

**Poverty Re-Measured: A New Approach to Assessing the Role of Poverty in  
Facilitating Violent Conflict**

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## *Background – Questions and Motivation*

Roughly halfway through my college career, I had the chance to spend several months travelling and studying throughout various parts of East Africa. During these travels, I studied conflict in the developing world, and conversed with both its victims and its perpetrators.

What captured my fascination more than anything during this time were the stories I was told by conflict's perpetrators. Each testimony revealed some sense of worldview at the time of conflict, worldviews which had by all means been shaped by politics and environment. That influence, to me, gave the impression that there was *something* altering these perpetrators mindsets in such a way that was allowing them to commit inhumane violence. I believed that *something* to be an extremely nuanced form of poverty.

The idea of poverty possessing some kind of relationship with security makes sense. Germany for example, incorporates money for international development into its national security budget, assuming that poverty and security are very much intertwined. In a similar vein, numerous testimonies are coming forward from former terrorists, particularly in failing states like Somalia, which are revealing in hindsight how poverty played a significant role in influencing them to commit acts of terrorism.

In this context, I wanted to take a closer look at what that role was, and specifically *how the lack of certain human capabilities, or poverty, can influence an average person to commit violent acts of terror*. My specific focus for this is to study the case of Rwanda in 1994, a time during which its government mobilized one of swiftest mass extermination campaigns ever

against its Tutsi minority. This tragedy, while not conceived by it, was perpetrated predominantly by a civilian population.

The case of Rwanda raises several questions which I hope to shed light on through this research. My prevailing concern is studying the question of *how the absence of human capabilities, poverty, can influence individuals to commit violent acts of terror*. In examining this question, I hope to shed some light on contemplating, among other questions – does poverty make a society more susceptible to violence? How are the commonly attributed roots of terror related to human capability? And, by understanding these relationships, how can creating capabilities targeted at preventing violence allow for more peaceful societies?

To answer these questions, I hope to first redefine poverty in the context of human capability. I noticed during my time in Rwanda that the role of poverty on influencing perpetrators widely referred to poverty in the context of material deprivation, rather than deficiencies in human capability. I saw this trend as problematic because it seemed to vastly oversimplify the impact of poverty, and saw it as a completely separate influence from other motives such as ethnic prejudice, coercion, and wartime insecurity. I want to shed light on how the very fact of these other motives reflects the absence of some human capability inherently related to poverty.

As a result, I have identified ten core capabilities, ones which Martha Nussbaum conceived and described as the *Ten Central Capabilities* for living a life of dignity. By assessing if these human capabilities were available for perpetrators in 1994 Rwanda, I hope to provide a better understanding of how poverty links together the commonly attributed roots of conflict, and how it enabled the full spectrum of motives to be able to occur.

## Literature Review

### Poverty as Human Capability

Amartya Sen has distinguished himself as one of the leading figures in defining poverty as human capability. In doing so, Sen adds complexity to the notion of poverty, arguing that it is far more nuanced than we might realize. Rather than poverty merely being the fact of being poor, Sen argues that there are core capabilities necessary for a life of dignity which allow people to achieve certain ends, not all of which are economic (Sen 30). Measuring the presence or absence of these capabilities can be far more effective at determining quality of life than more traditional metrics such as poverty lines and economic indicators.

The *Institute for Policy Analysis and Research – Rwanda*, is one of the leading think tanks in Kigali which specializes in conducting and publishing research related to human development in Rwanda. Its publications reflect how the current government of Rwanda recognizes the importance of measuring capability, and has incorporated the idea of “creating capabilities” into how it plans to battle its modern challenges associated with extreme poverty (IPAR 12). A simple example the Rwandan government provides for contextualization, is that in order to achieve the capability of employment, one must first have the capability to access adequate education. Consequently, it has substantially increased investment in areas related to education.

Yet rather than capability merely being an effective means of promoting development, the absence of capabilities can potentially reflect a legitimate kind of danger. Philip Zimbardo, a prominent psychologist and designer of the *Stanford Prison Experiment*, has conducted countless forms of research related to understanding the “psychology of evil.” His studies speak to the fact

that the extremely poor tend to commit violent acts more so due to the situations they find themselves in, as opposed to personal moral deficiency (Zambardo 25). This is revealing in the context of measuring capabilities because “the freedom to live different types of life is determined by a person’s capability set” (Sen 33). In this sense, creating capabilities becomes an essential tool in allowing individuals to be less susceptible to the dangers posed by the situational environments which they find themselves in.

An important consideration is to address *what* particular capabilities are the ones so consequential as to define what justice requires for a life of dignity. Martha Nussbaum provides a useful explanation to this question, and conceived what she defines as the *10 Central Capabilities* for a life of dignity. In doing so, she understands capability as individual freedoms (Nussbaum 61). Among those freedoms are the following (Nussbaum 33)...

#1	The ability to live a full normal length life.
#2	The right to bodily health, adequate nourishment, and adequate shelter.
#3	The right to bodily integrity and the ability to move freely without fear of harm.
#4	The ability to have senses, imagination, and thought. The ability to think freely and critically in a “truly human way” as informed by an adequate education. The ability to use one’s mind in an environment in which freedom of expression is protected.
#5	The ability to emotionally attach to things outside of the self.

#6	The ability of practical reason, to form a personal conception of the good, and to engage in critical thinking and the planning of one's life.
#7	Capability of affiliation and the right to live freely with other human beings. The ability to show concern for others as equal regardless of background.
#8	The ability to play and do recreational activities.
#9	The ability to have control over your environment in the form of free and non-coerced political participation, and the ability to acquire material wealth and maintain it.
#10	The ability to live with concern for nature and the natural world.

By understanding poverty through this lens, my research hopes to shed light on how absent capabilities can facilitate the emergence of causal factors of genocide.

### *Terrorism and Poverty*

Some of the most provocative research concerning the relationship between terrorism and poverty has been conducted by Alan Krueger. Krueger's findings indicate that there is no causal relationship between terrorism and poverty, and that violent acts of terror operate largely independently of economic conditions (Krueger 1).

Moreover, Krueger finds the notion of creating a false link between poverty and terrorism dangerous because he believes that it could unjustly divert international aid away from

developing nations which are not experiencing conflict, humiliate the developing world, and create perverse incentives to commit terror as means of accessing international aid (Krueger 2).

To make observations about this relationship, Krueger initially measures participation in terrorism on the same cost benefit analysis scale which might be used to predict participation in all crime. In doing so, he weighs an individual's desire maximize their utility against increased penalties and law enforcement (Krueger 7). To model this, Krueger weighs an individual's marginal cost of committing crime against their marginal benefit of doing so, and forecasts that the optimal amount of crime produced will be at the intersection of the two points.

Economically speaking, Krueger believes that in an accurate cost benefit analysis, the principle factor influencing shifts in marginal benefit would be political devotion to a cause, rather than poverty. He uses the example of Hamas suicide bomber recruitment to indicate that it is likely that ideological commitment far outweighs deprivation, lack of literacy, and other factors which one might assume to be more prominent influences of terrorism. In fact, given an overflow of willing participants, the more educated are actually preferred to carry out terrorist attacks for Hamas, as they are considered more passionate about their cause (Krueger 8).

Hate crimes are an additional form of violence which Krueger uses a cost benefit analysis scale to assess. He believes that both hate crimes and terrorism have ideological roots, and are not motivated by poverty or the strength of the economy. Using the Jim Crow South as an example, he finds that an increased number of lynchings occurred alongside surges in the value of cotton (Krueger 11). Using this insight, he suggests that educational attainment and financial wellbeing are inconsequential in fueling the kind of radicalism which would motivate terrorism. Moreover, he notes that the better educated more broadly make up the population of fighters

committed to radical terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah in Lebanon or Hamas in Palestine (Krueger 19).

At first glance, Krueger's work appears at odds with my hypothesis, that poverty is a determinant of willingness to participate in terrorism and genocide. However, by redefining poverty in the context of human capability, much Krueger's work actually supports the notion that poverty exerts a tremendous influence in motivating terrorism. In fact, the trends which Krueger identifies both in Lebanon and Palestine draw tremendous parallels to the case of Rwanda. By expounding on the work of Krueger, I hope to reveal the underlying role which poverty plays in motivating the kind of extremism which facilitates conflict perpetration.

### *Poverty as Deprivation*

Much of the existing literature which relates to poverty and the Rwandan genocide understands poverty as deprivation. Poverty as deprivation is the idea that the poor are in poverty because they are deprived – of money, water, or some sense of a voice.

Phil Magnarella is one of the chief observers of Rwanda who highlights this trend in the years leading up to genocide. For Magnarella, deprivation was the primary causal factor which drove genocide (Magnarella). He argues that economic competition between Hutu and Tutsi in the face of scarcity fueled a competitive animosity between the two ethnic groups. He contends in the face of drought, soil degradation, and diminishing returns on exports, a natural competition emerged between Hutu farmers and Tutsi pastoralists, and they became forced by necessity to battle over increasingly diminishing amounts of arable land (Magnarella). Magnarella argues that



the Hutu often found themselves on the losing side of this battle, and by consequence, found themselves deprived of food, money, and resources needed to provide for their health and wellbeing. As a result, Magnarella sees the genocide as a concerted effort made by deprived Hutu farmers to take their future back into their hands.

