

# Cambodians vs bangladesh genocide



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Genocide, according to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide is any act that has the intention of destroying a religious, national, or ethnic group. Genocide can be done in different cases - by killing a member of the group, or simply by doing deliberate harm to any member of the group. This paper aims to analyze both the Bangladesh and Cambodian genocide in terms of the determinants of genocide.

### Cambodian Genocide: a history

One country known for its genocide issues is a Southeast Asian country called Cambodia. The Cambodian genocide, which happened on 1975-1979, lost about 1.7 million people which is equivalent to 21 percent of the country's total population. It was considered one of the worst human tragedies of all times. Headed by Pol Pot, the Khmer Regime combined revolutionary ideas, with racial hatred and a diabolic ignorance for the lives of other people in order to produce misery, repression, and mass murdering. (Kiljunen and Kamputseatutkimuskomission. ) The Khmer rouge practiced auto genocide. Auto genocide means killing anyone not affiliated with the party or institution in power even if those persons may belong to the same ethnic class and race.

In the Pol Pot regime, this led to the killing of almost anyone not a member and not a peon of the regime. These included in the killing of intellectuals, artists, political enemies, journalists and businessmen. Officers, civil servants and public protectors with alliances or affiliations to the previous regime were sought after and killed together with their families. In the regime, there were two divisions, the " old" people consisting of those who were the

original revolutionaries and the “ new” people, those who joined up after the initial revolution.

There were no ethnic, socio economic classes within the two divisions. However, the “ new” people lived in constant fear because they had no say over the regime, and they were deemed “ expendable”. (Cook, Fladeland and Yale University. Cambodian Genocide Program. )

### Bangladesh Genocide

The Bangladesh violence is the widespread killings of the Bangladesh civilians and the unending human rights violations in 1971 which were carried by the Pakistan army. This army was supported by the religious and political groups of the Bangladesh Liberation War.

These atrocities were considered as genocide because of the intent and motives of the killings. The total killings were estimated to be between 1-3 million and reports of about 10 million people fled to India for their safety. (Jag) This widespread violence against Hindus was motivated by a policy to purge East Pakistan of what was seen as Hindu and Indian influences. The West Pakistani rulers identified the Bengali culture with Hindu and Indian culture, and thought that the eradication of Hindus would remove such influences from the majority Muslims in East Pakistan.

Historically speaking, one of the first acts of Khmer was to put into the countryside most of the urban population. Some of the residents were told that this is because of the US bombing threat. Soon, almost the whole city was empty and most of the residents were force evacuated. The roads were soon full of people and there was an inadequacy of food for the people. The

removal alone of the people resulted from 2000 to 3000 deaths. The Khmer Rouge was planning to turn the country into a place where it can be a nation where there can be a removal of corruption and parasitism.

Moreover, they also want to eradicate the enemy-spy organizations which were based on the urban areas. Genocide Pot Pol's regime executed all the civil servants, military officers, and police it could find. Evacuees with working class background pretended that they were peasants just to avoid execution from the government. Hundreds of military officers were machine-gunned, and their wives and children were also killed for the government to eliminate those who can harbor revenge to the regime. (Riley and Niven) Some refugee accounts disclose that the rate of killings decreased in the middle of 1975.

Some servants and educated people were sent to education centers, although in the late 1975, there was another wave of killings. To save the use of bullets, the regime just uses inexpensive weapons such as axes to carry out executions. Terror was everywhere that time. People were killed for simple reasons like not working hard enough, complaining, wearing jewelry, being sick, grieving with the loss of a loved one and sometimes, people were killed for no reason at all. In 1977 and 1978, the killings reached its climax because revolutionaries turned against each other in bloody wars. (Cook)

The number of deaths rises. An estimated number of three million people were killed. The refugees cited that more than the killings done by the regime, the greatest causes of deaths were starvation, hunger and disease like malaria. Hard physical labor was also a leading cause of death among the people. Journalist from the Western countries even cited Cambodia as

the “ killing fields” because of the millions of deaths. (Riley and Niven) At the height of the rebellion, the forces of Pakistan target different groups such as the Bengali intellectuals, the Hindus, the political and the student activists.

