, insurgents and terrorists gain a respite from the incumbent's campaign against them. Additionally, the greater presence of security forces in response to unrest – in the form of patrols, roadblocks and searches – can help the cause of terrorists and insurgents by seeming to confirm the opposition's inevitable charge that the state has "militarized" the conflict and is now "at war" with the people.

Strikes can cause serious economic damage. As Carlos Marighella observed in his "Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla", perhaps the most widely read revolutionary "how-to" manual of the 1960s: "strikes … although they are of brief duration, cause severe damage to the enemy … [by] disrupting daily life, occurring endlessly, one after the other, in true guerrilla fashion".[13] Even less violent forms of unrest, such as worker absenteeism, passive resistance, boycotts and deliberate attempts to cripple government agencies by "overloading the system" with false reports, can likewise have powerfully disruptive effects, both economically and politically.

Propensity to violence

The propensity to use violence can be measured along four scales. First, what is the balance between violent acts and other subversive activities? Second, does the group differentiate between state and non-state targets of violence? Third, does the group distinguish between military and non-military forms of violence? Fourth, what is the strategic imperative of violence?

Ethno-cultural groups: The case of the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka

Ethno-cultural groups focus mainly on political aggregation. Subversive activity largely revolves around dispensing justice and providing stopgap methods of survival for those who are in desperate need. Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, as leader of the Khalistan movement in Indian Punjab in the 1980s, was famous both for dispensing brutal and efficient justice and for benevolent use of the movement's funds. We look more closely at the LTTE to get a sense of the diversity of the non-violent subversive activity that the group conducts. Remarkable as the LTTE's military capabilities are, the depth and sophistication of its subversive activities are even more impressive, being probably without parallel among contemporary insurgent organizations.

LTTE subversion takes place across five continents and through a large number of front groups, including the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization, the World Tamil Association, the World Tamil Movement (WTM) and the Federation of Associations of Canadian Tamils. In South Africa the LTTE has infiltrated Tamil diaspora groups, including the Natal Tamil Federation and the South African Tamil Federation. It has established a network of sympathetic Tamil organizations across South Africa, and LTTE operatives have reportedly infiltrated South African military units and intelligence services.[14]

LTTE front groups serve three purposes: as tools for hounding critics of the LTTE through demonstrations, mobs and harassing phone calls, e-mails and letters; as transmission belts for spreading LTTE propaganda within Tamil diaspora communities and among wider non-Tamil audiences; and fundraising. During the late 1990s the LTTE raised an estimated $1.5 million a month in the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia alone.[15] However, the LTTE has relied on other sources of funds beyond the Tamil diaspora. The Tamil Tigers skim money donated to fronts and LTTE-dominated NGOs that provide social services and other support to Tamils in Sri Lanka and the diaspora.[16] "It is part of the LTTE modus operandi to siphon off funds that are intended for rehabilitation programs in Sri Lanka", according to the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board.[17]

In Canada, home to one of the world's largest overseas Tamil populations, the LTTE has mounted an even more sustained and sophisticated campaign to shape the political environment. Through its fronts, the Tamil Tigers has made a major effort to cultivate politicians, including members of parliament. Parliamentarians have attended pro-LTTE rallies staged by the WTM.[18] Although reportedly urged to ban the LTTE, Canada's government has repeatedly refused to do so, but whether this is a function of LTTE subversion or a product of some other concern (e.g. civil liberties) is hard to say.[19] The LTTE clearly has employed front groups to attract and divert donations to the insurgency. These front groups are a reflection of the LTTE's parallel government. Complete, funded ministries exist for the development of roads, distribution of vaccines, education and, of course, propaganda.

Does the LTTE differentiate between military and non-military forms of violence? Neither Muslims nor Tamil communists see the Hindu Tamil movement in Sri Lanka as representative of their concerns. The last three decades have seen repeated attacks on both. The massacre of 110 Muslim men at prayer in mosques in Kattankudy and 130 men, women and children in Eravur in August 1990 by the LTTE and the LTTE's forcible expulsion of the entire Muslim community of the five districts of the Northern Province, numbering 75,000, in October 1990 are cases in point.[20] These incidents are apart from suicide bombings, numbering over 200 in the same period.

While the crackdowns on Muslims and communists may be seen as internal to the LTTE, even with regard to the Sri Lankan state the LTTE has seldom differentiated between civilian and non-civilian targets. Over half of its suicide bombings have been directed at civilian locations, with the sole aim of spreading terror or avenging arrests or deaths.

The strategic imperative of violence has been to underscore the seriousness of the LTTE's demands. It possesses neither the means nor the potential for an all-out attack against the Sri Lankan military. Violence is used both as a tool of terror and as a military tactic to gain strategic ground and deny Sri Lankan forces access to and stability of control over the north and east.

It is difficult to make a definitive judgement about the overall effectiveness of the LTTE's subversive activities. The LTTE clearly has employed front groups to attract and divert donations to the insurgency. It has run a largely legitimate parallel government. It has held negotiations, maintained cease-fires and has, for the most part, managed to convince world opinion of its legitimacy. Given the factors analysed, it is as prone to use violence indiscriminately as it is to seek peaceful negotiation or conduct just war.

This characterization is not specific to the LTTE. Structurally, all ethnocultural groups would react in relatively similar ways, for three main reasons. First, indiscriminate and consistent use of violence may possess certain strategic benefits, but the costs far outweigh the gains. This is because perpetrating groups are usually bound to a certain area and responsible for a certain population. Indiscriminate use of violence leads to backlashes from competing ethnic groups and from the state. Second, a group's internal legitimacy will erode in direct relation to its propensity to use violence indiscriminately. For localized groups dependent on the population for support and cadres, these costs, however long term, are too high to pay. Third, such action will usually result in a loss of external legitimacy and constrict negotiation and support-building activities.

Right-wing groups: The case of the Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh

It is worth noting that while most ethno-cultural movements use subversion, far fewer right-wing groups do. The latter may also be more predisposed to violent (as opposed to non-violent or "less than violent") political behaviour. Violence appears to occupy a much more prominent place in the right-wing *mentalité* than it does in the ethno-cultural insurgent worldview.

This tendency can be seen in the case of the Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB). The group is known to maintain about 10,000 full-time and 100,000 part-time cadres. Reports also suggest that there are approximately a million trainees of the outfit. The cadres are from varied positions in society, including teachers at universities and *madrassas*. There are different wings of the group, including ones related to finance, public relations and external links. The publicity and recruitment wing is reportedly the largest of all. While a relatively small wing looks after armed training, the intelligence wing has cells in different political and non-governmental organizations.

