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Understanding Mass-violence Through the Thinking of Horkheimer and Adorno – The Case of Cambodia 1975-1979

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LB

In memoriam

of the families of my grandparents - Becker, Gelernter, Seikevitz and Trachtenberg, and their extended families, who were murdered by starvation, gas and fire, by willing murderers, in Auschwitz and Belzec death camps, in the ghettos of Łódź, Mátészalka, and Tomaszów Lubelski, in the villages of Ukraine, and in the labor camps and Gulags of the USSR.

May we one day be truly able to make sure that this never happens again.

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Abstract

Why does mass-violence happen *at all*? This paper takes the first steps to establish a model to answer this question and explain extreme mass-violence as a phenomenon. This paper seeks to fill a gap in the field of research, in which models exist to explain the phenomenon of violence, with cases of genocide being seen as problems or exceptions, and as such researched as individual cases rather than as part of a wider phenomenon. This paper uses a selected part of the writings of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer to establish the basis for a model to explain extreme-cases of mass-violence. The Five-Pillar Model includes 5 social elements - (1) Culture Industry (2) Mass-Media (3) Propaganda (4) Dehumanization (5) Ideological Awareness. When these pillars all reach a high enough level of severity, conditions enable elites to use scapegoating - to divert revolutionary attention to a specific puppet group, resulting in extreme mass-violence. The Five-Pillar Model is then used to analyze an empirical case - Cambodia 1975-1979 and shows how these pillars all existed in an extreme form in that case. This paper presents scapegoating as a possible explanation for the Cambodian case.

1. Introduction

In his 9th thesis of the *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, Walter Benjamin writes:

A Klee painting named “Angelus Novus” shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned towards the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.¹

Who is the angel of history? What is it that he sees? Does he see life for what it is, or is he what many people call a ‘cynic’ or ‘dark-seer’? The angel sees only piles of destruction and death; Are these piles only mountain tops, coming through the clouds of history, areas that stick out

¹ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 257-258.

in the rich history of human existence, or are these piles of corpses that which is the whole of history? Is this wreckage all there is to see or what the angel chooses to focus on? These are some of the main questions that had troubled members of the Frankfurt School, like Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Erich Fromm and others, as well as Walter Benjamin himself.² For now, these questions shall serve as an intellectual background for my writings here, and I'll come back to these questions at the end of the paper.

The Holocaust, the Armenian genocide, Cambodia 1975-1979, Rwanda 1994 - these are the most obvious cases that come to mind when we think of the term 'Genocide'. Why does genocide happen? How does it come to be that events of such terrible magnitude of mass-violence, murder, rape and torture, happen over and over again? Are we not in a point today that we have the tools to prevent these from happening? These are key questions that have vexed philosophers, researchers and thinkers through the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st. Generally speaking, there are two possible answers for these questions. The first, more common, answer is that these cases are a 'failure' of society. In other words, that in a 'normal' society,³ cases of mass-violence are not supposed to happen. The second answer is that mass-violence is an organic part of human society, culture, of the human condition. The nature of the relationship between society and violence is many times an implicit one. This nature is not made explicit when an answer (be it a theory, a model etc.) is introduced, but is presupposed nonetheless. Where does this implicit element come up then? When addressing a specific case, be it a large one or a local one, explanations related to the first answer - 'mass-violence as failure' - will look at what case-specific conditions – economic, social, political, geopolitical and so on, are relevant as causes for mass-violence. Explanations related to the second answer – 'mass-violence as success' - would instead ask 'why does mass-violence happen *at all?*', and the answer should then be that there is a common denominator, something basic that human-beings share, beyond the societal structure. From a methodological perspective, we could say that in the context of the second answer, there is a presupposed bigger, higher-level structure in place to explain mass-violence that isn't case specific, and that when we then investigate a specific case, we should do it in the context of this higher-level thinking, rather than within the case's own context only. This all also means, and this is a key point, that these two answers still agree that each case *does* indeed contain specific circumstances, causes,

² Benjamin, an unofficial member of sorts of the Frankfurt School, had always shared many philosophical and intellectual interests with other, 'official' members of the Frankfurt School, a similar disposition towards the writing style required by modern philosophy, as well as being a friend of many members.

³ Whatever the term 'normal' would mean for each researcher or thinker or in the context of each different model or theory.

individual elite personalities and so on. However, while the first group of models, related to the first answer, focuses on the sufficient, case-specific conditions for each occurrence of mass-violence, the second group of models, related to the second answer, tries to establish the necessary conditions for all cases. This is the key difference at the highest level of analysis and in my opinion, a missing part in the contemporary field of Genocide and mass-violence research - a gap in research which this paper aims to fill. While most explanatory models remain in the first group, looking for sufficient case-specific conditions, there is currently no satisfactory model aimed at finding the necessary conditions to explain cases of mass-violence as a phenomenon.⁴

The majority of existing models for explaining cases of mass-violence belong to the first group - viewing mass-violence as 'failure'. The thinking of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, the key figures in the Frankfurt School, belongs to the second group – seeing mass-violence as a 'success' of society. In this sense, this thinking can provide an alternative to existing models, one that successfully answers the bigger question presented earlier. The basis for Horkheimer and Adorno's entire intellectual project, a small part of which we touch upon in this paper, is the attempt to answer this very question that I have just now presented: why does mass-violence happen *at all*? Why is it that mankind seems to become more moral and more enlightened, while at same time violence escalates, becoming worse and worse? According to Horkheimer and Adorno, the answer to this question, originally posed towards the Holocaust and the rise of Fascism and Nazism in Europe during the 1920's and 30's, wasn't in the particular details of the case, but in the place of these details within a bigger structure of humanity. This, in a nutshell, is the core subject of their book *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. I will provide some more background and intellectual context for the book and the people behind further on.

In this paper then, I would like to take the first steps towards introducing a model to explain cases of extreme mass-violence as a phenomenon. The model is based on the philosophical concepts and social structures introduced by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Due to methodological and practical constraints, this paper focuses on the social concepts and structures that are part of Horkheimer and Adorno's thinking. In this paper, I introduce the key philosophical concepts they are using as well, serving to provide background, to help us better understand the intellectual origins and history of the model, as well as to place it in an intellectual context. This adapted model is then applied to a case study

⁴ There have been attempts, for example: Fein, *Genocide: a Sociological Perspective*. I discuss the fields of violence, mass-violence and Genocide research in chapter 2.

– Cambodia (Democratic Kampuchea - DK) under Khmer Rouge (KR) rule in 1975-1979. In the context of my words from before regarding the kinds of questions asked and answers given in research, we can now say that this paper views the case as an exemplar of a larger explanatory model, while focusing on specific sociological components, in the model as well as in the case, and induces from this case as to the effectiveness of the overall model, be it as partial as it stands now. In attempting to carry on with the thinking of Horkheimer and Adorno, this background is an important part of the model itself. At the very heart of their thinking, as we shall see, is the co-existence of material being and idealistic spirit. Without this philosophical basis, parts of the model would seem arbitrary, both in content and in the decision to present them over other possibilities.

How do we continue from here? I now turn to address several key concepts that are important for understanding the following parts of the paper. Next, I discuss this paper's research questions, its goals, as well as its limits. The following part after that deals with the current status of Genocide and mass-violence research, as well as previous research done on the case of Democratic Kampuchea (DK). This paper then proceeds to its two main chapter: in the first of these two chapters, I introduce the main components of my Five-Pillars Model – five concepts adapted from Horkheimer and Adorno's thinking. The second of these two main chapters is the first application of this model to an empirical case study, namely, Democratic Kampuchea under Khmer Rouge (KR) rule in the years 1975 – 1979. Following these two main chapters is the conclusions chapter, in which I assess the process so far, introduce my conclusions from this paper, reflect on this paper's contribution to the fields of research, as well as set goals for further expansion of the model.

Terms and Concepts

I'll now describe and define several key concepts I use (or not use, in the case of Genocide) in this paper. It is important to clearly introduce my position about these terms, as they are critical for understanding the model, for further development of the model in the next chapters, as well as for pinpointing the place of this model in the field of current research and in the tradition of intellectual history. I am discussing these terms prior to delving into the heart of the model and addressing my research questions, as these terms provide additional clarity and context for the entire paper.

Why Not Just Say ‘Genocide’?⁵

The term ‘Genocide’ was defined by the United Nations Genocide Convention (UNGC) from 1948.⁶ This definition arguably has its pros and cons, but is generally used as a basis for research or for other, different definitions of the term genocide, used by researchers in the field. In this paper, I don’t use this term to describe the case of Cambodia in the years 1975 – 1979. As someone who firmly supports a moral position, according to which neutrality plays into the hands of perpetrators, I find that it is important to clear this issue up now, as in our field of research, this isn’t merely a semantic or conceptual discussion, but considered to have moral and practical implications as well. According to the UNGC, this case is mostly not defined as genocide.⁷ Another reason for not using the term Genocide to describe the case is that in the field of mass-violence research, researchers use different terms to describe the same cases.⁸ These different terms are the result of different explanatory models, their relation to the UNGC, as well as their individual points of view and moral positions. With that said, this paper doesn’t deal with the definitions of the case. My purpose at this point, as I’ve stated, is to introduce a model that can explain cases of extreme mass-violence. Whether this case is referred to as ‘Genocide’ or as something else, be it as generally important a discussion as it is, is not my point here. From this perspective, my choice to not refer to this case as genocide doesn’t mean I take a neutral or silent moral stance towards the events, or that I am trying to adopt a position similar to another model using similar terms or concepts. It merely means that in this paper, I would like to focus on the model and its empirical application to the case and not on other topics.

Using the Term ‘Ideology’

The term ‘ideology’ bears a double meaning in this model, so I believe it requires some clearing-up. Ideology, in the thinking of Horkheimer and Adorno, as well as how I use it in this paper, isn’t only a theoretical concept. In many ways, this paper is a case which demonstrates how

⁵ See a discussion on this topic in: Semelin, *The Political Uses*.

⁶ *United Nations Genocide Convention*.

⁷ Most victims were Khmer, and were neither targeted as a group as such, nor were they part of a national, racial, ethnic or religious group being targeted. For this reason, Khmer victims aren’t genocide victims according to the UNGC. Some smaller groups, however, for example the Vietnamese and Buddhist monks, could be defined as victims of genocide under the convention, assuming a clear intention to destroy them as a group is established. According to my own definitions, into which I won’t be going, the case of Cambodia in the years 1975 – 1979 is indeed genocide and should be treated as such, in research and practice. Yale University’s Genocide Studies Program, the most important source for research and data on the Cambodian case, refers to it as “The Cambodian Genocide” (Yale University, *Genocide Studies Program* website).

⁸ I go into some examples of this in chapter 2.

ideology permeates and affects the material world, and how ideology is in turn affected by the material world.

The first use of ideology I employ here is similar to a Marxist one – incorporating the non-material elements of society, for example politics, culture and art. As we shall see when we expand upon this in the chapter discussing the model, this thinking doesn't merely incorporate material and ideological components – its components are both material and ideological *at the same time*. This dual nature, which in essence, is true to many things, many parts of the *Conditio Humana*, creates a tension, present throughout Horkheimer and Adorno's thinking.⁹

The second use of the term ideology I employ here is the more daily one, and that is when speaking of a set of ideas, a thinking, that a person or group have and are, to some degree presenting, following etc. As a general note, I try and make this distinction as clear as possible when using the term in the paper itself.

Elites and Their Place in Cases of Mass-Violence

In this paper, I use the term 'elites' regularly. Elites are those who drive others into action. In current research terms, this model is a macro-level, or top-down model.¹⁰ In the context of our discussion here, I define those in this paper by their position in the power-structure of the case and by their actions. Elites then are organizers, drivers, planners and promoters of others' actions. They are leaders not by a formal designation,¹¹ but by their impact on the situation. In this specific case, I mainly use this term to describe Pol Pot, and sometimes other high-level DK officials. Sometimes the term could be replaced by others, like 'leaders' or by the names of those specific ones I'm referring to.

Research Questions

As mentioned before, the purpose of this paper is to take the first steps towards a model explaining extreme mass-violence in human society as a phenomenon. This model is based on the thinking of Horkheimer and Adorno, presented in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, and includes

⁹ This tension shows up, for example, in the relation between text and subject, a key tension that needs to be acknowledged, in my opinion, when using this model. However, seeing as that it isn't directly connected to our discussions in this paper, I've left it to be expanded on in the future, as the model itself expands.

¹⁰ I expand on these definitions in chapter 2.

¹¹ Pol Pot himself, for example, wasn't designated the leader of DK or CPK, while he was in fact the de-facto leader and decision maker. At the same time, former-king Sihanouk was the formal head of state in DK, but had in fact wielded no political power.

necessary adaptations for our time and taking into account developments in intellectual thinking and research.

In this paper then, I would like to address the following key questions:

1. How can we explain the case of the mass-murder and violence, committed by the Khmer Rouge in Democratic Kampuchea, during the period between 1975-1979, through a model based on the thinking of Horkheimer and Adorno, as presented in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*?

This is my main research question. The model I am introducing here, carrying on with Horkheimer and Adorno's thinking, is focused on the top of the power structure. Why was this case chosen as the case study for this paper? Horkheimer and Adorno's original ideas are referring to the Holocaust. While they don't provide a full analysis of the case, they do base the majority of their discussions in the ideological part on the Holocaust. While their analysis then of that case is partial at best, the Holocaust is still too wide and diverse as a case for a paper of this size to properly explore. Next in line then are the three biggest cases¹² of mass-violence in the 20th century, after the Holocaust – the Armenian Genocide during World War I, Cambodia 1975 – 1979, Rwanda 1994. All three can be good test cases for our model here. All three have parts that are easier to apply our model to and parts that are more difficult. The choice to go with Cambodia 1975 – 1979 was at some level a personal one, on the other hand, it also has, at first glance, an interesting mixture of strong ideological components and a seemingly almost complete lack of mass-media components. These make this case an interesting and challenging first application for the model, an application that challenges the model and doesn't easily lend itself to empirical application.

A case of this magnitude, which takes place throughout an entire country for nearly 4 years, requires leadership, coordination, communication and a guiding ideology. For these reasons, my answer to this question focuses on the top-level elites of DK – the leadership of the Communist party (CPK), which were the same people leading the KR and the state. The implicit and explicit ideology of these elites is the driving force of what happened in DK. Elites, and especially Pol Pot, brought forth a vision they sought to bring to life, and acted in accordance

¹² I didn't include Stalin in the USSR and Mao on China in this list, although they are, according to any count, the two largest mass-murderers in human history. Their cases are different ones though, spanning many years and areas, and are usually researched, at least in Stalin's case, as a few separate cases rather than one large case. In Mao's case, intention is the main problem. And so, these two cases are generally separate cases in relation to the ones generally considered as genocides, or a similar definition which includes intent as a main component.

with this idea. They sought to create their army of perpetrators, ideologically – and as a result of that ideology, also racially – homogenous warriors to control a vast majority of what were in essence faceless, nameless working drones, whose sole purpose in life would be to live and die for what the elites envisioned as DK's independent, self-supporting existence. The vision of these elites included not only plans for the state in those borders which it had then, but also included irredentist aspirations for control over what they saw as areas that were historically theirs. In this case as well, CPK planned and executed attempts to fulfill this vision.

To answer this main question, I will answer several secondary questions in this paper:

2. What are the main philosophical and sociological elements comprising Horkheimer and Adorno's thinking, as it is presented in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*?

To establish the background and intellectual basis for this model, I introduce several key, basic elements of Horkheimer and Adorno's thinking, as they appear in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. At the philosophical level, this thinking has several base assumptions that are key to understanding the model and through that model, the actions of elites, which have a critical effect on the overall level of violence in empirical cases.

3. How can we adapt this thinking into an explanatory model for mass-violence?
4. What are the social structures, ideological and material, that are present in societies in cases of mass-violence according to Horkheimer and Adorno?

These are the two main questions I answer in chapter 4. In Horkheimer and Adorno's thinking, everything has structure. But when we say that, it doesn't mean that a structure has to be conceivable, understandable, visible, perceivable, organized and so on, from a human perspective. We try and better understand, better reveal structures by creating models, to organize and simplify the world for us. This is derived from the structure of the world and our limitations as human beings. This is what this paper, continuing Horkheimer and Adorno's line of thinking, is attempting to do. In this instance, the model isn't a model to explain the case of DK, it is a model to explain mass-violence as a phenomenon, and so the idea is to find those social structures and ideas that would be general enough to be relevant for as many cases of mass-violence as possible, while at the same time be detailed enough to allow for a case by case analysis, the first of which is done in this paper.

5. What are the social structures, ideological and material, that are present in our case study here, Cambodia under KR rule?

Chapter 5 is an empirical case analysis using The Five-Pillar Model. The goal of using the model for this analysis is to (1) offer an alternative explanation to the case of DK and (2) test the model. The empirical analysis is based on the 5 pillars of the model – Culture industry, Mass-Media, Propaganda, Dehumanization, Ideological Awareness. These five pillars (presented as four, as in this case, I’ve merged Culture Industry and Mass-Media into one section in the empirical analysis) then converge into a final point – Atomization, required to fully understand all others as the culmination of all other elements, resulting in scapegoating. I go through each pillar of the model and demonstrate how it appeared in the case of DK. This analysis of the empirical case is in turn used to enhance and expand the model.

6. What conclusions can we draw from this process, that would assist in further developing the model, as well as using it to explain other cases of genocide and mass-violence?

Lastly, I conduct a discussion on the result of my empirical analysis. I assess what is needed to expand the model further and to include a higher-level of analysis, that of the human condition. I examine the explanatory and analytic limits of the model as it currently stands, and what I can learn from the model’s application to this case towards improving the overall model and to assess its contribution to research in field of mass-violence and in the case of DK. The use of the analysis of one case of extreme mass-violence to analyze another one isn’t an obvious by any means, and the possibility of doing this, as well as possible problems related, should be addressed.

Why This Model?

In my opinion, genocide research as an idea embodies, in many ways, the thinking of Horkheimer and Adorno, as well as other thinkers associated with the Frankfurt School. In its heart, Genocide and mass-violence research isn’t ‘only’ about historical knowledge and facts. In many ways, it is a field based on moral presuppositions – that in the deepest moral sense, these cases we are researching have something extraordinarily terrible about them. We are researching these cases because we want to alleviate, or even prevent, the suffering of human-beings in the future. The basic questions that trouble Horkheimer and Adorno throughout their body of work are very relevant to our field of research: Why does violence keep escalating, seemingly in contradiction to the development of human society? How can we then solve this problem of escalating mass-violence? Horkheimer and Adorno didn’t only try and define the problem, they also made attempts to offer solutions. Intellectually following this spirit, this model becomes very relevant to the field of genocide and mass-violence research. In the heart of it is a strong, deep concern for human beings and for the path that human society seems to

be taking. While each case of extreme mass-violence has its own characteristics, this model tries to further the scope of research and to find a common structural denominator shared by all of the relevant cases, in light of these moral guidelines.

2. Current and Previous Research on Genocide, Mass-Violence and Violence

The purpose of this Chapter is to review the current state of affairs in the fields of mass-violence and genocide research, including some of the leading models and theories, as well as existing research on the Cambodian case. In addition, this chapter addresses some of the key issues and gaps in the field of research, which in turn make this paper relevant, as it seeks to fill these gaps.

Current research in the field could first be divided into two main groups: the first group looks at violence, or mass-violence, as a wide phenomenon, and then generally regards extreme cases, such as genocides, as either extreme examples that don't fit all of the established parts of models very well, or as flat-out exceptions, which are then, in research terms, essentially ignored as part of the phenomenon of mass-violence.¹³ Most studies on mass-violence assume that elites in these cases are rational actors, and these definitions cannot be generally applied to cases of a more extreme nature.¹⁴ The second group of studies focuses on cases of extreme mass-violence and as such, those researches are usually focused on a single case, its specific reasons, conditions and so on, not as part of a wider phenomenon, but as a single instance. Current research on the Cambodian case belongs to this group. This paper resides in the space between the two sides and seeks to establish a model that connects the two groups – a model that treats cases of extreme mass-violence as part of a phenomenon, that is to a degree separate, or at least, more extreme than other forms of violence and mass-violence, while still taking into account some of the specific elements of each case of mass-violence.

From a methodological point of view, this model is an interdisciplinary one. This is the nature of research of genocide and mass-violence. The field of research itself is a combination of

¹³ Dulić brings up this discussion from a different point of view in his article, saying that attempt to find similarities in cases of genocide, especially when in relation with the Holocaust, the result being prevention actions becoming impossible, seeing as genocides are inherently different, in his opinion, from mass-violence in general. (Dulić, *Mass Killing*, 255) This refers to exactly the problem I bring up in this paper, that the larger cases of extreme mass-violence cannot be analysed as part of a phenomenon when the level of analysis is phenomenological, geopolitical or other similar ones. At these levels, these cases are far too different.

