An Explanatory Account of Stalin's "Great Terror" and the Rwandan Genocide

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Strategy and Mass Killing: An Explanatory Account of Stalin's "Great Terror" and the Rwandan Genocide

The study of mass killings has been compelled by the horrific nature of this phenomenon, particularly as seen in modern history. Understandably, instances of mass murder are commonly viewed as inexplicable, the actions of participants as incomprehensible, and the minds of instigators as irrational. Academics have endeavoured to systematically explain mass killings in the hope that their research might gather a significant body of knowledge. Such knowledge may be of use for policy makers who aim to prevent future atrocities.

Traditional socio and psychological approaches to understanding mass killing have explained it as a pre-ordained or circumstantial phenomenon. The idea that massacres are driven by premeditated and well-calculated considerations is overlooked. In addition, more recently a strategic account has emerged, portraying mass murder in this rational light. Massacres are explained as 'a means to an ends' in which instigators and perpetrators are driven to kill by a logical utility that pertains to perceived 'necessity'. Such an innovative account of mass killings offers the potential of new insight and therefore warrants its critical assessment. This dissertation assesses the pertinence of a strategic account and the extent to which it explains mass killing.

This method of assessment will explore the prominent works of Benjamin Valentino and Catherine Barnes. I integrate their assumptions into one model strategic account and interpret its relevance in explaining Stalin's 'Great Terror' and the Rwandan Genocide. In each case this strategic approach proves adept in constructing an instrumental explanatory narrative, yet the flaw of socio and psychological deficiencies becomes apparent. This exposes the omission of significant considerations concerning the influence of human nature and society. These consistent explanatory strengths and weaknesses denote a strategic account's extensive relevance, but also highlight its inability to explain mass killing comprehensively.

Introduction: Strategy and Mass Killing

As Voltaire[1] once remarked, "Those who can make you believe absurdities, can make you commit atrocities."[2] Such musings have become widely debated with regards to an atrocity that is inseparable from modern human history, namely mass killing. Accordingly, many political scientists have dedicated their studies to explaining mass killings in the hope that their research might help prevent, or combat their occurrence. Formerly, mass killings have been explained through sociological and psychological approaches. However, more recently a strategic account has emerged that portrays this human tragedy as 'a means to an end', in which instigators and perpetrators are motivated by its perceived function. The rational and calculated processes, which form the basis of this account, are explained within the broader premises of opportunity, utility and capability. This dissertation will assess the relevance of a strategic account of mass killing, and the extent to which it explains this phenomenon. This approach proves instrumental to understanding mass killing; however, whilst its pertinence is universally relevant, evidential weaknesses highlight its failure to provide a comprehensive explanatory account.

Literature review

The central premise of a psychological explanatory approach argues that mass killings can be understood and explained as a consequence of human nature. The human tendency to obey authority or to act collectively in particular scenarios accounts for those who perpetrate and passively support killings. Specifically, underlying primeval tendencies and circumstantial considerations evoke a human predisposition to kill en masse. As Straus asserts, the study of mass killings is about "why ordinary human beings participate in extraordinary violence."[3] The human psyche is predisposed to develop a violent disposition when conditioned by the circumstances explained below.

Individuals become inclined to commit violent acts or kill as consequence of particular childhood experiences. This psychosis derives from the childhood experience of an authoritarian father or derogatory representations of others.[4] In adulthood these individuals are predisposed to submit to authority, support authority's demonization of victims and perceive authoritative decrees as justified.[5] With this human condition they will subsequently enact massacres for authoritative figures, should the opportunity arise.

Furthermore, other psychological experiments have sought to link human nature with the ability to perpetrate atrocities. The prominent Milgram experiment identified that human beings are frequently obedient to authority. In the experiment, authoritarian voices enabled participants to subvert their feelings of responsibility and inflict human suffering. Correspondingly, a psychological model outlines that mass killings occur when people's feelings of personal responsibility are subverted by the persuasions of higher authority.

Equally, another psychological approach outlines that inherent human nature does not have to be primed by childhood experiences to create potential killers. It asserts that humans associate themselves with underlying group identities. Human anxieties arise in times of hardship and perceived insecurity; these anxieties help rally people behind once dormant group identities. Importantly intrinsic human nature drives them to collectively fight and kill to guarantee their own safety or prosperity. The explanatory premise argues that mass participation in massacres is the consequence of a "collective blood lust."[6] Sociological factors, such as societal anxieties and manipulative centralised, commands are seen to underpin this phenomenon. Manipulative rhetoric appeals to human emotion and helps evoke man's dormant collective psychosis. However, the overarching premise is that human beings are compelled to collectively unite behind a once latent identity and kill en masse when they feel threatened. More immediate sociological considerations are overshadowed by what is seen as the driving force of genocides: human nature.

In contrast, a sociological account outlines societal characteristics and conditions as principal determinants of mass killings. Broadly speaking, the nation state and its accompanying characteristics are responsible for massacres, particularly in the extensive scale of 19th and 20th century mass murders. Whilst this explanatory approach centres on this premise, it has two differing interpretations on why the sociological dynamics of the nation state are responsible for such atrocities. Bauman presents the explanatory interpretation of the "modernity,"[7] arguing that "modern civilisation was the necessary condition"[8] for extensive mass killings like the Holocaust. In his view, there are three characteristics that underpin the modern state facilitate and drive incidences of mass murder, which are explicated below.

Sociological constructions of nationalism accompany the ascendency of the nation state, producing the basis of group identity and therefore group differentiation. This sets in trend the potential for discrimination and persecution.[9] Further pseudo scientific approaches associated with the modern state become entangled in nationalist racism, as such approaches provide a tool with which to dehumanise those who were viewed as dissimilar from the prevailing national group identity.

In addition, industrialisation is seen to facilitate the nation state and consequently its genocidal tendency. Its facets of technological advances, bureaucratic structures and norms enable the logistical and normative ability of the state to preside over mass killings. Notably in the case of the Holocaust, modern technology and accompanying bureaucratic processes meant many perpetrators only had to perform "a cool, objective operation…mechanically mediated …performed at a distance, and one whose effects the perpetrator did not see."[10] In short, this sociological approach explains more recent mass killings as a consequence of the modern phenomenon of nation state.

Another sociological interpretation maintains the premise of a sovereign state but refutes accompanying characteristics of modernity as underlying determinants of mass killings. Nation states do not have to be industrialised, scientifically orientated, and extensively bureaucratic in order to have social mechanisms conducive to massacres. As Barth argues, the different ethnic groupings present in any given territory require "boundary maintenance mechanisms."[11] These mechanisms are determined by coexisting social constructions of separate identities. Yet, governance of a sovereign territory is based upon one single collective identity. This rouses ethnic rivalries, as it encourages an ethnic grouping to govern on the basis of its exclusive identity. Subsequently, this grouping may feel the need to assert its ethnic interpretation of national identity in order to secure its state. This may ultimately lead to discrimination, persecution or even mass murder, as those considered ethnically dissimilar may be viewed as a threat to the national group identity.

Whilst there is a debate concerning additional sociological factors that may aggravate conflicting identities,[12] this model concurs that the nation state is the overarching driver of mass killings. As Jones emphasises, the development of the nation state "often carries explosive consequences for inter-communal violence."[13] Thus, a sovereign territory produces a social environment in which an understated ethnic identity comes to define national identity whilst another is seen as a sovereign rival. Consequently, the governing body preserves or consolidates an ethnically defined national identity and adopts it as a vital means of ensuring its sovereign rule. This imperative can promote mass killings.

Formerly it has been argued that different echelons of a perpetrator group kill as consequence of overpowering psychological or sociological pressures. On the contrary, a strategic explanatory approach hypothesises that killing is a rational undertaking. It is motivated by its perceived uses. Importantly, circumstances and capabilities are conducive to this determinant. Whilst psychological and sociological models imply mass killings have uses and arise in particular circumstances, they do not propose that utility represents the primary motivation to instigate or perpetrate mass murder. Similarly, whilst they argue particular circumstances underpin mass killings, such considerations are not seen to explicitly incentivise the utility of mass murder. Instead, these suggestions are considered as by-products of the psychological and sociological factors that drive the phenomenon of mass murder. Acts of genocide are considered a consequence of conditions and circumstances; the idea that massacres are driven by premeditated and well-calculated considerations is overlooked.

In short, these two models explain mass murder as a pre-ordained or, at best, an unplanned and circumstantial phenomenon. Thus, a strategic account distinguishes itself as an autonomous explanatory approach, for it argues that killing is the consequence of rationality and premeditation; the guilty actors concerned are motivated and driven to kill by utility. The emergence of this novel explanatory approach to mass murder warrants a critical assessment.

The explanatory assumptions of a strategic approach: prospective relevance

The principle proponents of the strategic approach, Barnes and Valentino, contend that mass killings can be explained by analysing their "functional utility."[14] Valentino suggests that people are motivated to commit atrocities because they perceive these actions as either a necessary objective or a vital and effective means of securing wider objectives.[15] "Mass killings occur when powerful groups come to believe it is the best available means to accomplish certain radical goals, counter specific threats or solve difficult military problems."[16] In short, killing, in some instances, can be an end in itself, whilst in others it is considered a means to a greater end. By considering the particular function of killing, both maintain that the motives and circumstances that persuade such a strategy can be identified.[17] They also outline circumstances that provide the opportunity in which leaders can instigate mass killings. Further, they associate mass killings with particular capabilities that afford regimes the ability to implement killings en masse. These three factors are said to account for the instigation, perpetration and passive support for mass killings.