The organization's growth received a boost after the Bangladesh National Party-led coalition government under Prime Minister Khaleda Zia came to power in 2001. Many members of the JMB have been found to be cadres of the Islami Chhatra Shibir, the student wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami, a partner in the ruling coalition. Such unbroken linkages with the Jamaat-e-Islami have helped the outfit immensely not just in terms of unhindered growth, but also in terms providing relief in the event of intermittent official action. Given such a structure it would be reasonable to assume that the focus of the organization is to subvert the state predominately through non-violent or less-than-violent means.

However, if we examine in detail the nature of the JMB's political violence, a different picture emerges. Twenty-one people were killed and over 200 were injured in explosions targeting four theatres in Mymensingh on 7 December 2002, attributed to the JMB. On 29 November 2005 nine people, including two lawyers and a police constable, were killed and 78 injured in two suicide bomb attacks by JMB cadres in the Chittagong and Gazipur court premises. On 17 August 2005 the JMB was suspected to be involved in the 459 countrywide explosions in 63 districts in which at least two persons were killed and 100 others sustained injuries. Six persons were killed and 46 injured by a JMB suicide bomber in front of the office of the Udichi, cultural wing of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, in the Netrakona district on 6 December 2005.[21] The attacks were usually preceded by warnings demanding that the government change the constitution and implement Islamic law. NGOs and cultural troupes are among the major groups threatened or coerced.

The JMB's discourse also reveals a propensity to violence. The JMB makes no attempt at negotiation, despite being in positions that could influence government policy. State institutions are attacked only when leaders are arrested; the attacks are restricted to courts. For the most part it is civilians, seen to be complicit with the state order, who are attacked.

It is important to examine briefly the valorization of terror that has occurred post-9/11. The overreaction of democratic states, especially the United States, following the attack has changed the perception and efficacy of terrorist methods. Introducing fear into the law-and-order frame of the global hegemon has created globally visible fault-lines. It must be noted, however, that right-wing majoritarian groupings have historically resorted to fear and terror as political methods, including in South Asia. Silencing and marginalizing the other in the political and social space are key to a right-wing technology of governing. Added to this, the force of the divine that usually informs right-wing actions is absolute and preempts negotiation with mortals.

Due to the amorphous nature of the threat, such groups do not differentiate between state and non-state targets of violence. Similarly, they do not differentiate between military and non-military forms of violence. Violence is used purely as a terror tactic. It is indiscriminate. It targets civilians. It follows no rules of just war.

However, despite the international efficiency of their subversive activities and the relative infrequency of attacks, right-wing groups are still more inclined to violence than ethno-cultural insurgent groups, rather than subversion or negotiation; the group's legitimacy comes not from the imagined community it purports to represent, but from the act of violence itself. This distinction becomes clear from the contrast with the intended actions of left-wing and ethno-cultural groups.

Left-wing groups: The case of the Maoists in Nepal

The concept of the united front was central to Mao's thinking and to the communist victory in China. The idea is simple in essence but broad – and potentially difficult – in application. It means to "*unite with all forces* *that can be united with* in order to fight a common struggle against the enemy and to win in revolution and construction”.[22]

As the Maoists in Nepal approached the launch of the people’s war, they defined a narrow role for the united front, with its component elements strictly subordinated to the party: “Armed struggle will be carried out by uniting all strata and categories of anti-feudal and anti-imperialist masses of the people under the leadership of the Party.”[23] Within three years the armed insurgency had expanded significantly, prompting consideration of formalizing the united front under the rubric of the “Central Organizing Committee of the People’s Republic of Nepal”.[24] Its role would still be to mobilize “various left, progressive, patriotic and democratic forces” but it would be explicitly transitional: “[S]uch a central formation will principally work as a means of struggle for the time being and will work secondarily as a means of power.”[25] In September 2001, during the first cease-fire, the Maoists created a 37-member United Revolutionary People’s Council (URPC) as a united front. It was headed by Baburam Bhattarai, with Krishna Bahadur Mahara as assistant convener and Dev Gurung as secretary.[26]

The Maoists have established a range of fraternal organizations to boost their popularity by carrying out above-ground political activities and mobilization on their behalf. By 2000 there were more than 20 such organizations.[27]

The All Nepal National Free Student Union (Revolutionary), the student wing of the Maoists, demonstrated the reach of the Maoists in urban areas for the first time with a strike which shut down more than 30,000 schools across the country in November 2000. The Nepal Trade Union Federation (Revolutionary) (NTUF(R)) brings together some dozen nominal unions.[28] Its leaders and members have reportedly played an important role in collecting “donations” from industrialists and businessmen in Kathmandu, Biratnagar and Birgunj. The NTUF(R) was said to be behind scattered incidents of extortion, vandalism and bomb explosions, but it gained a wider reputation in September 2004 when it forced the shutdown of 12 major businesses over labour conditions and complaints about foreign capital and exploitive multinational corporations.[29] Enforcing the strike was a minor bomb attack in the grounds of the five-star Soaltee Hotel, which hurt the tourism sector and also served as a symbolic attack against the royal family, which is closely linked to the hotel.[30]

For the most part Nepali Maoists do maintain the divide between state and non-state targets of violence. Violence is largely against the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA),[31] aimed at disturbing supply routes, damaging infrastructure and upsetting the normal functioning of local governance.

The Maoists have yet to attempt the type of united front politics that was decisive in the Chinese revolution. Creating their own support organizations is not the same as persuading forces with different aims to join them in a shared task with limited common objectives. The main reason for this has probably been the Maoists' attempt to eliminate political rivalry across the countryside by targeting other parties' activists. This has not created fertile ground for the kind of understanding that would be necessary to build a viable working alliance with other political groups. Even so, the working coalition in Nepal today is a testament to such groups' propensity to violence. Similar observations can be made regarding the cease-fires and talks in which Maoists in India frequently engage the governments of various states. Maoists there have also earned significant civil society support, particularly in states like Andhra Pradesh and Jharkhand.

There can be no doubt that Maoists have used terror to coerce and silence opponents, police informers and other civilians. Most of the reports, however, show that the use of terror is not the norm and the Maoists largely depend on military forms of violence to achieve strategic goals.

State responses

Before we attempt to analyse state responses to these three groupings, it is important to clarify the context of our taxonomy. Although the notion of propensity could imply a structural condition, we use it to reflect a choice of method, thus emphasizing the agency of the LTTE, JMB and Nepali Maoists. The continuum along which we have placed these three groups is constantly oscillating. It is also important at this point to explain that our concern in this chapter is not to analyse or perform a cost-benefit analysis on whether violence as a military or terror tactic is more effective than non-violent or subversive means. Similarly, it is not to perform a strategic stocktaking on other possible avenues that each of these three groupings might have followed, or might still follow. Rather, our goal is to understand how the state articulates and responds to subversions and secessions. The taxonomic cuts that have been effected are simply methodological. Indeed, it is our conclusion that, no matter how we define or classify subversive or secessionist groups, or indeed how they classify themselves, the state responds in a similar manner to all of them.