¹⁴ This rationality generally means that extreme violence isn't part of elites' ideology, and that they choose to engage or not engage in violence following an economic calculation. In other words, they won't initiate violence if they would economically lose from it. This view of elites as rational stands in stark contrast to the common view, and empirical evidence, of elite behaviour in cases such as the Holocaust, Rwanda 1994, or in our case of DK here.

history, social-science, state-science, law studies, philosophy, psychology and more. This paper then, by the nature of its intellectual surroundings, is connected to several disciplines. In this context, the focus of this paper is in intellectual history. It deals with the intellectual base and lineage of the model presented within it, and in many ways, with the relation between ideology and the material world, with the history and effect of a social and political structure permeated by ideology on an empirical case study. I'll now examine the two fields of research – mass-violence and genocide, to better explain the differences between them, the gap in research that my model seeks to fill, and the place that my model inhabits in these two fields of research.

Macro- and Micro-Level Analysis

Some researchers focus on violence as originating mainly from one of the levels of the social structure. In these types of analyses, there are two main levels of mass-violence, leading to two basic research models. These levels are the macro-level and micro-level. Macro-level violence leads to top-down research models, meaning these explain violence as mainly the result of elite decisions and actions. In these models, the perpetrators on the ground are executing orders, and are affected greatly by elite ideology. Conditions on the ground where the violence takes place take secondary place in significance in comparison with elite ideology or the nature of the perpetrators' society and culture. As a general rule, these models are usually used to explain the larger cases of mass-violence. Ben Kiernan's research on the Cambodian case, which I will shortly present, can be seen as mostly focusing on this level of explanations, as well as most other researches on large cases of mass-violence.¹⁵

Micro-level models explain violence as originating from the ground level of the perpetrators, and are then referred to as bottom-up models. In these models, elites are mainly reacting to opinions and actions on the ground, hypothesizing, for example, that certain orders are given by elites because these orders are what those elites think that their people want to hear or do. Alternatively, the models claim that violence happens not as a result of a guiding authority or ideology, but rather as a result of the individual psychology of the perpetrators on location, or as a result of local circumstances, conditions etc. The occurrence of violence, or its level of intensity, is explained by what happens to the perpetrators on the ground, for example due to trauma, peer-pressure, fear from attack or retaliation and so on. These models are usually used to explain local massacres or smaller cases of mass-violence. They cannot, generally speaking,

¹⁵ Examples include: Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, Valentino, *Final Solutions*, Zukier, *Situational Determinants of Behavior*.

explain cases of a larger size because they cannot account for the organization and coordination needed for a large campaign of mass-violence.¹⁶

There are some models that explain violence as a balance between these two models – that there are both top and bottom reasons. That the occurrence, nature and level of intensity of violence is the result of the relations between the two levels, and not one of them being overly dominant compared to the other.¹⁷

Our model here can be defined as a top-down model, clearly focused on elites as the driving force of extreme mass-violence. With that said, elites cannot execute their plans without a large enough force of ground-level perpetrators, which must be motivated and willing to enact violence. This requires the model to account for this ground-level part of the process, as it in fact does.

Models Researching Violence and Mass-Violence

In general, we can divide these models into 3 categories, or groups. Some models can be associated with more than one category, but generally speaking, most models favor one type of explanation or reason as a main cause for violence over others, even if they suggest more than one type of such explanation.

Descriptive and situational models – The largest group of models and explanations, these models focus on phenomenological analysis of cases. In other words, they examine cases of mass-violence and provide a typological analysis of, for example, types of perpetrators, or bystanders, or conditions, that have happened or were related to these cases. These models generally focus on recounting happenings as the main level of comparative analysis or as a tool for predicting the future occurrence of mass-violence.¹⁸

Structural models - In this type of explanation, writers see mass-violence as facilitated or allowed by society or the geopolitical power-structure. These models are the closest to Horkheimer and Adorno's thinking, in that they ask a wider question, a question about the power-structure in which these cases take place, which allows this violence to happen in the first place. In the terms we've used earlier, they don't see mass-violence as a failure of society,

¹⁶ Examples include: Dulić, *Ethnic Violence*, 91-92, Kelman, *Violence without Moral*.

¹⁷ Examples include: Bourke, *War and Violence*, Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence*, Zukier, *Situational Determinants of Behavior*.

¹⁸ Examples include: Boix, *Economic Roots of Civil Wars*, Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Fearon and Laitin, *Ethnicity, Insurgency*, Hegre et al, *Globalization and Internal Conflict*, Mann, *The Dark Side*, Midlarsky, *The Killing trap*, Naimark, *Fires of Hatred*.

but as a success. In this context they ask about those societies that *do* allow mass-violence - why are they doing that? Why do these societies in particular enable mass-violence?¹⁹

Rational choice models – These models assume a great level of predictability in human behavior. Basically, that most people react in a similar way to similar situations. While this thinking exists throughout the vast majority research, these models assume an even higher level of rationality in human behavior in comparison with the other two groups. In the context of the research of mass-violence, as well as the currently common levels of analysis in research I've discussed – macro- and micro-levels, we could further divide this category into two groups - individual-level on the one hand and state-level on the other hand.²⁰

We'll now look at some key examples of current research and examine their place in the field, mainly in relation to this paper:

In his book “The Dark Side of Democracy – Explaining Ethnic Cleansing”, Michael Mann uses the term “Ethnic Cleansing” as his main term for cases of mass-violence, meaning that the majority of the population in a state tries, in essence, to make a minority “disappear” which doesn't necessarily entail killing the minority group. The removal of a group refers to the group as a whole, not just selected parts of it.²¹

The main point of relevance to this paper is that when Mann addresses DK, he does so in the context of what he calls “Communist Cleansings”, which, as he immediately clarifies, don't fit his model very well.²² Moreover, specifically where relevant to our case here, I would argue that Mann's basic approach to Cambodia, seeing it as a case of forced industrialization of an agrarian society, and that KR viewed the world through class-based ideology,²³ is inherently problematic. Also, Mann claims that in general, most killings committed by these “communist regimes” were unintentional and were a result of structural failures rather than a murderous ideology brought into action.²⁴ This approach then sees DK as an ideological case of mass-violence on the one hand, which is problematic for his model, but also not ideological enough

¹⁹Examples include: Bandura, *Moral Disengagement*, Bourke, *War and Violence*, Zukier, *Situational Determinants of Behavior*.

²⁰ Examples include, For the individual level: Zimbardo, *A Situationist Perspective*, Milgram, *Some Conditions of Obedience*, Leyens, *Retrospective and Prospective*, Leyens et al, *The Emotional Side*. For the state level: Posen, *The Security Dilemma*, Roe, *The Intrastate Security Dilemma*.

²¹ Mann, *The Dark Side*, 3.

²² Ibid, 318.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid, 319-321.

to actually commit so many murders, that were then mainly accidental in his opinion.²⁵ While weakening his model as potentially including extreme cases like DK, it strengthens his base assumption of elites in these cases as rational actors. In this context, when killings are seemingly the result of irrational actors, like in DK, they are attributed to failures in the system instead of intentional actions.²⁶ At this point, Mann's analysis of the case stands in contradiction to my analysis of it and in contradiction to researchers like Ben Kiernan.²⁷

According to Stathis Kalyvas, mass-violence is about two sides fighting for "sovereignty" – control over territory, and so the purpose of all sides in a conflict is to gain support from the population. This is a problematic argument to apply to extreme cases, at best.²⁸ Similarly to Mann's, as there is a strong assumption here that elites are rational actors and that killings are only a tool used when necessary and a goal on their own.

Kalyvas's main argument in this context is that the type of violence, i.e. if it's selective or indiscriminate, would indicate the perpetrator's intention – if merely to gain control, or to exterminate the victim group. In other words, he connects intention directly with result. This logic has obvious criticism, as for example, the perpetrator might be killing indiscriminately because it cannot identify the actual targets it needs to kill²⁹. In other words, selective killings indicate control being the purpose of the perpetrator, and that it has a good level of control over the area, while indiscriminate killings could indicate either the aim being control with a low level of it at present, or extermination intentions with a good level of control, required for extermination. This is another example of excluding extreme cases from models as exceptions or structural failures, as the Holocaust, for example, contains selective killings but isn't about control of territory, but about destroying the victims, Jews as an example group in this case.

Benjamin Valentino's main term is "mass-killing". He focuses on elites as organizers of mass-killings and not on the structure of society or group-specific definitions of perpetrators or victims. According to Valentino, mass-killings are initiated and executed by elites, which is a

²⁵ See also my discussion about starvation being intended or not in the Cambodian case, which is debated among researchers. I address this in the part about previous research on Cambodia.

²⁶ This connects to my discussion on researchers' reluctance to accept starvation in most cases as intentional. This discussion is presented in the conclusions chapter of this paper.

²⁷ Which I expand upon later on in this chapter, as well as in chapter 6, in the discussion about starvation and intention.

²⁸ This approach assumes there's a limit to the level of violence an actor would use – that limit being the level in which the actor would lose more support than it would gain. From a theoretical perspective, this assumes rational behavior that is inconsistent with ideologically-based killings. From an empirical perspective, this doesn't fit Nazi policy in occupied territories, or the behavior of the CPK government in DK, in our case, just as two clear examples.

²⁹ Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence*, 89.

similar idea to Horkheimer and Adorno's. These elites are many times not reliant on public support, but in fact act against popular opinion. In general, mass-killings are not perpetrated by regimes that are based on popular support. These murderous regimes don't rely on mass-participation but instead on specialized elite units to perpetrate mass-killings. This stands in contradiction to our model here, which as we shall see, assumes motivation and pacification of masses for extreme mass-violence to take place. Mass-killings can be either dispossessive, which means they are meant to take over something from the victims – either remove them from a territory to begin with or take over the territory as a goal and the killing being a means to an end, or they can coercive, meaning they are about controlling, pacifying a population or forcing it to cooperate or to stop supporting someone else.³⁰ This is then another example of a model assuming rational actors, as mass-violence isn't a goal in itself, but a means to an end. As a phenomenological analysis, this analysis cannot successfully explain certain extreme cases which include mass-participation by perpetrators, for example DK or Rwanda 1994.

Experiments like those conducted by Stanley Milgram³¹ and later on, Phillip Zimbardo³², about the individual psychology of 'normative' people, show that most people react similarly in similar situations. Nonetheless, some people don't, and actions, while similar, are not the same.³³ Researches like these have proven that in certain situation, especially involving isolation or group-pressure, most people respond to authority in a similar, conforming manner, even if the orders they receive from the authority make no sense or even contradict those people's moral beliefs. While these researches prove very well how easy it is to make ordinary people into perpetrators in specific, pressured situations, they cannot answer three critical questions: (1) What motivates the authority to instigate and commit violence? (2) How can we explain perpetrator behavior when there is no situational pressure, when there are other options for employment, for example, and 'ordinary men' act as perpetrators nonetheless? (3) Mass-murder, for example in DK, is ongoing, and perpetrators aren't continuously ordered to hurt others. Why do they act this way then? In other words, these researches focus on the ground-level of perpetrators, but cannot account for their behavior without the existence of top-level authority or of inherent violent tendencies in human-beings.

³⁰ Valentino, *Final Solutions*.

³¹ Milgram, *Some Conditions of Obedience*.

³² Zimbardo, *A Situationist Perspective*.

³³ Many examples of rescuers, people who most notably act against authority and a group, society and situational pressures, can be found for example in: Tec, *When Light Pierced*, as well as a discussion on rescuers and their unique self-perception and world-view in: Monroe, *Cracking the Code*.

Posen's Ethnic Security Dilemma, as well as Roe's expansion of it are, as the names suggest, about security. According to Posen, mass-violence is generally something that most actors will look to avoid. According to him, States value security above all. These are rational actors and as such, act in accordance with their security being their highest priority. The key term here is "relative power".³⁴ This means that what is enough for one state could be too much or too little for another in terms of military strength. Another couple of important base assumptions that Posen adds on top of what we've already mentioned is that (1) in modern warfare, it is very difficult to distinguish between offensive and defensive weapons, and (2) that in the context of modern warfare, offensive action is much more effective than defensive one. The result of these first assumption is that states cannot know if other states are preparing for war, as it is no longer possible to deduce this from a state's military strategy and arsenal. The result of the second assumption is that the side that takes the initiative, acts aggressively and offensively and strikes first would likely win in a conflict. When states feel that there are specific times in which it would be better, easier, more cost-effective, strategically sound, to attack other states, due for example to a temporary advantage of some kind, they could hit with what they would see as a preemptive strike, and conflict would ensue. All sides would have preferred to avoid violence, but fear and material developments have forced their hand into conflict.

Roe starts from Posen's ethnic security dilemma and focuses on the intrastate level, with a key difference being that a "Hobbesian" state of affairs³⁵ of complete chaos doesn't exist when we are speaking of intrastate situations instead of interstate ones.³⁶ But while Posen's security dilemma is focused on military factors, Roe's focus is on culture – on how, for example, one group's attempt to strengthen their own culture could threaten another group's heritage, and could lead to an escalating rise in nationalistic elements on both sides, resulting in conflict. The main problem with these two models in the context of extreme mass-violence is that, once again, they cannot explain violence when there is clearly no real threat to one side, there is no 'arms race' of any kind. These two models are strongly rooted in 'violence as a failure' type of explanation. They don't take into account the deceit that elites use to motivate violence, taking a somewhat positivistic approach, assuming that threats that motivate elites and perpetrators are real, that they are the result of technological and strategic developments, and that without those,

³⁴ Posen, *The Security Dilemma*, 368-369.

³⁵ Roe, *The Intrastate Security Dilemma*, 184.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 189.

violence could be avoided. This stands again in contradiction to the nature of cases of extreme mass-violence.

Joanna Bourke brings up a similar problem to that which troubled Horkheimer and Adorno, as well as Walter Benjamin:

The terrifying fact is that the brutalities of the 20th century have not only taken place in the milieu of Enlightenment values but have actually co-opted its framework. The ideals of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment have been used to (at the very least) tolerate and (and at its worst) justify barbaric acts.³⁷

The question which Bourke tries to ask and answer, is “how is mass-violence possible at all?” – How is it that the values of humanism are allowing, facilitating and even, in a sense, causing dehumanization instead? This is a similar question to the one asked by Horkheimer and Adorno. She presents 3 reasons for the occurrence of mass-violence in our present time:

- (1) Western countries use other, non-western, countries to perform what they themselves would define as immoral actions. like illegally hold and torture prisoners. Moreover, Western leaders directly attack international law and human-rights organizations instead of protecting them, undermining the whole system and shifting public opinion against the ideas these organizations and laws are based on.³⁸
- (2) Language, used by leaders, governments and so on to put into action, conceal and change the public perception of committed atrocities.³⁹
- (3) “Authorized transgressions”.⁴⁰ This term and other similar ones are used to create, and in turn are part of, an environment that encourages and facilitates mass-violence.

The problem here is that there is a discrepancy between Bourke’s high-level structural question and her answers, which remain on lower, situational and phenomenological levels of analysis. In other words, Bourke asks about a phenomenon but gives examples of specific situations as an answer.

Similarly to Bourke, Henri Zukier brings up this problem from the state level of society – his basic argument is that in modern societies, perpetrators cannot act without repercussions – there is a whole functional system in place to handle crime, misbehavior and so on. And yet, this

³⁷ Bourke, *War and Violence*, 24.

³⁸ Ibid, 25-26.

³⁹ Ibid, 26-29.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 32.

violence still happens. His conclusion then is that society allows this violence to happen. Perpetrators are permitted, officially or unofficially, directly or indirectly, implicitly or explicitly, to commit these acts.⁴¹

So we've seen in this part that models that try to explain violence and mass-violence as a phenomenon, and extreme cases, like DK, as part of it, generally fail to do that. The two main problems they have are (1) they assume elites are rational actors and so that (2) violence is only a last resort, and elites, as well as their citizens, would rather avoid it if possible.

Models Researching Cases of Genocide

In general, these models aren't meant to be adapted into a wider model to explain other cases. Researchers don't systematically compare cases with others, sometimes focusing on a few, phenomenologically similar cases. We can observe this by looking at publications that are explicitly a part of the field of Genocide and mass-violence research. We can see that these can be roughly divided into two groups: (1) Case-focused researches, like those of Ben Kiernan about Cambodia, or (2) collections of writings, usually by different authors, relating to different cases, without trying to establish commonalities between the cases other than size, geography, functional components, these cases being one-sided or the intention to destroy the victim group, but these aren't necessarily systematic criteria.⁴² Essentially, even when grouped together, cases of extreme mass-violence are addressed as individual cases and not as part of a phenomenon.⁴³

While the Holocaust is one case of genocide, as such it could automatically be considered as a basis for a model to try and understand other cases, as it essentially is seen as the clearest and most undisputed case of genocide. However, the basic problem I've addressed earlier remains: There is no successful model in place to analyze other cases alongside the Holocaust as part of a single phenomenon.

Raul Hilberg's "The Destruction of the European Jews" is an example of a research that focuses on the Holocaust but can still be used to address other major cases. Hilberg's main argument is that the modern genocide, in this case – the Holocaust – differs from past cases in three main stages it includes – namely (1) the dispossession of the victims by the perpetrators legally and economically, (2) starvation and forced labor and finally (3) re-using victims' belongings after

⁴¹ Zukier, *Situational Determinants of Behavior*.

⁴² For example, most books about cases of genocide include China under Mao and the USSR under Stalin as cases, even though they are highly contested as cases of genocide and many deaths are attributed to structural failures instead of intention.

⁴³ Examples of this kind of publications include: Auron, *Genocide*, Gellately and Kiernan, *The Specter of Genocide*, Kiernan, *Blood and Soil*, Moses *Genocide: Critical concepts*.

death.⁴⁴ These are, according to Hilberg, three critical differences that modernity has introduced into mass-killing, making it an inherently industrialized economic process. While these are very important to the analysis of the Holocaust, they are problematic to apply to other cases, like Rwanda and DK, as no formal legal actions were taken by the states in question, and economic gain didn't drive the processes forward as a whole as it did. According to Hilberg, in the case of the Holocaust.

A noteworthy researcher is Helen Fein, who's attempted to create a model to define and explain Genocide as a phenomenon. The main problem with Fein's model is that it is based off of an unclear definition of the term 'Genocide' and of the reasons that Fein had for choosing certain cases for her empirical case analysis. Fein tries to incorporate cases of mass-violence into the phenomenon of Genocide,⁴⁵ but also to incorporate Ethnocide, Politicide, genocidal massacres and other types of cases into her study, and the result is that while being a comprehensive survey of opinions and definitions, Fein's text doesn't provide us with a somewhat narrow, usable definition of Genocide.

Fein's basic guidelines for her model⁴⁶ include:⁴⁷

1. The victim group has a history of exclusion from the main group.
2. The power of the state apparatus has been reduced by a defeat in war.
3. There is a change in elites, shifting to a group focused on ideals such as domination.
4. There is a reduced cost for the perpetrators for killing the victims, as a state or as individuals in society.

This is a phenomenological analysis based on two cases, and would likely work well for others of the more obvious cases of extreme mass-violence, like our case here of Cambodia. However, it has two major problems:

- (1) These guidelines absolutely don't fit other cases that Fein herself defines as genocide, like the Indians of North-America.

⁴⁴ Hilberg, *The Destruction of European Jews*, Dulić, *Ethnic Violence*, 83.

⁴⁵ Although she does this from an opposite starting point, compared to other researchers, which is why I'm mentioning her research as part of genocide research and not mass-violence research. Namely, she uses the term 'Genocide' in a way which includes many other cases of mass-violence, that are difficult to include under the term, as they lack the component of the perpetrators' intent to destroy the group as such. A strong example would be the case of North-American Indians (pp. 80-82), which is clearly not genocide according to the UNGC as (1) it occurred before the signing of the UNGC and the legal definition of genocide and (2) is at best murky when it comes to the existence of intent to destroy the victim group as such.

⁴⁶ Mainly based off of the cases of the Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide during World War I.

⁴⁷ Fein, *Genocide: a Sociological Perspective*, 72.

- (2) These conditions have occurred in many places, in different times, throughout the 20th century, but didn't necessarily result in genocide. These are then not sufficient conditions for mass-murder, but are possibly only a part of the necessary conditions.

This all means that at the end of the day, while Fein tries to define and explain genocide, she ends up, with a long list of cases, which she would like to claim are theoretically similar, but are in fact separate and different, even under her own model.

