

---

# CAPTURE FROM BELOW: CIVIL–MILITARY RELATIONS DURING INDONESIA’S ANTICOMMUNIST VIOLENCE, 1965–66

Mark Winward

“It was civil war!” exclaimed one respondent, recalling the violent anticommunist campaign that swept through the province of Yogyakarta starting in October 1965.<sup>1</sup> Some weeks after that first interview he and I drove along the winding roads a few kilometers outside the popular Prambanan temple, near the banks of the Opak River. We stopped periodically and my correspondent pointed out places where he had assisted the army by executing and disposing of the bodies of members of PKI (Partai Komunis Indonesia, Indonesian Communist Party). Almost exactly fifty years prior a failed political insurrection in Jakarta was used to justify a massive crackdown against all PKI members and members of its affiliated organizations, leading to perhaps half a million deaths in what was one of the largest massacres of the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike other mass killings that occurred during the Second World War and the Cold War, many of the most basic facts of the Indonesian killings remain open to challenge and interpretation. Questions persist over who bears primary responsibility

---

Mark Winward is a PhD candidate studying political science at the University of Toronto.

<sup>1</sup> Author’s confidential interview (006) with former perpetrator, Yogyakarta, January 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Cribb, “Problems in the Historiography of the Killings in Indonesia,” in *The Indonesian Killings 1965–1966: Studies from Java and Bali*, ed. Robert Cribb (Clayton: Monash University of Southeast Asian Studies, 1990), 12.

for the killings, how many were killed, and the effect of these killings on Indonesia's political future.<sup>3</sup> Faced with official and self-censorship, as well as a dearth of source material, studies of the killings have often relied on a single or small number of case studies. The key question for many of these studies is whether the state or society bears the primary responsibility for the killings.<sup>4</sup>

Only recently has scholarship converged over the central role of the Indonesian Army in orchestrating the killings across all of Indonesia.<sup>5</sup> In Aceh, Jess Melvin has uncovered official documents showing how local military units under the command of Brigadier General Ishak Djuarsa actively encouraged civilian groups to move against suspected communists.<sup>6</sup> In Bali, Governor A. A. B. Sutedja and provincial commander Brigadier General Sjafiuddin initially discouraged attacks on the PKI. There, killings only started after RPKAD (Resimen Para Komando Angkatan Darat, Army Para-Commando Regiment) units arrived in early December.<sup>7</sup> Roosa argues that the omnipresence of the army in "organizing the civilians, administering the detention camps, and arranging the trucks to transport the detainees to the execution sites" undermines the assertion that the killings were driven from the bottom up.<sup>8</sup> Still, it is clear civilians had a crucial role in implementing one of the largest episodes of mass killing since the Second World War.

While I agree that the army played a central role in empowering and organizing civilians, I argue that the military campaign to annihilate the PKI was often subject to significant civilian capture from below.<sup>9</sup> Due to limited resources, the anticommunist faction of the army was forced to rely on the civilian community to provide information and manpower, and to provide visible displays of support to legitimize the army's mass arrests and killings of suspected communists. This reliance, in turn, provided the masses with opportunities for score settling, violence, and killings outside military control. The alliances between the military and civilian groups were uneasy arrangements in which the military was forced to both rely on and restrain its enthusiastic allies. Once civilians were provided with legal and moral impunity, they were willing to pursue independent campaigns against their personal adversaries as well as suspected leftists. Concerns over the scope of these operations led to

<sup>3</sup> Robert Cribb, "Unresolved Problems in the Indonesian Killing of 1965–66," *Asian Survey* 42, 4 (2002): 550–63.

<sup>4</sup> See: Robert Hefner, *The Political Economy of Mountain Java: An Interpretative History* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990), 193–227; Kenneth Young, "Local and National Influences in the Violence of 1965," in Cribb, *The Indonesian Killings 1965–1966*, 63–100; and Hermawan Sulisty, "The Forgotten Years: The Missing History of Indonesia's Mass Slaughter (Jombang-Kediri 1965–66)" (PhD dissertation, Arizona State University, 1997), 100–214.

<sup>5</sup> See: John Roosa, "The State of Knowledge about an Open Secret: Indonesia's Mass Disappearances of 1965–66," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 75, 2 (2016): 281–97; Jess Melvin, *Mechanisms of Mass Murder: How the Indonesian Military Initiated and Implemented the Indonesian Genocide, the Case of Aceh* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2018); and Geoffrey B. Robinson, *The Killing Season: A History of the Indonesian Massacres, 1965–66* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

<sup>6</sup> Melvin, *Mechanisms of Mass Murder*.

<sup>7</sup> Geoffrey Robinson, *The Dark Side of Paradise: Political Violence in Bali* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 273–303.

<sup>8</sup> Roosa, "The State of Knowledge about an Open Secret," 292; see also Robinson, *The Killing Season*, 148–76.

<sup>9</sup> Nicholas Herriman, "A Din of Whispers: Community, State Control, and Violence in Indonesia" (PhD Dissertation, University of Western Australia, 2007).

occasional clashes between some of the more hard-core militias and members of the local army and police. While the army bears primary responsibility for orchestrating the killings, the independent role of civilian communities remains essential for explaining local dynamics of arrests, violence, and executions. Specifically, the army's reliance on civilians for information drastically increased the scope of those arrested to include individuals with few, if any, ties to the communist party. This, combined with the prevalence of torture, also led to an increase in the number of executions. Finally, the absence of legal constraints combined with the legitimacy conveyed by religious authorities and street protests led to sporadic outbursts of public killing and violence even when there were active attempts by the military to prevent this.

In this sense I expand on the dynamics of civil-military relations noted by Mathias Hammer in a recent study of the Klaten regency of Central Java. Hammer argues that unleashing violence is not the same as controlling it. Rather than the military leading the violence, the army created a situation in which civilians could influence the anticommunist campaign "from below" by controlling information about suspected PKI members.<sup>10</sup> I expand this concept of civilian capture-from-below to include not only the provision of information about existing detainees, but also participation in the violence in the direct, physical sense. Moreover, I expand the focus on information to include patterns of denunciation that led to the initial arrest of so many with only tangential ties to the PKI. As has been demonstrated elsewhere, access to such initial local information is essential for armed groups to deploy violence selectively against their intended targets rather than randomly throughout a civilian population.<sup>11</sup>

I examine civil-military relations in Yogyakarta, an administratively distinct province geographically located in Central Java. Yogyakarta is an important case study for the examination of relative civilian and military agency in the 1965–66 killings for three reasons. First, it represents a case in which the army clearly led the killings.<sup>12</sup> Mass arrests and killings only occurred after the arrival of RPKAD troops from outside Jakarta, underscoring that the army was the group most responsible for unleashing violence.

Second, civilian mobilization in Yogyakarta ought to have been more difficult than in the regencies in East Java that are the most frequently studied instances of civilian involvement in the Indonesian killings.<sup>13</sup> The area around East Java's Jombang-Kediri border, for instance, has extremely dense networks of religious boarding schools (*pesantren*). At the time, school headmasters (*kiai*) had almost absolute authority over their charges. These networks were able to coordinate their activities and mobilize

<sup>10</sup> Mathias Hammer, "The Organisation of the Killings and the Interaction between State and Society in Central Java 1965," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 32, 3 (2013): 37–62.

<sup>11</sup> See: Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 89–110; Stathis N. Kalyvas and Matthew Adam Kocher, "How 'Free' is Free Riding in Civil Wars? Violence, Insurgency, and the Collective Action Problem," *World Politics* 59, 2 (2007): 177–216.

<sup>12</sup> Mark Woodward, "Only Now We Can Speak: Remembering Politicide in Yogyakarta," *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 26, 1 (2011): 36–57; see also Jenkins and Kammen, "The Army Para-commando Regiment and the Reign of Terror in Central Java and Bali."

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Young, "Local and National Influences in the Violence of 1965"; Sulistyono, "The Forgotten Years"; and Greg Fealy and Katharine McGregor, "East Java and the Role of Nahdlatul Ulama in the 1965–66 Anti-communist Violence," in *The Contours of Mass Violence in Indonesia, 1965–68*, ed. Douglas Kammen and Katharine McGregor (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2012), 104–30.

huge numbers of students.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, NU *pesanten* networks in East Java already had access to a well-organized and effective militia organization in the form of NU's all-purpose Ansor brigade, known as Banser (Barisan Ansor Serbaguna). Banser units had clashed with communist party supporters in the years leading up to the September 30th Movement, and provided local NU leadership with a potent source of organized violence. Such preexisting and battle-tested militia were not part of Yogyakarta's socio-political landscape.

Finally, there was no land-reform campaign in Yogyakarta. In other areas of both Central and East Java these campaigns drastically increased material grievances and inter-group violence,<sup>15</sup> but a similar history of local conflict was not present in Yogyakarta. The combination of being a clear case of army-led anticommunist killings, a comparative lack of material grievance, and weak mobilization networks make Yogyakarta a least-likely case when it comes to civilian mobilization for mass killing outside military control. Ergo, the circumstances that caused Yogyakarta civilians to act unilaterally or to influence the anticommunist drive in ways unintended by the army are likely to apply to all or most areas in which the army instigated its campaign of mass detentions and executions.

