

Extended Essay in History:

**Colonialism and the Rwandan
Genocide in 1994.**

RESEARCH QUESTION:

**To what extent was the Rwandan genocide in 1994 a
result of the colonial legacy?**

Word count: 3 999

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Abstract

This extended essay deals with the Rwandan genocide in 1994, where the Hutu majority massacred the Tutsi minority. It undertakes a historical investigation of the causes of this massacre, attempting to explain how a situation where neighbours killed neighbours could arise. More specifically, the investigation deals with the relationship between colonialism and the genocide, examining the question: **To what extent was the Rwandan genocide in 1994 a result of the colonial legacy?**

The scope of the extended essay is restricted to the long-term causes of the genocide, as the immediate causes are not investigated. Also, the essay does not go into the historical and/or social factors that caused such a large part of the Hutu population to actually participate in the killings. In order to examine the research question, secondary sources dealing with pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Rwanda are used.

The investigation undertaken leads to the conclusion that the Rwandan genocide to a great extent was a result of the colonial legacy. The Hutu and Tutsi did exist as separate identities already in pre-colonial Rwanda, but with the ideologies and institutions introduced by the Belgian colonisers, the identities got new definitions. It was for example the Belgians who introduced the idea that the Tutsi was a separate race, alien to Rwanda. One can say that it was due to this perception that genocide could be justified in 1994. Even though other events, prior and subsequent to the colonial period, also contributed to the context in which the genocide took place, there is no doubt that the colonial legacy was one of the most important causes.

(265 words)

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Introduction

In 1994 the biggest genocide the world has seen since World War II¹ took place in Rwanda. Located in the Great Lakes Region of Central Africa, the earlier Belgian colony was in April 1994 populated by about 7 776 000 people². In the course of six weeks the Interahamwe militia, whose aim it was to clean Rwanda of 'cockroaches'³, had reduced the population by 11 %, killing 800 000⁴ Tutsis and moderate Hutus. In a massacre where the daily killing rate was at least five times as high as in the Nazi death camps⁵, the rule was: either you kill or you get killed.

The Rwanda genocide was genocide of one group of people, the Tutsi, by another, the Hutu. Two groups who had been living together on the same hill tops, spoken the same language and shared the same religion for centuries.

The history of the Rwandan genocide is one of extreme and seemingly absurd horror. Still it is a historical process that can be analysed, studied and explained. To investigate the causes of the genocide is interesting and even necessary, because it can create a better understanding of similar conflicts in other decolonized countries. Also, understanding the genocide can give useful guidance on how to avoid conflict in the future.

¹ Prunier, Gérard. The Rwandan Crisis: History of a Genocide. London: Hurst and Company, 1995, 237

² Ibid, 264.

³ *Inyenzi* (cockroaches) was the name the Hutu rebels called the Tutsi by. *Inyenzi* was first used about the Tutsi refugees who tried to take power 1961. They launched attacks from bases in Uganda and Burundi, and they earned their name for their "propensity to return repeatedly at night despite attempts to stamp them out". Even though when used by the Hutu rebels in 1994 it was a name that carried disrespect, it was apparently first adapted by the Tutsi rebels themselves "as a symbol of their relentlessness". (Kuperman, Alan J. The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention: Genocide in Rwanda. Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2001, 7.)

⁴ Prunier, 265.

⁵ Ibid, 261

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The incident that unleashed the genocide was the death of President Habyarimana, as his plane got shot down on 6th April 1994. This assassination happened in the context of the civil war, initiated by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) invasion in October 1990. To answer the question why Hutus suddenly started massacring their Tutsi neighbours it is, however, necessary to go further back in history.

As most African countries, Rwanda was colonized in the late 19th century. Being subjugated under a foreign power does naturally have a major impact on a state. In Rwanda the Belgian colonizers influenced the Hutus' and Tutsis' perception of themselves and each other, as well as the institutions in which the Rwandan state was organised. The research question **to what extent was the Rwandan genocide in 1994 a result of the colonial legacy**, therefore arises.

In order to answer this question, the investigation will look at the differences in the relations between the Hutu and Tutsi before, during and after the colonial period. Some other more recent causes, such as the policies adapted by the Second Republic⁶ and the RPF invasion in October 1990 are also assessed in order to determine to what extent the genocide was caused by the colonial legacy.

