

Politics as Violence: A Girardian Analysis of Pre-Genocide Rwandan Politics

Teresa Ann Pitts

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Scott G. Nelson

Timothy W. Luke

Laura Zanotti

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# Politics as Violence: A Girardian Analysis of Pre-Genocide Rwandan Politics

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## ABSTRACT

In 1994 genocide occurred in the tiny, crowded country of Rwanda in the Great Lakes region of Africa. What was unique to that genocide was its efficiency and use of low technology weapons: somewhere around 800,000 to one million persons were killed, mainly by machetes and bullets, and often by neighbors, former friends, or relatives that they knew by name. The killers had been well-prepared for their roles via myth-building and reinforcement of old fears against the victims. There was little to no international intervention, although Rwanda had close political ties with France and a colonial history with Germany and Belgium. Dozens of books and articles have been written seeking to understand, in both practical and theoretical ways, the motivations of the killers. This research looks to add to that body of knowledge by considering the ideas of a theorist outside traditional political theory – René Girard – and how his ideas may shed some light on the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Girard's conception of mimetic rivalry and his theorization of scapegoating illuminate society-based characteristics of political competition between well-established factions of Rwandan society. These characteristics, if subjected to various manipulations of social positioning and control, can serve to precipitate brutal acts of believed conciliatory violence against a perceived causal group. Without examining the origin of violence in society, an understanding of the 1994 genocide is incomplete, and policies designed to prevent such genocides from recurring may not be effective.

## Dedication

This work is dedicated to future victims of the next genocide – may there never be any.

## Acknowledgements

J \* M \* J

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## Chapter 1: Introducing René Girard and the Politics of Mimetic Rivalry

In 1994 genocide occurred in the tiny, crowded country of Rwanda in the Great Lakes region of Africa. What was unique to that genocide was its efficiency and use of low technology weapons: somewhere around 800,000 to one million persons were killed, mainly by machetes and bullets, and often by neighbors, former friends, or relatives that they knew by name. The killers had been well-prepared for their roles via myth-building and reinforcement of long-standing fears against the victims. There was little to no international intervention, although Rwanda had close political ties with France and a colonial history with Germany and Belgium. Dozens of authors have written literally thousands of books and articles seeking to understand, in both practical and theoretical ways, the motivations of the killers. This thesis looks to add to that body of knowledge by considering the ideas of a theorist outside traditional political theory – René Girard – and how his ideas may shed some light on the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Its work will not discount other explanations – the early role of the Belgian colonial powers, the later role of the French government, the failure of the international community, population and economic pressures – but will prioritize the rivalrous inter-ethnic Hutu relationships that intensified during the 1990 – 1994 time period.

### *Thesis Problem Statement*

Girard's conception of mimetic rivalry and his theorization of scapegoating illuminate society-based characteristics of political competition between well-established factions of Rwandan society. These characteristics, if subjected to various manipulations of social positioning and control, can serve to precipitate brutal acts of believed conciliatory violence against a perceived causal group.

### *Purpose of Research*

Without examining the origin of violence in society, an understanding of the 1994 genocide is incomplete, and policies designed to prevent such genocides from recurring may not be effective. It is too bold an assumption that this work by itself could “complete” such as understanding, but its findings will add to the body of literature that strives towards a reduction in the use of violence against civilians as a political tool. It also forwards the incorporation of

René Girard's work into the discipline of political science, and encourages others in the discipline to consider the power of mimetic rivalry in preparing a political culture for violence.

### *Significance of the Proposed Study ("What is at Stake")*

Studying mimetic rivalry in the context of politics is important because without an understanding of the origins of violence in society, any peace is only temporary. As mentioned, many scholars and journalists have examined various reasons for the occurrence of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda: the role of Western decision makers and policies (Klinghoffer, 1998; Barnett, 2002; Cohen, 2007; Krosiak, 2008), the role played by international aid (Destexhe, 1995; Uvin, 1998), the role of regional African history and politics (Mamdani, 2001). These and other authors look at the "mechanisms" (France's military support for the Hutu in power, cultural factors, political unrest in neighboring Burundi, the role of propaganda) that contributed to the outbreak of violence, but not the "engine" (escalated mimetic rivalry) that drives these mechanisms. In fact, two authors, Stefaan Marysse and Filip Reyntjens, in their 2005 book *The Political Economy of the Great Lakes Region in Africa*, predict the violence will recur as Western policymaking continues without significant changes and regional politics erupt into civil war in the Congo, in part influenced by refugees from Rwanda.