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. First, I describe the interview research I conducted surrounding the anticommunist killings. Second, I review existing accounts of civilian involvement in these killings. Third, I provide a theoretical framework to explain the emergence and sustainability of militia during periods of genocide or mass killing. Fourth, I briefly trace the emergence of the anticommunist coalition in Indonesia that was instrumental in implementing the campaign against the Indonesian left. The remaining sections trace the emergence of local anticommunist networks and the anticommunist campaign in Yogyakarta. Data for this paper is drawn from approximately fifty semi-structured interviews with former political prisoners, perpetrators of violence and persecution, and witnesses to the anticommunist campaign, as well as Indonesian military publications and secondary sources.

## Interview Research and the Anticommunist Killings

The majority of interviews for this study were conducted over a six-month period starting in December 2015. This period roughly coincided both with the fiftieth anniversary of the September 30th Movement that served as the pretext for the anticommunist campaign, and with the first national symposium on post-September 30th events, held in April 2016. This symposium followed the International People's Tribunal (IPT 65) held in the Netherlands, which highlighted human rights violations

<sup>14</sup> See: Sulisty, "The Forgotten Years," 100–214; and Fealy and McGregor, "East Java and the Role of Nahdlatul Ulama in the 1965–66 Anti-communist Violence," 104–30.

<sup>15</sup> The lack of *aksi* should not be read as land disputes being nonexistent in Yogyakarta. Indeed, Julianto Ibrahim lists a small handful of clashes that occurred in Sleman and Bantul. However, these clashes predate the *aksi sepihak* campaign and appear to be isolated incidents. See Julianto Ibrahim, "Goncangan Pada Keselarasan Hidup di Kesultanan" [Shaking the harmony of the Sultanate], in *Malam Bencana 1965 dalam belitan krisis nasional, Bagian II, Konflik Lokal* [The disastrous night of 1965 in the coils of the national crisis, part II: Local conflicts], ed. Taufik Abdullah, Sukri Abdurrachman, and Restu Gunawan (Jakarta: Yayasan Pustaka Obor, 2012), 79–136.

committed by the Indonesian Army in 1965 during their suppression of the communist party. Combined with the release of Joshua Oppenheimer's award-winning films *The Act of Killing* and *The Look of Silence*, my interviews occurred in a climate in which there were attempts at public discussions of the killings. These discussions often triggered substantial backlash by anticommunist hard-liners within and outside the army, resulting in the disruption of film screenings, book launches, and public lectures.

Despite a visible effort to suppress discussions of human rights violations, members of religious organizations involved in the identification of PKI sympathizers, former militia members, and retired soldiers openly discussed the leading role of the army in unleashing violence in Yogyakarta. Respondents spoke of potential problems in misidentifying communist party members (such as intentionally false accusations to settle personal grudges) and of civil-military collaboration in the processes of both arrest and execution. Rather than downplay the respective roles of the army and civilians, the principle concerns of those involved in the anticommunist campaign fifty years after the fact was either highlighting the barbarism of the PKI, thus legitimizing the campaign of violence, or voicing the view that since reconciliation had already happened at the local level, there was no need for symposiums, apologies, or compensation. The only question that respondents seemed unwilling to address directly concerned the number of suspected communists killed in Yogyakarta during 1965–66, preferring to describe it only as “*banyak*” (many).

Given the primacy of interview responses to the reconstruction of events in Yogyakarta, great care has been made to check the accuracy of interview statements. Where possible, I cross-referenced interview responses with other sources of information such as internal military publications and diplomatic archives. However, given those materials' focus on broad national events, detailed accounts of what occurred on the ground in Yogyakarta is rarely described in such documents. Rather than triangulate information with archival sources, most verification was done through a comparison of accounts from individuals embedded in different social networks who did not have contact with one another in the years following the anticommunist campaign, as well as through reinterviewing respondents as new information emerged.

Respondents were typically drawn from three networks: anticommunist activists, members of the local Muhammadiyah community, and former political prisoners and their relatives. Given the lack of contact between members of these networks today, respondents were asked to corroborate claims made from respondents in different networks as a means of overcoming issues of in-group memory-making.<sup>16</sup> In addition to checking interview responses across different groups, I interviewed many respondents multiple times. Not only did this practice help to improve trust and rapport with respondents, it also allowed me to probe for consistencies in interview responses, especially as new information came to light from other respondents.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Liisa Malkki, *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

<sup>17</sup> See: Lee Ann Fujii, *Killing Neighbors: Webs of Violence in Rwanda* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 34; and Elisabeth Jean Wood, “Ethnographic Research in the Shadow of Civil War,” in *Political Ethnography: What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*, ed. Edward Schatz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 119–42.

Overcoming issues of intra-group memory negotiation and consistency of responses is especially important given the time elapsed between the events under study and the interviews themselves—approximately fifty years. Interviews typically ranged from one to three hours, and were almost always conducted in respondents' homes. The majority of interviews were conducted with the help of a research assistant, and all interviews were conducted in Indonesian.

### Accounts of Civilian Involvement in the Indonesian Killings

Even as scholarship has begun to coalesce regarding the primacy of the army in the Indonesian killings, the relative role and independent agency of civilians remains understudied. Detailed examinations of civilian involvement in the annihilation of the PKI have largely been confined to East Java and the role of NU and its youth organizations Ansor and Banser. Hermawan Sulisty, for example, highlights the role of an anticommunist network centered on Lirboyo Pesantren, in Kediri, for mobilizing militia to arrest and execute suspected communists in the regency.<sup>18</sup> In 2012, a special edition of the Indonesian magazine *Tempo* focusing on civilian perpetrators of violence took a similar approach, with a substantial portion of the issue focusing exclusively on the Jombang-Kediri border.<sup>19</sup> Focusing more on central NU directives, Greg Fealy and Katharine McGregor argue that a militant anticommunist faction within NU was able to gain prominence in the wake of the killings, coordinating its actions with the military and issuing directives to provincial branches encouraging them to move against the PKI.<sup>20</sup>

This focus on East Java and NU is in some ways unsurprising. East Java had perhaps the greatest number of killings during the anticommunist campaign.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, stories abound of spectacular displays of public violence and killing in East Java.<sup>22</sup> On a more practical note, as the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia, NU possesses both archival materials and organizational longevity to facilitate research into member activities during this time.

Outside of NU, the incentive to, and results of, using civilians for essentially political-military purposes have received scant attention. In his study of the Indonesian Army, Harold Crouch points out that a lack of manpower in Central Java led RPKAD commander Sarwo Edhie Wibowo to ask for and receive permission to train civilian auxiliaries to assist the remaining loyal troops in the province.<sup>23</sup> Little is said about the role of the militia in Central Java, save:

<sup>18</sup> Sulisty, "The Forgotten Years," 100–214.

<sup>19</sup> "Requiem for a Massacre," *Tempo*, October 1–7, 2012.

<sup>20</sup> Fealy and McGregor, "East Java and the Role of Nahdlatul Ulama in the 1965–66 Anti-communist Violence," 104–30.

<sup>21</sup> Douglas Kammen and Faizah Zakaria, "Detention in Mass Violence: Policy and Practice in Indonesia 1965–1968," *Critical Asian Studies* 44, 3 (2012): 452.

<sup>22</sup> See: Pipit Rochijat and Ben Anderson, "Am I PKI or Non PKI?" *Indonesia* 40 (October 1985): 37–56; and Anonymous, "Additional Data on Counter-revolutionary Cruelty in Indonesia, Especially in East Java," in Cribb, *The Indonesian Killings 1965–66*, 169–76.

<sup>23</sup> Harold Crouch, *The Army and Politics in Indonesia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 151.

In general, the operations remained under army control and were directed mainly at PKI activists, but in some areas, such as Banyumas, it was reported that the army authorities stood aside and permitted the Muslim and nationalist youth to select their own victims, with the result that many thousands, who would have been merely arrested in areas in which the army exercised close control, were killed.<sup>24</sup>

David Jenkins and Douglas Kammen provide a more detailed examination of the situation in Central Java involving the RPKAD, demonstrating that the RPKAD normally led civilian elements, whose role was largely confined to the process of physical arrests and at times serving as executioners.<sup>25</sup> A telegram from the US ambassador to Indonesia, Marshall Green, reflects this same army leadership:

In Central Java army (RPKAD) is training Moslem youth and supplying them with weapons and will keep them out in front against PKI. Army will try to avoid as much as it can safely do so direct confrontation with the PKI ...<sup>26</sup>

Rinto Tri Hasworo also noted that the masses refrained from engaging in violence against suspected communist party members until they were under the umbrella of RPKAD, though once there, civilian groups, gangs, and militia could often rob, arrest, and kill with impunity.<sup>27</sup> Speculating as to why the army may have wished to use such militia, Robert Cribb hypothesized that there may have been a desire “to bloody the hands of as many people as possible in order to ensure that they would never be able to swing back to the PKI if political circumstances changed.”<sup>28</sup>

Consistent across these studies is the primacy of the army. However, there is little mention of the two-way relationship between the army and its civilian allies. The responsibilities and activities of individual civilians, civilian organizations, and civilian militia are hardly addressed at all. Indeed, the heavy focus on the army—especially RPKAD—removes civilian agency from the picture almost entirely. An exception to this is Hasworo’s work. However, even then, the analysis of civilian actors is largely limited to militia: when they began to operate, legal immunity and incentives for certain crimes, and the observation that their role varied across the region.<sup>29</sup> The role of the broader civilian community and its relationship with both the RPKAD and local militias remains a gap in our understanding of the violence. Given that the army is the actor responsible for implementing the 1965–66 killings, more attention needs to be paid to its capability to act at the local level, and its incentives for recruiting civilian assistance for its activities.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Crouch, *The Army and Politics in Indonesia*, 151.