The intellectual communities were executed by the Al Shams and Al-Badr forces, following the Pakistan army’s instructions. A certain event in the country’s genocide, which killed more than 3 million people, was the Operation Searchlight, which is a series of killings that began on March 25 1971 and ended on December 16 1971. Rape was also very popular that time and thousands of women became victims of this atrocity. The plan was actually to eliminate all the oppositions in one month and being able to take control of the whole country. However, it did not become very easy for them because of the resistance of the Bengali forces.

The casualties reported in the genocide were very large. A journalist in the name of Robert Payne even wrote that Yahya Khan once told a group of generals “ Kill three million of them and the rest will eat out of our hands. ” This shows how morbid the scene before was. A large number of women were also tortured, raped, molested and killed that time. Some source states about 200 000 women of women who were raped gave birth to thousand of war-babies. (Jag) Furthermore, killings among the minorities, specifically the Hindus were also very high. Rapes of Hindu women and killings of Hindu men became widespread phenomena.

More than 60 percent of the refugees that fled to India were Hindus. This violence against Hindus were very high because it was motivated by a policy to eradicate East Pakistan of what was seen as Hindu influences.

9 determinants of genocide

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## 1. Historical antecedents

The basis for the start of the genocide was wariness of the political powers that could be wielded by the more numerous and more represented Bengalis. The Bengalis on the other hand, raised protest against the actions by the west Pakistanis in trying to limit their political and cultural representation in the Pakistan state. The enmity lead to an us versus them mentality, with the west Pakistanis regarding their Bengali counterparts as inferiors and rivals. At the instance of the killings, the perpetrators were still technically murdering their own citizens. In Cambodia, the difference in religion of the Hindus and other minorities as well as the intellectual adversity of the middle and upper class posed a threat to the Khmer rouge dominance. Instead of a definite classification however, the Khmer rouge regarded all opposing them as enemies and potential targets.

## 2. Crisis environment

The setting of the Bangladesh genocide was during a war with the West Pakistan. The Bengalis were more numerous. And the war was for their liberation. The West Pakistanis used genocide as a tool to eliminate a grave threat to their dominance on what was then an undivided Pakistan. In Cambodia, the genocide overlapped the time frame of a war with Vietnam. The Khmer used genocide to eliminate groups that could be allies of the Vietnamese army, as in the case of their targeting of the people from the eastern zone. The genocide was also initiated in part by U. S activities that reduced key cities with bombings.

As time passed, the Khmer rouge utilized genocide to keep control of the populace. This is due to the internal conflicts that have arisen within the

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Khmer bureaucracy, which could be seen as a sign of weakness of the regime.

### 3. Pathological leadership

Leadership of the West Pakistan faction were then in the hands of the Sunni sect of Muslims. The Sunni sect has been known to breed extremist points of view regarding Islam in relation with other religions. The wanton disregard for life of the Bengalis was justified by the leaders as the products of their righteous holy war. They believed that the killing of unbelievers, those not Muslims, was an act that appealed to Allah. The use of religion by the ruling party was a strong motivation for the occurrence of the killings. In Cambodia, the Khmer leadership was composed of an elite ruling party headed by chairman Pol Pot. The regime was originally born out of a communist system following the tenets of Marx. Pol Pot seized a crisis in the former government to start a rebellion and eventually put him and his allies in power. The Khmer was born from a rebellion and as such, fell prey to the paranoia that it could also be destroyed by an uprising.

Pol Pot was a communist. However, Pol pot desired to set the Khmer apart from every other government in the world. The ruling party was composed of the greedy, the opportunists and the idealists. All of these motivations played apart in what resulted to be genocide.

### 4. Ideological imperative

The classification of the Khmer rouge of other cultural classes as enemies meant that symbols pertaining to those individual classes were identification

marks for endangerment. The robe of the Buddhists, the bible and cross of the Christians, the glasses of the intellectuals became symbols of their class.

In Bangladesh, the dominant Hindu apparel of the Bengalis easily set them apart from their Muslim counterparts in West Pakistan. The turban and other cultural facets of the Hindus' mien became symbolisms of their difference with the west Pakistanis. Dehumanization is the treatment or portrayal of the enemy as mere animals, inferior in every way to the human ruling regime. This is to remove the innate revulsion of doing harm against a fellow human being. Robbing another group of its humanity means that the perpetrators would be doing a lesser evil in harming them.