Scott Straus in *The Order of Genocide*, sees the role of poverty in genocide as largely related to deprivation, and argues that many individuals used the context of genocide to better themselves economically through various tactics such as looting and robbery. In this sense however, he views deprivation as more of a side effect of genocide, rather than as a cause itself. He supports this with evidence which demonstrates that an increasing number of thefts occurred at the end of the genocide rather than at the beginning of it, indicating that much of the looting may have occurred simply as a response to scarcity and state collapse.

Casually, Straus tends to favor other prevailing motivations such as wartime uncertainty and social coercion to explain the root sources of genocide (Straus 66). Like Krueger, Straus casts doubt on the relationship between poverty and security being causal. He does so largely because he measures poverty on the same material scale as Krueger. In doing so, he debunks the notion that *Interhamwe* fighters were deprived and unattached youth. His studies on levels of employment, education, and economic condition notes that the makeup of perpetrators “broadly reflected the makeup of the general population” (Straus 113).

My research hopes to build on the work of Straus, but in doing so, highlight how the measurements he uses to assess the poverty of *Interhamwe* fighters – employment and education among others, are not necessarily to key to assessing the full extent of poverty’s influence. More

substantive evaluations would focus on studying capability, which will be provided in detail through my analysis.

### *Prevailing Trends in Perpetrator Testimonies*

In *My Son, It is a Long Story*, Edouard Bamporiki offers a compilation of testimonies from a wide range of perpetrators. These testimonies offer a firsthand explanation from the mouths of the perpetrators themselves, and in doing so, they provide a glimpse of what life and worldview was like in the years leading up to the genocide and during the conflict itself.

While this contribution is helpful, it is not infallible. They are conducted retrospectively ten years after the genocide, and given the politics of reconstruction in Rwanda, the tale told in hindsight may not entirely mirror events as they were. Evidence of this comes in the form of countless perpetrators describing “bad leadership” as the party responsible for the genocide. While politically, this might be an important tool of reconstruction, it may not entirely be helpful for perfectly understanding the past.

Mahmood Mamdani is one the premier scholars who discusses the influence of *ethnic hatred* on how genocide was able to play out in Rwanda. Mamdani discusses the historical roots of Hutu and Tutsi groups, which he argues, were socially constructed colonial conceptions. The favoritism which the colonial administration granted to those of the Tutsi minority allowed them to rule immediately following independence. However, the resentment of ruling Tutsis by the Hutu majority resulted in a prolonged period of ethnic unrest and rebellion which politicized

ethnicity, and made adversaries out of a Rwandan people who largely shared the same ancestral origins.

Compounding this political stress was the mass distribution of *ethnic propaganda* which created false historical narratives intended to divide the Rwandan people. Much of this false history was derived from the Hamitic myth of a group of Afro-Europeans, the Tutsis, being construed as “invaders” who had descended from Ethiopia to what would become Rwanda. Their perceived quasi European ancestry granted the Tutsi special treatment by the colonial administration, and allowed many Hutus to see themselves as the true natives of Rwanda.

In the years leading up to genocide, that myth would resurface as Hutu propaganda to breed ethnic resentment. Social constructions regarding race would engage in all manner of stereotyping, accusing the Tutsis of having more “European features,” and having better jobs, more money, and better prospects for the future. In reality, countless Tutsis had been politically disenfranchised and personally targeted in the years leading up to genocide.

In 1995, Philip Gourevith wrote his famous journal, *We Wish to Inform you that Tomorrow we will be Killed with our Families*. In it, he shares countless stories of devastation and loss throughout the conflict. More than anything which stands out from his work, he talks about a fractured nation full of people who were scared and divided. His work speaks to a number of factors being responsible for how genocide occurred in Rwanda. Among those factors, *ethnicity* and *state coercion* are perhaps the most at fault.

One recurring theme throughout Bamporiki’s work is the idea of *state obedience or coercion* serving as a causal factor in facilitating violence. He shares stories of high level officials recounting pressure they faced to carry out their orders, and describe facing job loss and

intimidation for nonconformity. That same ideology trickles down to the foot soldiers who recalled themselves being *coerced* threateningly to take part in the attacks.

Another common motive posited by Scott Straus is the question of *wartime insecurity*. Scholars write that in the face of state collapse, the Hutu population was motivated to rally against the Tutsis as a *war tactic* to protect themselves from “foreign invaders” (Straus 67). In this sense, the act of performing genocide became an act of ensuring state security, particularly for hardline members of the ruling party.

### *Other Contributions*

In *Coffee and Genocide*, Issac Kamol describes the politics at play in the years immediately preceding the genocide. He argues that during the rule of president Juvenal Habyarimana, the president was able to use webs of patronage to maintain political allegiances. This patronage however, was dependent on the export sums acquired through the sale of coffee, Rwanda’s chief export on the world market. Yet fluctuations in the price of coffee created major economic shocks which caused these webs to collapse.

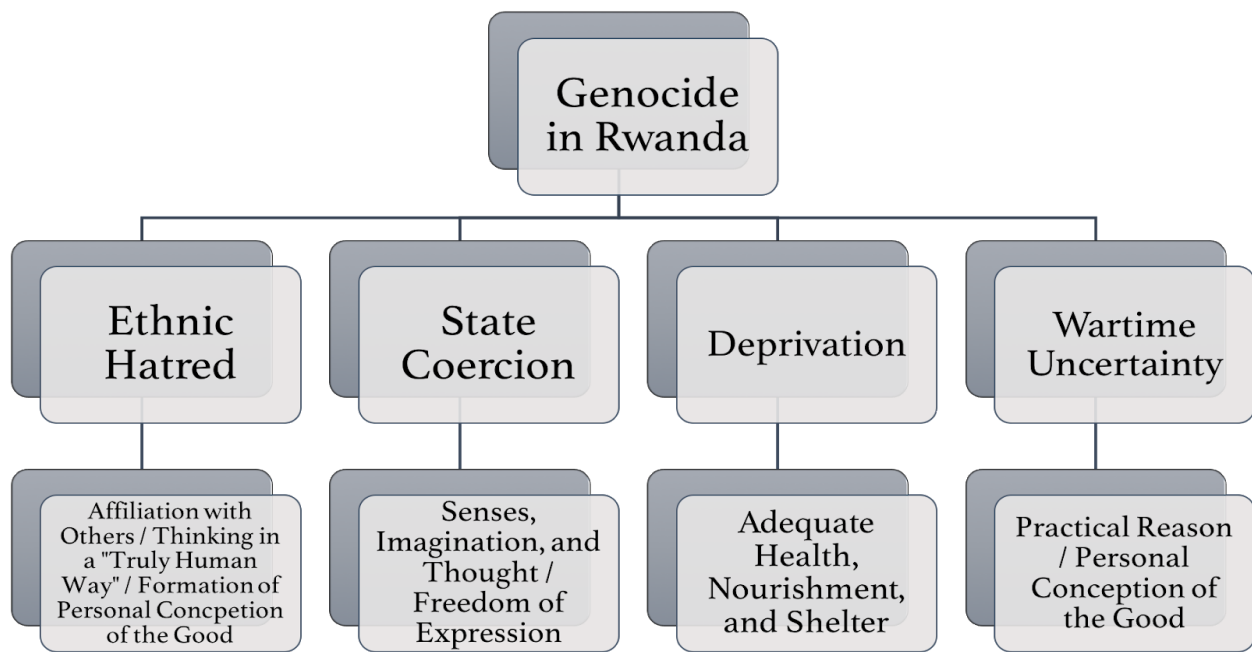
Furthermore, he claims that this shock coincided with a period of World Bank structural readjustment which pressured Rwanda to democratize as a condition for maintaining its foreign aid. Consequently, as Habyarimana’s webs of patronage fell apart, and his former cronies became political adversaries who created competing political parties which, by technical definitions, “democratized the country.” These new parties created radical youth wings for which they would mobilize and intimidate locals into party submission. Many of these new parties

became hardline *ethnic* parties, which would ultimately wind up blurring the distinction between ethnicity and politics.

In *Killing Neighbors*, Lee Ann Fujii sheds light on the hierarchical structure of webs of violence in Rwanda. She contends that the swift mobilization of individuals to commit genocide could have only occurred in the context of a deeply hierarchical society which valued obedience to authority. She uses the case studies of examining leaders from different districts to highlight the *obedience* at play.

Additionally helpful is the work of Mark Drumbl. In his work, he discusses his history of counselling the accused in Rwanda immediately following genocide. His accounts provide some sense of perpetrators' mindsets given his firsthand work with the accused themselves. It provides an important context in understanding how many genocidaires envisioned themselves soldiers acting in the face of *wartime anxiety*.

### Methodology



As the hierarchy above indicates, I believe there are four causal factors which lead to the outcome of genocide in Rwanda - *ethnic hatred, deprivation, state obedience or coercion, and feelings of wartime insecurity*.

Based off of a synthesis of wealths of existing research regarding Rwanda, I plan to use economic modelling as a means to demonstrate how each of these four factors could potentially influence shifts in the marginal cost and benefit of genocide perpetration leading to an increased likelihood of engaging in genocide. As demonstrated by the shifts, I aim to explain the specific role each influence played in promoting genocide. And finally, in the context of that role, I will demonstrate how each causal factor indicated the absence of certain core capabilities related to poverty.