Given such different propensities to violence, it could be assumed that the state would modulate its responses accordingly. However, except in the case of groups used by the state to infiltrate or derail insurgency movements, the state has shown a tendency to dub all insurgencies "terrorist", in order to usurp the legitimate use of violence and undermine the commitment, character and social location of the insurgents. The state has encouraged groups with similar goals to infiltrate and undermine the insurgents. It has also armed local populations and created vigilante groups to undermine the legitimacy of the insurgents. The "foreign hand" theory is more often than not deployed, maximizing the sense of a potential threat to the integrity of the state.

It must be recognized here that the heightened securitization[32] that the state deploys against insurgents is undermined by its support at various junctures to majoritarian right-wing groupings and ethno-cultural movements. Similarly, conflicts that have been resolved through peaceful negotiation (even after military action) further strengthen our hypothesis, as the state subsumes insurgents without ceding either authority or territory.

It is important to note that despite the meta-narrative into which the state subsumes subversive and seditious movements, there is an underlying complexity to South Asian states' responses to political violence that opens itself out into specific patterns. While these patterns provide considerable variance of context, composition and policy of the state, each feeds back into the subsuming meta-narrative of the totalizing South Asian state. Before we move on to discuss the specifics of state responses to political violence, it is useful to pause briefly on three variables that affect state responses.

Patterns of policy

There are three major policy avenues that become available to the state in the event of challenges to it. Firstly, there is the policy option of force. The state can, via military, paramilitary, police or armed militia, counter political violence with violence. This is the underlying policy instrument in each and every case that has arisen in South Asia. However, while the use of force is the most evident and, in some ways, the easiest option to deploy, it is usually accompanied by diplomatic attempts at negotiation. This second policy option, though invariably coupled with the use of force, has proved to be a considerable tool in the resolution of the political violence facing the state. As shall be seen in the section below, significant numbers of negotiated settlements have been reached by South Asian states and internal dissidents. Negotiation is further used as a policy option in that the state uses settlements in order to weaken or expose rebel factions. The Naga settlements, for example, led to the fracture of the Naga movement in northeast India, resulting in a considerable advantage to the Indian state. Similarly, in the federal state of Andhra Pradesh, "peace talks" are used by both the police and the Naxalites in order to regroup, to expose lines of communications and to further media propaganda.

Thirdly, there is the policy option of development. Most conflicts in South Asia, irrespective of whether they involve ethnic groupings or radical ideologies, are based around the demand for a better life. Given the low per capita income and the limited ability of South Asian states to provide adequate basic facilities such as water, work and healthcare, this is hardly surprising. However, time and again, states have used developmental policies as a major tool in the resolution of conflicts. Examples include the affirmative action policies in Pakistan, the granting of an autonomous hill council in Darjeeling and the comprehensive development package agreed upon in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) negotiation.

While each of these policy tools points towards differing scales of engagement with the rebels, they all continue to advance the underlying agenda of the totalizing state.

Varieties of states

While we have seen above that the use of force is the primary, and oft-times the only, policy option used by states, it is important to locate the propensity to violence of each state. According to Mansfield and Snyder,[33] in a survey of disputes that occurred between 1950 and 1985, anocratic states moving towards democracy are more likely to use force in the resolution of conflict than stable democracies. Similarly, autocratic states are more likely to use force than stable democracies. However, transitional anocratic states that are moving towards democracy are more likely to use force than fully autocratic states. Julian Schofield,[34] in a study of militarized decision-making, comes to four interesting conclusions. Firstly, the military's preoccupation with the state's security levels leads it to stress the existence of the foreign hand. Secondly, as the military establishment is attuned to changes in the military balance it is likely to exaggerate the benefit of a perceived window of opportunity to use force against insurgents. Thirdly, military regimes, because of an institutional sensitivity towards balance of capabilities, are more likely to see disputes in a geo-strategic perspective. And fourthly, while military leaders are no more likely as their civilian counterparts to advocate use of force and in some cases less likely, they are more likely to recommend rapid escalation of conflicts once force has been authorized.

On analysing these two complementary sets of conclusions, interesting implications emerge for the South Asian region. Firstly, anocratic states such as Pakistan are more likely, given the history of military regimes, to use force as a conflict resolution option. This is probably why, of all the South Asian countries, Pakistan has not negotiated a settlement, irrespective of the longevity of the conflict. A similar case is of autocratic Nepal, which when compared to democratic Nepal showed a far greater propensity to violence than the latter. As shall be seen below, this was also the case in Bhutan under albeit benevolent kingship. India and Sri Lanka have both shown a propensity to negotiate, as has Bangladesh.

A further variety of state comes into play regarding the composition of the state elite, and more complexly in the nature of coalition politics. The largely Punjabi Pakistani administration has to make considerable compromises in administrative recruitment and other affirmative action policies towards the Muhajir population, given their control over urban business. Likewise, the Sindhi population received far more accommodation of ethnic grievances than, say, the Baluchis or the tribes of Waziristan. Similarly, the democratic state in Sri Lanka cracked down heavily on the first Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP, or People's Liberation Front) uprising, with the aid of Indian forces. However, following the coming to power of the pro-Sinhala UNP (United National Party), government reluctance to combat Sinhala violence and vigilantism has been apparent.

Whether the state will resort to force also depends upon the politics of coalition partners, especially in a democracy. For example, the BNP-led coalition government chose to deny the existence of any form of terrorism in Bangladesh until the 17 August 2005 incident.

Levels of capability

Bangladesh's war for independence has been the only conflict in which a militarily superior state has had to concede territory or other conditions. In every other conflict, the victors have possessed a considerable military advantage. There are many examples of this unsurprising trend: the Sri Lankan army and the LTTE, the Bangladeshi army and the tribes of the CHT, the Pakistani army and the Baluchi rebels and the Maoists against the RNA. If the capability to use force exists, the propensity of its use as a policy option increases.

All these strands of state responses are illustrated time and again across South Asia. However, all pull together in the meta-narrative of the state using force and whatever other means available in order to prevent the actualization of goals of revolution, self-determination or religious dominance.

Ethno-cultural groups

In South Asia, subversion as a strategy has produced mixed results for ethno-cultural movements. The state has used militarism as the primary response to every movement. Negotiation occurs only on the state's terms, after it has put the movement militarily at a disadvantage. Despite minority groups' armed resistance, dominant states have ultimately suppressed most ethnic conflicts. These cases see neither use of violence by weaker-group militarists to promote their ethnic goals nor any great scope for revival of political strategies by the moderate leadership, even though the fundamental grievances sparking militarism remain unresolved.

