

Political science



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Rwanda B) The Rwandan Genocide of 1994 represents the most recent and arguably most heinous events of recent memory, culminating in the deaths of hundreds of thousands innocent men, women and children following the assassination of Rwandan President Habyarimana under mysterious circumstances. In Rwanda, ethnic animosities between the majority Hutu and Tutsi communities exploded in the aftermath of Habyarimana's death and produced one of the most violent events of the twentieth century. Seeking to explain the massacres which took place in Rwanda in 1994, Jonathan Glover persuasively argues that the propensity of people in the West to attempt to explain the genocide in Rwanda by harking back to tribal divisions and historic tribal animosities is an oversimplification which does not do justice to the conflict. Accordingly, by focusing on the inevitability of such tribal animosity Western scholars have ignored important preconditions to the outbreak of genocide in Rwanda in 1994. As the poorest country in data set #9, the world-wide movement to atone for the historical injustices faced by the Tutsi people is alive and well in post-genocide Rwanda (CIA, 2009). Genocide in Rwanda did not "just happen". The Belgian colonial experience shaped the artificial "ethnic" divisions in Rwanda which shaped politics for years to come, culminating in the genocide of 1994. Accordingly, the conflict in Rwanda was more than a civil war or short-term conflict. While estimates vary, up to one million people – largely Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed in an incredibly short period of time. The Rwandan genocide was not a standard civil war and was an orchestrated full-scale genocide perpetuated against the Tutsi minority but extremists within the Hutu camp. A hate campaign against Tutsis and moderate Hutus was conducted through a variety of means by génocidaires intent on eradicating the Tutsi presence in

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Rwanda. Fearing a Tutsi-led invasion in the aftermath of Habyrimana's death, the genocide planned by "people wanting to keep power" (Glover, 121) and a variety of means were used to coerce the Rwandan population to engage in the genocide. Instead of a mere tribal hostility, Glover argues for individual agency in attempting to account for the emergence of the genocide and argues that key players within the Hutu extremist establishment were responsible for the events that transpired after Habyrimana's plane crashed. Instrumentalism is a theoretical paradigm which argues that things "don't just happen", events are directed by individual actors who utilize crisis and trauma for their own political purposes. As such, seeing the Rwandan genocide as simply the result of traditional enmity and tribalism is an oversimplification which does more to hide, rather than explain, the reasons for the Rwandan genocide. In the post-genocide era, Rwanda is led by a Tutsi President and the rights of the formerly oppressed Tutsi people have now increased in light with what occurred in 1994. Attempts to make amends for the terrible violence which befell Rwanda are currently underway (Glover 118-121).

Works Cited

Glover, Jonathan. *Humanity: A moral history of the twentieth century*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.

"Rwanda". Central Intelligence Agency. 2009. October 13, 2009

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/rw.html>