In establishing this relationship, I hope to advance the possibility that poverty and the perpetration of acts of terrorism have are related, even if it is not apparent at first glance. In doing so, I hope to also demonstrate how poverty links together the leading theories regarding how genocide was able to play out in Rwanda.

This research relies on a range of disciplines. Most immediately, history provides for a more appropriate understanding of context, time, and place. By having a sense of what life was like for the typical Rwanda in 1994, we can best understand what motivated their decisions.

Sociology and anthropology will be critical because I hope to study human behavior, particularly as it responds to changes in society in the context of certain social conditions.

Economics and economic modelling will likewise be helpful in measuring incentives regarding how perpetrators made decisions in the context of Rwanda. Understanding the factors

which influence marginal cost and benefit will provide for better comprehension regarding why genocide played out as it did.

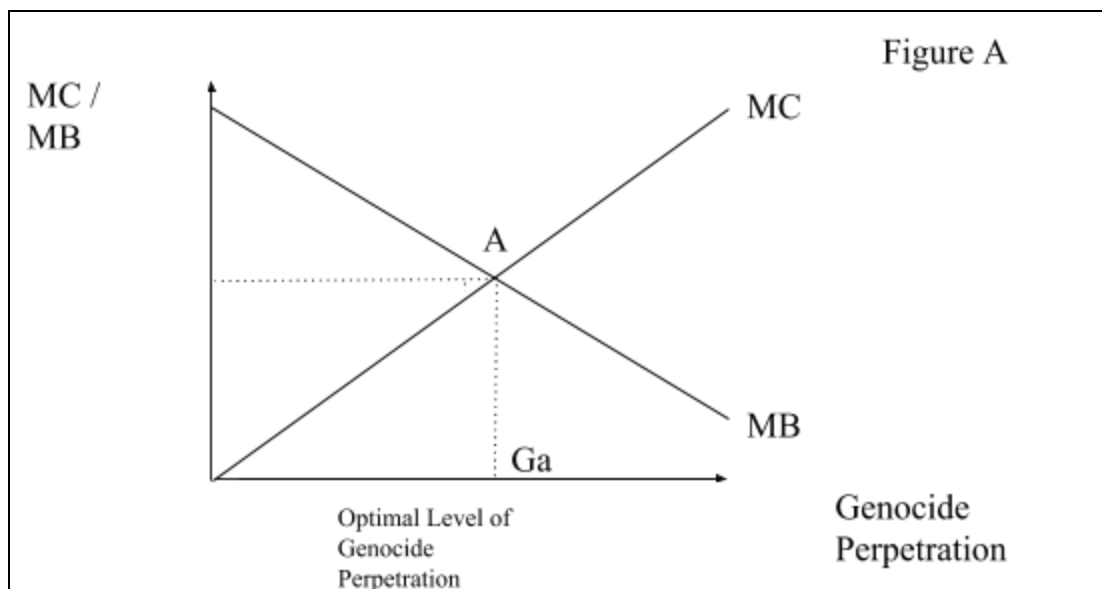
More than anything however, this research will be related to politics. Genocide was willingly employed as a political tactic. However, aside from a few privileged elite, few Rwandans would have actually benefited from the genocide itself. Yet given the politics at play, many individuals construed their personal marginal benefit as mutually agreed upon with the aims of their political movements. Studying politics, I believe, provides explanations for how poverty can be exploited to socially mobilize people to commit atrocity on large scales, and for how people can be made radically devoted to a political cause.

## Analysis

### Overview

So far we have effectively identified which factors were so consequential as to influence individuals to commit acts of genocide. Yet equally important remains the question of *how* they were able to do so.

Economic modelling provides a useful outlet for understanding these relationships. In this perspective, expected genocide perpetration can be modelled by understanding that in a given society, the optimal<sup>1</sup> amount of genocide perpetration will be determined at the point where the average individual's marginal benefit from committing genocide intercepts with their marginal cost of doing so, point A.



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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this research, optimal does not refer to its literal meaning, favorable or desired, as the desired level of genocide in a society will almost always be at point zero. Instead optimal here refers to its economic definition, the point where marginal benefit intersects with marginal cost.



In a typical society, the modern United States for example, the equilibrium of these two points would lie at a point close to zero. Intuitively, this makes sense, because only the most radicalized individuals would see themselves as marginally benefitting from genocide perpetration, so the marginal benefit curve would be positioned at a point very near to the axis. Additionally, given the presence of highly trained law enforcement and other preventive factors, the marginal cost of committing genocide would also be positioned at a point very near to the axis, intersecting marginal benefit at a point near zero.

Yet the case of Rwanda presents one unlike most. Somehow, various influences related to poverty affected the shifting of marginal cost and benefit of genocide perpetration in such a way as to move both curves to the right, ultimately resulting in increasing amounts of perpetration. The following evaluates how this may have occurred.

### *Poverty and Terrorism*

Before discussing the case of Rwanda, it may be useful to briefly evaluate the role that poverty is normally understood to play in motivating acts of terror. A tempting inclination is to dismiss the role of poverty by noting that not all countries which experience material poverty experience genocide. This is true; however, this insight is not entirely helpful for assessing the question of *can* poverty influence genocide, as I argue we see in the case of Rwanda. To do so, I would like to first dispel a few notions which would minimize the role of poverty in these sorts of conflicts.

One prominent work which studies the relationship between poverty and conflict comes from Alan Krueger. He assesses the role of poverty on terrorism. I argue that genocide

perpetration, especially in the case of Rwanda, was a form of state sponsored violence targeted at civilians to motivate political change, and for technical purposes, may be considered as one of the many forms of terrorism which Krueger refers to.

As mentioned, Krueger does not believe that poverty has a causal influence on terrorism (Krueger 1). He makes this claim by first comparing the marginal cost and benefit of committing petty crime to the marginal cost and benefit of committing terrorism. He argues that the impoverished, perhaps due to diminishing job prospects or other variables, might find themselves more likely to try to increase their marginal benefit by engaging in illegal practices such as drug dealing or theft. Moreover, should the poor find themselves living in places where crime is more commonplace, they may consider their chances of not being caught as more likely, which would amount to a reduction in their marginal cost (Krueger 7). Ultimately, the shifting of the marginal cost and benefit curves of crime to the right would result in increased rates of crime.

Yet Krueger argues that the same logic does not apply to terrorism and genocide, and he uses the specific example of Hamas suicide bombers to illustrate this point. Particularly, he notes that the shifting of marginal benefit is not affected by what he sees as poverty, but rather by what he sees as ideological commitment to a political cause (Krueger 10). More clearly, he sees perpetrators as committing these atrocities due to their desire to achieve a political end, rather than their desire to increase their total utility (Krueger 8). He evaluates this presumption by examining a positive correlation he identifies between increased years of schooling, and increased political radicalization. He finds that a majority of suicide bombing candidates for Hamas had been highly educated, literate, and extremely well versed in the Quran (Krueger 8).

Krueger also finds that terrorists are not typically those who are impoverished relative to the people around them. He sheds light on how the average Hezbollah militant in Lebanon tends to have far more means than the average member of the population. He measures these means through economic indicators such as occupation of work and car ownership, among other variables which might more generally be associated with deprivation more so than poverty (Krueger 21).

Fundamentally however, the definition, and by consequence the indicators, which Krueger uses to evaluate poverty fail to adequately realize the full extent of its influence. I argue that Krueger's work, if extended, actually reveals how certain absent capabilities motivate radicalization, which motivates conflict perpetration.

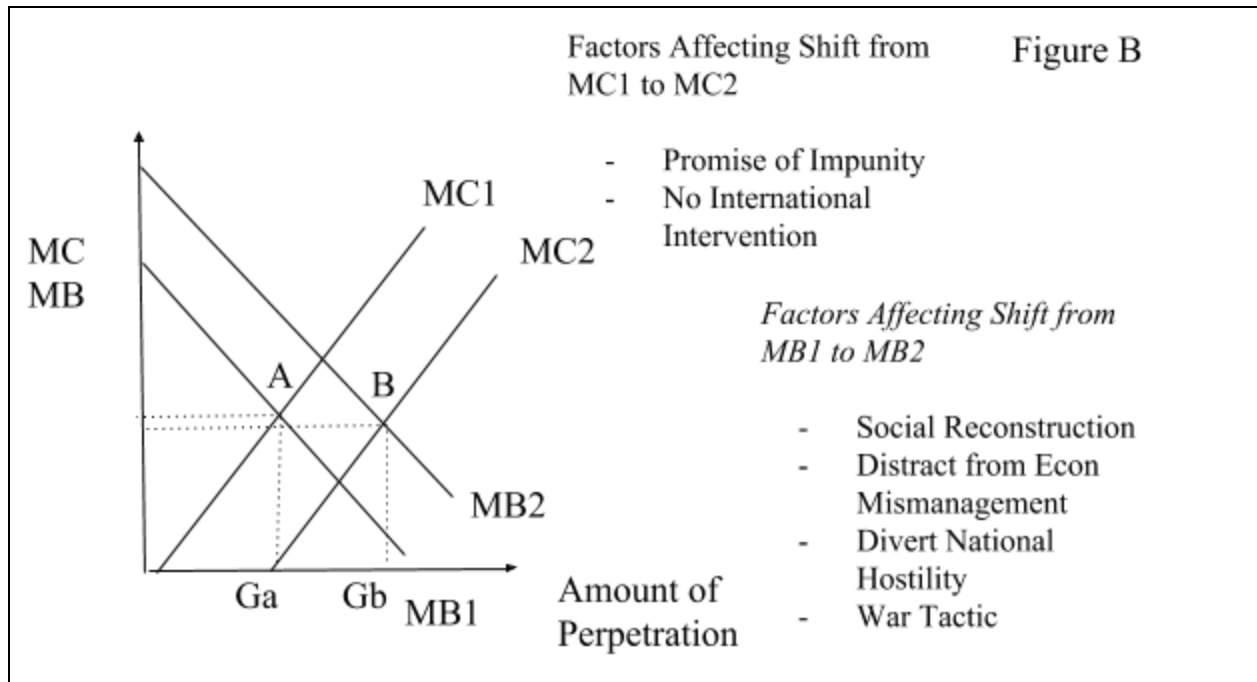
Fundamentally, Krueger believes that politics and political ideology, more so than poverty, is the factor at play most affecting the shifts in marginal benefit which cause increased terrorism. I argue that the distinction between the two enters a gray area. While politics and political views influence shifts in marginal benefit, those political views are the outcome of certain deficiencies of capabilities which may not be fully realized. Through drawing comparisons to the case of Rwanda, I hope to extend Krueger's work to show the unconscious role of poverty at play in motivating conflict.

