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# Stealing and Killing

## *A Property-Rights Theory of Mass Murder*

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[H]e who would get me into his power without my consent, would use me as he pleased, when he had got me there, and destroy me too when he had a fancy to it.

— John Locke, *Second Treatise of Civil Government*

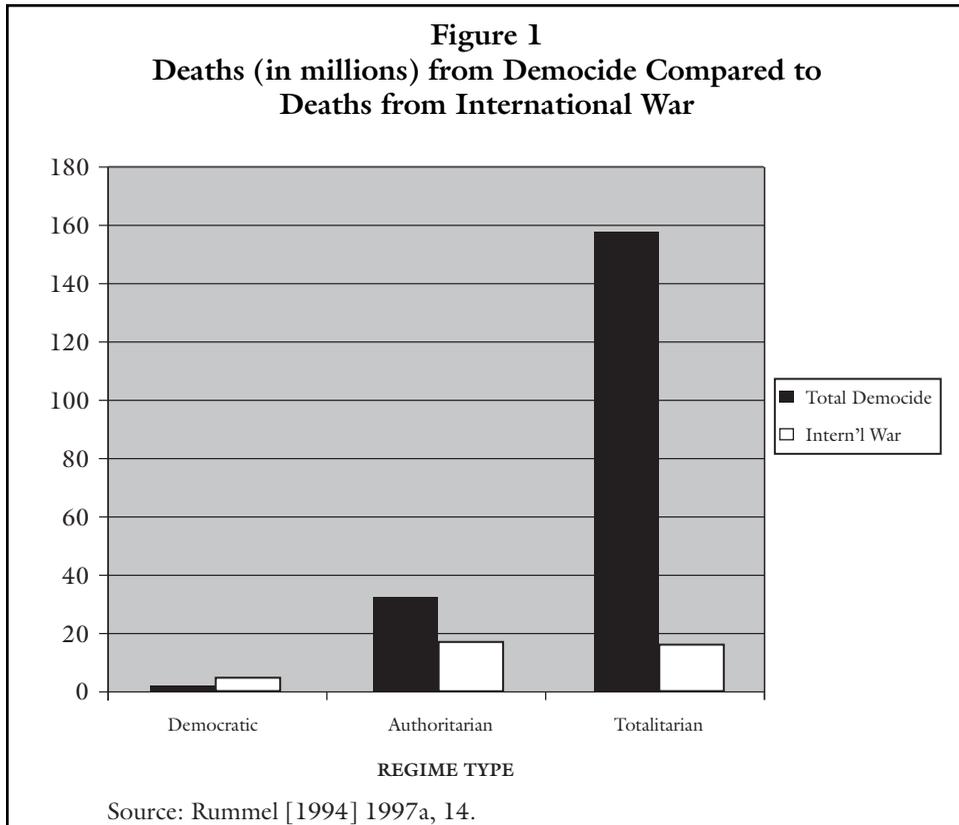
In the study of mass murder by governments, R. J. Rummel stands tall. His theory, which focuses our attention on the role of the state, is a giant step forward from previous theories that focused on “cultural-ethnic differences, outgroup conflict, misperception, frustration-aggression, relative deprivation, ideological imperatives, dehumanization, resource competition, etc.” (Rummel [1994] 1997a, 19). Rummel has expressed his theory in a number of different ways over decades of work in this area. Oversimplifying somewhat for now, I characterize his theory as a *regime-type theory*: at one extreme, totalitarian dictatorships are the most deadly; authoritarian regimes are still deadly but less so; and, at the other extreme, democracies are the least deadly (see figure 1).

Besides presenting a theory that puts the state at center stage, Rummel has also made two other major contributions to this area of study. First, he has attempted to make the first full accounting of twentieth-century mass murder. No earlier investigators,

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for example, had tried to come up with a number for total Nazi mass-murder victims because they had focused on particular groups—Jews, Gypsies, and so forth. His most recent estimate is that 262 million civilians were killed by governments in the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> Second, using what he learned about the number of government killings, he has emphasized the importance of understanding *democide* (his term for mass murder of civilians by government) by pointing out that as horrendous as combat deaths were in the twentieth century, the truth is that many more noncombatants were murdered.