In Pakistan, highly repressive tactics against the Baluchis, Pakhtuns and Sindhis worked to the advantage of state militarism. The Baluch war (1973–1977), predictably, dealt a severe, demoralizing blow to the insurgents. Moderate political campaigns in the absence of armed pressure (since most militants had fled to Afghanistan, surrendered to the army or been killed in operations) became totally subdued. The continued detention of leaders (until 1977), the prohibition on political activities in the province and the army's effective control of Baluch areas during Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's rule weakened the ambitious movement.

Although the Zia regime (1977–1988) reversed Bhutto's policies towards Baluchistan and promised a conciliatory approach, its manipulative ethnic policies, reflected in its strategies of coercion and cooption of Baluch nationalists, further contributed to the demise of the nationalist struggle.[35] These policies made a strong impact on the Pakhtun movement. Political differences between the Baluch and Pakhtun leaders emerged in 1977, quashing the tactical cooperation that had challenged Bhutto's coercive policies. Sustained military crackdowns in the North West Frontier Province, cooptation of the Pakhtun nationalists and economic rewards to the province brought a semblance of political order on Islamabad's terms. Although Bhutto's Sindhi ethnic identity and affirmative action policies temporarily arrested Sindhis' feelings of alienation, the Zia regime's use of military force weakened the Sindhi movement.[36]

Adeel Khan compares the four ethno-cultural "subnationalisms" in Pakistan and concludes that there is a "direct link" between the strength of subnationalisms and "their distance from or proximity to state power".[37] In his words:

> The Pakhtun nationalists' journey from separatism to integrationism has been a journey from Pakhtuns' exclusion from state institutions to their present over-representation. Likewise, Mohajirs' journey from ardent support for state nationalism to separatist rhetoric is rather too obviously linked with their downslide from their position of dominance in the state structure. On the other hand, the two most marginalized groups, Sindhis and Baloch, have been as consistently nationalistic as their distance from the state has been unchanging.[38]

Importantly, Khan links the power of subnationalisms in Pakistan to "their social, economic and political location in the state system" rather than culture, history and language; he argues that the latter "have been part of the symbolic and rhetorical armoury of these movements but not of their actual political agendas".[39] Furthermore, while subnationalisms in Pakistan "have always been centred around provincial autonomy and a share in the central government", the Pakistani state has "labelled them secessionist and thus forced them into that role".[40]

While ethno-national movements in Pakistan primarily experienced military suppression, the Indian government's combined politico-military strategy proved effective with the Khalistanis. The strategy proceeded in two separate tracks. The army and the state police hit hard at the militants to tire them and dampen their militancy. Normalcy began to return by 1995. Concurrently, the central government adopted a conciliatory approach, engaging moderate Akali leaders in negotiations: in 1982 the government released 25,000 detainees and undertook to promote Sikh cultural aspirations; in 1983 it appointed a commission under Justice R. S. Sarkaria to look into centre-state relations. Subsequently, in 1985 Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi negotiated a peace accord with the moderate Akali leader, Harcharan Singh Longowal.[41] Although the accord appeared as a major concession to the Sikhs, the cumulative gains accrued were small due to its non-implementation. The conflict has effectively been suppressed, leaving Sikhs with little hope of realizing their ethnic goals.

The East Pakistani conflict is distinct from all others in the region. It was the only conflict that ended after a military victory for the weaker ethnic group members. This unusual outcome was because hegemonic state militarism against a weaker group paved the way for the war between India and Pakistan in 1971.

In contrast, state militarism effectively contained the conflict in Bhutan. The Lhotshampas have sufficient political determination to fight for their cause, but lack the military strength to challenge the Bhutanese state. They are a militarily weak group with a weak ethnic patron (Nepal), whose constrained strategic support – and own internal turmoil – keeps them from achieving their goal.

In Sri Lanka the intensity of the ethnic conflict has not declined (prior to the apparent end of the civil war in 2009), notwithstanding sustained military operations by the Sri Lankan army (since 1983) and the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in 1987–1990. Likewise, India's mediation, which led to a bilateral agreement between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE in 1987, and various peace talks between the government and the militants brokered by Norway have neither resolved nor even mitigated the Sri Lankan conflict.[42]

In India's northeast, all but the Mizo conflict fit into this mode. Three of those conflicts – Naga, Tripuri and Bodo – have ended in peace negotiations, though the agreements have failed to end violence. The Naga conflict has seen a protracted peace process since the 1950s, involving mediators who tried in vain to negotiate a deal between the government and the Naga National Council (NNC) in the 1960s. Later, the famous Shillong Agreement of 1975 sought to enlist the NNC's commitment to the Indian constitution, disarmament and restoration of normalcy, but could not assuage Naga feelings of deprivation. The NNC was split on the issue of accepting the agreement. A section of its leadership decided to continue the armed struggle, which Indian security forces have been unable to end.[43]

The government's sustained military pressure on Tripuri militants paved the way for a negotiated agreement with the Tripura National Volunteers (TNV) in August 1988 and with the Tripura Tribal Force in 1993,[44] but peace has not returned there.[45] Splinter groups have emerged out of disagreements over the peace accords to carry on the fight. The struggle for Bodoland was also inconclusive. The Bodo Security Force and Bodo Volunteer Force survived the military onslaught and continued to deny a victory to the Indian army. The 1993 accord between the Assam government and the moderate Bodo leaders, as well as various initiatives of the central government in recent years, failed to restore peace and normalcy in the state.[46]

The conflicts in Kashmir, Sindh (particularly with the Mohajirs), Manipur and Assam (against the United Liberation Front of Asom) form another category in which coercion has remained the principal strategy, yet has had little success. There have been no serious and structured negotiations between the government and the militants because of constraints in developing a common framework for the peace process. Government initiatives and preliminary talks at the lower leadership level or with peripheral groups have been inconsequential. Unilateral government steps to advance the economic and political interests of the groups involved have hardly moderated the conflicts between the Mohajirs and the Pakistani government. Thus containment as a strategy has failed in these conflicts because some groups have a sufficiently strong organizational structure to sustain their spirit and strength to carry on the fight. The level of mobilization has been high in many conflicts, and external patron support has remained strong in a few. Interlocking conflicts and the operating terrain have worked to the militants' strategic advantage. At the same time, peace agreements have failed because of feelings of entrapment and the low level of war fatigue among minority group members.

Only a few conflicts have ended through negotiated settlement. Finding military engagements futile, the parties in the Mizo, Gorkha and CHT conflicts have successfully negotiated peace settlements. Since the government's strategy in Mizoram was to use military pressure to bring the

Mizo National Front (MNF) to the negotiating table, the centre held peace parleys with its president, Laldenga, in 1976 and 1980. Though the talks proved abortive due to the intransigence of the MNF, the centre continued to capitalize on the military weakness of the Mizo National Army to work out a settlement. With the local population and church leaders throwing their weight into the peace parleys, the government and the MNF chief signed the Mizo Accord in 1986.[47] The accord has an enduring effect, leaving Mizoram the most peaceful state in the northeast region.

