Building a Nation of Prisoners: The Mechanisms of Mass Indiscriminate Violence in Guatemala between 1978 and 1984

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Content

I. Introduction

The bloodiest civil war of the 20th century in Latin America, was waged in Guatemala. The war started in 1960 and a peace agreement was signed in 1996, and to it fell an estimated 200,000 victims. The Guatemalan highlands not only became a sea for the guerrilla to swim in, the entire nation became a prison to the ones affected by its ramifications. The Americas Wach Report proclaimed in 1984 that Guatemala was "a nation of prisoners", because of the restrictive regime that war had perpetuated and laid upon its citizens. The prisoners of Guatemala, were the civilians forced to join the civil patrols, they were the ones forced to leave their homes and land because everything they had was destroyed, they are the ones that had to flee the country and the ones that had to relocate in *aldeas modelos ('model villages')*. You became a prisoner in Guatemala not when you had committed a crime, you became a prisoner when you were suspected of being or becoming a subversive of the military government. The prisoners of Guatemala are "*the millions of Indians in Guatemalan countryside who have relinquished hope for a better life as virtually all the institutions that stood between them and the state have been destroyed" (Americas Watch Report v).* The nation of prisoners is something that was slowly created around the subversives of the government, but the nation of prisoners begot its quintessential form with the extreme forms of violence being perpetrated during the period of 1978 and 1983. The nation of prisoners was something that was actively created by the leaders of the nation of Guatemala.

Even though the entire region of Latin America has faced extreme violence and political turmoil, and many regimes in Latin America used human rights violations as a key element of governance, the state sponsored violence in Guatemala was unique on the continent in its scope and magnitude. The civil war in Guatemala lasted 36 years (1960-1996) and started as a small group of military officers attempted to overthrow the autocratic regime of General Ydigoras Fuentes in 1960. Ultimately the coup failed, but the military officers were able to flee, combining their forces with the military wing of the Guatemalan Communist Party to organize a small guerrilla force (Valentino Final Solutions 206). The guerrilla force had no strong support from the rural population between 1961 and 1978. From 1978 on, however, the guerrilla developed strong bonds with the local populations (Valentino Final Solutions 206). Mao Tse-Tsung wrote in 1937 about the guerrilla warfare tactics. He makes a renowned analogy comparing the guerrilla to the fish and the people (civilians) to the sea; implying that the guerrilla should move amongst the people as fish swim in the sea (93). Efrain Rios Montt (president of Guatemala in 1981) is quoted saying: if you cannot catch the fish, you have to drain the sea" (qtd in Schirmer 45). The fact that the guerrilla adapted their strategy to follow the guerrilla theory of blending in with the civilians. This leads us to believe that the guerrilla was such a

threat to the incumbent government, that the ruling elite saw no other available option than to "drain the sea". Thus, the fish were swimming in the sea from 1978 on, and the fisherman had to catch the fish at whatever cost. In other words, in order to kill the fish (guerrilla) the government saw fit to drain the sea and exterminate its local base of support.

It seems straightforward to acquiesce with the consensus that Guatemala's mass indiscriminate violence is due to the threat that guerrilla formed to the government. However, looking at the victims of the strategy of eliminating the guerrilla, the mass indiscriminate violence does not seem to be that indiscriminate. The UN-sponsored report by the Commission for Historical Clarification (CEH) has concluded that 93 percent of the deaths in the Guatemalan civil war, were caused by the State; and of this percentage 83 percent were Mayan. This astronomically high percentage prompts us to think that the violence utilized was not as much a strategic plan to eliminate the threat the guerrilla posed, but rather to covertly eliminate a particular cultural group within the nation[1]. Within this logic it should be argued that although the mass violence occurred under two different military leaders the ideology remained similar under both these leaders. However, we know that for the Guatemalan case, that when Efrain Montt deposed Lucas Garcia he was able to do so by opposing Lucas Garcia's policies. This separation of ideology was also necessary in order to gain popular support for new president. Outwardly and on a first glace the leader ideology explanation does not seem convincing for the use of mass indiscriminate violence in Guatemala.

Since the commonly explanations of rationalisation of mass indiscriminate violence seem to not capture entirely the motives for mass indiscriminate violence in Guatemla. In an attempt to challenge the status quo, we propose to analyze the Guatemalan mass indiscriminate within a novel theoretical framework of intra-elite competition. Van der Maat has suggested that mass violewnce often occurs in conjunction with high instability within the regime. He raises a valid query that if mass violence only produces negative consequences why does it so often occur when leaders appear most vulnerable? This research will attempt to apply this novel explanation for mass indiscriminate violence by observing whether intra-elite competition has been overlooked in previous research as an explanation filling in the gaps of the aforementioned theories.

Guatemala's violence is puzzling in the extreme violence it resorted to, in comparable political climate to the aforementioned countries. Looking at the Guatemalan civil war, the violence perpetrated during this 36-years long-lasting conflict is not unique in the region, the *desaparecidos* phenomenon (forced disappearances) was also observed in Argentina (1976-1983) and the

[1] The focus of this research will not be on the *genocide* of the Maya people, rather it will focus on the episodes of mass violence of which the genocidal violence of the Maya people was an *outcome*.

revolutionary movement such as the Sandinista movement in Nicaragua (1960s) was also to be noticed in the region. The question is why did Guatemala resort to mass indiscriminate violence and why did this occur at the point of time that it did? The mass violence in Guatemala took place just a few years before the country's transition to democracy, and rather suddenly after already three decades of internal conflict. The civil war lasted 36 years, yet the most violent episode of mass indiscriminate violence can be pinpointed in the period between 1978 until 1983. The research will look into the existing explanations with regards to Guatemala, namely the counterinsurgency rhetoric and the ideological approach, it will also look at a relatively new theory of elite rivalry and test whether it is adequate for the Guatemalan case. The purpose of this study is to test the suitability of the three theories while using the most violent episode of mass violence in Guatemala as a case study. Through the examination of events and role of elites, the thesis aims to answer the following question:

What mechanism(s) catalyzed the episode of mass violence between 1978 and 1984 in Guatemala?

To answer this question and advance the growing scholarship on the subject, the research will make use of qualitative method and process-tracing. It will base its core assumptions and concepts on the available literature on genocide studies, political violence analyses and the logic of civil wars. The thesis will be structured as follows: the first chapter will review the major theories on mass killing and most relevant to the Guatemalan case. In Chapter 2, I will set out the research design and give the observable implications of each of the major theories discussed in Chapter 1. Chapter 3 will then be a case analysis of the mass violence in Guatemala, it will dive into the history of the nation and the events leading up to the episode of mass violence in 1978 until 1984. Along the history-telling, this chapter will attempt to observe the implication for each of the major theories as developed in the second chapter. The final chapter will offer a summary of the observations and the conclusions for the Guatemalan case and will propose recommendations for further research.

II. Literature Review

2.1 Theories of mass violence against civilians

A growing consensus has emerged that mass violence against civilians is not a random and accidental occurrence, but rather an orchestrated political strategy (Valentino, Huth and Balch-Lindsay; Downes). This research will readily dismiss the 'first-generational' explanations of genocide, such as ethnic fractionalisation and regime type as being core instigators for large-scale violence. As Valentino describes, prior to the 1990's large-scale violence was explained either as "collateral damage" of warfare or as the mere consequence of irrational ethnic hatred (Final Solutions 375-6). Post-Cold War, these explanations revealed themselves insufficient and inadequate to explain the large-scale violence against non-combatants in civil wars. Ethnic hatred was easily debunked as many different ethnicities have lived along each other without resorting to genocidal violence and cases such as Rwanda or Serbia showed that violence was not only inter-ethnic but also intra-ethnic (Valentino Why We Kill 91-2). The argument that the death of civilians has to been seen as 'collateral damage' of warfare has also been falsified, cases such as the Holocaust and the Rwanda genocide, for example, show that civilians were not collateral damage but strategically targeted. Valentino argues in Why We Kill, that civilians often play a central although involuntary role to war, but that sometimes they become *the object of war itself* (94). Furthermore, Dongsuk Kim argues that in a nation where civilians encounter harsh political marginalization and intense conflict in the past, mass violence is highly probable. To this extent, this research assumes that large-scale violence is a strategic component of a state-led war campaign against the state's perceived enemy.

Seemingly contradictory, the extant literature assumes that targeting civilians on a large-scale is a bad strategy for two reasons; it is morally frowned upon by the national population and international community, and second, it will create resistance from the civilians rather than compliance (Downes 152-3). The mass killing of one's population is a high-risk strategy; it can unleash major resistance among the population, and abroad (resulting in foreign intervention) and lead in one way or another to a coup deposing the sitting leader. Nevertheless, it can prove to be a high reward strategy for the leader, as it may weaken the enemy enough to (re)take the power and win the war quickly.

Mass killing can be a rational choice that leaders can make to conserve and legitimize power; but what are the circumstances that push them to make this particular decision of unleashing large-scale indiscriminate violence against non-combatants at a particular point in time? Valentino argues that when a strategic approach to mass killing is employed the perpetrators will use it, when their

perception is that it is both necessary and effective (Valentino Final Solutions 67). Necessary in the sense that the threat of losing power is too great, and effective in the sense that it will result in the victory, of the sitting leader over his enemies, hereby securing his position.