### *Deprivation*

Among factors related to normally understood measures of deprivation, scholars note that the typical Rwandan in the years leading up to 1994 might have experienced a lack of economic mobility, feelings of helplessness, and a bleak outlook on the future. These combined factors created the proper preconditions for individuals, who in a flurry of frustration and resentment, seized the opportunity of state collapse to perceivably take back some kind of ownership over their future. In this economic context, the ideological factors might be seen as secondary. Phil Magnarella, a chief proponent of this theory, commented famously that “political identity is, after all, purely a mental concept. Land, people, and food are not” (Magnarella 517).

### *Ruling Elites*

Poverty as deprivation in Rwanda might be understood to have a dual influence. It provides rationalization both for why the ruling party sought to employ genocide as a political tool, and for why the average individual might have been motivated carry out the genocide.



The ruling party of Rwanda found itself in an economic crunch in 1994. In years leading up to then, the global price of coffee was swiftly declining. Traditionally, ruling elites had been able to exploit this industry to extract wealth and develop webs of patronage which maintained their support in the one party system. As global coffee prices plummeted, the state became required to subsidize its domestic production using money redirected from foreign aid (Kamola 65). This economic measure allowed the coffee market to remain on life support, and maintain a culture of clientelism, but it came at the cost of accruing more than one billion dollars in national debt. Faced with structural readjustment, international pressure to power share, and an invasion from Rwandan Patriotic Front, the government needed a quick solution (Straus 28).

Such a scenario created an environment in which ruling elites could see themselves as marginally benefitting from genocide. In the face of intense economic tension, the ruling party mobilized to divert blame off of themselves and onto the Tutsi minority, a group which had traditionally been favored by the colonial administration, yet in recent years, had been the

victims of intense discrimination following ongoing ethnic tensions (Drumbl 558). To the elites, genocide offered a kind of social restructuring of Rwandan society, and could also serve as a war tactic against the Rwandan Patriotic Front, an invading rebel force made up largely of Tutsi refugees (Straus 28). These combined conditions shifted the marginal benefit of mobilizing genocide to the right.

Likewise, the marginal cost may have been affected by the promise of impunity. In the years immediately preceding the genocide, American intervention in Somalia created a kind of national uproar following the very public death of nineteen American soldiers. As a result, America adopted an increasingly isolationist mindset regarding intervention in foreign wars, particularly those in developing nations. Similarly, the United Nations and the international community's recent history of negligence and non intervention in the developing world shifted the marginal cost of mobilizing genocide to the right because the ruling elite was able to operate under the impression that they would not be persecuted by the international community.

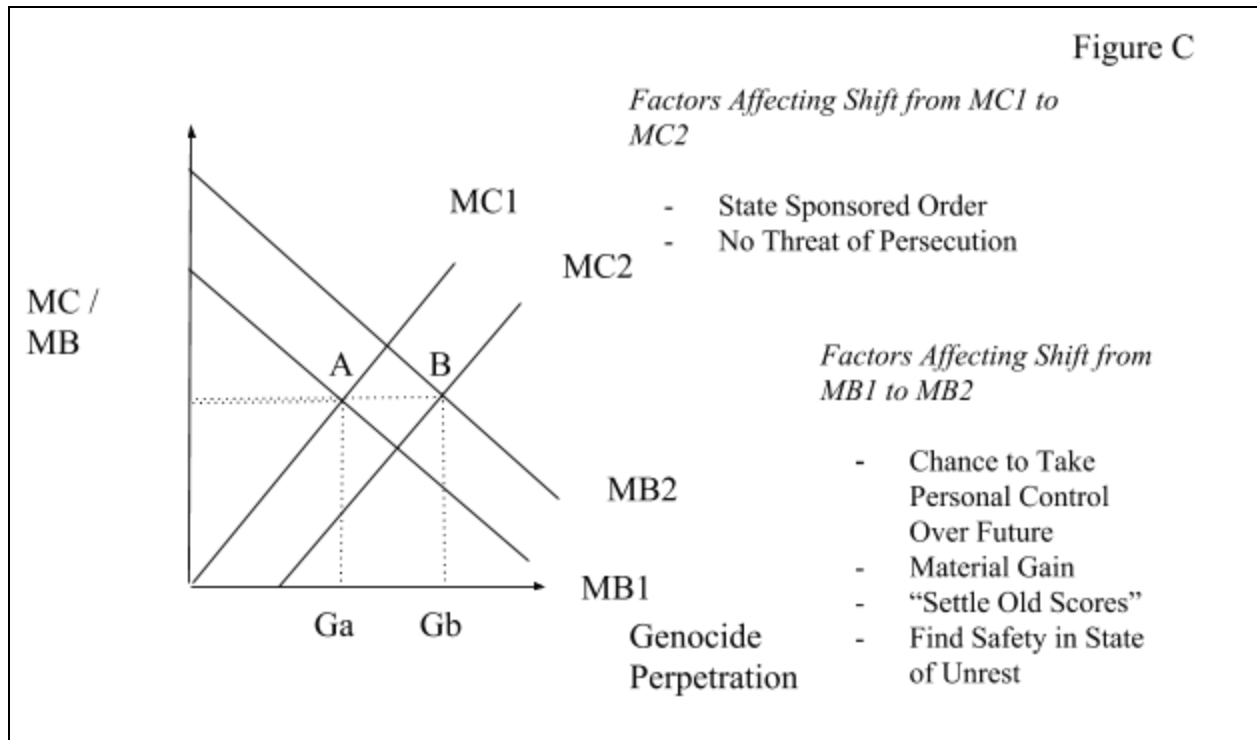
The shifting of marginal benefit and marginal cost is reflected in *Figure B*, where where both curves shift right. The new intersection of the two points moves the optimal point of genocide perpetration from point A to point B, which reflects an increase in perpetration as the amount of perpetration at point B is great than that of point A.

Moreover, the economic hardship faced by the government coincided with a time when it faced intense pressure from aid organizations and the international community to democratize. While the country did not necessarily become more democratic, the political landscape was "liberalized," allowing various different parties to legally form.

As coffee revenues continued to decline, president Habyarimana's webs of patronage continued to fall apart, and the political sphere became increasingly radical and hostile, oftentimes employing malicious propaganda campaigns (Straus 25). Within this atmosphere of divisive politics, a broad political alliance was formed under the banner of "Hutu Power" (Straus 29). Aligning itself with the ruling party, the alliance began to purchase arms using aid redirected from the the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and began planning a genocide against its Tutsi minority (Kamola 558). Within an economic frame, the ruling party members may not necessarily have been ideologues, but needed only to recognize genocide as a drastic, but convenient, political tool (Hamburg 34).

#### *Average Rwandans*

Material deprivation likewise affected the shifting of cost and benefit for influencing ground level perpetrators as well. In essence, as general standards of living rapidly declined for the average Rwandan, many attributed the countries woes to the presence of the Tutsi, rather than to failing economic policies. In doing so, many viewed the act of performing genocide as taking their future into their own hands and taking their country back.



Worth considering in this paradigm is the question of why standards of living were so poor for the average Rwandan. As is the case in many instances of extractive economies, the citizens suffer intensely following shocks in world price of their exports. In the years leading up to the genocide, these economic outcomes would constantly manifest themselves in everyday life. One tangible impact was mass inflation paired with decreased foreign consumption of Rwandan goods. With the devaluation of money, everyday products became more and more out of reach while wages and revenue streams steadily declined. While the state continued to incur debt, state-owned enterprise went bankrupt (Kamola 584).

The human impact of that bankruptcy would mean that many civil service jobs could no longer be funded resulting in wage delays and staff cuts. Public education collapsed. Various medical services and providers became less effective as medicine and drugs became more difficult to acquire. Previously contained diseases resurfaced on a wider level, with malaria rates



in particular increasing by 21% (Kamola 584). Continued drops in coffee prices forced many farmers to abandon coffee, the nation's chief export, in favor of food.

