

**Motivations for Mass Violence:**  
**A Case Study of 1965-1966 Anti-Communist Killings in Indonesia**



**Universiteit Leiden**

Supervisor: Dr. Eelco van der Maat

Student Name: Anahita Valakche

Student Number: s1921223

Master of Arts in International Relations

Specialization in International Studies

a.valakche@umail.leidenuniv.nl

Word Count: 14516

## Table of Contents

---

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| <b>I.</b>   | <b>List of abbreviations</b>  |
| <b>II.</b>  | <b>Introduction</b>   |
| <b>III.</b> | <b>Theoretical Framework: Prevalent Explanations for Mass Violence</b>  |
| III.        | i. Economic Incentives for Mass Killings  |
| III.        | i. i. Farid's Primitive Accumulation  |
| III.        | i. ii. The Role of Foreign Economic Influences in the Cold War Realm  |
| III.        | ii. Gerlach's Participatory Violence: Local Factors Behind Mass Violence                                      |
| III.        | iii. Van der Maat's Intra-Elite Rivalry and Genocidal Consolidation Theory                                    |
| <b>IV.</b>  | <b>Research Design and Methodology</b>  |
| IV.         | i. Observable Implications for Primitive Accumulation and Foreign Economic Influences                         |
| IV.         | ii. Observable Implications for Participatory Violence Theory   |
| IV.         | iii. Observable Implications for Intra-Elite Rivalry Theory   |
| <b>V.</b>   | <b>Analysis of 1965-1966 Mass Killings</b>  |
| V.          | i. State of the Indonesian Economy in the 1960s   |
| V.          | ii. Military's economic motivations for mass violence   |
| V.          | iii. Foreign actors: an active or passive form of economic influence  |
| V.          | iv. The orchestration of mass violence: a top-down or a localized/bottom-up process?                          |
| V.          | v. Signs of Elite Rivalry in Domestic Politics  |
| V.          | v. i. Historical intra-elite tensions and rivalries in the post-colonial era until 1965                       |
| V.          | v. ii. Genocidal Consolidation after 30 September 1965: Coup attempt, removal of rivals and use of propaganda |
| <b>VI.</b>  | <b>Summary of Observations &amp; Conclusion</b>   |
| <b>VII.</b> | <b>Bibliography</b>   |

## I. List of abbreviations

---

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| <b>Ansor</b>     | Gerakan Pemuda Ansor, a paramilitary youth group under Nahdlatul Ulama   |
| <b>Banser</b>    | Barisan Ansor Serbaguna, a sub-section of Ansor  |
| <b>KOPKAMTIB</b> | Komando Operasi Pemulihan Keamanan dan Ketertiban, Operational Command for the Restoration of Security and Order. One of the two main sections of the military forces active in 1965-66 together with RPKAD <sup>1</sup> |
| <b>NASAKOM</b>   | Nationalism, Religion, Communism; official state ideology under Sukarno after 1957   |
| <b>NU</b>        | Nahdlatul Ulama, largest Islamic organization in Indonesia   |
| <b>PKI</b>       | Partai Komunis Indonesia, Communist Party of Indonesia   |
| <b>PNI</b>       | Partai Nasional Indonesia, National Party of Indonesia   |
| <b>RPKAD</b>     | Resimen Para Komando Angkatan Darat, Army Command Regiment. One of the two main sections of the military forces active in 1965-66 together with KOPKAMTIB <sup>2</sup>   |

---

<sup>1</sup> Kammen and Zakaria.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

## II. Introduction

---

The total number of deaths as a result of anti-communist mass killings in Indonesia in 1965 and 1966 has been estimated at 500,000 people, making it one of the deadliest campaigns of mass violence in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> Despite their scale and intensity, the killings continue to be one of the least understood cases of mass violence due to an absence of primary sources and the former Suharto regime's issuance of strict censorship of any discussion on the topic. Scholarly attention has often been drawn to post-violence issues such as the memory of killings among Indonesians today. In contrast, the historical beginnings of mass violence and the reasons for perpetration of indiscriminate killings by Indonesia's political elite and citizens, have not received a great amount of attention until recently.

At the time of the killings, Indonesia was a newly independent nation. The country was still struggling with post-colonial economic challenges and the domestic political scene was divided into three general categories: "Islamic, communist and developmentalist."<sup>4</sup> As developmental ideas eventually lost their popularity due to economic decline under Sukarno's leadership, support for communist and religious ideologies increased considerably in the 1960s.<sup>5</sup> The killings also took place in a political atmosphere dominated by two influential leaders and their conflicting envisionings for the future of Indonesia; the violent phase served as a transition from Sukarno's *NASAKOM* and *Guided Democracy* ideologies to Suharto's *New Order*. This period has usually been portrayed as the result of an ideological conflict between modernist/capitalist Suharto-camp and leftist Sukarno supporters; however, as van der Maat's theory also suggests, ideological explanations are not sufficient for revealing the complexities of the Indonesian case as neither ideology was strong enough to serve as the main reason for the rise of such extensive mass violence across Indonesia.<sup>6</sup> Hence, this thesis will attempt to examine beyond ideology by concentrating on possible motivations of various actors such as the army, local groups and the public.

In order to advance the growing scholarship on the subject, the following paragraphs will compare and contrast existing explanations and also suggest a new theory that has not yet been applied to the Indonesian case. The puzzle is to determine which actor had the most responsibility and why that actor opted for indiscriminate violence. First theory will analyze economic reasons such as military's financial incentives for the killings and foreign economic

---

<sup>3</sup> Cribb, 219.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 226.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 226 – 227.

<sup>6</sup> Van der Maat, 6.

influences that have possibly encouraged mass violence; the second theory will look at the role of citizens and local forces through a bottom-up approach.<sup>7</sup> The third theory will suggest an original explanation by van der Maat who argues that mass violence occurs when a political elite attempts to safeguard its position and seeks to eradicate dangerous intra-elite rivals through genocidal consolidation.<sup>8</sup> The purpose of this study is to test the suitability of these three theories while using Indonesia as a case study. Through an exploration of financial motives, the role of local actors and intra-elite rivalries, the thesis aims to answer the following question:

**What was the most significant motivation behind the 1965-66 anti-communist mass killings in Indonesia?**

The case remains relevant today due to the long-term implications of the events in 1965-1966. The killings enabled the creation of an authoritarian regime headed by Suharto who would continue to rule until 1998 and would use similar strategies to perpetrate other mass killings such as the Indonesian violence in East Timor.<sup>9</sup> Understanding the Indonesian case can therefore provide us with further insight into East Timor genocide and help us critically analyze modern history of Indonesia.

### **III. Theoretical Framework: Prevalent Explanations for Mass Violence**

---

#### **III. i. Economic Incentives for Mass Killings**

---

The anti-communist mass killings took place during a significant transformation of Indonesia's national economy; it is therefore inevitable to analyze the violence in 1965 from an economic perspective. Many scholars have highlighted the sub-par economic conditions under Sukarno's leadership. In late 1950s and early 1960s, Indonesia was characterized by a declining national economy, which demonstrated itself in extremely low levels of GDP per capita, and precarious living conditions "bordering on famine."<sup>10</sup> This section identifies two major economic explanations. In the first explanation, Farid focuses on national reasons such

---

<sup>7</sup> Farid; Gerlach; Simpson, "International Dimensions of the 1965-68 Violence in Indonesia."

<sup>8</sup> Van der Maat.

<sup>9</sup> Thaler, 217.

<sup>10</sup> Murshed and Tadjoeeddin, 482; McNaughton, 300; Booth, 54 – 55.

as Indonesian military's economic motivations for perpetrating mass violence. The second explanation analyzes international factors such as foreign powers' provision of financial aid and their economic plans for Indonesia's future.

### III. i. i. Farid's Primitive Accumulation

---

Farid argues that the predominant reason behind the 1965-1966 killings was the financial aspiration of the Indonesian military elite in order to gain total control of the national economy. Through an application of Marxist theory, the author argues that the mass killings coincided with a process of *primitive accumulation*, which is defined as an economic process that transforms "immediate producers ... into wage-labourers" and converts "social means of subsistence and production ... into capital;" in other words, it encompasses a process of privatization and the creation of a landless class.<sup>11</sup> Farid provides a case-specific explanation through an analysis of the capitalist intentions of the Indonesian military; the author hereby provides an economic context to the mass killings and challenges earlier simplistic arguments that portrayed Indonesians as "primitive people prone to violence."<sup>12</sup> On a general note, Farid argues that contemporary human rights discourse has continuously neglected the financial aspects of mass violence by not drawing a link between the use of killings and the simultaneous economic battles Indonesia was experiencing.<sup>13</sup> In contrast with the understanding of the mass killings as localized violence, Farid argues that the Indonesian military's well-calculated economic strategies prove that the killings in 1965-66 exemplified "vertical, bureaucratic violence" rather than an example of "horizontal, spontaneous violence" as argued by other authors such as Gerlach.<sup>14</sup>

In historical context, the theory does not claim that 1965 marked the beginning of capitalism in Indonesia as that had already occurred under Dutch colonial rule; as Farid points out, *primitive accumulation* is a recurring process that especially arises during financial crises.<sup>15</sup> As mentioned before, severe economic challenges for the Sukarno regime had immediately preceded the period of mass killings. As the mass violence unfolded itself in 1966, Indonesia was facing rising "inflation ... at 600 per cent," its "industrial production ... [was at] a halt, and ... [there existed a severe lack of] hard currency;" economic reforms had

---

<sup>11</sup> Marx quoted by Farid, 9; McNaughton, 293.

<sup>12</sup> Farid, 4.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 10.

become necessary.<sup>16</sup> From the non-Sukarnoist elite's perspective, the mass killings could have served as an effort to reform the economy by changing the characteristics of the national workforce. Furthermore, the mass violence against members of PKI would allow the military elite to denounce communism on an international scale, convince Western powers of their anti-communist ideals and ultimately "[reintegrate] Indonesia into the capitalist world economy."<sup>17</sup>

For the military to pursue *primitive accumulation* successfully, the society's collaboration was necessary. Various scholars have explained micro-economic factors behind a citizen's decision to participate in mass killings through the "economics of identity."<sup>18</sup> How do economic reasons and identity politics interact to account for an individual's decision to perpetrate mass violence? According to Mushed and Tadjoeeddin, an individual's actions are foremost influenced by three factors: their principle identity, actions of other members of the same identity group, as well as a "hate parameter" which is politically determined according to the teachings/instructions of the identity group's "leadership elite."<sup>19</sup> However, a person can also have a multitude of identities simultaneously. This observation is especially applicable to Indonesian politics at the time whereby each individual was influenced by a variety of ideologies; for example, one could both be acting according to religious teachings from the Islamic community and political ideologies such as anticommunism.<sup>20</sup> The theory shows that an identity group's likelihood of perpetrating violence increases when group members experience certain socio-economic conditions, for example when they "live in close proximity ..., suffer from poverty, and have low human capital (educational) endowment."<sup>21</sup> Such conditions enable the leadership of an identity group (for example the military elite, religious leaders etc.) to influence the "hate parameter" more easily and more effectively.<sup>22</sup>

Nevertheless, some studies show that it is unlikely for low economic growth or primitive accumulation alone to provide a sufficient reason for mass violence. In her cross-examination of genocides since 1955, Harff indicates that while lower levels of development and poor life quality bring a higher risk of state failure and general "civil conflict," they do not necessarily lead to mass killings.<sup>23</sup> Other factors such as the absence of trade openness and economic isolation on an international scale are more directly correlated with a higher

<sup>16</sup> Simpson, "International Dimensions of the 1965-68 Violence in Indonesia," 69; Robison and Hadiz, 46.