Previous Research and Primary sources on the Cambodian Case

The main researcher of the Case today is professor Ben Kiernan from Yale university. Most of the articles written about the case are either by him personally, by researchers connected to Yale University's Cambodian Genocide Program, or use Kiernan's writings as sources,⁴⁸ as was the case in this paper.

Kiernan's analysis of the Cambodian case is very thorough and takes place on several different levels – individual, local, national and international. The analysis is mainly focused on the internal structure of DK, consistencies and inconsistencies in its internal build, as well as historical and geopolitical causes for KR takeover and ensuing violence. Kiernan, as well as other researchers connected to him and to the program, don't generally use comparative analysis to compare with other cases of mass-violence or attempt to draw conclusions towards a wider phenomenon. In that sense, Kiernan's research belongs to the category of genocide research, focusing on a single case⁴⁹ and its relevant set of circumstances, and isn't a part of the general research into violence.

Another important researcher on Cambodia is David Chandler. Chandler is considered a good, reliable source for historical information and primary source translations. However, his interpretation of these sources and his analysis of the case of DK are generally considered controversial today. His main idea is that most killings in the case were unintentional, and that KR didn't have a murderous ideology.⁵⁰ His findings on this case are highly contested. For this reason, I didn't use Chandler as a source in this paper.

⁴⁸ For example, see: Kiernan, *Genocide, Extermination and Resistance*, Kiernan, *Ideology Sources*, Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, Kiernan, *The Cambodian Genocide*, Ciorciari, *China and the Pol Pot Regime*, Kissi, *Genocide in Cambodia*, Aumonier, *Genocide*, Raffin, *Youth Mobilization*. An example of an exception is: Locard. *State Violence*, who doesn't use Kiernan as a source.

⁴⁹ As is done in Yale University with regards to other cases of genocide or extreme mass-violence, such as for example the Holocaust and Rwanda 1994.

⁵⁰ Chandler's analysis of the case contradicts a great number of primary sources, testimonies and direct quotes from CPK leaders and basically means there was no intentional mass-violence committed. More on discussions surrounding his position can be found in: Kissi, *Genocide in Cambodia*, 309. Kiernan's criticism of Chandler's

There is a good number of sources available for this case. Primary sources, such as transcripts, interviews conducted at the time and telegraphs that were sent between the office of Pol Pot and different correspondents, such as army officers in the field, government offices, as well as other DK elites. There have also been interviews with survivors and former perpetrators that were conducted after the fall of DK in 1979.⁵¹

3. Theory

In this chapter I introduce in short the main philosophical ideas in Horkheimer and Adorno's thinking, as they are presented in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. These ideas are meant to serve as an intellectual background, to explain the context and basis for 5 pillars of the model and other concepts I introduce in chapter 4. As mentioned before, this paper introduces a sociologically-based model. Nonetheless, this background is important for understanding the logic behind the model, as it is firmly rooted in a philosophical base.

The Philosophy

First, I will go through basic characteristics of the philosophical thinking of Horkheimer and Adorno. I will mainly focus on elements that are connected to, or based on, thinkers that came before them and are better understood in the context of those thinkers. The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the philosophy behind the model, to strengthen its intellectual base, and to provide context and rationale for pillars and concepts of the model. This isn't meant to be an in-depth analysis of Horkheimer and Adorno's philosophy. Instead, it is meant to provide basic background and context. As a guideline, I've tried to stay as close to the original texts as possible in this chapter, and mainly introduce the philosophy instead of analyzing it. In other words, these are not my ideas based on the philosophy, but rather the ideas of Horkheimer and Adorno, as presented in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

Dialectic of enlightenment was first published in 1944. It has since then had several editions, most notably in 1947 and 1969. The book includes seven sections written by Horkheimer and Adorno themselves, constituting the original basis of the book. Included in these are 3 chapters, titled "The Concept of Enlightenment", "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass

findings in: Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, 251-252. Examples of his books include: Chandler, *Brother Number One*, Chandler, *The Tragedy of Cambodian History*.

⁵¹ Examples of these sources, used in this paper, are: *Pol Pot Speech*, *Interview of Comrade Pol Pot*, Telegrams listed in the bibliography. Many excerpts from primary sources, used in this paper, can be found in Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*.

Deception” and “Elements of Anti-Semitism: Limits of Enlightenment”, and two excursuses. The three chapters make up the main basis for the model I introduce in this paper.

The Concept of Enlightenment serves as an introduction to the rest of the text and introduces the basic philosophical concepts that are developed in the rest of the book. The purpose of the other two chapters is to analyze enlightenment in Horkheimer and Adorno’s then-current environment. In these, the writers relate to two major phenomena of the 20th century – mass-media and anti-Semitism (for them also representing Fascism and Nazism) and analyze these phenomena using their philosophical concepts, such as Dialectics, Enlightenment, Oppression, The Fetish, Myth, Sacrifice and others. I will explain the most relevant concepts further on.

The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception - This section addresses the role of mass-media, in particular, the entertainment industry, in society. The basic idea is that technology is used as part of the means of production and for recreation, but also to pacify the masses, to preserve the current bourgeois relations of production and through that, to prevent revolutions and to preserve and expand the wealth and power of those that are currently in control of the societal structure. In my model, it is the main basis for the pillars Culture Industry, Mass-Media and Propaganda, as well as the concept of Excess.

Elements of Anti-Semitism: Limits of Enlightenment - In this chapter, Horkheimer and Adorno analyze the phenomenon of anti-Semitism, which they see as an extreme counter-reaction to Humanism. Antisemitism is seen as a part and example of extreme nationalism in general, of Nazism and Fascism, but also as a tool used intentionally by elites in these movements to shift revolutionary attention from the true owners of the means of production towards other groups. In my model, it is the main basis for the pillar Ideological Awareness and the concept of Scapegoating.

The excursuses – The two excursuses don’t refer to concrete historical events or current sociological structures, but rather introduce processes of enlightenment which took place, through stories and myths, in Western culture. While these excursuses are a very relevant part to the overall body of intellectual work by Horkheimer and Adorno, and are mentioned here for that reason, the model in this paper is generally not based on them.

Hybrid Thinking – a Short Intellectual History

The goal of this part is to introduce a few basic philosophical elements in Horkheimer and Adorno’s thinking. It is meant to serve as a shortcut for understanding the intellectual basis for

their thinking by referring to key notions that Horkheimer and Adorno have based their thinking off of and pointing out important differences when present.

A final note regarding this part: Due to the limitations of this paper, I cannot endlessly regress in explaining philosophical concepts. As such, I've used key terms used by these thinkers I'm about to discuss as they themselves used them. As a general rule, I've used concepts and terms in the meaning of those thinkers and in the context of their own philosophy.

A Duality of Ideology and Materialism

The thinking of Horkheimer and Adorno is usually described as a 'hybrid' philosophy when we discuss whether it is a material or ideological philosophy. It is knowingly built on the thinking and philosophies of several major Western thinkers, including, for example, Nietzsche, Hegel and Marx.⁵² Elements from these thinkers form, generally with changes, different parts and levels of the intellectual structure presented by Horkheimer and Adorno.

I will now go over the main ideas in Horkheimer and Adorno's thinking that are based off of other philosophies. These main ideas are usually, as we shall see, base concepts and structures. Following this, I will present the main concepts that are introduced and used by Horkheimer and Adorno themselves, and are then their own. These represent a minimal number of philosophical concepts that are necessary for the model as it stands now and are introduced in summary. I will expand further on how these seemingly separate elements come together when I introduce Horkheimer and Adorno's own concepts. Without this intellectual base, the pillars of the model would seem arbitrary, both in content and in the decision to present them over other options.

A Marxist Base

In Horkheimer and Adorno's thinking, historical progress can be measured through historical phases. These historical phases are defined using Marxist criteria, meaning they are defined as separate from each other by the material conditions existing in them – namely, the material base, the relations of production, the division of labor, the level of specialization⁵³ – are all

⁵² I could also add Kant and Freud as main influences, as well as a number of other, less influential thinkers and philosophers. I've chosen to focus on Marx, Hegel, and Nietzsche as they are more relevant for the parts of the philosophy I'm using in this paper. While Kant and Freud are very much present in the wider body of work by Horkheimer and Adorno, they are not directly linked to this model as stands and to the thinking directly behind it, both on my part and that of Horkheimer and Adorno themselves.

⁵³ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 15.

different from other phases. This is a key element in Horkheimer and Adorno's thinking which is based off of Marxist philosophy.⁵⁴

A second key element that Horkheimer and Adorno have in common with Marx deals with historical progress as a whole, as a structure. More specifically, the way that historical phases change. In every phase there comes a moment, where the material conditions are no longer in alignment with the ideological super-structure. This leads to tension, which escalates to a degree that necessitates a revolution. The revolution ushers in what is in essence a new historical phase, and the process continues. This element, as we shall see, is especially important in Horkheimer and Adorno's thinking in our context here, as awareness of it is one of the key motivations for elites to use mass-violence.

A key difference between Marxist thinking and Horkheimer and Adorno's is that the progress of history for Marx is all about class struggle, while for Horkheimer and Adorno, the true struggle is between power groups, with the level of de-facto political power being more important as a way of differentiating between groups, rather than class association. In our terms from earlier, we could say that Marx assumes elites to be mostly rational actors, while Horkheimer and Adorno assume they are mostly irrational.⁵⁵

A Hegelian Existence

The key to human existence, to human civilization, isn't the accumulation of wealth. This is a key difference from Marxist thinking. It is about power, about the dialectic relationship between freedom and control. Control in Horkheimer and Adorno's thinking is obtained through oppression; a term we will discuss shortly. In this context, what we would call the ideological side of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is rooted in Hegel's philosophy.⁵⁶

A Nietzschean World

The 'world' in this context means everything, the universe, or also a specific field or part of it that we're examining, researching, trying to understand. According to Nietzsche, the world is chaotic. This is simply the state that all things are in – from our point of view as human beings. This is the only point of view we have. The world's internal structure, the relations between its components – these exist, but are far too complicated for people to understand. Morality doesn't

⁵⁴ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 7.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 139.

⁵⁶ We can say in short that dialectics as a concept in modern Western philosophy is considered to originate from Hegel's thinking. However, for Horkheimer and Adorno, the dialectic process is not purely ideological like Hegel's or purely material, like it is usually considered to be in the Marxist tradition, but a combination of both.

naturally exist in the world. There are no ‘good’ and ‘bad’ things in it. Moral labels are assigned by people. At this point, Horkheimer and Adorno differ greatly from Nietzsche: While Nietzsche wants people to strive towards detaching themselves from morality, Horkheimer and Adorno see morality as the critical basis for human thinking. This idea permeates the entire body of work and is the most basic motivation for their thinking. I will expand on this further when I discuss their concepts and the model itself.

Horkheimer and Adorno’s Main Concepts

I will now introduce a few of the main philosophical concepts of Horkheimer and Adorno’s philosophy. These are based mainly off of the introductory chapter “The Concept of Enlightenment”.

Dialectics and Enlightenment

In the opening lines of the first chapter of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno write:

Enlightenment, understood in the widest sense as the advance of thought, has always aimed at liberating human beings from fear and installing them as masters. Yet the wholly enlightened earth is radiant with triumphant calamity.⁵⁷

The Dialectic of Enlightenment is a meta-historical approach to culture. However, it is not merely a meta-historical structure, but constitutes the basic ideas that compose the basis for human culture throughout history. Dialectics are culture itself, but also a tool used for its understanding. The dialectic structure doesn’t only represent historical progress, but also the process that characterizes progress itself and the internal structure of each historical phase, as well as processes in various fields in culture, arts, science etc.

Enlightenment in itself isn’t necessarily a positive thing. It is the rational attempt to control nature and the self, and by its very essence contains the potential for its own destruction and transformation into barbarism. Enlightenment in science, essentially – observing of the world, is about ever-growing detachment between scientists/observer and the object of their research. When applied to the research human-beings, it results in the ever-growing dehumanization of people, which in turn facilitates an increase in violence.⁵⁸ This basic contradiction and tension

⁵⁷ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 1.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 1, 3, 4, 7.

between enlightenment's ideas and their outcome are, in a nutshell, the essence of the dialectic process.

Each dialectic stage (which is in essence a historical phase) is made of a thesis, an antithesis and a synthesis. The thesis is the attempt to rationally understand and improve the world. The antithesis is born from the thesis and is the transformation of the thesis into irrationality – where the thing, the process, becomes its own goal. This is a fetishistic process - a concept I will expand on shortly. A basic example for this process would be a doctor researching what would help people (the thesis), and a doctor conducting research on people to expand the knowledge of medicine, with no other purpose (the antithesis). The difference is the existence or non-existence of morality as an integral part of the process.⁵⁹ The synthesis in this example would be a methodology in medicine balancing between these approaches.

The synthesis then is the combination between these two opposites – thesis and antithesis. The result of the conflict between rationalism and anti-rationalism. It contains the elements of the thesis and antithesis, and becomes the thesis of the next historical phase. As this process moves forward, one of the main characteristics of the new thesis of every historical stage is that it includes all the theses and antitheses that preceded it in history, not only those that have directly become the synthesis in the previous stage. The main point here is that the birth of the antithesis out of the thesis and the resulting synthesis, and so, the continuation of the dialectic process, is not a problem in itself - it is the inherent nature of the historical process, not a failure of the process, but a success.⁶⁰

Oppression

In Horkheimer and Adorno's thinking, oppression is a basic principle inherent to human nature and culture. It is the basis for human society. Oppression exists within every historical phase as part of the relations of production of that stage, and isn't detached from them; on the contrary – it's an integral part of all human relations with the world – both internal and external.⁶¹

There are three types of oppression:

- (1) Oppression of the self.
- (2) Oppression of the other.

⁵⁹ Bringing us back to the discussion titled 'A Nietzschean World' and the importance of morality, specifically in research and in culture as a whole.

⁶⁰ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 28.

⁶¹ Ibid, 11.

(3) Oppression of nature.

As a general idea, we can say that oppression of nature is facilitated by the oppression of the other and of the self.⁶² Oppression is neither ‘good’ nor ‘bad’. It is the drive that all human-beings have. It happens in all parts of the dialectic of enlightenment⁶³ and present in all but the earliest historical phases⁶⁴ of human society. In the context of the dialectic process, oppression is inherently progress – further progress means more oppression.⁶⁵ Its moral value, i.e. if it is a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ oppression, is assigned by people. As a general rule, Horkheimer and Adorno define oppression used as part of the process of benefiting human beings and mankind (as it usually is in the thesis stage) as ‘good’, and oppression used to dominate and hurt people, to gain power (as is the case for the antithesis stage), as ‘bad’.

When Adorno and Horkheimer examine the Holocaust through oppression, their argument is that Jews were used as a target for anti-Semitism in recent times because it constituted a tool to hide the basic control structure of society from the oppressed. Control is not only financial, but is also represented in culture, media, politics, etc. Being aware of the historical process that dictates their imminent replacement as rulers, oppressors create a scapegoat, which has a semblance of power and influence. Jews, in the case of Nazi Germany, were present early on at the higher levels of society and had high visibility, but had de-facto no real power. In this sense, the oppressors themselves incite the wrath of the masses and redirect it towards a scapegoat, so that their own control of the means of production may persist.

Fetishism

Fetishism⁶⁶ is the process in which the thing becomes its own purpose, replacing the original purpose. An example would be a surgeon that refuses to operate on a patient because the surgery is dangerous and failure would hurt the surgeon’s statistics and impede his career. The surgeon no longer sees successful surgery as saving someone, but the marking of the surgery as ‘successful’ becomes more important. The lives of people are not valued morally as worthwhile, but in terms of personal gain of power, money, prestige and so on.

⁶² Mey-Dan and Yas’oor, *The Frankfurt School*, 27.

⁶³ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 18.

⁶⁴ An example of this kind of early historical phase is found in the first excursus, in the story of the Lotus Eaters – these people live in a proto-society that has no oppression, as they are completely unaware of others, they are one with nature. For those people, it is heaven that they live in, but Odysseus, as someone representing a higher level of historical progress, cannot stand this and would rather tear them away from their bliss in order to achieve his own goals. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 44-45.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 25-28, 30-31.

⁶⁶ The Fetish as a concept and Fetishism as a phenomenon are explained to a much greater degree in Horkheimer, *The Eclipse of Reason*.

In Horkheimer and Adorno's thinking, fetishism is the process that brings forth the antithesis from the thesis. It is the force that exists between the different parts of the dialectic structure. In our previous example, the rational behavior is to better one's surgical skills to improve and save the lives of others.⁶⁷ The irrational behavior which is born from this looks the same – the surgery stays as is – but is now done in an immoral, and hence irrational (as it is not meant at a moral good objective) way.

Horkheimer and Adorno's Thinking in the Context of this Paper

As I've mentioned before, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was published in 1944, placing it chronologically before the end of World War II and the Holocaust, before the full scale of the horror became known, and more details about Nazi regime and ideology had been fully exposed and researched. This book was also published before the UNGC was signed and before terms like "genocide" and "Holocaust" even existed. Moreover, other key cases of mass-violence, in magnitude as well as severity, like our case of DK here, Rwanda 1994, as well as others, hadn't happened yet. The model, therefore, doesn't – and couldn't – take into account many historical, intellectual, ideological and material developments and changes. That is, as I've mentioned before, the purpose of this paper – to establish a base for a current model by compiling and updating the components present in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and applying them to a different case.

Does the nature of the problem of mass-violence mean it cannot be solved?

This is an obvious question due to the base assumption in Horkheimer and Adorno's thinking⁶⁸ that mass-violence is organic to human existence. I won't be expanding on this in this paper. I can say that there is a solution to this problem, according to Adorno, and it lies with critical thinking, self-criticism and education. It is discussed outside of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and deserves a full analysis and discussion on its own. I would like end this part with a short quote: "... a true praxis capable of overturning the status quo depends on theory's refusal to yield to the oblivion in which society allows thought to ossify".^{69 70}

⁶⁷ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 16.

⁶⁸ Upon which I will expand later on in this paper.

⁶⁹ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 33.

⁷⁰ More on this can be found in: Adorno, *Education After Auschwitz*.

4. The Five-Pillar Model

Introduction

In this chapter, I introduce The Five-Pillar Model for examining mass-violence. This model is based off of the philosophical concepts used by Horkheimer and Adorno in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Following this chapter, I will use the model to analyze an empirical case – Cambodia under Khmer Rouge rule in 1975–1979.

This model is entrenched in modernity.⁷¹ This means that cases like Cambodia 1975 – 1979, and in general, mass-violence at the extreme level that we’re discussing here, cannot happen outside of the context of modernity; According to Horkheimer and Adorno, there need to be material and ideological developments in place that would allow for this level of violence. There need to be communication, coordination, transportation, a high-level division of labor, technology for killing quickly enough, as well as a guiding ideology that denies the victims’ ability to convert, to change, and so necessitates and rationalizes murderous violence as the only possible course of action – not as a last resort, but as a legitimate solution to a problem.

In modern times, many regimes are based on popular support. This takes many forms, in fact and in appearance. To stay in power, rulers must constantly work to gain and maintain the support of their citizens, and to pacify those whose support cannot be gained. This pacification can be direct – i.e. they could be made non-aggressive, or indirect, i.e. the aggression of these disloyal or unpacified (from the rulers’ point of view) citizens could be redirected at others instead of the elites.

To put this in the context of the philosophical terms, this process is a fetishistic process. Maintaining themselves in power becomes the purpose of the rulers. These rulers could choose to gain support by making life better for their citizens, by actually improving people’s lives, and if they don’t, they can be replaced by someone else who would do a better job. But all of this doesn’t matter to these rulers – it’s not about making things better or taking responsibility, it’s not about what they do, it’s about how people perceive their actions. In these situations, the thought process of elites becomes devoid of morality, instead containing only self-preservation gaining power.

⁷¹ According to Horkheimer and Adorno, we can sometimes observe proto-forms of the modern social structure throughout history, as provided in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* through “Excursus I: Odysseus or Myth and Enlightenment”.

How Does the Model Work?

The five pillars of the model exist in every society. These are all inherent to human culture according to Horkheimer and Adorno. What is then the difference between a ‘normal’ society and a ‘genocidal’ one? The difference lies in the strength of these elements. As they become more fetishized, they become more and more their own purpose and as such, become more and more negative. When these five pillars hit a high enough level of severity, the result is extreme mass-violence.

Each pillar represents a different component of society as a whole and has a different role: Mass-Media and Propaganda are the functional elements of the model and as such, of society. Culture Industry is the instrumentalized structure of the whole of society and culture. Dehumanization is an ideological component, permeating the entire structure. Ideological awareness is the realization of elites of the existence of this whole structure and its change through time. All of these components together lead, from an elite point-of-view, to the need for scapegoating to prevent their own demise as part of progress of this process.⁷²

If we say violence is an organic part of human history and culture, why doesn’t it happen all the time then? Why are there still specific cases of this level of violence happening in one place and not another?