Assuming the strategic approach and the threat to power, we have to look at the *people* in positions of power and how their decisions are motivated to secure their power, hereby directly causing mass violence. Therefore, this paper assumes that the strategic logic of a leader or a leading elite is at the fundament of large-scale violence for most civil wars occurring in the post-Cold War context. The organisational pattern of this literature review is based on the major theories governing the topic of large-scale strategic violence, which can be organised in three major threads of explanations in the case of Guatemala; guerrilla threat, leader ideology and, intra-elite competition.

2.2 Guerrilla threat

The civil war that raged in Guatemala fought between the state and the guerrilla fighters, clearly seems to indicate that the genocidal violence is the result of the intensifying warfare between the two parties. In their 2014 article Valentino, Huth and Balch-Lindsay find that mass killings will occur more often during guerrilla wars than in other kinds of war, and the chance of a mass killing occurring increases if the guerrillas has a high support from the local population and/or when the guerrilla are perceived as a 'major military threat' to the government. The killing *en masse* of the civilian population is then used as a military strategy to deprive the guerrilla from its support; mass killing is thus used a "war by other means" so argue Valentino, Huth and Balch-Lindsay (401-2). According to so-called "guerrilla literature" the central focus of the guerrilla should be the civilian population; an insurgency cannot be won without the help of the civilian population due to sheer number and technology of the guerrilla combatants, the combatants need shelter, food and intelligence that the civilian population is able to provide. Due to the guerrilla's proximity with the local population; "the systematic targeting of civilian populations is the only "practical" solution to the seemingly intractable problems of guerrilla warfare" (Valentino Final Solutions 198).

Mass violence executed in a counterinsurgency context is often seen as a different phenomenon than when it is not occurring in a counterinsurgency context. The reasons put forward are that the perpetrator is lacking territorial control or that information is lacking to differentiate between the insurgent and the population (Straus 553). The attitudinal approach posits that a civilian population chooses to support the guerrillas and will resist the government (Lockyer 3-4). Thus, the motivation for governments to separate the guerilla from its civilian base of support through coercive tactics is high because the 'hearts and minds' of the civilians are still seen as winnable by the government forces. This is, if the civilians and guerrilla can be distinguished from one another. The

'drain the sea' strategy employed by repressive regimes is one that is based on the 'attitudinal approach' to counterinsurgency. There are several problems with the attitudinal approach. The most important of these, for the Guatemalan context, is that the attitudinal approach assumes that the civilians are voluntarily choosing the guerrillas' side, not accounting for the coercive tactics that the guerrillas can employ to force the support of the civilians.

The Guatemalan insurgency has been taken as a case in point by Valentino, Huth and Balch-Lindsay to illustrate that a regime is more likely to respond with mass killing if the guerrilla presents a major threat to the political regime and had a large civilian base of support. However, in many other case studies the guerrilla never represents a major or even serious threat, often the territory is under (full) military control but civilians are nevertheless targeted with extreme violence. The question can be asked: is there more to mass indiscriminate violence than a counterinsurgency operation turned extreme?

2.3 Leader ideology

The leader ideology explanation posits that the ruling leader is not acting out in a random or irrational manner, but rather that he/she has a certain ideological plan for the nation in mind. Leader ideology or elite ideology is a theory of strategic violence that posits that the leader or the ruling elite will resort to extreme violence to make the civilians adhere to a certain (political) ideology or to execute his or their political utopia. In his book, Sémelin presents this theory, he argues that the creation of an enemy through fear, paranoia and delusional reality create a 'us versus them' dynamic which can lead to large-scale violence. This explanation edges towards Straus' observation of an ideological paradigm explaining mass violence. The main idea behind this paradigm is the assumption that "one needs to understand the ideas in people's mind, in particular those of leaders, in order to understand how and why genocide occur" (Straus 548). The goal of the leader is thus to perform social control and advance the nation according to the leader's views. Valentino tests this theory for the cases of Cambodia, China and the Soviet Union, in which the political ideology of Communism was carried out through the mass killing of the civilians.

The ideology purported can be based on ethnic homogeneity as it was in Rwanda, for example or ideals of developmental modernization. In Guatemala's case, this was a plan for the national development of the country, the ideological fight against Communism (characteristic for the Cold War context) and of ethnic homogenization. Even though ideology has often been a central explanation for mass violence, Jonathan Leader Maynard argues that a central theoretical framework is presently lacking, one that would give scholars ample possibility to make better analyses of the reason behind mass atrocities. What Leader Maynard points out is that there is a lack of

interdisciplinary knowledge on ideology. Similarly, Straus contends that there is a need to bring together the strategic approach, as well as the ideological approach for the study of genocide and mass atrocities. Balcells is making in her book 'Rivalry and Revenge' is that political factors are crucial in understanding violence against civilians, she asserts that it is political mobilization at the national level that make non-combatants with strong ideals looking suspicious and motivates their persecution (5). Her argument continues by asserting that political determination regulates the extent to which there is local collaboration with armed groups in the elimination of these individuals (5). Leader or elite ideology can be rooted in many different motivations, but it does always assert some form of power against the masses, which may be encountered with resistance.

The literature asserts that ideological motivation is not a sufficient factor for mass killing to occur, at least not on its own, but that it is a necessary condition (Maynard 833-4). If the ideological motivation is not the sole initiator of episodes of mass violence, what mechanism works in conjunction with ideological motives that is sufficient for mass indiscriminate violence? Or is there an alternative cause entirely for mass indiscriminate violence?

2.4 Intra-elite competition

The previous theories are prominent explanations for the civil war and mass indiscriminate violence in Guatemala, the following explanation of intra-elite competition is one that has not yet been tested as such for the Guatemalan violence. The explanation offers to look at the ruling elite, but rather than looking at the ideologies that might drive their willingness to resort to mass violence, this theory looks at their personal position of power. This explanation also edges towards Straus' "ideological paradigm", in the way that there is a need to understand what is in the leader's mind, however, this ideology need not to be based on a utopian ideal, but rather on a practical way to retain power. Van der Maat, amongst others, proposes as a new explanation to the sudden resort to mass violence, he argues that this is the cause of intra-elite competition or intra-elite rivalry.

The argument for intra-elite competition goes as follows: if a leader is unable to target rival elites directly to avoid being overthrown, the leaders could use the opportunities that the mass violence incurs to coerce civilians and local leaders into support. Taking the 1994 Rwandan Genocide as a case study, Van der Maat asserts that a leader may resort to extreme violence to resolve an intra-elite crisis. In other words, leaders will simultaneously unleash mass indiscriminate violence and use selective violence to remove intra-elite competitors; by this precluding rival elites and consolidating power (2). Matthew Krain asserts that it is not the economic, political or social status of a state that accounts for why genocides or politicides occur at certain points in time and not others (335). He argues for observing events that are attempting to "open the political opportunity

structure". Changes in the political play and capturing power are indicators of competition at the top, Krain argues that the elites, whether new or old attempting to grab or retain power need to do so in and quick and efficient manner (335). This fits well into the intra-elite competition explanation. Authoritarian regimes build on elite support for political survival, democratic regimes, on the other hand, build on public support. Additionally, in authoritarian regime the checks and balances of a democracy are generally non-existent, thus elites find their power checked by rival elites and when they lose power there is a high risk of "losing life or liberty" (Van der Maat 9). The intra-elite competition explanation for mass violence is thus rooted in the claim that a leader will attempt to remain power and if insecure of his position, they will resort to mass violence.

Paranoia is induced with the leader due to their highly vulnerable and unstable position; the leader will have to navigate between allotting enough power to his influential supporters while at the same time denying them enough power to form a threat to his rule, life or liberty. To understand the idea of elite rivalry it is worth diving into the concept of coup-proofing. Coup-proofing strategies are efforts of leaders that will diminish the ability of the military to organize a successful coup (Sudduth 4). Sudduth reports that the literature has assumed that the higher the coup risk, the more often coup-proofing strategies are implemented by the leader. Sudduth posits that even though intuitive, this explanation is not rational and the opposite is actually true; the higher the coup risk, the lower the probability that a leader will implement coup-proofing strategies as this might increase the coup risk and precipitate the leader's downfall. It can be argued that this paranoia is heightened in a context of high coup-risk context. As Marshall and Marshall have demonstrated, a nation that has experienced a coup d'état is more likely to encounter more to come. Thus, it is credible that a leader put into power by a coup d'état is more likely to set coup-proofing strategies early on in his rule, in order to keep their position.

Omar McDoom has researched the possibility to predict the moment and place for the breakout of violence. By analyzing the violence in Rwanda, he asserts that both the concepts of 'elite control' and 'social segregation' are helpful to predict when and where violence will occur during a genocide. Although McDoom acknowledges the helpfulness of these two factors, nevertheless, he is of the opinion that neither of the factors are adequate to give an answer as to *why* genocides occur. Thus, McDoom and Van der Maat offer conflicting insights on the role of ruling elite and the consequences they have on genocidal violence. Where McDoom says elite rivalry has to go hand in hand with social fractionalisation and is not the direct cause for genocidal violence, Van der Maat argues that elite rivalry can be the direct cause of genocidal violence.