<sup>17</sup> Mushed and Tadjoeeddin, 486.

<sup>18</sup> Anderton, 460; Mushed and Tadjoeeddin, 487.

<sup>19</sup> Mushed and Tadjoeeddin, 487.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 488 – 489.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 489.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 490.

<sup>23</sup> Harff, 67 – 69.

risk of genocide in specific.<sup>24</sup> Such macro-economic conditions were existent in Indonesia during Sukarno's later years. The analysis section of this essay will further elaborate on both socio-economic conditions and the state of the national economy under Sukarno, and test to what extent either factor might have contributed to the military elite's and various identity groups' decision to organize or participate in the mass killings.

### **III. i. ii. The Role of Foreign Economic Influences in the Cold War Realm**

---

Since the military-led violence against communists was initiated by the army's desire to foster change, to escape conditions described by Harff as economic isolation, and to allow Indonesia to become a part of global economy, foreign forces were closely involved in the process. From a comparative perspective, scholars have noted similarities between the Indonesian case and the Western support for Suharto, and the general foreign encouragement of capitalism in Central Africa and South America through support for military-led dictatorial regimes such as those led by Mobutu or Pinochet during the same decade.<sup>25</sup>

Most common explanations for mass violence concentrate on within-state actors and do not delve into the role of foreign in the process. Recently, scholars have pointed out the mistaken tendency to analyze genocide "as mainly a domestic enterprise."<sup>26</sup> Foreign influence has been receiving more attention in the post-Cold War era due to the emergence of humanitarian interventions and responsibility to protect; however, recent studies have often concentrated on the question of (failed) prevention by foreign actors. The suggested explanation will rather assess outsiders' financial role in the early development and enactment of mass violence in Indonesia. This explanation will identify indirect and direct forms of economic support by foreign powers.

At the height of US-USSR rivalry, Indonesia had a crucial position in the communist camp; PKI represented one of the largest communist movements at the time, only third to those of USSR and China.<sup>27</sup> Some scholars have argued that the Western support for the 30 September movement was the continuation of a historical process which had begun with American efforts to promote "modernization and anti-communism" in Indonesia since the increase of political tensions during the US-backed Permesta rebellions in 1957.<sup>28</sup> Early traces

---

<sup>24</sup> Harff, 67 – 69.

<sup>25</sup> Murshed and Tadjoeeddin, 486.

<sup>26</sup> Midlarsky, 18; Shaw, 49.

<sup>27</sup> McNaughton, 299.

<sup>28</sup> Simpson, "International Dimensions of the 1965-68 Violence in Indonesia," 51; Gerlach, 78.



of Western involvement had been characterized by non-interventionist methods. Such efforts included the promotion of “structural adjustment”<sup>29</sup> as a prominent economic policy and the distribution of other social science theories among the Indonesia’s political elites in order to provide the military with a “growing political and economic role.”<sup>30</sup> Such foreign-induced empowerments would later result in the military’s willingness to impose grand schemes such as primitive accumulation as identified by Farid, and soft power tactics would eventually transform into direct forms of support during the mass killings.

### **III. ii. Gerlach’s “Participatory Violence”: Local factors behind mass violence**

---

Some scholars have argued that regional rivalries, local political formations and the role of citizens were just as important as the nation-wide military campaign in the transition of anti-communist sentiments into outright mass violence. Indonesia embodied an incredibly diverse character not only on an ideological level but also on a cultural level. The process of “political pillarization” in 1950s had reinforced “cultural divisions;” as a result, societal differences had also become visible through the establishment of “a whole range of separate social institutions” fostering the already existing political divisions on a societal level.<sup>31</sup> While economic and elite rivalry explanations concentrate on the role of elites, institutions or foreign states, Gerlach disagrees with the frequently adopted state-centric approach in genocide studies and suggests that attention should also be given to the role of the public.<sup>32</sup> To put it briefly, Gerlach’s eclectic approach aims to introduce a more societal, citizen-oriented perspective to complement the political focus of elite rivalry, economic or foreign influence explanations.

Gerlach identifies two predominant approaches in previous scholarship on 1965-1966 killings: “leftist-liberal versions” which place the blame on the military regime under Suharto, and the “right-wing” approach which concentrates on the role of the public and its frustrations with the communist party as a possible cause.<sup>33</sup> According to participatory violence theory, these two main perspectives should be combined rather than analyzed separately. Gerlach argues that there is value in both explanations and the mass killings were a result of “their

---

<sup>29</sup> Structural adjustment refers to IMF’s or World Bank’s provision of loans to developing economies on the condition that the recipients of aid gradually adopt a liberal, free-market economy (Investopedia).

<sup>30</sup> Simpson, “International Dimensions of the 1965-68 Violence in Indonesia,” 52; Gerlach, 86.

<sup>31</sup> Cribb, 228.

<sup>32</sup> Gerlach, 2.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 21.

interaction.”<sup>34</sup> While other explanations focus on the dynamics between various political actors, Gerlach concentrates on the interaction between political actors and the public through his emphasis of the particularly “participatory character” of the Indonesian case.<sup>35</sup> The theory accentuates the geographically diverse character of Indonesia in order to demonstrate the locally varied approaches to violence and the existence of support among a wide variety of groupings in the Indonesian society. Such characteristics of violence found its roots in Indonesia’s historical trend of cooperation between the public and the military; similarly, the country’s independence from Dutch colonization had also extensively utilized “guerrilla tactics” that depended on collaboration of the public.<sup>36</sup> The army would later name its close links with the society as the principle of “dwifungsi or the double responsibility” which referred to the military’s self-claimed dual role of sustaining security and steering “social-political development.”<sup>37</sup>

At first glance, Gerlach’s explanation appears as contradictory with other theories, as it proposes a bottom-up explanation and concentrates on the public’s emotions and willingness rather than the role of institutions. By focusing on the paramilitary nature of the killings, the theory defies the commonly held expectation of “a central authority” organizing or encouraging the perpetrators; in fact, it presumes that such phases of violence were historically a recurring practice in Indonesia and that the majority of perpetrators committed the killings as a result of “extreme hatred” rather than the influence of political actors.<sup>38</sup> In defense of this argument, the author notes that the most commonly used methods of killing in Indonesia were unarmed, and that only a minority of the deaths was caused by professional use of weaponry.<sup>39</sup> The analysis section will further test whether mass violence could have been a result of local movements instead of central organization or elites, and elaborate on the historical relations between the public and the Indonesian military.

### **III.   iii.   Van der Maat’s Intra-Elite Rivalry and Genocidal Consolidation Theory**

---

In his theory of genocidal consolidation, van der Maat redirects scholarly focus from ideologies and outgroup threats towards the role of political elite and elites’ attempts to defend their position in highly competitive political environments; the author hereby aims to

---

<sup>34</sup> Gerlach, 21.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>37</sup> Gerlach, 32; Jenkins 22.

<sup>38</sup> Gerlach, 33.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 34.

fill the gap in existent framings of genocide by concentrating on the relationship between mass violence and “within-regime rivalry.”<sup>40</sup> Many existing scholarly analyses of mass violence remain limited in their scope mainly due to two reasons: they strictly concentrate on cases whereby a guerrilla force is present, and most explanations overwhelmingly concentrate on political ideology as a reason for mass killings.<sup>41</sup> However, nearly 40 percent all mass killings between 1950 and 2004 occurred in a non-counter-guerilla setting whereby the perpetrators had already established control over the territories in question.<sup>42</sup> Indonesian mass killings in 1965-1966 also serve as an example of this less acknowledged category whereby the elite did not face any territorial threats.

How does elite rivalry differ from other existing explanations of mass violence? First of all, common theories focusing on extremist ideologies, such as Valentino’s leader ideology theory, prove insufficient<sup>43</sup> since the leadership’s ideological foundations often lack in strength and popularity during periods of mass violence.<sup>44</sup> Van der Maat argues that mass indiscriminate violence is not perpetrated by ideological strongholds; in fact, it is generally accompanied with a sense of ideological instability and high levels of “insecurity and rivalry” among the elite.<sup>45</sup> Such conditions were visible in Indonesia as Sukarno’s leadership and political stances were becoming growingly unpopular. Additionally, a second set of theories concentrating on outgroup threats have analyzed mass indiscriminate violence as a strategy in order to win or avoid civil wars; such theories neglect mass killings whereby political leaders enjoy high levels of “territorial control” which would ideally enable the elite to opt for selective forms of violence instead of indiscriminate killings.<sup>46</sup> Thus, elite rivalry can offer an explanation for instances such as the 1965-66 mass killings whereby leader ideology and outgroup threat theories do not suffice. Elite rivalry explanation argues that members of political elites commit mass killings for the sake of self-defense and survival at times of serious political insecurities and when they face threats from other elite groups.<sup>47</sup>

During the height and the immediate aftermath of the mass violence, the process of *genocidal consolidation* creates sufficient space for the perpetrators to consolidate their

---

<sup>40</sup> Van der Maat, 3.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>43</sup> This is especially true for the Indonesian case as Valentino sets the Indonesian case apart in his *leader ideology* theory as an exception, as it does not directly align with his explanation (Valentino, 70).

<sup>44</sup> Van der Maat, 6.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 7 – 8.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 7.

authority; thus, mass violence enables certain elite groups, such as the military in Indonesia, to gradually seize local and national governing mechanisms.<sup>48</sup> Throughout this process, the main elite group also eliminates other political organizations, which might have initially collaborated with them in the perpetration of violence; van der Maat refers to this as “grass-root consolidation.”<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, the final process also “[enables] the purge of rival elites at the top” which might pose a threat for the main perpetrator group in the long term.<sup>50</sup> Van der Maat’s quantitative findings attest to the identified differences between cases of counter-guerrilla and non-counter-guerrilla mass violence; results show a strong correlation between non-counter-guerrilla violence and processes of *genocidal consolidation*, which is often forerun by *elite rivalry* and most likely followed by *elite purges*.<sup>51</sup>

The disorderly nature of authoritarian regimes such as the one under Sukarno, can often lead to a more grave danger of destructive intra-elite competition in contrast with well-organized democratic settings.<sup>52</sup> In the 1960s, Indonesia’s domestic political scene was in the process of becoming increasingly dictatorial as President Sukarno had finalized Indonesia’s parliamentary system in 1957, and had begun the process of *Guided Democracy* with authoritarian elements.<sup>53</sup> During Guided Democracy, Sukarno aimed to reconcile the main ideologies of the post-colonial era, which were nationalism, religion and communism, in a distinct ideology named NASAKOM.<sup>54</sup> However, such attempts failed to create the egalitarian political platform as envisioned by Sukarno; domestic politics significantly shifted towards the left as the support for the PKI rapidly increased throughout the 1960s, much to the disdain of other elite groups.<sup>55</sup> While the era of Guided Democracy was not as authoritarian as the political climate would later become under Suharto, it did mark an era of “terrible uncertainty” due to extreme fractionalization of politics and society; the beginnings of authoritarianism and signs of a declining economy prepared the grounds for rising competition among elites.<sup>56</sup> Cribb’s observations on domestic power structures under Sukarno reflect many characteristics of van der Maat’s theory of *genocidal consolidation* such as high political volatility preceding the mass killings and elite purges.

---

<sup>48</sup> Van der Maat, 11.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 9 – 10.