Similarly, the Gorkha conflict showed its ripeness for settlement when the centre offered to mediate between the West Bengal government and the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), leading to a peace accord in August 1988. The GNLF compromised on its demand for a separate Gorkha state within the Indian union and accepted the establishment of a hill council in the Darjeeling district.[48] The competing militarism ended and normalcy returned to the hills. Even though the accord worked smoothly, it has not satisfied the GNLF. The desire to achieve its original conflict goal is still articulated by its leadership without, at the same time, resorting to any organized political or military actions.

An explanation for Indian state responses to insurgency could lie in the "fourth-generation war", or counterinsurgency (COIN), doctrine of the Indian army. Rajesh Rajagopalan has suggested that that there are five critical elements in the Indian army's COIN doctrine: limiting the quantum of force used in operations, isolating the insurgents from the general population, dominating the affected area, maintaining larger forces at all times in the combat area and, finally, the belief that there are no military solutions to insurgencies. Limitation of force is "not only because of concerns about human rights, but also because of operational effectiveness". The second element requires not just "winning the hearts and minds" of the people through public service, but also preventing the insurgents from doing likewise. Dominating the affected area involves "showing the flag" through large-scale deployment of troops rather than conducting offensive operations, with the purpose of exhausting the staying power of the insurgents. This approach, however, requires consistent maintenance of forces larger than those of the insurgents in the combat area, as the only way in which guerrilla adversaries can be countered without causing large-scale collateral damage. However, the unique aspect of Indian COIN doctrine is the deep-seated belief that insurgencies "represent political problems which need to be resolved through political dialogue with the rebels".[49]

Apart from India, Bangladesh is the only other country in the region in which a negotiated settlement has ended an ethnic conflict. The peace process started in 1977, amid continued military operations, and proceeded sluggishly until June 1992 when the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) government worked out a cease-fire in the CHT and held six rounds of unsuccessful negotiations with tribal leaders through 1995. Nevertheless, the cease-fire was extended 35 times until December 1997, when the Awami League government negotiated a landmark agreement with the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity leader, J. B. Larma.[50] Despite strident opposition from the BNP and a delay in implementing the accord because of disagreements between the contracting parties, there has been no resumption of violence and prospects for enduring peace are quite high. There seems to be general satisfaction among the tribal people, a positive sign of ending the conflict from their side. In this and the other two cases, what made an agreement possible were an apparent stalemate in conflict processes, slackening external support for weaker groups and a general trend towards demobilization of group members.

Ideological left-wing groups

The Royal Nepal Army, despite its intermittent involvement in domestic pacification tasks, was never a battle-tested force. Nepal has been at peace since 1816, when it signed the Sugauli Treaty with the British East India Company. No external forces have ever physically threatened Nepal's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Not surprisingly, the RNA became not only under-trained and under-armed, but obsolete in military terms. The Maoist insurgency and domestic conflict in Nepal increased the military profile of the state and its interventionist tendency. The easiest way to measure the impact of conflict on security is to look at the spiralling security expenditures of the state – justified by the government as an "investment for peace". Another measure is the number of personnel inducted into the core security sector compared with the past. On 26 November 2001, "in view of the serious crisis facing the sovereignty, integrity and security of the country", the Nepali government declared a state of emergency. It subsequently adopted an Anti-terrorist Act to deploy the armed forces, culminating in the announcement of a unified military command on 4 November 2003. The impunity provision of the Anti-terrorist Act as a legislative measure has provided unrestrained power to the security forces, covering even secret activities committed in plain clothes.

In a February 2004 report on the human rights situation in Nepal, the US State Department asserted that the "RNA (Royal Nepal Army) was responsible for a number of killings, including deaths in custody in which torture was credibly alleged. The RNA continues to kill civilians." The report further stated that the "security forces used arbitrary and unlawful lethal force and continue to abuse detainees, sometimes using torture as punishment and to extract information. The disappearance of persons in custody was a problem. Prison conditions remained poor. Impunity remained a problem. [Thus] the government's human rights record remained poor, and it continued to commit numerous serious abuses."[51]

Another unforeseen and unrelated, but crucial, event that galvanized a change in how security-related decisions are made in Nepal was the 9/11 attacks. Following the US "global war on terrorism" and Patriot Act, Nepal also hardened its position against the Maoists, branding them terrorists and declaring an emergency to mobilize the armed forces by transforming a simple "law-and-order" problem to a serious "national security" crisis. This change in the thinking of security elites and the strategy adopted to quell Maoist violence have much to do with the anticipated armed assistance from the international community for a coalition partner – even one traumatized by internal conflict.

Between 2001–2002 and 2002–2003 a total of 39,634 million rupees were spent on security, 21,284 million in the latter year alone. Of that amount, 6,213 million rupees came from foreign military assistance, excluding the supplementary allocation by the government. Of the total, the off-budgetary allocation amounted to 5,000 million rupees.[52]

However, on 1 February 2005 King Gyanendra of Nepal dissolved parliament and banned all news reports. The army arrested senior political leaders, journalists, trade unionists, human rights activists and civil society leaders. All telephone and internet connections were cut. On 3 September 2005 the Maoists declared a three-month unilateral cease-fire to woo opposition political parties. After negotiations on 19 November, the Maoist rebels agreed to work with opposition politicians in a common front against the rule of King Gyanendra. The rebels did not extend a four-month cease-fire in January, saying that the government had broken it with numerous attacks on Maoist villages.

In March 2006 Nepalese rebels extended a road blockade of the capital. A general strike began the next month, with Maoist forces promising to refrain from violence. Maoist insurgents, responding to a demand by the newly appointed Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, announced a unilateral three-month truce in April 2006, after weeks of pro-democracy protests in Kathmandu, and encouraged the formation of a new constituent assembly tasked with rewriting the nation's constitution. Nepal's new cabinet declared a cease-fire on 3 May 2006. On 21 November 2006 peace talks ended with the signing of a deal between Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and Maoist leader Prachanda. The deal allows the Maoists to take part in government and places their weapons under UN monitoring.

Similarly, in India the state's response to Maoist insurgency has been underscored predominately by force. Still, as in Nepal, the state has until very recently (post-9/11) been unwilling to dub the Maoists as "terrorists", recognizing the legitimacy of their demands and the support that they draw. The state remains in a functional paradox, as it is unable to accept Maoist demands. The Maoists' commitment is to the classical Maoist strategy of "protracted armed struggle", which defines its objectives not in terms of the seizure of lands, crops or other immediate goals, but the seizure of power. Nevertheless, the state has at times negotiated with them. Following the 9/11 attacks, however, the nature of the discourse changed; the state now follows a fully militaristic policy.