In this article, I present an alternative theoretical approach, a *property-rights theory*, for understanding how governments came to slaughter unarmed civilians by the millions and tens of millions. The questions that Rummel and I are trying to answer are, first, How does a government gain the capability to murder millions of civilians? and, second, What, if anything can be done to prevent such monstrous crimes? Rummel focuses on the structure of government, pointing to the centralization of power in an authoritarian or dictatorial ruler as the primary problem and to “political freedom” and decentralization of power through democracy as the solutions. The property-rights

1. Rummel describes his recent revisions to his originally published estimate of 174 million on his blog, at <http://freedomspac.blogspot.com/>.

approach, by contrast, points to systematic invasions of private-property rights as the primary enabling acts and to defense of those rights as the solution. My proposed approach implies that, contra Rummel, democracy is not part of the solution but rather part of the problem because both democratic ideology and democratic practice undermine private-property rights.

Although in broad terms the regime-type theory and the property-rights theory are complementary, they give rise to different conclusions in many respects. So I must proceed to criticize Rummel's work. First, however, I want to honor Rummel and orient the reader to this difficult and painful topic by quoting a powerful passage from his book *Death by Government*:

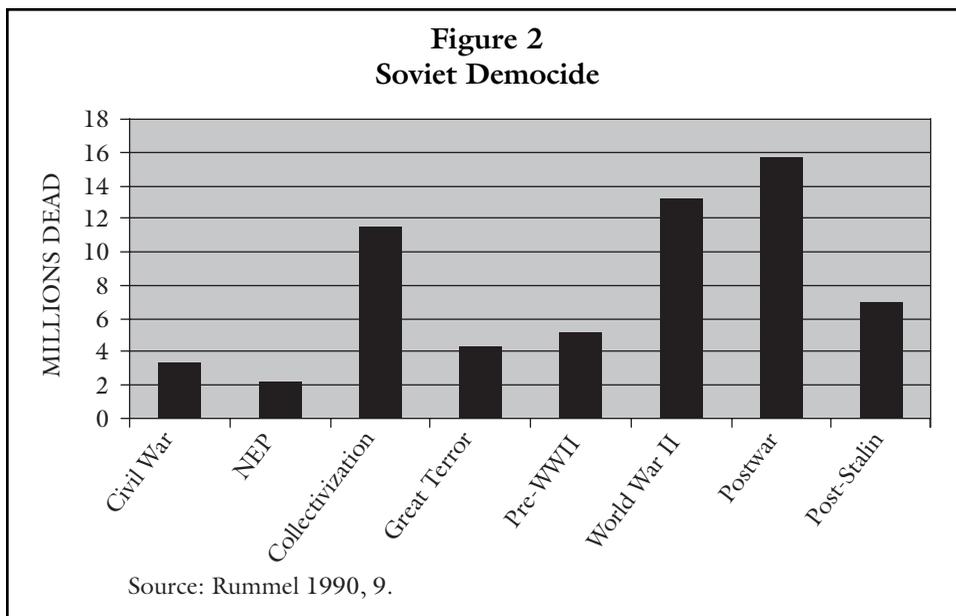
A systems approach to politics still dominates the field [of political science]. Through this lens, politics is a matter of inputs and outputs, of citizen inputs, aggregation by political parties, government determining policy, and bureaucracies implementing it. Then there is the common and fundamental justification of government that it exists to protect citizens against the anarchic jungle that would otherwise threaten their lives and property. Such archaic or sterile views show no appreciation of democide's existence and all its related horrors and suffering. They are inconsistent with a regime that stands astride society like a gang of thugs over hikers they have captured in the woods, robbing all, raping some, torturing others for fun, murdering those they don't like, and terrorizing the rest into servile obedience. This exact characterization of many past and present governments, such as Idi Amin's Uganda, hardly squares with conventional political science. ([1994] 1997a, 26)

## Advantages of a Property-Rights Theory of Democide

Before getting into the theory, let us think about why a property-rights approach is worthy of consideration. What does this theory offer that can supplement or amend Rummel's regime-type theory?