<sup>25</sup> Jenkins and Kammen, “The Army Para-commando Regiment and the Reign of Terror in Central Java and Bali.”

<sup>26</sup> Telegram from the Embassy in Indonesia to the Department of State, November 4, 1965, National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1964–66, POL 23-9 INDON.

<sup>27</sup> Rinto Tri Hasworo, “*Penangkapan dan Pembunuhan di Jawa Tengah Setelah G-30-S*” [Arrests and killing in Central Java after G-30-S], in *Tahun yang Tak Pernah Berakhir: Memahami Pengalaman Korban 65* [The year that never ends: Understanding the experiences of the victims of 65], ed. John Roosa, Ayu Ratih, and Hilmar Farid (Jakarta: Lembaga Studi dan Advokasi Masyarakat, 2004), 31–36.

<sup>28</sup> Cribb, “Unresolved Problems in the Indonesian Killing of 1965–66,” 552.

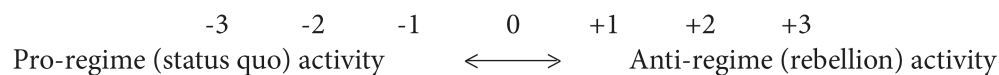
<sup>29</sup> Hasworo, “*Penangkapan dan Pembunuhan di Jawa Tengah Setelah G-30-S*,” 34–36.

<sup>30</sup> Hammer, “The Organisation of the Killings,” 37–62.

## Explaining the Emergence of Civilian Perpetrator Groups in Genocide

Why do ordinary civilians willfully participate in the slaughter of large numbers of noncombatants? While the literature on this subject is vast, two prominent themes have emerged with a reasonable degree of consensus. First, participants in genocide generally resemble the population from which they are drawn. In other words, perpetrators are ordinary citizens.<sup>31</sup> Second, most perpetrators only participate in groups. In cases ranging from state-organized German *Einsatzgruppen* and Rwandan *Interahamwe* militia to decentralized pogroms, much civilian participation is only done in the presence of (often many) others. Removed from the group, many potential perpetrators will adopt different roles, ranging from passive bystanders to actively risking their safety to rescue potential victims.<sup>32</sup> To explain participation in genocide, the focus should thus be on the group: how does it form, and under what conditions does action escalate to violence or actual killing?

The literature on the formation of militia during civil wars provides a useful starting point for the formation of organized perpetrator groups. Like pro- or anti-regime militia, perpetrator groups require assurances that they will not be acting alone, their cause has at least a moderate degree of local support, and there is some prospect of success in their actions.<sup>33</sup> Here I rely on a framework based on the work of Roger Petersen, who focuses on the formation of resistance groups in Lithuania during the Second World War.<sup>34</sup> Petersen's most important observation is that there is a spectrum of participation in acts of resistance, with small, less-risky acts serving as a means of signaling support for the cause to others. This boosts the confidence of potential insurgents or pro-regime militia to pursue increasingly risky strategies, such as armed conflict. This produces a spectrum of roles that Petersen represents on a scale from -3 to +3, with 0 being neutral:



Neutral behavior means neither supporting nor resisting the regime or rebellion. Those at the -1/+1 nodes engage in small-scale, usually nonviolent acts of support or resistance that have some potential consequence or cost upon discovery. These include producing pro- or anti-regime graffiti, singing banned songs, chanting slogans, or attending a rally. Two key aspects of -1/+1 type activities are their being largely

<sup>31</sup> See: Evgeny Finkel and Scott Straus, "Macro, Meso, and Micro Research on Genocide: Gains, Shortcomings, and Future Areas of Inquiry," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 7, 1 (April 2012), 62; and Peter B. Owens, Yang Su, and David A. Snow, "Social Scientific Inquiry into Genocide and Mass Killing: From Unitary Actor to Complex Processes," *Annual Review of Sociology* 39 (July 2013), 76.

<sup>32</sup> See: Fujii, *Killing Neighbors*, 154–80; and Janine Natalya Clark, "Genocide, War Crimes, and the Conflict in Bosnia: Understanding the Perpetrators," *Journal of Genocide Research* 11, 4 (2009): 435–37.

<sup>33</sup> In the context of insurgency, this includes the ability to engage in sustained resistance against an occupying regime with the potential of eventually defeating such forces locally. In the context of counterinsurgency, mass killing, pogroms, or genocide, this action is more likely to be the political or physical destruction of the targeted group of civilians or insurgents. For both, success also entails some chance of avoiding punishment for their participation in violence.

<sup>34</sup> Roger D. Petersen, *Resistance and Rebellion: Lessons from Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).



unorganized and their small element of risk or reward—the activity being either formally banned (+1) or having the potential for social sanction (-1). At the -2/+2 nodes, activity escalates to include pro-regime mobilization (-2) or direct support and participation in locally based, armed resistance (+2). In other words, -2/+2 behavior is organized and risky. Type -3/+3 behavior involves armed and mobile activity, such as joining an extra-territorial militia (-3) or a full-fledged rebel army (+3).<sup>35</sup> In the following expository section I refer only to “+” behavior for the sake of simplicity.

Mechanisms that move individuals from 0 to +1, and from +1 to +2, are crucial for explaining mobilization. Triggering mechanisms, those that move individuals to unorganized (+1) activity, include: resentment formation, threshold-based safety calculations with society-wide referents, status considerations linked to the local community, and focal points. Resentment formation marks the start of perceived grievances against an opposing regime, rebel group, or, in the case of genocide, an identity group. Any action against this group is weighed against the potential risks for doing so. Those willing to take the first steps towards unorganized resistance earlier than other members of their community may gain in status, as their actions carry some risk relative to doing nothing. Individuals who fail to move to a +1 position when such behavior is widespread may face a loss of community status, such as by being accused of cowardice or violating newly emerging social norms. Focal points provide symbols and referents for actions. These may be either specific events in which to frame grievances or local rituals that signal the willingness to take risks. In other words, focal points allow individuals willing to act to find each other.

Mechanisms that move individuals from type +1 to riskier +2 activities are threshold-based and community-centric safety calculations that also follow the community's norms of reciprocity.<sup>36</sup> As increasing numbers of community members engage in +1 behavior, those who would consider engaging in +2 behavior gain confidence that the community will support their actions to the extent that they will not unilaterally bear the cost of their heightened actions. In other words, potential militia members will not fight alone. Norms of reciprocity can partially explain the networks from which +2 participants are drawn. Dense ties between individuals can compel one to engage in more-risky behavior when someone else in the close network has already done so. An example would be the tendency for close family members to provide material support for one of their own who joins a resistance movement—for instance, sheltering him or her during searches or providing funds.<sup>37</sup>

The level of analysis in this explanation for mobilization is the community. Petersen identifies five community essentials: direct relations between members, many-sided relations (social, cultural, and economic), reciprocity, rough equality of material conditions, and a common set of beliefs or values.<sup>38</sup> Communities are especially important for facilitating movement from +1 to +2 behavior: they produce accessible information, reduce communication costs, and facilitate recruitment. Subsections of a community may differ in their behavior on a spectrum of roles, but

<sup>35</sup> Petersen, *Resistance and Rebellion*, 8–9.

<sup>36</sup> Petersen, *Resistance and Rebellion*, 14.

<sup>37</sup> Petersen, *Resistance and Rebellion*, 14.

<sup>38</sup> Petersen, *Resistance and Rebellion*, 16.

these positions themselves influence how “far” others may be willing to go. If enough members of a community reach the +2 stage of behavior, a local armed rebellion can emerge and sustain itself.

Given the importance of direct relations between members, strong communities are more likely to form in rural areas or within established organizations. These sites are characterized by frequent face-to-face interactions and members often having similar sets of beliefs.<sup>39</sup> When networks branch across such communities, there is the potential for widespread and sustained mobilization.

Petersen’s model provides mechanisms for understanding dynamics of participation in resistance movements. I argue that it also provides a mechanism for explaining civilian participation in genocide. Individuals tend to participate in genocide as part of a larger group. Volunteers or conscripts are formed or form themselves into squads or brigades, arrests are often done in large processions, and civilian-led killings are frequently brutal and public displays of violence.<sup>40</sup> Genocides and other mass killings are almost always framed as being against a monstrous “other” that threatens the very existence of the social group targeted by the propaganda—potentially increasing both resentment and societal-level perceptions of risk.<sup>41</sup> Such propaganda is likely to resonate to some degree, as genocide usually coincides with internal wars, revolutions, and regime failure.<sup>42</sup> As genocides are virtually always conducted by either states or their security forces, mobilization in genocide is best represented by “-” behavior.<sup>43</sup> Movement from -1 to -2 in genocide is similar to individuals’ movements from +1 to +2 during civil wars in that a small number of hard-core participants from within a given community have a tendency to embolden themselves and are responsible for the most violent acts.<sup>44</sup>

One element missing from Petersen’s model is the role of local military forces in shifting the perception of community standards and safety thresholds—a key factor explaining the escalation to -2/+2 behavior. Viewing mobilization primarily through the lens of insurgencies, Petersen notes that communal mobilization is more common in rural areas relative to cities—in part due to a comparative lack of a military presence to put down potential insurgents.<sup>45</sup> Given that the absence of armed forces helps open opportunities to mobilize, the redeployment of troops *away* from an area

<sup>39</sup> Dense networks with similar values is a major reason that Western churches have been key mobilizing sites for instances of contention, such as the US Civil Rights movement. See Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930–1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

<sup>40</sup> See: Donald L. Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); and Annie Pohlman, *Women, Sexual Violence, and the Indonesian Killings of 1965–66* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

<sup>41</sup> For a critical overview of this literature, see Scott Straus, “What is the Relationship between Hate Radio and Violence? Reexamining Rwanda’s ‘Radio Machete,’” *Politics and Society* 35, 4 (2007): 609–37.