Of these three major explanations; leader ideology, guerrilla threat and intra-elite competition, all are able to explain the cause for the mass violence in the case of Guatemala at least. Even though this list of three explanations are far from exhaustive for all possible reasons to resort to mass violence, what this list does it combines the most plausible explanations for the mass violence that has occurred in Guatemala. Leader Maynard argues: “successful rationalisation of violence may well be a key requirement for large scale atrocities to occur” (828). All three theories do provide a rationalisation for mass violence, the question is: which of these explanations is the most successful at rationalising mass indiscriminate violence in Guatemala?

III. Research Design and Observable Implications

This research has for a purpose to uncover the causal mechanisms of mass and genocidal violence during the civil war of Guatemala, this is also called pathway-analysis. Using qualitative observations, this research aims to test theories with the process-tracing method in order to explain why the mass indiscriminate violence occurred in the Guatemalan case. Process-tracing is a method from the social sciences that, simply said, links causes with outcomes. In other words, the process-tracing method will test the theories by observing whether the expected results are observable in the outcome in a within-case analysis. Beach and Pedersen ascertain three distinct forms of process-tracing: theory-testing, theory-building and explaining-outcome (3). This research mainly applies the variant of theory-testing as it has identified the X (civil war) and the Y (mass violence) but it is unknown what the causal mechanism (explanation) is that leads from X to Y (see figure 1).

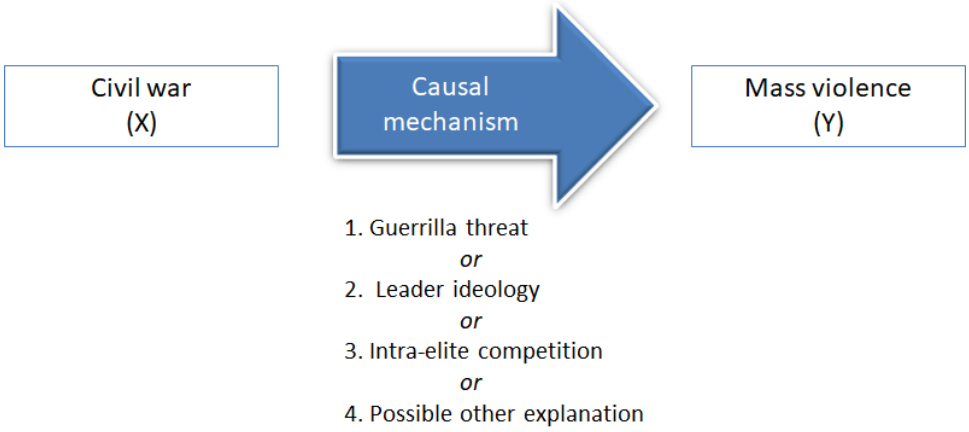

Figure 1 - Research Method of Process Tracing: Theory-Testing

For this research, we have selected the Guatemalan case where both X (civil war) and Y (mass violence) are present, and have hypothesized in the literature review which theories could be plausible explanations leading from X to Y (Beach and Pedersen 11; 14). The research will be mechanism-oriented, in other words, it is interested in uncovering how the proposed theories cause changes in the nature of the violence in Guatemala's civil war, not simply that they do. The efforts of this research, then, are to be placed in a broader framework of contextually similar cases to uncover the common causal mechanisms that result in genocidal violence. As Schwartz and Straus emphasize; political scientists and academics of related fields have rarely ventured themselves in the process-tracing of conflicts and violence (2). But, tracing back the cause of the extreme violence beginning at the end of it, might give the answers that explain how the violence was able to occur to such a significant level in the Guatemalan case.

There is a growing consensus in the literature that mass violence is used strategically, nevertheless, it is unclear what the arguments about why the perpetrators consider it a strategic move to attack civilians (Schwartz and Straus 12). To process-trace the Guatemalan mass violence at its height, this research will make use of a plethora of secondary as well as tertiary sources; books, interviews, academic articles, news articles and (declassified) archive documents. As Schwartz and Straus argue: "Process tracing often begins with an established correlation and seeks to develop a more detailed narrative of the causal pathways that accounts for it – either to test existing explanations or develop new ones" (5). A significant difference between process-tracing and other qualitative research methods is that the timing of the observed events is of the utmost importance. Straus demonstrates that "the question of domination over time is essential for explaining genocide" (555). In the Guatemalan case, the established correlation is the genocidal violence occurring during the civil war. What this chapter will present, are the causal pathways that could account for genocidal violence.

The method of process tracing requires the researcher to identify a series of causal variables that lead to a predetermined goal, an explanation, as described in the literature review. To summarize, the predetermined variable for leader ideology is the acceptance or the strengthening of ideological consent. For the guerrilla threat theory, the objective is the annihilation of an armed insurgency against the State. Finally, the intra-elite competition theory is built upon the objective of removing rival elites that are (perceived as) a potential threat to the sitting leader. Based on these objectives, the leader/ruling elite will behave a certain way which will reveal a chain of causal mechanisms, which will be laid out in the following sections. The presence of the mechanisms also called observable implications will provide us the most plausible explanation for mass violence in Guatemala.

3.1 Guerrilla threat

For the first explanation of mass indiscriminate violence, we will lay out three main observable implications for the theory of guerrilla threat, namely: counterinsurgency context, risk minimization strategies; and scorched earth warfare tactics.

The most basic premise of the guerrilla threat is that there is a context of guerrilla warfare with in the nation. The government forces have acknowledged the guerrilla and have engaged with them applying counterinsurgency strategies. Through the acknowledgement of and engagement of the government forces with these guerrilla fighters, there is an implicit concession that the guerrilla poses a threat either politically, territorially or socially to the government forces.

As we have seen, one important feature of the guerrilla threat is its reliance upon the local population on resources and information to wage war against government forces. Information starvation is according Lyall and Wilson III "the lack of efficient collection of reliable information on population characteristics, including its grievances cleavages, power structures, views of the counterinsurgency, and the nature of the insurgents themselves" (76). Straus argues, that the actors committing the violence do so because they lack control and information on the territories to be selective in the violence they use (553). Consequently, it makes sense to target the civilian population in an effort to inflict 'information starvation' to the guerrilla forces, who are close(r) to the local population (Lyall and Wilson III 72).

In the case that the guerrilla is perceived by the governing elite as threatening, it is expected that the governing elite will implement policies and military strategies to diminish that threat, this is also called "risk minimization" (Midlarsky 106). Midlarsky discloses that risk minimization strategies are typical for guerrilla warfare, arguing that the army forces have difficulties differentiating between guerrilla combatants and civilians (106). Risk minimization behavior is adopted by government forces in prevention of expected resistance. Examples of risk minimization are: more military will be deployed in the areas that the guerrilla is active, or: the state may also resort to more repressive military units, such as death squads. The risk minimization strategies will also particularly target potential threats, such as community leaders and (young) men who are likely to take up arms. Risk minimization strategies are preventive measures targeting civilians that will offer the government the ability to eliminate potential threats from within the communities that the guerrilla forces could rely on.

Another widely used tactic for depriving the guerrilla of their main source of strength is the scorched-earth warfare. This type of warfare refers to the systemic destruction of all natural and infrastructural resources such as crops, livestock and residences in areas of active guerrilla presence. According to Valentino, the scorched earth strategy is one that serves three primary functions: the first, is to deprive the guerrillas and their support of food and shelter, "killing them or starving them into submission" (Final Solutions 203). Second, it can force the populations into resettlement camps or so-called model villages and deter refugees to return to their homes. Lastly, used selectively it can be used as severe punishment or deterrent for villages or areas suspected of providing support to the guerrilla fighters (Valentino Final Solutions 203).

Furthermore, both Valentino and Gerlach observe that military forces will implement "positive" policies that are aimed at improving the daily life of the civilians, thus deterring them from joining the guerrilla in their fight against inequality (Valentino Final Solutions 199; Gerlach 177).

Positive poliecies will reward local populations for supporting the government forces with primary needs such as for example health care, food, work, etc. These policies are designed to win over the "hearts and minds" of the population and convince them that cooperation with the government forces is in the population's best interest, resulting in a 'drained sea' for guerrilla forces.

As we can see, the observable implications for the guerrilla threat are not about the guerrilla fighters directly, but rather about the 'sea' that the local populations might offer them. By using preventive measures, positive policies, or directly destroying the infrastructures the guerrilla might or could rely on, the government forces deter the local populations to join or provide support to the guerrilla forces.

3.2 Leader ideology

From the drain the sea strategic approach to eliminating support of the enemy, we move over to a more abstract reasoning on the perfect way to organize society according to a ruling leader. In the literature, the recurring theme is the concept of subversion or; the non-compliance either ideologically or politically with the ruling elite or the perceived challenging of the status quo. For the causal mechanism to be the explanation of leader ideology, the ideological discourse of the ruling elite[2] should strongly favor one vision of society, this can be based on political, religious, economic or ethnic ideals. This ideal should be clear from the start of the leader's rule, this is probably also framed as the main reason the leader to be in power. This is most flagrant when the leader offers a certain ideological view of society that contrasts with previous rule. The leader should purport a "purified national community or a return to an idealized past" as Straus suggests (549). This ideological view is the spearhead of the leader's rule and is thus constantly and clearly articulated throughout the entire society *before* resorting to (mass) violence. Leader Maynard describes four ways that ideology can be communicated; "everyday social interactions, long term institutionalised practices of explicit education such as state schooling or institutional training programmes, medium-run propaganda programs, and short-run calls to violence" (827). Thus, if the theory of leader ideology is correct, we should be able to see such interactions and practices in Guatemala.

