

# The Politics of Mass Killing in Autocratic Regimes

Bumba Mukherjee · Ore Koren

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Additional material to this book can be downloaded from <http://extras.springer.com>.

ISBN 978-3-319-91757-3      ISBN 978-3-319-91758-0 (eBook)  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91758-0>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018941878

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Cover image: © Hilary Morgan/Alamy Stock Photo  
Cover design: Akihiro Nakayama

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer International Publishing AG part of Springer Nature  
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

## PREFACE

Why do authoritarian regimes perpetrate mass killing in some times but not others? What explains the variation in mass killing within nondemocratic states? Despite a large and growing literature on violent repression and civilian mobilization in nondemocratic countries, more work is needed in order to understand and carefully explain one of the most basic decisions authoritarian governments make: whether to kill their own subjects, or not. In this book, we show that food crises play an important role in causing popular resentment and can motivate the civilians to collectively mobilize against the regime. We also show that sustained mobilization against the regime is more likely in developed urban areas, where the civilians can more easily overcome collective action problems.

By showing—using a combination of high-resolution data and detailed case studies—that highly developed urban areas can generate mass killing perpetrated preemptively as a strategy to credibly deter sustained political mobilization by civilians, our book offers a new explanation to the onset and variation in mass killing within nondemocratic countries. It also explains an important linkage between economic development and mass killing. This has implications for our understanding of not only how economic development can cause mass killing, but also how, by impacting human capital, mass killing can cause long-term negative impact on development.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We both would like to thank our colleagues at the Department of Political Science at Penn State University, the University of Minnesota, and Dartmouth College for providing an intellectually stimulating, cheerful, and supportive environment. We also would like to thank Penn State for financially supporting the fieldwork required for this project and the US Institute of Peace for funding part of Koren's work.<sup>1</sup> We are extremely grateful to Min Hyung Joo for her outstanding research assistance. We very much appreciate the willingness of numerous interviewees in Pakistan, Malaysia, and Indonesia who were gracious enough to share their time, expertise, and experiences with us.

At Palgrave Macmillan, we would first and foremost like to thank our editor, Alina Yurova, for her encouragement, immense patience, and helpful advice. It is because of Alina's enthusiastic support that this research project evolved into a book and found an amazing home. We are also indebted to Benjamin Bailey and John Stegner who guided the manuscript through the production process at Palgrave Macmillan and Springer. Finally, we thank the anonymous referees for their insightful comments, encouragement, and advice. This book has benefited considerably from their feedback. The final errors are, of course, all ours. As always, our families and friends have been supportive, encouraging, and convincingly enthusiastic through all the challenges we have faced during this project. Thank you!

## NOTE

1. The views expressed in this book are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the US Institute of Peace.

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