Horkheimer and Adorno’s thinking, and so, this model as well, make no claim that there are no case-specific circumstances. However, these pillars that I introduce represent the common denominator elements of human society. When these elements reach, through case-specific history and circumstances, and through the actions of elites, a high enough level of fetishism, the result is extreme mass-violence. This process of fetishism, while in retrospective is ever-present and organic to human existence, is by no means imminent. In many cases, societies never reach these extreme levels, and that is due to their specific set of circumstances.

Some of these concepts are used in name by Horkheimer and Adorno, and are adapted and further explained by me, and some are coined by me, wholly extracted from *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. In any case, these pillars represent my adaptation, to some degree at least, of the ideas of Horkheimer and Adorno.

I will now address these five pillars, their place in society and culture, especially in cases of extreme mass-violence, and their relation to Horkheimer and Adorno’s philosophy.

⁷² You can see a graphic representation of this explanation in Figure 1.

Pillar 1: Culture Industry

“Reason itself has become merely an aid to the all-encompassing economic apparatus”.⁷³

Culture Industry is a term used by Horkheimer and Adorno, describing the state of culture, of society in its widest meaning, in modern times. In the context of Horkheimer and Adorno’s thinking, Culture Industry is the process of increasing fetishism taking place in culture. Fetishism means in this context that things created to serve people, to make their lives better, become their own purpose, or tools for the morally-negative aspects of rationality. This means the dehumanization of people: they are no longer the most important, the purpose for advancing technology, for changes in culture and politics, for sociological institutions to exist. Human-beings become tools for all of those things to happen – advancing technology, for example, becomes its own purpose, even if these advancements hurt people, or are achieved at the expense of human lives – this becomes acceptable, even necessary. The system then becomes a-moral, immoral even, and extremely dehumanizing. Its purpose has become “infecting everyone with sameness”.⁷⁴ Enlightenment as a process of rationalization requires distancing between researcher and object. When the object is human-beings, this translates into the dehumanization of human-beings in order to better understand them. This is the essence of all modern science.⁷⁵ Much like the other pillars of this model and in turn, of Horkheimer and Adorno’s thinking, Culture Industry isn’t necessarily negative. It exists in all human cultures throughout human history. It takes different forms in different historical phases, but its nature stays the same. Culture Industry exists in both the thesis and the antithesis phases. What changes is the ideology of the Culture Industry – in the thesis phase, it includes ideas of humanism and morality, while in the antithesis phase it would be anti-human, or barbaric ideas, as Horkheimer and Adorno call them.

In the context of Mass-Media, another pillar of this model, Culture Industry means that the purpose of mass-media development changes – from helping people, making them more educated, helping them make better decisions, spreading democracy and democratic values, fighting illiteracy and barbaric oppression, mass-media is instead used to pacify the masses, to decrease resistance, to promote compliancy, to spread false propaganda, to spread nationalistic ideas of hatred and intolerance towards others, and to encourage shopping and economic spending, in itself a method of making people more compliant.

⁷³ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 23.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 94.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 8, 11, 20.

On the state level, Culture Industry means the shift from the social-democratic model, in which the state's reason for existing is to serve the people, make their lives better and take care of them from birth till death, to a model in which the state merely collects taxes and controls violence and foreign affairs, seemingly existing independently from the welfare of its people. The state, which in this sense means those people who are in power, becomes focused on preserving power instead of taking care of its citizens. Those are dehumanized, and instead of their welfare being the purpose of the state, the state's welfare becomes their purpose.

Excess

In the context of this model, the term 'excess', coined here by me, represents anything that doesn't directly and obviously contribute to the material advancement of the human condition, in any direction – positive or negative.⁷⁶ Excess could then mean a person, a group, a technology or even a concept, like free time. From the point of view of any rational system or person, there is always some kind of excess in any process. What differentiates liberal or democratic regimes from more oppressive ones is the relation to excess. In liberal or democratic societies, there is an assumption that there could be a great deal of excess, for example, that people don't work as much as they possibly can, that they are entitled to free time. This isn't only assumed as happening, but is generally a desired part of society and culture – that people are not as important as they are efficient, but that they have a value that is independent from their economic usefulness – a moral value.

Efficiency, while being aspired to, still has its limits in most societies. The balance between efficiency and excess is the balance between morality and dehumanization. What is the worth of human freedom? Of a person's right for free will, free time, for expressing themselves and their opinions, of resting - in other words, of not producing economically? At the state level, the more liberal and democratic a society is, the more important these values become in relation to economic efficiency. In a social-democratic state, using resources to help those who cannot work, for example, is considered a good and moral use of those resources, while in other states it would be considered wasteful – investing resources that won't provide any kind of profit in return. This could lead, for example, some states to invest less in welfare as it returns little material profit. In extreme regimes or states, driven by what Horkheimer and Adorno would call 'barbarism', the logical end-conclusion of this process would be the elimination of excess

⁷⁶ I'm using the terms 'positive' and 'negative' here as from the point of view of Horkheimer and Adorno, meaning that advancement within the thesis is 'positive' and advancement within the antithesis is 'negative'. From the point of view of elites, anything that benefits them would be designated 'positive' and anything that doesn't would be designated 'negative'. In this context, I'm using the morally objective point of view of the model as a base.

– killing those who aren't worth enough for the state to keep alive. This attitude towards excess isn't one-dimensional. Based on certain criteria, a state might see excess in certain groups as positive and welcome, while in other groups undesirable, even as basis for expulsion or annihilation. An example would be Nazi Germany's attitude towards German Arian citizens on the one side and Jews on the other. While the former were welcome to live a regular life, have free time, hobbies and so on, at least to a degree, the latter were systematically murdered if they weren't obviously and immediately useful.

Pillar 2: Mass-Media

In Horkheimer and Adorno's thinking, mass-media is a hallmark of modernity.⁷⁷ There is always some form of mass-media present in every culture throughout history, but the level of technological development and ideological purposefulness of mass-media in modern times makes it a key component of modern society, and as such of the violence inherent to that society. Mass-media functions as one of the tools for spreading propaganda, but isn't the only tool, and propaganda isn't its only use. They both have common areas of existence and effect, but are nonetheless separate components of human society and as such, of this model. Mass-media exists in all societies, however, in more extreme cases of mass-violence, we can see a mass-media system that is mostly dedicated, at the very least, to preserving the current material and ideological conditions, promoting only ideas that serve elites, with no criticism or promotion of critical thought.

Advanced technology, the key to Mass-Media in its modern form, has special significance for two reasons in the context of modernity: The first reason is that technological advances bring cultural changes, which characterize the modern era as the era of mass-production, required to meet the needs of the masses. In other words, population growth, alongside industrialization and the rising standard of living, bring about deep changes in society - urbanization, pollution, the rise of social movements and so on.

The second reason is that it is no longer possible to control the masses like in previous historical phases – medieval divine legitimacy of rulers no longer holds any power in the modern state. Mass-media is used to create a false perception of the world, so that people who take part in it (which in modern societies means, except for individual exceptions, absolutely everyone) experience the world through what is in essence a filter. This twisted perception of the world, which mass-media has a large part in creating, although no by itself, is then used to solve the

⁷⁷ Mey-Dan and Yas'oor, *The Frankfurt School*, 37.

two problems elites face in modern society: the first being the need to motivate masses for action that are beneficial for elites, the second being the need to pacify the masses so they don't rebel against the socio-economic and political conditions. The second problem is a big one, for it is a part of an inevitable historical process that these elites are trying to divert.

Mass-media has then two uses for elites:

The first use of mass-media is to motivate people to act in accordance with elite interests and will. In the context of mass-violence, propaganda is an important tool for creating and educating perpetrators and for motivating bystanders to act against rescuers.

The second use of mass-media is to pacify potential resistance. In this context, mass-media presents people with a false perception of the world, not in the way that propaganda does it, as we'll see in the next part, but by replacing their connection to the world with a false one. By focusing people's attention on the freedom to choose from a selection of products and possibilities, instead of on the fact that the selection is actually limited and includes a repetition of items.⁷⁸ In the context of mass-violence, this means to make sure bystanders do not interfere with perpetrator actions, that rescuers are isolated and the effect of their actions minimized. Bystanders can potentially prevent mass-violence from happening, as they are usually the overwhelming majority in any society. They are therefore a threat to the success of mass-violence by elites, through perpetrators.⁷⁹

Mass-media is then a platform on which other pillars of the model are delivered – Culture Industry, Propaganda and Dehumanization are all dependent, at least in part, on a sufficient infrastructure of mass-media to exist so they can be spread. Mass-media is not, however, the only way these other pillars are spread, as we can see the respective parts. The point here is that in this model, certain areas of mass-media overlap with other pillars, especially Propaganda, but it is by no means a complete overlap.

Pillar 3: Propaganda

There is a strong opinion in research that propaganda has a limited effect on the ideas of people. In other words, that there is a limit to how much people can be affected.⁸⁰ However, in these cases of extreme mass-violence we are dealing with, as is really the case with modern society in its entirety, we are not merely speaking of propaganda in the limited sense, as a form of

⁷⁸ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 100-101.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 96-100.

⁸⁰ See for example: Huang, *Propaganda as Signaling*, Rozendaal et al, *Reconsidering Advertising Literacy*.

advertisement, we are speaking of a total experience provided by the modern state to its inhabitants.⁸¹ The entire concept of the nation-state and its origins is based on the state's ability to create, propagate and embed idea of a common past, present and future. This engulfing process, which includes all parts of society, is done, at least to a degree, by all states even today. This renders the findings about the limits of propaganda somewhat moot, as they many times assume propaganda in a society that either encourages criticism towards (at least) blatant propaganda or that the propaganda contradicts key elements in society. A strong example would be racist ad on TV calling for violence in a multicultural and non-violent society. This would obviously have a limited effect. But if the state itself introduced violence as legitimate into the education system, within a few years, we could see a change in attitudes towards violence in that society.

Generally speaking, in cases of mass-violence there are 4 main groups: Victims, perpetrators, rescuers and bystanders. Of the non-victims, bystanders are by far the largest group (around 85%), perpetrators are next (around 10%) and rescuers, those who help victims, are the smallest group (around 5%).⁸² What members of all 3 of these groups have in common is that are citizens of the state in which violence is perpetrated, living their lives in parallel to violence taking place, having a certain degree of personal freedom, which most of them use to ignore the events taking place, a few actively participate, and even fewer try to help the victims, while clearly putting their own lives at risk.

In the context of our model, propaganda plays a vital role in cases of mass-violence – it is the most important tool of murderous regimes to ensure the success of their mass-killing operation. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, language is one of the “instruments of power”, alongside weapons and machines,⁸³ and propaganda is language transformed into a tool of oppression. Propaganda uses mass-media as one way of spreading, but it is by no means the only one. Earlier I discussed the role of excess in different societies. Even for all but the most extreme regimes, there is a group that is allowed to have, or even be, excess. These are usually the citizens of the state that are dehumanized less than others, and so there is a limit to how much violence can be used against them. They are, however, a large number of people and are potentially a threat to those in power – the elites. Progress, be it ideological or material, or a combination of both, would eventually spell out doom for elites. They then turn to scapegoating,

⁸¹ Similar ideas can be found for example in: Gellner, *Nations and nationalism*, Wassermann, *People Nation Patria*.

⁸² Vollhardt and Bilewicz, *After the Genocide*, Monroe, *Cracking the Code*.

⁸³ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 29.

which I will shortly discuss, to divert the revolutionary force of the masses towards false targets. Propaganda is one of the main tools used by these elites to perform this scapegoating. It is used to directly divert attention from those elites to their intended scapegoats – the victims of mass-violence, and it can also be used to pacify the mass of potential revolutionaries – strengthening bystanders, or to motivate potential perpetrators into action. Propaganda can be delivered through mass-media, through direct interaction between elites and others, through ceremonies or other elements of culture, through art, government policies or laws, through language itself, as well as any number of other ways. These modes of delivery are where Propaganda could sometimes overlap with other pillars. Propaganda serves to spread ideas of Dehumanization, but is not the only way to do so, nor is it the origin of dehumanization in society.

Pillar 4: Dehumanization

In Horkheimer and Adorno's thinking, Dehumanization plays an integral role in human society and in the Culture Industry. Dehumanization is the basic interaction between human-beings, as well as with their own selves and with nature. Dehumanization then, in this thinking, is the ideological actualization of oppression in human social and psychological relations with themselves and their surroundings. It is rooted in the basic interaction with the world that enlightenment necessitates in all fields of human existence.⁸⁴

I must iterate that dehumanization happens all the time in what is essentially every human interaction. This does not mean, however, that it always takes an extreme form. The main point here is that dehumanization is the perception every person has of their surroundings and inner self as tools for successful social action. This means, for example, that people must limit their own natural drives to fit in to society, or the basic daily social conduct that all people perform, through using others to achieve goals like success at work or personal life, which is then considered in general an acceptable level of dehumanization, and ending with extreme instrumentalization of people working to death for the glory of a person or nation, and anything in between. In other words, dehumanization is always present in all human social interaction, but varies greatly when it comes to the level, or severity, of the dehumanizing process. This also means that we can usually use dehumanization and instrumentalization as interchangeable concepts, as all dehumanization is the instrumentalization of others, as well as of internal and external nature, to achieve a more successful social interaction and existence, whatever that could entail for a specific individual.

⁸⁴ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 7, 9.

Going back to The Fetish and the fetishistic process I've explained before, the fetish is a process of dehumanization. The more extreme the fetish is, the more a thing becomes its own purpose, and when it relates to people, the stronger is then the level of dehumanization. Dehumanization is a loss of moral value, when science, for example, is not advanced for the purpose of helping people but for the sake of advancement itself, then the value of a person is no longer defined in moral terms but is instead measured in efficiency or usefulness for science⁸⁵. In this example then, human beings are turned from the purpose of science to tools for advancing it. The scientist in this case no longer researches for people but for science's sake, or for personal fame or wealth. We could say then that for this scientist, human beings have become dehumanized, they have now become objects of research that help science advance.

Dehumanization is a part of the historical process of progress – it is also present in processes and fields that are considered positive in Horkheimer and Adorno's thinking.⁸⁶ One could say that dehumanization can be positive, as long as the betterment of human life remains the main goal, meaning that the level of dehumanization is kept low. Once the fetishistic process hits a certain degree of dehumanization, it then becomes negative. This is in fact the basic internal process of the Dialectic of Enlightenment. Dehumanization is part of oppression, which is always present in human society. It is used for the betterment of human life in the thesis of a given phase, and when the fetishistic process hits a certain level, a thesis gives birth to an antithesis. This is then not a black-and-white process - society doesn't one day change its face - but a gradual change that happens over time.

In the wider context of this model's structure, Dehumanization is somewhat different than other pillars, as it permeates the rest of the social structure, and so, all other pillars, but doesn't overlap with any of them in the functionalist sense. Instead, Dehumanization is the force that drives fetishization and as such, is the ideological connector between the higher-level structure of human nature and the structure of human society.

Pillar 5: Ideological Awareness

Ideological awareness, in the context of this model, is connected to the Marxist historical structure. The basics of this structure, which are, as we'll see, all we need in this part, are these: Each historical phase is defined by its relations of production, the overall picture of material

⁸⁵ Another example to make this perhaps clearer: a certain advancement made in science is 'good' because it helps people (lower level of dehumanization) in contrast to a human being considered 'good' because it helps science advance, or another human being considered better because he helps science advance faster, or at a cheaper price economically (higher level of dehumanization).

⁸⁶ For example, science, see: Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 13.

conditions – for example, technological development, the nature of the means of production, etc., and of ideology, which in this sense means culture, politics, morality etc. In Horkheimer and Adorno's thinking, what all of these phases have in common is that they are based on exploitation, or in Horkheimer and Adorno's terms – on oppression. All 3 types of oppression we've discussed before are constantly present – human society is always built on the oppression of the other and of nature, while at the same time, members of society must oppress themselves as an inseparable part of their role in society, whatever it may be.⁸⁷ Historical phases change then, by definition, when the relations of production inherently change. This happens many times because technological and sociological advances change the fabric of society to a degree where change becomes imminent. At the same time, each historical phase sees a group that has control of the means of production, and therefore have power and control over society. These elites controlling the means of production have no interest to change the social structure that benefits them, and so change comes many times in the form of a violent revolution.

In Horkheimer and Adorno's thinking, there is an added twist, so to speak: Not only revolutionaries and scholars, but also elites learn from history, or read Marx. This means that those elites in power know that progress will bring their inevitable demise and replacement by others. These elites also won't sit idly by and let this happen.⁸⁸

In the context of the larger structure of the model, Ideological awareness is a somewhat separate component from the other pillars. It is the direct driving force behind scapegoating, which in turn causes extreme-mass violence. Without Ideological Awareness, all other pillars of the model could be seen as arbitrary, with no purpose or direction. When it exists, Ideological Awareness then uses Culture Industry, Mass-Media and Propaganda, through Dehumanization, to enact scapegoating, and through it, to divert the path of the historical process.

Does this mean that all elites are Marxists?

Not at all. Some elites could be Marxists while some others not. Defining certain elite individuals or groups as Marxists is unnecessary for the purposes of this model. Elites need only know and believe in the basic historical structure. In other words, they believe that progress will bring their demise, and here these elites add to the equation – unless we do something about it. This is why I say that we only need the basics of the Marxist meta-historical structure – elites see importance in controlling the economy as part of their constant aspiration for power, they

⁸⁷ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 30-31.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 141-144.

also know that progress threatens them – whether or not they use Marxist terms to explain this is irrelevant for us here.⁸⁹

Furthermore, the basis of this model is the analysis, by Horkheimer and Adorno, of the Nazi regime in Germany. No one could claim that Nazi ideology was somehow a Marxist one. Also, we are not referencing other components of Marxist thinking here, all of them missing from the Nazi regime, to try and define any thinking as ‘Marxist’.⁹⁰ There is no claim made that Hitler had any Marxist tendencies or anything similar to that, but only that he saw progress in certain areas of human culture and society as dangerous to his position of power and acted on it.

Lastly, for the purpose of applying this model to empirical cases, we need to establish that there was awareness of this kind of basic ideology within the elite group. This ‘group’ can even be the leader only, as in some regimes, like Nazi Germany, the leader isn’t one of many, but a supreme leader that has much more de-facto power and influence than anyone else. In this sense, the leader himself could be seen as his own class, or group. We can see this ideological awareness through words or through actions, and assuming we’re not seeing these elites as mad, analyzing their actions in response to this perceived threat would show us that they indeed perceive this progress as a threat.

Scapegoating

Scapegoating is the reaction of elites to the inevitable historical process we’ve discussed. The term ‘scapegoating’ is my own when used in the context of this model. It isn’t used by Horkheimer and Adorno in their writing, instead used by me to represent this process which does take place according to Horkheimer and Adorno, and is essential to explaining extreme mass-violence.

Progress, be it ideological or material, or a combination of both, would eventually end the rule of current elites through a critical change in the relations of production. This is the inevitable nature of the historical process according to Horkheimer and Adorno. Elites agreeing with the basic idea behind this process turn to scapegoating in order to subvert it. The main point is that elites, understanding that the historical process cannot be stopped or avoided, use scapegoating

⁸⁹ In other words, this becomes a discussion about terminology and language, and what matters here is the perception of elites, not their ideological iteration of it.

⁹⁰ Also, when we look at any of the main cases of mass-violence in the 20th century – Nazi Germany, the Armenian Genocide, Cambodia under KR and Rwanda 1994, they all have an idea of equality only for those who are ‘worthy’, who are not expelled or killed. These are all clearly not Marxist ideologies, but we can still try and prove that they are aware of, and agree with, the basic concept of the Marxist historical structure, while still maintaining that they are otherwise not Marxists.

to instead divert the revolutionary force of the masses towards a false target, essentially causing this force to be expended, as the relations of production seemingly change, while in actuality this change hasn't taken place.

Scapegoating is where this model is differentiated from others - it's not only a set of circumstances, conditions and social structures. It's saying that there is a second set of reasons for the actions of perpetrator elites, hidden from all others behind a wall of deceit and false rationalization.