Since the mass indiscriminate violence in Latin America can be observed throughout two different leaders, it should be the case that the ideology is not linked to one of these leaders per se,

[2] Leader Maynard presents a valid claim, he argues that an account of ideological dynamics should look at the role of all categories affected by this ideology and that we should be careful to treat the members of categories as heterogenous and with motives and mind-sets (826). Even though this is an excellent point it is an extreme feat to achieve with the resources and time allotted for this research. Moreover, Leader Maynard continues by somewhat softening his stance by acknowledging that it is expected that ideology will play a "more active motivational" role for the *policy initiators,* in this case the ruling elite (826).

but that it encompasses both of them. We should be able to see that elements of the same ideology are visible in both Lucas Garcia and Rios Montts' rule. Thus, we should be able see a continuation and reiteration of the same or similar ideology by Rios Montt as prescribed by Lucas Garcia. However, as stated in the introduction, this is quite delicate feat for the new leader, since they were put in office by the elite and without public support. For the Guatemalan case, thus it makes sense to look at the similarities for both ideologies, even though the second leader presents his ideolog as novel and innovative.

At the onset of violence, the discourses should justify mass violence in words such as it being 'a means to an end' or 'to serve the greater good'. Leader Maynard observes different implications to the different ideological justifications for mass atrocities. More precisely, the author identifies six distinct justificatory mechanisms; dehumanisation, guilt-attribution, threat-construction, de-agentification, virtue-talk, and future-bias (829-832). These mechanisms engender certain general observations, such as; propaganda of hate speech and a clear ideological goal displayed through speeches and other public announcements by representatives of the state and/or the leader. More generally, leader ideology should infer a polarisation of society, based either on ethnicity, religious identity or political affiliation, depending on the propagated ideological view. In other words, an 'us versus them' has to be created, this can be achieved by the first three justificatory mechanisms outlined by Leader Maynard. In this line of argument, both Jacques Sémelin and Scott Straus also describe genocide as "*destroy* them to *save* us", in which fear (or threat-construction) plays an important role. In principle, violence in the leader ideology explanation should be selective in nature, it should target one or more specific groups of people because they do not or cannot adhere to the ruling elite's ideology. Thus, violence can be large-scale but to adhere to the principle of the leader ideology explanation, it should only target the ones opposing or not adhering to the ideology. We also expect to see that the perpetrator will present themselves as the victim, thus the perpetrator will engage in de-agentification; he will not take meaningful agency or responsibility for the violence (Sémelin 48-49; Leader Maynard 831-832).

The leader or representative(s) of the ruling elite should also be considered charismatic and portrayed as such by the media outlets. Most probably we will not be able to see much dissonance with the regime in most local and national media outlets, assuming that the leading elite has established control over the media. The international media, however, might present quite a different image of the leader. A charismatic leader will be portrayed in the media as more approachable, with details on his personal life and might possibly get more sympathy from his target audience (urban middle-class).

Moreover, we will see that the leader will also attempt to institutionalize his ideology within governmental practices. Consequently, we should see a closed or reduced socio-political sphere as the leader will try to create a homogenous society including homogenisation of the local and national politics. The leader ideology will also try to find allies within traditional societal institutions, such as universities or religious institutions and representatives, in order to convince the popular masses. Nevertheless, the leader might encounter resistance from the popular masses, which will result in public outrage and demonstrations. Following Balcells' reasoning, we should be able to see civilians with strong ideals engaging in political mobilization and be persecuted by the government forces for it. The argument is that when there is political mobilization "active supporters [of the enemy] can promote resistance movements, including armed resistance, and they can provide key information to the enemy" (Balcells 5). Balcells, continues this line of thought by arguing that political identities will become an indication for armed groups to detect potential threats (5). In summary, the desire for the homogenisation of society expressed by a leader should be followed by popular resistance in order to result in mass indiscriminate violence.

Both the guerilla threat explanation and leader ideology make use of ideology within their justification for mass violence; the contrast with the guerrilla threat is that ideology is a cover, it is a way to win over the populations, a strategic tool to convince ordinary people to engage in violent activities. Whilst under leader ideology the repressive actions are tool to the greater ideological goal.

3.3 Intra-Elite Competition

If the intra-elite competition is the causal mechanism for genocidal violence, we are expecting to observe coup-proofing strategies by the leader. Coup-proofing strategies as defined by Jun Koga Sudduth are strategies implemented by a political leader that "will reduce the military's *ability* to organize a successful coup" (4). The first sort of strategy we identify are spoiling strategies. Spoiling strategies are the awarding of material, financial or political resources to possible or perceived enemies. Spoiling, can however act as double-edged sword as it might indebt the enemy to the leader, but it might also give the enemies the material, financial or political power to overthrow the sitting leader. Sudduth excludes spoiling from his analysis, as he argues the double-edge of the sword will not coup-proof a regimen (4). This is a fair point, however, this analysis will monitor whether these spoiling strategies have occurred in the Guatemalan context, as I argue, it might not be an effective coup-proofing strategy but it shows that the leader is indeed anxious of losing his position.

A leader put into power through a coup is expected to feel insecure in his position, as they know that they might be removed as easily as they have acquired the power. In a nation, where

coups have occurred regularly, we expect to see other coups occurring more often, this is referred to as the 'coup-trap' (Lehoucq and Pérez-Liñán 1106; Sudduth 9-10). The data collected by Marshall and Marshall in their Data Codebook and List is a worldwide analysis for the period of 1946 until 2017 to prove that this coup trap is a real threat. To avoid such a coup-trap and secure his position, a leader might therefore engage in coup-proofing strategies. Sudduth argues that coup-proofing strategies can include the creation of paramilitary organizations, the frequent change of commanders, and the segmentation of the military into rival branches (3).

Van der Maat observes four stages for his theory of genocidal consolidation. First, the leader will put into force an irregular militia; second, this militia will unleash mass indiscriminate violence; third, local government and security institutions will be captured thanks to the unleashed violence; lastly, the institutions being in control of the leader, it will prove simple to neutralize the rival elites of the leader or "purges" (11). More specifically what Van der Maat denotes as "purges" are the (forced) removal of in-group elites in important or key positions; the sudden disappearance of key players by death; forced exile; or imprisonment that form a threat to the leader in power. The (attempt) of purging of the sitting leader is the tipping point in the analysis of intra-elite rivalry. Van der Maat argues that genocidal consolidation will occur when the unleashed mass indiscriminate violence gives the ruling elite enough space to seize local and national government institutions, thus, the leader is then consolidating his power from the bottom-up and simultaneously undermining support for is rivals, something also referred to as grass-root consolidation (11).

Rival elites will resort to a coup for multiple reasons, either they feel they are not heard by the sitting ruler, they are simply hungry for power or there are external factors. Thus, we will see a dissonant group of elites within the group in power, this is an especially dangerous situation to be in for a leader as it offers less fighting chance than a regular rebellion, asserts Van der Maat (9-10). Concerning the possible external factors, Suddduth argues that this can be for example the economic performance of a nation. If a nation does not perform well economically, this might impact the willingness of rival elites to attempt a coup d'état, since the ruling leader can be blamed for the failed national economic circumstances (9). It will also impact the plotter's ability to successfully conduct a coup, because the population will be more supportive of discharging a leader that has been inadequate for the economic climate in the country. Rival elites will thus prove a threat to the sitting leader when they publicly disagree with the leader's policies.

If a coup fails, we are expecting to see removal of the plotters and coup-proofing strategies set in place. It is argued that a political leader will consolidate his power by appointing close relatives and friends to key positions and create security organizations that will purge the enemies (Sudduth 7;

Van der Maat 9). This last aspect is also something we might find in a coup that succeeded, the new leader, weary of the instability caused by the coup could create a circle of trust around him, something Van der Maat calls 'pillars of support' (9). Hand-picked individuals and organizations are expected to be and remain loyal and uncritical to the leader and his ideals, nevertheless, leaders can find that these hand-picked individuals or organizations often have diverging interests, thus they can become a threat to the survival of the leader on the longer-term (Sudduth 7; Van der Maat 9).

Moreover, in an intra-elite competitive environment, we expect to see a closed political sphere in the nation where dissonant political parties are discouraged, discredited and destroyed. But we also have seen events that were attempting to re-open the political sphere. What Lehoucq and Pérez-Liñán observe in their comparative study of coups occurring in Latin America is that closing the political sphere of competition fosters political instability and coups. Thus, according to Lehoucq and Pérez-Liñán the coup trap can only be avoided in two ways: a leader dominates the political sphere enough to crush and deter new conspiracies, or the leader needs to initiate democratic process and open up the political system of the nation, meaning that the leader will have to give in some of his power (1108). In Guatemala, we should expect to see either political parties who are supportive of the military regime and the military institution or in case of opening up the political scene we are expecting to see a move towards democratization, neoliberal policies and a more diverse political landscape.

In summary, following the different explanations for mass violence we expect to see many variable causal mechanisms. Table 1, provides a list of the causal mechanisms categorized per possible explanation for mass violence in Guatemala. By analyzing some of the key events and occurrences in the history of Guatemala, we should be able to point towards an explanation of mass violence and piece together (and possibly solve) the puzzle that mass indiscriminate violence has formed for Guatemala.

