

Lecture 20

Ethnic Conflict: Rwanda





Rwanda

Great Lakes Region



- ★ Capital City
- ★ Regional Capital City
- Significant City
- Important City - Town
- Attraction - Landmark
- River
- ▲ Highest Point



Rwanda is divided into 12 prefectures, with the city of Kigali as the capitol of the country.

“Tribal War” or Genocide?

- During three short months in 1994, in the small central African country of Rwanda, between 500,000 and one million Tutsi were killed by their Hutu neighbors

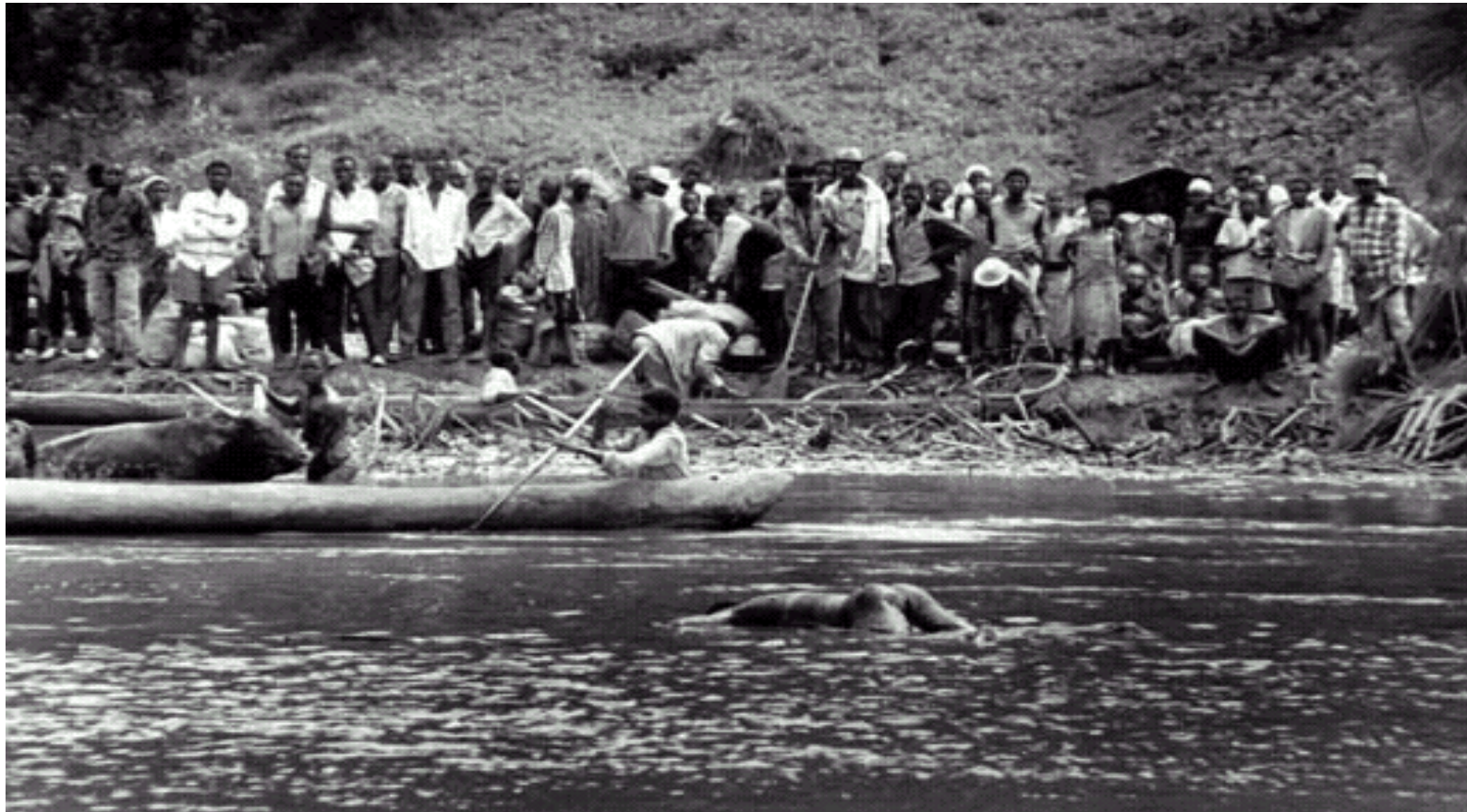
In April 1994, the people of Rwanda suffered a tragedy of momentous proportions - while the world stood by and watched it happen. Over the course of only 100 days, a stupefying 1,000,000 innocent fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, aunts, uncles, grandmothers, grandfathers, young and old alike were slaughtered.