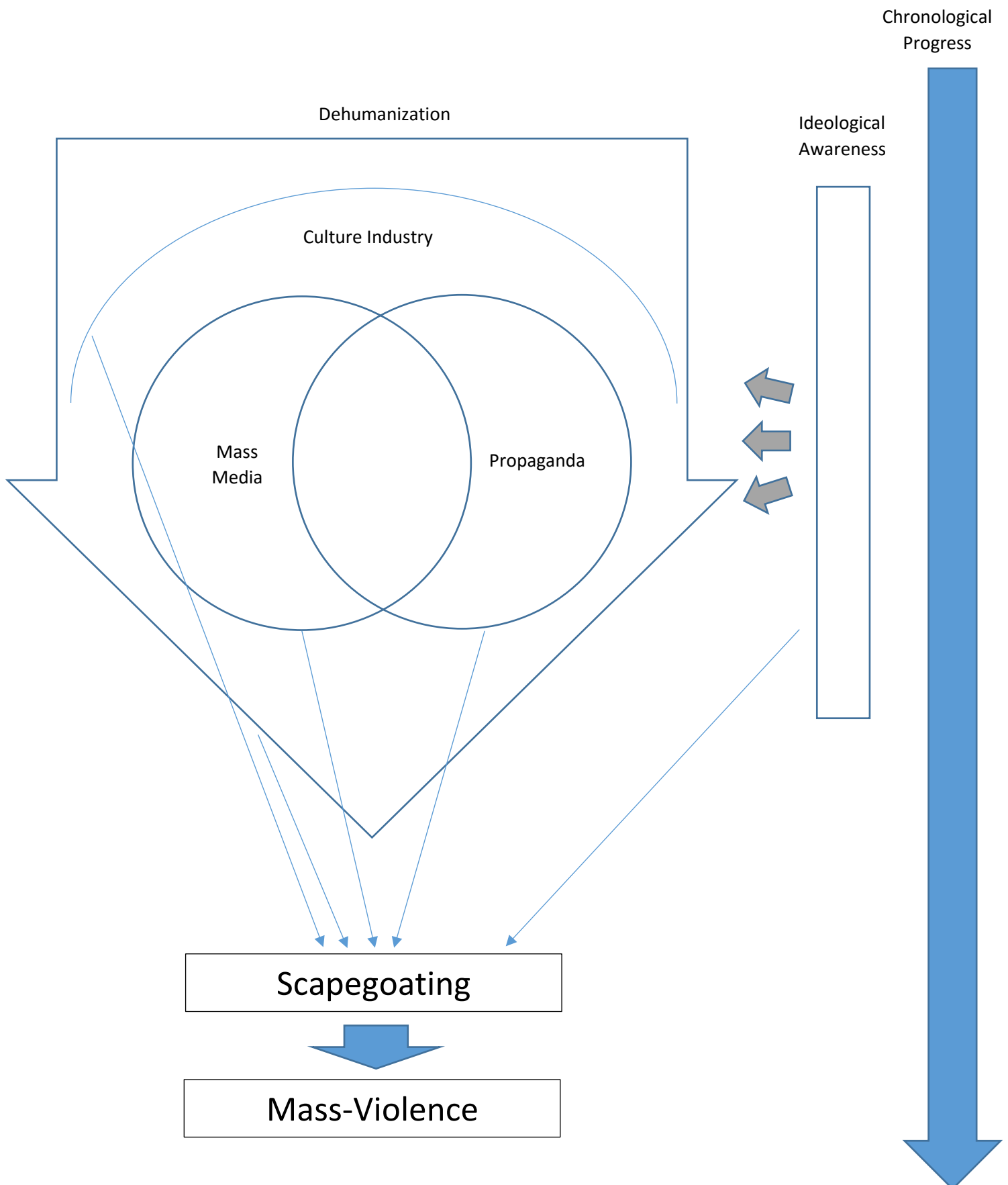
Scapegoating is aimed at groups of citizens that are, in the context of this model, allowed to have excess. These people have some rights under these violent regimes, and so have some level of legitimacy, and thus, power to bring forth change. These are generally members of the group we call 'bystanders' – passive majority of the non-victim population. The process of scapegoating involves falsely marking a group as being those who control the means of production. This marking is achieved mainly through propaganda and mass-media, but also through other means, for example, enacting special laws. It becomes an integral part of the Culture Industry. This group is then falsely presented as being in control of the economy. They then become the target of violence by elites, seemingly in the name of 'the people', those that are so-called "abused" by this group. The expulsion or murder of this group becomes part of the elites' attempts at maintaining their position of power. The victim group is completely instrumentalized by the elites – their very existence is in its entirety a tool for preserving elite domination. Their lives have no other meaning.⁹¹ For Scapegoating to take place successfully, all other pillars of the model are required to be at a sufficiently extreme level.

It is critical to understand that scapegoating is a process which is only clear to those elites that initiate it. For everyone else, the false facade of the identity of those de-facto in power, of the reasons for killing or expelling the victims – these are rationalized through a completely different set of explanations: through the creation of a false world-view, by Culture Industry, by Mass-Media and Propaganda, using Dehumanization, all these are tools for elites while perceived as true by everyone else. For elites, this process is clearly false, it is a ruse to maintain power. But for everyone else, this process is real, organic. It is seemingly based on a truthful world-perception, in real-world conditions, it has historical background and context, it makes sense.⁹²

⁹¹ Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 137-138.

⁹² Ibid, 139-144, 152-153.

Figure 1: The Five-Pillar Model



5. Fetishized to Atomization – Analysis of the Case of Democratic Kampuchea

Introduction and Questions

In this chapter I'll be applying The Five-Pillar Model to an empirical case of extreme mass-violence. This case is Democratic Kampuchea (DK) – Cambodia under Khmer Rouge (KR) rule in the years 1975 - 1979. This chapter focuses its analysis on the top-end elites of DK and their interactions with their subordinates – victims as well as perpetrators. Why focus on elites? As I've explained in chapters 1 and 2, this is a top-down model, meaning that elites are by definition the leaders and organizers of mass-violence. These kinds of large-scale, long-term, ongoing operations cannot be spontaneous. They require organization and planning. The impact and effect of these specific elites can be disputed according to the conditions of specific cases, but there is a minimal level of influence which is inherent and necessary for such expansive cases, which must be high enough for the operation to be 'successful'.

To successfully accomplish this analysis, I seek to answer the following questions in this chapter:

1. What was the level of control that KR elites in general, and Pol Pot in particular, had in DK, and were they inclined to use this level of control to accomplish their ideological goals?
2. To what extremity were Culture Industry and Mass Media elements present in DK society?
3. How was propaganda used in DK, and which forms did it take?
4. What part did dehumanization have in DK culture and CPK ideology?
5. What was the level of ideological awareness of CPK elites?
6. How did CPK elites use scapegoating?

These question are listed in the order of this chapter, and each refers to a different section in it. The first question leads off into a discussion about control and intention, which as I've mentioned in the previous model, is an important base assumption that needs to be made clear, otherwise the pillars of the model, used in the empirical analysis, could be seen as arbitrary. Questions 2-6 are based off of the parts of the model which I've introduced earlier. Each question refers to one part of the empirical case analysis and follows the basic structure of the model. I've merged pillars 1 and 2 (Culture Industry and Mass-Media) into one in this analysis. I'll explain this choice in the relevant section of analysis.

The parts of this chapter aren't arranged in order of importance. Each part doesn't lead directly to the next one, and each part isn't built on the previous one. They are all equally important for understanding the final part - "Convergence into Atomization – dealing with the extreme level of social atomization unique to this case.

Historical Background⁹³

On April 17th, 1975, Khmer Rouge forces overwhelmed Cambodian government forces and took over Phnom Penh, capital city of Cambodia, after months of brutal siege. The Khmer Rouge deposed Lon Nol, the nationalistic leader of the state, who himself took over the state from Prince Nordoom Sihanouk through a revolution in 1970. During the period before, KR forces carelessly fired rockets into the almost defenseless city, hitting civilian neighborhoods and killing thousands. As KR marched into the city, the starved and exhausted residents hoped for a new era of quiet, after a period of brutal war. They hoped that the Khmer Rouge, seemingly led by former ruler of Cambodia, Prince Sihanouk, would restore order to the war-torn state. Sights of celebration were all over the city. There was hope that Cambodia would prosper under old-new leader Prince Sihanouk, whom KR presented as their figurehead.

This feeling of hope was short-lived. Within one day, KR began to execute Pol Pot's plan for Cambodia. Exploiting people's fears and traumas of American intensive carpet-bombing raids in previous years, which claimed the lives of thousands of Cambodians, the Khmer Rouge, announcing an imminent American bombing attack, evacuated the city of its two million residents. There was no American bombing planned, as the USA had already ceased its military activities in Cambodia. Nonetheless, the ruse was highly effective, and KR were able to empty-out the city within days. Two million men, women and children were deported to the countryside, with no time to prepare food or transportation, with no infrastructure to support them or in fact, without any intention by KR of ever doing so.

All around the country, KR set up labor camps. The plan was to turn Cambodia into an autarchy – a completely self-sufficient state, utterly independent of outside help, support, trade or threat. In reality, the newly formed Democratic Kampuchea was never meant to be such, as relations and trade with China and Yugoslavia, among a few others, continued and intensified. This process included the state-wide emptying of cities, and the creation of massive communal rice

⁹³ For further historical information and sources see: Kiernan, *Blood and Soil*, 549-551, Kiernan, *Ideology Sources*, Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, Kiernan, *The Cambodian Genocide*, Kiernan, *Genocide, Extermination and Resistance*, 237-240, Ciorciari, *China and the Pol Pot Regime*, Locard. *State Violence*. 218-223, *Interview of Comrade Pol Pot*.

farms, meant to become the economic backbone of the new state. Foreign trade was strictly controlled by the state, restricting the economy into one based mainly on the export of raw materials to China and North Korea in exchange for weapons and some agricultural aid.

For the plan to work, radical changes were to take place in Cambodia. At the time of its occupation by KR, Cambodia was a relatively developed state. Infrastructure, education, healthcare and other areas were developed, and the country's modern economy relied on trade with other states, on the import and export of goods and materials. The people of Cambodia were educated. They had access to outside influences, books, newspapers, mass-media, culture and so on. This all, according to Pol Pot's plan, had to disappear; in order to restore the old glory of Angkor Wat to modern Cambodia, the state and its citizens had to revert to an older, less advanced existence. In Marxist terms, which were key to KR thinking and ideology, the historical process of the development of the conditions of production, which according to Marx cannot be reversed, was to be indeed reversed – Cambodia would be sent back to the middle ages, and be made an economy based solely on consuming and manufacturing what it can from its existing local resources. The economy would be based, in this case, on an army of slave-laborers, mindlessly and endlessly working without any other purpose. Those who would threaten the process, in the eyes of KR, those who cannot work, and those who are simply too many for the old-new food production to support, all of those needed to be disposed of, in the most economically efficient way, as to not strain the new economy.

Slave labor camps were set-up all over the country. The majority of DK citizens lived in work projects like these camps. The new state had begun an all-out assault on the structure of society and on Cambodia's groups and people. In these camps, any group association was forbidden. People weren't allowed anything but worker's uniform, they had no names, but numbers. Prisoners were forbidden from speaking to one another, and were constantly bombarded by propaganda. Families were broken-up, children intentionally sent to different locations than their parents, or assigned different work hours, so communication would become impossible. Forced-labor farms were to produce the rice the new state would need to survive, as well as, in theory, more and more excess production, with the camps becoming more efficient and the population getting smaller, to trade to allies such as China for weapons and other "essential" goods. In reality, most of the production was exported, while workers in the camps starved to death.

As part of this, their so called "Great Leap Forward", the Khmer Rouge set out to cleanse the Khmer state and race of foreign, "unclean" and "diseased" elements. This included the mass

extermination of specific groups – Cham, Lao, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Buddhist monks, as well as any Khmer who was deemed “foreign” or a threat to the regime, state, race and culture. The population of the new state was to become anonymously homogenous.

In general, KR policy towards minorities took two forms: the first, aimed at the Muslim Chams and the hill tribes, was to totally assimilate them into the Khmer population. They were now referred to as “Islamic Khmer” and “Upper Khmer”, respectively. Their group and individual identity were to be completely erased. The second form, towards other minority groups was extermination⁹⁴ and indeed, from those groups, between 40% and 100% were murdered.⁹⁵ Mass extermination began immediately and was carried out in extreme brutality. People with any trait that was perceived by KR as “foreign”, like speaking foreign languages, wearing glasses or owning a record, were executed. Most non-Khmer groups were almost entirely destroyed as they either threatened Pol Pot’s utopian project, like the Buddhist monks⁹⁶, or the purity of the Khmer race, another key element in KR thinking. The old Angkor empire was purely Khmer, and so should be the new one. To be more efficient, murders were committed without firing bullets - most victims were bludgeoned to death, babies were smashed onto trees and rocks. The bodies were buried in mass graves, known as “the killing fields”. Estimates about the number of those who died are commonly around 2 Million. Many others were left handicapped, hurt, traumatized, lost their families and loved ones, and the entire state’s infrastructure and economy were completely destroyed. Considering the means of killing, this is an especially striking number of victims – nearly a quarter of the country’s population of around 8 million were murdered in nearly 4 years of KR control. This is a very high percentage and total number of victims when compared to other cases of mass-violence in history.⁹⁷

Pol Pot’s reign of terror lasted until 1979, when former-allies now turned enemies Vietnamese forces overran DK, in retaliation for what was an ongoing irredentist campaign of border attacks and incursions by KR on Vietnam.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, 251-252.

⁹⁵ Kiernan, *The Cambodian Genocide*, 344-348.

⁹⁶ Buddhist monks were social leaders in Cambodia, and as such could lead resistance to the new regime. They suffered a nearly 100% death rate during the Khmer Rouge years – less than 2,000 survived from around 70,000 before 1975 (Kiernan, *The Cambodian Genocide*, 344).

⁹⁷ Auron, *Genocide*, 135-139, Locard. *State Violence*, 121-122.

⁹⁸ Kiernan, *Genocide, Extermination and Resistance*, 238.

The Relation Between Control and Intention

What was the level of control that KR elites in general, and Pol Pot in particular, had in DK, and were they inclined to use this level of control to accomplish their ideological goals?

In this part I will discuss and explain this key relation, relevant to the model as well as to the case. As I've mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, this part isn't one of the four pillar-based parts of the analysis. Nonetheless, this discussion provides support and background for the following parts. I'm discussing this relation here rather than in the model chapter, because I see it as an implicit part of any top-down model-based empirical analysis – when we focus on elites as the driving force of a case, we assume they had the power and the will to do so. It isn't obvious though, that they always did and that some parts of the case weren't caused by others. For this reason, it is important to begin this empirical analysis by establishing that CPK elites had sufficient control and intention, meaning their actions, presented in the following parts, weren't arbitrary.

The question of control, and through it, of intent, is then a key one for this paper. When speaking of control in this case, I am referring to two different levels, and two different sets of relevant questions emanating from these levels. The first is the control of the Khmer Rouge, as an organization, over the state of Cambodia. On this level there is a clear agreement in research that KR had indeed maintained a very high level of control throughout the period they were in power. This can be seen by examining their actions – the emptying of cities, the concentration of citizens in the collective work camps and the ongoing operation of this vast network of camps, these are all evidence that KR were indeed in control, otherwise they wouldn't have been able to execute such a large project, that required planning, coordination, communication and a well-functioning chain of command. If these weren't in place, we wouldn't be able to see this level of consistency in action over such a wide geographical area, such a large number of perpetrators, victims and assistants (to the perpetrators) and with such a level of communication in place - the lack of development in communication in the 70's compared to today emphasizes even more the need for powerful control from above. A great deal more effort was necessary to accomplish this level of coordination. We also access to victim and perpetrator testimonies, of just how controlled victim lives were and how powerless they were in comparison with their KR perpetrators.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, 250.

The second level of control is the personal elite level, and it is, to a degree, debated among researches. This level deals with the individual leaders of DK, men like Pol Pot, Khieu Samphan and Leng Sary, and their personal ability to affect local happenings on a national level. In other words, could they directly influence the daily lives of individuals in the camps? Obviously Pol Pot influenced people with his decisions, but did he have a level of control that was so high, that it penetrated the personal sphere of his subjects? Within KR power structure, Pol Pot had a tremendous amount of power and influence. He was the de-facto supreme leader of Cambodia, even when in secret, and his plan for Cambodia that was executed in accordance with his vision and guidance.¹⁰⁰ Did this control of KR and CPK structure also translate into the state structure level?

This question, regarding the level of on an individual leader had on a state level pertains, for example, to the question of starvation: Many prisoners in the camps starved to death while they were producing enough food to feed the population. This food, however, was sent to other countries instead. Starvation was a state-wide phenomenon in DK and not localized to a specific location. One side of the discussion claims that this famine was the result of a structural failure in DK – that local leaders were over-pressured by their superiors, and so to hide their failure to meet the quotas of rice of export, they shifted to export rice that was meant for the local population. Under this explanation, KR leaders were at fault for creating a malfunctioning system, of demanding too much from their subjects, but not of deliberately starving them. This side assumes then that Pol Pot, Khieu Samphan and Leng Sary could not control the personal or local spheres, and that DK was more like a normal state in that sense, where leaders can affect conditions that may very well cause people to starve, but lack the ability to order this starvation directly.

Raffin presents a case for this side:

The Khmer Rouge preoccupation with the prospect of a Vietnamese invasion meant that national defense was a priority, to the detriment of ensuring an adequate food supply for Cambodia's population... to the DK were the "hidden enemies" not only within the population but also within the party's ranks. These threats, the regime insisted, needed to be eliminated. ...the regime's inability to reach its agricultural production quotas reinforced this perception. To meet these enormous quotas, local cadres would sometimes forward to Phnom Penh rice that was intended for

¹⁰⁰ Kiernan, *Genocide, Extermination and Resistance*, 237, Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, 55-57.

consumption by the rural population. When party leaders learned about documents reporting people's suffering in the countryside, they concluded that subversion was responsible for the situation...¹⁰¹

This claim is further supported by Mann, when he says that "Most deaths inflicted by Communist regimes were not intentional murders".¹⁰² Attributing deaths under regimes like DK to working conditions, disease and malnutrition, as a failure of these states to provide better conditions due to their "Marxian schemes of revolutionary transformation"¹⁰³ and not as a result of an intentionally lethal ideology.

Starvation then, according to this claim in the discussion, was caused by a failure to manage the economy by state and local levels. As their ideology, or maybe the leaders' individual psychology, couldn't even perceive such an option, the local leaders, as an attempt at survival, lied and moved around rice from the people to export, while elites like Pol Pot accused traitors and "diseased elements". In the context of our discussion, this side represents the claim that many deaths in DK were circumstantial, systematic failures, and not intentional, and that the KR top leaders lacked, in fact, control on the ground level, but that it was focused more on the mid-level of leadership, which in turn was, as this claim states, not in control themselves.

The other side of this discussion, including Ben Kiernan, claims that KR leadership did in fact possess this level of control, and that starvation was a part of a well-thought-of, planned and executed ideology. The starvation of the victims was ordered and executed all over the state, in all work camps. It was a part of KR ideology – to make the Khmer people stronger by making them face hardship, and to cull out the "diseased elements"¹⁰⁴ from the national body. To make the nation stronger as a whole, as well as on the individual level. As we shall see in this part and in the following six parts of this chapter, there is a plethora of empirical examples to support this claim. The main point overall is that people's lives – both victims and perpetrators – were changed to such an extreme degree, that there is proof of consistent, ongoing communication between Pol Pot and local leaders, discussing many times minute details that state leaders don't normally deal with, and that actions were taken across the whole of DK with such consistency and efficiency. This body of evidence all shows that there is much more empirical evidence to support the second side of this discussion about starvation – that KR elites, especially Pol Pot,

¹⁰¹ Raffin, *Youth Mobilization*, 409-410.

¹⁰² Mann, *The Dark Side*, 319.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Kiernan, *Blood and Soil*, 549.

had indeed an overwhelming level of control throughout DK and the time they ruled it, also consistent with their ideology and actions seen before April 1975.¹⁰⁵

The entire process of the atomization of the Cambodian society, reconstruction (or perhaps deconstruction) of society into an atomized anti-society, which I discuss in the last part of this chapter, couldn't have happened on a state-wide level, and certainly not maintained for as long as it was, without specific orders issued and a level of control to make sure that they are in fact executed.