<sup>53</sup> Cribb, 228.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 229.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 229.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 230-231.

The analysis section will further discuss how the Indonesian military under Suharto initially used violence against PKI to achieve total control, and consequently sidelined other elite groups in order to maintain its control as the theory suggests. While the study frames the political leader as the side that perpetrates mass killings against its rivals, in the Indonesian case the roles are reversed as General Suharto represents a military elite that ignited and performed the mass violence in order to remove the governing leadership under President Sukarno.<sup>57</sup>

#### IV. Research Design and Methodology

---

The proposed thesis aims to assess the explanatory power and applicability of existing theories for why mass indiscriminate killings occur while using the 1965 mass killings as a case study. The project will test the applicability of each explanation with respect to the 1965 mass killings. As others have also noted, Suharto's 30-year-rule and the subsequent censorship have led to difficulties in finding primary sources concerning the killings; the research will therefore mostly rely on secondary sources and existing scholarship. Due to the limited scope of this essay, the research will primarily employ the method of *theory-testing process-tracing* which represents one of the three types of process-tracing methods as identified by Beach and Pedersen. In contrast with *theory-building* approach, *theory-testing process-tracing* is dependent on established theories and tries to articulate "a causal mechanism from existing theorization" through an analysis of observable manifestations or implications of each existent theory.<sup>58</sup>

Due to the gradual development of the Indonesian case, this study will assume that the applicability of each theory to the case varied throughout the 1950s and 1960s. As Beach and Pedersen point out, "[falsifying] a theory" in its entirety is discouraged in political science due to the general "ambiguity of social science data."<sup>59</sup> For these reasons, the study will refrain from accepting or refuting existing explanations in their entirety. Instead, the essay will investigate the relationship between various theories and test their time-specific relevance to the case study.

Each explanation leads to different expected outcomes of mass violence. If economic explanations hold true, mass violence would have eventually enabled the military elite's

---

<sup>57</sup> Van der Maat, 10.

<sup>58</sup> Beach and Pedersen, 14.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 102.

control of the economy and an opening of Indonesia into the Western financial markets. If ‘participatory violence’ theory is the most applicable explanation, local movements organized by the public will be expected to have great levels of autonomy during mass violence and sustain their authority after the mass killings ended. For intra-elite rivalry to be the most pertinent explanation, purges of elite would need to be achieved by the end of mass killings. The following table outlines the observable implications for each theory in question.

| <b>Explanation</b>                                     | <b>Observable Implications</b>  |
|--|---|
| <b>Economic Incentives and Outsider Influence</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Disruption or decline of the national economy, cases of famine prior to mass violence</li> <li>▪ Danger of probable future economic policies for the wealthy classes and the military</li> <li>▪ Immediate threats to the military’s financially privileged status</li> <li>▪ Signs of military interest in liberal financial theories</li> <li>▪ Arms support, financial aid or provision of military training by foreign actors which facilitated mass violence</li> </ul> |
| <b>Participatory Violence</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increasing importance of local actors</li> <li>▪ High levels of participation by the public in the perpetration of mass violence</li> <li>▪ Local variations in violence</li> <li>▪ Evidence for autonomy from local actors/organizations and central authority</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Intra-elite Rivalry and Genocidal Consolidation</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Creation and distribution of propaganda</li> <li>▪ Active efforts for removal of competitors</li> <li>▪ Highly insecure political environment</li> </ul>   |

*Table 1 – Observable implications for each explanation considered*

#### **IV. i. Observable Implications for Primitive Accumulation and Foreign Economic Influences**

---

Economic explanations require a careful analysis of military's financial aspirations at the time of the killings. The analysis part of this thesis will therefore analyze economic policies implemented by the military throughout the course of mass violence, and explore the relationship between such financial decision-making and the killings.

For Farid's primitive accumulation theory, possible observable implications include evidence for military's willingness to install a capitalist system in order to sustain its economically advantaged status through a well-planned reorganization of the economy. We would expect to observe documents or propaganda showing a strong interest among the Suharto-led parts of military in joining the global, Western-style financial markets.<sup>60</sup> Additionally, a vigorous effort by the military to restructure the national economy through new policies would be expected to occur if Farid's theory holds true. Other implications would include dangers of alleged future PKI-led economic policies such as land redistribution for more affluent societal groups.<sup>61</sup> Sukarno-era global isolation in financial terms, a rapidly declining economy and the absence of international trade relations would also provide evidence for military's willingness to implement economic changes.<sup>62</sup> For micro-economic explanations concerning lower economic classes, a citizen's decision to commit mass indiscriminate violence could be a result of high poverty rates and cases of famine.<sup>63</sup>

Evidences for foreign economic intervention would include more active, direct and aggressive types of support from foreign powers such as the provision of arms, military trainings and financial help to the military elite. For the Suharto-led military camp, such support would be expected from Western powers, while Sukarno would ideally be expected to receive aid from communist regimes. Active efforts by Western governments to teach or encourage anti-communist, liberal economic theories among the political elite in Indonesia would also count as a sign for foreign economic interference.<sup>64</sup> Through an analysis of Western diplomatic or media accounts, negative portrayals of Sukarno in favor of the military could also be considered a proof of indirect influence. Any direct economic damage to the Indonesian national economy caused by intentional methods such as withholding of aid or

---

<sup>60</sup> Murshed and Tadjoeeddin, 486.

<sup>61</sup> Thaler, 205.

<sup>62</sup> Harff, 68 – 69.

<sup>63</sup> Murshed and Tadjoeeddin; McNaughton.

<sup>64</sup> Murshed and Tadjoeeddin, 486.

exclusion of Sukarno and his administration from global markets would also indicate outsider meddling as a reason behind mass violence.

#### IV. ii. Observable Implications for Participatory Violence Theory

For Gerlach's *participatory violence* theory, evidence would include a lack of central organization in the perpetration of violence. The rise of paramilitary formations that interfere with military's goals would also support Gerlach's explanation. The absence of strong central leadership during the mass killings can also indicate a more participatory nature of violence. Higher levels of regional independence would also be visible through increased variation in types of violence in different regions of Indonesia as well as differences among types of victims targeted in various areas.

An assessment of Gerlach's theory would also require an analysis of the amount of time during which the public was able to exercise autonomous violence without military intervention and the extent of local actors'/public's ability to act independently.

#### IV. iii. Observable Implications for Intra-Elite Rivalry Theory

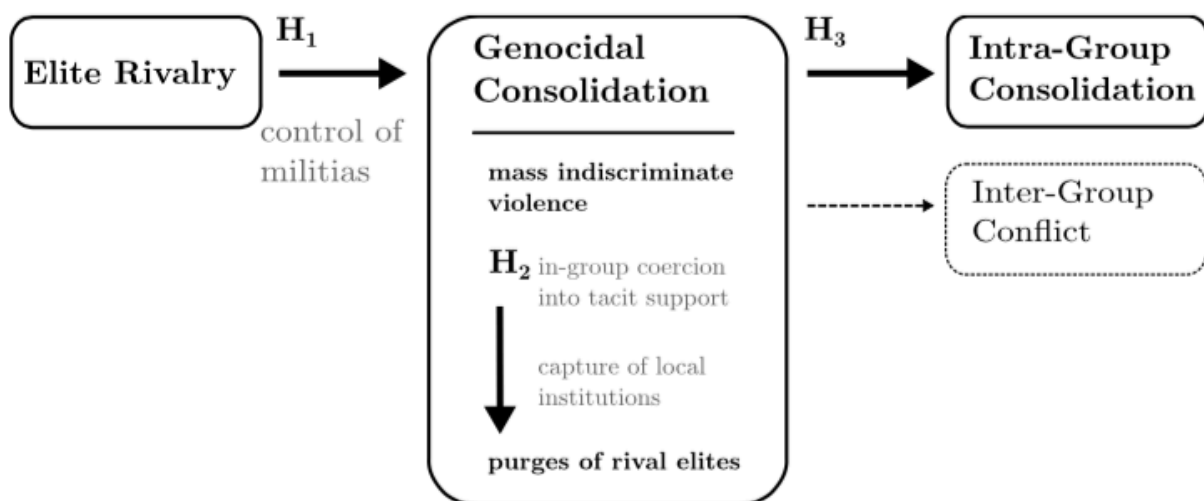


Figure 1<sup>65</sup>

The *elite rivalry* phase ( $H_1$  in Figure 1) of Van der Maat's theory is most commonly identified with the occurrence of coup attempts.<sup>66</sup> This stage was blatantly visible in Indonesia

<sup>65</sup> Van der Maat, 11.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 22-23.



during the violent coup attempts of 1950s and 1960s in the lead up to the most crucial coup attempt on 30 September 1965 which incited the transition of existing rivalries into mass violence. This stage would also be characterized by “minor purges,” which refer to the removal of any member of the political elite.<sup>67</sup> Other indications include “coup-proofing strategies,” in this case by Sukarno-led government before 1965, such as “[tying] up the military in the execution of a war” or “homogenizing ... [the] inner circle” of the military in an ideological sense.<sup>68</sup> Further evidence is provided by measures of political instability such as high levels of corruption that might exacerbate rivalries. Military’s efforts to financially secure itself through consultation of foreign actors could also serve as an implication for early elite rivalry.

For the ensuing stage of *genocidal consolidation* ( $H_2$  in Figure 1), evidence would include more active efforts such as the creation of propaganda in order to scapegoat political rivals and promote imaginary threats, as well as *purges of elites* which constitute of the elimination of serious rivals who hold high positions in “an armed component, such as the military, secret police, armed paramilitary groups, or praetorian guard.”<sup>69</sup> The main group of perpetrators, in this case the Indonesian military, would be expected to simultaneously incite “mass indiscriminate violence against an outgroup” and perform “selective violence towards an ingroup” with the purpose of achieving the final stage of *intra-group consolidation* ( $H_3$  Figure 1).<sup>70</sup> In the Indonesian case, the outgroup would be expected include (PKI-affiliated) civilians subjected to mass violence, while the ingroup would likely consist of Suharto-camp’s elite rivals in the government or the military. The military’s actions would also be anticipated to achieve a thorough control of state and security apparatus during this stage.<sup>71</sup>

The analysis section will consider historical tensions between the military, Sukarno, PKI and religious actors, details of the military’s action in 1965 and 1966, as well as inner dynamics of the military elite in the post-independence era in search of the above-mentioned observable implications.

---

<sup>67</sup> Van der Maat, 22-23.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 22-24.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 2, 36.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 11.

## V. Analysis of 1965-1966 Mass Killings

---

### V. i. State of the Indonesian economy in the 1960s

---

Indonesian economy saw a dramatic decline in 1950s and 1960s. In stark contrast with his charismatic leadership, Sukarno was heavily criticized for his mismanagement of the national economy.<sup>72</sup> In the decade before mass violence, Indonesia had been facing extensive levels of “poverty and stagnant growth,” these issues partially stemmed from Sukarno’s decision to nationalize all foreign companies after 1957.<sup>73</sup> These nationalized companies came under the direction of members of the military who lacked experience with financial management; the absence of experienced decision-makers exacerbated the economic conditions.<sup>74</sup>

Scholars have compared the close connection between 1965-66 mass killings and Indonesia’s economic problems to the financial calamities that preceded the Armenian and Rwandan genocides.<sup>75</sup> Indonesia’s average growth in GDP had severely decreased from 5.5 per cent annual growth between 1949 and 1957, to 1.8 per cent per annum during Sukarno’s *Guided Democracy* between 1957 and 1966.<sup>76</sup> Additionally, only a year prior to the mass killings, Sukarno had wrongly altered his main economic focus from “sandang-pangan,” a policy that aimed to meet citizens’ basic necessities, towards a costly “nation and character building” agenda, despite the deterioration of precarious living conditions in the country.<sup>77</sup> In relation with the local variations theory, Sukarno’s nationalist economic policies had mostly favored workers and companies that were situated on the island of Java and who were associated with the Indonesian state, while further alienating businesses in farther locations such as “smaller outer island producer-exporters” and “the Islamic petty trading and manufacturing bourgeoisie.”<sup>78</sup> As early as the 1950s, exporters from outer islands had voiced their disagreements with the central administration’s prioritization of Java, which received

---

<sup>72</sup> Murshed and Tadjoeddin, 20; Booth, 45.