Even though the Tutsi and Hutu identities existed also in pre-colonial Rwanda, there is no doubt that their definitions changed significantly with the new ideologies and institutions introduced by the colonisers. In the time after independence Rwanda never managed to transcend the colonial legacy. The author of this investigation will therefore argue that the Rwandan genocide in 1994 to a great extent was a result of the colonial legacy.

⁶ The Second Republic is the name used by the second government set up in independent Rwanda in 1973.

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1. The Hutu and Tutsi Origins

In order to determine the importance of the colonial legacy as a cause of the genocide, the investigation will first examine the origins of the Hutu and Tutsi identities.

The Rwandan population consists of three groups: the Hutu, the Tutsi and the Twa. The Twa⁷, constituting less than 1% of the Rwandan population⁸, did, however, not play a significant role as a group in the history of the genocide.

1.1 The distinctive-difference theory and the no-difference theory

There are two different theories as to what the ancestral origins of the Hutu and Tutsi are. The first one identifies the Hutu/Tutsi difference as “one between distinct groups, ethnic or even racial”.⁹ Introduced by the colonialists, it was originally based on the difference in the physique of the two groups. The Hutu were described as “short and thickset with a big head, a jovial expression, a wide nose and enormous lips”¹⁰, while the Tutsi were described as “very tall”, “very thin” with “a high brow, thin nose and fine lips framing beautiful shining teeth”¹¹. This physical difference was ‘scientifically’ confirmed by a German anthropologist who, early in the 20th century, found a 12 cm difference in average height between Hutu and Tutsi.¹² Later, studies of the genotype of the Hutu and Tutsi have further supported this

⁷ The Twa were the first inhabitants of what is today Rwanda and lived as forest hunters and gatherers. (Ogot, B. A. “The Great Lakes Region.” General History of Africa, IV: Africa from the Twelfth to the Sixteenth Century. Ed. D. T. Niane. Paris: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1984, 516.)

⁸ Gourevitch, Philip. We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families: Stories from Rwanda. London: Picador, Macmillan Publishers Ltd, 2000. (First published: New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1998.), 47.

⁹ Mamdani, Mahmood. When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda. Oxford: James Curry Ltd, 2001, 41.

¹⁰ Prunier, 6

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹² Mamdani, 44.

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theory¹³. Its validity is, however, limited due to the fact that it was developed by Europeans, who were strongly influenced by the racial ideologies of that time.

The other theory, which came as an anti-colonial critique of the 'different origins' theory, is that "there is no difference between Hutu and Tutsi, or that the difference [is] one of class"¹⁴. This theory claims that the differences in the physique of the Hutu and Tutsi are due to social selection in terms of selective breeding and selective feeding.¹⁵ The existence of so-called *petit-Tutsis*, Tutsis of lower class, does however contradict this theory.

1.2 Civilizing conquerors or peaceful co-existence

Due to the small, but still clear differences between the Hutu and Tutsi it seems clear that the two groups have lived separate from each other over a long historical period. While Curtin in his *African History* states that it is impossible to know whether the Hutu and Tutsi are offsprings of the same Bantu-speaking community, or if they had different linguistic and cultural origins,¹⁶ most historians today believe that the Hutu and Tutsi migrated into the Great Lakes region from different areas.¹⁷

There are, however, still controversies as to how this migration occurred. Earlier historians, for instance Kagame, believed that the Tutsi came as "civilizing conquerors" to the already existing agriculturalist, 'Hutu'¹⁸ states.¹⁹ However, more modern historians, such as Ogot, the

¹³ Studies have for example shown that, while the sickle cell trait is virtually absent among Rwandan Tutsi, it is very common among Rwandan Hutu. (The sickle cell trait is seen as an evidence on survival in malarial environments through natural selection.) (Mamdani, 45.)

¹⁴ Mamdani, 41

¹⁵ Some scholars believe that as cattle keepers, the Tutsi knew about race selection, and applied this to people. Other emphasize that the distinct physical aspect of the Tutsi is due to their high consumption of milk products. (Prunier, 17.)

¹⁶ Curtin, Philip. *African History*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company (Inc.), 1978, 170.

¹⁷ B.A. Ogot, the leading East African historian on the subject, does for example support this theory.

¹⁸ As will be explained later in the essay, the Hutu identity was early transformed to a trans-ethnic identity.

¹⁹ Ogot, 498.