<sup>42</sup> Barbara Harff, “No Lessons Learned Since the Holocaust? Assessing Risks of Genocide and Political Mass Murder since 1955,” *American Political Science Review* 97, 1 (2003): 57.

<sup>43</sup> See: R. J. Rummel, *Death by Government* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1994); and Benjamin Valentino *Final Solutions: Mass Killing and Genocide in the Twentieth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

<sup>44</sup> See: Horowitz, *The Deadly Ethnic Riot*; Charles Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 24.

<sup>45</sup> Petersen, *Resistance and Rebellion*.

should help to facilitate mobilization.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, the deployment of troops sympathetic to the community—and thus less likely to use repression to stifle mobilization—would impact safety calculations in a similar manner. Should troops likely to suppress mobilization leave, or troops sympathetic to potential mobilization arrive, the likelihood of grassroots mobilization increases. In the case of pro-regime militia, newly arriving troops may even encourage civilian mobilization, especially when incoming troops lack manpower and reliable intelligence networks on the ground.<sup>47</sup> Once communities begin to mobilize, they can then capture elements of official operations from below. Here, I consider the army to be the “regime” or “status quo” body, and mobilization in support of it is represented by “-” behavior.

### Forming an Anticommunist Network

By 1965 Indonesia lacked a centralized state apparatus capable of independently implementing a systemic campaign of mass murder. The armed forces were politically divided, with the navy’s leaders being strong supporters of Sukarno, while Air Force Chief Omar Dhani was aligned with the PKI. Although the army’s top leadership, generals Yani and Nasution (and later Suharto), were anticommunist, the army itself had significant internal divisions. Many of the Javanese battalions were seen as Sukarno loyalists, and the PKI had managed to secure some support from Central Java military units stationed in Yogyakarta, Surakarta, and Semarang. Other loyal Javanese troops, especially from Central Java and East Java, had been deployed outside Java for the confrontation with Malaysia (known as *Konfrontasi*). It could also be risky to deploy troops from other provinces that remained loyal to the high command: the West Javanese Siliwangi Division clashed with those of the Central Javanese Diponegoro Division while stationed in Central Java in 1948, during the Indonesian Revolution.<sup>48</sup> As the RPKAD moved into Central Java to crush the PKI, there were only an estimated 2,200–2,500 anti-PKI, combat-ready troops in a province of twenty million.<sup>49</sup> Rather than being able to depend on loyal armed forces and a centrally organized bureaucracy, army leadership was forced to rely on a network of informal alliances with different religious and political organizations to provide them with the capacity to eliminate the PKI. In Java, this network spanned the country’s largest religious organizations: Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, Himpunan Mahasiswa Indonesia (Muslim Students’ Organization, HMI), and the Catholic Party. The Indonesian Nationalist Party (Partai Nasional Indonesia, PNI) was also a member of this network, though it would eventually become divided over its position vis-à-vis Sukarno.

<sup>46</sup> See also Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 157–80.

<sup>47</sup> Unlike troops that have been deployed in an area for a long time, incoming troops often lack close connections to the civilian population, a condition that impedes the collection of detailed local intelligence. Encouraging civilians to arm and mobilize provides these incoming troops with an armed force with privileged knowledge of local conditions. See Kristine Eck, “Repression by Proxy: How Military Purges and Insurgency Impact the Delegation of Coercion,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59, 5 (2015): 924–56.

<sup>48</sup> See: Crouch, *The Army and Politics*, 148; and Ann Smith, *The Road to Madiun: The Indonesian Communist Uprising of 1948* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1989), 67–73.

<sup>49</sup> Hammer, “The Organisation of the Killings,” 43.

A combination of two events drove noncommunist religious and political organizations to align with army hard-liners. First, the shift to Guided Democracy in 1959 sidelined the influence of the major Muslim political parties. Despite combining for 39.3 percent of the popular vote in the 1955 general elections, by 1960 NU's status in government was largely limited to the religious ministry, while Masyumi was banned entirely.<sup>50</sup> The sidelining of political Islam also coincided with significant political gains by the PKI, whose supporters Sukarno used as his main bastion of domestic support. The PKI used its position to publicly lobby Sukarno to disband HMI, which the PKI saw as an extension of Masyumi counterrevolutionaries.<sup>51</sup> Second, in 1963 the PKI began a campaign of *aksi sepihak* (unilateral actions) in which PKI and affiliated organizations attempted to occupy lands unilaterally to enforce the terms of the 1960 sharecropping law. The occupations provoked a violent response from large landowners, many of whom were members of NU, Masyumi, or the PNI.<sup>52</sup> Land conflict underscored the material threat of a communist government to noncommunist organizations.

By 1965, anticommunist civilian leaders from NU, HMI, Muhammadiyah, and the Catholic Party were in regular contact with military leaders in Jakarta.<sup>53</sup> The principal obstacle in moving against the communists was the support given to the PKI by President Sukarno, who remained extremely popular with both the populace and large sections of the armed forces. There was a very real risk that a frontal assault could split the armed forces, resulting in civil war.<sup>54</sup> What was needed was an event that would isolate the PKI from the president's protection. The September 30th Movement provided just such an opportunity to remove this potential obstacle to destroying the PKI.

### Unleashing Violence

In the early hours of October 1, 1965, a group calling itself the September 30th Movement (Gerakan 30 September, G30S), led by Lieutenant Colonel Untung, kidnapped and killed six high-ranking Indonesian generals. That same morning, Untung broadcast the existence of the movement over radio, claiming the group's goal was to save Sukarno from a CIA-sponsored Council of Generals. Beset by poor planning, the movement quickly collapsed. By October 2, Suharto, the highest-ranking army combat officer, rallied loyal troops in Jakarta and co-opted those loyal to G30S. Seizing control of the airwaves, Suharto blamed what he termed a coup attempt on the PKI. Over the next ten days, Suharto purged potentially disloyal troops from army units based in Jakarta while simultaneously flooding the airwaves with anti-PKI

<sup>50</sup> See: Herbert Feith, *The Indonesian Elections of 1955* (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1957); Ruth McVey, "Indonesian Communism and the Transition to Guided Democracy," in *Communist Strategies in Asia*, ed. A. Doak Barnett (New York: Praeger, 1963), 148–98.

<sup>51</sup> Robert Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 47.

<sup>52</sup> Rex Alfred Mortimer, *The Indonesian Communist Party and Land Reform, 1959–1965* (Clayton: Monash University Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, 1972).

<sup>53</sup> Author's confidential interview (040) with former member of HMI leadership, Jakarta, April 2016.

<sup>54</sup> John Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder: The September 30th Movement and Suharto's Coup d'État in Indonesia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 186.

propaganda, focusing particularly on the alleged torture of the generals (whose bodies were found some four days after September 30).<sup>55</sup> On October 10, Suharto announced the formation of Kopkamtib (Komando Operasi Pemulihan Keamanan dan Ketertiban, Operational Command for the Restoration of Security and Order), a parallel chain of command within the existing security apparatus to be used for “restoring order and security.” One week later the RPKAD was dispatched to Central Java under the command of Sarwo Edhie to spearhead the anticommunist drive.<sup>56</sup>

Following G30S, civilian organizations with anticommunist leanings quickly coordinated their activities. On October 2, top members of NU, HMI, Muhammadiyah, and the Catholic Party met in Jakarta. They agreed that G30S was the work of the PKI, and in response formed the Action Command to Crush the Thirtieth September Movement (Komando Aksi Pengganyangan G30S, KAP).<sup>57</sup> Within twenty-four hours of forming, KAP leadership traveled to Kostrad to coordinate activities with anticommunist army forces. Two days later, the same day that the generals’ bodies would be discovered, KAP was also dubbed “Front Pancasila” (United Front) in order to frame the movement as one operating in accordance with state principles, on the recommendation of Suharto.<sup>58</sup> This underscores the close connection between civilian anticommunist hard-liners and Suharto.

KAP mobilized members of its constituent organizations to stage mass rallies in support of Suharto and of crushing the PKI, first on October 5 during a funeral for the slain generals, and then a larger rally on October 8 that culminated in the destruction of the PKI headquarters in Jakarta.<sup>59</sup> On October 9, NU leaders sent a circular to local branches urging members to demonstrate their disapproval of the attempted coup, while on October 17, at the same time that the RPKAD was being dispatched to Central Java, HMI chairman Sulastomo went on a tour of Central Java.<sup>60</sup> The message to the constituent organizations of KAP was clear: be brave and stand fast against the PKI.