<sup>73</sup> Murshed and Tadjoeddin, 20 – 21.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 22 – 23.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 24.

<sup>78</sup> Robison and Hadiz, 44.

high amounts of government expenditure in order to compensate for the region's trade deficit.<sup>79</sup> Such financial policies deepened regional inequalities.

Nevertheless, governmental policies were not the only reason for the country's economic failure. There existed a multitude of reasons that were not in Sukarno's control. After the Permesta rebellions<sup>80</sup> in 1957 and the imposition of martial law, a majority of the Indonesian economy had come under the regulation of the military.<sup>81</sup> Taking advantage of the situation, Indonesian army increased the defence spending to such extents that it was covering nearly half of the state budget by 1960 and thereby seriously impeding Sukarno's efforts to improve the economy.<sup>82</sup> Misallocated foreign aid was another setback to development; a majority of the aid which was provided by the United States through the "Food for Peace" programme, concentrated on provision of "rice, cotton, tobacco, and wheat," the imports of which hurt Indonesia's domestic production and caused inflation, weakening the economy further.<sup>83</sup> From 1963 onwards, economic and social burdens of war arose due to a violent conflict between Indonesia and Malaysia, also referred to as *Konfrontasi*, which was responsible for "accelerated political polarisation and economic collapse" in the country.<sup>84</sup> Military generals originally supported the Konfrontasi in order to divert funds from it for their own purposes and withdrew their support once it presented economic challenges.<sup>85</sup> These financial conditions prepared the stage for non-Sukarnoist elite's willingness to change the leadership.

## **V. ii. Military's economic motivations for mass violence**

---

If Farid's economic explanations are valid, how did mass violence allow an efficient rearrangement of the economy? What were the processes that enabled the military to alter the national economy and achieve full control? For example, the military was able to use mass violence in order to force agricultural use of "new seeds, fertilizers and pesticides;" farmers who disagreed with employing such methods were targeted by the military as alleged members of the leftist union *Peasants Front of Indonesia* and thereby accused of communist

---

<sup>79</sup> Booth, 47 – 48.

<sup>80</sup> Permesta Rebellions, also known as PRRI rebellions, were a CIA-backed military rebellion in 1957 in eastern parts of the archipelago

<sup>81</sup> Simpson, "Economists with Guns," 50.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 49.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>85</sup> Roosa, "Pretext for Mass Murder," 211; Mehr, 233.

affiliations.<sup>86</sup> The military was also insistent on the adoption of cash-cropping practices and pursued a commodification of agriculture through a so-called *Green Revolution*.<sup>87</sup> Through its violent targeting of peasants, army officers were able to reverse Sukarno-era redistribution of land and reclaim large quantities of land; hereby, the army was able to intensify socio-economic differences in the society and strengthen its control of agricultural economy.<sup>88</sup> Such military tactics show the utilization of mass violence for furthering economic agendas.

Moreover, the killings also facilitated the military's creation of a "slave economy" through the use of detained political prisoners; the process enabled a severe oppression of labor unions and the creation of "a cheap and submissive labour force."<sup>89</sup> Due to workers' fear of being accused of leftist affiliations by the military, military-backed businessmen were able to dramatically reduce working conditions at plantations to the level of slavery.<sup>90</sup> It was more than a coincidence that mass violence overlapped the beginnings of rapid infrastructural development under Suharto; the military's use of indiscriminate violence could be considered a method for building an oppressed workforce that would later "construct buildings and houses, including the local military headquarters" in various parts of Indonesia.<sup>91</sup> While it would be overly simplistic to suggest that mass violence allowed the military to build a capitalist system immediately, Farid argues that the use of forced labor and the "separation of the producers from their means of production" definitely altered Indonesia's "capital-worker social relations" for many decades to come and thereby generated the foundations for the creation of military-controlled capitalism that would emerge and expand in 1970s and 1980s.<sup>92</sup> Such developments showed that the military regime had a predominantly financial reasoning behind its actions, which can be presented as evidence for economic incentives.

On a related note, the army's violent targeting of leftist women's movements such as Gerwani throughout the mass killings preceded the subsequent exclusion of women from the political scene after 1965 and served as a basis for the military's future economic policies such as the general exclusion of women from the national workforce.<sup>93</sup>

It is difficult to determine whether economic reasoning behind the mass killings can be suggested as an original theory since it appears to be closely connected to other explanations.

---

<sup>86</sup> Farid, 11.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 10 – 11.

<sup>88</sup> Farid, 10.

<sup>89</sup> Farid, 11 – 12; McNaughton, 300.

<sup>90</sup> Farid, 11.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 13 – 14.

For example, Simpson mentions how foreign actors described the mass killings in Sumatra as a monetary struggle among elite competitors “for the commanding heights of the Indonesian economy.”<sup>94</sup> In Sumatra, perpetration of mass violence was tied with the military’s efforts to gain access to “local ports and rubber and tin estates.”<sup>95</sup> Historically, the military had increasingly acted upon economic incentives; in an earlier rebellion in 1957, they had also challenged the Indonesian state’s financial regulation of “raw material exports of the Outer Islands” as well as the state’s “control of the ex-Dutch firms.”<sup>96</sup> Such acts motivated by the army’s economic self-interest seem to have implied financial rivalries among the elite, rather than represent a strong financial/ideological stance of the military. To a certain extent, military’s financial incentives added fuel to rivalries among the elite.

In a critique of Farid’s theories, Hammer highlights various shortcomings of economic explanations. As Hammer argues, there existed many non-economic motivations for mass violence due to local variations, which will be discussed further in the next section; while military decision-makers might have been steered by economic motives, this was not the case in parts of Indonesia where local actors acted independently from the military.<sup>97</sup> Hammer also questions the extent of economic restructuring that mass violence caused according to Farid; an analysis of other sources show that the number of landless farmers by the end of the killings was much lower than Farid’s claims and the consequences of Green Revolution was not as extensive as primitive accumulation theory suggests.<sup>98</sup> While mass violence definitely had economic aspects, it was not the only cause; at different locations “property disputes” also occurred as a result of “private frictions and grievances” among civilians.<sup>99</sup>

Another argument against the presentation of economic incentives as an original explanation is that the killings could not have been influenced by financially anti-communist ideologies since the Indonesian economy under Sukarno had not truly embodied leftwing, anti-capitalist ideals in the first place. Despite his relations with the PKI and his anti-colonial rhetoric, the economic system during Guided Democracy has been described as an example of “national state capitalism” rather than a truly socialist system.<sup>100</sup> In the decade before the mass killings, Sukarno had attempted to drastically increase governmental regulation of the economy, decrease the amount of foreign capital, and reduce Indonesia’s reliance on foreign

<sup>94</sup> Simpson, “Economists with Guns,” 64.

<sup>95</sup> Simpson, “International Dimensions of the 1965-68 Violence in Indonesia,” 64.

<sup>96</sup> Jenkins, 18 – 19.

<sup>97</sup> Hammer, “The Indonesian Killings and Economic Redistributions: A Reply to Hilmar Farid,” 320.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, 321 – 322.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 324.

<sup>100</sup> Robison, 64, 98.

trade.<sup>101</sup> These policies had the unexpected consequence of financially empowering the military to unprecedented levels. When economic conditions reached their lowest point in 1965, Indonesia faced two scenarios: the foundation of “a centrally planned system” led by the PKI, or a process of privatization of the economy and a reentrance of foreign capital.<sup>102</sup> By this time, the military had already established itself as an economic powerhouse; in fact, Robison notes that a system of “military patronage” in the economy had existed for nearly a decade since the end of the parliamentary system in 1957.<sup>103</sup> State corporations, which were in the hands of military officials, dominated the economy; this system favoring military officers was referred to as a form of “bureaucrat capitalism.”<sup>104</sup> Thus, the mass killings did not necessarily represent a dramatic ideological transition from a leftist economy into a capitalist one; the period of mass violence seems to have been a survival tactic of the military in order to escape the downfall of a failing economy and prevent a further deterioration of the army’s already existing economic belongings/shares. One could argue that these motivations represented a form of economic rivalry rather than the furthering of an economic ideology; hence, economic explanations could also be considered a part of elite rivalry/genocidal consolidation theory.

One of the aims of Farid’s economic explanation is to draw a distinction between “largely non-violent political rivalry” and mass indiscriminate violence.<sup>105</sup> As explained in the previous section, the military had co-existed with other actors such as PNI and PKI as “bitter rivals since the late 1950s.”<sup>106</sup> Thus, economic factors such as the urgency of financial meltdown under Sukarno and immediate benefits of primitive accumulation can show why and how a decade of intense but non-genocidal political rivalry was suddenly transformed into outright mass violence. While merely financial reasons could not be a sufficient explanation on their own, they can serve as a case-specific side effect for elite rivalry.

### **V.     iii.     Foreign actors: an active or passive form of economic influence?**

---

United States was undeniably the foreign actor with the greatest amount of financial influence on the Indonesian military. US’ attitude towards Indonesia in the post-independence era had three main characteristics: US officials were deluded by an “obsessive fear of

---

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 71-72.

<sup>102</sup> Robison, 128.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 92.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 95.

<sup>105</sup> Farid, 8.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 8.

communism in Indonesia,” they intensely encouraged development programs that would be managed by the military, and they heavily relied on the military “as the guarantor of economic and political stability.”<sup>107</sup> US observations of Indonesia’s domestic situation were mostly based on anthropological research produced by American scholars such as Clifford Geertz; Geertz’s idea of *agricultural involution* argued that poverty in Indonesia stemmed from “overpopulation, technological stagnation, and disempowerment,” and suggested that solution could be provided through agricultural improvements such as “American farming methods ... and agricultural mechanization” and the eventual relocation of peasants towards cities to create “an industrial workforce.”<sup>108</sup> US dissemination of Geertz’s ideas would later influence the military’s use of mass violence as a form of implementing economic policies as mentioned in the previous section on economic incentives.

US had already begun its efforts to create financial assistance programs for the military in 1950s.<sup>109</sup> By 1957, encouraged by anti-communist fears, US had already given its backing to a part of the Indonesian military discontent with Sukarno; the supported generals would dissent against the Indonesian government and cause the PRRI rebellion of 1958.<sup>110</sup> PRRI rebels in the military had not only received support from the US but also from Muslim political groups and PNI, just as their future equivalents also would during the formation of the anti-communist coalition in 1965.<sup>111</sup> As a consequence of 1958 rebellions, anti-American sentiments had rapidly increased in Indonesia.<sup>112</sup> Moreover, many leading American institutions and foundations had invested “nearly \$20 million for education, agriculture, medical, and technical assistance” and also funded US-based education of Indonesian specialists in various fields such as agriculture, military and national economy in the decade before mass violence.<sup>113</sup>

Sukarno’s leadership of the non-aligned movement had not only raised suspicions in the US but to a lesser extent also in USSR and China, since it proposed an independent political and economic path that did not exactly align with Western, Soviet or Chinese interests.<sup>114</sup> Outsider influence on Indonesia was therefore not one-sided and did not only originate from the US; in fact, the Western insistence for modernization efforts through

<sup>107</sup> Simpson, “Economists with Guns,” 12.