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leading East African historian on the subject, claim that the pastoralists did not arrive as one cohesive, conquering group, but that the early Rwandan state incorporated both agriculturalists and pastoralists.²⁰

In Arnold's *Africa: A Modern History*, the generally held perception that Hutus were agriculturalists and Tutsis pastoralists is presented. An evaluation of this work does, however, show that its purpose is to give a general overview of the history of the African continent over a long time period, and that it rarely goes into detail. More focused works, such as Webster's essay describes this interpretation as an oversimplification.²¹ Research by Catharine Newbury has brought evidence showing that agricultural and pastoral activities often were carried out jointly.²²

Based on the evidence gathered it seems like the ancestral origins of the Hutu and Tutsi are insignificant today. The facts that they speak Kinyarwanda²³, share the same religion²⁴, have intermarried²⁵ and been part of the same economic community for centuries are vastly more important when one seeks to explain contemporary events. In order to understand the conflict between Hutu and Tutsi we must therefore look at more recent history.

²⁰ Ogot, 518.

²⁰ Webster, J. B. and others. "The Great Lakes Region: 1500 -1800." *General History of Africa, V: Africa from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*. Ed. B. A. Ogot. Paris: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1992, 790.

²² Mamdani, 51.

²³ This community of language includes Rwanda, Burundi, Congo, Uganda and Tanzania. (Mamdani, 52.)

²⁴ Before the missionaries mass converted the Rwandans to Catholicism in the 1930s, the *kubandwa* cult was practiced in Rwanda. The followers of this cult believed that the faithful were possessed by *Ryangombe*, the Lord of the Spirits. *Kabandwa* was also practiced in other interlacustrine kingdoms. (Prunier, 15.)

²⁵ Mamdani says that he has "been unable to find comprehensive data on the extent of intermarriage. Yet all accounts that I have heard of or read speak of considerable intermarriage". (Mamdani, 54.)

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2. Pre-colonial Rwandan state formation

When one investigates the relations between the Hutu and Tutsi identities one must keep in mind that all works on pre-colonial Rwanda are based on oral traditions. This is a limitation to the knowledge about this society, especially because the stories told often would be heavily influenced by those in power.²⁶

2.1 Centralisation and Polarisation

The Rwandan kingdom was founded towards the end of the 15th century.²⁷ As mentioned above, consensus among historians today is that the early Rwandan state was modelled on smaller Bantu-states which already existed before the Tutsi migrated into the area. At this time power was shared among Hutu and Tutsi. Even though the *mwami*, the king, always was Tutsi, some of the most important *abiiru*, his spiritual 'advisors', were Hutu.²⁸ Beginning with the rule of Rujugira (1756-65) the Rwandan state did, however, go through a process of "centralisation of state power and a reorganisation of society along hierarchically exploitative lines",²⁹ which altered the relation between Hutu and Tutsi.

During this period the spiritual monopoly of the *abiiru* was, for example, undermined, and by the end of the 19th century the political unit the Hutu *abiiru* made up had basically lost its power.³⁰ The Rwandan patron-client relations were also reorganised. Under Rujugira there was a shift from the reciprocal *umuheto* system to the more abusive *ubuhake* system.

²⁶ Gourevitch, 48.

²⁷ Ogot, 518. According to Mamdani there is, however, disagreement among historians about the exact date of the creation of the Rwandan state, ranging from 1312 (Kagame) to 1532 (Rennie). (Mamdani, 61.)

²⁸ The three topmost *abiiru* were from the lineages Tsobe, Tege and Kono. The story is that the founder of the Tsobe lineage, Rutsobe, was a 'Hutu', and it is suggested that this is the most important clue to the incorporation of predominantly agriculturalists (later 'Hutu') in the early Rwandan state. (Mamdani, 63.)

²⁹ Mamdani, 63.

³⁰ Ibid, 64.

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“Ultimately ubuhake exposed the clients to more arbitrary forms of exploitation”.³¹ As part of the reorganisation a new system of land tenure, *igikingi* was also introduced. Now land, which earlier had been under the control of lineages, was controlled by the king, who assigned it as “pasturage to his closest subjects”.³² This meant that the chiefs, many of whom were Hutu, lost their control of land. Finally, under the reign of Rwabugiri (1860-95) in the late 19th century a new clientship, *ubureetwa*, was introduced. A system without any reciprocity, where the clients had to do manual labour as ‘payment’ for occupation of land,³³ it became a “hated symbol of centralist oppression”.³⁴ Because it was imposed only on the Hutu, *ubureetwa* contributed to a “polarizing [of] the social difference between Hutu and Tutsi”.³⁵

There were, however, also countertendencies to the polarisation of the Hutu and Tutsi identities in the pre-colonial Rwandan society. Rwabugiri did for example prefer to recruit Hutus, who were “less elegant but more efficient” to his army.³⁶ The threefold hierarchy³⁷, into which Rwanda was organised, also left the Hutu with some power. Even though all chiefs were appointed by the mwami and most of them were Tutsi³⁸, it made it possible for the Hutu to play one chief against the other.³⁹

³¹ Mamdani, 65. Mamdani has here done his analysis based on Catharine Newbury’s study of the changing forms of clientship in the region of Kinyaga.