They were hacked to death with machetes and nail-studded clubs. They were shot dead with guns. They were beaten, tortured, abused and left to die. Many of the women and girls who were not killed were forcibly and violently sexually assaulted by HIV+ men as part of a systematic rape campaign which used the deadly potency of the AIDS virus as a tool of slow death.

An estimated 800,000 people, in a population of 7 million, were wiped out in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. It was one of the worst slaughters in human history. The aim of the Rwanda government officials who encouraged it was to eliminate all Tutsis from the country.

Neither the U.S. government nor governments in Europe did anything to stop the genocide. Only the triumph of an invading Tutsi army three months after the genocide's beginning in April 1994 put a halt to the killing.

Rwandan Genocide



Rwandan men killed at one of the thousands of massacre sites.





The Hutu militia, or the 'Interahamwe' - which means 'those who kill together'.

*This Tutsi man survived an attack
by machete-wielding assailants.*



Topics of Discussion

- History of pre-colonial Rwanda
- Define ethnic differences and similarities of Tutsi and Hutu
- Effects of colonization of Rwanda by Europeans
- The Aftermath of European Colonization

Pre Colonial Rwanda

- approximately 85 per cent Hutu and 14 per cent Tutsi.
- the kings and upper class of both countries were Tutsi, the ordinary population Hutu.



The shores of Lake Mollera, Ruanda



Tutsi man, Rwanda

Physical Differences

- Height
- Facial features
- Skin tone



Type of work

- Hutus were an agricultural culture
- Tutsi were a pastoral culture

Similarities

- Common Language
- Common Culture
- Lived in the same areas

Video Clip from “Hotel Rwanda”:

- <http://eircom.mymovies.net/player/play.asp?url=/film/fid3022/features/avfid3665/wm/bb.asx&filmid=3022&partner=eircom&sec=avfeat>

Rwanda - Background

- History of the Hutu/Tutsi difference
- Effects of Colonialism – racialising the categories
- The Social revolution of 1959 – turning the tables
- The Kalibanda regime: 1961-1973
- Habyarimana regime: 1973-1990

Historical Background (Identity Construction)

- Rwanda and Burundi located in East Central Africa. Only subjected to European colonial subordination very late in the 'Scramble for Africa'.
- 1890s, Germans and Belgians move in. Joint German colony in 1898 until its loss in WWI, when it becomes a Belgian possession till 1959.
- Germans and Belgians employed racial criteria in their divide and rule policies by utilising the pre-existing social-ethnic hierarchy, thereby to a large extent *creating* ethnicity.

Colonization

1918 Under the treaty of versailles the former German colony of Rwanda-Urundi is made a League of Nations protectorate to be governed by Belgium



The Creation of Race



Mostly Tutsi – a cattle raising people who came from the north hundreds of years earlier – were held by the Europeans to be racially superior: taller, slimmer, allegedly more intelligent, originally from Ethiopia with Aryan or Caucasation 'blood' who had conquered the allegedly inferior Hutu, who comprised about 85% of the population and tilled the land as farmers/peasants.

= **Hamitic Myth**: Biblical story of Noah's youngest son, Ham, cursed as a slave for disloyalty, and therefore the first 'black man'. So Tutsi not seen as 'Negroes' by Europeans.

Practically, Tutsi favoured as client ruling class by Germans and Belgians. Tutsi would implement colonial policy in exchange for total domination of Hutu, especially in relation to political and social mobility and ownership of land and cattle. In the 1930s, the Tutsi elite could even demand forced labour and taxes of the Hutu, sometimes sequestrating their land.

In 1933, racial identification cards were introduced, ending any chance for Hutu social mobility and power-sharing, which had survived in parts of the country.