Ideological right-wing groups

In November 2006 the Bangladesh Supreme Court upheld an earlier judgment sentencing several militants, including JMB leaders Abdur Rahman and Siddiqul Islam – also known as Bangla Bhai – to death. Bhai is also thought to have been the military commander of the Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB). The JMJB has been described as a sister organization of the JMB. The two leaders were arrested in March 2006 and are thought to be responsible for organizing over 400 near-simultaneous explosions on 17 August 2005. Despite their arrests, the government is viewed as having had only limited success in dismantling JMB networks. Some see the government's efforts to explore possible linkages with the BNP and Islamist parties as "timid".[53] The government outlawed the JMB and the JMJB in February 2005, reportedly in a policy reversal brought on by international pressure.[54] Experts feel that the arrests and trial do not in and of themselves "address the prospect of quiet, creeping Islamisation".[55]

The government's rapid action battalion (RAB) has made some further moves against terrorist groups. In December 2006 a RAB raid reportedly uncovered explosives and detonators, and seized additional detonators after a shoot-out with JMB militants.[56] There are increasing concerns about human rights violations associated with the RAB. It has been described as "a government death squad" by Human Rights Watch.[57] Amnesty International has also expressed its concern over "reports of excessive use of force by police and army personnel".[58]

Bangladesh's form of moderate Islam is increasingly under threat from radical elements, while its political and economic development continues to be hampered by the forces of corruption, radicalism and partisan fighting. This was evident in the lead-up to the election scheduled for January 2006. The frustration caused by the combination of poverty, corruption and the lack of good governance due to a stalemated political process is thought by some to contribute to increasing radicalization of society. The radical Harkatul Jihad Al Islami (HuJI) is believed to have ties to both al-Qaeda and the Islamic Oikya Jote, which is a coalition partner of the BNP. Some view the BNP's coalition with hard-line Islamist coalition members as promoting the spread of violence.[59]

In the US State Department's country reports on terrorism, HuJI is on the list of other groups of concern, as is the JMB. It is thought to have been behind an assassination attempt on then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in July 2000.[60] HuJI also signed the 1998 *fatwa* by Osama bin Laden which declared American civilians to be legitimate targets.[61] It is thought to be the group behind the January 2002 attack on the American Center in Calcutta.[62]

The Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), which is in coalition with the BNP, is thought to have had ties with fundamentalist leader Bangla Bhai, who promoted Islamic revolution in Bangladesh. Bangla Bhai fought in Afghanistan and sought to install a Taliban-style government in Bangladesh. His supporters reportedly terrorized communists, leftists, liberal intellectuals, Hindus, Christians, members of the Islamic Ahmadiyya sect and Buddhists in the cause of promoting Islamic extremism.[63] The government of Bangladesh was criticized by the Awami League for denying the existence of fundamentalist organizations in Bangladesh. The government banned Bangla Bhai's organization in 2005.[64] Today, many fear that the JI has been colonizing the BNP from within the coalition.[65]

The roots of the current political divide can be traced to the origins of the Bangladesh state in 1947 when it became the eastern part of the newly independent state of Pakistan. At that time, Bangladesh's religious identity served as the basis of its political disposition despite linguistic and other divisions. Many Islamists sided with Pakistan during Bangladesh's struggle for independence in 1971. Bangladesh's ethnic identity then took on new prominence. Many who collaborated with Pakistan in committing atrocities against Bengalis in 1971 were members of Islamist parties.[66]

Some experts see military rule as having given the Islamists an opening into what is largely a secular society in Bangladesh. The state has been ruled by the military for approximately 15 of the past 35 years. Regional expert Sumit Ganguly asserts that the military's desire for legitimacy led them to "wrap themselves in the mantle of Islam", and this created new political space for Islamists in Bangladesh. As a result, "they not only altered the terms of political discourse in Bangladesh but also helped fashion a new political culture that could accommodate a shift toward a more pristine, austere, and parochial vision of Islam".[67]

Further state complicity can be seen in events of 23 May 2004. Several hundred armed cadres of the JMB marched down the Rajshahi city streets and presented a memorandum to the state minister for home affairs through the district police superintendent and district administrator (later joint secretary to the same ministry). In their memorandum they affirmed that they were working to uproot terrorism with support from ministers and parliament members from the northern region. There was a general impression of complicity by the police and influential ministers and MPs of the northern constituencies, which allowed such vigilante violence to continue for over a year. The impunity for their reign of terror may have encouraged them to carry out the nationwide bomb attacks on 17 August and suicide attacks after that. It is reported that "Every member of the JMB's Majlis-e-Shura (highest decision making forum) was once involved with Jamaat or Shibir. Whether their involvement with Jamaat or Shibir (student front of Jamaat) continues is not confirmed. Newspaper reports and investigations do not indicate that they have been expelled from Jamaat." The same district newspaper in Satkhira reported that "All those who have been arrested, or detained in connection with the bomb attacks on August 17, or have been released are involved with the politics of Jamaat or Shibir . . ."[68]

Where charges were filed or trials held, it was alleged that investigations were incomplete. An influential editor of a Bangla national daily said:

> We can see that when anyone is arrested in these incidents, various agencies of the police carry out investigations at their own behest, interrogate the detainees at the combined interrogation cells, but we know of nothing more beyond that. These reports are perhaps limited to the upper echelons of the government. They suppress all truths or non-truths in these reports. These detainees are given bail in a few days, even after there are allegations of anti-state activities.[69]

It was also reported that in-depth investigation was not conducted to identify the actual master planners, leaders, motivators, shelter/training facilities, recruiting and operational strategy, national and international links or source of funds/arms.

Up to March 2006 police arrested around 1,000 suspected terrorists all across the country and the six top leaders of the JMB were sentenced to death. In spite of various reports of their willingness to speak out on the ideology, activity or motivation and network, they were not allowed to talk to press or electronic media. The two topmost leaders who were sentenced to death were not kept in condemned cells under maximum security as required by the Jail Code, but were housed in a place in Dhaka under jail guards, which was declared a subjail.

The Lashkar-e-Toiba's (LeT, also known as Jama'at-ud-Da'awa) professed ideology goes beyond merely challenging India's sovereignty over the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The Lashkar's "agenda", as outlined in a pamphlet titled "Why are we waging *jihad*", includes the restoration of Islamic rule over all parts of India. Further, the outfit seeks to bring about a union of all Muslim-majority regions in countries that surround Pakistan. Towards that end, it is active in Jammu and Kashmir, Chechnya and other parts of Central Asia.