During the economic collapse, few social services were in place to provide safeguards against these rapidly declining standards of living. Wealth distribution became near nonexistent, with Butare, a region with nearly 20% of Rwanda's population, receiving only 1% of government funding (Kamola 586). The ongoing war against the RPF in the north did much to disrupt the tourism industry, ultimately sealing off the ground trade routes through Mombasa, which would further increase the price of imported goods (Magnarella).

As scapegoats for all of these woes, the Tutsi became increasingly stigmatized, and political alliances, including the ruling party, stirred up rampant political tension by aligning their party platforms with their ethnic interests. In doing so, political parties capitalized on the anger which many Rwandans felt about the state of their lives, and directed it at the Tutsi.

Thus, in a state of deprivation, individuals were able to see themselves as personally benefiting from the extermination of the Tutsi. In this worldview, the destruction of the Tutsi would be the personal gain of many jaded Rwandans who felt powerless due to their relative deprivation. This kind of anger accounts for the shift in marginal benefit from MB1 to MB 2 reflected in *Figure C*.

Philip Verwimp writes that in the face of deprivation, greed was also an important motivating variable because many people were in a position to benefit from genocide both personally and materially. In some cases, genocide was used to "settle old scores" and steal back possessions or property which people construed to be their own (Smeulers 444). Yet not all deprivation was not accompanied by a kind of vitriolic animosity toward the victims and their

ethnicity, in some cases, individuals joined, “for no other reason than to find food, shelter, and safety with others” (Smeulers 444).

Moreover, the marginal cost of perpetration seemed to become minimal to most people given that soldiers themselves were often the parties mobilizing the killings. In such a period of violence and terror, there was no need to fear prison because genocide was a direct order sponsored by the state itself. Such a scenario allowed for the shift from MC1 to MC2 found in *Figure C*.

In this political atmosphere, the youth became the target of new youth leagues associated with Hutu Power who sought out support through radicalization. One author writes that “early Interahamwe recruits had nothing to lose and a lot to gain, they were offered incentives such as food, drink, and cash, and so it was relatively easy to radicalize them” (Smeulers 442). In all of these critical ways, deprivation is understood to impact the genocide. Even in the international community, the World Bank claimed that poverty, as deprivation, undoubtedly played a role in setting the stage for genocide, and for heightening social tension (World Bank).

Returning to Krueger’s models however, his work still holds firm that *politics*, not poverty, is driving genocide. Many would agree with him, in fact one author writes that “countries have a suffered a much worse crunch than Rwanda did between 1989 and 1994, without the population turning in on itself” (Mamdani 198). When Krueger studies deprivation, he does so through measuring the presence of material possessions such as means of heating, occupation, and other similar indicators (Krueger 21). He concludes that whether or not someone has these material things will *not* determine whether or not they decide to join a terrorist group or perpetrate genocide. This logic would at first glance seem consistent with the case of Rwanda.

Like in the case of Hezbollah terrorists, many members of the Interahamwe were actually *better off*, as measured through employment and financial standing, relative to the population around them in 1994 (Straus 128).

Yet to extend Kruger's models, I argue that deprivation may not causally impact the decision to commit genocide, but it did impact how people arrived at the political mindsets which they held. Many Rwandans political views saw their own well being to be mutually at odds with the well being of the Tutsi around them, and they were upset with their prospects for the future. Deprivation, and the absent human capabilities which accompanied it in Rwanda, offers an explanation for why this might have been.

From deprivation, it is clear that Rwandans might have been said to lack, most immediately, the ability to live a full, normal length life, a capability very closely aligned with adequate nourishment, health, and shelter (Capabilities 1 & 2).

Relatively few modern nations in the world today face this problem on a scale this large. In 1994 however, a population of predominantly farmers often went hungry. That irony was not lost on them, it was visible in numerous aspects of life. People's children could not grow properly without food. Normal brain functioning and productivity declined, and preventable diseases like malaria took massive tolls on human health in ways which they previously had not.

Leveraging this general state of discontent, hardline propaganda campaigns attributed the collapse of the agricultural market to the Tutsi. They did so by creating a vision of the Hutu majority as unjustly economically disenfranchised by the market dominated minority of the Tutsi (Drumbl). These propaganda campaigns emphasized what Magnarella describes as a food-people-land imbalance (Magnarella). This refers to how, in the presence of scarcity in a

micronation such as Rwanda, a historically Hutu agricultural sector was required share its land with a historically pastoralist Tutsi minority. Given the greater amount of land required for cultivating cattle, the Tutsi both received more land, and used the proceeds from their more lucrative industry to dominate the economy, and disenfranchise the Hutu.

Using that logic, many Hutu saw deprivation, and the chance to acquire land and material possessions as a just power struggle to take back what they construed as that which rightfully belonged to them. One testimony describes this animosity noting that “*as we were trained, they told us that the enemy who prevented the Hutu from becoming rich were the Tutsi... They told us any time we saw a Tutsi, we should make sure we remembered everything they owed to us... I spent all my time counting the property of Tutsis... I wished for the day they told us to exterminate them so that I could steal all of their property*” (Bamporiki 247).

Had the typically Rwandan had access to adequate nourishment, health, and shelter, it is likely that they would not have construed their well being as so mutually at odds with the Tutsi around them (Capabilities 1 & 2). Given this capability, the marginal cost and benefit curves would both shift inward, and intersect at point closer to the axis, reflecting decrease in the amount of genocide perpetrated.

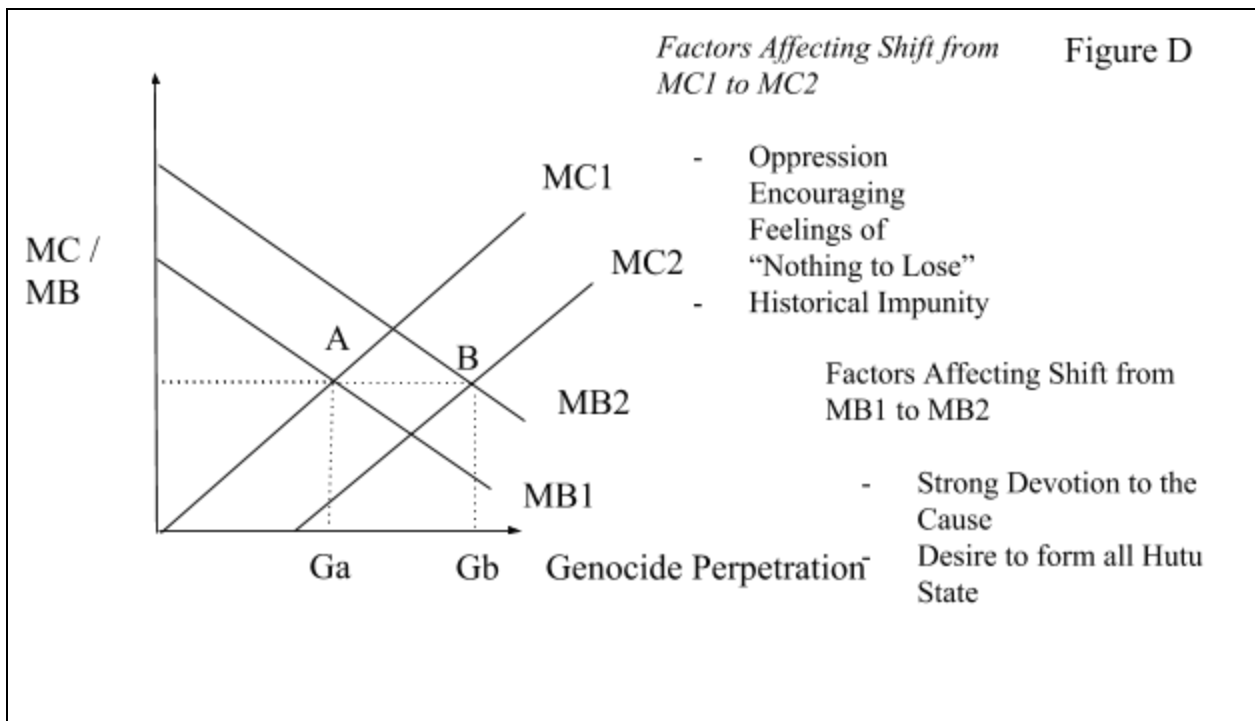
### *Ethnic Hatred*

When most people think of the Rwandan genocide, they think of Hutus and Tutsis, and how the conflict was thought to embody a kind of tribal war between two deeply adversarial ethnic groups. Such is how American media outlets explained the situation in 1994.

Yet the role of ethnic tension as a cause of genocide proves thought provoking in the case of Rwanda, because as ethnography has concluded, “Hutu and Tutsi cannot properly be called distinct ethnic groups” (Drumbl 578).

Yet to be sure, ethnicity played a substantial role in Rwandan society most immediately due to the politicization of it. Ethnicity was thought to dictate worldview and political ideology because many coercive political party platforms established themselves to try to reflect and advocate for the interests of one particular ethnic group.

In this sense, the impact of ethnic hatred on the cost benefit analysis of committing genocide would shift marginal benefit outward because many Hutus saw themselves as personally benefiting from the prospect of living in an all Hutu state. Their marginal cost would likewise shift outward because the history of Hutu-Tutsi violence had typically reflected an atmosphere of impunity for any Hutu offenders.