We can see an example of the level of control by the leaders of the KR in the following telegram, sent from the office of Pol Pot, summarizing a leadership meeting held on August 3rd, 1976:

3. Matters of production increase, besides rice: [We] need to prepare any [crop] that is strategic, such as every kind of potato, edible fruits and every kind of beans. [We have] a lot of possibility [to grow] mung beans. At the same time, [we] need to grow kapok trees. We increase production this way to provide for ourselves, help the people, and help to build the country. Rubber plantations: [We] can pull out [the rubber trees] because [we] no longer benefit from them. Use these lands to grow strategic crops as [mentioned] in the above. Plan them in hectares as in industrial style. Plan of [growing] kapok trees: In the year 1977, 100,000 trees [need to be planted]. Economically, kapok trees give more fruits than coconut trees -- easy to plan and easy to take care of.¹⁰⁶

We can see from this telegram an example of the kind of micro-management applied by top-level KR leaders towards the entire state. In points like this one, they had decided for the entire population of DK exactly which kinds of vegetables, fruit or other plants they must or mustn't grow. There's no question of preference or personal decisions. The leaders decide there is no use for rubber, and so all the rubber trees must be cut down. The criteria exhibited in this telegram for why these decisions are taken is simply that they are the will of leadership. Nothing else. This in turn likely means that indeed, KR leadership saw their own opinion as the only valid ones. They had no consideration for the opinion or needs of their people, only for the needs of the state as they saw them.

¹⁰⁵ The discussion on starvation and intention remains a generally relevant one today, both in this case and in others. I return to it in the final chapter of this paper.

¹⁰⁶ *Telegram N0001374*.

We cannot assume from this telegram that these orders were indeed carried out, only that they were given. However, we can see from other telegrams, sent to the office of Pol Pot by local and regional commanders, that Pol Pot was indeed very involved in the daily activities of the regions and in dealings between the regions themselves. For example, a report that “On 10 - 5 - 77, in a village west of Tnaot Temple, the soldiers of Pornhea Krek heard the sound of the enemy cutting down trees and digging the ground to camp from 11 pm until 4 am.”¹⁰⁷ In another telegram we see a report about one incident in which “bandits came down from the mountain”.¹⁰⁸ This level of reporting, about something as hearing sounds of soldiers cutting trees or a local small crime, shows how involved were Pol Pot, and others such as Khieu Samphan, who sometimes received copies of the telegrams, in the everyday life of the people, in small details of local happenings. Going back to the discussion on starvation, these telegrams, which sometimes indeed deal with food distribution among other things, show that the starvation of the people of DK could have indeed been orchestrated as a policy by KR leadership. It doesn’t prove that local leaders couldn’t have falsified reports, but it does show that KR elites had the power to cause starvation among their people if they wished it to be so.

In 1978, a directive came down from Pol Pot, instructing to “firmly stir up national hatred and class hatred for the aggressive Vietnamese enemy, in order to turn this hatred into a material hatred”.¹⁰⁹ In the context of all that we’ve discussed so far in this chapter, this quote shows that Pol Pot had not only strong influence on the policy of the KR, but also that this ideological mixture between social and national or racial elements was constant, and most importantly for us here – that Pol Pot himself had the concept of transforming ideology into materialism, that he perceived ideology in similar terms to what we’re discussing here.¹¹⁰

We have seen that Pol Pot, as well as other KR elites, had the ideological background, reach of control, and the awareness and willingness to use this reach to achieve their revolutionary goals, in disregard of the victims this revolution will have.

¹⁰⁷ Telegram N0001411.

¹⁰⁸ Telegram N0001417. Similar types of reports can be seen in other telegrams, such as N0001295, N0001415, N0001418, N0001187, containing reports about casual contact with other KR soldiers and officers, local disturbances and skirmishes. All of these are reports that would usually not be sent to a head of state from local officials and wouldn’t be sent consistently if they weren’t continuously demanded by Pol Pot.

¹⁰⁹ Original document translated in Kiernan, *Blood and Soil*, 549. See other examples in: Kiernan, *The Cambodian Genocide*, 346,

¹¹⁰ See also reports from a Center Political Course, held in Phnom Penh on November-December 1975, in: Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, 101.

Culture Industry and Mass-Media

To what extremity were Culture Industry and Mass Media elements present in DK society?

Culture in this context of combined pillars includes film, television, literature, everyday culture, political culture, etc. As mentioned in the chapter about the model, culture, in its modern industrialized form, is used, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, by elites to (a) implement their oppression of the masses and (b) hide themselves as oppressors. At a quick glance, DK seems to have a striking lack of the mass-media elements. Does this mean then that there was little culture industry in DK? In this part, we will examine these questions and the severity of Culture Industry and Mass-Media that did exist in DK.

Back to the question I've presented before: Does the lack of means of mass-media in DK also mean the lack of culture industry? Not necessarily in general, and certainly not in the particular case of DK. While there is clearly a void in that area - there were very few mass-media outlets in DK society - culture industry still existed. CPK kept the airwaves filled with political content, targeting mainly the young with political and nationalistic propaganda.¹¹¹ It can also be found in popular culture. And whilst this element of DK society was politicized and instrumentalized to the extreme, it was functioning still to fulfill its two purposes, in what was essentially a highly-focused, "pure" even, bluntly violent, form of culture industry, especially lacking the entertainment component. In the context of our model then, the change between DK and other societies isn't in that DK had different mass-media, or none at all, in the Western sense – it still had a system in place to achieve the same goals. People in DK had no personal or communal life that weren't completely politicized, instrumentalized for the purposes of the state. That is always the case for culture industry though even in Western, liberal societies. The difference is in the level of politicization, in the lack of entertainment and excess, so to speak, in the culture industry.

Culture industry in DK was present in culture itself, in the everyday lives and interactions that did happen for the victim population of DK. The narrative they were in at all times, the language and terms used around them, these were the culture industry of DK. This doesn't simply mean propaganda, which we'll discuss in the next chapter. This means that the entire cultural and social atmosphere of DK was politically charged, aimed at achieving the goals we've already discussed. Take for example the poem "The Motherland of Kampuchea" from 1978:

¹¹¹ Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, 246-247.

The American imperialists and their lackeys

Their lackeys owe us blood as hot as fire.

The hot and angry war ensured that Kampuchea will never forget the enmity

Will not forget the severe oppression.

Seize hold of guns to kill the enemy quickly.¹¹²

This song wasn't sung in official ceremonies of any kind, but rather was a family song, sang by people sitting together for some rare free time. It is an example that even free time had become useful for the state. It seemed that people were getting some time off, that they could enjoy themselves, but that in reality, their entire cultural surroundings had been transformed to serve the needs of DK and CPK. In the terms of our model, from the point of view of the state, there was no excess – downtime from work was used by the victims for political re-education which was beneficial to the state. From the victims' point of view, they did receive some rest. This song, and similar ones, served two purposes for the state: they (1) motivated citizens to work and to accept CPK world views and (2) pacified them by providing them with a semblance of rest.

DK was in a constant state of motion. Everyone was supposed to be working all the time towards the greatness of the nation. This included all citizens, victims and perpetrators, having to grow food on top of whatever else they were doing. Everyone had to be a farmer or a worker, preferably both at the same time, but also a warrior, a fighter defending the nation. This meant making personal sacrifices for the nation as well as taking part in combat.¹¹³ We can see an example of this policy in the telegram summarizing a leadership meeting of the CPK, held on August 8th, 1976, where Pol Pot writes with regards to Production increase, that "On every island, our brothers [soldiers stationed on the islands, LB] cultivate rice, grow edible fruit trees such as coconuts, rambutan and durian".¹¹⁴ This is an official document, showing that it was an intentional policy sent down from the very top of DK leadership, that soldiers must also be farmers. This shows the highly ideological nature of DK society, acting to have all citizens literally become warrior-farmers, but also the extreme level of instrumentalization applied also to KR fighters, i.e. perpetrators, that their usefulness to the nation had to be maximized. Their lives are micro-managed by elites to such a degree, that they're not only told to provide their

¹¹² Original poem translated and quoted in: Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, 248.

¹¹³ Raffin, *Youth Mobilization*, 415-416.

¹¹⁴ Telegram N0001374.

own food, but also exactly which trees they must and mustn't grow. We can also see this from telegrams sent to Pol Pot's office from local officials all over the state, referring to him as "Comrade Brother" and ending telegrams with phrases such as "Warmest revolutionary solidarity".¹¹⁵

Angkar's ("The organization" – secret name for CPK until 1977) overwhelming presence prevented any experience of personal space or time. Victims had no place to which they could withdraw and have the option to reflect on the state of DK or on their own. They couldn't make a distinction between their own private views and official DK ones.¹¹⁶ The overall atmosphere in DK was of constant war for survival. Be it on an individual level, class level or state level, there was always a struggle. People had to physically survive every day, but it didn't stop there. At the same time, their group, whatever it may be, was being violently assimilated into the national body, and the state itself was in a perpetual state of war, constantly invading its neighbors or being invaded, people being told all the time that their entire lives might be destroyed by foreign enemies at any given moment, if they stopped the struggle for even a short while.¹¹⁷

We can see then that Culture Industry and Mass-media elements were overwhelmingly present in DK – all outlets of mass-media that did exist in DK were used for only one purpose – spreading CPK ideology and propaganda. The entire culture of DK was fetishized to the extreme, existing only as a function of the party of the nation, including even popular culture like songs, nothing was allowed to exist outside of this complete politicization.

Propaganda

How was propaganda used in DK, and which forms did it take?

Propaganda was ever-present in everyday life in DK. In the model, Propaganda functions as a major part of nation building process. We'll now see that KR elites themselves saw it as such. They did not see themselves as simply changing a state, but as complete revolutionaries, tearing down Cambodia to usher back its old glory, and their actions, as we see, were in line with this thinking.

In this part, I examine the different kinds of propaganda present in DK. The forms that this propaganda took were differentiated by means, target audience and the type of propaganda

¹¹⁵ Both in Telegram *N0001158*. See for example also telegrams *N0001045*, *N0001415* containing similar expressions.

¹¹⁶ Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, 250.

¹¹⁷ Kiernan, *Blood and Soil*, 552-554.

itself. While propaganda is related to culture industry elements, they are not the same. Propaganda in DK, as we shall see, wasn't based solely on the use of mass-media.

But in the case of DK, there is a unique social structure in place: The totalitarian nature of the state, absolutely deconstructing and reconstructing the lives of its citizens, creates a social structure utterly different in its base than other states that have perpetrated extreme mass-violence, before or after DK. While Nazi Germany, Turkey during World War I and Rwanda in the 90s (as a few key examples) were murderous regimes, they didn't fundamentally change, to such a degree, the lives of those who were not their victims – people went to their normal jobs, went out for coffee and beer after work, spent time with their families and friends and so on.¹¹⁸ In DK, we see what is essentially a binary social structure – victims, making up the vast majority of the population, basically viewed as numbers, instrumentalized and atomized to the extreme, and perpetrators – KR members of different levels. In this case then, we see propaganda used for educating the perpetrators on the one hand, and for further atomizing the victims on the other.

As we've mentioned before, according to the thinking of Horkheimer and Adorno, propaganda is mainly targeted at two groups of the population: Perpetrators and bystanders. It is meant to bring would-be, potential perpetrators into action, and to pacify the mass of bystanders. While they are, by definition, passive participants who do not object to the violence being perpetrated, they are still a vast majority, potentially capable of a revolution if properly motivated. It is then in the interest of the murderous regime currently in power to keep bystanders as such and to prolong as much as possible their own hold to the seat of power.¹¹⁹

For our purpose, the idea behind this somewhat lengthy, but quite necessary, explanation was to provide background for a question: Why would KR elites employ propaganda in a society which is devoid of most of those we could consider "viable" targets for propaganda? As we shall now see, propaganda was in fact needed, and employed in several forms, as an important part of scapegoating.

¹¹⁸ This is not to say that these regimes, as well as other murderous one, had no effect on the lives of citizens – of course they did. But for those who, for many different reasons, were bystanders, for example, and were not somehow linked to victims or rescuers at some point, there was the possibility for life to move on more or less as usual. For many perpetrators, life did move on as usual, while their work now involved mass-extinction.

¹¹⁹ This isn't a unique characteristic of murderous or extreme regimes by any stretch of the imagination. Most rulers want to maintain their rule, and one way to do it is by propaganda. However, in our case here it has an added significance which I discuss.

How did propaganda look like then, in a state that had a nearly non-existent mass media system? This might look like a disadvantage, but I believe that in the case of DK it became an advantage for elites attempting to transform the state. It is an advantage, as unlike in what we might call a relatively “normal” state, where propaganda might work better when using multiple channels, in DK, the highly atomized social structure (which I will discuss in detail later on as well) made KR propaganda the only form of mass-media both victims and perpetrators were exposed to. In the case of the victims, they literally had no other experience of the world except for KR propaganda, as they were not allowed to even speak to one another.

One kind of propaganda was broadcasted messages, played for example during the few days of the evacuation of Phnom Penh. These were repeating messages, calling for KR men to refrain from taking the personal belongings of deported citizens, like glasses, watches and jewelry. Kiernan brings up this propaganda and questions its purpose. As cities had become, at that point, ghost-cities, these messages were not meant to reassure the deportees. They did, according to Kiernan, serve two purposes - an ideological purpose – to make sure that the KR men don’t succumb to materialism, to imperialist property-hoarding, and a practical, deceptive purpose – to maintain the illusion, even among KR men, that the deportees would come back to their homes in the future.¹²⁰ These messages then were meant to keep KR men ideologically loyal, as well as maintain indirectly the passivity of the victims, who undoubtedly would hear from their perpetrators that they would someday go back to their homes. This made the façade that much more persuasive.

Another form of propaganda was through the broadcasts of Radio Phnom Penh, which broadcasted slogans, speeches, false information and news and nationalistic songs,¹²¹ repeatedly and with mantra-like regularity “like monks who lead the prayers at a wat.”¹²² All this was done under direct orders from Pol Pot himself.¹²³

Another form of spreading propaganda was through the ranks of the organization. From Pol Pot, through generals and battalion commanders, to commissars and local leaders, all the way down to the KR perpetrators on the ground.

Kiernan provides a recollection by Ouch Bun Chhoeun, then CPK deputy secretary of Region 21, who recalled that “the propaganda line” passed down from the party Center after the

¹²⁰ Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, 52-53.

¹²¹ Ibid, 90, 96, 103, 106, 132, 246.

¹²² Raffin, *Youth Mobilization*, 414.

¹²³ Ibid.

evacuation of Phnom Penh: "1. The city people have had an easy life, whereas the rural people have had a very hard time. 2. The city people were exploiters. 3. The morality of the cities under Lon Nol was not pure and clean like in the liberated areas. 4. The city people shirked productive work."¹²⁴ From this recollection we can learn that the messages were indeed coming down the chain of command all the way from KR elites, and that in relation to the cities and their residents, that these were portrayed as parasites on others, on the nation. I will expand further on this point in the Dehumanization part.

Another important part of KR propaganda was youth education. Children from the “right” social group were educated to become future KR members, perpetrators, party leaders and local cadres.¹²⁵ They were brainwashed from all directions, completely atomized, separated from their parents and families. Parents were made sure to be separated from their own children, working in different areas and shifts. The children and youths were raised in a communal, barracks-style existence which was completely dedicated to the nation-building process of DK.¹²⁶ KR criticized “family-ism” (*kruosaaniyum*) as an ideology to be discarded.¹²⁷ Each child stood alone before the state and its supreme leader, Pol Pot, terrorized and isolated, making the education and reeducation processes much more easily received.

We can find an example of this in this 1977 propaganda song:

Before the revolution, children were poor and lived lives of misery,

Living like animals, suffering as orphans.

The enemy abandoned all thought of us...

Now the glorious revolution supports us all.¹²⁸

The blatant message of this song is clear – before the revolution, under imperialist rule, children had families, but not true ones. They were alone, abandoned by the material society. Now, after the revolution, the children have no family like the false ones they had before, but they have something much better, a better existence, as the state and each other are now the true support they are receiving. Their former families are then equated with the Western enemy. It may seem

¹²⁴ Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, 62.

¹²⁵ *Pol Pot Regime*, 98, Raffin, *Youth Mobilization*, 393.

¹²⁶ Kiernan, *Ideology Sources*, 8-9.

¹²⁷ Kiernan, “Wild Chickens, Farm Chickens, and Cormorants: Kampuchea’s Eastern Zone under Pol Pot,” in Chandler and Kiernan (editors). *Revolution and Its Aftermath in Kampuchea*, 182. In Kiernan, *Ideology Sources*, 8-9.

¹²⁸ For example, it was said that foreign powers tried to assassinate DK’s leaders and destroy its economy by stealing its money. Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, 95, 99-100.

blatant to the present-time Western reader, but these children were completely isolated, were not taught anything else but these ideas, certainly not critical thinking, and so were powerless to resist, this kind of propaganda in the (anti-)social environment of DK, would have been highly effective.

Another kind of propaganda presented DK as an isolated and ever-threatened nation.¹²⁹ For example, In a speech in honor of a delegation from The People's Republic of China, held on November 5th, 1978, Pol Pot said that "...our people have to tackle and oppose the large-scale barbarous acts of aggression, annexation, swallowing of territories and elimination of our race unceasingly perpetrated by the Vietnamese enemy against Democratic Kampuchea".¹³⁰ Later on in the speech he adds that "...with the active participation of the Soviet International expansionist big power... the Vietnamese have prepared and are preparing actively their forces of aggression in order to launch a second strategical large-scale attack...".¹³¹

Pol Pot is addressing multiple levels of the social structure in this speech – he is speaking of the attack on the race by the Vietnamese, as they were presented as foreign elements attacking the nation and its people. He's also addressing the situation between Vietnam and DK, and accusing Vietnam of being the aggressor and annexing Khmer territories. He could be making historical accusations, as we've mentioned that a part of KR ideology was irredentism towards territories belonging at the time to DK's neighbors.

This is meant at creating a perception of a parallel situation between the citizens of DK, and the state itself – both presented as isolated, with no one to trust. The solution provided by Pol Pot for both nation and citizens, the only solution, was for people to trust the state alone, and for the state to trust itself. This is a manifestation of the ideology of autarchy – DK must be completely self-sufficient so it can stand against its enemies. The international arena is in a Hobbesian state-of-being, and there is no one, no greater power, for the state to turn to, similarly to the people's reliance on the state. Other countries, like Vietnam, says Pol Pot, are helped and controlled by "expansionist big powers"¹³², also echoing referring to the Americans as the same type of power, and in the past, Cambodia being a similarly dependent under Sihanouk and Lon Nol.¹³³

¹²⁹ Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, 94-95

¹³⁰ Pol Pot Speech, 11.

¹³¹ Ibid, 13.

¹³² Pol Pot Speech, 13

¹³³ Other examples of Pol Pot's propaganda speeches can be found in: Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, 94-95,

KR propaganda made all “non-Khmer” elements into enemies of the Khmer state, race, nation and history. This is derived from the homogeneity element of their ideology, one of its key elements: According to this ideology, DK is a Khmer nation in the most extreme ways – it is a return to old Khmer borders, to old Khmer glory, its citizens are all Khmer – in race, in class, in action, in character. They are all pure-blooded, hardened, totally loyal to the ideology and sworn enemies of anything different or ‘foreign’, as they perceived that term. Anyone not matching these definitions is excess, and excess cannot exist in the DK. Any foreign familial or economic structure or idea was presented to the people of DK as ‘enslaving’ the Khmer people. The oppressive regime continuously presented its actions as freeing and its victims as oppressors. For example, the complete destruction of the family, as we’ve mentioned before, was presented as women’s suffrage. Women, like children, were oppressed by their husband in the family, while women themselves oppressed their children alongside their spouses. All these were continuously presented as foreign, non-Khmer elements.¹³⁴

Going back to question I started this part with, we have seen that propaganda was ever-present in DK society. Every outlet of mass-media that existed was dedicated to spreading propaganda. Other parts of culture, like music and poetry, was allowed to exist only to serve the greater needs of the nation. Even interpersonal interaction, when it was allowed at all, was infused with propaganda and politicized content. Propaganda was used as an important tool in the creation of completely false and instrumentalized worldview in DK citizens. Looking back at our model, we can see that in this aspect of DK culture, no excess was allowed to exist.

Dehumanization

What part did dehumanization have in DK culture and CPK ideology?

We now reach the fourth and last of the parallel pillars of the empirical case study. Dehumanizing the victims was a prominent feature of KR discourse. Dehumanization was present as an ideology – the insignificance of the people in comparison the absolute importance of the state, and as action – people were dehumanized constantly by the words and actions of KR leaders and soldiers. In the context of our model and its relation to the philosophical base, dehumanization is related to the ever-presence of oppression in different forms. Humans are no longer seen as human, but as tools to be used for the achievement of goals and furthering the interests and influence of those who can oppress. Dehumanization is the adaptation of the oppression of the other, through social ideas and via culture industry, into ideology and action.

¹³⁴ Kiernan, *Ideology Sources*, 8-9.

Pol Pot frequently used agricultural and biological metaphors and concepts in his speeches, and in general when addressing members of Angkar and of the general KR. In this part, I go through the different forms which dehumanization took in DK, mainly from the elite perspective.

Dehumanization, like the other pillars I've introduced, is both material and ideological. It isn't just a way of thinking that perceives people as objects, or assigns them with economic or material value; it is an idea brought to life, influencing the everyday lives of the people of DK and was an integral part of the control and power structure of the state.