<sup>108</sup> Simpson, “Economists with Guns,” 22 – 23.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 35.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, 18 – 19.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, 17 – 18.

agencies such as USAID stemmed from Soviet assistance offered for developing economies including Indonesia.<sup>115</sup> However, the 1957 disagreement on West New Guinea with the Netherlands determined Sukarno's future alliances; while the US remained neutral, USSR emerged as a fervent ally of Sukarno.<sup>116</sup> Sukarno's move towards the Soviets was also a result of the post-Stalin era, which led to an opening of USSR's foreign policy under Khrushchev who was willing to provide Indonesia with considerable amounts of foreign aid.<sup>117</sup> However, the most important difference between US and other nations was definitely the close relations US government had sustained with the Indonesian military. Nevertheless, the intermingling of outside forces in domestic politics presented a more complicated situation than a merely communism vs. capitalism narrative; while the US and other Western powers were in agreement about the implementation of "a covert warfare approach" in order to disrupt the Indonesian economy and consequently undermine Sukarno, Russia and China were in disagreement with regards to their stance towards Indonesia.<sup>118</sup> As a result of the continuing deterioration of Sino-USSR relations at the time and PKI's convergence towards China, USSR would also provide the military, PNI and NU with support against Sukarno and the PKI.<sup>119</sup>

After 1960, political intentions of outsider forces became more crucial in determining the fragmentation of Indonesian political elite. Foreign interests in Indonesian politics were closely related to Sukarno's position as one of the harshest critics of neo-colonialism; from mid-1950s onwards, Sukarno became one of the leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement.<sup>120</sup> Relatedly, his disagreement with the British involvement in the process of decolonization and formation of a Malaysian state had led Sukarno to pursue *Konfrontasi*, a three-year military conflict between Malaysia and Indonesia.<sup>121</sup> *Konfrontasi* led to an increase in Western powers' hostility against Sukarno since Malaysia was still under the control of Britain and the Commonwealth at the time.<sup>122</sup> In fact, the intensification of covert actions in Indonesia in 1965 was a result of British and American agreement on the need to finalize *Konfrontasi*.<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, Sukarno had nationalized British assets in 1964 and Indonesia was experiencing

---

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 8 – 9.

<sup>116</sup> Simpson, "Economists with Guns," 25.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, 24.

<sup>118</sup> Simpson, "International Dimensions of the 1965-68 Violence in Indonesia," 53 – 54; Simpson, "Economists with Guns," 191.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, 54.

<sup>120</sup> Henry, 87; McNaughton, 299.

<sup>121</sup> Subritzky, 211-213; Simpson, "International Dimensions of the 1965-68 Violence in Indonesia," 52-53.

<sup>122</sup> Subritzky, 223; Simpson, "Economists with Guns," 10.

<sup>123</sup> Simpson, "Economists with Guns," 143 - 144.



significantly high levels of animosity towards Britain.<sup>124</sup> The conflict ended in the aftermath of regime change as General Suharto and the military were not willing to continue Sukarno's ideologically motivated war against colonialism; the political chaos in the aftermath of the 30 September coup and the mass killings thereby arguably helped Britain avoid a long-term and costly military commitment.<sup>125</sup>

Simultaneously, US was abandoning any hopes for collaboration with Sukarno and moving closer towards the military. After the Dutch-Indonesian conflict over the West Irian, US Congress entirely opposed any further support of Sukarno and resisted Kennedy administration's suggestions for "\$325-\$390 million in aid."<sup>126</sup> As a result of Congress' disagreement and the growing popularity of "military modernization theory" as opposed to the former encouragement of "civilian supremacy over the armed forces" through democracy-building projects, Kennedy administration's plans were downsized to a "Military Assistance Program" which provided the Indonesian military with \$4.3 million in financial aid and an "archipelago-wide fixed communication system," and also established US-led training programs for police forces who would later be integrated into the army in 1960.<sup>127</sup> The subsequent assassination of Kennedy and his replacement with Lyndon Johnson who was a hard-liner, also meant that US would become even more negative towards Sukarno and seek to obtain closer relations with anti-Sukarnoist military generals.<sup>128</sup>

Western intentions were also closely linked to the presence of foreign oil companies in Indonesia such as "Caltex, Stanvac and Shell Oil" which feared a governmental takeover and a process of nationalization by the Sukarno regime and PKI.<sup>129</sup> There was also a brief period of disagreement between military and US in September 1965 when Sukarno announced his intention to confiscate all US oil firms.<sup>130</sup> Despite US pressures, army leadership was initially not entirely against nationalization; months of negotiations with the US would convince Suharto to cancel any prospect of nationalization by December 1965.<sup>131</sup> This period showed that while foreign powers were influential, the military still exercised a certain amount of independence.

---

<sup>124</sup> Henry, 87.

<sup>125</sup> Subritzky, 223; Simpson, "Economists with Guns," 143 – 144.

<sup>126</sup> Simpson, "Economists with Guns," 61-67.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, 63 – 80.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, 126 – 127.

<sup>129</sup> Simpson, "International Dimensions of the 1965-68 Violence in Indonesia," 54 – 55; Simpson, "Economists with Guns," 100 – 108.

<sup>130</sup> Simpson, "Economists with Guns," 197.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, 199.

After the coup attempt and the start of the mass violence, foreign encouragement of rivalry among political elites remained visible in diplomatic statements by the British Ambassador to Indonesia, who encouraged “early and carefully [planned] propaganda and psywar activity to exacerbate internal strife.”<sup>132</sup> An important example of such clandestine, indirect foreign acts was the Australian involvement through anti-communist broadcasts on Radio Australia; high levels of foreign-led propaganda were fundamental in establishing “a pogrom atmosphere.”<sup>133</sup> A more direct support was provided by the US who sent \$1 million worth of “communications equipment, small arms ... medical supplies” to the military in November 1965.<sup>134</sup> Besides, it was not only the West which adopted a policy of silence and covert support towards the elimination of PKI; Russia also remained generally quiet on the mass killings and even provided the Indonesian military with arms support due to the previously mentioned rapprochement between PKI and China and Sino-Soviet rivalry which worsened Soviet leadership’s trust in Sukarno.<sup>135</sup> However, the active support appears to have begun after mass violence had already started; thus, sources do not show an active collaboration between the military and foreign powers during the original planning of mass violence.

On the whole, it is difficult to justify outside influences as a distinctive explanation since the general role of outsiders was limited and only acted as a contributing factor for existent rivalries by strengthening the military.<sup>136</sup> Foreign influences were therefore closely linked with intra-elite competitions. One of the questions van der Maat proposed was why do elites opt for violence at times of grave instability; Suharto camp’s ability to receive extensive assistance from the US and other foreign actors, definitely served to strengthen their willingness to eliminate rivals and pursue their economic ambitions. Foreign influence can therefore also be observed as a further encouragement for increases in intra-elite rivalry.

#### **V.     iv.     The orchestration of mass violence: a top-down or a localized/bottom-up process?**

---

An important contention in scholarship is whether the rise of mass violence occurred due to a centrally organized plan by the political/military elite or a disorderly and localized

---

<sup>132</sup> Simpson, “International Dimensions of the 1965-68 Violence in Indonesia,” 58.

<sup>133</sup> Gerlach, 80 – 81.

<sup>134</sup> Simpson, “Economists with Guns,” 186.

<sup>135</sup> Simpson, “International Dimensions of the 1965-68 Violence in Indonesia,” 62 – 63; Gerlach, 84; Simpson, “Economists with Guns,” 189.

<sup>136</sup> Gerlach, 85.

type of public effort.<sup>137</sup> For an analysis of the bottom-up processes, it is crucial to have an understanding of how Indonesia's decentralized nature challenged the military elite. Historically, regional divisions had been visible in the creation of the United States of Indonesia for a short period of time; USI had consisted of various federal states situated on different parts of the archipelago until Sukarno abolished the system in 1950.<sup>138</sup> As the sense of national unity further declined under Sukarno, local actors came to the forefront. In early 1960s, as the military was struggling with small-scale Muslim insurgencies "in West Java and Aceh," army officials were also becoming growingly concerned about PKI's enhancement of its activities in rural towns.<sup>139</sup> The military was also concerned about the approaching end of PRRI-related martial law in 1963, which was expected to decrease the military's central authority overall.<sup>140</sup> In response to local challenges, General Nasution devised a "territorial warfare and management" policy which called for the military's creation of local counterinsurgency groups situated in rural towns throughout Indonesia.<sup>141</sup> The military decided to prioritize its existing commitment to its civic duties in various regions to such a large extent that by 1962, 40% of all military members had been stationed in "rural development projects" around Indonesia.<sup>142</sup> Such efforts showed the army's willingness to increase its command of remote parts of the archipelago in opposition to the rise of local actors.

Despite the military's efforts to sustain a central control, regional movements persisted and a majority of the killings would be organized and committed by local actors and regular citizens.<sup>143</sup> The methods of killing would also indicate a mix of bottom-up and top-down processes; Simpson describes local violence as a form of "close killing" whereby civilians both relied on arms supplied by the military as well as unprofessional devices such as "bamboo spears, machetes."<sup>144</sup> In line with Gerlach's participatory violence theory, Hammer also likens the Indonesian killings to the Holocaust due to its creation of a "space for opportunism" whereby members of the public could make use of mass violence to address "private frictions and grievances;" the author goes on to argue that some of the economic

---

<sup>137</sup> Hammer, "The Indonesian Killings and Economic Redistributions: A Reply to Hilmar Farid," 319.

<sup>138</sup> Simpson, "Economists with Guns," 16.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid, 78.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, 78.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, 77.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid, 78.

<sup>143</sup> Fealy and McGregor, 117.

<sup>144</sup> Simpson, "Economists with Guns," 191.

reasons suggested by Farid, such as disagreements over land among farmers, could also be considered an example of personal motivations for violence.<sup>145</sup>

Due to the limited scope of this essay, this section will only examine the local dynamics and the relations between the army and citizens in two regions: East and Central Java. In East Java, members of NU acted as the principle aggressor and mostly practiced religiously motivated mass violence.<sup>146</sup> It remains unclear whether the military or NU had greater control of the killings; however, all accounts indicate high levels of partnership between them across East Java. NU's youth wing Ansor and its paramilitary group Banser held most of the responsibility for the violence in East Java region due to their organization of "nightly killings" and anti-PKI mass rallies.<sup>147</sup> However, their position as an independent actor is questionable as they often acted in line with "senior local NU leaders and the Army" whose consents were required.<sup>148</sup> The overall authority of the military on NU was especially tested on the final days of the mass killings in early 1966 when military personnel urged NU and its affiliates to halt killings or otherwise face persecution.<sup>149</sup> The events in Java show that local actors' role were limited to the early stages of mass killings and were severely curbed by the military towards the end of the violence. The influence of public and local movements fluctuated throughout the killings. In the beginning, the army cooperated with anti-PKI groups in order to eliminate PKI; afterwards, NU began to act more autonomously against its non-PKI rivals such as PNI, the nationalist camp and the leftist wing within the military.<sup>150</sup> In the final months of the violence, the military would overpower the NU in order to finalize the killings.<sup>151</sup> Thus, the influence of local actors was short-lived.