Worth considering in this paradigm is *how* Hutu-Tutsi relationships became so adversarial, particularly given how distinctions between the two groups resulted mainly from social constructions determined by colonists. As a means to divide and rule, in 1925, the Belgian colonial administration created a registry which began the construction of “race policy,” a form of discrimination which favored Tutsi elite (Mamdani 88). In determining which Rwandan would belong to each ethnic group, many hypothesize that the colonial administration determined the wealth of each person, as measured in cows, and used that as a standard for assigning ethnic race cards. As a result, ethnicity began to play an active role in everyday life in the colonial administration, as Tutsi were favored, and given a wider breadth of opportunities and leadership positions.

By the time of independence, Hutus saw themselves as an oppressed majority under a ruling elite. That bitterness later became politicized creating power struggles divided along ethnic lines (Mamdani 20). Such a relationship created a firmly ingrained *us versus them* mentality which saw the interests of the two ethnic groups as fundamentally at odds.

The political scene in the years leading up to 1994 also did much to foster hostile ethnic relations. With the forced liberalization of the political realm, the Coalition pour la Defense de la Republique, (CDR) among other radical political parties formed, and these new parties used “campaigns of terror” to coerce party membership. Each one created youth wings which coerced political participation predominantly through intimidation (Kamola 585). The ruling MNDR had a youth wing of its own, the *Interhamwe*, a group which became notorious for its destructive role in the genocide. Speaking to the ethnic indoctrination which accompanied these new movements, one described how “*with the multiparty system... I came to learn hatred against the Tutsi...*”

*There were groups of people called 'salvation committees' These were the people who spread the hatred"* (Bamporiki 188).

Krueger would likely point to the idea of ethnic hatred as a more convincing motive for genocide. When people feel oppressed, they have a tendency to fight back, as their marginal cost would reduce given the feeling of having nothing to lose, and their desire to eradicate the opposing group would seemingly increase their marginal benefit. Each of these effects would predict increases in levels of genocide or terrorism perpetration.

Krueger highlights this trend by sharing the sentiments of Palestinian suicide bombers, who appear to maintain an equally adversarial relationship with Israel. One claims, "*the Israelis, they humiliate us, they occupy our land and deny our history*" (Krueger 9). The case of Rwanda displays similarly hostile ethnic relations, as one former Interahamwe member recalls "*when we were still young children, there was a song we used to sing... 'you, Gathe Tutsi, your end is near... I really felt that I hated the Tutsi*" (Bamporiki 56). Such sentiments reflect not just temporary anger, but a learned hatred, which begins to be indoctrinated in the youth through even the very songs which are taught to children. These feelings of hatred seemed to motivate individuals even during the killings themselves. One perpetrator reports how during the genocide, "*each song we sang indicated how the Tutsis were cruel... personally, I danced, I enjoyed it, and felt that Tutsi didn't have any value*" (Bamporiki 171).

Krueger appropriately highlights the role of hostile ethnic relationships in motivating acts of terror and genocide. Where Krueger and I diverge is in attributing *how* and *why* these relationships form. For Krueger, he writes, "primary motivation stems from passionate support

for a movement and its ultimate aims... eradication of poverty and universal high school education are unlikely to change these sentiments” (Krueger 9).

Unlike Krueger, I see the role of poverty and education as being vital to forming these mindsets which so deeply shape ethnic hatred. The very fact of ethnic hatred itself reflects numerous deficiencies in capabilities related to poverty. In forming such a hostile world view, three capabilities which appear immediately to be absent are the capabilities of thinking critically in a “truly human way”, thought and practical reason, and the capability of affiliation and the right to live freely with others (Capabilities 4, 6 & 7).

Krueger is skeptical of the extent to which more education can influence more peaceful worldviews. He believes this because he finds a negative correlation between educational attainment and radicalism, meaning that the more education someone has, the more likely they would be to subscribe to radical mindsets. He supports this claim by acknowledging studies in Palestine, where overwhelmingly, the literate were *more* likely than the illiterate to support armed attacks against Israel (Krueger 15). Moreover, in an additional study, the *more* educated tend to be less willing than the *less* educated to form a dialogue with Israel.

Such outcomes would seem unexpected, but they actually mirror the case of Rwanda. In fact, in Rwanda, the more educated tended to be the ones who were more likely to support genocide due to its ethnic components (Straus 112). Logically however, this makes sense. The more literate and educated were the biggest targets of propaganda campaigns, as they were the ones who might have been seen to hold the most political sway. The *more* educated would be the ones reading propaganda such as the “Hutu 10 Commandments.” And the educated but



disenfranchised, would ideally be the ones who had the most to gain politically by the formation of an all an Hutu state.

From this, we might more accurately conclude that quality of education, may be more important than quantity in the effective formation of a worldview. In this sense, how an individual processes the world around them may be of more value than literacy rates or years spent in school. Such is seen at work in Krueger's findings. He notes that in a poll conducted on educated Lebanese, 74% of those surveyed did not believe that Arabs or Osama Bin Laden played a role in the September 11th terrorist attacks; moreover, a majority of respondents in a separate survey reported that they *would not* consider the attacks on the World Trade Center to be considered terrorist attacks. Such findings might call to question the content of the education received, and allow us to note how a partisan education will shape a partisan worldview.

We appear to see a similar story in Rwanda. People appear to arrive at their worldviews regarding ethnic hatred based off of the different lessons they are exposed to at a young age. In sum, the fact of ethnic hatred seems to reflect the absence of “the ability to have senses imagination, and thought... the ability to think critically in a “truly human way” as informed by an adequate education... and the ability to use one’s mind in an environment in which freedom of expression is protected” (Capability 4). In the aftermath of genocide, many perpetrators admit to this claiming to have “lost their minds” (Bamporiki 72).

Closely intertwined with thinking in a “truly human way” is the ability to form a personal conception of the good (Capability 6). Rather than thinking in a human way, many followed orders, which perhaps on some level, they knew to be morally wrong. As one perpetrator

remarks, *“I lost my innocence and became a beast... I would like to ask of the youth to have a human heart, a heart that works to prevent evil”* (Bamporiki 246).

In shaping a political worldview, post genocide education maintains that family and school are the two most vital factors of influence. In the case of Rwanda, it was possible that individuals had the capability to think in a truly human way because their family instilled values of empathy and morality in them. When one rescuer was questioned as to why he did not kill, he responded, *“because my heart did not allow me... I saw that they were harming others, and everyone should have a right to life”* (Fujii 168).

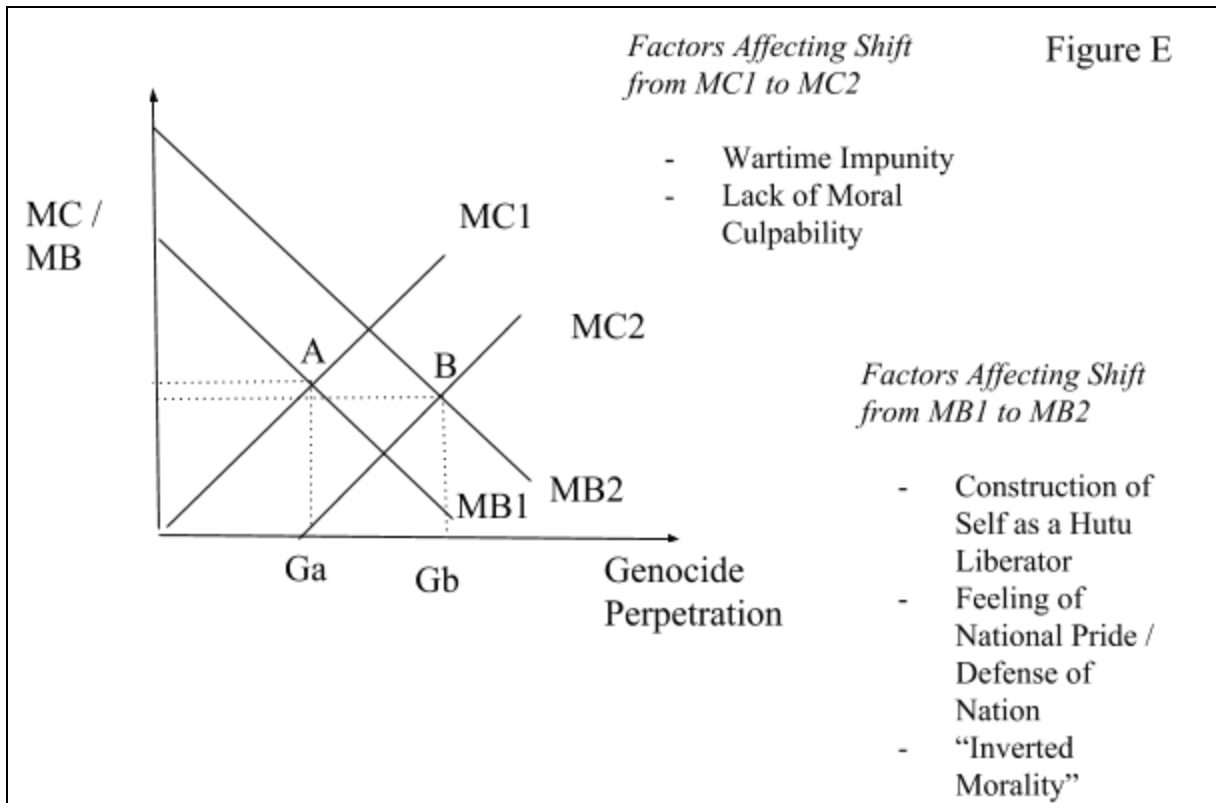
Yet while this response was inspiring, it was unfortunately not commonplace, as the likelihood of growing up in a hardline Hutu family, was unsettlingly more common than not. In that upbringing, killing Tutsi might be understood as doing the right thing. This sentiment was reflected by a leader who recalled his higher ups telling him bluntly that *“your enemy is the Tutsi, we told you about it”* (Bamporiki 39).