First, focusing on the regime type is not helpful in understanding cycles of mass murder under the same regime type—for example, the peaks and valleys of mass murder by the government of the USSR, a totalitarian dictatorship from beginning to end. A property-rights approach, however, not only suggests that a totalitarian regime would be murderous but also shows where the peaks and valleys of killing will be: the peaks would correspond to determined efforts to collectivize (that is, to massive assaults on private-property rights), and the valleys would correspond to retreats from collectivization (for example, to the New Economic Policy [NEP] period in the USSR). See figure 2.

Similarly, in the case of China, a focus on regime structure would merely indicate that China has been under a Communist dictatorship for more than fifty years.



A property-rights approach, in contrast, calls our attention to the significant changes in property rights in China in recent years and predicts that large-scale democide is unlikely, despite the regime type's being nominally the same as the one during the Great Leap Forward.

A property-rights approach gives us more insight into the dynamic of how a state gains murderous strength and the people become weak, so that the state can kill so many people. If a devil asked Rummel, "How do I murder tens of millions of people?" Rummel would have to answer, "Establish a totalitarian dictatorship." To which the devil would respond, "Fine, but how can I put myself in a position to do so?" The property-rights theory then explains that the path to mass murder and the path to a powerful, centralized state is the same and that the key is to attack private-property rights.

*Socialism:* From the perspective of the property-rights theory, it seems clear why the greatest mass murderers were avowed socialists instead of, say, right-wing military dictators such as Francisco Franco. Attacks on private-property rights in socialist regimes were not a side effect of another goal, such as defending the country, suppressing a dissident religious group, or attacking a particular race. Such attacks expressed the socialists' explicit and avowed ideological aim. It comes as no surprise then that the revolutionary socialists (socialists who really meant business) attacked private-property rights repeatedly in deadly waves of "collectivization," "de-kulakization," "Great Leaps Forward," and so forth.

*Imperialism:* The property-rights theory helps us to understand how the same type of regime can behave one way "at home" and another way abroad. At home, the regime may face resistance at every turn from long-established property-rights

traditions. Abroad, the regime does not face these constraints in dealing with the “natives.” A recent case in point is the gun grabbing by the U.S. forces in Iraq, in contrast to the still relatively well-armed population of the United States itself (Rockwell 2003).

*Democracy:* Where the regime-type theory holds up democracy as the solution to mass murder, war, and other types of regime violence, the property-rights theory argues that because the principle of democracy (at least in the modern sense) has nothing to do with the protection of private-property rights and in practice undermines such rights (Hoppe 2001, 95–106), it promotes such violence. The relevance to democide is illustrated by events in Germany, where, as F. A. Hayek argued, a period of democracy laid the groundwork for a dictator to emerge: “In Germany, even before Hitler came into power, the movement [toward centralized economic planning] had already progressed much further. It is important to remember that, for some time before 1933, Germany had reached a stage in which it had, in effect, had [*sic*] to be governed dictatorially. . . . Hitler did not have to destroy democracy; he merely took advantage of the decay of democracy and at the critical moment obtained the support of many to whom, though they detested Hitler, he yet seemed the only man strong enough to get things done” ([1944] 1994, 75–76).

*Regime Change:* The regime-type theory has been used as a justification for “regime change,” a policy of sanctions, military invasion and occupation, and other means intended to change an undemocratic regime into a more democratic one. The reasoning is all too familiar: “you have to break some eggs to make an omelet.” In this case, the omelet is democracy, which it is hoped will result in less democide and a more peaceful regime, thus justifying in the long run all the short-term “collateral damage” and other destruction.

Joseph Stromberg explains why the means of imperialistic war is incompatible with the proposed goal of constructive change: “In all probability, revolution from the outside is the most costly and counterproductive, not to mention least revolutionary, approach to revolution. The characterization of the War as Revolution raises the very important issue of ‘modern ‘Bonapartism,’ that is, . . . a confusion between a war of conquest and revolutionary war.’ . . . Imperialist war strengthens statism and destroys the material welfare of the people. As such, it is profoundly antirevolutionary, no matter how it unsettles the defeated enemy society” (1979, 39).