This thesis may open the door a little wider to the implications of human behavior as expressed through political organizations by illuminating political constructs that allow or even encourage violence as a political solution. Understanding the role of mimetic rivalry can lead to better policy making that addresses the root causes of violence and possibly prevents or mitigates the occurrence of conflict, thus freeing resources for the realization of human potential.

### *Scope & Limitations of Thesis*

Given time, geographical, and monetary constraints, the scope was limited to those sources accessible in a timely fashion through Newman Library at Virginia Tech, McConnell Library at Radford University, the Interlibrary Loan service (ILL), and e-mail correspondence. Research materials have been limited to print media (books, articles, and internet) in English and French (reflecting Rwanda's history with both Belgium and France). Materials with information on pre-genocide Hutu political actions, statements, and policies, and applications of Girard's ideas to politics, will be emphasized.

The study was also limited to discussing mainly Girard's ideas of mimetic rivalry and scapegoating, and only carefully examined intra-ethnic Hutu political culture from 1990 –1994, and gives cursory examination to the same from early history through 1990.

### *Procedure*

This thesis sources mostly print media in the form of books and articles. A quick search on “Rwanda-genocide” at the Library of Congress yielded 508 listings, of various media types (films, audio, print) and languages (English, French, Danish, etc.). An initial Google internet search was conducted on “Girard – political science” to discover specific articles applying Girard's ideas to issues in political science. Next a book search on “Rwanda – genocide” at Virginia Tech's Newman Library was conducted, and more than 35 books were listed; they were examined, summarized, and categorized as to their focus concerning the genocide (personal accounts, role of Western agents, psychological profiling of the killers, etc.). Also, the top two databases for political science (as rated by VT library staff) were searched using “Rwanda – genocide – Girard”; this yielded several articles for review. The thesis expanded on these methodologies by correlating four reading lists for Rwanda (found using Google) with the books available at Virginia Tech; missing volumes were acquisitioned via ILL. More specific searches (such as “Rwanda – pre-genocide – politics”) and searches of lower tier data bases were conducted, as well as a cursory French language search for articles and books. Only the most relevant of French-language sources were considered due to time constraints. Focus was on discussions and accounts of Rwandan political actions, statements, and policies in the years preceding the genocide, specifically from 1990 to early 1994. Information gathered was then summarized in writing and analyzed.

### *Definition of Terms*

**Genocide** - Over two dozen scholarly definitions of genocide exist, dating from 1944 to the present. A specific and commonly accepted definition appears in Article 2 of the U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (UNCPPCG):



In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

Some scholars argue that political groups are not included in the above definition, and others inquire into the meanings of “in whole” or “in part.” On the more general end of the spectrum is Scott Straus’s definition: “... an organized attempt to annihilate a group that a perpetrator constitutes as an organic collectivity” (Straus, 2001; p. 367) which seems like it would include armed conflict of any sort. Arguing the merits of the various definitions is obviously beyond the scope of this project; here the author is content with genocide as defined by the UNCPCPG.

**Mimesis** - means imitation in its broadest sense. As originating in Erich Auerbach’s work, it refers to the representation of reality in literature. Girard goes beyond Auerbach in viewing mimesis as a motivational desire that is both acquisitive and violent. Girard sees mimesis as the force governing all human and cultural life.

**Mimetic desire** - is the desire to obtain that which others seem to or actually do possess. The assumption is that human desire is not autonomous, but originates from seeing what others have or “are.”

**Mimetic rivalry** – The escalation of mimetic desire into competition between the “subject” and “model” for the “object”; in other words competition between members of a social group for the same resource.

**Scapegoat mechanism** – a mechanism enacted when the violent unrest of mimetic rivalry threatens group cohesion, so that a person or group deemed as “different” is falsely accused of causing the initial unrest, and whose demise is seen as a cure to the unrest.

**Western** - refers to the body of political and cultural thought embodied in and promoted by the countries of Europe and North America primarily. This body of thought has its roots in the writings of Ancient Greece, Ancient Rome, Christianity and the Enlightenment. These countries are also characterized by well developed infrastructures and easy access to communicative and processing technologies.

### *Assumptions*

It is assumed that there is no one answer to the “why” of the 1994 Rwandan genocide – why presumably peaceful individuals took up arms against their friends, neighbors, and in some cases relatives, why the government encouraged this slaughter rather than protected its citizens, why developed countries with the capacity to do so failed to respond to prevent or halt the killings. This thesis does not look for “one great why”, but rather seeks to add to the understanding of this tragedy by incorporating the ideas of René Girard into its study and into the field of political science.