Explanation	Observable Implications
Guerrilla threat	▪ On-going guerilla warfare and counterinsurgency strategies ▪ Risk Minimization Strategies (e.g. Information starvation, elimination of potential threats) ▪ Scorched-earth warfare (e.g. destruction of crops, livestock and infrastructure ▪ Positive policies (e.g. rewarding local populations with development policies)
Leader ideology	▪ Ideological vision communicated through society (e.g. institutional training programmes, propaganda, calls for violence) ▪ Justificatory mechanisms (e.g. ideological and polarizing language) ▪ Charismatic leader (e.g. portrayed by the national media) ▪ Institutionalization of the ideology (e.g. politically homogenous society, alliances within traditional societal institutions, resistance from the masses)
Intra-elite competition	▪ Coup-proofing strategies (e.g. spoiling possible enemies, establishing paramilitary structures, rotating commanders) ▪ Insecure political climate (e.g. coup trap) ▪ Genocidal consolidation (e.g. seizing government institutions, purging of rival elites) ▪ Public discontent of rival elites (based on e.g. economic welfare of nation, social uprisings) ▪ Strengthening of leader inner circle (e.g. appointing friends and relatives in key positions)

Table 1 - Overview of observable implications per explanation

IV. Context and Case Analysis

The following chapter will present the historical and political context of the civil war in Guatemala, simultaneously it will test the three theories presented earlier through the process tracing for the events that occurred during the period of 1978 to 1983 in Guatemala. The first section aims to give a general overview of the civil war in Guatemala looking at the period of 1944-1996. The subsequent sections will concentrate on the period 1978-1984, the third major wave of terror. As such, the analysis focuses on 2 military leaders, General Romeo Lucas García who was president from July 1st, 1978 until removed from his position by a military junta led by General Efraín Ríos Montt on March 27th, 1982. Events and actions performed by these key actors/policy initiators of the conflict will be analyzed and presented within the frameworks of the theories presented above.

4.1 The military as (governing) institution

Ever since the overthrow of the last caudillo of Guatemala in 1944, the military has embedded itself in the formal politics of the nation; enshrining its influence in the newly drafted constitution under the civilian rule, gaining "the power to recast the State in the military's own image" as Jennifer Schirmer declares (9). 1954 is a hallmark year for the Guatemalan political history, it is the year that the so-called Ten Years of Spring ended, the last time that Guatemala would have experienced democracy until the 1990s. Under Arévalo and his successor Jacobo Arbenz, The Ten Years of Spring brought about agrarian and land reforms and a modern capitalist society; an attempt to detach the nation from its colonial remnants; "challeng[ing] the status quo" (Rothenberg xx). Ironically, as Schirmer remarks, this period facilitated the political consolidation of the army, the first democratic president was providing well for the military officers, providing them with, for example, influential positions within the government (10-13; Handy 133-136). In other words, the militarization of the State began before the guerrilla movement was created.

Arévalo's successor was Colonel Jacobo Arbenz Guzman, Arévalo's minster of Defense, who was elected after the suspicious death of his political opponent (Handy 113; Jamail 24). During his presidency the Arévalo was known as "the personification of nationalism and agrarianism (Handy 114). Handy sketches an image of true democracy during Arbenz presidency in which population participated in politics, the press was free and critical, and the government was warranting constitutional rights to its citizens: "[…] which would not be experienced at any time during the four decades following the overthrow of the Arbenz government" (117). Arbenz alienated internal and external allies with, according to Handy, four standpoints: fostering economic independence, refusal to quash communist organizations, ignoring the military's concern over the control of the countryside, and the agrarian reform bill of 1952 being passed. The more conservative officers were

disgruntled with Arbenz' socialist policies and the bid to create a civil militia protecting the agrarian reform process, resulting in a coup d'état (Schirmer 13; Handy 133-6). Financed by the United States, fearful of the spread of Communism and sensitive to the US businesses' loss of monopoly, the 1954 coup, led by colonel Castillo de Armas, was a full-spectrum coup, "distinguished from previous US interventions in Latin America and elsewhere because it drew on every aspect of US power, using politics, economics, diplomacy, psychology, and mass media to destabilize Arbenz's government" (Schirmer 4). Arbenz was forced to resign and was replaced by a herd of military officers, who, for the coming, sought to increase their personal power rather than engage politically with the nation, inevitably a coup ensued.

Handy summarizes the war with regards to the role of the military as follows: in 1963 the military felt that it had the responsibility to intervene directly in Guatemalan politics to the return of Juan José Arévalo and his socialist policies. Between 1963 and 1966, the military shaped the political landscape in one that was acceptable to them. "And from 1966 to 1970, when this attempt proved impossible, military officers frustrated attempts at reform by perpetrating increasing levels of violence". Oglesby adds to the argument; she says between 1963 and 1986: "the army was the governing institution of the Guatemalan State" (94). Even during civilian rule, the military were influential in politics. It can be argued that the civilian rule existed because and to the willingness of the military. The military officers ingeniously used the civilian parties as allies and as fronts for their own. Consequently, as Handy argues: "[…] all major decisions were made by the army in high command, occasionally in consultation with the leading civilian politicians" (394-5). The Army as the governing institution of the Guatemalan State in context of the guerrilla threat also meant that the main governance tool utilized, was repressive violence. By august 1967, the Guatemalan army "had virtually destroyed" the guerrilla movement under due diligence of the US training directly transferred from the Vietnam battle. According to Castaneda, the defeat ignited a process of "rethinking and reorganizing among the left" and started the second cycle of the civil war (94). Castaneda pinpoints the start of the intensified violence in November 1981. It is then that the army high command agreed upon a new rapid deployment force. The intensified military campaign was initiated in 1981 under minister of defense and brother to the president, General Benedicto Lucas. The campaign started in Guatemala City but, moved rapidly to a more intense counterinsurgency campaign. This scorched-earth campaign started under General Benedicto Lucas but intensified under the rule of Efraín Ríos Montt. This strategy would begin in the center of the country (Guatemala City) and heading north-west until the border of Mexico, reasserting control over the social and territorial bases of the guerrillas (Castaneda 95).

The civil war in Guatemala was fought on ideological lines. What we see is that the Guatemalan violence was structured by the fundamental oppositions of modernity versus primitivity and communism versus national security (Oettler 5). The first binary oppositions clearly are societal, they encompass the differences between the rural and urban, the indígenas and the ladino, but also looks at the place of Guatemala in the world. The second pair of binary oppositions is political in nature, not only does it encompass the indígenas and the ladino, it divides the conservatives and the progressives, the nationalists versus the socialists/communists, again it also looks at the Guatemala's place in the world, but with regards to where it places itself on the political spectrum. The civil war in Guatemala was complex and hinges on different forms of exclusion, but that not only social elements are the reasons for the civil war. Rothenberg adds: "while racism, inequality and marginalization have produced enormous suffering for the Guatemalan people, these conditions alone did not create the conflict (xx). The report by the CEH found that structural inequality was a general social context and that the conflict was a result of intensified due to "escalating levels of state repression in response to movements for social change" (Rothenberg xx). In summary, it is not the many forms of exclusion that Guatemala had institutionalised that were at the root of the nation's civil war, rather it was its inability to create an inclusive society for its citizens. Between 1980 and 1982, an estimated 427 of the 700 inhabitants of the village were assassinated. Some of the worst massacres were committed in the last months of the Lucas regime. Thus, the conflict seemed to have turned from an ideological conflict into an ethnic one with genocidal features, eliminating 93 percent of the Mayan population between 1978 and 1984.

In April 1982, a National Security and Development Plan was adopted, of which we will highlight particularly the Beans and Bullets element (Frijoles y Fusiles). The military plan was based on the fact that the traditional forms of terror had proven to be ineffective; therefore, the war had now to be fought on political, economic and social fronts. On the social front, was a "positive policy" which offered food and security to the 'loyal' Guatemalans (Beans). The Guatemalans that the army was not able to 'save' would be met with bullets. "Beans, though, would always be accompanied by Bullets" (Schirmer 57). Furthermore, PACs self-defense patrols were introduced; local villagers received food, water, employment and health care in exchange for working only local militia patrols (Crandall 266). The shift from indiscriminate violence to a mix of mass indiscriminate and selective violence is also known within the military strategists as going from a 100 percent to 70/30 percent. In June of 1982, Ríos Montt had gotten rid of his fellow junta members and continued to rule alone (Drouin Understanding the Genocide 89). Ríos Montt was at the top of the regime and the nation for 18 months until he was deposed, in august 1983, the same way as he had acquired power. His minister of Defense Mejía Victores 'relieved' the general of his functions with support of the military

elite. From there a slow democratic transition took place, with the first elections held in 1985, although this did not signal the endo of the violence. This came only in 1996, when under president Arzu a Peace Agreement was signed between the URNG and the Guatemalan government, putting an end to 36 years of civil war.