Thus, Barnes and Valentino argue that their bespoke interpretation of the opportunity, utility and capability to commit mass murder ascertains why, how and when atrocities are committed. The overarching premise of a strategic explanatory model emerges: mass killings can be understood as a rational phenomenon. The following section will integrate this school of thought as a strategic explanatory approach.

Utility:

From a macroscopic perspective, mass killings are undertaken by leaders when they pursue policies that will dispossess a group, or when they face military failings in war that persuade them to use any means necessary to maintain power. Valentino underlines that the utility of mass killings must be contextualised within "dispossessive" or "coercive"[18] scenarios. By understanding these broad scenarios, one can retrospectively identify the specific motives that determine the 'utility' of mass murder. In the first scenario, he argues that leaders calculate that mass killings are 'necessary' when they produce policies that will inevitably "materially disenfranchise"[19] a segment of society. Similarly, he suggests leaders adopt a strategy of killing when they perceive influential groups in society as an obstacle to policy implementation. Consequently, killing becomes the 'only viable' means of realising objectives. Motives persuading the 'necessity' and 'effectiveness' of killing en masse also transpire in the coercive scenario. Valentino maintains that by recognising the perceived functions of massacres, one can understand what motivates leaders to instigate them. In his view, "mass killing is simply war by other means."[20] These means are employed when orthodox methods of warfare fail and 'necessitate' this extreme tactic. For example, looming military defeat might motivate leaders to instigate atrocities to prevent their downfall. Similarly, military shortcomings incentivise the elimination of a group, as leaders and or their followers "suspect them of supporting the enemy."[21] By considering 'utility,' this model aims to identify the motives that drive mass killings through the functional perceptions of 'necessity' and 'effectiveness'. Human slaughter is explained as a strategy.

However, by hypothesising multiple uses of killing, the approach must explain what emerges as an intricate phenomenon. Strategic proponents outline that multiple functions occur in any given massacre, as Barnes highlights, it is conceivable that different actors within a perpetrator group may well have varying 'functional' incentives for killing.[22] Therefore, by outlining two different scenarios that generate multiple 'uses' of killing, the account must explain how different motives apply to different echelons of a perpetrator group. Barnes argues leaders are more likely to instigate massacres on the basis of tactical utility, the motives of which can be associated with political and military objectives outlined in dispossessive and coercive scenarios.[23] Conversely, direct perpetrators may be incentivised by different perceived functions, for example liquidating a particular group can be a "primary goal"[24] in itself. By presenting mass killings as a multi-faceted phenomenon that requires an explanatory factor malleable to the varying echelons of a perpetrator group, the model challenges social and psychological approaches. Notably, these approaches purport to explain mass killings by applying one rigid factor blindly to the varying genocidal actors. Importantly, if the overarching consideration of utility can distinguish divergent motives and attribute them to different actors, then, accordingly, the pertinence of this explanatory premise will be substantiated.

Capability:

The explanatory tool of utility is also underpinned by the considerations of opportunity and capability. It is proposed that accounting for these considerations helps to explain how and when the perceived utility of mass killing arises. It attaches explanatory power to these two dynamics, believing that they are conducive to the motives that drive the perceived utility of killing. As Valentino argues, the model can identify "specific goals, ideas and beliefs of powerful groups and leaders,"[25] who adopt a policy of killing. With reference to capability he purports that leaders can instigate atrocities provided they have a small but "well armed and organised group."[26] Such willing perpetrators can materialise as a consequence of "levels of hatred, discrimination, or ideological commitment common to a society."[27] He maintains that the ascendency of a limited number of such "active supporters"[28] represents a sufficient tool with which leaders can instigate killings. However, this explanatory assumption should not be considered in isolation. The ascendency of such a perpetrator group may well be an important requisite that facilitates genocidal policies and "the passivity of the rest of society."[29] In addition, it is argued that the victim group must also be disorganised and have no realistic means of defence or escape. Taking into account these determinants of capability might help explain how and when killings transpire. This dual faceted strategic premise is tailored to incorporate the varying circumstantial considerations that determine the capability to kill in each incidence of mass killing. It also infers that the sociological approach of determining genocidal capability through an exclusive interpretation of sovereign state characteristics is misguided.

Yet, implicit within the strategic methodology is an admission that sociological observations, albeit with references to

a small group of perpetrators, are implicated in the determinants of capability. Valentino concedes that "social structures and psychological mechanisms"[30] might play a role in generating popular support for massacres. However, he maintains understanding mass killings from the perspective of the capability of instigators and direct perpetrators as central to accounting for their occurrence. Consequently, this element of the strategic account concerns itself with "specific situations and conditions"[31] that enable and motivate perpetrator groups to commit atrocities. This methodology has been adopted in the belief that the capability of leadership to mobilise perpetrators is a dominant factor that accompanies its central premise of utility. Therefore, simply explaining the capability to commit mass killings might neglect wider socio-psychological observations that are relevant to understanding the occurrence of this phenomenon. A strategic interpretation seeks to establish capability as an insightful dynamic through select analysis of the perpetrator group and its victims. Having distanced itself from broader socio-psychological considerations, the relevance of capability must be substantiated through this bespoke strategic interpretation.

Capability is contextualised within the dynamics of the perpetrating regime. Barnes argues that any government that can exercise complete control over the entirety of a state apparatus has the capacity to instigate massacres. In particular, elite political control of a popular or influential power base is identified with the ability to exert "monolithic influence over a domain,"[32] and therefore with capacity to instigate atrocities. By identifying that hegemonic power is rooted in the control of "a mass-based party organisation or the military,"[33] the model contends that such power bases provide leadership with supporters malleable to centralised commands, thus enabling the ability to implement killing en masse. These structural dynamics are seen to identify and substantiate capability as an explanatory factor. In addition, Barnes emphasises that this interpretation requires that one explains how the "ingredients for hegemonic power"[34] might cause a tendency to implement extreme measures. Whilst she argues hegemonic power is indicative of underlying structural characteristics that physically enable a regime to kill, she also links absolutist rule with an underlying disposition to maintain "unfettered power."[35] This preoccupation generates a regime's normative capability to willingly use any means necessary to maintain absolute power. Assessing capability as an explanatory strategic component demands both a structural and normative evaluation in terms of the ability and willingness of a regime to perpetrate this extreme political measure.

While genocidal capability is identified through the potential to exercise power coercively, leaders also strive to fulfil policies through consent as "power generated through consent represents the ultimate form of control."[36] Undoubtedly, coercion is paramount for the capability to target victims but a strategic perspective interprets that the capability of a regime to produce perpetrators and bystanders should be associated with the ability of leadership to generate their consent. Further, it links a regime's endeavour to underpin its rule via the consent of its power base with a desire to have all necessary means of maintaining its hegemony. Therefore, capability is argued to constitute a regime's eagerness to have killing as an accessible instrument of policy should particular scenarios threaten its absolute power. Again, substantiating capability as a valid consideration requires identification of the structural and normative determinants of consent for mass killings.

By establishing a symbiosis between coercion and consent, the strategic model must account for this relationship's contributions to capability. For example, Barnes argues "ideological conformity becomes the basic bridge between coercion and consent."[37] This requisite is intrinsic to regimes that wield hegemonic power, seeing that the ascendency of such governance is achieved when political, educational and cultural channels of expression are all supplanted within one single state ideology.[38] Evidently, coercion, or rather repression, enables such ideological supremacy. It is used to liquidate rival sources of political advocacy in order to establish the supremacy of one governing ideology. Should a group threaten this supremacy, a regime will then have already consolidated the structural ability to exercise power via consent through ideological conformity. Normatively, it will be willing to kill en masse, as it understands unrivalled ideological supremacy is key to its absolutist rule. Likewise, potential perpetrators will willingly undertake all means necessary to safeguard the ideology they have come to worship. Thus, accounting for both coercion and consent is required in order to illustrate the genocidal influence of capability both structurally and normatively.

Leaders that wield hegemonic power will know the importance of maintaining this power by any means necessary. The likelihood of threats to unfettered power might also be more pronounced, or at least perceived as such. Analysis

of a regime's ideological control of channels of expression supposedly illustrates the means by which consent for genocidal policies is induced. In addition, the ideological basis of such hegemonic regimes might convince leaders of obstacles or threat. Consequently they perceive the implementation of mass murder as being vital to maintaining their position of power.[39] Both the explanatory factors of capability and utility must be interrelated and analysed in reference to ideology. A strategic account argues that the ability of absolutist regimes to produce consenting perpetrators derives from the ascendency of its single ideology. Invariably, the leader of a regime disseminates a view among its power base and to wider society that sustaining and advancing its ideological ideals is for the "greater good of the populace."[40] Through control of these channels they propagate such ideological principles in an effort to foster consent to central decrees. This might explain how regimes can call upon a reservoir of consenting individuals to pursue more extreme means of policy implementation. The presumption is that regimes are able to instigate mass killings in part because they have effectively accumulated the structural and normative means to do so. This presumption must be evaluated through the proposed considerations of coercion and consent. The forthcoming case studies must demonstrate that a regime's capability helps drive mass killings.