The property-rights theory encourages instead an increase in justice, which is to say an increased respect for private-property rights, or, to put it another way, a decrease in robbery. Nothing in this perspective suggests that a wave of injustice, such as “liberating” a country’s population by means of “shock and awe” aerial bombardments, can serve as the path to justice. In pointing out this advantage of the property-rights theory, I do not mean to be topical in a frivolous way. A theory of decreasing mass murder that encourages mass murder has a serious defect.

## A Property-Rights Theory of Democide

What stands out about democide in the twentieth century is not the discrete “crimes of passion,” such as the killings in Tiananmen Square, but the systematic, bureaucratic killing that took place over years. Not only is this aspect of state murder horrifying to contemplate, but it also explains how the killing occurred on such a stupendous scale: killing millions of people took a long time. This aspect of democide seems especially amenable to economic—or, more precisely, praxeological—analysis because the systematic killing took place over time, used resources, and even involved something like capital investment (for example, to build concentration camps). But mass killing is not a market phenomenon, so rather than turning to the familiar praxeology of cooperation, which starts with the mutual gains realized in peaceful exchange, we must turn to the analysis of the dark side of human action: the praxeology of aggression.

### *The Praxeology of Aggression*

Murray Rothbard presents the fundamentals of a praxeology of aggression in “Fundamentals of Intervention,” the second chapter of his book *Power and Market*. He starts with a simple two-person situation: an aggressor and a victim. We know, first, that aggression causes a loss of utility for the victim (Rothbard 1970, 13), but causes an ex ante gain of utility for the aggressor (14). When aggression is not incidental but systematic or even institutionalized (such as state aggression), broader consequences result. Social conflict is created in the scramble to go from being the victim to being the aggressor (14). Furthermore, as John C. Calhoun pointed out, this scramble gives rise to the creation of antagonistic “classes” (14). Finally, “the indirect consequences are such that many interveners themselves will lose utility ex post” (23).

### *Systematic Aggression and Time Preference*

Hans-Hermann Hoppe argues that systematic aggression against property changes the time horizon for individuals. Because incentives for producing for the future are reduced, future income and consumption are also reduced, which results in a rise in time preference ([1993] 2006, 36). Hence, “the length of the production structure will necessarily be shortened, and a decrease in the output of goods produced must result” (44 n. 9). Furthermore, taxation discourages time-consuming but productive efforts to earn income and encourages instead short time horizon methods, including stealing or legally seizing goods through politics (43–44). To summarize Hoppe’s points, systematic aggression against property results in increased time preference (short-term consumption becoming more preferred to long-term consumption); decreased output of goods; and the more aggressive scrambling for money obtained by ordinary and political (legal) theft—all of which implies as an upshot a more and more shortsighted and violent scramble over

an increasingly smaller pie. Thus, aggressions against external property are problematic in several ways.

First, such aggressions constitute a violent attack on a person through an attack on the things the person owns. When they are “legal,” then a property owner’s resistance to them will result in official violence directly against his person. This point deserves emphasis because political attacks on private-property rights have been widely glorified as idealistic and socially minded for more than a hundred years. Much as rape needs to be viewed primarily as a violent act rather than as a sex act, so aggression against property needs to be viewed primarily as a violent act rather than as a manifestation of idealism if we are to understand its role in mass murder.

Second, successful aggression against private-property rights removes the use of the property from the rightful owner’s control. Loss of property has numerous consequences, but those most relevant to democide are loss of the ability to protect oneself, as when one’s guns or other means of self-defense are taken, and loss of the ability to be productive and hence of the ability to command resources for consumption.

Third, a successful expropriation empowers the aggressor. Owing to control of the property acquired through aggression, the aggressor will probably have enhanced capability to perpetrate even more aggressive violence.

Fourth, a successful theft may reduce the incentive to reacquire property because the victim perceives such accumulation as pointless—the property will just be taken again; hence, time preference increases.

### *Aggression Against External Property Necessary for Systematic Democide*

Systematic stealing disarms the victims and empowers the aggressors. By “disarms,” I mean not only that it takes weapons away, but also, and perhaps more important, that it takes away the resources used to sustain and defend their lives.