Result of all this? Development of a Hutu liberation movement in the 1940s. Same time as decolonisation movements in Africa, Asia and Central/South America.

Hutu Manifesto: argued for democracy and inverted Hamatic myth. If Tutsi were supposedly superior late-comers, then they cannot be the indigenous people of this region. We are its rightful owners.

During the 1950s, rivalry over who will control post-colonial Rwanda-Burundi. Competing elites with their own ethno-centric visions of what constituted the 'nation'.

During this period, Belgian authorities unclear about which side to back. Tutsi seen as loyal elite who could continue to represent colonial interests (as Sihanouk in Cambodia at this time). But Hutu the great majority.

Events moved so rapidly after 1959 that the Europeans lost control.

1959-1964 Social Revolution:

Hutu revolutionary elite mobilize Hutu masses against Tutsi aristocracy. Within five years, long standing social, economic and political relationships of Tutsi domination swept away in favor of a republican, democratic order.

Thousands of Tutsi were massacred, and thousands (200,000) more fled to neighboring Burundi and Uganda, where – in stark contrast to Rwanda – Tutsi domination of the Hutu majority continued. From there, a series of counter-invasions were launched, most seriously in 1963. They were defeated, but the message of Tutsi aspirations to 'come home' was clear to Hutu elites.

Point is that since its inception, *Hutu elites have lived with a heightened sense of anxiety that their revolutionary achievements could be reversed by a Tutsi invasion aided by the 14% Tutsi population in Rwanda.*

Ten Commandments of Hutu Power

1. Every Hutu should know that a Tutsi woman, wherever she is, works for the interests of her Tutsi ethnic group. As a result, we shall consider a traitor any Hutu who marries a Tutsi woman; befriends a Tutsi woman, employs a Tutsi woman as a secretary or concubine.
2. Every Hutu should know that our Hutu daughters are more suitable and conscientious in their role as woman, wife, and mother of the family. Are they not beautiful, good secretaries and more honest?
3. Hutu women, be vigilant and try to bring your husbands, brothers and sons back to reason.

4. Every Hutu should know that every Tutsi is dishonest in business. His only aim is the supremacy of his ethnic group. As a result any Hutu who does the following is a traitor: makes a partnership with a Tutsi in business, invests his money or the government's money in a Tutsi enterprise; lends or borrows money from a Tutsi, etc.

5. All strategic positions, political, administrative, economic, military and security should be entrusted to Hutu.

6. The educational sector (school pupils, students, teachers) must be majority Hutu.

7. The Rwandese Armed Forces forces should be exclusively Hutu. The experience of the October [1990] war has taught us a lesson. No member of the military shall marry a Tutsi.

8. The Hutu should stop having mercy on the Tutsi.

9. The Hutu, wherever they are, must have unity and solidarity, and be concerned with the fate their Hutu brothers.

10. The Social Revolution of 1959, the Referendum of 1961, and the Hutu ideology, must be taught to every Hutu at every level. Every Hutu must spread this ideology widely. Any Hutu who persecutes his brother Hutu for having read, spread, and taught this ideology, is a traitor.

- They drew up contingency plans: lists of Tutsi and Hutu 'collaborators' to be eliminated if necessary. A nation-wide militia was armed and trained. Guns, grenades and machetes arrived by the planeload -- 85 tones in addition to 581,000 machetes, one for every third Hutu male.

- In meantime, a multi-party state had been agreed upon. In addition to the Hutu National Movement for Revolution and Development (MNRD) several opposition groups emerged that were moderate and ethnically mixed.

- *There were Rwandans who wanted a multi-ethnic solution.* But in MNRD eyes, they were seen as potential allies of the RPF.

- In August 1993 – Tanzanian-brokered and Western supported power sharing arrangements agreed at Arusha between Rwandan and Burundian leadership. Tutsi minority parties would be brought into the government, the military would be shared, and UN Peacekeepers would supervise demobilization and demilitarization. 22 months later, multi-party elections would be held. 2,500 peacekeepers arrived for this
- 'Low' scale killing going on in this period. *Human Rights Watch* reported three massacres of Tutsi in Rwanda with 2,000 dead. Designed to derail negotiations by making compromise impossible.