Opportunity:

Particular circumstances are also presented as a strategic means of accounting for the occurrence of genocide. That is to say that opportunities or opportune moments arise to play an important role in encouraging the use of genocide. Opportunity is argued to underpin both utility and capability. As with utility, conflict is a determinant of this factor. The strategic approach proposes that conflict generates group cohesion as group identity is "affirmed and reaffirmed against the identity"[41] of the enemy. War provides a means of consolidating group unity under centralised leadership as it generates "fear about disintegration and destruction."[42] Barnes argues war is an opportune moment in which leaders who aspire to gain absolutist rule can manipulate anxieties to gain support for eliminating rivals or obstacles to hegemonic power. This challenges the psychological premise that war is merely a catalyst that evokes the true origins of mass killings, inherent human nature, and the associated phenomenon of collective blood lust. Instead, it argues that a circumstance such as war produces an environment in which obedience to central command is more likely. This provides leaders with an opportune moment in which to instigate massacres for their own political purposes.

Similarly, a revolution's formative years are considered an appropriate scenario in which leaders can instigate killings as a political tactic. As with capability and utility, ideology plays a role in determining the opportunity to instigate massacres. Once in power, revolutionary leaders can channel the support for securing the revolution into support and participation for their extreme means of consolidating absolutist rule. Revolution, by its nature, has an overarching ideological notion that "the old order must be transformed,"[43] and that its ideals must be achieved for the 'greater good' of the nation. Supporters can be ideologically motivated to support or directly perpetrate killings, particularly when a regime can convince them of a supposed threat to the revolution and its followers. Thus, opportunity underpins utility and capability. The propagation of a new ideology throughout a society represents an opportunity for revolutionary leaders to generate a perception of the functional utility of mass killings among its power base. Furthermore, a revolutionary power base of ideological allegiance affords the initial capability of leaders to propagate perceptions of utility. Therefore, the formative years of revolution may well determine an opportune moment in which to capitalise upon or foster a killing capability. Put into context, the formative years of a newly governing regime has the opportunity to consolidate its hegemony through killing. It can manipulate its power base to support or perpetrate with the premise of 'the necessity to secure the revolution at all costs'. Mass killings during wars and revolutions might therefore be accounted for in part with the consideration of opportunity.

Perspectives of the strategic approach intertwine the explanatory factors of opportunity, capability and utility. Outlining an opportune moment in which leaders can establish and exploit unity underlines an effort to link this explanatory consideration with capability and utility. Characteristics associated with conflict or revolution, such as power bases or highly centralised governance, might correspond with the capability of leadership to instigate killings. Similarly, leaders are afforded an opportunity to manipulate associated group insecurities or ideological followers in order to motivate people to kill.[44] They can fuel notions of a looming enemy or a threat to establish the motives of necessity and effectiveness, thus incentivising participation in mass murder. The ascendency of these functional perceptions may well legitimise central edict to kill. As discussed, war and revolution can be exploited to generate a

popular perception that killing will fulfil an important or vital function. By intertwining the three factors of opportunity, capability and utility, the approach from the strategic school of thought endeavours to produce a holistic account of mass killings. The extent to which a progression can be observed between these three considerations in the following case studies will help evaluate this endeavour. The three factors may well reinforce one another, but they must also prove instrumental in these instances of mass killing in order to ascertain their pertinence. Above all, the analysis of these three explanatory factors must vindicate the strategic premise that killing en masse is understood and explained as a rational phenomenon.

Stalin's military purge: a strategic assessment

It was in June 1937 that the leader of the Soviet Union, Joseph Stalin, initiated his purge of the Soviet Red army. It began with the trial and execution of eight prominent soviet military commanders, most notably Marshall Tukhachevsky. These individuals were alleged to have been working with Nazi Germany and had intended to orchestrate a military coup. Importantly, the evidence used to convict these military officers is widely seen to have been forged and obtained through forced confessions.[45] Stalin's secret police, 'the Peoples Commissariat for Internal Affairs' NKVD, enacted wider interrogations and executions throughout the Soviet armed forces. In total, approximately 30,000 individuals were purged. Notably, Stalin's military purge was part of his larger persecution of senior politicians, intellectuals and artists during the 1930s. This infamous period in Soviet history saw the mass murder of a million people and became known as the 'Yezhovshchina', 'the Great Terror'. The following case study will assess whether a strategic account is relevant to explaining Stalin's military purge.

It is critical to set this military purge in the context of proceeding political and socio- economic developments. Initially, Stalin had launched a combined programme of rapid agricultural collectivisation and industrialisation, but his independent decision to undertake these policies at breakneck speed had led to mass starvation in 1932. This had generated underlying opposition within the senior ranks of the communist party. A consequence of this national crisis was that millions of Russians opposed communist rule. Stalin had essentially forced senior party members into "a life-and-death situation,"[46] in which they had to support his leadership in order to carry the party through this threat. Despite this, there remained underlying resistance to Stalin's premiership. Consequently, once Stalin had successfully expunged national resistance through forced labour and mass killing, he had to subsequently eliminate internal opposition to his leadership by removing Martemyan Ruitin and other party members who had tried to oust him. Their expulsion, combined with improving Russian agricultural production in mid 1933, helped consolidate Stalin's grip on leadership.[47] He had secured his position as head of the party but had failed to exercise supreme influence in the Politburo as its members voted against the execution of Ruitin and co-conspirators. This shortcoming was the prelude to his endeavour to engineer a political environment where his leadership could never again be contested. The revolution had been consolidated through coercive mass murder; acquiring absolutist rule was now Stalin's new imperative.

From 1933, the ascendency of Stalin's political protégé Sergi Kirov as an influential member of the Politburo and nationally respected figure again presented a new challenge to his leadership of the Communist party. Kirov had been instrumental in persuading the Politburo not to execute Ruitin and his co-conspirators. He also began arguing for the rehabilitation of these individuals back into the Communist party. Alongside Kirov, the Red Army had emerged as the only Soviet state organisation that still commanded support from the subjugated post collectivisation population.[48] Stalin now sought to establish political commissar control over the military top brass as part of his bid for supreme power. Marshall Tukhachevesky and other military leaders vehemently opposed this political encroachment. Thus, in Stalin's view, Kirov and the Soviet military leadership represented the greatest obstacle to his absolutist rule. He realised, though, that the hasty murder of a popular Kirov and a similarly popular military elite would evoke political and national discontent. Similarly, he recognised the necessity of maintaining the support of some officers so as to avoid "a genuine military seizure of power."[49] Stalin needed to retain a loyal band of officers who could reconstruct the Red Army after the purge. Ultimately, he realised that having a loyal military group at his disposal was vital to him exercising supreme rule. He thus had to gain support from the public and a large proportion of military forces for these mass killings.

Opportunity:

The strategic account presents the circumstance of a revolution in its formative years as an opportune moment for leaders to divert support for safeguarding the revolution into support for extreme means to consolidate their absolute power. Stalin secretly arranged for the assignation of Kirov in 1934, pinning the blame on a conspiracy led by one of the founding members of the Bolshevik revolution, Leon Trotsky.[50] He alleged that Trotsky and his co-conspirators were working with Nazi Germany to overthrow the Communist government and restore capitalism. He then subsequently channelled communist fervour into support for and participation in his mass killings. This ideological pretext enabled the NKVD to implicate senior Communist party members in the plot. Publicising their 'trials', convictions and executions through state controlled media convinced the Communist party and the populace of this 'threat' to Soviet society.[51] This afforded Stalin the perfect opportunity to remove political obstructions unopposed.

Having fabricated this plot, Stalin's witch-hunt could turn to the military. Eight Soviet military leaders were 'implicated' in the plot and were sentenced to death. These 'trials' were engineered to persuade the wider military of their culpability and gain consent to supposedly preserve communism through Stalin's supreme rule. Subsequently, Stalin used this ideological pretext to expand his witch-hunt, murdering 30,000 Soviet military personnel and broadening the 'Great Terror'. It can be seen that Stalin as the head of the fledging Soviet regime had the opportunity to establish and consolidate hegemonic rule by manipulating the Bolshevik revolution's ideology. The pretext of his ideological manipulations reciprocates the central premise of opportunity, namely that new governing ideologies can be exploited with the pretence that all actions are 'necessary to secure the revolution'. The strategic rationale that mass killings arise when these dynamics afford leaders opportunistic means of mobilising perpetrators for their very own political agenda provides relevant explanatory insight. In this case, revolution paved an opportune moment in which a politically deviant individual could implement mass killings to establish his own political supremacy.

Utility:

Whilst ruthless, the purging the Soviet military appears a calculated and rational process. Specifically, events suggest that the liquation of the senior Soviet military was a tactical means of finalising Stalin's pursuit for political supremacy. The Soviet military remained the only autonomous organisation after the massacres and the political purge that accompanied collectivisation. Unlike the Bolshevik government, it also commanded popular support from Russians. It was perhaps the only entity capable of resisting Stalin's complete seizure of power.[52] His organised and methodical targeting of influential military leaders suggests he viewed an autonomous military as the principle obstacle and threat to his political agenda. Notably, this purge coincided with the reintroduction of military political commissars. The eight senior generals tried and executed had been opposed to this obvious government bid to exert political control over the army.[53] It has been suggested by former Soviet spy Leopold Trepper that false documents planted by Nazi double agents tricked Stalin into believing that his generals were involved in a Trotsky led plot to overthrow the Politburo.[54] Purportedly, maintaining, rather than expanding his power, was the rationale behind killing these individuals, as was the broader endeavour of neutralising the army's autonomy through the wider Red army purge. Whilst this is widely seen as a false interpretation of Stalin's true belief and agenda,[55] it still corresponds with the premise that utility and rationality drives mass killings. The strategic model maintains identifying the functions served by killing highlights as not just the rational nature of this phenomenon but also the specific motives that incentivise mass killings. Initial consideration suggests the explanatory premise of utility appears a pertinent means of accounting for specific determinants of this case example.