³² Mamdani, 65-66.

³³ The spread of *ubureetwa* is clearly linked with the change in the system of land tenure. *Ubureetwa* was enforced on Hutu lineages whose lineage head, as a result of the introduction of *igikingi*, no longer was in control of the land they occupied.

³⁴ Prunier, 13.

³⁵ Mamdani, 66.

³⁶ Prunier, 15.

³⁷ This hierarchy was organised as follows: Each province was ruled by an army chief, whose task it was to recruit soldiers; each district was ruled by two chiefs – one landholding chief who was in charge of agricultural land and production, and one chief of pasture, who ruled over grazing land; and each hill was ruled by one hill chief. (Mamdani, 68-69)

³⁸ According to Mamdani, Hutu chiefs were more common lower down in the hierarchy; either as landholding chiefs or hill chiefs.

³⁹ Mamdani, 68-69.

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Another important characteristic of the early Rwandan state was expansionary campaigns.⁴⁰ Through conquest many surrounding statelets were incorporated into the central Rwandan state. Even though none of the different people living in these statelets defined themselves as Hutu, they were considered Hutu when their state became part of Rwanda.⁴¹ Thus, Hutu now became a trans-ethnic identity, and because it was associated with conquered people, this contributed to the degrading of the Hutu identity.

As a result of the centralisation process, where more and more power was transferred to the mwami and his closest subjects, the Tutsi had by the end of the 19th century become an identity associated with power while Hutu was “associated with and entirely defined by inferior status”.⁴² Hutu and Tutsi had, at this point, definitely emerged as political, rather than biological or socioeconomic identities.

3. Colonialism in Rwanda

In order to determine to what extent the Rwandan genocide in 1994 was a result of colonialism the investigation will now examine how the colonial practices influenced the definitions of and the relations between the Hutu and Tutsi.

3.1 The nature of the colonial practice in Rwanda

The first European, the German Count Gustav Adolf von Götzen, arrived in Rwanda on the 4th of May 1894. By then Rwanda had already been given to Germany as part of German East

⁴⁰ Cohen, D. W. “Peoples and states of the Great Lakes region.” *General History of Africa, VI: Africa in the Nineteenth Century until the 1880s*. Ed. J. F. Ade Ajayi. Paris: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1989, 274

⁴¹ This is for example shown through Catharine Newbury’s study of Kinyaga in Southern Rwanda from 1860 to 1960. Kinyaga’s population only became Hutu after the region gradually was occupied by and absorbed into the Rwandan state in the last quarter of the 19th century. (Mamdani, 70.)

⁴² Mamdani, 69-70.

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Africa at the Berlin Conference in 1885.⁴³ Germany's presence in Rwanda was, however, never strong⁴⁴, and by 1919 Rwanda was handed over to Belgium through a League of Nations Mandate.⁴⁵ The Germans, and later the Belgians, chose to govern Rwanda through indirect rule, as it was the least expensive system. Also, it suited Rwanda well with its strongly centralised state system.⁴⁶ The Tutsi were, thus set to rule over the Hutu population.⁴⁷

3.2 Ideology: the Hamitic Hypothesis

The theory that was used to justify the favouring of the Tutsi was the Hamitic Hypothesis⁴⁸. Developed in order to justify the treatment of slaves, it stated that every sign of progress on the African continent was a result of external influence. The first people identified as alien civilizers, so-called 'Hamites', were the builders of the pyramids, the Egyptians, but soon Ethiopians and Nubians were also included in this group.⁴⁹

When the Germans arrived in Rwanda, they found a highly developed monarchy which had achieved a high "degree of political and religious sophistication".⁵⁰ The Europeans quickly identified the Tutsis, who governed the Rwandan state, as Hamites. Due to their physical appearances and their form of monarchy, the theory was that they had migrated into the area from Ethiopia, and "subjugated the 'inferior' Hutu peasant masses".⁵¹

⁴³ Melvern, Linda. *A People Betrayed: The role of the West in Rwanda's Genocide*. Claremont: New African Education Publishing, 2000. (First published: London: Zed Books Ltd., 2000.), 7.