Local factors were also crucial for the orchestration of mass violence in Central Java, which was "a densely settled, largely rural" setting.<sup>152</sup> It is important to note that a local factor was also connected to the military; the violence perpetrated by RPKAD in Central Java occurred under the command of Sarwo Edhie.<sup>153</sup> Edhie was partially motivated by personal vengeance due to his relationship with General Yani, who was one of the high-ranking officials assassinated during the coup attempt on 30 September 1965.<sup>154</sup> Other local factors

---

<sup>145</sup> Hammer, "The Indonesian Killings and Economic Redistributions: A Reply to Hilmar Farid," 324.

<sup>146</sup> Hammer, "The Indonesian Killings and Economic Redistributions: A Reply to Hilmar Farid," 319 – 320.

<sup>147</sup> Fealy and McGregor, 118 – 119.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 124 – 125.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 126 – 129.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 126 – 129.

<sup>152</sup> Jenkins and Kammen, 75.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 76, 80 – 81.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 76, 80 – 81.

emerged due to the inability of local military forces to organize themselves efficiently; hence, they consulted the public.<sup>155</sup> Due to immense pressures put on the security apparatus through Suharto's and other high-ranking officials' command for excessive violence, mass violence resembled "an act of improvisation" whereby ambiguity reigned.<sup>156</sup> Official detention processes were absent and detainees were mostly held in "makeshift facilities."<sup>157</sup> It was often members of the public who organized interrogations; as a result, civilians used their role to denounce other civilians and personal reasons became the principal reason for victims' subjection to mass violence.<sup>158</sup> Nevertheless, the participation of the public was still a result of military officials' wishes and would not have been possible independently of the army. In Central Java, the reliance on "civilian volunteers" to conduct some of the violence against the detained individuals, seems to have occurred due to senior officers' mistrust of junior military officials and uncertainties about whether junior officials would conduct mass violence as severely as requested by Suharto.<sup>159</sup> Scholars also remain uncertain about how much the military relied on information from the public as opposed to its own intelligence.<sup>160</sup> While public's participation was an important factor in the selection of victims, the military elite appears to have had the upper-hand in general which became clearer in later stages of mass violence in Central Java when the killings became increasingly organized by military's central authority.<sup>161</sup>

Scholars have also highlighted certain characteristics of the 1965-1966 mass killings that indicate a top-down, "bureaucratic nature" mass violence; for example, a local term used to describe victims at the time was "dibon" ("ticketed" in Indonesian) referring to the existence of paperwork and lists in the organization of the killings.<sup>162</sup> The existence of an elite-led ideological standpoint is most visible in the documents issued by the military in the immediate aftermath of the coup attempt. By analyzing primary sources such as "purge directives and policies" originating from 1965, scholars have illustrated the importance of the elite in the early stages of the violence.<sup>163</sup> A defining characteristic of the language used in these initial documents was its ambiguity, which could be interpreted as an absence of a clear

<sup>155</sup> Hammer, "The Organisation of the Killings and the Interaction between State and Society in Central Java, 1965," 58.

<sup>156</sup> Hammer, "The Organisation of the Killings and the Interaction between State and Society in Central Java, 1965," 44.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, 44.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid, 39.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, 55.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid, 56.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid, 49.

<sup>162</sup> Farid, 8.

<sup>163</sup> Djakababa, 13; Kammen and Zakaria, 445.

ideological basis; however, Djakababa notes that the purpose behind the army's vague objectives was to maintain an attitude that was "flexible enough to implicate anyone" in the coup attempt.<sup>164</sup> Others have noted that the ambiguous nature of the documents would enable regional officers to act independently.<sup>165</sup> Such efforts also imply a conscious top-down instigation of local violence by the military elite.

Analyses of Eastern and Central Java show that bottom-up factors and the public were influential in the early selection of detainees while remaining under the command of the military. As the military issued a directive instructing local forces to end mass detentions and killings in December 1965, later stages became dominated by the military's efforts to end local variations and implement an increasingly top-down approach in order to consolidate and ensure the Suharto camp's overall authority.<sup>166</sup> Therefore, the reasons for mass violence did not only depend on the location, but also on the time as its nature fluctuated throughout the process of killings. Public's participation appears to have been a contributing factor to the intensification of violence but they fall short of being the overarching reason behind the killings.

## **V. v. Signs of elite rivalry in domestic politics**

---

### **V. v. i. Historical intra-elite tensions and rivalries in the post-colonial era until 1965**

---

*"We were there prior to the Republic. We are the Republic. It is because we were there that these people can call themselves minister."*<sup>167</sup>

An important legacy of former Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia had been the creation of "a vacuum of social power" which led to intense fractionalization in politics and would later instigate high levels of political rivalries.<sup>168</sup> Before the ideological divisions of the Cold War era, mass killings in formerly colonized states occurred mainly due to the process of decolonization and its creation of societal divisions between local opponents and supporters

---

<sup>164</sup> Djakababa, 15.

<sup>165</sup> Kammen and Zakaria, 444.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid, 449.

<sup>167</sup> A military official's portrayal of the army's self-proclaimed superiority over political actors in the independence era as quoted by Jenkins, 16.

<sup>168</sup> Robison and Hadiz, 43 – 44.

of colonists.<sup>169</sup> Afterwards, Cold War became responsible as it led to the rise of a bipolar international system, but also caused a “systematic diffusion” of power due to the rise of new political elites in recently established “post-colonial but often quasi-imperial states.”<sup>170</sup> New elites such as the military in Indonesia who were empowered during post-colonial battles for independence would later go on to use their newly acquired powers against their local rivals.<sup>171</sup>

Indonesian army had historically played a crucial role in national politics since the early stages of independence from the Netherlands. During its early formation, it had emerged as an institution that was on equal terms with the Indonesian state rather than one with a depoliticized, secondary role.<sup>172</sup> The web of trust between the Indonesian public and the military, as observed during the 1965 mass killings, originated from late 1940s. While a majority of politicians at the time had settled for diplomatic solutions, the Indonesian military established closer relations with the society by opting for “perjuangan (struggle)” and thereby also consolidated the influence of “local military leaders,” a development that would have significant consequences during the mass killings.<sup>173</sup>

Indonesian state and military exercised a comparable level of political power, which reinforced a gradually increasing sense of rivalry between the two institutions. An example of growing tensions in this era was the Madiun Affair in 1948, whereby the military eliminated the left-wing People’s Democratic Front (FDR) after an alleged coup attempt; the violent phase had an estimated death toll of 30000 communists and has since been described as a rehearsal for the events in 1965.<sup>174</sup> The tumultuous years of parliamentary democracy between 1949 and 1957, also saw increasing signs of competition between the military and the government; the rivalry in this period arguably peaked on 17 October 1952 when the military intervened and compelled the cabinet to resign.<sup>175</sup> Jenkins notes that the military developed its ideologically distinct character between 1957 and 1959 when a series of local uprisings took place.<sup>176</sup> In 1956, local military officers in Sumatra organized “bloodless coups” and gained control of regional power from the central state.<sup>177</sup> In fact, Indonesia saw yet

---

<sup>169</sup> Shaw, 106.

<sup>170</sup> Shaw, 101.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid, 109.

<sup>172</sup> Jenkins, 16.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>174</sup> Gerlach, 24, 54; Sugiyama, 23.

<sup>175</sup> Jenkins, 18.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid, 8 – 19.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid, 18.

another rebellion in 1958 by a group of local officers who established the “Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia” in an effort to challenge the state, but were quieted down soon afterwards.<sup>178</sup> The military, under the command of Nasution, increased its demands for greater levels of political involvement for itself, and warned of retributions if its requests would not be met.<sup>179</sup> The historical evolution of the Indonesian military through the above-mentioned series of challenges to the state shows a rapidly increasing sense of competition over the years until the mass killings.

The intensification of rivalry was not a one-sided process whereby military officers were the only aggravators. In an effort to counteract the military’s rising influence, Jenkins notes that Sukarno also stoked “inter-service and intra-army rivalry” in late 1950s by undermining General Nasution’s<sup>180</sup> commanding role in the military.<sup>181</sup> Sukarno’s attempt to weaken the army through his interference in military’s internal affairs at the time align with the “coup-proofing strategies” that are a characteristic of intra-elite rivalry.<sup>182</sup> Another coup-proofing policy in line with van der Maat’s theory was Sukarno’s pursuance of Konfrontasi, the Indonesian-Malaysian conflict, in order to keep the military elite occupied.<sup>183</sup> Furthermore, rivalries inside the army were also a result of the gradual decline of Indonesian military’s “reforming zeal;” some members of the military elite were fearing the loss of their distinct political identity as officers became increasingly entrenched in the Sukarno-led government through “administrative, political, and managerial tasks.”<sup>184</sup> Therefore, political rivalry was not only visible between the leftist movement and military supporters, but also within the military itself.

The inter-military divisions became more apparent after 1962, when Sukarno intervened in the military command and appointed General Yani as the head of the army; Yani was relatively more pro-Sukarno compared to his predecessor General Nasution.<sup>185</sup> At this stage, the rivalry within the army was defined as a struggle between Yani and Nasution, and Suharto had not yet emerged as a prominent actor. In April, only six months before the mass killings began, General Yani introduced a military policy which closely resembled many of Sukarno’s ideas and received heavy criticism from Nasution for ignoring army’s original

---

<sup>178</sup> Jenkins, 19-20.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>180</sup> Nasution was the Army Chief of Staff at the time.

<sup>181</sup> Jenkins, 21.

<sup>182</sup> Van der Maat, 10.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>184</sup> Jenkins, 21.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid, 21.



doctrines; the rival rift between Sukarnoist and non-Sukarnoist members of the military was deepening.<sup>186</sup> As non-Sukarnoist members of the military elite increasingly felt that their “operational freedom” was jeopardized and that President Sukarno threatened their ideals, rivalries intensified before reaching their zenith on 30 September 1965.<sup>187</sup>

Moreover, another section of Indonesia’s political elite that shared the responsibility for mass violence was the country’s largest Islamic organization, Nahdlatul Ulama.<sup>188</sup> Members of NU had been benefitting from increasing levels of political authority and wealth since 1950s.<sup>189</sup> NU’s participation in the mass violence was not only the result of a religiously motivated condemnation of communism; bureaucratic rivalries between NU and PKI had drastically increased during President Sukarno’s Guided Democracy. The transitional era that saw a significant increase in PKI’s authority in the Indonesian Parliament (nearly 35 per cent of the seats were now held by PKI) had also seen a decrease in NU’s share of the parliament from 40 to 25 per cent.<sup>190</sup> NU was politically threatened by PKI’s growing popularity. In a similar manner with the military, NU was also internally divided. Fealy and McGregor distinguish between two sections: *accommodationists*, who represented secular Muslims (“abangan”) and were open towards collaboration with President Sukarno and the leftist movement, and *militants*, who practised a stricter version of Islam (“santri”) and were more opposed to PKI’s rising influence as they considered communism a threat to Indonesia’s religious identity.<sup>191</sup> Mass killings would see the rise of NU’s militant section, which consisted of “former soldiers, conservative kiai and younger intellectuals.”<sup>192</sup>

Violent clashes between NU and PKI had already begun in early 1960s when PKI members confiscated land from the wealthy religious class in order to benefit the peasantry and compensate for unsuccessful land reforms.<sup>193</sup> As religious leaders often belonged to the more affluent part of the society, PKI violence against the more conservative in East Java furthered the belief that PKI also constituted a major threat to Indonesia’s Islamic community.<sup>194</sup> In response to the increasing threats in Central and Eastern Java, NU

---

<sup>186</sup> Jenkins, 22.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>188</sup> Fealy and McGregor, 105.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid, 108.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid, 110.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid, 110 – 112.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid, 112.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid, 112.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid, 113.

established a “paramilitary corps” as well as “anti-PKI networks at the local level” around the country in 1962.<sup>195</sup>

Thus, political rivalries between various sections of the military, PKI and NU had been deepening by early 1960s and the domestic scene was becoming very volatile. The following section will discuss how competition among the elite resulted in genocidal consolidation.