Analysing the process of the initial senior military purge also benefits from the explanatory factor of utility. The 'trials' of Marshall Tukhachevsky and other generals were tailored to convince their colleagues of the necessity to safeguard the political hegemony of communist governance, notably through one supreme leader. The particular process of persecution ensured that some of the generals' colleagues saw that their superiors were 'culpable' and remained loyal to the Politburo over which Stalin presided.[56] 'Evidence' extracted through torture and death threats made against the generals' relatives produced compelling 'confessions' at the 'legal proceedings'. This convinced an audience of military officers present at the trials of Tukhachevsky and his 'co-conspirators'. As a consequence, Stalin not only maintained, but also strengthened, elite military support for his leadership; a crucial component of any political pursuit for absolutist rule. In this incidence, one particular use of killing served another opportunist political function. This illustrates that the strategic approach of associating utility with other political opportunities in any given massacre affords further explanatory insights. Removing those opposed to the political seizure of the military

command by political commissars also provided a platform of loyal senior military support for Stalin's intended seizure of regional 'nomenklatura' state apparatus. Had he succeeded in removing an autonomous military but failed to establish a new generation of blindly loyal military officers, the process of supplanting regional state administration through another Politburo purge may have been politically dangerous. As Blackstock stresses, convincing a senior military group of the culpability of eight accused generals meant he could avoid "a genuine military coup d'état"[57] that might have developed during his future political pursuits. Analysing this purge identifies rational considerations that lead to a compelling account.

Ultimately, the killing of 30,000 Red Army personal also reflects the relevance of utility as a facet of the strategic account. The function of this mass killing did not necessarily concern the need to kill specific individuals; rather, it represented a tactical means of reinforcing Stalin's absolutist rule and establishing Red Army subservience. Historians, such as Conquest, ascribe to the strategic premise that mass killings can be explained as a "rational"[58] process. In his view, this dynamic becomes apparent when one considers the collective utility of killing en masse.[59] Those killed were predominantly lower-ranking officers who could not jeopardise Stalin's violent seizure of Soviet regional administration. Nonetheless, killing thousands of lesser military personnel created a climate of fear that enhanced the control Stalin had established during the initial phase of the purge. As Carmichael argues, the second phase was not a means of liquidating a political obstacle. It rather functioned as "a form of propaganda whose aim was to place all potential opponents under an absolute moral ban."[60] Importantly, many of those arrested in the military purge were spared execution once they denounced others. Deaths threats made against inmates and their families often compelled them to provide false evidence. Ultimately, killing some coerced many to denounce.[61] These denunciations demonstrated unwavering military loyalty to Stalin's supreme leadership. Many of these officers escaped execution but were expelled from the Communist party.[62] This climate of fear induced through killing provided an opportune moment in which residual military political influence could be removed. Indeed, as outlined, opportunity can be seen to contribute to utility. These genocidal functions indicate Stalin's motivation to finalise and reinforce his absolute power. Understanding motives for mass murder through associated functional incentives imparts valuable explanatory considerations.

Yet, rationalising this purge through a strategic explanatory premise of functional utility can misinterpret unintended consequences as serving premeditated purposes. In this respect, not all effects of a mass killing can be explained as a consequence of calculated and rational incentives. Whilst a strategic functional interpretation encompasses the main causes of the Stalin's military purge, it misinterprets the extent of the killings and military expulsion as an intended aim. Notably, in 1939 the Politburo effectively removed the ability of military units to denounce commanding officers, stating that claims of disobedience and malpractices would only be identified and considered from the higher chain of command. Ultimately, whilst the fear generated from the purge had facilitated Stalin's aim of killing off military officers without incurring a military revolt, these denunciations had nonetheless got out of control. As Reese argues, denunciations "had become an uncontrollable mechanism…during the purge of the military."[63] The reinstatement of 11,596 officers who had not faced execution after conviction is indicative of the unintended extent of the purge. Connor argues the extent to which the NKVD arrested and executed military personnel was a consequence of "NKVD over compliance, rather than clear political purpose."[64] As discussed, individuals denounced to survive, and whilst denunciations and executions both functioned as a means and as end, their extent, nonetheless, spiralled out of control. Evidence suggesting that the extent of these killings was in part a consequence of human fear and a consequential "spill over of victimisation"[65] highlights that the strategic account's explanatory scope is limited by its psychological deficiencies. Whilst explaining Stalin's incentives for orchestrating and implementing an infectious witch-hunt, utility fails to accurately account for the full extent of the killings. Ultimately, it is an oversimplification to explain the Red Army purge entirely as a consequence of premeditated functions.

Capability:

Arguably, the role of capacity for mass killings has been implied throughout the assessment of utility. Analysis of the Red Army purge may substantiate the explanatory premise that massacres are enabled when leaders have accumulated both the structural and normative ability to instigate mass killings. At a fleeting glance, the suggestion that leaders can instigate mass murder when they have a "well armed and organised group"[66] at their disposal appears relevant to understanding this case. From beginning to end, Stalin's secret police, the NKVD, played an

instrumental role in perpetrating this atrocity. Stalin had acquired centralised rule in 1934 by superimposing party and state police structures with his very own secret police. Stalin's political directives were either ordered or sanctioned by this organisation.[67] His successor, Nikita Khrushchev, outlined that its power became so extensive that the NKVD "had the last word…it decided whether or not a party member could be elected to top party posts."[68] Importantly, during the 'Great Terror,' the ability of the NKVD to arrest and execute those Stalin deemed politically dangerous led to the passivity of senior party members. As Khrushchev outlined during his leadership of the Moscow central committee, rather than resisting arrests and executions of party members, he merely stated, "I had to obey."[69] Thus, in this instance, the strategic assertion that a well armed and organised perpetrator group produces passivity towards mass killings is validated. Further, as proposed by the strategic account, the ascendency of an elite and loyal group enables a leader to enact mass killing. Purging eight senior generals facilitated Stalin's seizure of the military via political commissars, but it also reinforced the NKVD's operational ability to exercise his political biddings throughout the Red Army. The subsequent killing of 30,000 individuals graphically illustrates the premise that organisational supremacy translates into a killing capability.

Yet, this does little to account for why NKVD personnel so willingly acted as Stalin's executioners. As discussed, the NKVD were 'over compliant' in killing on Stalin's behalf. The strategic model argues the ascendency of willing perpetrators arises as a consequence of "levels of hatred, discrimination, or ideological commitment common to a society."[70] Whilst pursuing his bid for political supremacy through mass killings, Stalin disseminated notions of the 'enemies of the people' and 'counter-revolutionary infiltrators' throughout Soviet state apparatus and society. These notions encouraged hatred against those who Stalin saw as political obstacles. Importantly, such propaganda aimed to portray his resolve to 'protect' the Bolshevik revolution and to promote popular allegiance to communist rule under his leadership.[71] Arguably, this Stalinist illusion helped generate willing perpetrators in the NKVD. Even Mikhail Frinovsky, a NKVD Deputy Chief, showed symptoms of being ideologically deluded, stating in conversation with another NKVD agent: "we've just uncovered a gigantic conspiracy in the Army…But we've got them all."[72] The strategic rationale that capability is generated consensually appears valid; Stalin's political manipulations succeeded in mobilising perpetrators to some extent.

However, as Connor highlights, during the Red Army purge many NKVD interrogators "guaranteed their safety"[73] by ascertaining confessions from victims. In this respect, whilst 'ideological commitment' and accompanying 'levels of hatred' appear to have mobilised senior perpetrators, more junior perpetrators did not willingly undertake their roles. Circumstances rather coerced their involvement. Nonetheless, a symbiotic relationship between coercion and consent emerges, vindicating the strategic assumption that such a symbiosis is possible. Although coercion and consent played varying roles in producing capability, both examples illustrate perpetrator conformity to Stalin's ideologically decree of eliminating the 'enemies of the people'. This reinforces Barnes strategic prognosis that "ideological conformity becomes the basic bridge between coercion and consent."[74] Accounting for Stalin's structural capability to instigate mass murder affords greater understanding of how he was able to implement this purge. However, assuming all perpetrators willingly consent to killing as a consequence of specific sociological considerations is too broad a generalisation. On the contrary, the coerced ideological conformity of perpetrators can be more closely associated with capability in this case. Nonetheless, the premise of capability remains relevant to understanding this mass killing.

This structural interpretation of genocidal capability also implies an accompanying normative dynamic. As Barnes purports, the structural characteristics associated with hegemonic power affords the structural capability to kill en masse, but it is also underpinned by a disposition to maintain "unfettered power."[75] This preoccupation determines a hegemonic regime's normative willingness to utilise its genocidal capability. This normative consideration is applicable to both Stalin and his perpetrator group. As identified, through functional incentives, Stalin's primary motive behind the purge was to ascertain and reinforce his absolutist rule. He implemented killing en masse once he had assured his absolute power post trial and execution of his senior generals. The phase of killing en masse did not concern establishing absolute power, but rather a reinforcement of his 'unfettered power'. Thus, associating absolutist rule with the willingness to maintain power through mass killings is applicable in this incidence. Similarly, the NKVD had no restraints on its power, except for those imposed by Stalin. As discussed, this organisation exerted control on behalf of Stalin, breaking military autonomy through Stalin's purge. Nonetheless, the extent of this atrocity is seen to have been unintended. Much like Stalin, it appears his perpetrator group killed in excess because its

absolute power compelled the organisation into a killing frenzy. As Connor argues, the organisation was driven to kill in excess because the powers Stalin had bestowed upon the organisation meant that its "interests in maintaining itself" were served "by detecting a growing number of deviants."[76] Both instigator and senior perpetrators became preoccupied with unfettered power and consequently willingly killed to ensure its continued and growing abundance. Identifying normative genocidal capability affords greater understanding of the Red Army purge.