### The Campaign Spreads to Yogyakarta

Prior to G30S, Yogyakarta was a major PKI stronghold. In the 1955 general elections, the PKI received an estimated 237,000 votes—good for first place—though there was a near even three-way split among PKI, PNI, and the combined votes of NU

<sup>55</sup> Author’s confidential interview (051) with former soldier, Mojokerto, May 2016. Army autopsy reports refute claims of torture; see Benedict Anderson, “How Did the Generals Die?” *Indonesia* 43 (April 1987): 109–34. For more on the anti-PKI propaganda campaign in general, see: Saskia Eleonora Wieringa, “Sexual Slander and the 1965/66 Mass Killings in Indonesia: Political and Methodological Considerations,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 41, 4 (2011): 544–65; and Annie Pohlman, “Incitement to Genocide against a Political Group: The Anti-Communist Killings in Indonesia,” *PORTAL Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies* 11, 1 (2014): 1–22.

<sup>56</sup> Kammen and Zakaria, “Detention in Mass Violence,” 443–44.

<sup>57</sup> Confidential interview (040).

<sup>58</sup> Sulastomo, *Dibalik Tragedi 1965* [Behind the 1965 tragedy] (Jakarta: Penerbit Yayasan Pustaka Ummat, 2006), 79.

<sup>59</sup> Crouch, *Army and Politics*, 141.

<sup>60</sup> Confidential interview (040).

and Masyumi.<sup>61</sup> Unlike the neighboring regencies of Klaten and Surakarta, major conflict between the PKI and national or religious organizations was rare. There were no land reform campaigns in the years leading to G30S, and incidents of violence between communist and noncommunist organizations appears to have been limited to occasional bouts of rock-throwing between youth.<sup>62</sup> Even these conflicts were limited to select *kampung* (neighborhoods). In many areas, these low-level conflicts were more common between student groups originating from different parts of the country than between competing socio-political organizations.<sup>63</sup>

Despite a lack of physical confrontations, there were still undercurrents of tension and political competition. Some members of HMI were wary of PKI demonstrations that were held regularly at Malioboro market. Gerwani (Gerakan Wanita Indonesia, Indonesian Women's Movement) and the Muhammadiyah women's organization, Aiysha, also competed fiercely.<sup>64</sup> Demonstrations and counterdemonstrations were a common feature of university life between members of the PKI-affiliated CGMI (Consentrasi Gerakan Mahasiswa Indonesia, Unified Movement of Students) and HMI.<sup>65</sup> No respondents could recall such demonstrations becoming violent. For some, friendship and kinship ties crossed political and religious ties. For a minority, the PKI was an existential threat both on campuses and in their neighborhoods. One respondent who would later serve as an executioner claimed that the PKI and its supporters sought to dominate the area's Muslim community. During his days in University, he frequently clashed with students in CGMI as they put up posters and held rallies on campus, believing it a duty to confront those who sought to ban HMI. Like other radicals, he believed that should PKI gain power, its supporters would move to marginalize or eliminate Islam from Indonesian public life. Following several physical altercations with CGMI students, he was expelled. In response, he joined an emerging group calling themselves GEMUIS (Generasi Muda Islam, Young Islamic Generation), an Islamic student and youth organization with both NU and Muhammadiyah members dedicated to opposing communism's influence.<sup>66</sup> While initially small, GEMUIS provided a means of connecting the most ardent civilian anticommunists and fostering links among those who would later join Yogyakarta's hard-core anticommunist civilian auxiliary units.

News of the September 30th Movement caught Yogyakarta's civilian population by surprise. On October 2, PKI supporters staged a rally supporting G30S.<sup>67</sup> Major Kartawi, from the local military resort command (Komando Resort Militer, Korem 072 Pamungkas), also addressed the crowd.<sup>68</sup> There were sporadic local arrests of both PKI members and members of noncommunist organizations who attempted to use the confusion to provoke violence against their perceived opponents.

<sup>61</sup> Feith, *The Indonesian Elections of 1955*.

<sup>62</sup> Author's confidential interview (012) with Muhammadiyah member, Yogyakarta, February 2016; and author's confidential interview (021) with former political prisoner, Yogyakarta, March 2016.

<sup>63</sup> Author's confidential interview (033) with former political prisoner, Yogyakarta, March 2016.

<sup>64</sup> Woodward, "Only Now We Can Speak," 42.

<sup>65</sup> Author's interview (004) with Sri Muhayati, former political prisoner, Yogyakarta, January 2016.

<sup>66</sup> Author's confidential interview (006b) with former perpetrator, Yogyakarta, January 2016.

<sup>67</sup> Author's confidential interview (028) with former political prisoner, Yogyakarta, March 2016.

<sup>68</sup> Crouch, *Army and Politics*, 145.

News of G30S and subsequent propaganda stoked fear within the religious community. Rumors about PKI death lists spread, leading many Muhammadiyah members to sleep in their mosques for protection. Fearing assault by members of Pemuda Rakyat (PKI's youth wing), Catholic Party members also hid during the evenings and during meetings.<sup>69</sup> The source of such rumors is unclear. The uncle of one respondent, a member of the military intelligence, told his family that they had been placed on such a list.<sup>70</sup> Many Muhammadiyah members gathered at the Kauman Great Mosque to protect it and themselves. Fearing attacks by the PKI, prominent *kiai* instructed those at the mosques in self-defense and mental training.<sup>71</sup>

GEMUIS also staged two small demonstrations in the week immediately following Untung's radio broadcast. On October 4, GEMUIS members marched to Tugu station chanting for Aidit and the revolutionary council to be hanged, and for the PKI to be banned. There, they tore down PKI posters and those of its affiliated organizations before proceeding to Malioboro market to do the same. The following day, a larger crowd assembled outside the Kauman mosque before marching to the home of Colonel Katamso, who had been kidnapped, to demand his safe return. From there, the mob marched to the local office of the PKI labor union SOBSI (Sentral Organisasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia, Central All-Indonesian Workers Organization) and vandalized the building.<sup>72</sup> GEMUIS's further attempts to move against suspected communists were actively stopped by the police, and several members were temporarily arrested.<sup>73</sup> In light of this, GEMUIS leadership chose not to engage in further public activities until the RPKAD arrived two weeks later.

By the middle of October, hard-liner elements, such as GEMUIS, buoyed by potential new recruits in the mosques, formed KOGALAM (Komando Siaga Islam, Islamic Standby Command), a militia self-tasked with defending the religious community against the PKI. KOGALAM managed to coordinate such hard-liners, who roamed between different religious sites to defend property and persons from potential attack.<sup>74</sup> There were also occasional night patrols by both sides, especially Muhammadiyah and PKI youth, despite curfews.<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, skirmishes between anticommunist and communist elements were extremely rare during this period. Very few respondents could recall any confrontations, and those who did universally claimed they were nonlethal and that the police sought to restrain violence.<sup>76</sup>

Local armed forces initially supported the September 30th Movement. Troops from Korem 072, organized under Battalion L, deposed and executed their commanders, Colonel Katamso and Lieutenant Colonel Sujijono, and declared their support for the movement. However, their position eroded as the movement in Jakarta collapsed. Cut off from other like-minded units, Battalion L agreed to return to the

<sup>69</sup> Baskara T. Wardaya, ed., *Truth Will Out: Indonesian Accounts of the 1965 Mass Violence*, trans. Jennifer Lindsay (Clayton: Monash University, 2013), 58.

<sup>70</sup> Confidential interview (012).

<sup>71</sup> Confidential interview (012).

<sup>72</sup> Julianto Ibrahim "Goncangan Pada Keselarasan Hidup di Kesultanan," 120–21.

<sup>73</sup> Confidential interview (006).

<sup>74</sup> Confidential interview (006).

<sup>75</sup> Author's confidential interview (011) with Muhammadiyah leader, Yogyakarta, February 2016.

<sup>76</sup> Confidential interviews (006) and (021).

fold on October 5 following a meeting with Brigadier General Surjosempeno, Central Java's military commander.<sup>77</sup> While the military situation was temporarily under control, the loyalty of Yogyakarta troops was compromised. The only local elements that could be considered dependably anticommunist were those in the mosques; however, these militias had yet to act in force, constrained as they were by potential police repression, fear of the PKI, and lack of assurance that violence was justified. Except for the October 2–5 period, no demonstrations were held in support of or against G30S in Yogyakarta until the arrival of the RPKAD.

The RPKAD arrived in Yogyakarta on October 20, 1965, a date that coincided with the discovery of the bodies of Katamso and Sujiono. At around the same time, Sulastomo arrived at Kauman, and in a speech instructed those present to be courageous in the face of the PKI. Upon arriving, the RPKAD staged a massive rally at the central square next to the Sultan's Palace, which was attended predominantly by thousands of members of religious organizations. The rapid mobilizing of such a large number of individuals to coincide with RPKAD's arrival strongly suggests that local religious leaders were informed in advance of the demonstration. Speakers included prominent local members of Muhammadiyah and NU, as well as the new local army head, Colonel Widodo.<sup>78</sup> The speakers told the gathered crowd that they no longer had to fear the PKI, and provided a list of PKI-affiliated organizations that were to have their activities banned.

The October 20 rally culminated with a campaign of mass arrests, driven in part by rally attendees. Fanning out from the *alun-alun* (palace lawn, commons), mobs of attendees attempted to capture suspected communist sympathizers, either by seizing them directly or isolating them in buildings where they could be apprehended later by the military police.<sup>79</sup> The military provided security for both the October 20 rally and subsequent arrests, deploying several armored military vehicles as a show of force.<sup>80</sup>

By the evening of October 20, the local jails were already full, with new prisoners arriving by the truckload. The number of arrests following the rally was massive: cell blocks with a maximum capacity of 50 prisoners held more than 130.<sup>81</sup> This in turn led to food shortages and long delays between detainees' initial arrest and processing their personal information. Existing facilities were unable to cope with the tremendous influx of prisoners, forcing military and police units to establish makeshift prisons in schools, libraries, and offices.