#### **V. v. ii. Genocidal Consolidation after 30 September 1965: Coup attempt, removal of rivals and use of propaganda**

---

The epitome of political rivalry and instability occurred on 30 September 1965 when a coup attempt caused the murders of seven prominent right-wing generals; as Cribb and Farid note, historians have contested the reasons behind the coup and many explanations exist for why it happened.<sup>196</sup> Violent murders during the coup led to a “real vilification of the [communist] party;” in a short period of time, the image of PKI members drastically changed “from being a recognized, if somewhat feared, element ... into a pariah.”<sup>197</sup> The disparagement of the organizers of the coup attempt marked the beginning of mass violence against all citizens (allegedly) affiliated with PKI and the effective removal of any communist element from Indonesia’s political elite.<sup>198</sup> The transition of communists into targets for violence was not a natural development; the military would successfully utilize the coup attempt to deliberately transform communists into an outgroup that would become subject of indiscriminate violence.

One of the crucial steps in the creation of an outgroup was military’s systematic use of propaganda in order to specifically blame the PKI during and after 1965; this was an aspect of the killings that implied elite-level organization in support of van der Maat’s theory and contradicted the idea of a bottom-up approach as per Gerlach. The military elite, and later the Suharto regime, have for a long time tried to sustain a “single narrative” of the events on 30 September.<sup>199</sup> The elite interference remains visible today; in fact, as recently as in 2007, the

---

<sup>195</sup> Fealy and McGregor, 113-114.

<sup>196</sup> Cribb, 231; Farid, 5.

<sup>197</sup> Cribb, 232.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid, 234.

<sup>199</sup> Roosa, “The September 30<sup>th</sup> Movement: The Aporias of the Official Narratives,” 26.

Indonesian government established a rule that legally required all Indonesian textbooks to mention PKI while discussing 30 September.<sup>200</sup>

An early strategy used by the military elite was a continuous flood of anti-communist propaganda distributed by “psychological warfare specialists” assigned by the Indonesian army.<sup>201</sup> This unregulated phase of propaganda incited suspicion and mass violence “against all [PKI] members, not just the top leaders.”<sup>202</sup> The official media campaign, which followed the first wave of impromptu propaganda, was organized and narrated by Notosusanto, a military historian representing the Indonesian “Armed Forces History Center;” this effort constituted of a more organized, written version of the initial propaganda campaign.<sup>203</sup> In contrast with the early stages, Notosusanto’s writings were more selective and only implicated a small section of the communist party in the coup attempt instead of all members of PKI.<sup>204</sup>

As Roosa explains, the events of 30 September did not initially constitute of “a social revolt;” they were interpreted by President Sukarno as “a strictly military action” and the beginning of an era in Indonesian politics whereby PKI would possibly emerge as a major actor.<sup>205</sup> President Sukarno was initially prepared to collaborate with coup organizers and appointed one of his supporters in the military, Pranoto, as the army commander with the leftist movement’s approval.<sup>206</sup> Early statements by G30S also indicate an elite-led process. For example, on the day of the coup attempt, both G30S’s as well as PKI’s early official statements defined the ongoing coup as “an internal Army affair” and did not refer to any communist involvement.<sup>207</sup> The anti-communist, outgroup narrative would not have emerged if it was not for military’s careful planning and efforts.

Apart from the military, the more conservative section within NU also played an important role in the creation of an outgroup. On the day of the coup attempt, two of the most prominent accommodationist NU members, Chasbullah and Chalid, were not present in Jakarta and therefore could not influence NU’s immediate response; as a result, NU’s militant section would overshadow the accommodationists.<sup>208</sup> NU’s militant section immediately

---

<sup>200</sup> Roosa, “The September 30<sup>th</sup> Movement: The Aporias of the Official Narratives,” 26.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid, 33-34.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid, 43 – 44.

<sup>206</sup> Mehr, 239; Roosa, “The September 30<sup>th</sup> Movement: The Aporias of the Official Narratives,” 43.

<sup>207</sup> Roosa, “The September 30<sup>th</sup> Movement: The Aporias of the Official Narratives,” 35.

<sup>208</sup> Fealy and McGregor, 115.

approached Suharto and the army for collaboration; in fact, NU members were responsible for the first radio broadcast that publicly announced PKI as the mastermind behind the coup.<sup>209</sup>

It was only on 1 November 1965 that Suharto received unrestricted authority as he became the head of KOPKAMTIB; during the one-month period between the coup attempt and the emboldening of Suharto's powers in November, the Sukarno-led presidential office had issued two directives, both dated 20 October 1965, in order to calm the nationwide chaos, to claim a regulating role and most significantly to counteract the rising military regime.<sup>210</sup> Nevertheless, the Sukarno-led directives only had a symbolic role as the military had the final say in the detention process; the simultaneous issuance of various directives by the military and the presidential office, serves both as a proof of intense elite rivalry between these institutions but also of the existence of a top-down control of the process.<sup>211</sup>

The period after March 1967 when Suharto ousted Sukarno completely and established his own cabinet saw a drastic decrease in intra-elite rivalries; however, the military remained divided.<sup>212</sup> While the army had clearly secured its place as the governing elite, it now struggled with inner divisions between *radicals* and *centrists*.<sup>213</sup> The radical elements were concentrated in West Java, and insisted on more extensive reforms than what General Suharto had already pursued; they wanted to establish “a de-party-ized system” and aimed to eliminate all political rivals such as the PNI and the NU.<sup>214</sup> Jenkins notes that West Java, South Sumatra, and East Java were some of the regions where heads of military units belonged to the radical camp.<sup>215</sup> The centrists, on the other hand, were relatively “cautious and consensual” in their dealings with Sukarno or PKI.<sup>216</sup> For example, one of such centrist local branches of the military, the Brawijaya Command in East Java, was less willing to actively engage in the killings due to some of its members' continuing loyalty to President Sukarno.<sup>217</sup> By 1966, Suharto camp would finalize the process of intra-group consolidation by meticulously eliminating all “pro-PKI and pro-Sukarno elements” in the military.<sup>218</sup>

---

<sup>209</sup> Fealy and McGregor, 116.

<sup>210</sup> Djakababa, 17.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>212</sup> Kammen and Zakaria, 459.

<sup>213</sup> Jenkins, 25.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid, 25.

<sup>217</sup> Fealy and McGregor, 118.

<sup>218</sup> Jenkins, 24.

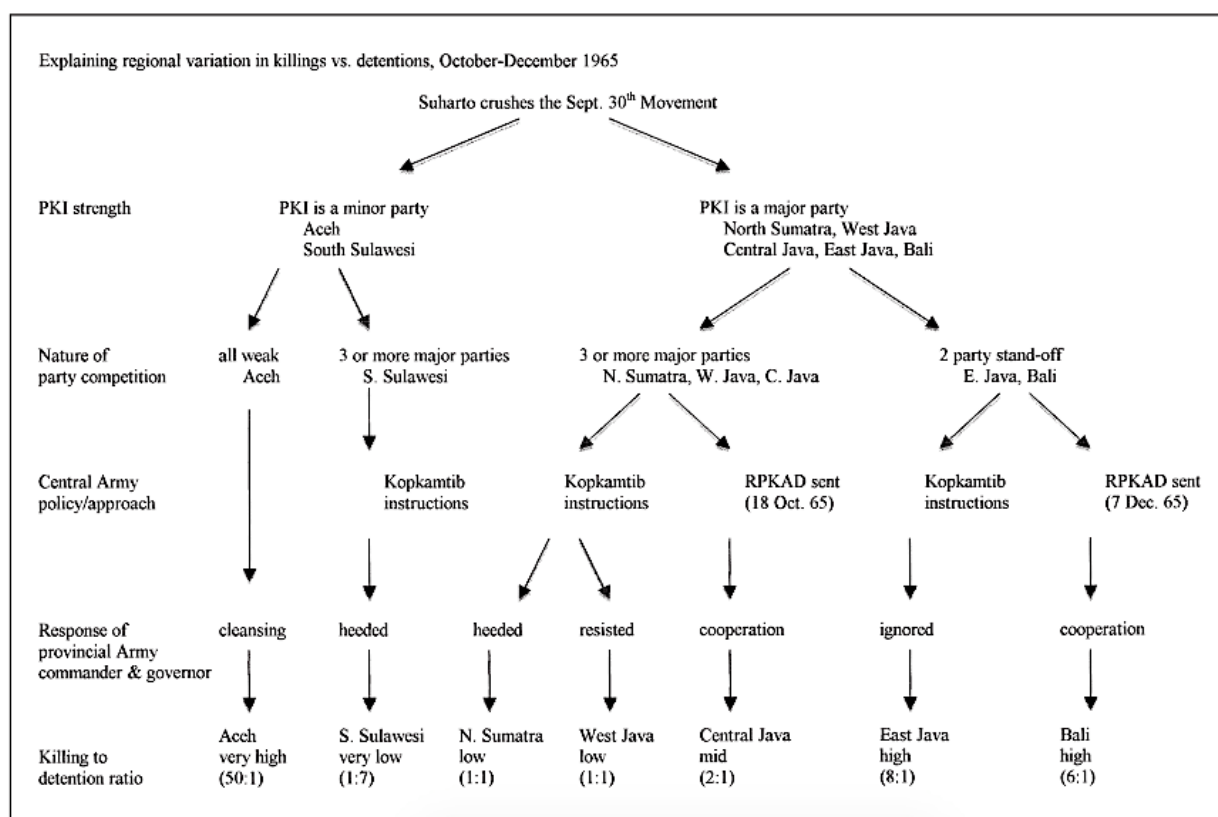


Figure 2 – Killing to detention ratio in various regions of Indonesia<sup>219</sup>

There also exist quantitative justifications for the importance of elite rivalry in 1965. Kammen and Zakaria's extensive analysis of political competition on each island provide statistical proof for the pertinence of intra-elite rivalry theory to the Indonesian case. Their findings suggest a positive correlation between the scale of mass violence and the intensity of elite rivalries during three months after the coup attempt (see Figure 2).<sup>220</sup> The authors measure the intensity of violence through a killing to detention ratio for each region; results show that the ratio, thus the degree of violence, was much higher in East Java and Bali which experienced "a two-party standoff" and saw the highest levels of intra-elite competition.<sup>221</sup> Areas such as South Sulawesi, North Sumatra, West Java and Central Java where political challenges occurred between more than three groups faced lower levels of violence due to the mitigating effect of more political divisions, and hence less intense elite rivalry.<sup>222</sup> The authors consider Aceh, which also had an extremely high killing to detention ratio, as an exception due to an entirely local nature of mass violence with no central organization by the

<sup>219</sup> Kammen and Zakaria, 455.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid, 456.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid, 455 – 456.