4.2 Guerrilla threat

Within the guerrilla threat explanation state violence follows a logic of using terror as the means to the end of disposing of subversion. The guerrilla threat is a theory in which the *strategic* annihilation of civilians is central. Therefore, we are looking at (some of) the declassified strategic plans and military operations. According to Brett, the guerrilla threat was "fused with a historically constructed threat articulated through the framework of race", making the distinction between guerrilla threat and leader ideologies almost indistinguishable (36-37). The first wave of guerrilla forces was created after the failed of coup of 1960, the young rebelling officers retracted to Eastern Guatemala and Cuba and allied themselves with the communist party of Guatemala. Boon characterizes this first wave of guerrilla fighters, as "predominately ladino" and, the author reports, they failed to attract widespread support from the rural and indigenous populations for their resistance. This first wave of guerrilla rebels counted about 6,000 civilian supporters and was minimal in its use of violence (Boon). In the late 1960's, however, they increased their levels of violence, they started to kidnap, bomb and assassinate opponents. This induced the first peak of violence of the civil war as observed by Figueroa Iberra.

Between 250,000 and 500,00 civilians provided support to the insurgency. Combining this with the fact that the guerrilla, although small in numbers, was present in both the rural and urban areas, the regime could have felt threatened (Valentino, Huth and Balch-Lindsay 399). Handy remarks that the Army was at least two steps behind the guerrilla forces; arriving to towns seized by the guerrilla days later or when they had already deserted; which gave the military ample opportunity to retaliate against the villagers (Handy 256). The aggressive feelings towards the guerrilla must have enforced themselves when the army felt outplayed, finding other victims for their frustration. Handy remarks that the ladino military often saw "all Indian villagers as potential enemies" spinning a self-fulfilling toll; by attacking Indian villages, the military pushed whole communities towards the guerrilla forces (250-1). The scorched earth campaigns targeting a few hundred guerrillas (at the beginning of the war) claimed the lives of thousands of peasants, embodying the drain the sea strategy at play. In 1982 the different guerrilla factions joined forces under the banner of the National Revolutionary Union (UNRG). The unification of the guerrilla factions, meant the unification of their tactics and coordination of their strategy, threatening the regime in power even more.

In 1978 the United States stopped providing military aid to the Guatemalan government resulting in an independent crafting of military philosophy and strategy by the government. According to Gen. Gramajo in 1980 Guatemala was "on the verge of collapse – a polarized, intolerant society with decadent political institutions, an economy debilitated by capital flight, and isolated internationally" (qtd in Schirmer 18). The insurgent movement in Guatemala was at its highest between 1980 and 1981; between 6,000 and 8,000 armed fighters and between 250,000 and 500,000 active collaborators and supporters joined the insurgency (Adams 296). Beginning in 1981, the repression shifted from selective to indiscriminate. Rothenberg/the CEH reported that the soldiers, unable to find their target, would kill the relatives of the targeted people instead (34). "The attacks were part of deliberate government policy to destroy the guerrilla's base of support by destroying those villages suspected of providing assistance to those forces" (Handy 258). Part of the military campaign was to force the rural males of Mayan descent to join the Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil (PAC). These civil patrols were charged with observing and controlling their own communities and participating in the acts of violence as requested from the military; achieving in this way "the mental metamorphosis of young indigenous soldiers, and the *ladinoisation* of indigenous communities" (Oettler 2). Handy is of the opinion that the major reason for the 1982 coup, was a fear from the military officers that another inefficient and corrupt military command would enforce support for the guerrilla (256). The guerrilla had gained control over the western highlands, the EGP was supposedly "laying plans for establishing "liberated" areas where the revolutionary forces would establish nascent governments" (Handy 256). In 1982, the four guerrilla factions join together to form a unique front named the URNG. The guerrilla was never a major threat according to the army reports the CEH. Rothenberg asserts that even under a united front, the URNG lacked adequate arms, training and logistics, they did not have enough combatants, weapons or territory to challenge the Guatemalan Army (xxxi).

In 1982 the new phase of the military plan was put into action. The new strategy adopted by the Guatemalan military, was "to maintain a permanent presence, a presence that alternated brutal repression with carefully measured benevolence" (Handy 264). This was called the Beans and Bullets, the beans signifying food, shelter and work and bullets, the bullets they would take if not opting for the beans. This shift was also seen as from 100 to 70/30, meaning that from 100 percent indiscriminate violence the army would provide for 70 percent of beans and 30 percent of bullets. Within this military strategy also came forth the creation of *aldeas modelos*, or 'model villages'. These *aldeas modelos* were rural resettlement camps where the lives of people living within these camps was subject to constant military control. As Jonas describes, due to the scorched-earth operations, the civilians became dependent on the army for food, shelter and work. The goals of the

Beans and Bullets programme can be summarized by the words of Ríos Montt: *If you are with us, we'll feed you; if not, we'll kill you* (qtd in Bonner)**.** Under Ríos Montt the self-defense patrols (PACs) were created, this policy permitted local villagers to receive food, water, employment and health care by joining local militia patrols. Crandall reports that "roughly one million peasants from 850 villages" joined the PACs (266). The literature often refers to the strategic objective by the military of afflicting the information starvation to the guerrillas. The army does this in two ways; the first is to eliminate the (potential) sources by displacing them and ensuring that they would not return or killing them. Valentino also put forward the notion of "starving them into submission" which we have also seen through the implementation of the scorched-earth strategies and the implementation of bullets and beans-plan. What the Guatemalan military, thus did was to win over the hearts and minds, by offering no other attractive option.

4.3 Leader ideology

The leader ideology in the Guatemalan civil war was built around racism and subversion. Since independence in 1821, the country's primary political community, as Straus (2015) has termed it, had been constructed around ladino identity and values; indigenous or Indian identity had been excluded from this narrative and, historically, constructed to represent an existential threat to the primary political community (Brett 36-37). Rothenberg: The nation's structural inequality was supported by laws, regulations, and other mechanisms of governance that were backed up by violence and designed to protect the interest of privileged elite" (xxvi). Thus, even though the laws are not a direct reflection of the ideology of the leader it is a reflection of ideology of the institutionalised military elite. In other words, leader ideology is less marked in Latin American societies, compared to other case studies, due to the institutionalisation of military ideas. Moreover, the military and autocratic regimes gave the ruling elites more room to operate and carry out their ideologies than a democracy would, with its checks and balances. Additionally, the civil war of Guatemala was waged from the government point of view on the basis of ideology, in a time of cold war and anti-communism sentiment. These anti-communist sentiments were repeated during the many years that the civil war lasted. However, not all leaders have engaged in genocidal violence, thus anti-communism cannot be the (only) motive for violence.

What we see happening towards the late 1970s is that the Indian communities have had ample time to obtain and experiment with their own agency, manifesting themselves in peasant leagues, unions and social campaigns (Drouin Understanding the Genocide 84). Most notable was the CUC, the Committee of Union of the Peasants, a national peasant organization representing all peasant and agricultural workers of all backgrounds but primarily led by Mayas. In January 1980 members of the CUC and students took over the Spanish Embassy in Guatemala City to denounce the

widespread repression in the countryside, to which the armed forces responded by burning the building leaving no survivors (Drouin 85). Not long after, in February 1980 members of the CUC, stopped harvesting the crops. This protest led to a raise of the minimum wage of peasants, a wage that some of the landowners would refuse to adhere to. The response was another unified and repeated protest by the Indian communities, which the Guatemalan army countered with Operation *Ceniza* (Ashes), the first phase of the National Development Plan. This campaign used the official membership lists of the worker's association to trace and target the most active and vocal representatives of the Indian communities (Drouin 86). "By the late 1970s, the country had reached a crisis point. The state's repressive activities were directed against virtually all social movements and political activities that challenged the status quo" (Rothenberg xxix). This is where we can see the profound differences between Lucas García and Ríos Montt. Under Lucas García, the violence had for objective to destroy mass movements, he was even quoted saying: "[The workers] are trying to screw me, but I'll screw them" (Handy 176). Not only did Lucas Garcia attack members of trade unions, he also targeted university students and teachers and rival politicians. Under his successor, kidnappings and killings in the urban area declined dramatically. A strategic move, we can argue, by giving the middle-class population (largely living in the urban areas) that violence declined, whilst the rural violence was still ongoing, Rios Montt could have been trying to build himself popular support. Thus, Balcells predictive observation that the army will target politically active movements proves to be relevant for the Guatemalan context.

As Oettler discloses, General Lucas García was perceived by the population as a psychotic tyrant, while General Ríos Montt had a vision of morality, discipline and order, and national unity: La Nueva Guatemala. Every Sunday, Efraín Ríos Mont would give a nationally broadcasted speech/sermon (Schirmer 271). Ríos Montt had become part of the El Verbo church in 1978. In the 1980s, catholic priests had become an obstacle to the expansion of evangelical Protestantism of which General Ríos Montt was a pastor within the El Verbo church. Efraín Ríos Montt was a born-again Christian evangelist, who saw it as his mission to purify the nation of communism and atheism. Due to working with and within indigenous communities, Catholic priests had been driven out or murdered by the Guatemalan army. Protestant sects, on the other hand, allied to the Guatemalan military and preached individual conversion, the importance of obedience to military and political authority, the merits of capitalism, and the value of inequality. Ríos Montt's own Church of the Word went so far as to define priests and nuns as the enemy (Kozloff). General Efraín Ríos Montt used his religious identity as recurring theme in his speeches, in this context, he called for "the need to surgically excise evil from Guatemala" (95). Subversives were also commonly referred to in terms of subhuman beasts and demons (Drouin Understanding the Genocide 87). This is illustrated by the

following example, one of Efraín Montt's followers, a pastor of the Verbo Church assured: "The army doesn't massacre Indians, it massacres demons, and Indians are demons possessed; they are communists" (qtd in Nelson and Kenneth 12). Among the followers of the leader ideology it was clearly articulated that the perceived enemy had been dehumanized.