The same day as the Yogyakarta demonstrations, the Diponegoro headquarters released decision letter Kep-PPDD/0064/10/1965, which called on the PKI and its

<sup>77</sup> Crouch, *Army and Politics*, 144.

<sup>78</sup> All indications are that this was Urip Widodo, from the Jakarta command, receiving a temporary caretaking assignment.

<sup>79</sup> Fearing for their lives, onlookers with potential communist sympathies took refuge in nearby buildings, which were quickly surrounded by Islamic youth chanting slogans to crush the PKI. The onlookers barricaded themselves in the buildings, only removing the barricades when military police guaranteed their safety. Despite assurances of protection, however, the military police detained all those hiding within and used the fact that they had hid from the rampaging mob as evidence of their affiliation with the PKI. Author's confidential interview (002) with former political prisoner, Yogyakarta, January 2016.

<sup>80</sup> Staf Pertahanan Keamanan [defense and security staff], *40 Hari Kegagalan "G30S"* [forty days failure G30S] (1966), 92–93.

<sup>81</sup> Confidential interview (002).



affiliated organizations to freeze all activities.<sup>82</sup> In addition, all members of the PKI or its affiliated organizations were to report to their local police station every morning between the hours of eight and ten.<sup>83</sup> At this time, neither the PKI nor any of its organizations had been banned; however, it was now clear that the army intended to purge the PKI down to its roots in Central Java.

Around October 22, Battalion L was redeployed to Kalimantan for *Konfrontasi*. This removed the last organization that was likely to physically stop the persecution of leftists. However, the removal of Battalion L also left the army severely understaffed in Yogyakarta and the surrounding regencies.<sup>84</sup> To make up for this lack of manpower, on October 22 or 23 Sarwo Edhie requested permission to use and train civilian auxiliaries, which was granted several days later.<sup>85</sup> Following the departure of Battalion L, the RPKAD expanded its operations, moving in force to Surakarta on October 22.<sup>86</sup>

### Civilian Recruitment and Participation

As operations expanded to include Surakarta and Klaten, the manpower shortage in Central Java became increasingly problematic. Even before plans to recruit civilians were approved by Suharto, Sarwo Edhie and Santoso approached religious organizations' members to elicit their help in identifying and arresting PKI members. The RPKAD actively encouraged vigilante action, instructing Muhammadiyah leaders to "cleanse their environment" of the PKI.<sup>87</sup> Such orders were almost certainly passed to members of Catholic, NU, and nationalist organizations as well. Anti-PKI graffiti became increasingly common in the days following RPKAD's arrival, and the homes of known leftist members were often targeted.<sup>88</sup> Continued anti-PKI demonstrations, marches, and graffiti transformed the public sphere into one that was virulently against the left and indicates that the number of civilians triggered to low-risk and unorganized (type -1) action was high.

Formal training of civilian auxiliaries began the week following the October 20 rally. RPKAD approached local leaders of religious and nationalist organizations to encourage participation in training programs. There was great enthusiasm for the training exercises, which often involved physical training such as jogging and knife

<sup>82</sup> The organizations listed in this document are: BTI (Barisan Tani Indonesia), SOBSI, Pemuda Rakyat, Gerwani, LEKRA (Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat, Institute for the People's Culture), and the PKI-affiliated Chinese Party BAPERKI (Badan Permusjawaratan Kewarganegaraan Indonesia); see Staf Pertahan Keamanan, *40 Hari Kegagalan "G30S,"* 96–97. Not included in this list is the student group CGMI nor the intellectual organization ISSI (Insitut Sejarah Sosial Indonesia), both of which would have substantial portions of their membership arrested during the communist purge of Central Java and Yogyakarta.

<sup>83</sup> Staf Pertahan Keamanan, *40 Hari Kegagalan "G30S,"* 96–97.

<sup>84</sup> In addition to the Yogyakarta troops, three battalions from Solo also supported the September 30th Movement and was redeployed. Parts of the Semarang battalion also declared their support for the movement, ensuring that the lack of manpower issue could not be addressed by redeploying local battalions; see Crouch, *Army and Politics*, 147–48.

<sup>85</sup> Crouch, *Army and Politics*, 151.

<sup>86</sup> Hammer, "The Organisation of the Killings," 38.

<sup>87</sup> Confidential interview (011).

<sup>88</sup> Confidential interview (028).

throwing. Not all who signed up for this training were necessarily militant anticommunists or potential executioners; for some, the training was an entertaining diversion, especially students whose schools had been closed as a precautionary measure following G30S.<sup>89</sup> Thousands of young adults signed up for the initial round of training. As training progressed, army trainers selected small numbers of volunteers for increasingly strenuous training. From these select groups ten individuals were eventually given firearms and permission to lead civilian units against the PKI. The RPKAD and military police provided guarantees of legal immunity to these ten, in what one such leader described as a “license to kill.”<sup>90</sup>

Several hard-core perpetrators were drawn from the ranks of KOGALAM, underscoring the importance of preexisting dedicated anticommunists in the violence that was in the process of being unleashed. In addition to the mass training provided to civilian auxiliaries, the RPKAD, working with Muhammadiyah, formed KOKAM (Komando Kesiapsiagaan Angkatan Muda Muhammadiyah, Muhammadiyah Youth Preparedness Command) in late October to help crush the PKI.<sup>91</sup> KOKAM worked alongside other action fronts and youth groups throughout the anti-PKI campaign. Such militia formed the organized risk-taking (-2) backbone of the anticommunist campaign following the increase in unorganized, low-risk (-1) behavior that started October 20.

Civilians assisted the military during the communist crackdown in Yogyakarta in three primary ways: identifying suspected leftists, serving as auxiliaries, and publicly demonstrating against the PKI. Each of these activities led to opportunities for civilian groups to capture part of the anticommunist campaign from below. The RPKAD and military police also recruited a small number of civilians to serve as executioners, though this appears to have been less common in Yogyakarta than East Java.<sup>92</sup> Unlike the ten civilians given firearms and tasked with leading militia, these executioners were not granted firearms, and their role was to execute detainees under the supervision of the army. Taken together, this civilian recruitment ultimately led to a situation in which the army was able to unleash a system of denunciations, arrests, and violence, but not entirely control it.

The PKI’s infiltration of Korem 072 disrupted the army’s capacity independently to gather local intelligence in Yogyakarta. Due to this limited intelligence on PKI rank-and-file, RPKAD was forced to rely on civilians to identify potential communist sympathizers from amongst the populace. Direct accusations could be made in three primary ways. First, RPKAD troops maintained a presence in the streets following the October 20 demonstration. These soldiers solicited information from local people and were available should anyone wish to volunteer information.<sup>93</sup> These troops would then either proceed directly to the homes of the accused to make arrests, or place their names on a list to be picked up in a larger arrest action. Second, RPKAD units would

<sup>89</sup> Confidential interview (012).

<sup>90</sup> Confidential interview (006).

<sup>91</sup> Confidential interview (012).

<sup>92</sup> Author’s confidential interview (001) with former soldier, Yogyakarta, December 2015. See also Rochijat and Anderson “Am I PKI or non-PKI;” and Anonymous, “Additional Data on Counter-revolutionary Cruelty in Indonesia, Especially in East Java.”

<sup>93</sup> Confidential interview (012).

attempt to gain information directly from religious and nationalist organizations. These organizations were instructed to provide lists of suspected communist sympathizers and submit them directly to the RPKAD or military police.<sup>94</sup> Finally, organizations that were considered to have a large leftist constituency—such as universities—were instructed to provide lists of all PKI sympathizers. Recently declassified military materials demonstrate that schools such as UGM (Universitas Gadjah Mada) were given orders to cleanse their faculty and student body of communist sympathizers.<sup>95</sup>

The ability to provide information as to who was affiliated with the PKI opened opportunities for individuals to use the anticommunist campaign to resolve their own private grievances. At times, personal denunciations were used as a means of eliminating rivals. One of my contacts, a soldier, was accused of supporting the September 30th Movement by a fellow officer who sought a relationship with the other man's wife. It was only the intervention of one of the accused's superior officers that prevented a long incarceration.<sup>96</sup> At times the motivation for denunciation was not clear to those who were arrested. One such victim, at the time a fourteen-year-old girl known to be a gracious dancer, was accused of being a member of Gerwani by one of her neighbors. Although she had no political affiliation, she was jailed for fourteen years.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, some capitalized on the fear of denunciations to extort wealthy members of the community. Tan Soe Yie, head of the local branch of the Chinese party BAPERKI (Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat, Institute for the People's Culture), was repeatedly subject to this type of blackmail.<sup>98</sup> None of these individuals had any substantive links to the communist party.

An additional tool for mass denunciations were membership lists allegedly seized by nationalist or religious organizations during raids on PKI-affiliated organizations. Given that membership in political parties was extremely common by the 1955 general elections, the number of people who could be implicated by these lists was enormous.<sup>99</sup>

The lists provided by nationalist and religious organizations led to the arrest of many whose ties to the PKI were tenuous at best. One way in which Muhammadiyah added to its lists was by observing the attendees at cultural events sponsored by the PKI-affiliated cultural organization LEKRA (Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat, Institute for the People's Culture), such as *wayang* performances. Members of Muhammadiyah

<sup>94</sup> Confidential interview (011).

