

## 17.523: Ethnicity and Race in World Politics-Fall 2005

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### Lecture 23: "Ghost of Rwanda" Discussion

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Handout: Rwanda map.

Rwanda

- Video suggests that the Hutu had been badly treated by the Tutsi
- There was a history of ethnic divisions, but nowhere near the deep cleavages that existed in other societies.
- Hutus and Tutsi were divided by occupation
- There was a lot of intermarriage.
- Same religion, language, etc.
- Dominance of the Tutsi was solidified under Belgian rule.<-- Very Important.
- The degree to which colonialism should be blamed for the genocide in Rwanda is a hotly debated subject.
- Tutsi were favored by Belgians and Hutu resented it b/c they were majority
- 1962-Belgium colonialism coming to a close.
- Belgium put all of their support behind the Hutu when they recognized that colonialism would end.
- Student: were there reasons for the favoritism?
  - Big part was due to prevailing views of "racial science."
  - Somehow the Tutsi were "better."
  - Hutus were typically darker and shorter.
  - Belgians had their own view of who they colonized and those views have come to matter.
- Supposedly, there is a justification for why the Tutsi are "better" and Belgians enforced that.
- Student: Was there a distinction between the groups?
  - Hutu owned the animals and Tutsi were land owners.
- Second emphasis on Belgian colonialism:
  - Certain fluidity of the identities, which was overcome by the ID cards.
  - Under Belgians, they instituted identity cards that required only one identity be provided on the cards.
  - Very consequential during the genocide because the Hutus asked for the identity cards when killing Tutsi.
  - After colonialism, if there was ambiguity as to which tribe a person identified with, presumably s/he could choose..
  - In general, it's assumed that the Hutu is about 85%, Tutsi 14%, and Twa 1%
  - Those are rough estimates and some may argue the amount of Tutsi, but it's roughly the same. Census data are unreliable.
  - In 1962, the Hutu knew that they had Belgian support. There is a complete political status reversal, with Hutus on top and Tutsis on bottom.

There's a problem with the reversal. Hutus seem to have deep virulent disdain for Tutsis. Tutsis are accustomed to being in power, and don't want it taken away.

- The Hutu power movement (party developed on eve of political independence) stressed majority rule.
- Reappeared during genocide and presented virulent anti-Tutsi platform.
- First president was President Kayibanda (Hutu)
- Ousted in 1973 by another Hutu, President Habyarimana.
- President Hab was in power for about 20 years, and he was the one killed when the plane was shot down.
- Many Tutsi leave because there are periodic killings against Tutsi and many go into political exile
- Rwandan patriotic front was formed in 1987 by political exiles in Uganda. (RPF)
- Periodically conducted military raids in Rwanda.
- RPF didn't like the Hutu government.
- Tutsi are living in fear in a hostile country and don't leave because it's their country.
- One of the downsides of the RPF military raids is that the domestic Tutsi would be hurt as a consequence of these raids.
- Oct. 1990, RPF attacked. Demanded an end to their political exclusion and wanted power sharing.
- Hutu said no.
- International community intervened and forced negotiations between RPF and Rwandan government in 1992.
- Rwandan government felt like the International community was rewarding violent groups with negotiations.
- It's still undetermined who shot down President Habyarimana's plane.
  - The Hutu might have shot it down because he was too moderate
  - The Tutsi (RPF) might have shot it down to force more concessions.
- Why would the Hutus have shot down the plane?
  - Student: RPF was confined to a small area in the North. The fact that it went down in Kigali points to a group of people with the capability of being there.
  - Student: The Tutsi's best option would have been through peaceful negotiations.
  - Student: after the Prime Minister was assassinated for being moderate, the Hutus continued the killing of moderates which implies that they may have started off with President Hab.
- Genocide lasted for 100 days.

How was it so efficient

- Student: the Hutu used propaganda to enlist everyday people to kill their Tutsi neighbor. They also exploited the obedience of the Tutsi and Hutu culture.
- Student: distributing machetes throughout the country.
- Student: there was a lot of propaganda. Hutu leader holding up a gun and said the RPF was going to take over the country. They mentioned in the film that once a person killed a Tutsi, it opened the flood gate and the obstacle of killing was lifted.

What were the economic conditions like?

- There weren't any serious economic crises, as far as I've read.
- It likely wasn't a trigger to the genocide.

How persuasive is the argument that cultural obedience contributed.

- Student: don't think the obedience is all that unique. The propaganda pushed them over the edge. Hutu told them, here's your machete, here's your reason to hate them, now go kill the Tutsi. Already angry at the Tutsi. Could have happened in Zimbabwe. Anger was a strong impetus.
- Student: at that point in time, the tension was clear. The RPF had just attacked Rwanda and it could easily have been used by government that Rwanda will return to colonialism time and Tutsi would take over again. It was a scary thing for the Hutu and feared power sharing.

When the genocide starts, the RPF is mobilizing. They come in to stop the genocide.

- Took on a heroic role.
- International community pulls out with the exception of a small number of token forces from the UN.
- Belgian peacekeepers killed fairly early on.

What are some of the reasons to explain the UN's lack of participation and the US?

- For the US, Somalia heavily affected their decision.
- They were in denial that it was genocide.
- Genocide carried legal implications of intervention.
- Lack of US economic or strategic interest in Rwanda.
- U.S. officials kept saying that they didn't know what was going on.

What would be the argument for intervening in Rwanda on the basis of national interest for the US?

- Student: Raises our credibility. Rwanda could be a potential market.
- Student: It's the right thing to do.
- It's in keeping with our national principles: human rights, individual rights.

How could the US officials claim they didn't know what was going on.

- They were just covering because they knew exactly what was going on. Their claims are unbelievable.

Important part of the genocide is knowing who the perpetrators were.

- It included normal people
- Troops.

How do you handle culpability and how to punish?

When it ended, RPF came into power and Hutus become refugees

- Hutus fled to neighboring Zaire
- UN paid for the refugee camps.
- Americans pitied the people fleeing and causes a moral quandary because many of the refugees were killers in the genocide.
- Tutsis are in control now.
- Paul Kagame is the president of Rwanda. As President, he has outlawed opposition parties.
- The genocide ended when the RPF came in and took over the government.

Two genocide trials going on:

- One in Tanzania (the Hutu leadership are being tried here. Tanzania doesn't have death penalty). Corruption is alleged at these trials.
- Others in Rwanda.
- The trials are going extremely slowly.

Raises the question of how do you deal with the new Rwanda and punishing crimes of genocide?

This is a legal question.

- And also a political question
  - Tutsi aren't allowing opposing parties.
  - Try to get rid of ethnic identities.
- There are programs going on to promote ethnic cooperation.