Is this theory just a tautology: “violence is a predictor of violence”? No, the thesis is specifically that aggression against external property usually *precedes* aggression against person. Moreover, aggression against external property *enables* aggression against person by transferring resources from victim to aggressor, lowering the time preference of both, creating conflict where there was harmony, and so forth. Because democide usually takes place over long periods, the victims must be prevented from running away and from effectively defending themselves. Thus, attacks on property are essential to a successful democide—to keep the victims helpless and foreclose their alternatives.

Claim Number 1: *Aggression against external property is a necessary condition for systematic democide.*

To deny this claim implies support for the alternative claim that in at least some cases systematic democide was *not* preceded by aggression against external property. The first difficulty with this counterclaim pertains to explaining how the murderers came by the resources to kill on a large scale over time without first stealing. One

logical possibility is that the murderers used their own justly acquired property. Though not strictly impossible, this scenario is extremely unlikely and, I think, historically unprecedented.

A second difficulty pertains to explaining how the victim population is rendered powerless to flee, defend itself, or hire others for its defense without having first been looted or disarmed. One possible response is that the victim population has been “disarmed” ideologically; that is, although they have the resources to defend themselves, they do not choose to do so because they have been convinced that the regime may legitimately kill them. Such an unusual situation verges on mass suicide, a different phenomenon from the one at issue here.

### *Socialism: Production, Distribution, and Calculation*

In the case of a Communist system, the attack is mounted not simply on external property, in general—the sort of attack illustrated by a bandit raid or by income taxation—but on the means of production in particular. Ludwig von Mises’s ([1920] 1975) socialist-calculation argument demonstrates that where capital is socialized, calculational chaos will ensue. At the extreme, the economy will break down altogether, and the advantages of the division of labor will be lost for the most part. This consequence alone may be enough to account for the murderous famines that invariably accompany all concerted efforts to socialize.

Mises argues that it is impossible for a government to take over an economy fully and run it rationally. A full government takeover can only destroy an economy. We see this outcome in the British Empire’s camps in Kenya, the Soviet work camps, the Nazi work camps, and so forth. These forced-labor projects exhibit the ultimate subordination of people to “the plan,” and the workers, rather than being extremely productive for the state, often simply perished from starvation, disease, and abuse. There have been, then, real instances of full communism in which the means of production were truly socialized, money was abolished, the entrepreneur had no role, and everyone was guaranteed work—indeed, was compelled to work. The concentration camps, also known as “death camps,” constituted the fullest practical realization of the Marxist economic program. Hoppe summarizes the economic effects of socialization as including a drop in the rate of investment, wasteful use of capital, and a “drop in the general standard of living” (1988, 25, 26, 28).

We can say even more, however, based on our understanding of “distribution” in the market. Rothbard writes: “‘Personal distribution’—how much money each person receives from the productive system—is determined, in turn, by the functions that he or his property performs in that system. There is no separation between production and distribution, and it is completely erroneous for writers to treat the productive system as if producers dump their product onto some stockpile, to be later ‘distributed’ in some way to the people in the society. ‘Distribution’ is only the other side of the coin of production on the market” ([1962] 2004, 624). Or, as Hoppe puts

it, “From the standpoint of the natural theory of property, there are not two separate processes—the production of income and then, after income is produced, its distribution. There is only one process: in producing income it is automatically distributed; the producer is the owner” (1988, 45).

An attack on people’s ability to produce differs from merely stealing someone’s output for the day. A person who has lost his productive capacity has lost the ability to demand consumer goods in the market—another reason why socialism has been deadly on such a huge scale. Socialism’s victims are left without the means to draw goods to themselves to meet their basic needs. They become entirely dependent on bureaucratic distribution, which, as the calculation argument suggests, will be ineffective even if the regime intends to feed them. If the regime decides to starve them, however, it can do so with deadly effectiveness.

Claim Number 2: *Aggression against people’s means of production is even deadlier than generalized aggression against external property; socialism is more dangerous than mere looting.*

### ***Socialism: Public Slavery***

Another aspect of the socialization of the means of production is that everyone becomes an “employee” of the state. What jobs they may take, whether they work, their rewards and punishments—all are determined by the state. As Hayek writes, “Economic control is not merely control of a sector of human life which can be separated from the rest; it is the control of the means for all our ends” ([1944] 1994, 101).