Agricultural terms and metaphors included for example "pull up the grass, dig up the roots" when referencing the process of transforming the state and proclaimed that the bodies of city-dwellers and other victims of terror would become "fertilizer"¹³⁵ for the future.

While the usage of these agricultural metaphors seemed to be part of the ideological transformation of the state, and, if we assume the ideological truancy of Pol Pot and other KR elites, a natural part of the vocabulary of those believing in the prominence of the farmer in the social structure, in practice KR demolished the farmer class in Cambodia, as Kiernan puts it:¹³⁶

But as they demolished the small raised dykes dividing traditional peasant plots, the CPK also demolished all three pillars of Cambodian peasant life: the peasant farm, the family unit, and the Buddhist religion. While the Khmer Rouge idealized the peasantry and liked to say they were leading a peasant revolution, they destroyed the Khmer peasant's way of life.¹³⁷

Reminiscent of Nazi ideology, a mix of biological and social metaphors was also common in KR language. Pol Pot referred to internal enemies as "an illness", "civil microbes", "a sickness". Microbes must be eliminated, so that they don't infect and rot the entire national body.¹³⁸ These were many times targeted at foreigners living in Cambodia, groups like the Vietnamese, that could more easily be defined as, in this context, literal foreign objects that are parasitic in nature and must then be removed. However, any group deemed enemy of the state by CPK leadership became the target of such attacks.

Another group that was sometimes perceived and introduced as synonymous with foreigners were urban residents, "city-dwellers", who were many times identified as foreigners because of

¹³⁵ Kiernan, *Ideology Sources*, 7.

¹³⁶ While at the same time using (fittingly, perhaps) agricultural analogies of his own.

¹³⁷ Kiernan, *Ideology Sources*, 7.

¹³⁸ Raffin, *Youth Mobilization*, 409-410, Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, 336.

their association with modern trade and economic occupations. Once again we encounter the KR ideological crossing of class and race. I've mentioned before that KR propaganda made all "non-Khmer" elements enemies of the Khmer state, race, nation and history.

Dehumanization was a tool for the international arena as well. I've shown before, in the part about propaganda, how CPK propaganda drew parallels between the situation of the people of DK and the international situation of DK itself. Dehumanization was a part of this as well. Khmer who were deemed traitors were said to have "Khmer bodies with Vietnamese heads", or that there are "pests buried within",¹³⁹ referring to Vietnamese infiltration of DK. In this context, Pol Pot claimed that the KR revolution was the only "clean" one in history,¹⁴⁰ referring to its success in eradicating all of the so-called disease and parasites from the Khmer national body.

We've seen that dehumanization was used as an integral part of DK discourse. It permeated all aspects of DK's social and political structure, as well as CPK ideology, and was used as a part of state propaganda as well – although not always, as many times, as we've seen in our discussions about propaganda, it was very direct and blunt, using no metaphors or other literary tools. On the other hand, dehumanization had a far greater role in DK than just a part of the propaganda machine: It was an integral part of CPK ideology and CPK policy – the victims of KR violence were completely dehumanized – stripped of all group and individual traits, made anonymous slaves, existing only as tools for the glory of the nation. This was a deliberate usage of ideology and its transformation into the material by Pol Pot and other CPK elites, in their strive for power, as national and racial glory.

Ideology and Ideological awareness

What was the level of ideological awareness of CPK elites?

We've seen before that ideological awareness is a key element in the model. With awareness to ideology comes intent. The actions of elites, according to Horkheimer and Adorno's model, are not merely attempts at political survival, at maintaining their own current seat of power, these actions are intentional and self-aware attempts to divert what is, according to Marxism and to the belief of those elites, the imminent path of history.

This is a place to reiterate: there is no claim here that there is some greater power moving things, or that the course of history is fate – not at all. Nonetheless, those who agree with this type of

¹³⁹ Both quotes from: Kiernan, *Blood and Soil*, 549.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 549-550.

Marxist thinking certainly think that the result of each historical phase is indeed the collapse of the current relations of production and the beginning of a new phase, where the relations of production are inherently different. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, those elites who are aware of this outcome of each historical phase, try and change this outcome. If the revolution that ends the current historical phase will be aimed at those who own the means of production, the true owners in this phase could try and create the illusion that someone else is the actual owner, so that the oppressed masses would rebel against this ‘fake owner’ instead of them, the real ones, and thus exhaust their revolutionary drive. We’ve referred to this process as “scapegoating”.

We’ve mentioned before the deep changes in society in modern times, like urbanization and the rise of social movements, caused in part by, among others, population growth and industrialization. In the Cambodian case, we see in this chapter that there was an extreme reaction by KR elites and organization to these developments, the nature of the reaction showing their awareness of the situation on a high structural level.

Through what we’ve established so far, and through statements like Pol Pot’s from 1978, instructing to “firmly stir up national hatred and class hatred for the aggressive Vietnamese enemy, in order to turn this hatred into a material hatred”,¹⁴¹ we see that the transformative operation taken on by the KR was an ideologically inclined one, which would indicate that KR elites and in particular, Pol Pot as their leader, were indeed ideologically aware. In the context of this chapter, we can see that Pol Pot used Marxist terms regularly and was clearly aware of this, mentioning here this transformation between ideology and materialism. However, there remains the question of reasoning – in other words, why was this done, in the ideological and social-structure contexts?

The identity of those in power was clear and so, there was seemingly no need to find a scapegoat to divert the violence towards. However, this was true for KR as an organization, but not for Pol Pot as its leader. In the power structure of DK, while the KR had control as an organization, the true control of the means of production, in a truly totalitarian, arguably unprecedented, sense, was in the hands of one person - Pol Pot. As we take a look at The Marxist historical structure, we see that it doesn’t assume exceptions. In other words, since the oppression and abuse of the proletariat by those who control the means of production is a constant of all

¹⁴¹ Original document translated in Kiernan, *Blood and Soil*, 549.

historical phases, it cannot be any different¹⁴², the revolution which would change the social structure is, at that sense, inevitable. All elites, in the Marxist context, are bound to be overthrown, even the totalitarian, seemingly powerful ones. That, in turn, means elites have a constant need to divert attention from themselves as a measure of protection. In other words, the structure (or meta-structure) of the process stays the same, it is the elites within it that then instrumentalize people around them and then dictate the level of violence and diversion that is then applied.

Were Pol Pot in particular, and KR elites in general, aware of this historical thinking? It seems like they certainly were. Those leading DK were explicitly sworn communists, and so very much aware and in agreement, at least to a degree, with the ideas of Marx and Engels, as well as those who followed them – Lenin, Stalin and Mao.¹⁴³

Most members of the leadership of the Communist party and DK were members of the French Communist party when they studied in France. Obviously, they chose to name their party “the Communist Party” and their ideas and actions, as we have seen so far, had been with the intention to form a communal society¹⁴⁴. After China’s leader Mao’s death in 1976, Pol Pot proclaimed DK’s allegiance to Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao. The CPK declared itself to be a Communist Party in 1977. Stalinist-style collective work-camps, political, social, religious and cultural purges, as well as forced mass-population expulsions, all under an umbrella of communist-style propaganda, were the signature characteristic of the CPK’s time as rulers.¹⁴⁵

Even before they took over Cambodia, the KR had already enacted a similar policy to that which they were going to enact state-wide in 1975, in areas under their control. As early as mid-1972 in the Southwest areas, Cham women were forced by the KR to cut their hair short, to resemble the Khmer way, long hair being a part of Cham tradition. Later on, the traditional Cham sarong was banned, as well as other articles of clothing made from colorful cloths,

¹⁴² It must be this way by definition, as each historical phase in Marxist thinking, and in theories derived from it, is defined by these same relations of production. In that context, as the relations change, so does the historical phase alongside them.

¹⁴³ Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, 98-99.

¹⁴⁴ I don’t intend to claim here that Pol Pot’s and KR ideology was indeed a “true”, so to speak, Marxist one. Their ideology had many other, more dominant, elements – nationalistic, racial and others, some certainly unique to KR. In general, I agree with calling this a “hybrid” ideology instead of “Marxist”. The exact nature of KR ideology is *not*, however, my focus here. I would like to show that KR leadership, and especially Pol Pot, as the main leader of DK and CPK, were aware of Marxist ideology and its historical and meta-historical elements.

¹⁴⁵ Kiernan, *Ideology Sources*, 3-4, Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, 148.

including Khmer traditional ones. Local residents were forced to wear only black pajamas; Later on, there were increasing restrictions on all religious activities.¹⁴⁶

The KR had then an established ideology and policy when they took over Cambodia in 1975. We can see that in as early as 1972, KR had already taken up a policy of forcibly assimilating the Cham into the Khmer, who were themselves subjected to steps towards atomization. These steps were not targeted specifically at minority groups, but also towards the Khmer majority population. The KR also enacted what can be seen as communist laws, like abolishing religion and forced communal meals.

We can see other elements of KR ideology in the testimony of Ka Chu, a local Cham blacksmith in Chhouk Sor subdistrict, in the Southwest province of Kompong Chhnang, taken over by KR forces in 1970. Ka Chu testified that the local Cham were told by KR that “now that you have come to live in Kampuchea, you must struggle hard... Do not follow the example of Champa, which did not struggle. That is why you have no country.”¹⁴⁷ We can see that the ideology of struggle, that national independence must be gained and maintained through violence was already present before KR came to power state-wide. Hardship, according to KR ideology, is a necessity. Not only is struggle difficult as is, the people must be hardened and kept ready to struggle by imposing hardships on them. According to this ideology, struggle must be taught to the people as well as lived, as a means to strengthen the nation.

In April 1973 Pol Pot, alongside Ke Pauk, the CPK commander of the Northern zone, where Pot was based, published an official CPK document, titled *Class Analysis and the Class Struggle*, which dealt with the relation of ruling classes and the oppressed proletariat. In it they wrote that “All nationalities have labourers, like our Kampuchean nationality, except for Islamic Khmers, whose lives are not so difficult”.¹⁴⁸

This CPK document gives us a few more pieces of information about how already formed was KR ideology when they took power in 1975. This document presents us with the base Marxist ideology, speaking of the oppressed proletariat and class struggle, however, as Kiernan notes, the class division is actually based off racial criteria. Here we can see the hybrid racial, nationalistic and Marxist components of KR ideology come together, even before DK came to life. We can also see from this document, as well as from the previous Ka Chu testimony, that

¹⁴⁶ Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, 259-288.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 259.

¹⁴⁸ Original document translated in: Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, 260.

the idea of Kampuchea, the old-new state of the Khmer, was already evident and formed during the early 70's.

In an interview with a Yugoslav delegation of journalists, which took place on March 17, 1978. Pol Pot was already known to be the leader of DK. He was now no longer hiding his identity. This document gives us an excellent opportunity to understand Pol Pot directly through his own words. While the speaker's intentions must always be taken into account when analyzing such documents, we can still learn much about his ideological awareness, his point of view of the world, as well as his intentions in taking part in this interview. In the interview, which took a very friendly, yet inquisitive, overall tone, Pol Pot was asked about the plan he has for the social structure of the society, and responds by saying that

...we have no model in building up our new society. The Special National Congress held at the end of April 1975 clearly specified the determinant role in the revolution, in the national liberation war, played by the worker and peasant people, who form the overwhelming majority of the people. It is this worker and peasant people who have endured the heaviest burden in the revolution. It is then this same worker and peasant people who must enjoy the most of the gains of the revolution...¹⁴⁹

This answer, only a small part of being introduced here, could be interpreted by some as simply being 'sarcastic', considering Pol Pot's true, well-known at this point in time, level of power, but I would argue that it is not the case. At this point in time, Pol Pot had been revealed as the supreme leader of DK. His interviewers treat him as such, as their questions focus on the wide range of topics and high level of view that we would expect a state leader to receive. Even though it is clear to these journalists that Pol Pot is indeed the supreme leader of DK¹⁵⁰, and this being indeed the reality at the time, Pol Pot continues his ruse and his scapegoating. He says that "...the edification of the society is undertaken in conformity with the aspirations of the entire people, especially those of the worker and peasant people who are the overwhelming majority of the population."¹⁵¹ Pot uses terms that can clearly be connected to Marxist or Maoist ideologies, referring to the workers and the farmers, respectively, as the backbone of the revolution and of the new society, as those who are truly in control. According to his words

¹⁴⁹ *Interview of Comrade Pol Pot*, 5.

¹⁵⁰ It's also worth remembering that this interview took place in early 1978, when Pol Pot and the revolution were at their highest points.

¹⁵¹ *Interview of Comrade Pol Pot*, 5.

here then, Pol Pot is simply a servant of a higher power – the people. He has no plans; he is simply following the will of the people.

We can see three things worth noticing in Pol Pot's thinking from this excerpt and from the interview itself:

Ideology – There is a strong ideological undertone to everything Pol Pot says. When he describes living conditions, he uses material terms. He speaks of the oppressed rising, about self-consciousness.

We cannot learn from this interview about whether or not Pol Pot held this ideology before it took place, but with the context of previous documents and testimonies, we can see a pattern of consistent continuity. The same elements we've seen in theory and in practice before, are coming back in his words now.

Scapegoating – At this point in time, he is known as the supreme leader of DK. Nonetheless, and while at same time mentioning in other answers how it's his doing, for example, that the living conditions of the people have improved or that the cities were emptied ¹⁵², which show he does indeed, in his own words, possess a great deal of power at the very least inside DK, he does not take responsibility for decisions. He maintains that he executes the people's plan. He is the organizer, not the thinker, according to his version. Being the key component to Horkheimer and Adorno's thinking, I expand on this element later on.

Practical – what is the purpose of this interview? The document was produced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of DK. These journalists were then likely invited by DK to conduct this interview. It is unlikely that someone like Pol Pot would do anything of this sort, like interview, without a purpose. We've already seen that he did in fact have a plan and an ideology in place, in spite of his claims in this very interview. The purpose of the interview is then the scapegoating we've just spoke about, but also propaganda. Propaganda is part of scapegoating, part of the methods of its distribution, but not only. There is more to propaganda than scapegoating, and more to scapegoating than propaganda. This interview is a practical tool to spread propaganda, in DK and outside, and it is a tool for Pol Pot to boast about the greatness of DK as a country and the success of the KR project and so also to spread and strengthen his ideology and similar ones.

¹⁵² Ibid, 2-3, 9.

We can see then that CPK elites in general, and Pol Pot in particular, showed a very high level of ideological beliefs, as well as a self-aware observation about these ideologies and beliefs, and acted accordingly with these ideologies, as well as their awareness of those.

Scapegoating

How did CPK elites use scapegoating?

Even as the KR took over Cambodia and transformed it completely, a high level of secrecy and deception was maintained through the different levels of the KR. At the leadership level, two men were positioned as faux leaders – Prince Norodom Sihanouk and Khieu Samphan. Sihanouk, the former ruler of Cambodia until Lon Nol's 1970 revolution, had banded together with the KR during Nol's years as ruler. That match wasn't a natural one, but Sihanouk was important for the KR as a means to attract followers from all over Cambodia, as he still had a strong support base and god-like admiration among the Cambodian population. Making Sihanouk a figurehead for the revolutionary movement certainly helped consolidate the KR power base among farmers and residents of the countryside and legitimize DK internationally,¹⁵³ this move isn't part, in my opinion, of scapegoating: when KR took over Cambodia, Sihanouk was announced as the head of state, but later was placed under house arrest¹⁵⁴. In other words, immediately when acquiring power, but as their status wasn't yet consolidated, KR removed Sihanouk, he was no longer the official leader. He had no usage in the ongoing control of the state and in executing Pol Pot's plan, as well as in the mass-violence yet to come. Hence, Sihanouk was a measure to attract supporters, a tool used in a certain period and then discarded. He didn't serve as a scapegoat, but more as a part of early-period propaganda to strengthen the KR.

Khieu Samphan's case is different than Sihanouk's. While he was number two in many ways to Pol Pot - the true leader of DK, Samphan was presented as leader of the KR before the revolution - for example, he met with Prince Sihanouk when the latter came back to Cambodia to join forces with the KR in the fight against Lon Nol. When the KR took power in Cambodia, he was made the president of DK, formally the highest position in the state, even though the state was run de-facto by Pol Pot as the supreme leader¹⁵⁵.

¹⁵³ Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, 99-100, 231.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 54.

¹⁵⁵ Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, 2-4.

Although we are now discussing the relationship between two people and not groups or classes, we can still analyze these actions by Pol Pot as scapegoating: In the power structure of DK, Pol Pot was literally in a class, or status, of his own. He was the supreme ruler – in Marxist terms, he was really the one and only owner of the means of production. In that sense, someone Like Khieu Samphan would always be a potential threat. If people were to understand who is the owner of the means of production and rebel, this could be a revolution specifically aimed at overthrowing Pol Pot. From this point of view, Pol Pot had to divert the revolutionary attention from him, and a logical, acceptable scapegoat would be Khieu Samphan, the no. 2 of DK and the formal leader until the reveal of Pol Pot as supreme leader.

On the next structural level, the party level, we can see a continuation of the secrecy policy. The CPK's very existence was a secret until 1977, and in general was only referred to as "Angkar" (The Organization). When KR took over Cambodia in April 1975, a 3-day "celebratory national congress" was held in Phnom Penh. This was supposedly a gathering of representatives from all major groups in Cambodia, like the military and the Buddhist clergy, who joyously came together and made key decisions about the future of the new state. Khieu Samphan himself took to a radio broadcast to announce so-called "unanimous" decision made by this congress, among them, the appointment of prince Sihanouk as head of the new state. This "congress" had in reality no power, and was simply a cover for the real power of the new state, the leadership of the then-secretive CPK, meeting at the same time¹⁵⁶.

In a key CPK secret meeting in May 1975, Pol Pot instructed CPK and KR officials on the main points of his plan. While being neither the formal leader of DK, nor a member of the country's congress, Pol Pot was absolutely in control and led the KR in implementing his plan, which had included the emptying of the cities, the destruction of the clergy, the murder of all former and possible future enemies of the state and acts against the Vietnamese, including the expulsion of those Vietnamese living in Cambodia, as well as immediate commencement of aggressions along the borders, in particular the Vietnamese one¹⁵⁷. Within the first weeks of the newly formed DK, two disputed Vietnamese-controlled islands in the gulf of Thailand had already been attacked¹⁵⁸, revealing DK's intentions towards Vietnam.

We've seen before that later on, when he was the explicitly established leader of DK, Pol Pot categorically attributed the power in DK to the people and not to himself. In his speech on

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 53-54.

¹⁵⁷ Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, 55-57.

¹⁵⁸ Ciorciari, *China and the Pol Pot Regime*, 217.

November 5th, 1978, Pol Pot said that “At present, our people are valiantly and arduously struggling to totally achieve the plan of building up socialism for the year 1978 in the fields of agriculture, industry, social affairs, health, culture, teaching and education...”.¹⁵⁹

In the context of Horkheimer and Adorno’s model, these mean that Pol Pot is diverting the potential revolutionary anger from himself, and is quite literally dispersing it into the people. He tells the people who hear him, who feel oppressed, both victims and perpetrators, that if they want to rebel and change the situation, the guilty ones are the them themselves, the people – those who oppress are also those who free, he (Pol Pot) is meaningless, a tool. So is any other KR official who seemingly, according to Pol Pot, has power. This power is bestowed by the people¹⁶⁰ and not some evil dictator. The people control the means of production then, and they have only themselves to blame for the situation. They are voluntarily maintaining this system, this power structure. These arguments pose the people with two solutions for the situation – find those at fault, according to them, and purge them, or maintain the situation because they cannot change themselves, they are the oppressors and the oppressed. In any case, from his own perspective, Pol Pot benefits as he, the true ruler, wouldn’t be removed. He isn’t the one at fault, just an equal member, a comrade, of the revolutionary national body.

Other targets of scapegoating, as we’ve in previous parts, were those “foreign elements”, blamed at the same time for all of DK’s past and present problem. Extreme violence against these groups, for example, the easily identifiable Chinese and Vietnamese people (but not the Cham), wasn’t meant simply as a tactical attack on potential threats, but rather as a part of an ongoing campaign of deception, creating a puppet, meant to expend the revolutionary violence of the masses without actually changing the power structure of society.¹⁶¹ The Vietnamese, for example, were blamed for being spies and saboteurs, but weren’t allowed to leave DK.¹⁶² This is because as we’ve seen, their presence was more important than their absence.

Convergence into Atomization

What was the place and function of atomization in DK society and KR ideology?

¹⁵⁹ *Pol Pot Speech*, 11.

¹⁶⁰ Kampuchea is, after all, *Democratic*, is it not?