The discourse used by the government to refer to subversion did not change much throughout the civil war. "We have no scorched-earth policy; we have a policy of scorched Communists.", is what Ríos Montt affirmed (qtd in Crandall 265) In the mind of policy perpetrators, the *indígenas* were equal to subversives. General Gramajo upholds that the main target was not the indigenous people per se: "[…] it's true, *indígenas* died in all this in substantial numbers because there were a high number of *indígenas* in the army and because they had been carried away by the subversion (qtd in Schirmer 56). The language used for defining subversion, was not only based on morals and religion, but also on emotion. Subversion was compared to a virus infecting the population, and whomever got infected needed to be killed in order to avoid the virus spreading.

Smyth reports that hateful discourse played a role in Guatemala, but not in the same ways as other occurrences of large-scale violence (2). Where in other nations such as Rwanda and Yugoslavia hateful discourse was disseminated throughout the society, in Guatemala hateful discourse was selectively disseminated towards groups of military personnel and select groups of civilians, namely villagers under control of the military (Smyth 2-3). For example: "Efraín Montt press secretary: […] Clearly, you had to kill Indians because they were collaborating with subversion. And then they say, 'You're massacring innocent people'. But they weren't innocent. They had sold out to subversion" (qtd in Nelson and Kenneth 12). Moreover, in an interview, recorded 2nd of June 1982, Ríos Montt himself identifies a problem of Guatemala, he says that it is too diverse and that is as such not one nation: "we are a group of nations, with their own characteristics, with their own languages", he continues to specify the different provinces such as Petén, El Quiché and Chimaltenango as distinct nations. This signalled a shift in the motivation of violence, it moved away from the communism and subversion rhetoric to a developmentalist rhetoric, which Hand also describes in his book Gift of the Devil. (263). Moreover, the targeted civilians were often referred as subversives. Subversion was often connotated with evil, bestial and demonic. Many of the justificatory mechanisms as presented by Leader Maynard, can be found in the Guatemalan case. One of the most evident is the mechanism of dehumanization and us versus them rhetoric.

Among the Guatemalan elite, it was widely accepted that there it was a necessity to turn Indians into non-Indians, one of the ways to achieve this was the mandatory military service (Drouin Understanding the Genocide 82). Drouin asserts that anywhere between 800,000 to 1 million

civilians may have taken part in civil defense patrols by 1983, effectively turning indigenous people against their own people (82). Constitutionally, the creation of these patrols was illegal, nevertheless they did exist and the military used them (Drouin Understanding the Genocide 86). Thus, we see another observable implication of the creation of paramilitary organizations by the ruling elite. Another visible mechanism within this strategy, was de-agentification, which purports the perpetrators will not take responsibility for their acts and claim that violence is the only possible solution to the problem of the nation. Especially since the guerrilla forces gradually adopted an indigenous agrarian philosophy due to recognized role of the indigenous people in a revolutionary process by the guerrilla leaders (Richards 93). Thus, to make use of the 'drain the sea'-strategy makes sense from a military strategic perspective, especially since the EGP does claim representing the indigenous populations and their interests. As we have seen, with the creation of the paramilitary and civil defense patrols the army had a way to distance itself quite literally from the mass violence. At the same time, through the paradigm of national security, and later development, the national army did have the freedom to eliminate the subversive that were such a threat to the national security and development of Guatemala.

Furthermore, Ríos Montt inherited an economically unhealthy nation. The country had been severely affected by the worldwide recession; the demand for Guatemala's export reduced and interest rates were increased. Moreover, during the last three years that Lucas Garcia was in power, the nation suffered from the economic weigh of the civil war as well as the corruption costing the nation's economy. In the observable implications, we also looked at the effect of the poor economic performance of a nation, and what this might mean for coup plotters. The Guatemalan case shows these implications; Lucas García was held accountable for failed economic policies, resulting in the dissatisfaction of military officers and other elites with the leader, providing the opportunity to Ríos Montt to successfully depose the previous leader. It was also said that the leader will try to find alliance in traditional institutions. Clearly, this is not the case for Lucas Garcia who attacked universities and church organisations, specifically as a part of his repressive governance strategy.

Although guerrilla threat has certainly influenced the course of the civil war, it is questionable whether we can consider the singular cause of mass violence. As we have seen, it is quite debatable whether the guerrilla did in fact form a (major) threat to the government. This may have been the image that the government projected onto its population, but in reality, it might have been otherwise. The fact that the different guerrilla factions joined under one banner might indicate that they understood that the only way to resist, was to unite, because choosing to continue operating independently would cause their immediate demise. According to Brett the main motivation of the Guatemalan government to use mass violence was to both "eliminate the

insurgent threat, whilst forging a new society, purified of potential subversion" (17). Brett thus asserts that it is a combination of the guerrilla threat as well as the leader ideology laid out in this research.

4.4 Intra-elite competition

Towards the outside world, the Guatemalan Army was incredibly cohesive, however since the end of the Ten Years of Spring, different factions formed in the military. The most powerful factions until the 1970's were the military technocrats and the more conservative officers; both these factions shared the strong ideology of anti-communism (Handy 272-3). During the 1970's, a new faction formed within the Army, this group was more willing to endorse (limited) progressive reforms. A wedge was driven between the General-President Lucas García and his troops due to the high casualty rates in the counterinsurgency operations and the feeling of abandonment by the high military command of the young officers (Schirmer 44). "Throughout the Lucas administration the military was divided into a number of competing cliques […]. The president, although in a position of power, did not control all military appointments and was therefore unable to ensure that his supporters would occupy positions of authority" (Handy 181). President-General Romeo Lucas constantly rotated his commanders, a coup-proofing strategy identified by Sudduth and Van der Maat. There were many allegations of corruption by close friends of president Lucas Garcia, which severed relations within the military (Schirmer 18). It is a sensible decision for ruling leader put in power through a coup to apply coup-proofing strategies, as it is usual that a coup is followed by another coup, as have demonstrated several scholars (Marshall and Marshall; Lehoucq and Pérez-Linán). Obtaining power through non-democratic means equals that it is as easy to lose the power as it was obtained. Both of Lucas Garcia and Ríos Montt seem to have been well aware of this and set up coup-proofing strategies. The coup in which Ríos Montt obtained power, further divided the army. Handy asserts: "To a considerable extent, Ríos Montt's position depended on how well he could respond to the junior officer's demands without completely antagonizing the more senior officers (273).

As we know, the repressive governance of Lucas García started with targeting mass movements as well as rival politicians. This is interesting, because Lucas Garcia had made the campaign promise of opening up the political landscape, but the fact that he would target the rival politicians, shows us a leader that is in fact closing this landscape and is attempting to secure his own position. What Marc Drouin observed during his research in the field is that at first the massacres were selective: the young and elderly men were chosen to be tortured and killed from lists. From February 1982 on (a month before Lucas was overthrown and Montt came to power), however, the military and civil defense forces increasingly started to target the indigenous populations

indiscriminately. Perhaps, this was a failed attempt from Lucas García to use mass violence because of intra-elite rivalry. It might have been, that he had sensed his position as a leader was precarious and in a desperate attempt to salvage his power, he used mass violence as grass-root consolidation. Nevertheless, this is to be rebuked as we would expect that the fact that this leader was removed from his position, would diminish the violence. The staggering percentages offered by Marc Drouin of killing rates between 3 and 57 percent before March 1982 in the communities that he observed and between 83 and 96 percent by July 1982, do indicate that change of leadership has greatly increased the genocidal violence in the Guatemalan case rather than decreased it (92).

Ríos Montt was aware of and actively planning the coup of March 23rd, contrary to widespread claims that he did not learn about it until army units had surrounded the palace (Bonner 'General's rise to power'). The day of the coup, three successive juntas were formed, the only consistent element being Gen. Efraín Ríos Montt. The final junta, of which he was president, also included Gen. Horacio Egberto Maldonado Schaad and Col. Francisco Luis Gordillo Martinez, who were said to be close friends of Ríos Montt (Bonner; Schirmer 21). It seems that Efraín Ríos Montt was well aware of the coups and that he was planning to acquire the power. According to the CIA report entitled *Guatemala: Officers Disgruntled (march 27 1982)* the junior officers who put General Ríos Montt in power, were quickly displeased with Ríos Montt. The newly put in power president did not reward the junior officers, rather, he re-enforced the principle of military hierarchy. The report also mentions that two junior officers were announced to be members of the presidential junta, instead General Ríos Montt overturned this decision, and proposed that six junior officers serve as advisers to the junta (13). "The source said the two army officers who were members of the junta established after the coup did not resign voluntarily last month, as General Ríos Montt said, but were forced out by the general and officers loyal to him". One of the ousted junta members initially resisted, the Guatemalans said, pulling the pin on a grenade in the presence of General Ríos Montt and several officers. Although the junta member changed his mind, the sources said, he did not sign the resignation papers. Later, he and the other dismissed junta member were offered $50,000 to remain quiet, according to the sources" (Bonner). Assuming this is true, General Ríos Montt did use purging methods to in his pillar of support to keep and make power his own.