⁴⁴ In 1914 there were only 96 Europeans in Rwanda, including the missionaries. (Prunier, 25.)

⁴⁵ Afigbo, A. E. and others. *The Making of Modern Africa, volume 2: The Twentieth Century*. Essex: Longman Group UK Limited, 1992. (First published in 1971.), 348-349.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 320.

⁴⁷ Prunier, 26, 54.

⁴⁸ The Hamitic Hypothesis was first born with Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798. In Egypt archaeologists and other scientists that Napoleon brought with him, found traces of a great culture. In disbelief that this advanced civilization could have been created by negroes, these scientists created the Hamitic Hypothesis. The theory was that the Egyptians were descendants of Hamites, the sons of Ham, Noah's sinful son, who had mixed with the negroes. The Hamitic Hypothesis was further developed by John Hanning Speke who said the Hamites shared a common language and common culture, and that, different from the agriculturalist negroes, they were pastoralists. (Mamdani, 86.)

⁴⁹ Mamdani, 79.

⁵⁰ Prunier, 9-10.

⁵¹ Ibid, 10-11.

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The application of the Hamitic Hypothesis to Rwanda had an important influence on the definition of the Hutu and Tutsi identities. Until now Tutsi rulers had based their right to power on Rwandan mythology. According to a commonly cited myth the heavenly king, *nkuba*, had two sons and one daughter, who fell down to earth and formed the basis of the two royal clans, Abanyiginya and Abeega. Kigwa, one of *nkuba*'s sons there had three sons: Gatwa, Gahutu and Gatutsi. One day Kigwa wanted to give his sons a test. He gave them all a calabash full of milk and told them to watch over it for a night. By the next morning Gatutsi's calabash was the only one still full of milk. Therefore Gatutsi became the new king and was set to rule over Gahutu and Gatwa.⁵² This shows how the Tutsi justified their right to rule with a sacred rather than a foreign origin. With colonisation, the idea that the Tutsi was a separate *race*, non-indigenous to Rwanda, was introduced.⁵³ This idea was important in 1994, when it was used to justify the genocide.

3.3 The institutions

The ideology that Tutsi was a separate race, superior to the Hutu, was implemented into the institutions established by the Belgian colonial-government, like for example the education system. The first western school in Rwanda was established in 1905, by the 'White Fathers' in Nyanza. It only enrolled sons of chiefs, hence, almost only Tutsis. Since that time the aim of the colonial-government's education policy was to develop the Tutsi into an elite, working as "auxiliaries to both the missionaries and the colonial administration". Later, schools especially for Tutsi chiefs were established.⁵⁴

⁵² Another myth also tells the story of how the social difference between Twa, Hutu and Tutsi were created: One day Gatutsi suggested that all three brothers went to *Imana* (God) and ask to get social faculties. Gatutsi, as the first born, got to ask first, and he was assigned the faculty of anger. Gahutu was next, and was told that only the faculty of disobedience and labour was left. Last came Gatwa, who were assigned the faculty of gluttony. (Mamdani, 79-80.)

⁵³ Mamdani, 87.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 89.

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Even though some Hutus were given education as well, emphasis was definitely put upon the Tutsis. This can clearly be seen from this table which shows the number of students from different ethnic origins enrolled at the Astrida (now Butare) College⁵⁵:

	Tutsi pupils	Hutu pupils
1932	45	9
1945	46	3
1954	63	19
1959	279	143

While Tutsi pupils were given a separate, superior education in French, the Hutu pupils were taught in Kiswahili. Thus, the Belgian education system acted as a “womb of racial ideology”⁵⁶, shaping the mindset of generations of Hutus and Tutsis. This is a clear example of how the colonial legacy lived on after independence, and was an important factor in the genocide in 1994.

The Tutsi pupils, educated in the colonial system, were prepared to serve the administrative system, a system that also strongly contributed to the polarisation of Hutu and Tutsi identities. The centralisation process initiated in pre-colonial Rwanda was continued by redefining the powers of the chiefs. In 1929 Governor Voisin abandoned the trinity of the chief of pastures, the chief of land and the chief of men, and fused the power of these three into the hands of one single chief.⁵⁷ This reorganisation made it impossible for the Hutu clients to play one chief against the other and easier for the chiefs to abuse their power.⁵⁸ In addition to this the

⁵⁵ Table taken from: Prunier, 33.