¹⁶¹ See examples in: Kiernan, *Blood and Soil*, 549, Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, 251-252, 290-293, 296-298, 346, Kiernan, *The Cambodian Genocide*, 345-347, *Pol Pot, speech*, 11-13.

¹⁶² Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, 296.

The title of this last part of the part is a telling one. Atomization in this empirical case is the culmination of all other parts of the model. So how do these four¹⁶³ pillars of the case converge into this point? Atomization was the state of being in DK. It is ideology made real. It emanates from the ideological background of elites, believing in the superiority of the state, the nation, the race, over all other things. What is this ideology? In the context of our case here, atomization is the idea that each individual human-being should stand isolated before the state, so that these human-beings would become powerless compared to the whole nation. In this state of being, each person should only be loyal to the state. Loyalty to others is only for the benefit of the state and otherwise forbidden. But atomization here is not only an idea, it is, as I said, a state of being, strictly enforced by KR on their victims. The idea was taken to the extreme through complete dehumanization – people weren't allowed to speak to one another.¹⁶⁴ They had to look the same, dress the same, there couldn't be any excess – in people, in needs, in physical characteristics, in culture, in belief, in loyalty. All excess, material or ideological, was destroyed, but not as waste; Excess was to be used as fertilizer, as fuel for the nation to become more and more independent, literally on the bodies of its people. This state of being wasn't only enforced using physical force. A new generation coming in was to be educated – all forms of culture were destroyed except those of CPK. Children were separated from their families completely, told that their parents were traitors, that the world hates them and wants to destroy them, that they must fight back and their only help, their only family in the world is the nation, is Kampuchea¹⁶⁵. They lived in an environment permeated with these ideas and were directly told this through propaganda.¹⁶⁶ This propaganda, which they heard on mass-media, taught in school, had delivered from their superiors. This wasn't only them though, they were told by DK propaganda – it is the state of the world as well, where DK stands alone and isolated, exploited by the its so-called family – both the US-led West and the USSR-led East, both imperialistic blocs were the enemy. In a speech on July 1975, in front of CPK central committee, Pol Pot said that "...we have won it without any foreign connection or involvement. We dared to wage a struggle on a stand completely different than that of the world revolution."¹⁶⁷ In a telegram summarizing a leadership meeting of the CPK, held on August 8th, 1976, Pol Pot writes that "Both enemies, the West and the East, try to find opportunities to attack us and to benefit from

¹⁶³ The five pillars of the model became 4 pillars in the empirical analysis stage as Mass-Media and Culture Industry were treated as one in this specific case analysis.

¹⁶⁴ Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, 247-248.

¹⁶⁵ Locard, *State Violence*, 121-124.

¹⁶⁶ Kiernan, *Blood and Soil*, 551-554.

¹⁶⁷ Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, 94.

us... in the West are the American imperialists, Thailand and the traitors”.¹⁶⁸ DK had relations only with other states which didn’t belong to the two blocs, like China and Yugoslavia.

In the terms of our model, we could say that all five pillars of the model reached such an extreme level in the case of DK, that the result was a society where people had no purpose, except for as tools for the achievement of the glory of the nation. In comparison to Nazi Germany, we can see that in the Nazi case, which was the base for analysis by Horkheimer and Adorno, some people were dehumanized less than others – for example, German bystanders, but not only them. These people were not living in a liberal Western state, with regards to personal freedom, by any means, but they were allowed to have excess – free time they could use, within limits, as they wished. This doesn’t exist in the DK case, where limitations on personal time were severe. And so, all pillars are being pushed to the extreme in this case, and the result is a society which we refer to as completely atomized. Atomization isn’t only an ideology, it isn’t only a material state of being – it is both, and it is based on, supported by and maintained by ideology, material conditions, culture industry, propaganda and dehumanization. All these are parts which converge into the whole - atomization.

Atomization became an integral, critical part of the ideological and material structure of DK revolves. Atomization filled two key roles in the new KR state:

The first role of atomization is the functional, material role – the highly atomized social structure¹⁶⁹ is, according to KR ideology, a highly efficient way of maximizing economic production, by basically eliminating all other social functions, to the extreme level of abolishing interpersonal contact, as “distractions”. Human-beings have needs, identities, preferences. Atomization is the way to eliminate all of these, to create working drones, who receive nothing from the state and give everything to it in return. In the context of our model, this is the ultimate form of oppression of the other, ultimately forcing the other to oppress himself. KR elites sacrificed millions without blinking, in order to further their own goals.

The second role of atomization relates as well to the base model I’ve presented in this paper: atomization serves to replace mass-media in a society deprived of such elements. Mass-media has two purposes in the context of mass-violence: It is a key component in the elites’ creation and motivation of perpetrators, while at the same time it is used to pacify bystanders so that

¹⁶⁸ Telegram *N0001374*.

¹⁶⁹ Which we could even refer to as “a-social structure”, as it is basically lacking in any category of measuring a society and is an intentional and self-aware attempt at negating common human social traits and needs.

they don't form a critical mass that could slow down or stop the mass-violence. The role of atomization then in this case is to replace mass-media. The actual ongoing phase of atomization means that each person in the social structure – be it in our case victim or perpetrator, stands alone and isolated against the overwhelming state apparatus. In other words, the individual's perception of the world is dominated, if not created in full, by this overarching structure or group of elites. Moreover, the working drones are still essentially humans, even in the eyes of one like Pol Pot – otherwise there would be no need for propaganda at all – and so those needs we've mentioned in the previous role, the needs that people have were deprived of them, creating a void. Atomization allows the state to fill this void with content – an extreme version of Culture Industry.

This extreme form of atomization created a void in human interaction for the victims as, in their perception of reality, the other, the source for that perception, is missing. There is no mass-media in the classic modern sense, i.e. cinema, television, theater as entertainment or mental relief, in DK. Atomization created an opportunity for the regime to replace this void, it made the entire population susceptible to scapegoating. The only contact that the victims had which was legitimized was with perpetrators – on a personal, daily level, with local officials and leaders, and on an impersonal level, with CPK leadership, through propaganda and selected forms of mass-media. In a sense, this was a way for the regime to create a false perception of reality, to create the puppet-group required for scapegoating. DK doesn't have bystanders – it's all basically perpetrators and victims. And so, the perpetrators themselves become mass-media for the victims, as well as for themselves, as they function in a similar way to mass-media in other cases. The victims themselves are then made voiceless.¹⁷⁰ They literally have no voice. They lose all individual identity and are then given one instead – a working drone, exactly like everyone else, just a tool for the state to use.¹⁷¹ And so, the victims are instrumentalized and dehumanized in the most extreme way and are also forced accept this ideology as their own, doubling up its effect by lowering the victims' resistance to it as it is essentially a world-perception exogenous to theirs.

This atomized state-of-being isn't a part of the social order – it becomes *the* social, or anti-social, order. It is the only social structure remaining. There is no family, no group, no religion, no culture, except DK. Through atomization, all facets of the revolution, ideological and material, come together. This level of atomization isn't meant only divert revolutionary

¹⁷⁰ Kiernan, *Pol Pot Regime*, 249-250.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 97, 448.

attention to others (monks, Muslims, ‘foreigners’) through strong-influencing propaganda, but is seen by CPK elites as a way to directly influence and reverse the path of the Marxist historical process. On the one hand. People are more and more powerless under the constant barrage of propaganda, completely isolated, making resistance nearly impossible. Even if people would somehow be able to unite and revolt, their absolute isolation from outside influences and single-minded education would, in Pol Pot’s eyes, never lead to these next revolutions targeting the true owners of the means of production – CPK top-level elites, and Pol Pot himself in particular – but would always target “traitors”, “parasites” and “foreign puppet-masters” instead. In the context of our model then, this assures, from the point of view of CPK leadership, the preservation of this oppressive power structure against internal threats of revolution and against the path of history.

6. Conclusions

I had two main goals in mind as I was writing this paper – (1) to introduce a model based on the thinking of Horkheimer and Adorno, and (2) to test the model on an empirical case study. Looking back, the potential to better explain mass-violence exists, but it is a goal that this paper, with its obvious limitations of size and methodology, could neither attempt nor achieve. To conclude this paper, I would like to go back and examine the main points I’ve made in it, to bring up issues that came up during research, and to examine what I’ve managed to do so far, as well as what needs to be done further for this model to become truly relevant for the field of research.

Comments on the Model and Contribution to the Field of Research

It seems that this model can be successfully applied so that it explains other cases of extreme mass-violence, like the Armenian Genocide during World War I and Rwanda 1994. Seeing as this model is based off of writings originally meant to explain the Holocaust, I think that it can certainly be used to explain Nazi genocide of the Jews.

Horkheimer and Adorno’s original intent when analyzing the Holocaust was certainly not to explain the Holocaust as a unique case of violence. The opposite is in fact true: Auschwitz, as they refer to the Holocaust many times,¹⁷² isn’t some isolated, horrifying case of violence – it is the culmination, at that point in time, of a historical process of an escalating level of violence.

¹⁷² As, as we’ve mentioned before, the book was published before the end of World War II and more knowledge about the case of the Holocaust had yet to have been discovered or its name conceived.

Nazi ideology and actions were an antithesis, a barbaric counter-response to the rise of humanism that took place before. For Adorno and Horkheimer, Auschwitz wouldn't be the worst case of violence in history, but instead the worst case of violence in history *so far*. For them, the horror of the Holocaust would bring forth a synthesis, which is the thesis of the next chronological phase. This would likely be, and indeed was, a reaction of rising humanism, re-establishing itself, and in turn would be accompanied by an antithesis of once again rising, even-worse violence.

The model, as it stands now, is lacking in overall explanatory power for the phenomenon of genocide, or extreme mass-violence, and is focused on analyzing specific structural elements in cases, which as I've shown, can be successfully done for the case of DK. Its current contribution to the overall field of Genocide and mass-violence is in identifying a gap in the field, the absence of a model to explain extreme mass-violence as a phenomenon, and taking the first steps to fill this gap. I address the needed expansions to improve the explanatory power of the model in the upcoming section.

In the research of DK case, this paper provides an alternative explanation, based off of existing empirical data, I suggest here an explanation focused on the power of ideology and its effect on the empirical case, through the beliefs and highly-intentional actions of elites. This explanation differs then from most other analyses of the case by focusing on scapegoating as an actionable interpretation by elites of an ideological perception of history. In other words, my explanation, through the model, is based on an extreme level of historical awareness, which in turn leads to intentional extreme violence, and not on a reaction of elites to political, geopolitical and historical conditions and circumstances.

This model is built around the idea that we should look for the necessary conditions to explain cases of mass-violence as a phenomenon, instead of sufficient case-specific conditions. It is important to mention though, that while this model is based on assumptions that include the existence of certain common drives between human beings in general, it doesn't take up a group-psychology-based stance, meaning it does not assume that people necessarily react similarly in similar situations. On a structural level this means that each case of mass-violence has its own distinct characteristics, resulting from different material, ideological and historical conditions, as well as different individual elite personalities. For example, atomization to the degree it arrived at in DK is distinguishable for other cases of extreme mass-violence, as is the unique social structure of DK, which lacked non-victim and non-perpetrator populations.

This model is based on the thinking that beyond these different conditions, there is in fact a common denominator at the base of this phenomenon of extreme mass-violence, that does connect these cases together, beyond the phenomenological analysis of similar happenings. This common denominator can be found, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, through analyzing these cases at the highest possible level of analysis – the philosophical level – and would help us establish an explanatory model to answer the question I presented in the introduction of this paper: ‘why does mass-violence happen *at all*?’

Comments on Atomization

Atomization wasn’t part of our model, nor should it be. While a certain degree of atomization is very much a component of the modern state and modern society, it is to a much milder degree of severity than in our case here. We could say that when the pillars of the model are at a milder level of fetishization, this in turn creates a milder degree of atomization, which happens in all modern societies and is an integral part of modern life. This means that while atomization would always be present in any case of extreme mass-violence, as these take place, according to most definitions, in the context of modernity, this level of intensity in the isolation of the individual, as well as that which was present in KR ideology guiding it, is extreme in human history. Atomization is ever-present, and sometimes exasperated by certain regimes¹⁷³, it has never been such an intentional part of ideology or the social structure of any large case for research, mass-violence or other. Nonetheless, in the case of DK, atomization was the almost-unique result as the parts of model we’ve discussed came together with Cambodia’s history and local conditions, as well as with Pol Pot’s individual ideology and personality.

Starvation and Intention

Earlier in this paper, I discussed the question of starvation in DK in the context of CPK elites’ level of control over the state. We’ve seen that there is a claim made, that starvation in DK wasn’t in fact intentional, but was caused by a structural failure. In other words, that while it is acceptable that KR committed terrible acts of violence – murder, rape, and torture – towards their victims, it is far less acceptable that they would starve them.

This position in research echoes other cases, in which a regime and its ruler are known to have committed incredible acts of cruelty, but then when we arrive at starvation, this is somehow

¹⁷³ For example, in the form of laws that isolate certain groups and so, the individual in them, like the Nuremberg laws in Nazi Germany, or formal discrimination against Tutsi in Rwanda before 1994.

assumed to be a failure, and not part of the overall campaign of violence orchestrated by the state and its ruler.¹⁷⁴

One such similar example is Stalin, who as leader of the USSR between 1924 and 1952 is known to have committed enormous acts of violence. Tens of millions of people were murdered, whole populations forcibly expelled. This is overall agreed between researchers to have been intentional and ordered by Stalin. But when we arrive at famine, which happened for example in the years 1931-1934, there is still a discussion about whether or not this was intentionally ordered by Stalin, or, similarly to claims made about DK or Mao's China, a structural failure that was connected to local leadership incompetence and problems, or inefficiencies, in communication and transportation, or even just because of natural causes.¹⁷⁵ It is fascinating that while in all other cases of violence during Stalin's reign, and in general about his time in power, there is no doubt in research of his direct responsibility to these happenings, much like Pol Pot's reign over DK. But when it comes to starvation, it somehow becomes inconceivable to some that famine could be intentionally caused, even with the powerful grip these rulers had on their respective states.¹⁷⁶

Next Steps Needed

As it stands now, this model requires expansion in two main directions to achieve this goal:

As a first expansion, the model should be developed to include much more of the philosophical elements of Horkheimer and Adorno's thinking. These elements potentially provide the core common denominator that connects not only the major cases of mass-violence in the last one and a half centuries, but also other, smaller cases of mass-violence, as well the phenomenon of violence inherent to human society as a whole. Without the philosophical level of analysis, there is a missing level of depth to certain parts of the explanation. In essence, without the philosophy the model is mainly focused on sociological analysis rather than explanation. While this is sufficient in the context of this first step, development of the analysis would require an

¹⁷⁴ See for example Mann's aforementioned comments on 'Communist regimes' (Mann, *The Dark Side*, 319-321) – Stalin's USSR, Mao's China and Pol Pot's Cambodia - which I've mentioned before as examples of cases whose killings Mann mainly considers to be the result of structural failures and not intentional ideology that sees starvation as a legitimate means to an end.

¹⁷⁵ See this discussion in: Ellman, *The Role of Leadership*.

¹⁷⁶ This is also related to a bigger discussion about direct and indirect killings. Defining killings as direct and intentional, especially when it comes to the less clear areas, such as starvation, has substantial implications. In today's world of international tribunals for war-crimes and crimes against humanity, these definitions between direct and indirect killings could have legal ramifications as well, implicating many for war-crimes. See for example a study on direct and indirect killings as result of conflicts in: Ghobarah et al, *Civil Wars Kill*.

expansion of the model. To accomplish this, I need to incorporate the other chapters of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, as well as more of Horkheimer and Adorno's other books and publications.¹⁷⁷

The second expansion is to apply this model to other cases. Obvious candidates, already mentioned in this paper, would be the Armenian Genocide during World War I, the murder of Tutsi by the Hutu in Rwanda 1994 and the Holocaust. While the events of the Holocaust are the base for their philosophical analysis in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the model I'm developing is by no means making the claim of being identical to Horkheimer and Adorno's ideas. There have been advancements and changes, for better or worse, to the field of research, to technology, politics, philosophy, morals, culture and so on. All of these need to be addressed, and accounted for when expanding this model. By the model's very nature, emanating very much from the all-encompassing nature of Horkheimer and Adorno's thinking, it is necessary to account for changes in various fields when creating a model to explain a phenomenon so basically embedded into the human condition.

Final Notes

I started this paper with a quote from Walter Benjamin and to conclude, I would like to go back to that text. I chose that aphorism because it captures, in many ways, the core thinking of the Frankfurt School, especially Horkheimer and Adorno, and which I've tried to go through in short in this paper. The basic, and most important idea for us here is that violence is not a failure in the context of human society. It isn't something that happens because of special circumstances or because it was allowed to happen by authorities. Violence is everywhere – it is an inseparable part of human society throughout history. There is no escaping society. People cannot live alone in modern times. State and society always have at least some control or effect.

Let's go back to the questions that were presented at the start, and try and answer them now:

Who is the angel of history? In the context of Horkheimer and Adorno's thinking, and very much in Benjamin's as well, the angel is the historian. Not just any historian, but the one who sees history for what it truly is – a cycle of unending violence.

What is it that this historian sees? Does he see human existence for what it is, or is he what many people call a 'cynic' or 'dark-seer'? Indeed, tell us Horkheimer and Adorno, the

¹⁷⁷ These would include, as a start: Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, Horkheimer, *The Eclipse of Reason*, and articles in Mey-Dan and Yas'oor, *The Frankfurt School*.

angel/historian sees life for what it is. He sees the structure of history. Where others see isolated piles of wreckage, the historian sees a pattern, a structure of violence.

The angel sees only piles of destruction and death; Are these piles only mountain tops, coming through the clouds of history, areas that stick out in the rich history of human existence, or are these piles of corpses that are the whole of history? Is this wreckage all there is to see or what the angel chooses to focus on? These piles are indeed the whole of history, it is all that ever was. Violence is everywhere. It's at the base of all social interaction, structures and behaviors. The presence of violence is a constant. What changes is the kind of violence, its appearance, its severity. Mass-violence is an organic part of the human condition, it isn't a failure of society, it is a success. Not in the positive sense, but in that it is a phenomenon that is in line with the nature of society, not against it.

Going back to what I called "A Nietzschean World", all this does not mean we should despair. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, an in contradiction to Nietzsche, morality is our anchor in the face of this chaos. One could say that for human-beings, chaos is the nature of nature. It is what the human condition, in essence - our world as human beings, is – an unending cycle of violence, too complicated and seemingly chaotic for us to understand. Nonetheless, Horkheimer and Adorno call on us to not despair – much like Odysseus, they go on a journey through this violent world, trying to understand it, to oppress it, and so to make it a better place for people to live in. This paper has been a small, first step in the spirit of their thinking. It is a basic human urge to push forward into the unknown at any cost, to disenchant myths and rationalize irrationality. But in this version of the dialectic process of history, Horkheimer and Adorno's one, we can use our ideological awareness to try and break the cycle, and like Odysseus and the sirens, stay true to our cause without falling into irrationality, into the antithesis.

Summary

Why does mass-violence happen *at all*? This paper takes the first steps to establish a model to answer this question and explain extreme mass-violence as a phenomenon. This paper seeks to fill a gap in the field of research, in which models exist to explain the phenomenon of violence, with cases of genocide being seen as problems or exceptions, and as such researched as individual cases rather than as part of a wider phenomenon. The analysis of large cases of extreme mass-violence is conducted separately, focused on case-specific conditions and reasons. This paper uses a selected part of the writings of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944) to establish the basis for a model to explain extreme-cases of mass-violence. The Five-Pillar Model includes 5 key social elements - (1) Culture Industry (2) Mass-Media (3) Propaganda (4) Dehumanization (5) Ideological Awareness. When these pillars all reach a high enough level of severity, conditions enable elites to use scapegoating - to divert revolutionary attention to a specific puppet group, resulting in extreme mass-violence. Next, this paper applies The Five-Pillar Model to a test case – Cambodia under Khmer Rouge control in 1975-1979, and shows how these pillars all existed in an extreme form in that case, leading to an historically unprecedented level of atomization, which in turn was used to further escalate violence, control and maintain the power structure of Democratic Kampuchea's society. This empirical case analysis offers an alternative explanation to the case of Cambodia 1975-1979. Focusing on top-level elites, specifically Pol Pot, who intentionally used a dehumanizing ideology and the state apparatus in its entirety to misdirect revolutionary forces and expend them at false target, thus maintain their control in the face on a historical process that spells their imminent replacement.

Finally, this paper addresses the required steps to expand and develop this model in two directions: (1) higher-level analysis, through the addition of more of the thinking of Horkheimer and Adorno and (2) the inclusion of more empirical cases, to test the model further.

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