In short, a strategic interpretation affords extensive explanatory insight in this incidence. Considering its premises of opportunity, utility and capability helps account for when, how and why Stalin undertook his military purge. The emergence of an explanatory narrative during this assessment demonstrates cohesive progression between these three factors. Such consistencies are indicative of the broader explanatory premise that killing en masse, at least in this instance, can be understood as a rationale phenomenon. Nonetheless, interpreting the entire military purge as the sole consequence of a rational process is misguided. The pertinence of the strategic explanatory account should not be overemphasised. It appears that not all perpetrators were willingly motivated to kill. In this respect, explaining this mass killing entirely as the consequence of rational processes would be misguided, with insightful socio-psychological observations detracting from this central premise. Despite these limitations, the strategic model identifies the instrumental determinant of the Great Terror; namely that Stalin's military purge was the product of his motivation to secure absolute power.

The Rwandan Genocide: A Strategic Assessment

At a fleeting glance, the Rwandan genocide appears to represent an irrational killing frenzy in which approximately 200,000 people brutally murdered 800,000 fellow Rwandans with improvised farm tools and machetes. The genocide occurred over a hundred days, yet much of the killing transpired within ten days. These murderous efficiencies rivalled the efforts of Nazi Germany's most notorious death camp, Auschwitz. A strategic assessment maintains that such a massacre can be understood as a calculated phenomenon in which a logical utility determined a strategy of human slaughter. The following case study will assess whether this explanatory account is relevant to understanding the Rwandan genocide.

As with the Soviet case, it must be set in the context of immediately preceding events. The Rwanda genocide of 1994 occurred in the midst of civil war. Since 1990, the rebel army, the 'Rwandan Patriotic Front' (RPF), had been fighting to overthrow the Rwandan government. The dynamics of this civil war were ethnically fashioned, where the RPF comprised of Tutsi refugees and the government was Hutu led.[77] These dynamics originated from Rwanda's colonial history. During colonization, Tutsis were considered 'racially superior' by the Belgium authorities. Accordingly, they were granted administrative roles in governance and other privileges. Inevitably, Hutu bitterness became entrenched. Post-colonial rule saw the manifestation of this ethnic animosity in Rwanda's political affairs. The dominant political party the 'National Republican Movement for Democracy and Development' (MRND) adopted an ideology of 'Hutu power', which spoke of Tutsis as enemies, who if given the chance again would enslave Hutus. Accordingly, the MRND party leader, Junénal Habyarimana, when occupying the Rwandan presidency, pursued Hutu political dominance.[78]

President's Habyarimana's government comprised of an elite group of Hutu hardliners known as the 'Akazu', 'the small house'. In 1990, it began to put its 'Hutu power' ideology into practice by fuelling popular hatred against Tutsis. Posing as the RPF, rebels and under the cover Government forces shot civilians in its very own capital Kigali. The government pinned the blame on Tutsi citizens and began disseminating propaganda that labelled Tutsis as the 'enemy'.[79] The intensity of this state extremism snowballed immediately after the Presidential assassination in 1994. It marked the end of a brief cease fire and the beginning of an explicit government decree to kill the Tutsi 'enemy'. It should be noted that until the breakup of the ceasefire Habyarimana's hard-line party, MRND had been in coalition with the 'Democratic Republican Movement' (MDR). This more moderate Hutu party had pushed for the ceasefire and restrained extremist Hutu ideology. President Habyarimana's assassination in 1994 afforded his Akazu colleagues an opportunity to liquidate or sideline these moderates and seize absolute power. Having asserted supreme control over the state, they set about the instigation of a Tutsis massacre as part of their own political agenda.

Opportunity:

Partly accounting for this mass killing as a product of opportunity is relevant. The strategic model purports that war provides a means of consolidating group unity under centralised leadership, seeing that it generates "fear about disintegration and destruction."[80] Indeed, the assassination of the Rwandan president Junénal Habyarimana afforded his close associates an opportune moment in which they could instigate their policy of genocide. Habyarimana had agreed to a cease-fire in 1993. Although the culprits of this assassination are disputed, the hardliners in government seized upon the opportunity to break the ceasefire and mobilise support for its genocide. Their actions epitomise the premise of opportunity. They capitalised upon the presidential assassination firstly by removing moderate Hutu officials who opposed their extremism. Many Hutu blamed the Tutsi RPF for the assassination. In this politically charged environment, Habyarimana's former colleagues could label moderates in government as 'collaborators'.[81] Thus, Hutu hardliners were afforded an opportunity in which they could establish absolute control over governance. Most importantly, the assassination reignited a war in which popular anxieties could be manipulated. As outlined by Barnes, war provides a means of consolidating group unity under centralised leadership, as it generates "fear about disintegration."[82] The governmental declaration of 'war on the Tutsi enemy'[83] labelled Tutsis as a threat to Hutu existence, fuelling fears that the government subsequently channelled into support for its genocide. Consequently, understanding this mass killing, in part, as the consequence of an opportunity, where extremists could seize state apparatus and promote genocide, is most relevant.

Utility:

The intended use of the Rwandan genocide must be understood as a consequence of war. Strategic progression through opportunity and utility is embodied in this interrelated context. Valentino emphasises that leaders adopt a strategy of mass killing when they face military failings that persuade them to use any means necessary to maintain power.[84] This is reflected in Straus's bespoke interpretation. He argues: "war matters for several reasons. It provided the essential rationale for mass killings: security."[85] Identifying this genocidal function draws attention to the Hutu government's motives for instigating mass murder. It is the context of an ongoing war in which a weak Hutu government facing defeat calculated that killing en masse was a necessary and effective means of maintaining power. From the government's perspective, committing genocide in areas not yet taken yet taken by the rebels would ensure they could hold onto power. This military use accounts for the why the government saw killing as a necessary and effective tool. Ultimately, these functional incentives motivated the government to commit genocide. Thus, Valentino's prognosis is that "mass killing is simply war by other means,"[86] occurring when orthodox methods of warfare fail is of acute relevance to this genocide. Looming defeat did indeed motivate Hutu hardliners to adopt a genocidal strategy that they thought would prevent RPF victory. This perceived function corresponds with the strategic tenet, which hypothesises that military shortcomings incentivise the elimination of a group as leaders and/or their followers "suspect them of supporting the enemy."[87] Thus, utility reveals the underlying motives that drove the policy of human slaughter.

Similarly, utility is manifestly evident in the driving motivations of the some 200,000 individuals who perpetrated the killings. It appears that willingly perpetrators were motivated to kill as a consequence of the perceived function of 'necessity'. In the account of one perpetrator: "We were told that the Tutsi will take our land and property; we had to defend ourselves."[88] Whilst this statement reflects the functional incentive of necessity, utility does little to explain why such individuals were compelled to kill by government rhetoric. As Straus emphasises, ordinary Hutu civilians would not have seen Tutsis as an existential threat, and therefore a threat that must be removed, without "pre-existing, society- wide"[89] perceptions of ethnic differences. Notably, Belgian rule had established Tutsis as 'racially superior' and afforded them some degree of privileges. Hutu suffering under this regime installed long term sociological distrust amongst these two groupings. The long-term ramifications were that many Hutus feared the return of Tutsi governance. In the context of an advancing RPF, they could be persuaded that killing was a 'necessary' means of preventing this. However, when the Rwandan government called upon Hutus to kill the 'Tutsi enemy' only 7000 initially took to arms.[90] Instead, the government relied upon local representatives and its militia, the 'Interahamwe,' to compel civilians to commit genocide out of an apparent necessity. Fuelling fears, to this effect, would have been impossible without underlying ethnic divisions in Rwandan society. Considering utility identifies varying functional incentives that apply to different actors in this genocide; however, this factor overlooks wider

sociological considerations that vital to understanding perpetrators' motives.

Utility accounts for the perpetrators who readily enacted the government's genocidal decree,. Though, this strategic prognosis overlooks broader observations that might otherwise contribute to its interpretation. Some argue that widespread participation in killing was driven by obedience to authority: a consideration that has been subject to both sociological and psychological assessment. Authors, such as Khan, suggest that Rwanda's long-standing culture of obedience compelled many to perform the government's decree.[91] Whilst it is widely accepted that a 'culture of obedience' existed, it is not seen as instrumental in mass participation.[92] As Uvin stresses, "it is a gross simplification to deduce Rwandans participate in mass murder because they are obedient and conformist by nature.[93] As is discussed in a perpetrator's account, many were persuaded by the government's strategic rationale that they 'must protect themselves against an existential Tutsi threat'.[94] Although the influence of the 'culture of conformity is debated,' psychology maintains inherent human nature helped mobilise perpetrators.[95] Allport argues socio-psychological dynamics underpin widespread susceptibility to the "Machiavellian trick of creating a common enemy."[96] Overshadowed by the functional rationale of perpetrators, this analysis helps explain why the government's strategic pretence proved so successful in motivating civilians to kill. Rwanda can be understood as a rational phenomenon where the pretence of 'ethnic survival' drove mass participation; however, utility overlooks how socio-psychological dynamics aided this persuasive imperative.