The people become slaves in fact, if not officially, but they become slaves of an unusual sort. Hoppe explains that just as socialized capital is depleted, so also socialized labor receives “lowered investment, misallocation, and overutilization” (1988, 30). Misallocation results from the lack of a competitive market for labor and the consequent absence of market prices for labor because independent entrepreneurs are eliminated. One pictures the schoolteachers and skilled craftsmen working in the killing fields under the watchful eyes and guns of the Khmer Rouge. Overutilization results because with the workers’ income largely subject to the caretakers’ control, these partial, temporary owners have an incentive to use up the labor without regard for the long-term consequences. In public slavery, the worker has no resale value. In the extreme, laborers are worked to death, as many millions were in the twentieth century.

In *Democracy: The God That Failed*, Hoppe starkly explains the nature of this “public” slavery, as compared with private slavery, in a long footnote in which he contrasts “the case of private slave ownership, as it existed for instance in antebellum America, with that of public slave ownership, as it existed for instance in the former Soviet Union and its Eastern European empire”:

Just as privately owned slaves were threatened with punishment if they tried to escape, in all of the former Soviet empire emigration was outlawed and

punished as a criminal offense, if necessary, by shooting those who tried to run away. Moreover, anti-loading laws existed everywhere, and governments could assign any task and all rewards and punishments to any citizen. Hence the classification of the Soviet system as slavery. Unlike a private slave owner, however, Eastern-European slave owners—from Lenin to Gorbachev—could not sell or rent their subjects in a labor market and privately appropriate the receipts from the sale or rental of their “human capital.” Hence the system’s classification as public (or socialist) slavery.

Without markets for slaves and slave labor, matters are worse, not better, for the slave, for without prices for slaves and their labor, a slave owner can no longer rationally allocate his “human capital.” He cannot determine the scarcity value of his various, heterogeneous pieces of human capital, and he can neither determine the opportunity-cost of using this capital in any given employment, nor compare it to the corresponding revenue. Accordingly, permanent misallocation, waste, and “consumption” of human capital results.

The empirical evidence indicates as much. While it occasionally happened that a private slave owner killed his slave, which is the ultimate “consumption” of human capital, socialist slavery in Eastern Europe resulted in the murder of millions of civilians. (2001, 24–25 n. 25)

Claim Number 3: *Successful socialization of the means of production reduces the people to slaves whose lives the regime has neither the incentive nor the ability to preserve.*

### *Gun Control and Democide*

In *Death by “Gun Control,”* Zelman and Stevens argue that gun control has preceded all the mass murders of the twentieth century. They summarize their thesis in what they call the “Genocide Formula”: “Hatred + Government + Disarmed Civilians = Genocide” (2001, 25). As they explain further,

How does “gun control” relate to genocide? As explained in this book, “gun control” schemes try to make it unpopular and then relatively rare for private citizens to own and use firearms. Anti-gun laws make it more costly and risky to have guns. Anti-gun rhetoric weakens the spirit of people to be armed.

Licensing, registration and safety-inspection laws do more than discourage firearm ownership. By enforcing these laws the government creates a list of people who could possibly resist tyranny and oppression. As shown in this book, evil governments use such lists to locate, disarm, and eliminate firearms owners from the population.

When the firearms are confiscated and the defense-minded people gone, only the defenseless unarmed people remain. The third element of the Genocide formula—the only one that the people can directly control—is in place. (29–30)

This important argument fits very well into a property-rights approach to democide. I would emphasize, however, that stealing the means of production is perhaps even deadlier. People who still can demand goods on the market, owing to their ability to produce, can procure new means of defense.

The deadliest combination is gun control and socialization. Take away people's means of defense and their ability to acquire another means of defense, and they are left truly defenseless before the power of the state.

### *Ideology and Democide*

So far I have argued that a massive invasion of private-property rights, especially the right to produce, is a prerequisite for democide, but I have not considered how this invasion comes about. How does a regime that ultimately rests on popular opinion get away with such horrendous actions? Ideology holds the key.