Suharto camp.<sup>223</sup>

As has been noted, the military's persistent coup attempts, propaganda efforts, creation of out- and ingroups and careful plans to remove all political opponents show that the Suharto camp's willingness to secure its position at a time of rivalries formed a prominent motivation for mass violence. The positive correlation between severe elite rivalry between two actors and a higher probability of killings also reaffirms the suitability of inter-elite rivalry theory for the Indonesian case.

## VI. Summary of Observations & Conclusion

---

Through violent pressures on farmers, the mass killings enabled the military to transition Indonesia's agriculture into a more profitable sector than what it had been under Sukarno. Army officials were also able to use prisoners acquired in the mass detentions as free labor. However, while the military would achieve large economic gains in the long term through enhanced capitalism and corruption in the 1970s and the 1980s, the immediate short-term economic gains from mass violence through agricultural changes remained too limited to qualify as a motivation for mass violence.<sup>224</sup> Nevertheless, the precarious economic conditions under Sukarno as explained before, were necessitating a change in leadership; military officials were frustrated with exhaustive policies such as the war with Malaysia. Rather than the main reason for mass killings, the military's willingness to take control of the economy by cancelling other elite actors can therefore be suggested as an additional reason for increasing instabilities and intra-elite rivalries.

On the topic of foreign economic influences, American embrace of the Indonesian military had been evident since the 1950s through financial aid, training programs as well as support for a former coup attempt by the military in Sumatra in 1958. British officials were also willing to replace Sukarno with the purpose of putting an end to the ongoing conflict with Malaysia. Nationalization of oil was another motivation for outsiders to encourage an ousting of Sukarno. However, Western support for the military was primarily a form of soft power. While some indication of Australian involvement in propaganda efforts exists, it is difficult to qualify foreign forces' support for the military as an active arrangement of mass violence. Outsiders only began to provide the military forces with arms, funds and supplies after the mass killings had already been ongoing. In a similar manner with economic incentives, while

---

<sup>223</sup> Kammen and Zakaria, 444.

<sup>224</sup> See limitations of *Green Revolution* mentioned by Hammer, 320 – 322.

not foreign influence did not present a significant motivation for mass violence, foreign encouragements definitely provided the military with a sense of confidence and an impetus for their perpetration of violence.

Similar limitations also exist for Gerlach's participatory violence theory; citizen-led initiatives that stemmed from Indonesia's diverse character, appear to have had a degree of autonomy only at the height of mass violence and mostly with regards to the selection of victims. But the final stages of the killings revealed the military's increasing levels of central control over local actors. Local actors provided the military with significant help in eliminating the outgroup more effectively, but did not act as an independent reason for mass violence.

Finally, historical accounts showed that political rivalries had been an essential part of Indonesian politics since independence. Actors such as NU, PNI, PKI, the military and the Sukarnoist faction had been experiencing periodic instances of conflict and non-genocidal competition. The foremost rivalry occurred between the Indonesian military and the national government; this was visible in the sporadic coup attempts and rebellions by various parts of the military throughout the 1950s. While not qualifying as distinct explanations, the above-mentioned intensification of financial problems, military's economic incentives and increases in foreign support for the army in the 1960s, offer reasons for why the military would have felt the momentum to pursue genocidal consolidation and to efficiently eradicate its rivals after October 1965. The military's use of extensive propaganda and purges in order to create an outgroup (communists) and an ingroup (Sukarnoist members of elite), as well as the military elite's increasingly top-down control of local actors in the final stages of the violence with the purpose of achieving intra-group consolidation, show that van der Maat's theory provides the most comprehensive explanation for the Indonesian case.

Academically, the relevance of this study is that van der Maat's original explanation can also be applied to other cases of indiscriminate killings where ideological explanations are not relevant. Limitations include an over-reliance on secondary sources due to limited availability of primary sources on the topic. Another restraint is the broad focus. Analysis of mass violence in Indonesia in general, presents an area too large for the scope of this thesis. In a future study, a smaller region or a single army district should be chosen in order to achieve a more thorough analysis. Further studies can also concentrate on rivalries not among different actors, but within a single entity; for example, a more detailed analysis of rivalries among

various sections within the military can provide us with further insights into the organization of mass violence.

The subject of anti-communist violence continues to be a taboo in contemporary Indonesia even though the consequences of mass violence are still visible today. Indonesia's current national economy is characterized with severe inequalities, the origins of which can be traced back to the mass killings; the current "politico-business oligarchy" in the country continues to consist of many beneficiaries of the period of mass violence.<sup>225</sup> Mass killings had enabled both military officials and colonial-era elites to reclaim more important positions under Suharto's leadership through their collaboration with the army during the killings.<sup>226</sup> As mentioned before, another important societal significance of the killings in 1965-1966 is their repetition in East Timor only a decade later.<sup>227</sup> The similarities between the two cases show that an understanding of Suharto regime's strategies and motivations in 1965-1966 can allow us to recognize the signs for emerging indiscriminate violence in Indonesia in the future.

---

<sup>225</sup> McNaughton, 300 – 302.

<sup>226</sup> Robison and Hadiz, 63.

<sup>227</sup> Thaler, 217.



## VII. Bibliography

---

- Anderton, Charles H. "Choosing Genocide: Economic Perspectives On The Disturbing Rationality Of Race Murder." *Defence and Peace Economics* 21.5-6 (2010): 459 – 486. doi: 10.1080/10242694.2010.513478. Web.
- Beach, Derek, and Rasmus Brun Pedersen. *Process-tracing Methods Foundations and Guidelines*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2013. Web.
- Booth, Anne. *Economic Change in Modern Indonesia: Colonial and Post-colonial Comparisons*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. Print.
- Cribb, Robert. "Genocide in Indonesia, 1965-1966." *Journal of Genocide Research* 3.2 (2001): 219 – 239. Print.
- "Definition of Structural Adjustment." *Investopedia*. Web.  
<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/structural-adjustment.asp>. Accessed 1 December 2017.
- Djakababa, Yosef. "The Initial Purging Policies after the 1965 Incident at Lubang Buaya." *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 32.3 (2013): 11 – 36. Web.
- Farid, Hilmar. "Indonesia's Original Sin: Mass Killings and Capitalist Expansion, 1965–66." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 6.1 (2005): 3 – 16. doi: 10.1080/1462394042000326879. Web.

Fealy, Greg, and Katharine McGregor. "East Java and the Role of Nahdlatul Ulama in the 1965-66 Anti-communist Violence." *The Contours of Mass Violence in Indonesia. 1965-68*, edited by Douglas Kammen and Katharine McGregor, Asian Studies Association of Australia in association with University of Hawai'i Press Honolulu, 2012, p. 104 – 130. Print.

Gerlach, Christian. *Extremely Violent Societies: Mass Violence in the Twentieth-Century World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Print.

Hammer, Mathias. "The Indonesian Killings and Economic Redistributions: A Reply to Hilmar Farid." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 16.2 (2015): 316 – 326. doi: 10.1080/14649373.2015.1037094. Web.

Hammer, Mathias. "The Organisation of the Killings and the Interaction between State and Society in Central Java, 1965." *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 32.3 (2013): 37 – 62. Web.

Harff, Barbara. "No Lessons Learned from the Holocaust? Assessing Risks of Genocide and Political Mass Murder since 1955." *American Political Science Review* 97.1 (2003): 57 – 73. doi: 10.1017/S0003055403000522. Web.

Henry, Adam Hughes. "The Role of Propaganda During the Indonesian Massacres." *ISAA Review (Journal of the Independent Scholars Association of Australia)* 13.1 (2014): 85 – 105. Available at <http://search.informit.com.au.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/documentSummary;dn=440400092293422;res=IELHSS>. Web.

Jenkins, David. "The Evolution of Indonesian Army Doctrinal Thinking: The Concept of Dwifungsi." *Asian Journal of Social Science* 11.1 (1983): 15 – 30. doi: 10.1163/080382483X00103. Web.

Jenkins, David, and Douglas Kammen. "The Army Para-commando Regiment and the Reign of Terror in Central Java and Bali." *The Contours of Mass Violence in Indonesia 1965-68*, edited by Douglas Kammen and Katharine McGregor, Asian Studies Association of Australia in association with University of Hawai'i Press Honolulu, 2012, p. 75 – 103. Print.

Kammen, Douglas and Faizah Zakaria. "Detention in Mass Violence." *Critical Asian Studies* 44:3 (2012): 441-466. doi: 10.1080/14672715.2012.711979. Web.

Maat, Eelco van der. "Genocidal Consolidation: Final Solutions to Elite Rivalry." (September 1, 2015). Web. Available at <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2665673>.

McNaughton, Chris. "Reading the Mass Violence in Indonesia 1965–1966 as a Form of Primitive Accumulation." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 16.2 (2015): 292 – 305. doi: 10.1080/14649373.2015.1037086. Web.

Mehr, Nathaniel. "Reaction and Slaughter: Indonesia 1965-66." *Arms and the People: Radical Popular Movements and the Military from the Paris Commune to the Arab Spring*, edited by Mike Gonzalez and Houman Barekat. London: Pluto, 2012, p. 232 – 250. Web.

Midlarsky, Manus I. *The Killing Trap: Genocide in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Web.

- Murshed, Syed Mansoob and Mohammad Zulfan Tadjoeeddin. "Long-Term Economic Development in the Presence of an Episode of Mass Killing: The Case of Indonesia, 1965-1966." *Economic Aspects of Genocides, Other Mass Atrocities, and Their Prevention*, edited by Charles H. Anderton and Jurgen Brauer, Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 481 – 509. Web.
- Robison, Richard and Vedi R. Hadiz. *Reorganising Power in Indonesia: The Politics of Oligarchy in an Age of Markets*. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004. Print.
- Robison, Richard. *Indonesia: The Rise of Capital*. Asian Studies Association of Australia: Southeast Asia Publications Series, 1986. Print.
- Roosa, John. *New Perspectives in South-East Asian Studies: Pretext for Mass Murder: The September 30th Movement and Suharto's Coup d'État in Indonesia*. Madison, US: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006. Print.
- Roosa, John. "The September 30<sup>th</sup> Movement: The Aporias of the Official Narratives." *The Contours of Mass Violence in Indonesia. 1965-68*, edited by Douglas Kammen and Katharine McGregor, Asian Studies Association of Australia in association with University of Hawai'i Press Honolulu, 2012, p. 25 – 49. Web.
- Shaw, Martin. *Genocide and International Relations: Changing Patterns in the Transitions of the Late Modern World*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013. Web.
- Simpson, Bradley R. "International Dimensions of the 1965-68 Violence in Indonesia." *The Contours of Mass Violence in Indonesia. 1965-68*, edited by Douglas Kammen and Katharine McGregor, Asian Studies Association of Australia in association with University of Hawai'i Press Honolulu, 2012, p. 50 – 74. Print.

Simpson, Bradley R. *Economists with Guns: Authoritarian Development and U.S.-Indonesia Relations, 1960-1968*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008. Print.

Subritzky, John. "Britain, Konfrontasi, and the End of Empire in Southeast Asia, 1961–65." *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 28.3 (2000): 209 – 27. Web.

Thaler, Kai. "Foreshadowing Future Slaughter: From the Indonesian Killings of 1965-1966 to the 1974-1999 Genocide in East Timor." *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* 7.2 (2012): 204 – 222. Web. DOI: 10.3138/gsp.7.2/3.204

Valentino, Benjamin A. *Final Solutions: Mass Killing and Genocide in the Twentieth Century*. Ithaca, NY [etc.]: Cornell University Press, 2004. Cornell Studies in Security Affairs. Web.