Regarding how to create these absent capabilities, adequate education might be considered education which can assist one in the formation of a personal conception of the good, and the ability to think critically in a truly human way (Capabilities 4 & 6). Post genocide education describes the kind of education which can foster these outcomes as education which can be said to promote social competence, listening, and communication. Education should foster tolerance and respect for differences while making individuals aware of bias and stereotype, and promote “win-win” outcomes (Hamburg 172). This sort of education allows for an environment where individuals truly can live in free affiliation with others (Capability 7). The

idea of Hutu success only being possible through the destruction of the Tutsi illustrates the dangerous outcomes which accompany the absence of these capabilities.

*Wartime Uncertainty*

In another light, many perpetrators understood themselves to be soldiers fighting for Rwanda against an invading Rwandan Patriotic Front - RPF. For nearly three years, the ruling party, with the help of the French, had been fighting the RPF in the northern part of the country. As a result, many in the north thought of the conflict as a security struggle, and that their participation was needed to keep Rwanda safe.



Economically speaking, the idea of fighting a war tremendously affects the shifting of marginal cost because war provides the promise of impunity, and it would seem to also relieve the individual of any moral burden which might accompany taking a life. In fighting a war and wearing a uniform, the killing can be construed less as taking an innocent life, and more as dispatching an enemy and defending family and loved one, so marginal cost shifts outward, as reflected in *Figure E*.

Regarding marginal benefit, the atmosphere of war may have allowed people to see themselves as benefitting from conflict perpetration. The idea of wartime uncertainty allowed people to envision genocide perpetration in the sense that they were defending their nation, something vital to the interest of them and their loved ones. It also allowed people to take a kind of nationalist pride in their actions.

Such a justification may not have been initially interpreted as unreasonable. In the northern part of Rwanda, some explained normal life as being transformed by the war, and as a result, local leaders could make any order with the justification of ensuring state security (Fujii 78). In fact, when many orders were given to kill Tutsi, it was described in the context of, “*go to work*” or “*go fight the enemy*” (Straus 158). More than half of perpetrators in a survey believed that they were fighting *for* their country during the genocide.

Furthermore, the role of the state and army created the illusion of self defense as well. Attacks were carried out overwhelmingly in groups, oftentimes with military presence or involvement. A study found that the military was present in more than 50% of attacks, with armed militia present at more than 75%, and that soldiers or local officials led the attacks in

roughly 82% of cases (Straus 115). As such, in the case of the genocide, the violence being done was considered preemptive and defensive (Straus 140).

This situational perspective in the context of war provides context for understanding many aspects of dehumanization which appeared within the framework of the genocide. Notably, the Tutsi were described as “*the enemy*” which allowed many to see them as adversaries rather than as neighbors. Many Hutu were also provided with uniforms, either in the form of actual military garb, or leaves to show membership with the *Interahamwe*.

Broadly speaking, the idea of a uniform promotes anonymity and reduces accountability, and by consequence, reduces marginal cost of perpetration (Zimbardo 28). It allows perpetrators to be less able to acknowledge both their own individuality, and that of their enemy, reducing the guilt which may accompany taking a human life. As a result, when many attacks occurred, perpetrators went in groups, and sometimes wore costumes. In select cases, perpetrators wore suits of knives and almost imitated aspects of theater (Fujii 172).

Yet the idea of wartime uncertainty being rationally used to justify or explain a slaughter as massive as genocide fails on countless fronts. Most notably, the rationale for deploying genocide occurred when Hutu Power “was challenged by the threat of peace” (Drumbl 607). More clearly, the Arusha Accords successfully negotiated a power sharing arrangement with the RPF alongside the ruling party in the years preceding genocide. The genocide itself might be seen as a violent rejection of this international agreement as the ruling party firmly maintained its unwillingness to share power with a largely Tutsi RPF.

The false conceptualization of genocide as an act of war was by all means a deliberate intention of the ruling party. Many argue that even the event which sparked the genocide, the

downing of president Habyarimana's plane, was an act deliberately orchestrated by the ruling party to create a state of emergency, force a power transition, and give the impression that the Tutsi posed an imminent threat. Propaganda campaigns continued to instill feelings of fear and distrust among much of the Hutu population, and in one instance, the ruling party staged a fake attack on Kigali, spending the night firing bullets into the sky to create the impression of an RPF attack on the capital city (Drumbl 559).

So ultimately, the notion of perpetrators understanding their genocide engagement in the context of wartime anxiety reflects the absence of numerous core capabilities, the most prominent perhaps being practical reason (Capability 6). The Hutu population outnumbered the Tutsi on a scale of nearly 10-1. The Tutsi would have no interest or capacity to mobilize against their Hutu neighbors. Likewise, rarely do modern nations need to employ the use of civilians to fight their battles for them. Given that Rwanda had a military, it seems dubious that a nation would need to employ a population of farmers to eradicate their neighbors due to security concerns.

An inability to practically reason left much of the population susceptible to believing all manner of stories dictated by superiors. A former member of the Interahamwe noted that when he began his training, he was given a gun and told to go fight the Inkotanyi [RPF], “*we spent days just killing Tutsi... but those who led us in these acts mislead us... they told us the Inkotanyi did not know how to shoot, that they only shot peas*” (Bamporiki 229). Such deceit managed to create the impression that threats posed by the Inkotanyi came not just from the invading rebels themselves, but also from Tutsi women and children.

Another component of the capability of practical reasons also refers to the freedom to form a personal conception of the good (Capability 6). This capability by consequence might then be said to embody both the practical and moral components of free thinking. While much of the propaganda which associated the genocide with a wartime power struggle may seem outlandish, the idea itself seems to be one which was genuinely believed by many of the conflict's perpetrators.

In fact, many perpetrators were said to have only believed themselves to be imprisoned because the ruling party had lost the war (Drumbl 569). As a result, countless perpetrators thought themselves to be innocent in the years just following the genocide, and were said to “inhabit a world where almost no one feels guilty” (Drumbl 607).

It is revealing that even in the aftermath of genocide, many perpetrators still did not believe themselves to have done any wrongdoing. Many imprisoned perpetrators even believed that they were awaiting liberation from other groups of Interahamwe who would recapture Rwanda and free them (Drumbl). Such confessions reveal that in a state of perceived war, many people may not have seen the question of picking up a machete as a grand question of morality. In that sense, feelings of moral guiltlessness reduced marginal cost to the point that most perpetrators were not burdened by the moral weight of attacking Tutsi women and children.

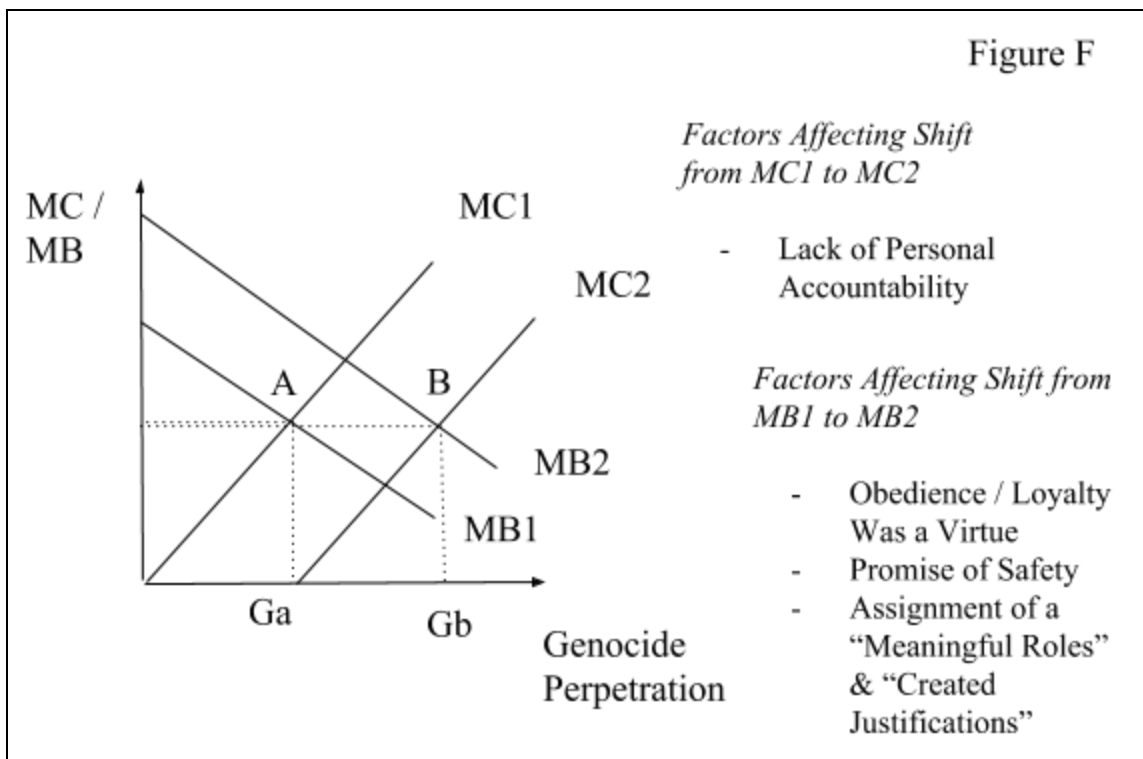
Perhaps more troublingly, in a state of war, people's personal conceptions of the good may have actually reflected a kind of inverted morality (Drumbl). By this, it might be said that rather than just not feeling guilty about killing, many perpetrators may have thought that perpetration, and the killing of the Tutsis was the *right* thing to do given their moral compass. Killing Tutsi in this perspective may have increased an individual's marginal benefit by offering