<sup>95</sup> Abdul Wahid, "Counterrevolution in a Revolutionary Campus: How Did the '1965 Event' Affect an Indonesian Public University," in *The Indonesian Genocide of 1965*, ed. Kate McGregor, Jess Melvin, and Annie Pohlman (New York: Springer 2018), 157–78.

<sup>96</sup> Confidential interview (001). This practice of arresting the husband of a desired woman in order to coerce her into entering a relationship was widespread during the anticommunist campaign; see Pohlman, *Women, Sexual Violence, and the Indonesian Killings of 1965–66*.

<sup>97</sup> Author's confidential interview (003) with former political prisoner, Yogyakarta, January 2016.

<sup>98</sup> Confidential interview (102) with former political prisoner by an anonymous research assistant, Yogyakarta, May 2016.

<sup>99</sup> Regarding the 1955 elections, Herb Feith notes that "it was unusual for a man of any influence or claims of enlightenment in a small town or village to belong to no party." Indeed, virtually all interviewees had memberships in at least one of the mass political organizations of that time. See Feith, *The Indonesian Elections of 1955*, 23.

would identify the attendees and denounce them en-masse to the army.<sup>100</sup> While many of the individuals who were thus detained were released within the first several months of captivity, they still faced starvation, inhumane conditions, and often torture during their time in prison. Others were incarcerated until the mass release of political prisoners in 1979. Some were executed.

Those responsible for compiling lists at UGM also had substantial leeway in pursuing their own personal agendas. While the task of identifying potential communists was officially in the hands of school administrators, in practice it was often delegated to individual professors or students. Lacking membership information on student groups such as CGMI, identifying and screening suspected communists was “often arbitrary” and “subjective.”<sup>101</sup> While there may not have been specific, personal malice towards those whose names were put on any of the lists, the unregulated processes of denunciation demonstrate how the anticommunist campaign ballooned in ways unintended by its architects due to the actions of civilian organizations.

Torture was a common means of securing coerced confessions from detainees. Prison guards, usually military police, frequently removed detainees from their cramped cells for interrogations, during which they would be subject to prolonged beatings and other physical abuse. Interrogators often sexually abused female detainees, stripping them naked to search for a hammer-and-sickle tattoo allegedly given to Gerwani members.<sup>102</sup> Under these conditions many detainees confessed to being PKI cadres or to having knowledge of the September 30th Movement—an unlikely possibility, since some had only learned on the day of their arrests that groups such as CGMI were affiliated with the PKI. Some detainees in the torture centers of what would become the New Order had a term for this: “*diPKI*” (to become PKI).<sup>103</sup> Torture could occur in any detention center; however, the most common site for such violent interrogations was the upper floor of the US Information Service’s former Thomas Jefferson Library, which was abandoned prior to the September 30th Movement. The army and military police regularly transferred detainees from large prison camps, such as Wirogunan, to Jefferson for periods ranging from a day to several weeks starting some time in November 1965. Interrogators at Jefferson went on to enjoy prominent careers in the New Order, such as Lukman Sutrisno, who became a professor at UGM.<sup>104</sup>

Civilians were not only able to influence who was sent into the prisoner system; they were also able to affect these individuals’ fates once they arrived. Prominent citizens who were seen as civil society leaders could occasionally secure the release of some detainees by vouching for their innocence. One young woman, a member of the Catholic Youth, brought her pastor to the local barracks to plead the case of two acquaintances, both members of Gerwani. After her pastor met with the officer in charge of the detainees, the two prisoners were released.<sup>105</sup> Detainees who had friends

<sup>100</sup> Confidential interview (011).

<sup>101</sup> Wahid, “Counterrevolution in a Revolutionary Campus,” 171.

<sup>102</sup> Confidential interview (003).

<sup>103</sup> Author’s confidential interview (016) with former political prisoner, Yogyakarta, February 2016.

<sup>104</sup> Confidential interview (021).

<sup>105</sup> Wardaya, *Truth Will Out*, 100–101.

or relatives in prominent military roles were also often able to secure early release, or at least a reduction in sentencing, thus reducing the likelihood of being executed.<sup>106</sup> Some civilians were tasked with helping to classify detainees following the formation of regional prosecutor teams on November 8. Regional commanders could appoint individuals as they wished to these teams.<sup>107</sup>

Civilians were also active in the physical arrest and killing of suspected communist party members in Yogyakarta. Broadly speaking, arrests occurred in Yogyakarta in two ways. First, soldiers or police supported by civilian groups would proceed to the houses of suspected communists, who would be arrested and loaded into trucks and brought to one of the many prison sites. Large numbers of suspects whose names were on a list would be arrested in a relatively brief time span. New lists were compiled for each week, and it was not uncommon for non-relatives staying at the house of an accused to be arrested as well.<sup>108</sup> Second, following the initial waves of arrests, suspected communists would receive a letter instructing them to report to the local army base or police station, where they would be detained.

For direct arrests, the role of civilian auxiliaries was often to provide a show of support for the soldiers performing the arrest, or to surround individual homes or villages to cow suspects into submission and to prevent their escape. The number of auxiliaries ranged from dozens to hundreds. When a suspect attempted to flee, youth militia, who were often armed with crude bamboo spears or knives, would savagely beat the suspect—at times to death.<sup>109</sup> On occasion, such mobs would select their own victims, descending on them rapidly to similar effect. In most instances local army units sought to restrain this type of violence, though several respondents recall incidents in which authorities stood back and allowed such beatings and killings to occur.<sup>110</sup> Even so, such violence is well within the bounds of army-led killing, as soldiers standing by as observers gave tacit consent to mob violence. This kind of violence in official operations was uncommon; however, some anticommunist groups were more than willing to use violence unilaterally.

The lessening of legal consequences for using violence and the expansion of low-risk mobilization in the Muhammadiyah community emboldened those who had been hard-core anticommunists in Yogyakarta prior to G30S. Of the ten student leaders tasked with leading civilian auxiliaries, some seized the opportunity to pursue their own campaigns of terror against suspected communists, outside of military authorization. Such operations often involved youth from KOGALAM. These units would descend into PKI neighborhoods or villages, often staying at local mosques. After soliciting information from local sympathizers, the anticommunist vigilantes would savagely beat any accused communists that they could find. Alternatively, these militia members would withhold information from the army when performing joint operations, claiming that certain PKI suspects were not at home, thus preventing their arrest. Later, the militiamen would descend on the neighborhood or village again to

<sup>106</sup> Confidential interview (001).

<sup>107</sup> Kammen and Zakaria, *Detention in Mass Violence*, 446–47.

<sup>108</sup> Confidential interviews (006) and (102).

<sup>109</sup> Confidential interview (028).

<sup>110</sup> Confidential interview (028).

exact their own form of justice. Local army units at times sought to discourage such unofficial operations, leading to minor clashes between militia and the military. When asked about why they continued these actions, one of the militia leaders claimed that it was both a desire for revenge, and because it was “fun” when compared to official operations during which military units prevented militia from overt and public displays of violence.<sup>111</sup> Unsanctioned actions were not ubiquitous across militia groups, but they do represent an important way in which civilians could act outside of army control. The situation became so destabilizing that on November 24 Brigadier General Surjosempeno issued a pronouncement banning civilian arrests, and warning that disobedience could lead to arrest.<sup>112</sup> Mass arrests by civilians appear to have stopped at this time. Nevertheless, the social legitimacy granted by a seeming mass movement and the training given to militia emboldened some citizens to action that they did not take prior to the arrival of the RPKAD.

Civilians were also involved in executing detainees. Like most other documented executions during the Indonesian killings, prison guards removed detainees from the prisons at night, after which they were trucked to a remote location. Local army units and occasionally a small number of civilians would already have gathered at this prearranged spot, where they would execute the detainees and dispose of the bodies. The most common execution method for soldiers was to shoot detainees; civilian executioners were usually forced to use blunt or bladed weapons. The majority of the killings were conducted by army personnel with the assistance of Muhammadiyah members.<sup>113</sup> At some locations, such as Wonosari, detainees were simply pushed, bound, into coastal caves, to be swept out to sea.<sup>114</sup> I have not found any evidence of killings on this scale outside those directly under military control. The logistics involved in transporting prisoners en masse to a predetermined execution site would likely have been beyond the capacity of any of Yogyakarta’s civilian militias.

An overlooked element of civil-military dynamics is that of popular protest in support of the army’s campaign to eliminate the PKI. Once religious and nationalist groups were assured of the strength of their position, they quickly escalated their street presence from night patrols to mass rallies attended by thousands, especially near Kauman mosque and the public square outside the sultan’s palace. These demonstrations and marches were held on a daily or near-daily basis, and anti-PKI and Sukarnoist graffiti became a common sight throughout the anticommunist campaign. Demonstrations were not limited to the Muslim community, as elements of the Catholic and nationalist communities protested as well.<sup>115</sup> This transformation of the public sphere emboldened civilians to escalate their anti-PKI actions from protest (-1 type behavior) to organized violence (-2 type behavior).

Unlike those who mobilized only after the arrival of the RPKAD, groups such as KOGALAM had already formed and were engaged in activities such as night patrols in order to safeguard religious persons and property, especially around Kauman.<sup>116</sup> They

<sup>111</sup> Confidential interview (006b).

<sup>112</sup> Crouch, *Army and Politics*, 154.

<sup>113</sup> See also Woodward, “Only Now We Can Speak,” 43.

<sup>114</sup> Confidential interviews (001) and (006).