Ideology's role in democide must be considered carefully, however. Violators of external property rights do not always embrace an explicitly antiproperty ideology, as the Communists did. For example, the deadly economic sanctions against Iraq were not explicitly justified by an antiproperty ideology, but in the name of democracy, freedom, and regime change. The socialists were especially deadly, though, because they precisely and consciously aimed their attacks at property rights. As we examine ideologies with elements of socialization, we should expect to find some of this same lethal effect, though not as much as in outright socialism.

Attacks on property also go by other names besides *socialism*. *Militarism*, which includes the subordination of private-property rights to the state's military machine, played a deadly role not only in the Nazi regime, but also, we are learning, in Mao's regime, as Mao focused on building up military power (Chang and Halliday 2005). He was willing to take food from the mouths of the Chinese people for this purpose, and he often did so. Ideologies that announce their devotion to the race, to the nation, and even to freedom and democracy can also result in attacks on private-property rights.

The property-rights approach to democide gains credibility when we recognize that the twentieth century, a time of such colossal mass murders, was also a time of ideological rejection of classical liberalism's strong devotion to the protection of private-property rights—an ideological rejection, it should be noted, that was popular in all regimes by the middle of the century, even in those that were nominally committed to "freedom." It is no coincidence, however, that the century's deadliest regimes were explicitly socialist and featured an announced ideology of enmity toward private-property rights.

Socialism leads to dictatorship. Hayek ([1944] 1994) argues that a regime that massively invades private-property rights will tend toward dictatorship as a side effect. George Reisman explains more forcefully “why socialism, understood as an economic system based on government ownership of the means of production, positively requires a totalitarian dictatorship” (2005). These arguments do not tell us whether socialism or dictatorship plays the larger role in facilitating mass murder. We may well note, however, that throughout history many regimes sought the kind of power over society that was finally achieved only by regimes with an ideological and practical commitment to the elimination of private-property rights.

### *War and Democide*

According to Rummel, “[m]ost democides occur under the cover of war, revolution, or guerilla war, or in their aftermath” ([1994] 1997a, 22). “Over the life of a regime the more disposed it is to be involved in deadly foreign and domestic wars, the more likely it will commit democide, whether or not carried out during these wars. This is because totalitarian power not only underlies democide and genocide, but also because this power underlies as well the occurrence and intensity of war” (1997b, 93, 95).

From the perspective of the property-rights approach to democide, war plays a causal role in empowering a regime and in compromising property rights. Modern “democratic” war, in particular, has made massive taxation and conscription leading features of the state. “War is the health of the state,” as Randolph Bourne pointed out: the state gains strength, and the people who are subject to it become correspondingly weaker. “Government interference with business and socialism,” writes Mises, “create[s] conflicts for which no peaceful solution can be found. . . . What has transformed the limited war between royal armies into total war, the clash between peoples, is not technicalities of military art, but the substitution of the welfare state for the laissez-faire state” ([1949] 1998, 819–20). During wartime, we are likely to see the warfare state, swollen with stolen men and goods, commit genocide against “foreigners.” “Given his natural human aggressiveness,” Hoppe asks, “is it not obvious that [the state ruler] will be more brazen and aggressive in his conduct toward foreigners if he can externalize the cost of such behavior onto others?” (2001, 241).

### **Rummel’s Regime-Type Theory of Democide**

Rummel presents a moving target. I criticize his theory here for putting so much stress on the way the government is structured (as a dictatorial, authoritarian, or democratic system) rather than on what the government actually does (specifically to private-property rights). Yet in his 1983 paper “Libertarianism and International Violence,” he distinguishes “political freedom” and “freedom,” defining the latter as political freedom plus economic freedom. In that paper, at least, he puts great weight on economic freedom as a contributor to avoiding violence.

In his 1997 book *Power Kills*, however, he places heavy stress on democracy (“political freedom”) and makes little or no mention of the role of property rights or economic freedom: “There is one solution to each [war, civil collective violence, genocide, mass murder], and the solution in each case is the same. It is to foster democratic freedom and to democratize coercive power and force. That is, mass killing and mass murder carried out by government is a result of indiscriminate, irresponsible Power at the center” (3).