Capability:

Interpreting capability helps account for the extent, speed, and intensity of this mass killing. Hutu hardliners had the opportunity to seize power and instigate genocide in 1994. Yet, the astounding scale of this massacre can be understood through pre-existing capabilities. Valentino's assertion that leaders can instigate genocide providing they have "well armed and organised group"[97] is applicable to the Rwandan genocide. In the four years leading up to the genocide ,the army grew extensively. It also initiated a civilian defence scheme on behalf of the government in 1990. This policy encouraged local communities to run civilian defences to 'guard against RPF attacks'. Civilian men were provided with machetes and trained by local police to perform sentry duties. Local government representatives also received fire arms training from the Army.[98] Further, in 1992 Hutu hardliners from the MRND party and army began to fashion the party's youth wing, the Interahamwe, into a militia.[99] Thus, when hardliners seized government in 1994, they had a 'well armed and organised' militia at their disposals. This elite group proved instrumental in providing the regime's genocidal capability. As Straus emphasises, although small, "they tipped the balance of power toward killing Tutsis…they spear-headed many of the attacks."[100] The strategic premise that a small, but well armed, group affords a regime, with the capacity to implement mass killings, proves instrumental in explaining Rwanda.

Strategic analysis accounts for how the Hutu hardliners nurtured capability at a local level in the years leading up to the genocide, but it overlooks what facilitated this process. Straus and others emphasise that the Rwandan state's authority was remarkably influential throughout its far-flung rural communities.[101] [102] Absolute adherence to hierarchy was a valorised and well established norm. Prunier argues that governmental influence and hierarchical norms arose over the centuries as high population density demanded this influence.[103] Others argue colonial rule established or inflated the bureaucratic and normative reach of the state.[104] Although ongoing, this debate's sociological narrative highlights that the more immediate capabilities amassed by Hutu hardliners were facilitated by outstanding characteristics entrenched within Rwandan society. As with utility, obedience may not determine the capability to kill, but it evidentially provided the context in which this strategic catalyst could thrive. In short, indoctrinating young political supporters in the Interahamwe and militarising civilians and local officials to 'defend against the RPF' was normatively assisted.

Sociological analysis omits the more immediate efforts of Hutu hardliners, notably efforts that proved instrumental in engineering genocidal capability. Nonetheless, it rightly identifies how Rwandan state efficiencies and normative obedience could be channelled by these efforts into "the implementation of a complex genocide plan."[105] Whilst acutely relevant, this explanatory factor is divorced from sociological dynamics, which appear significant in understanding how Hutu hardliners were able to engineer genocidal capability.

Nonetheless, additional determinants of capability are applicable to this case study. Valentino's assessment proposes that, in addition to a capable perpetrator group, the victim group must be unable to defend itself and have no means of escape.[106] The ascendency of the Interahamwe as an ideologically and politically determined killing apparatus sealed the fate of many Tutsis, but other state apparatuses also helped ensure many would fall victim to the massacre. The popular radio station 'Radio-Télévision Mille Collines' (RTLM) urged Hutus to kill Tutsis. It broadcasted 'RPF supporters whereabouts' and designated areas that 'neccessitated' purging.[107] Determinants of capability, namely a willing perpetrator group, passivity among society, and a defenceless victim group, can be understood within the context of this persuasive propaganda tool. RTLM's propaganda became a proxy for centralised command and mass mobilisation; the Interahame attacked in response to the RTLM's 'intelligence'. Civilians in isolated rural communities could be compelled to participate, or passively support, the killings. In short, radio helped effectively organise and maximise the extent of the killings throughout the country. Further, this densely populated land locked country also contributed to the Tutsis's entrapment. As Straus emphasises, "the shortage of exit options is part of the reason that killing was so rapid and intensive."[108] In this landlocked country, endemic and localised participation rendered the Tutsis defenceless. Hiding or fleeing proved a false hope for many. Understanding the strategic clause of defenceless victims enriches an account of this genocide, highlighting how wider factors, such as propaganda and geography, were at play.

Identifying the means of producing perpetrators, supporters and defenceless victims through propaganda and geography requires this approach to explain why these two factors had such an effect. A strategic interpretation of propaganda's ability to generate capability draws upon the persuasive nature of utility. A growing population and the devaluation of cash crops put pressure on land and resources, fuelling ethnic rivalries. Notably, the global devaluation of coffee preceded the genocide, putting pressure on an agrarian society that already had underlying tensions since colonial rule. Arguably, these conditions meant many were receptive to the notion of 'ethnic survival'. Accordingly, propaganda could channel economic hardship and ethnic rivalries into the perception of an existential Tutsi threat that Hutu must collectively combat. This functional incentive helped the regime to amass its willing perpetrators. Kamola suggests that such economic concerns and resentment of perceived Tutsi wealth stoked the fires of ethnic rivalries in rural neighbourhoods.[109] Indeed, killings often went hand in hand with the appropriation of victims' assets. Yet, propaganda also translated these sentiments into murderous intent. For instance, one participant involved in a massacre at the town of Ruhengeri, deridingly informed victims: "it's you Tutsis who are causing all these problems."[110] In this respect, one observes progression between utility and capability, inter-relating these two factors interprets how propaganda fuelled incentives for killing. Accordingly, the regime had willing perpetrators at its disposal.

Nonetheless, this assessment overlooks the possibility that some perpetrators acted on impulse, momentarily seizing the opportunity to appropriate the assets of neighbours. Government representatives and the Interahamwe militia units, on occasions, promised that those who killed Tutsis would be entitled to the victims' assets.[111] Greed, rather than ethnic grievance, may have driven some individuals. For them joining the killing frenzy was merely an economic whim. The author Mironko highlights that he found some perpetrators offered this explanation when interviewed.[112] Whilst more infrequent than expressed motivations of 'necessity,' the presence of greed indicates that the extent of the killings was not entirely the consequence of rationalised processes. In short, genocide was not exclusively determined by accumulated murderous capabilities and functional incentives. Further, other authors reciprocate the premise that the killings demand wider considerations. Whilst Scherrer affirms that propaganda proved instrumental in amassing willing perpetrators, he stresses that it is inherent within human nature to be drawn to act collectively. Hutu hardliners' rhetoric that spoke of 'ethnic survival' and 'necessity' tapped into the innate psychosis of "collective bloodlust."[113] Although perceived utility motivated many to kill, collective human predisposition underpinned the ability of propaganda to amass perpetrators. Respectively, psychological analysis cannot be detached from this genocide. Yet again, the strategic approach overemphasises the extent to which the killings were entirely a consequence of rational processes, associated with capability and utility.

A strategic approach identifies that this genocide was driven by Hutu elites seeking a political strategy that would safeguard their power. Killing en masse constituted "war by other means." The opportunity in which to implement this morbid political strategy arose with the assassination of president Habyarimana. The utility of killing also proved instrumental in generating mass participation. Hutu hardliners motivated civilians to participate under the pretence of

'necessity' and 'ethnic survival'. However, strategic analysis omits how the persuasive nature of 'necessity' was sociologically underpinned. Fear of Tutsi dominance lingered post colonial rule. Accordingly, many Hutus were receptive to the notion of a 'Tutsi threat'. Whilst overemphasised by some authors, the cultural norm of obedience and human susceptibility to the "Machiavellian trick of creating a common enemy"[114] assisted the government's characterisation of the 'Tutsi threat'. Utility proves instrumental in explaining mass participation, yet it overlooks socio-psychological dynamics that underpinned the motivation of 'necessity'.

Capability's explanatory facets are of acute relevance. The militarisation of civilians and local administration amassed capability. Notably, the small and well armed Interahamwe militia were instrumental in facilitating the genocide. Likewise, interpreting the victims' defenceless disposition reveals wider circumstances that helped ensure the extent of this genocide. However, sociological deficiencies mean no attention is given to how the Rwandan state's extensive local influence assisted mass participation. Nonetheless, capability draws attention to propaganda's instrumental role in amassing perpetrators, and incorporates the role of utility. Despite overlooking the modest contributions of circumstantial greed, or collective human disposition, this analysis embodies strategic progression, underlining the emergence of a pertinent explanatory narrative. In short, a strategic model accounts for instrumental determinants of the genocide, but it overemphasises the extent to which this massacre was a consequence of the rational processes accompanying utility, and capability.

A Holistic Assessment of the Strategic Explanatory Approach: A Soviet-Rwanda Cross- Comparison

Having conducted individual strategic assessments, this approach's generic relevance to understanding mass killings can now be considered. Considering its consistent explanatory strengths and weaknesses in these two case studies will suggest the extent of its comprehensive value. Consistencies in each of its three explanatory factors will be first explored. Their merits and inherent flaws, namely their socio-psychological deficiencies, will be used to construct a holistic assessment of its worth, as a universal explanatory approach to mass killings.