The Indian state's response, predictably, is that of all-out violence. On average, a LeT militant is killed or arrested almost every day.[70] No precise figures are available about the troops in Kashmir. Around 400,000 Indian troops were reportedly present in the state in 1999. That number increased sharply in 2002, amid eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation between Indian and Pakistani troops along the entire border, including Kashmir. Estimates put the number of Indian troops then in Kashmir at 700,000. The number of troops withdrawn in 2004 was placed at between 1,000 and a few thousand.

The LeT is just one of 58 religious political parties and 24 armed *jihadi* groups that have been in existence at various phases of Pakistan's six-decade-long history. The Pakistan army and its Directorate of Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) created many of these groups as covert instruments of state policy, to create or quell internal sectarian conflicts and to intimidate opponents of the regime, ethnic separatists and moderate political parties. In the late 1980s, during the Afghan *jihad*, the Pakistan army realized that these groups could also be deployed to manage regional interests – to ensure Pakistan's objective of maintaining its strategic depth in Afghanistan and keeping India tied up in Kashmir through a proxy war.

Following the 9/11 attacks and General Pervez Musharraf's speech later that month, the Pakistan police have coordinated with the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to conduct continuous raids, clamping down on right-wing groups in the country. In September 2002 a senior Pakistani security official claimed that his forces had "broken the back" of al-Qaeda in the country.[71] Pakistan also deployed more than 115,000 regular and paramilitary troops along the tribal belt bordering Afghanistan and Iran in support of US-led efforts to capture Taliban and al-Qaeda fugitives. Some 45,000 Pakistani troops were reported to be actively supporting Operation Enduring Freedom as of October 2002.[72] In addition, a vast litany of laws in every state in South Asia give armed forces and police extraordinary powers to clamp down on suspected "terrorists".[73]

It is important to contrast here the difference between right-wing groupings that receive state patronage and those that find themselves at the receiving end of state action. The Ranvir Sena in India is a case in point. The extent of political patronage extended to the Ranvir Sena[74] can be gauged by the fact that while a large number of Naxalites are killed in "encounters" with police, not a single Ranvir Sena activist has been subject to this fate. The Ranvir Sena declared a few days before the Jehanabad carnage that it would soon make a national and international headline; the state offered no response.[75] Similar patterns are well documented in the post-Godhra riots in Gujarat. State and police complicity in majoritarian violence is not new in India.

In Sri Lanka, what complicates matters is the fact that most of the victims of state violence during the JVP uprisings were civilians from the majority Sinhalese community. During the first JVP uprising, in 1971, over 15,000 civilians were killed without proper judicial process by a combined Sri Lankan army and Indian army operation. During the second JVP uprising, in 1987–1989, an estimated 60,000 civilians disappeared, most of them assumed killed by the Sri Lankan army and other state forces. This tally is despite the fact that the JVP has been a coalition partner in the central government in Sri Lanka.

Conclusion

What, then, would be the sort of conclusions one might draw regarding state responses to political violence, the effectiveness of different kinds of subversions and possible strategies to enable dialogue between the state and subversive actors?

Is it possible to move out of these cycles of violence? Political philosophers have long suggested that sovereignty and political violence go hand in hand. The state looks at the problematic of violence in natural justice terms. According to Hobbes, we should not think of the state of nature as a condition that entirely disappears with the founding of the state. If that were so, we would no longer need to lock our houses when we leave home or keep certain cupboards locked even when we are at home.[76] Thus, from a Hobbesian perspective, the state must and does respond with violence when it is faced with subversion or secession.

The totalizing logic of sovereignty emerges as the one constant in the multitude of South Asian contexts examined in this chapter. Both ethnocultural and ideological movements are "*below*, *within* and hence *against* the state". It does not matter whether a particular movement is against the state or not. From the totalizing perspective of the sovereign territorial state, all such movements, "precisely because they are supposedly subordinate and subsumed, are *always* potentially subversive".[77] The sovereign state subordinates and subsumes; that, indeed, is its nature. When it can subsume without violence, the state will do so, but avoidance of violence is a secondary consideration: "non-violently if possible, violently if necessary" seems to be the guiding principle of sovereign action.

However, states do not use the same quantum and quality of violence against all insurgents. In the Sri Lankan case, violence by the JVP is confronted by the state in a very different manner than violence by the LTTE; in fact it could be argued that since the JVP is a coalition partner in Sri Lanka's government, its violence *is* a form of state violence. Similarly, in Pakistan the ideological violence of right-wing Islamists is dealt with in a manner that is very different from state responses to ethno-cultural demands in Waziristan and Baluchistan. The Pakistani state's attempts to negotiate peacefully with Islamists far outnumber the few such attempts in the restive provinces.

For the state to negotiate to bring an ethno-cultural movement into the fold requires the movement to frame its demands in the language of the state. Such situations arise mostly in the context of ethno-cultural movements that are claiming "greater representation" within the confines of the state, although such movements initially may demand independence as a bargaining chip. The MNF in Mizoram is an excellent example; perhaps other conflicts in India, such as Nagaland and Kashmir, are also now on the same path.

Ideological movements, because they embody a critique of the state, are much more difficult for the state to subsume without violence. Faced with such a challenge, the state may attempt to change the discourse of the movement to fit within the structure of the state, but for the most part it reacts with violence to crush such movements. The Maoists in Nepal are particularly interesting in this respect. Despite being an ideological movement, they have changed the nature of their demands and entered state space on the state's terms.

Furthermore, state violence does not always succeed. The failure to subsume with force sometimes leads to a negotiated settlement; usually, this is the case when the state and insurgents are locked in a painful stalemate. The resolution of the CHT conflict in Bangladesh could be an apt example of such an outcome. On the rare occasions when the state stands defeated, secession becomes inevitable. The glaring example here is Bangladesh and its partition from Pakistan in 1972. It is the first and only South Asian instance (albeit momentous) of an ethno-cultural movement successfully subverting the state and seceding.

Finally, we return to the epigraph from Revel with which we began our essay. Throughout this chapter, we have constructed taxonomies that collapse into irrelevance once we consider the responses emanating from states. It would appear from our South Asian examples that violence has always been states' preferred approach to confront subversive and secessionist insurgencies. Even so, we distinguish one additional category, based on the nature of state itself. Do democratic states use violence differently from non-democracies?

On this, our findings are less than conclusive. Despite many instances of excessive violence, the Indian army does emphasize limited force and political settlement as cornerstones in its counterinsurgency doctrine. The Sri Lankan army, in contrast, has waged all-out, no-holds-barred war against the LTTE and other Tamil insurgent groups. What explains the difference between these two South Asian democracies? Certainly not the nature of the state, but rather how the insurgents are characterized: as "our people" in the Indian context, no matter how vociferously the Nagas or Kashmiris might protest that they are not Indian; as the Tamil "others" in the polarized, Sinhala-dominated Sri Lankan context. So clearly these South Asian democracies differ in their resort to violence against insurgent movements.