- All the while, the international community does not take much notice and France backs the Rwandan regime carrying out the violence.
- Melchior Ndadaye, the first ever Hutu president, of Burundi was assassinated by the Tutsi army on 21 October 1993. The ensuing violence saw 200,000 Hutu flee to Rwanda, refugees now available for mobilization against Tutsi in Rwanda.
- Obviously, the likelihood of powersharing in Rwanda was considerably weakened.

On 6 April 1994, while returning from a meeting in Tanzania, a small jet carrying the two presidents was shot down by ground-fired missiles as it approached Rwanda's airport at Kigali. *Immediately after their deaths*, Rwanda plunged into political violence as Hutu extremists (= 'Hutu Power') began targeting prominent opposition figures who were on their death-lists, including moderate Hutu politicians and Tutsi leaders.

Logic points towards MRND shooting down the plane and blaming it on the RPF, for this way they could end the Arusha agreements and solve, once and for all, the Tutsi problem.

The radio station 'Radio Libre des Mille Collines', listened to by all on transistor radios, blasted murderous propaganda, inciting extermination of the Tutsi.

Four levels of organisation:

- government entourage and advisors
- rural organisers, 200-300 drawn from communal and prefectural cadres
- militias (*interhamwe*) estimated at 30,000, the ground-level operatives in charge of actual killing.
- presidential guard recruited exclusively among the northerners and trained to support slaughterhouses and civilian death squads.

Lead up to the killing, 1990-94

- Economic crisis
- International pressure
- The RFP invasion
- Democratic reforms, rise of extremism
- Propaganda, misinformation, massacres
- The Arusha Accords, 1993
- Assassination of Burundian President Ndadaye
- The splitting of the Hutu moderate support
- The UN peacekeeping mission
- President Habyarimana's plane crash: April 6 1994

Facts of the Killings

- Most of the killings occurred during the first month. After this the large scale killings died down
- Big massacres happened in churches. A couple of huge massacres of tens of thousands in football stadiums.
- Many killed in smaller groups at roadblocks, in the bush/marshes or simply in their homes
- Number of dead: Estimates vary between 500 000 to 1 million, 800,000 is figure most often quoted.
- Number of killers: Estimates vary from tens of thousands into the millions. Estimate of 200,000 by Scott Straus but methodology may be questionable.

Groups of Perpetrators

- Ringleaders – extremists in Army, MRND hierarchy
- Army especially the Presidential Guard and paratroopers and National Police (gendarmerie)
- Civil authorities: prefets (governors), bourgmestres (mayors), conseillers (councillors), communal police
- Intelligentsia – teachers, doctors, businessmen, clergy
- Interahamwe – militia group consisting largely of unemployed youth, internally displaced and Burundian refugees
- Ordinary peasants - Most of the killers came from these last two groups

Explanations of Rwandan Perpetrator Behavior

- Importance in Rwanda of considering leaders and followers together
- Instead of asking, ‘how can we explain popular participation in the genocide?’, ask ‘what factors made the genocide a success?’
- Socio-economic (poverty, greed), cultural (racial hatred), pragmatic (fear), political (state power and obedience)
- Note the way each explanation sees the role of ideology. All see it as important but for different reasons

Socio-economic explanations

- Resource scarcity in Rwanda: population density 574 people per sq km arable land, highest in Africa
- Population increase, development of less-arable land to compensate, drop in size of land-holdings famine
- Main theorists in English: Peter Uvin, 'Tragedy in Rwanda: The Political Ecology of Conflict', *Environment* 38, no. 3. and Villia Jefremovas, *Brickyards to Graveyards: From Production to Genocide in Rwanda* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002).
- Cannot be an explanation by itself but was certainly important motive for some of the killers

*We started the day by killing, we finished by looting.
The rule was: to kill on the way there, to loot on
the way back.*

*We felt carefree and satisfied. We didn't have to
haggle. We didn't have to pay tax to anyone. We
drank very well due to the money we had come
across. We ate the best meat of those we had
killed. We were happy with the new corrugated
iron that we had brought back. [for roofing] We
slept comfortably, on account of the good food
and the fatigue of the day.*