Opportunity:

The guiding tenets of this explanatory factor prove insightful. An aspiring revolution provided an opportune moment in which a strategy of human slaughter could be employed. This context provided Stalin with an opportunity in which he could instigate his military purge under the pretence of 'securing the revolution'. Stalin had the opportunity to harness the ideological resonance of the Bolshevik revolution, fabricating an alleged plot to overthrow communism to motivate participation and support for his military purge. Similarly, war in Rwanda provided a means of consolidating group unity under centralised leadership by generating "fear about disintegration and destruction."[115] The assassination of President Junénal Habyarimana reinforced this opportunity, as his associates could fuel fears of a looming 'Tutsi threat' and compel mass participation, and support for genocide. Further, in this climate of fear hardliners could remove moderates from government. Once politically unopposed, they had the opportunity to exercise absolute power and implement genocide. Thus, in these instances, leaders were provided with the prospective strategies that granted them the opportunity to instigate mass killings.

In both examples, the opportunity to engineer the genocidal pretext of an existential threat, whether politically or ethnically fashioned, proved conducive to the functional incentive of 'necessity'. This inherent progression between opportunity and utility demonstrates the cohesive explanatory narrative afforded by a strategic account. Ultimately, opportunity's explanatory relevance contributes to the central premise, namely that mass killings, at least in these instances, can be understood as a rational phenomenon.

Utility:

In both instances, interpreting the utility of these mass killings affords extensive explanatory insight. The presumption that leaders are motivated to instigate massacres as means of ascertaining political objectives holds true in both instances. Stalin's purging of the Soviet Red army functioned to secure his absolute power. Likewise, the Hutu hardliners decision to instigate genocide stemmed from their motivation to retain power. Respectively, strategic proponents, such as Valentino, are right to assert that recognising the perceived functions of massacres identifies

what motivates their implementation.[116] Stalin was motivated to oversee a military purge as it functioned to break the Red Army's autonomy, a political obstacle that was insurmountable, accept by means of liquidation. Accordingly, Stalin adopted the necessary means of ascertaining absolute power. Equally, in Rwanda Hutu elites calculated that killing Tutsi civilians would prevent the RPF from winning the war and toppling their government. In the face of looming defeat, this genocide was seen as necessary and the only viable means of preventing RPF victory. Utility compelled a determined strategy of human slaughter. Repeated notions of 'necessity' and 'effectiveness' illustrate that these mass killings can be understood as a product of calculated processes, which are encapsulated in the explanatory factor of utility. This contributes to the central premise that mass killings can be explained as a rational phenomenon.

Utility proves relevant to understanding what determined perpetration. Barnes's assumption that different actors in genocide are motivated by varying 'functional incentives[117] is illustrated in both atrocities. However, in both examples, a strategic approach overemphasises utility's role in determining the passivity towards, and perpetration of massacres. In the Soviet case study, a functional interpretation highlights how a climate of fear motivated denunciations, thus facilitating killings at perpetrator level. Military personnel were motivated to denounce others, as it ensured their own survival. Whilst this coercive consequence was designed to facilitate Stalin's purge, the extent of denunciations, and the corresponding scope of mass murder, was unintended. Thus, understanding these killings solely as a functional consequence of utility is erroneous. Utility fails to explain how hysterical denunciations drove the purge beyond its intended scope. Respectively, a psychological approach may be of explanatory assistance.

The Rwandan case study offers a similar assessment of a strategic explanatory approach. Interpreting utility's role in amassing perpetrators and passive support proves insightful. Many were motivated by the function of eliminating a 'Tutsi threat'. Although this consideration identifies the immediate source of mass participation, it fails to explain why the government's pretence of 'the necessary elimination of a Tutsi threat' proved so convincing. A sociological approach identifies how Rwanda's colonial past had engrained a dormant fear of Tutsi domination. This may well explain why government rhetoric persuaded many of the necessity to kill. Whilst of explanatory significance, utility fails to provide a comprehensive account of perpetration in both instances. This persistent flaw detracts from the model's overarching premise, namely that mass killings can be understood exclusively as a rational phenomenon.

Despite this consistent flaw, the explanatory tent of utility, such as the functional incentive of 'necessity,' directs pertinent explanatory insight. It affords bespoke interpretation of the instigation and perpetration of mass murder, as it proves malleable to subtle nuances in these two individual case studies. Stalin instigated his military purge as a necessary means of removing an obstacle that stood in the way of his political agenda. Likewise, Hutu elites instigated a massacre, which they adopted as a necessary means of averting military and political defeat. The means of perpetration were also coupled with the functional incentive of necessity. Stalin's military purge was facilitated by the necessity of personal survival as it drove the means of perpetration, namely denunciation. Whilst 'necessity' exceeded the strategic framework of rational intent, the strategic account demonstrates the significance of originally conceiving the provocation of a calculated measure of denunciation. Similarly, in Rwanda, the perpetration of genocide was fulfilled by the perceived necessity of eliminating a Tutsi threat. Though the persuasive nature of this functional incentive again exceeded the explanatory scope of a strategic interpretation, utility's acute relevance was evident. The contribution of socio-psychological processes in the mass killings negates utility's comprehensive nature, but its guiding premise of 'necessity' proves instrumental in both examples. This quality suggests that whilst utility may not be a definitive explanatory factor to understanding the instigation and perpetration of mass killings it is of universal relevance.

Capability:

The premise that the means of committing mass murder can be explained through dynamics that facilitate this phenomenon is of explanatory significance. In both case studies, it is useful to interpret capability's guiding tenet that a "small but well armed group"[118] can enact, and also compel, active and passive support for killing. Such dynamics facilitate the instigation of mass killings. Stalin's military purge was enacted by his loyal NKVD. Similarly, the 'small but well armed' Interahamwe militia played an instrumental role in spearheading the atrocities and in encouraging civilian participation. The frequency of a centrally instigated and selectively lead mass killings also

contribute to the notion that massacres can be explained as a rational phenomenon. Further, the notion that such a group generates wider participation and passivity in mass killings proves true. In a climate of NKVD administered persecutions, senior political figures, such as Khrushchev, obeyed Stalin's tyrannical premiership. Much the same, in Rwanda the Interahamwe militia persuaded ordinary civilians to either participate or passively support the Tutsi massacre. The strategic determinant of this capable perpetrator group, namely "levels of hatred, discrimination, or ideological commitment common to a society,"[119] guides appropriate explanatory interpretation. Indeed, senior NKVD figures exhibited ideological fervour that bought into Stalin's ideological pretence of safeguarding the revolution. Similarly, the Interahamwe was originally conceived as youth wing of an extremist Hutu movement. This ideological commitment was a symptom of post colonial in Rwandan society. Such commitment to Hutu governance was channelled by elites into the Interahamwe's ascendency as a select perpetrator group. The recurrent characteristic of an instrumental perpetrator, which facilitates the capability of leaders to instigate genocide, denotes the explanatory relevance of capability in instances of mass killings.

However, genocidal capability cannot be understood soley through these guiding tenets. Strategic methodology distances itself from broader sociological analysis when interpreting capability. Consequently, it fails to comprehensively explain how the genocidal capability of a perpetrator group is amassed. Not all NKVD agents willingly killed. Thus, the insistence that individuals within this group willingly kill, exclusively as a consequence of ideology or hateful norms in society, is untenable. Instead, explaining that many NKVD agents killed to save themselves from deportation or execution may well be understood psychologically. Similarly, the Interahamwe militia played an instrumental role in committing and encouraging civilians to kill, but these tenets do not account for all capabilities amassed by the regime. The militia drove wider participation and passivity by disseminating the government pretence of eliminating the Tutsi threat, but socio-psychological forces associated with a culture of obedience and persuasive radio propaganda also proved instrumental. Explaining propaganda' role in amassing perpetrators through notions of necessity benefits from bespoke interpretations of utility and capability. This progression demonstrates the cohesive nature of a strategic approach. Nonetheless, socio-psychological deficiencies ensure that strategic capability does not completely explain how mass killings can be implemented. Ultimately, strategic capability is insightful, but the extent to which the existence of an adept group of perpetrators explains the capability of leaders to instigate mass murder is limited.

Nonetheless, the pertinence of wider considerations demonstrates that a strategic approach is of macroscopic explanatory value. Wider dynamics can be identified that are seen to afford the capability to enact a mass killing. Its universal quality is afforded by both its structural and normative considerations. Normative dimensions of capability interpret the NKVD as an organisation that was a capable perpetrator group. The monolithic influence it enjoyed in Stalin's regime meant it willingly killed to maintain power. However, whilst this normative measure helps explains capabilities that facilitated the military purge it also detracts from the extent to which mass killings are understood entirely as a rational phenomenon. Notably, the willingness of the NKVD to kill spiralled out of control as it became consumed by the pursuit of greater power. Similarly, the capability tenet of defenceless victims identifies structural determinants of the genocide, namely the persuasive reach of propaganda and Rwanda's geography. These facets ensured that victims were defenceless and thus reinforced the regime's ability to enact genocide. But, whilst this tenet provides explanatory insight, it fails to account for the role of impulsive greed, and human attraction to collective actions. These considerations, to some extent, contributed to the structural capability to commit genocide, so strategic capability does not entirely explain the extent of killing. Further, these observations detract from the more rational and calculated nature proscribed by a strategic interpretation of mass killing. Respectively normative and structural interpretation helps account for how these massacres were achieved, but neither proves comprehensive. Both the consistent explanatory significance and limitations of strategic capability suggests it is universally relevant but by no means a comprehensive facet of the strategic approach. The capability's consistent relevance indicates universal value but its limited explanatory scope underlines the holistic inadequacy of a strategic account.