Yet the evidence is compelling that we can discern a difference in the track records of democracies and non-democracies. The only three instances in South Asia when an ethno-cultural conflict has been brought to an end through negotiated settlement – the Mizo, Gorkha and CHT conflicts – have all involved democratic states, and there was until recently an expectation that Sri Lanka would become yet another shining example of negotiated settlement. Perhaps, then, the lesson that flows out of South Asia is that democratic states, while being as *prone to violence* as non-democracies, are nevertheless more capable than their non-democratic counterparts of *ending the cycle of violence*, owing to their greater ability to incorporate difference and tolerate dissent within the existential parameters of the state.

Notes

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14. See Gunaratna, Rohan (1999) "LTTE Chase the Propaganda War in the ANC's South Africa", *Jane's Intelligence Review* (online), April; Gunaratna, Rohan (2001) "Intelligence Failures Exposed by Tamil Tiger Airport Attack", *Jane's Intelligence Review* (online), September.
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16. Ibid., p. 5.
17. See Bell, Stewart (2005) "RCMP Calls Tamil Fundraising Group for Tsunami Victims 'Front for Tamil Tigers' ", *National Post* (Toronto), 19 January, p. A9, available at www.canada.com/nationalpost/news/story.html?id=1f4d7889-519a-42ef-a081-b655df64347e.
18. Bell, Stewart (2005) *Cold Terror: How Canada Nurtures and Exports Terrorism around the World*. Mississauga, ON: John Wiley & Sons Canada, p. 75.
19. Bell, Stewart (2006) "Tories Would List Tigers as Terrorists", *National Post* (online), 26 January, available at www.nationalpost.com/news/story.html?id=1f4d7889-519a-42ef-a081-b655df64347e.
20. Lines-magazine.org. (2006) "Statement From Sri Lankan Groups Regarding the Situation of Muslims", 21 September, available at www.lines-magazine.org/archive/civilsoc_statement.pdf.
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25. Ibid.
26. Press statement of URPC, 26 November 2001, as quoted in Kumar, Dhruba (2005) "Impact of Conflict on Security and the Future: The Case of Nepal", *Journal of Security Sector Management* 3(1), available at www.jofssm.org/issues/jofssm_03_asia_d.doc.

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28. These unions include the All Nepal Carpet Workers Union, All Nepal Transport Workers Union, All Nepal Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union, All Nepal Construction Workers Union, All Nepal Meter Tempo Workers Union, All Nepal Press Workers Union, All Nepal Thangka Art Workers Union, All Nepal Painters Union, Nepal Shop Workers Union, Nepal Progressive Newspaper Vendors Union and Himalayan Trekking Workers Union.
29. Kumar, note 26 above.
30. BBC (2004) "Rebels Force Nepal Firms to Close", BBC News, 17 August, available at http://newswww.bbc.net.uk/2/hi/south_asia/3571884.stm·
31. As part of the downgrading of monarchy, the Royal Nepal Army was renamed the Nepal Army in 2006.
32. Ole Wæver's concept of securitization was based on the idea that areas or subjects of concern possess a location identity along a continuum that moved from non-politicized (or unpoliticized or depoliticized) to politicized to securitized. He uses Barry Buzan's ideas that the concept of security opens itself out into a referent object (like the state) which is portrayed as being under existential threat by a group, which demands or decides (via a speech act) that emergency measures must be taken to combat this threat. This group must be invested in the trappings of authority sufficient to make an evaluation of threats by those who are expected to respond to the threat and subject themselves to emergency moves. See Wæver, Ole (1995) "Securitization and Desecuritization", in Ronnie Lipschutz (ed.) *On Security.* New York: Columbia University Press.
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36. Ahmed, Samina (1997) "Centralization, Authoritarianism, and the Mismanagement of Ethnic Relations in Pakistan", in Michael E. Brown and Sumit Ganguly (eds) *Government Policies and Ethnic Relations in Asia and the Pacific*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 107–109.
37. Khan, Adeel (2005) *Politics of Identity: Ethnic Nationalism and the State in Pakistan*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, p. 189.
38. Ibid.
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40. Ibid., p. 190.
41. The accord stipulated *inter alia* that Chandigarh, the shared capital of Punjab and Haryana, would be transferred to Punjab and a commission would determine the Hindi-speaking territories for their transfer to Haryana in return; the issue relating to sharing of water between the two states would be referred to tribunal; and the Sarkaria Commission would decide autonomy demands of Akalis. See the text of the accord in *The Indian Express* (Delhi), 25 July 1985. Also see Kapur, Rajiv (1987) "Khalistan: India's Punjab Problem", *Third World Quarterly* 9(4), pp. 1214–1224.
42. See Sahadevan, P. (1995) "The Internalized Peace Process in Sri Lanka", *BIISS Journal* (Dhaka) 16(3), pp. 325–345; Jayatilleka, Dayan (1995) *Sri Lanka: Travails of a Democracy, Unfinished War, Protracted Crisis.* New Delhi: Vikas.
43. See Gundevia, Y. D. (1996) "Army in Nagaland", *Economic and Political Weekly* 31(34), 24 August, pp. 2284–2287.

44. Under the trilateral agreement involving the central and state governments and the TNV in 1988, the militant group agreed to end all underground activities; the government promised to extend resettlement facilities, increase tribal representation in the legislature through reservation, protect the tribal interests in land alienation and develop agricultural and irrigation facilities in tribal areas. See the text of the agreement in *The Frontline* (Madras), 17–30 September 1988. The 1993 agreement broadly incorporated the provisions of the 1988 agreement and provided safeguards to the tribal culture.
45. See Singh, Tej Pratap (2005) “The Tripura Insurgency: Socio-Economic, Political and External Dimensions”, *South Asian Survey* 12(2), pp. 287–305.
46. The 1993 accord provided a Bodoland Autonomous Council, which is far less than the Bodos’ desire for a full-fledged Bodo state within the Indian union. For details on the accord, see Bhattacharjee, Chandana (1996) *Ethnicity and Autonomy Movement: Case of Bodo-Kacharis of Assam*. New Delhi: Vikas, pp. 139–153; Ghosh, Partha S. (1998) “Ethnic Conflict and Conflict Management: The Indian Case”, in Iftekharuzzaman (ed.) *Ethnicity and Constitutional Reform in South Asia.* New Delhi: Manohar, pp. 63–65.
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48. Ibid., pp. 95–98.
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58. Amnesty International (2007) “Bangladesh: Human Rights Under Threat as Election Tensions Intensify”, 9 January, Amnesty International, New York.
59. Testimony by Dr Christine Fair, Human Rights Watch, Congressional Human Rights Caucus Hearing on Bangladesh, 24 May 2005.
60. US Department of State (2003) *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2002*, April. Washington, DC: State Department, p. 133.
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