<sup>115</sup> Wardaya, *Truth Will Out*, 58–59.

<sup>116</sup> Confidential interview (006b).

at times had moderate clashes with PKI-affiliated night patrols, though by all accounts such encounters were insignificant. These pre-RPKAD groups had already exhibited some -1 behavior—chanting slogans and defying nighttime curfews; however, such behavior had yet to become common in Yogyakarta, and there was no organized, risky -2 behavior. The arrival of RPKAD and bolstering speeches by religious leaders removed legal and moral impediments for most people to begin engaging in -1 behavior. As a result, many ordinary citizens thereafter took to the streets in massive numbers. It was only after this mass mobilization that groups like KOGALAM were willing to escalate their actions to type -2 behavior, such as coordinated violence and the occasional killing.

There are two reasons that explain why civilian mobilization and escalation of participation to risky and organized -2 activity in Central Java should not be viewed solely through the lens of military training, incitement, and leadership. First, those involved in organized activities (e.g., serving in night patrols and militias; providing lists of names; and serving as executioners) saw themselves as part of a larger movement that went beyond its direct participants. They did not see themselves as part of a military campaign; rather, they saw themselves as part of a mass movement tied to the local Islamic community. When speaking of this period, they framed their actions as a part of this movement, with the movement itself preceding the arrival of the RPKAD. This suggests their willingness to escalate their behavior was closely tied to their sense of community. In addition, all of those involved in the campaign, as well as the parents of another respondent who was too young to have participated, recall experiencing an increase in status due to their activity—being seen as *berani* (brave).<sup>117</sup> Moreover, it was the same groups that formed prior to the arrival of the RPKAD, such as KOGALAM, that supplied much of the core of -2 participants, suggesting some level of continuity within these groups. Social networks, not direct conscription, were also a reason for participation. One respondent recalls joining night patrols to catch suspected communists because an older brother was a youth leader, even though my respondent did not participate in the youth training programs—a clear example of how local communal networks, including familial ones, drove participation more than did direct incitement by the Indonesian Army.<sup>118</sup>

Second, and more importantly, militia groups acted outside military control and the army physically had to prevent militia from escalating their activity even further. If, indeed, the explanation for organized civilian involvement is direct recruitment by the military, there should not be instances of militias undermining the formal arrest process in order to act without military supervision. Rogue militia such as KOGALAM also had sporadic physical clashes with local police and army units well into late 1965, when the army chain of command had already effectively been established in the province. While there may have been some desire to keep civilians in the front ranks to minimize the visibility of an army-led campaign of extermination, civil-military relations in Yogyakarta suggest that these civilians were a crucial source of intelligence and auxiliary manpower. As the army came to rely on civilians and civilian

<sup>117</sup> Author's confidential interview (005) with FAKI leader, Yogyakarta, January 2016; and confidential interview (006). A former soldier also used *berani* to describe civilian executioners, from confidential interview (001).

<sup>118</sup> Confidential interview (012).

organizations for information, arrests spiraled beyond party activists, while public killings appear largely to be the result of the army stepping back once militia had initially been empowered to act. In other words, the army both unleashed violence, and, to the extent to which it had the capacity and will, occasionally restrained it.

### The Campaign Ends

Civilian groups in Yogyakarta appear to have stopped making public mass arrests not long after Surjosempeno's November 24 order to halt vigilante action. Nevertheless, some militias continued their unofficial activities into January of 1966, even as official arrests were winding down. These vigilante actions widened in scope to begin targeting some members of PNI, which itself had begun to fracture around loyalty to the Sukarno regime.<sup>119</sup> As before, local armed forces and police attempted to limit these clashes, with only some success.

Rogue civilian vigilante groups only stopped their actions against perceived leftists in March of 1966, around the time that executive authority was transferred to Suharto. Suharto announced the official dissolution of the PKI as a legal political party immediately upon receiving this authority. Upon hearing this news, those involved with the killings claimed that the threat posed by the PKI was over.<sup>120</sup> To secure the compliance of belligerent militia, their leaders were offered appointments in the freshly purged bureaucracy, effectively buying the cessation of local violence.<sup>121</sup> Contact between former militia leaders and the RPKAD continues to the present day, with the RPKAD (now KOPASSUS, Komando Pasukan Khusus, Special Forces Command) providing said leaders with uniforms and other regimental symbols to commemorate their service in the elimination of the PKI. KOPASSUS has also been willing to provide security to gatherings of the 1966 generation (*angkatan '66*), underscoring continued contact between the Special Forces and former civilian militia leaders. This co-option and continued communication between the core of civilian militia groups and the army explains why such militia groups did not publicly continue their activities into the New Order period. Because the militias did not simply disband themselves following the end of the perceived communist threat, New Order leaders had to go out of their way to appease at least some of the militias' leadership.<sup>122</sup> Co-option, rather than direct control, best categorizes the relationship between the hard-core anticommunist militias and the New Order.

### "Ideology Never Dies!"

Studies of the anticommunist campaign in Central Java have to date largely focused on the role of the RPKAD in arming and training civilians before instituting a reign of terror against the Indonesian left. While this is broadly true, it fails to reflect

<sup>119</sup> Confidential interview (006); and author's confidential interview (008) with former KAMI leader, Surakarta, February 2016.

<sup>120</sup> Confidential interviews (006) and (011).

<sup>121</sup> Confidential interview (006). Similar dynamics were noted by those involved in the anticommunist campaign in Surakarta (Solo), from confidential interview (008).

<sup>122</sup> Cribb, "Unresolved Problems in the Indonesian Killings of 1965–66," 552.



the dynamic nature of civil-military relationships and civilian agency that profoundly affected the campaign on the ground. In Yogyakarta, small, preexisting anticommunist groups seized the opportunity presented by G30S and the subsequent campaign against the PKI to escalate their behavior from unorganized to organized action against communism. The consolidation of religious and nationalist groups in sites such as mosques strengthened the anticommunist community, fostered recruitment of new members into those consolidated groups, and gave group members assurances of safety and increased community status should they move against the PKI. The removal of legal constraints by the army was crucial in unleashing these militia, but once unfettered these groups were able to sustain themselves outside army control.

Applying a community model to participation in the anticommunist campaign highlights the importance of massive group demonstrations for enabling the escalation of civilian violence against the Indonesian left. These demonstrations, initially facilitated through anticommunist networks encompassing the army and elements of nationalist and religious leadership, triggered many people to move from hiding to participating in largely unorganized protests. Buoyed by the absence of negative consequences, and assured of additional status should they escalate their participation, members of preexisting groups from within this community moved to organized, violent behavior—including executions—that could only partially be controlled by the army. Such citizen involvement in protests and atrocities did not end until the ascension of Suharto. By April 1966, unsanctioned activities had begun to cease, in part due to patronage positions offered by elements of the army to militia leaders, which incentivized them to cease their unofficial activities.

Like most contemporary scholars of the Indonesian killings, I find that the army bears primary responsibility for unleashing the violence. Moreover, the process by which the vast majority of killings took place—identification, detention, classification, and execution—required the organizational capacity of the army. Even when civilians made the identifications and arrests, it was the army that imprisoned and controlled access to detainees. However, a lack of loyal army units and the absence of reliable intelligence about PKI membership forced the army to rely on local informants who could denounce others freely. This in turn provides a credible explanation as to why the anticommunist campaign in Central Java often targeted fringe party members or individuals without ties to the PKI. The (in)ability and (un)willingness of the army to restrain militia following their empowerment to use violence may also explain why some areas were subject to brutal and public-spectacle killings while in others killings occurred almost solely at night in isolated areas. More attention needs to be paid to the internal loyalties, politics, and local capacities of army units during this time, as these factors provide varying incentives and abilities to recruit, empower, direct, and supervise the civilian elements that were often the public face of the violence and a major source of intelligence on the PKI.

Elements of anticommunist groups continue to operate in Yogyakarta today. My interviews, which coincided with the first national symposium on the killings, included both former political prisoners and representatives of the armed forces. The symposium attracted significant press attention as well as anticommunist demonstrations that culminated in a counter-symposium held in June 2016. Universities in Yogyakarta also attempted to hold discussions and forums, most

focusing on the experiences of former political prisoners. Yet venues hosting discussions involving former political prisoners were often forced to cancel the event following violent threats made by groups such as the Indonesian Anti-Communist Front (Front Anti-Komunis Indonesia, FAKI). Close connections between FAKI and local army and police units assured that protestors were able to do this with impunity—more than fifty years after the initial anticommunist protests.<sup>123</sup> Several FAKI members were direct participants in the communist killings, while other prominent members were children at that time, able to recall their parent's involvement. Events glorifying Suharto and reminding students of the danger of communist revival were allowed to proceed at universities, such as UGM, without incident, and often included high-ranking army and religious leaders.

The original anticommunist militia groups have not not disappeared, though the passage of time has certainly eroded their numbers. Provided grievance and focal points, these groups are still willing to threaten violence today. In one of our final conversations, the respondent who had showed me the execution sites warned me of the dangers of communist revival. "Ideology never dies!" he exclaimed, speaking in English to underscore his claim. A few months after leaving Indonesia I received a photo of him, along with members of FAKI with concealed faces, "dispersing" a meeting of former political prisoners. These militia are still useful allies for security forces opposed to reopening discussions of the past; however, the penetration of state security to the local level prevents civilian militia from being able to capture this process from below.

---

<sup>123</sup> Confidential interview (005).