⁵⁶ Mamdani, 89.

⁵⁷ Prunier, 27.

⁵⁸ Mamdani, 91.

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colonial-government systematically replaced the Hutu chiefs with Tutsis.⁵⁹ This, of course caused resentment among the Hutus, towards the Tutsis as well as the colonialists.

Through this new system of chiefship, the Belgian administration developed an agricultural economy based on forced labour⁶⁰, which they justified by labelling it 'customary'.⁶¹ In addition, farmers were also compelled to growing forced crops. Each farmer had to grow a certain area of famine-resistant crops,⁶² and coffee was also introduced as a "compulsory cash crop for reasons of development".⁶³

The Belgian administrators made it the Tutsi chiefs' responsibility to see to that their subjects carried out the demands set by the colonialists, and chiefs who failed to deliver were punished. The attitude was: "You whip the Hutu or we will whip you."⁶⁴ For Tutsi chiefs who collaborated with the colonial government, it was a profitable relationship⁶⁵ and many abused their power. The result was a worsening of the social relationship between Hutus and Tutsis.

Finally, the Belgian administration, through the official census of 1933-34, classified the Hutu and Tutsi as legal identities. The classification was based on oral information, mainly

⁵⁹ M'bokelo, Elikia. "Equatorial West Africa." *General History of Africa, VIII: Africa since 1935*. Ed. Ali A. Mazrui. Paris: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1993, 212.

⁶⁰ Forced labour included tasks such as the upkeep of roads, but some chiefs took the opportunity to abuse their power and also required their subjects to do things like constructing houses for them. (Mamdani, 95.)

⁶¹ Mamdani, 94.

⁶² This was formulated into law in 1931. Mamdani points out that this was quite ironic: because the subjects had to spend so much time doing forced labour for their chiefs, they hardly had time to grow food for themselves. Introducing more 'forced labour' in the form of forced crops did not better this situation. (Mamdani, 95-96.)

⁶³ Mamdani, 96.

⁶⁴ Courevitch, 57

⁶⁵ "The more a chief became indispensable as an instrument of local government, the more he had opportunities for extralegal exactions." (Mamdani, 96.)

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provided by the Church, physical measurements and ownership of large herds of cows.⁶⁶ From now on social mobility between the identities was no longer possible.

From the evidence collected, it seems obvious that the colonial power had a major influence on the Hutu/Tutsi difference, and contributed greatly to the polarisation of the two identities. The authors of the main sources used for this investigation, *The Rwanda Crisis*, written by Prunier and *When Victims Become Killers*, by Mamdani, both support this interpretation. The reliability of *The Rwanda Crisis* should, however, be questioned here, due to the fact that Prunier was on friendly terms with some of the leaders of the RPF⁶⁷, which makes a bias quite likely. Mamdani's work on the other hand, is of great value here. Mamdani presents facts about the colonial period in great detail and frequently discusses different historical and political interpretations.

4. The colonial legacy in Independent Rwanda

The fact that it was more than 30 years from when the Belgians left Rwanda to the time when the genocide occurred could be an argument supporting the idea that colonialism was not an important cause of the massacres of 1994. The investigation will now examine to what extent the colonial legacy lived on after independence.

4.1 The 'Social Revolution' of 1959

Following the attack on Hutu leader Dominique Mbonyumutwa by Tutsi militias on 1st of November 1959, a rebellion broke out in Rwanda.⁶⁸ Hutu attacked Tutsi authorities as well as Tutsi homes and the violence spread throughout the whole country. In an attempt to end the

⁶⁶ Mamdani, 98.

⁶⁷ Prunier, xiii

⁶⁸ Melvern, 14.

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political unrest, Belgium shifted its support from Tutsi to Hutu,⁶⁹ and eventually the political violence led to a transfer of governmental power from Tutsi to Hutu.

The Hutu elite that came to power, as well as scholars writing just after the rebellion of 1959, claimed that a Social Revolution had taken place.⁷⁰ Most post-1994 scholars, on the other hand, claim that it merely transferred power to a counter-elite, and that the colonial logic was simply turned upside-down.⁷¹ This interpretation is supported by the fact that the revolutionaries claimed the Social Revolution marked a shift, not only from minority to majority rule, but also from alien to indigenous rule⁷². That Tutsis, after the First Republic was founded on independence in 1962, were forcibly removed from the political arena⁷³, further proves that the colonial race-ideology was adapted by the Hutu revolutionaries.