Moreover, according to the report, Efraín Montt also appointed close relatives and friends to key positions in the regime. Thus, Efraín Ríos Montt did not engage in spoiling strategies by appointing the junior officers that put him in power to co-rule. Quite the contrary, as can be seen, the leader surrounded himself with people he could trust (family and friends) and people that had not been actively plotting coups (I.e. the junior officers). Ríos Montt's rule was partly marked by his embrace of El Verbo. This also translated in his inner circle: he appointed two members of the World

Church to ad-hoc created advisory positions. From the moment that Ríos Montt came into power, he gradually sent the "more ambitious officers who served during the Lucas regime" to positions in the field while positioning his own followers within the defense ministry and the Army General Staff (Schirmer 26). Simultaneously, Ríos Montt continually attempted to diminish his reliance on the junior officers and create his own base of support within the military (Handy 272). After the removal of President Lucas García, Ríos Montt immediately fired close to 300 employees in the ministry of interior, many members of the Lucas regime were also confined house arrest, while others were sent to military trials (Handy 266). General Ríos Montt's actions of appointing close friends and relatives and purging the elements of the previous rule corresponds with the coup-proofing strategies that Sudduth and Van der Maat partly identified.

General Efraín Ríos Montt assumed office with a military junta of three; upon coming into power, the military junta suspended the constitution and ruled by military decree (Drouin 89). The CIA reports that President Ríos Montt's strength was "his positive popular image and the apparent continuing support of most junior military officers" (18). Another CIA report, describes how Ríos Montt had been able to win over the population and the junior military officers. Through enacting popular public measures and pursuing some former government officials believed to be corrupt (17). In the first week of July 1982, President Ríos Montt instated a state of siege in the nation. In the same month, Ríos Montt appointed, by decree, rural mayors "under threat just in case some refused to accept their new status" (Schirmer 25). From this we can see that Ríos Montt attempted to consolidate his power from the bottom-up, capturing local institutions. Starting to resemble a personalistic caudillo, Ríos Montt was gently 'relieved' from his functions by his own minister of defense Mejía on August 8th, 1983. According to Schirmer around 1982, the military came to the realization that to be able to keep the military institution in existence, "at least the appearance of a democracy" should be given space in the political spheres of Guatemala (22). Already conscious of his precarious position in 1982, General Ríos Montt is quoted in the New York Times saying "I am the one who has the power up to this moment. Within half an hour they [the competition] can shoot me without any problem" (Bonner). His Defense Minister did not shoot him, but he did ask the Council of Commanders […] in the presence of Ríos Montt, for their vote (which was given "in a manner of minutes") to relieve the president of his functions (Schirmer 29). Even though, President Efraín Ríos Montt was deposed, this did not signal the end of the violence (Rothenberg xxxii). This indicates that intra-elite competition although fierce, was not the main reason for the mass violence occurring in the rural highlands of Guatemala.

V. Conclusion

Building the 'Nation of Prisoners' was not an overnight feat; it took 36 years of civil war and suffering; many Guatemalans lost their lives over the course of the conflict and about 75,000 period during the violent 18 months. Moreover, not only live were destroyed also the social relationships between individuals, communities and within the society. This research has accounted for the large-scale violence perpetrated against civilians during the Guatemalan civil war, in the third wave of terror. Through process-tracing events that occurred before, during and after the peak of the violence between 1978 and 1983, and linking the political decision-making with the acute political situations. As Rothenberg predicted: "in the future, generations of scholars will struggle to explain, in its depth and complexity, all the factors and mechanisms of terror that were used to brutalize the people of Guatemala for over three decades" (7). The Guatemalan case is certainly complex; many factors have influenced the mass violence recorded between 1978 and 1984 and many of the observable implications identified in the third chapter were present in the Guatemalan context for the delimited time period. One of the complexities of the Guatemalan case, is its enduring conflict. This fact makes it for example hard to distinguish between the leader ideology theory and the ideology used to justify violence in the guerrilla threat theory. The fact that violence is "endogenous to itself" also blurs the lines for the motivations for violence (McDoom 44).

Looking at the peak of mass violence between 1978 and 1984 it is difficult to pinpoint one single theory to be the explanation for mass violence. Since the civil war was waged over more than three decades and that the military has been the governing institution for most of that war, it makes it harder to distinguish whether ideologies are to be related to the leader or to the military as an institution. It is clear that the conflict shows mechanisms of all theories, thus making them adequate theories to theory-test and theory-build. Nevertheless, the timing of the observable implications was of utmost importance in perceiving which of the presented explanations was the most successful at the rationalization of violence in the Guatemalan context; the fact that the implications are visible does not mean that they are the causal mechanism for unleashing mass indiscriminate violence. The most adequate and blunt response to the question *what mechanism(s) catalyzed the episode of mass violence between 1978 and 1984 in Guatemala,* is: several. "Rather than being irrational and out of control, many of these Latin American militaries are precisely in control and acting in their own best interest" (Schirmer 4). What we have seen in this thesis is that ample evidence to confirm this, many plans and strategies are drafted and approved by the highest segments of the military elite, proving that the leaders in command were neither irrational nor out of control; they were strategic and determined to stay in power. As we have been able to see from the analysis, many of the expected observable implications where applicable for the Guatemalan case-study.

At first, the government forces starved the guerrillas from information, used scorched-earth warfare and eliminated individuals supporting social change with violence. Nevertheless, an influential faction of the military realized that indiscriminate terror made the insurgent movement even stronger. Thus, examining the '100 percent versus 70/30 beans and bullets campaigns', it is visible that the national army de-escalated its mass indiscriminate violence to mix of mass indiscriminate violence and selective violence; the policy of physical annihilation was transformed into a policy, which combined murder and the destruction of the cultural identity of the enemy. "Beans, though, would always be accompanied by Bullets" (Schirmer 57).

Many of the justificatory mechanisms that fit with in the explanation of leader ideology, identified by Leader Maynard, were visible in the case study, but somehow the timing of the observable implications did not always fit. The ideological vision of a homogenous society was communicated for decades, if not centuries through Guatemalan society. Even though the State did not succeed in allying with traditional societal institutions, it did succeed in creating a political homogenous society with a closed political sphere since 1954. The resistance from the masses, however, is one observable implication that did fit the timing of rationalisation of mass indiscriminate violence, and it would be fruitful to look further into this for further research. But for now, we can conclude that leader ideology is not the catalyst of mass indiscriminate period for the period 1978-1984 in Guatemala.

We have been able to see that Guatemala does fit within the sequence of events for genocidal consolidation as described by Van der Maat. Although the context does present observable elements of intra-elite rivalry, especially with the overthrow of Lucas García, the violence only intensifies after his demise, while the intra-elite rivalry as presented by Van der Maat expects that it would diminish. Therefore, Van der Maat's theory might not be the adequate theory to explain the cataclysm of mass indiscriminate violence in 1978-1984 Guatemala.

The intra-elite rivalry theory as presented by McDoom, taking into account the social fractionalisation of Guatemalan society, fits better within the Guatemalan case. The centuries-long disdain for this particular social group that were the Mayans, meant that, even though the military could identify who was or was not supporting the guerrillas in any way, this was not of importance; the lives of the Mayans were not important for the Colombian nation as envisioned by the ruling elite. Targeting the Mayas was much less complex to target an ethnic group than to target an ideological group. This explanation also ties in with elements of ideological exclusion. As we have seen, many mechanisms to justify violence were used by the Guatemalan army. However, the elements of, for example, dehumanization, threat-construction and guilt-attribution are present *prior*

to the wave of terror analyzed in this research. This proves Leader Maynard's point, that leader ideology is a necessary but insufficient cause for the mass violence, and a such not a catalyst mechanism for the mass indiscriminate violence in Guatemala.

In conclusion, none of the theories seem to be quite the right fit for the mass indiscriminate violence of 1978-1984 in Guatemala. But, all of them seem to carry a piece of the puzzle that Guatemala has formed, a deeper look at differences between the violence under Lucas Garcia and Rios Montt and the link between development, might give use the missing piece to solve the puzzle. Additionally, a recommendation to further this research would be to quantify the qualitative data to give a comparative dimension to the research. At the moment this research has been designed in such a way that it is only useful on its own for the Guatemalan case, it can be difficult to compare, in its current form, with other cases of mass atrocities because of its qualitative nature. Such a comparison could be done with regional cases such as Nicaragua, which had similar revolutionary movement and Argentina with the similar use of forced disappearances as a form of governance, the research focusing on the differences between the nations; arguably this could give more context as to why mass indiscriminate violence was used in Guatemala. Moreover, this research might have consequences for the research on the link between mass violence and the culture of terror. Thus, another recommendation would be to look at the mass violence in Guatemala through a paradigm of the culture of terror as presented by Figueroa Ibarra. Taking into account the toll that 36 years of civil war must have taken on the policy executors, violence took over the regular dynamics of social interaction. Thus, a particularly interesting aspect would be to look at the changes in the ordinary social relationships that occurred within the Guatemalan communities and society. Although the nation returned civil rule and signed a peace agreement in 1996, thereby ending the civil war, the nation continued to suffer. The civil war left a mark on the collective memory, the psyche and the social fabric of Guatemala and its citizens; the prison that Guatemala had turned into, was one that could not be easily destroyed.

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