a perpetrators family what they might have construed as safety, security, and a better life. Such an outcome would reflect the absence of practical reason and a personal conception of the good because such a sense of inverted morality would be fundamentally at odds with other human capabilities - most notably, free affiliation with others and the ability to think critically in a “truly human way” (Capabilities 4 & 7).



## State Obedience

Perhaps the most initially puzzling motive for how genocide played out was the question of state obedience. Obedience provides a simple answer to the complex question of why commit genocide. In Rwanda, some go so far as to say that the nation suffered from having a culture of obedience. One proverb says, in Rwanda, “an order is as heavy as a stone.” Noted scholar Gerald Prunier describes political tradition in Rwanda as being overwhelmingly defined by “centralized and unconditional obedience to authority” (Mamdani 199).



Within this framework, people may have understood obeying authority to be the right thing to do. The people giving the orders to commit genocide, by and large, were leaders who commanded the respect of the community, and by consequence, would not have received substantial resistance to their demands. As a result, individuals may have seen their marginal

benefit increase by commit genocide because they interpreted following orders to be a good thing, something they should strive for, and would intrinsically benefit from.

Also affecting marginal benefit, the fact of state obedience during the genocide often blurred a distinction between obedience and coercion. Bearing that in mind, many felt violently threatened, either directly or indirectly for non conformity. Thus, compliance with orders may have offered individuals the promise of safety which they may have interpreted themselves as benefitting from.

Within an intensely hierarchical society, many have described Rwandan social roles as being relatively fixed, with each person knowing their place (Fujii). Such a social dynamic may have facilitated mass mobilization because solicitation was not merely requested within these hierarchies, it was personally ordered. One scholar found that perpetrators “participated not principally because of being told do so over the radio... but because a person or persons directly solicited their participation” (Straus 149). Statistics support this finding, claiming that obedience and inter-Hutu coercion made up the testified reasoning for participation in more than 75% of cases, and that in polling, more than 90% claim that they, before 1994, had never disobeyed an authority (Straus 149).

The risk of physical punishment as a threat for non-conformity appeared to vary depending on sector, leader, and day. Some were forced to give bribes in order to be left alone, while others report that participation was completely voluntary. Regardless, the order, or at least impression, of kill or be killed, proved fairly convincing as protecting one's well being seemed to increase many perpetrators marginal benefit of following the crowd.

Affecting marginal cost, the idea of obedience typically comes up alongside the idea of bad leadership, both on the part of the ruling party, and on the part of local sector leaders. One leader assigns himself nearly total responsibility for all the destruction in his sector, noting how “*the Tutsi in Nyamabuye were killed because they had a bad leader*” (Bamporiki 77). More poignantly, another leader wrote that in Rwanda, “*as a leader, a word can be as lethal as a killing sword. Our citizens respect leaders, when you order, he executes...*” (Bamporiki 65). The idea bad leadership reflects in part the idea of a diffusion of responsibility, which reduces the marginal cost of genocide perpetration. Because an order is being given, this allows for less personal accountability on behalf of the perpetrator because it creates the notion that the choice of genocide was not just a personal decision, but the command of an authority.

As is articulated by some modern sociologists, the question decision making in genocide involves an unconscious power dynamic where in most cases, individuals felt powerless to their situation, so they carried out what they construed to be their only choice given the context of the situation.

The situation, as interpreted by many Hutu, saw themselves as carrying out an order from a superior. The idea of following an order allowed the diffusion of personal responsibility, which reduced the marginal cost of perpetrating. Other situational factors at play affecting marginal benefit would be to the assignment of meaningful roles – people benefitted in the sense that they understood themselves to be Hutu liberators. And finally, there were “created justifications,” such as the assignment of Tutsi to the role of historical adversaries, which allowed people to see themselves as benefiting their killing (Zimbardo 28).

Initially, the perceived inability to reject an order would indicate capability deprivation, particularly of senses, imagination, and thought (Capability 4). This is a reflection of the fact that blind obedience reflects that someone is being told what to think, rather than personally thinking critically. Following the genocide, the leaders of the Rwandan Patriotic Front described it as an act committed by masterminds and slave bodies (Kubai 2). A Hutu lawyer, Francois Xavier Nkurunziza describes how Rwanda had not had a culture of people forming personal conceptions of the good in the years leading up to 1994.

He writes, *“Conformity is deep, very developed here. In Rwandan culture, everyone obeys authority. People revere power and there isn’t enough education. You take a poor ignorant population, and you give them arms and say, it’s yours. Kill. And they’ll obey. Fear and obedience are like flip sides of a coin, common to them is that is that the person involved has ceased to think”* (Mandani 200).

From this, it would appear that the general Rwandan population was not incapable of thinking; however, their capability to do so in a way which was meaningful and “truly human” was prevented. On reflection, many perpetrators, particularly leaders, seems to be aware of how absent empathy and humanity appeared to be during the genocide. One leader testifies that among the lessons he learned from 1994, *“the first thing a leader should have in his character is love”* (Bamporiki 66).

## *Normative Component*

The idea of poverty being measured in human capability was first posited largely by the work of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum.

As Sen writes, a capabilities approach to assessing poverty distinguishes itself because it aligns individuals well being with a person's potential to do and be things (Sen 31). It prioritizes and values certain aspects of the human condition as more valuable than others. By way of example, rather than measuring literacy rates, a capabilities approach might measure worldview, and whether or not it is a personal choice, following exposure to alternatives. More than anything however, Sen contends that human capability allows individuals the agency to choose different types of life (Sen 35).

Martha Nussbaum writes that we can prefer a capabilities approach to measuring poverty because it assigns a meaningful task to public policy makers (Nussbaum 19). Metrics such as poverty lines may be useful, but they do not explain *how, why, or to what extent*, are people experiencing poverty. Capabilities offer a more tangible solution to these problems, as policy designed at alleviating poverty can be tailored to address far more specific tasks and concerns.

## *Conclusion*

The inspiration behind much of this project came about after having spent extended time studying conflict throughout parts of Africa, and meeting with individuals who had themselves been perpetrators. Speaking with people who the international had at one point deemed “terrorists” was an awakening experience, and with each interaction, I had been left with more questions than answers.

Many of the perpetrators I had met were guilty of unthinkable crimes - burning houses, massacring settlements, and even killing their neighbors. Before hearing their testimonies, there was a tempting inclination to question the morality of these people. How could *they* have done this, and perform these acts of violence which they *should* have been able to realize were completely inhumane. But in making such assessments, it became easy to judge perpetrators based solely by the outcomes of the crimes that they have committed, absent any context of *why* they had done so.

For me, the context that these meetings revealed was that certain human capabilities were inaccessible to many perpetrators given the context of their background. And that context frequently goes overlooked in developed world while discussing much of the amorality and lawlessness which accompanies conflict in the developing one.

In recognizing this, while by no means absolving perpetrators of the crimes that they commit, we can ask an important question. Namely, how could things have been different? To me, creating capabilities could have allowed for more favorable outcomes. Among other concerns, creating societies which encourage free affiliation with others regardless of

background, and enabling societies to promote thinking in a “truly human way” is likely a step in right direction. Capabilities empower individuals to see the world in certain ways, and to ultimately, become more free (Sen 55). That empowerment moving forward, will hopefully allow individuals to better recognize how poverty can be exploited to facilitate violence.

When Philip Gourevitch concluded his journal describing the years he had spent in Rwanda immediately after the genocide, he interviewed Paul Kagame, an RPF leader who would go on to become the president of Rwanda. When asked about his impressions of how his country could have turned in on itself, he comments poignantly that people “*can be made bad, yet they can also be taught to be good*” (Gourevitch 352).

Human capability reveals that the role of poverty in conflict in the developing world has a far greater impact than many might realize. Deprivation of capability creates the proper preconditions to expose individuals to potentially being “*made bad,*” as the case of Rwanda very grievously demonstrates. Yet by the same account, it is equally possible that creating the capabilities necessary for a life of dignity can effectively teach people to be good. Because ideally, creating capabilities will allow people to be immune to becoming victims of their situations, and empower them to play a more active role in the construction of peaceful societies.

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