4.2 The Second Republic

The Second Republic was born with a bloodless coup, carried out on 5th of July 1973 under the leadership of the Hutu, Major General Juvénal Habyarimana.⁷⁴ The new president set out with the slogan “Peace and national unity”⁷⁵ and his government claimed to be “protector of all its children, Hutu as well as Tutsi”.⁷⁶ Tutsi was now redefined as an ethnicity *indigenous* to Rwanda, and it looked as if better times were to come for the Tutsi. They were, however, still seen as a historically privileged minority, and Habyarimana’s government faced

⁶⁹ Practically this was carried out by the Belgian colonel, Guy Logiest. Arriving in Rwanda on 11th of November, he immediately started replacing Tutsi chiefs with Hutus and declared that from now on Hutus would be favoured in administrative matters. (Melvern, 14.)

⁷⁰ Mamdani, 104.

⁷¹ Linda Melvern is one example of this: “It would be called a social revolution, but it was not.” (Melvern, 14.)

⁷² Mamdani, 133-134.

⁷³ As a reaction to an invasion of Tutsi refugees from bases in Uganda and Burundi about 20 Tutsi leaders were arrested and executed. These included a UNAR (the monarchist party) member of government (Etienne Africa), UNAR’s president (Rudisitwarane) and secretary general (Rwagasana), as well as the president (Bwanakweri) and vice president (Ndazaro) of RADER, another mainly Tutsi party. (Mamdani, 130.)

⁷⁴ Mamdani, 138.

⁷⁵ Arnold, Guy. *Africa: A Modern History*. London: Atlantic Books, Grove Atlantic Ltd., 2005, 367.

⁷⁶ Mamdani, 138.

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difficulties balancing between justice and reconciliation.⁷⁷ Soon, ethnical quotas were introduced in education⁷⁸, employment and the Church, in order to “redress historical wrongs”.⁷⁹ Even though Tutsis were allowed back in the political arena⁸⁰ they were kept away from organs of power.⁸¹

The evidence examined here shows that the colonial legacy did not die with independence. Even though some moves towards reconciliation were made under Habyarimana, the Tutsi and Hutu still remained distinctive identities in social and political life.

5. Ugandan Politics and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)

Invasion of 1990

Even though the colonial legacy was kept alive in independent Rwanda, and was a major cause of the genocide in 1994, it was not the only cause. The investigation will now look at one of the most important immediate causes of the genocide, and the motivations behind it.

On 1st of October 1990 about 50 men opened fire against the guards at the Rwandan border post of Kagitumba.⁸² This was the beginning of a well-planned invasion by the RPF forces, based in Uganda, whose goal it was to reach Kigali. Even though the invasion did not succeed, it had great impact on Rwanda’s political life. Habyarimana’s government used the

⁷⁷ Mamdani, 138.

⁷⁸ This was part of the 1985 law of education: Hutu should receive over 85% of the places in schools, the Tutsi only between 10 and 15% and the Twa only 1%. (Mamdani, 139.)

⁷⁹ Mamdani, 137-138.

⁸⁰ When Habyarimana’s cabinet was formally put together on 1st June 1974, it included a Tutsi, André Katarwa. (Mamdani, 141.)

⁸¹ Mamdani, 141.

⁸² Prunier, 93.

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situation to its advantage to create an atmosphere of unanimity.⁸³ This created panic among the Rwandan population, who feared another attack. The RPF invasion of 1990, thus, became a trigger for the situation that led to the genocide in 1994. It is therefore quite interesting to see that the invasion to a large extent was a result of Ugandan rather than Rwandan affairs.

The group who constituted the backbone of the RPF invasion were refugees who had fled to Uganda due to political crisis in Rwanda.⁸⁴ By 1990 there were an estimated 200 000 Rwandan refugees in Uganda, mostly Tutsis.⁸⁵ Living in camps, the refugees remained clearly divided from the rest of Ugandan society.⁸⁶

After independence in 1963 the Obote I government⁸⁷ made the question of indigeneity a central issue of Ugandan politics. The many campaigns launched against foreign residents caused many Banyarwanda refugees to join opposition movements.⁸⁸ When Obote was re-elected under allegations of fraud in 1980, many refugees joined Museveni's guerrilla war against his regime.

As Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA) came to power in 1986, the situation improved for the Banyarwanda refugees. The NRA changed focus from indigenous versus

⁸³ On 4th and 5th of October the government launched an attack on Kigali, and followed it up by arresting anyone who supposedly were supporters of the RPF. (Prunier, 108-109.)

⁸⁴ Banyarwanda had, however, constituted a considerable part of the Ugandan population before the waves of refugees arrived. Some of the non-refugee Banyarwanda had lived in the country since the early 20th century, and regarded themselves as Ugandans, while other had come to Uganda as working migrants. (Pirouet, Louise. "Refugees in and from Uganda in the post-colonial period." Uganda Now: Between Decay and Development. Ed. Hölger Bernt Hansen and Michael Twaddle. London: James Curry Ltd, 1988, 239-240)

⁸⁵ Mamdani, 164. Most of them had left Rwanda between 1959 and 1973. (Prunier, 63.)

⁸⁶ Mamdani, 165.

⁸⁷ The first government of independent Uganda was formed by Milton Obote, founder of the Uganda People's Congress, who had made an alliance with the royalist Buganda Kabaka Yekka Party. (Oliver, Roland and Atmore, Anthony. Africa Since 1800. Fifth Edition. Cambridge: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 2005, 259.)

⁸⁸ Mamdani, 167.

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non-indigenous to residents versus non-residents.⁸⁹ But when the guerrilla war was over the NRA, in the process of forming a government, was forced to build coalitions with other groups, many of whom were not comfortable with the position of the 'foreign' Banyarwanda in the NRA.⁹⁰ This brought the question of indigeneity back into Ugandan politics and subsequently, many Banyarwanda now lost their positions in the NRA.⁹¹ Experienced guerrilla fighters therefore turned from the NRA to RANU (Rwandese Alliance for National Unity),⁹² which later was renamed RPF (Rwanda Patriotic Front). The RPF became a predominantly Tutsi organisation, its nucleus consisting mostly of former members of the NRA, determined on an armed return to Rwanda.⁹³ When, in 1990, the opposition in parliament raised the claim that those non-indigenous to Rwanda, especially the Banyarwanda, should be excluded from citizen entitlement,⁹⁴ it triggered the RPF to attempt a violent return to Rwanda.

This evidence shows that the RPF invasion to a large extent was a reaction to Ugandan politics. This interpretation is supported by the fact that the political situation in Rwanda was fairly stable at the time of the invasion. One can therefore conclude that also external factors acted as causes of the genocide in 1994.

⁸⁹ Mamdani, 170-171.

⁹⁰ The promotion of Major-General Rwigyema to army commander-in-chief and minister of defence was especially unpopular. (Prunier, 72-73.)

⁹¹ Prunier, 72.

⁹² Mamdani, 175.

⁹³ Ibid, 175.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 176-182.

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Conclusion

After having examined the impact colonial power had on the Hutu/Tutsi divide, the investigation comes to the conclusion that the colonial legacy definitely was an important cause of the Rwandan genocide in 1994. Even though there was a clear divide in pre-colonial Rwanda, Tutsi being identified with power and Hutu with inferiority, the difference was a political rather than an ethnic one. When the Belgians arrived, they identified the Tutsi as a separate and superior race of pastoralists, alien to Rwanda, while the Hutus were identified as the inferior, 'native' agriculturalists. Through the educational and administrative system the Belgians spread this perception of the Hutu/Tutsi difference.

To say that colonialism was the only significant cause of the Rwandan genocide would be rather farfetched. It is, however, evident that the influence of colonial power on the dynamics of Rwandan society played a major role in the events of 1994. The governments of independent Rwanda failed to transcend the colonial legacy, and so ethnicity remained a defining issue in Rwandan politics. During the colonial period "a time-bomb had been set and it was only a question of when it would go off."⁹⁵

The Rwandan genocide was, however, also a result of regional affairs. The RPF invasion in October 1990, which triggered a civil war that led to the genocide, was to a large extent motivated by Ugandan affairs.

Even though the conflict resulting in the genocide mostly has its roots in the colonial period, colonialism does not explain *why* the conflict resulted in genocide. How was it possible that a

⁹⁵ Prunier, 39.

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whole group of people attempted to physically eliminate another group? This question remains unresolved, and may make up the basis of another investigation.

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