Elucidating how this relationship works, he states that in the deadly, dictatorial regime, “Their culture is one of command, and unquestioning obedience and their modus operandi is naked power.” He contrasts this situation with the democratic society, which he describes as a spontaneous order whose “primary mode of power is exchange, its political system is democratic, and this democratic government is but one of many groups and pyramids of power in the social field. . . . Of necessity such an exchange-based order produces a culture of exchange, that is norms of negotiation, accommodation, concessions, tolerance, and a willingness to accept less than one wants” (1997b, 7). Summarizing the two opposites in his schema, Rummel states:

At the most fundamental level, then, we have an opposition between Freedom and Power. It is an opposition between the spontaneous society and the society turned into a hierarchical organization. It is an opposition between social field and antifield. This is not to deny the importance of culture and cross-pressures and the influence of public opinion in explaining the democratic peace. It is to say that they are social forces whose presence or absence is best understood in terms of the freedom of a democratic, spontaneous society or the commanding power of one that is tightly organized. (1997b, 8).

## The Theories Compared

We might agree for the most part with Rummel’s static picture of the two types of regime. Respect for private-property rights will lead to a more decentralized, spontaneous society, whereas systematic invasions of private-property rights will lead to centralization and, at the extreme, to dictatorship. Yet we are left with little sense of the dynamics of how either regime gets to such a place. Rummel’s enthusiastic endorsement of democracy leaves little room in particular for understanding, as I see it, how democracy actually contributes to the deadly move toward the massive invasion of property rights.

To summarize, the points of agreement between Rummel’s regime-type theory of democide and my property-rights theory are:

- “What about cultural-ethnic differences, outgroup conflict, misperception, frustration-aggression, relative deprivation, ideological imperatives, dehumanization,

resource competition, etc.? At one time or another, for one regime or another, one or more of these factors play an important role in democide” (Rummel [1994] 1997a, 19). Yet none of these factors applies to all democides.

- The state’s power is the common denominator: “Power is a necessary cause for war or democide” (Rummel [1994] 1997a, 20).
- “Most democides occur under the cover of war, revolution, or guerilla war, or in their aftermath” (Rummel [1994] 1997a, 22).

The points of disagreement are:

- The regime-type theory points to democracy as the solution to democide. The property-rights theory points to respect for private-property rights as the solution.
- The regime-type theory points to a dictatorial form of government as the main cause of democide. The property-rights theory points to massive invasions of private-property rights as the main cause both of a dictatorial form of government and of democide.
- Although Rummel spends little time on pre-twentieth-century history, his classification of regimes suggests that monarchies would be classified as authoritarian and that they should be expected to be more murderous than democracies but less so than totalitarian dictatorships. The property-rights theory judges each regime by its respect for private-property rights and notes that many European monarchies historically were far more respectful of such rights than modern democracies have been; therefore, we would expect those monarchical regimes to have been less murderous than democracies.
- Rummel tends to excuse or rationalize democide by democracies (by the United States, in particular), for obvious reasons. The property-rights theory does not view democracies through such rose-colored glasses. The millions killed in Vietnam, the million killed by economic sanctions against Iraq, the millions killed as a result of covert U.S. operations, the violence by France in Algeria—these incidents are no surprise for the property-rights theorist, who recognizes the power that the perpetrating democratic regimes possessed, owing to massive amounts of stolen property and the lack of respect these regimes had for (certain) foreigners. Moreover, the property-rights theorist accepts Hoppe’s point that democratic regimes, being public governments, take a short-term caretaker view that results in sometimes treating lives as cheap.
- The regime-type theory explains that the twentieth century’s deadliest regimes were socialist because they were totalitarian dictatorships. The property-rights theory explains that their deadliness sprang directly from their socialism.

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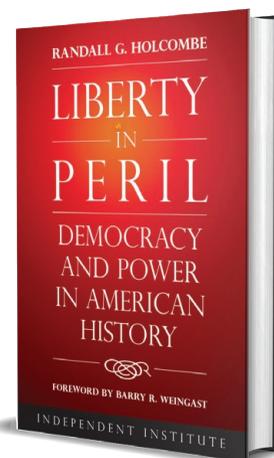
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