Thus in both instances, opportunity generates an interpretation that is relevant to understanding circumstances that afforded leaders an opportune moment in which to instigate mass killings. These opportunities were such that leaders could engineer the pretext of an existential threat, facilitating the process whereby perceived functions of 'necessity' incentivise passivity and participation in the killings. This noticeable progression between the factors of opportunity and utility is conducive to the beginning of a pertinent strategic approach to understanding mass killings.

Importantly, the relevance of opportunity as an explanatory factor supports the strategic premise that mass killings can be explained as rational phenomenon. Utility's consistent relevance at the instigator level suggests that, in other instances, it has the potential to explain why leaders instigate mass killings. At the perpetrator level, utility is of repeated explanatory significance. It explains how the functional incentives of perceived necessity and effectiveness are instrumental in motivating perpetrators. However, evidential socio-psychological deficiencies mean utility fails to comprehensively explain perpetration. Rather, it overemphasises the extent to which participation in killings was motivated by perceived functions. This shortcoming also detracts from the overarching premise of a strategic approach, namely that mass killings can be understood exclusively as a rational phenomenon.

Indeed, the establishment of a select group of well armed, organised and ideologically committed individuals affords leaders with the capability of implementing massacres. Similarly, capability's wider normative and structural determinants, namely the willingness of perpetrator groups to kill in order to maintain their power, or the circumstances surrounding defenceless victims, are also of explanatory significance. Whilst utility is integral in understanding the process of amassing capability, apparent socio-psychological deficiencies imply capability overemphasises the extent to which perpetration is determined by rational and calculated processes. Although integrating utility into the explanation of the ascendency of perpetrators is apparent, socio-psychological deficiencies highlight the limited extent to which it accounts for a regime's ability to commit mass murder. These consistent strengths and weaknesses denote that while a strategic account is of universal relevance, it fails to comprehensively explain mass killings. Accordingly, it does not constitute a holistic explanatory model.

Conclusion

This dissertation sets out to assess the relevance of a strategic account and the extent to which it explains the phenomenon of mass killing. Exploring traditional sociological and psychological approaches to understanding mass killing highlights that a strategic account has often been explained exclusively as a pre-ordained or circumstantial phenomenon.

A psychological account centres on the premise that the human psyche, whether triggered by particular circumstances or pre-ordained ones, drives the occurrence of mass killings. Childhood experiences of authoritarian fathers produce adults who are predisposed to commit atrocities when ordered by authority. Further, the Milgram experiment reasoned that it is inherent within human nature to obey the voice of authority; such commands subvert individual feelings of responsibility, allowing people to perpetrate violence on others. Human nature is also attracted to collective actions that result in mass killing. In times of hardship or great insecurity, people rally behind a once latent group identity as they are predisposed to collectively kill to ensure their own safety or prosperity. Sociological considerations of societal anxieties and centralised command structures also play a part in triggering the human condition of 'collective bloodlust'. All these factors are perceived to trigger mass murder.

In contrast, sociology emphasises the principal role of societal characteristics, explaining mass killing as a consequence of how nation states materialise and function. Modern nation state dynamics can cause and facilitate mass killings. Sociological constructions of nationalism arise in the state, forming the basis of group identity and causing group differentiation. This triggers discrimination and persecution. Pseudo-scientific approaches associated with the modern state can be used to dehumanise those who are seen to be at odds with national identity. Technological advances, bureaucratic structures and norms bestow the state with a logistical capability to commit murder on a massive scale. These processes also distance people from the act of killing, thus facilitating perpetration. Another account suggests that a nation from its infancy requires the construction of a single collective identity as means of asserting sovereign boundaries. This encourages one ethnic grouping to govern on the basis of its exclusive identity and to assert its own interpretation of national identity in pursuit of sovereign integrity. Ethnicities that are different from the prevailing national identity become a perceived national threat. Consequently, discrimination, persecution and mass murder can ensue.

Having explored these traditional explanatory approaches to mass killing, it becomes apparent that they interpret it as either a pre-ordained or circumstantial phenomenon. Whilst socio and psychological models differ, they both overlook any strategic rationale, missing that massacres are driven by premeditated and well-calculated

considerations. The strategic model proposes that a perceived function determines the primary motivation for instigating or perpetrating mass murder. Thus, a strategic account emerges as a novel and autonomous means of explaining mass killings. The potential insight offered by a new explanatory approach has justified the need for this critical assessment.

From the perspectives of Valentino and Barnes, a strategic account is fundamental to explaining when, how and why mass killings occur. Yet, this hypothesis is by no means certain. Interpreting the explanatory assumptions of these key strategic works provides one succinct model that is amenable to a comprehensive critical assessment. Both works contend that mass killing can be understood as a rational phenomenon, in which a perceived function motivates its instigation and perpetration. Rational and calculated processes are explained as precursors to providing regimes with the opportunity and capability to enact a strategy of mass killing. These explanatory processes reside within the categories of opportunity, utility and capability. This framework has determined the criteria of this critical assessment. Each factor, with its guiding assumptions, must afford a degree of explanatory insight to demonstrate the relevance and extent to which a strategic approach accounts for mass murder.

Accordingly, utility must ascertain specific motives that drive mass killings through perceived functions of 'necessity' and 'effectiveness'. Human slaughter must be explained as a strategy but also as an intricate phenomenon in which various motives can apply to instigators and perpetrators. It has been argued that if utility could interpret and distinguish multiple functions that incentivise different echelons of a perpetrator group, then the pertinence of this premise would be ascertained. Assessing capability as another component demands both structural and normative evaluation. Bespoke strategic interpretation should be able to interpret and attribute these characteristics with a regime's ability to enact a genocidal policy. It is also apparent that the model must demonstrate that particular circumstances afford the opportunity to implement the strategy of human slaughter. Progression between these three considerations should be measured by the manner in which opportunity, capability and utility are conducive to one another. The prospect of progression in the case studies would denote the emergence of an instrumental explanatory narrative.

A strategic interpretation of Stalin's 'Great Terror' affords extensive insight. Notably, the progression between the factors of opportunity, utility and capability embodies an explanatory narrative that is relevant to this mass killing. Opportunity ascertains that, in the formative years of the communist revolution, Stalin was provided an opportune moment in which he could instigate a purge of the Red Army. Purported revolution provided Stalin with an ideological pretext for his political strategy of mass murder. Utility interprets that he was motivated to undertake his military phase of the purge as it functioned to secure and reinforce his absolute power. It also identifies that the additional functional incentive of eliminating 'communist saboteurs' motivated senior NKVD perpetrators. As capability purports, this well armed group enabled Stalin to implement the purge. This organisation proved normatively and structurally capable of murder. Its mere existence drove passivity towards the purge. However, it is apparent that many perpetrators were driven to kill out of human fear. Observed psychological considerations imply that the extent of the purge exceeded its intended function. Therefore ,it is misguided to interpret the purge as a sole consequence of rational processes. Nonetheless, strategic consistencies are indicative of the broader explanatory premise that killing en masse, in this instance, can be largely understood as a rationale phenomenon. The relevance of a strategic account is thus evidential.

Similarly, the account proves instrumental to understanding the Rwandan genocide. This mass killing can be explained largely as a calculated phenomenon in which logical utility compelled a genocidal strategy. Opportunity interprets that the circumstances of a civil war and a presidential assassination meant Hutu hardliners could seize power and instigate genocide. The opportunistic circumstance of war also relates with the utility of killing Tutsis. Hutu hardliners were motivated to implement genocide, believing it would prevent the advance of the RPF rebels and therefore their defeat. In addition, utility interprets how the government mobilised perpetrators with it pretext of 'ethnic necessity'. However, explaining this persuasive functional incentive requires a sociological analysis, which underlines that colonial rule and extensive state influence underpinned this. Again, capability identifies how a small and well-armed group enables a regime to implement human slaughter. Hardliner efforts established an Interahamwe militia

that was normatively and structurally adept at perpetrating genocide. Capability progresses with utility, highlighting how propaganda amassed perpetrators, produced passive support, and rendered Tutsi victims defenceless. It interprets how circumstances sealed the fate of victims and how they contributed to the scale of killing. Yet, full understanding of propagandist persuasions of 'ethnic survival' requires the psychological insight of 'collective bloodlust'. Circumstantial greed also highlights that this mass killing cannot be entirely understood as a rational phenomenon. Again, a strategic account overemphasises the extent to which this massacre can be understood as a rational phenomenon. Nonetheless, its relevance is such that it largely explains this genocide as a strategic consequence.

Both of the two empirical studies demonstrate that the strategic factors of opportunity, utility and capability provide consistent explanatory insight. These consistencies denote the universal relevance of the strategic account. The emerging progressive links between these factors fulfils the requisite criterion of critical assessment. Such cohesion establishes a broader explanatory narrative that is very relevant to explaining these massacres. Nonetheless, persistent weaknesses, namely inherent socio and psychological deficiencies, highlight that this approach cannot comprehensively explain mass killings. Rational and calculated processes are instrumental determinants of this phenomenon, yet socio and psychological accounts interpret the underlying role of incidental dynamics. Thus, the assumptions of Valentino and Barnes overemphasise the role that rational processes play in this phenomenon. The holistic inadequacy of this approach is apparent from the limitations identified in this critical assessment. In light of these findings, it is clear that a strategic explanatory account of mass killing is of extensive relevance, but evidentially this human tragedy cannot be exclusively understood as a strategic consequence. Respectively, academic efforts to counter this phenomenon would be best served through an inclusive spectrum of strategic, sociological and psychological aspects.

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