The prime mean for this is hate propaganda carried out in various media. This was performed in both Cambodia and Bangladesh. The Khmer rouge exhibited their enemies as animals. Photographs and records from the Tuol Seng prison reveal that the Khmer actually made the prisoners admit that they were not humans but animals- before the prisoners were executed. Those in the eastern zone were popularly berated as being Khmers but having Vietnamese minds. The west Pakistanis vilified the Hindu culture while exhorting the righteousness of their cause.

##### 5. Center control and technological capability

The West Pakistan army, although outnumbered, possessed better weapons than their counterparts. They had better supplies and better armaments than the Bengalis. This superiority in arms made the West Pakistanis capable of mass killings. In Cambodia, the Khmer rouge acted as an entity, enforcing order through brutal means. As compared to the peasants and farmers that were their main constituents, the Khmer has the weapons and the training to

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carry out their atrocities. Both events show that superiority in numbers are overcome by superiority in arms. A small number of people can subjugate a larger group by means of technology.

6. Bureaucracy Genocide is always organized, usually by the state, though sometimes informally. In the case of the Cambodian genocide, the Khmer Rouge as an entity was the sole vessel by which the acts of genocide were perpetrated. The Khmer Rouge army and their cohorts pursued an active role in classifying and dehumanizing the enemy. In the Bangladesh genocide, it was the Pakistani army and its subordinate wings like the Al Badr and Al Sham that were the main arm of genocide. In both instances, specific orders were given as to dealing with the enemy.

#### 7. Planning and programming

The West Pakistanis had a framework when the war occurred. Special task forces were organized to hunt down and exterminate opposition. In the Khmer Rouge, a general order was given but no punishment was forthcoming to those indiscriminately killing minorities. Youth born of the regime were conditioned to kill the others and were subject to training in order to be able to do so.

#### 8. Public support or acquiescence

In the case of the West Pakistanis, public support was overwhelming in dealing with the Bengalis. Motivated by religion and paranoia regarding their enemy, the West Pakistani public supported the killing of their Bengali counterparts. Internal objection in the Khmer regime was muted. Irrational killings, or killings for simple or no reason at all, has driven the entire

population to a point of blind servitude and obedience. The leaders were fearful that were the population to attain a high level of education and freedom, they would turn against the regime.

The regime was originally a revolutionary government, and it has feared that since it began in one uprising, it could end in another. Suppression of loyalties, alliances, removal of cultural and ethnic identity and the instigation of mass fear and paranoia was done to effectively control the Cambodian population. (Parti communiste du Kampuchea. et al. )

9. genocidal outcome The heavy hand of the Khmer rouge was born out of paranoia and a deemed feeling of superiority. They initiated killings to keep the population in control and to silence those against their leadership. This was especially crucial when dissention and discord within their own ranks began to weaken the bureaucracy. The war with Vietnam also became a problem with the Khmer being demoralized. Killing of those that were deemed aiding the Vietnamese was used as a tool to boost confidence. The low economic status of the country was blamed on those who were not working for the ideals of the regime. In Bangladesh, the West Pakistanis treated Bengalis as parasite in their economy and subjugated them accordingly. They allotted minimum resources to the area despite them having a larger population.

The conflicts with Hindu India made the Hindu Bengalis a target of suspicion and prime suspects when events occur that threaten the government. The West Pakistanis saw the benefits of removing the Hindu influence, because if allowed to grow, the Bengalis could subsequently subjugate the west Pakistanis. In contrast with the Cambodian genocide, the events in

Bangladesh were done by outsiders. The main proponent of the atrocities was West Pakistanis, who had a very different cultural, religious and ethnic background to the Bengalis.

The object of the genocide, as opposed to the destruction of the deemed opposition in Cambodia, was to ethnically purify the region in favor of the West Pakistanis. The west Pakistanis deemed all those in East Pakistan as enemies and sought to eliminate all of them. The east Pakistani does outnumber the west, and the use of genocide could be to gain an upper hand through fear. What remains constant in both cases is the use of genocide to uphold a perceived superiority and to impose a sense of inferiority among the enemies.