From: Jean Hatzfeld, *Un Saison de Machettes*

Cultural explanation: Racial Hatred

- Genocide was largely a due to the reemergence of a cultural predisposition among Hutus to hate Tutsis
- Peter Uvin, 'Prejudice, Crisis and Genocide on Rwanda', *African Studies Review*, 40(2), 1997
- Impossible to justify because of the highly political nature of Hutu violence against Tutsis. Generally has only emerged when there is a political threat against Hutus.
- Nevertheless, the appeal of racial hatred was so strong in the years, there is evidence to suggest that particularly the young men were susceptible to ideology and propaganda

The necessity to flee pushed us towards the river with the interahamwe in pursuit. They kept yelling: 'You must drown. You will drown and end up in Ethiopia where you belong.'

Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance,
African Rights

The Pragmatic explanation: Fear

- Rene Lemarchand develops applies Bauer's notion of a 'pragmatic genocide' to Rwanda given the real nature of the threat posed by the RPF to the Hutu elite
- Habyarimana were able to convince the population that the RPF were also a threat to them – that they would face a return to servitude
- Rene Lemarchand, 'Disconnecting the Threads: Rwanda and the Holocaust Reconsidered', *Journal of Genocide Research* 4, no. 4 (2002) and Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*.

Facts supporting fear explanation

- Mamdani sees violence as inherently political
- Nature of the propaganda equating Tutsi with RPF – how important was this pretence in the execution of the genocide
- Importance of Arusha Accords, assassination of Burundian President Ndadaye and the continuation of the civil war in splitting the moderates. Was it also this fear that motivated the population
- The slow down of the killings after the first month – was this because it was harder to convince the population

- *When I saw him there at the barrier, together with the militia, I had a desire to provoke him so that he would kill me quickly. I said to him in a loud voice, 'Bonaventure, you too, you have become an interahamwe.' He looked at me with a very cruel eye. His comrades asked him ... if I was an accomplice of the inyesi. The guy told them that I was 'Good, and welcoming.'*
- *Tutsi survivor testimony, Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance, African Rights*

The political explanation: state control and obedience

- Traditionally the most influential because of the keenness of scholars to debunk the myth of ‘ancient ethnic hatred’
- Christian P Scherrer, *Genocide and Crisis in East Africa: Conflict Roots, Mass Violence and Regional War* (Westport, Conn., Preager, 2002) and Filip Reyntjens, ‘Rwanda: Genocide and Beyond’, *Journal of Refugee Studies* 9, no. 3 (1996).

Cont'd

Emphasise:

- 1) that state under control of the extremists
- 2) Authoritarian nature of Rwandan society
- 3) Essential manipulative power of ideology

Explanation often referred to by Rwandans themselves



- *‘The radio was telling us to do it.
So were the leaders.
Our Mayor was very clear.
He directed us.
I killed eight people.
I killed people I knew did not deserve to die.
It was that simple.’*
- Gaspard Rwamulinda

An obedient population or a conformist one?

- The idea of Rwandan population as obedience does not necessarily stack up with the political upheaval in years 1990-94
- Decentralized nature of authority during the genocide. There is good reason to question the strict control that the administration is said to have had at the local level was operating during the genocide
- Other factors for killing such as greed, opportunism, fear are ignored

Incorporating many explanations

- In Rwanda what was factor for one person or one group may not apply to another group or person, must consider *interahamwe*, government officials, intelligentsia, army and peasants separately
- Few theorists say only one explanation is important but they do usually have their own favorite one
- Combining explanations: recruitment of youth into *interahamwe* may be explanations incorporating the socio-economic (poverty, reduced landholding) and the fear of RPF. Also racism, or does racism follow?

Rwanda's perpetrators today

- In 1996, around 100 000 arrested and imprisoned in horrible conditions
- Few confessed because felt that they did nothing wrong or because did not believe it would lead to a higher sentence
- Presumably many of these have been released although no figures
- Some will be tried in the village tribunals – *gacaca*
- Progress of ICTR in Arusha



- *'I am guilty.
What I did was evil.
I have been a bad man.
Those who I have killed
have relatives.
The moment I meet them
I will ask for forgiveness.'*
- Karoli Kayirango
- http://www.polarisimages.com/Nadel_exhibit.html