The existence of evil is un-testable in the field of political science, and it is beyond the scope of this thesis to argue whether evil exists as a supernatural force or a natural component of human nature. The assumption will hold that, whatever the source, humans have not only the capacity to inflict great physical, mental, and emotional harm on each other, but also the ability to rationalize such harm within a perceived moral framework. That being said, this thesis takes the position that genocide is morally wrong in all instances, and that understanding its mechanisms with the goal of mitigation and ultimately prevention is a worthy scholarly pursuit. Methodological assumptions include intrinsic value given to the published word, whether as articles in journals or papers at conferences or published books, although it is acknowledged that bias may be present and a critical eye is needed in the reading of sources. Also assumed is the inherent value of reading a much-studied event through a fresh perspective, and the value to political science of looking at what is mostly classified as a “political” event through the lens of anthropological philosophy.

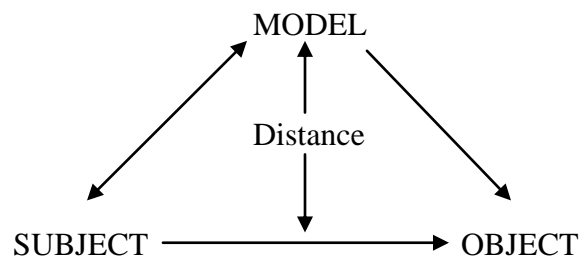
It is also recognized, though not assumed, that being already familiar with Girard’s ideas it would be possible to “make the data fit the theory”, by picking and choosing only those aspects of pre-genocide politics that support a Girardian point of view. The author was on guard against this, of course, and the factual basis needed to support Girard’s ideas (example: the presence or absence of political strife among Hutu elite) will also provide a safeguard against self-serving manipulation.

This thesis takes the ideas of mimetic rivalry and scapegoating as developed by René Girard and applies them to a reading of 1990-1994 Hutu majority political actions, statements, and policies. Many readers will be familiar with the ideas of mimesis as developed by Erich Auerbach and Edward Said. It is an exciting and new addition to the body of knowledge

concerning one of the most disturbing events of the twentieth century.

### *The Thinking of René Girard: Mimetic Desire*

“René Girard is unfamiliar to most political scientists,” begins Kyle Scott in his article *A Girardian Critique of Liberal Democratic Peace Theory* (Scott, 2009, p.45) and indeed this true. Born in Avignon in 1923, he started his academic life as a scholar of medieval history. Girard moved into French literature and built a reputation through critiques of modern French writers. Through his work he began to notice commonalities of characters and relationships found in great works of fiction; he named these commonalities the *mimetic character of desire*. This he detailed in his book *Deceit, Desire and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure* (1961 French; translated into English 1966). This was also his effort to bring some systematic study to the discipline of literary criticism, which was a new approach for the field at that time. In *Deceit* Girard uncovered a common theme in the works of five great novelists: Cervantes, Dostoyevsky, Flaubert, Proust, and Stendhal. He names this theme *triangular desire* – a desire predicated on not just the presence of the desirer (called the subject) and the object of desire, but on the presence of a mediator (or model) as well. The diagram below illustrates this:



Fundamentally, every person desires “being” (a deep longing due to our separation from God, says Girard) and in his or her eyes the one who he or she is moved to imitate (the model) seems to have this “being.” The subject, in imitation of the model, focuses his or her desire and efforts on acquiring that which the model has or desires. Both the model and the subject desire the object, and both come into relationship with each other over the acquisition of the object. The subject and the model can actually become violent rivals for the object, but as long as social separation (distance) between subject and model is maintained via social mechanisms (distinctions such as economic class, ethnic group, religion), mimetic desire remains peaceful.

As an example, in Cervantes' novel *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha* (*Don Quixote*), Quixote desires what Amadis de Gaul (an exemplary knight) seems to have: perfect chivalry. Quixote relinquishes any "original" desires in order to mimic Amadis in the latter's accomplishments. Because Amadis is a fictional character to Quixote, Quixote can pursue his quest for the "object" of perfect chivalry without entering into direct rivalry with Amadis, a distinction Girard names as *externally mediated triangular desire*.

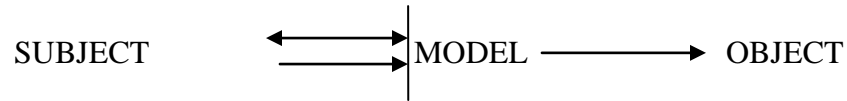
In contrast is Stendhal's character of Julien in *The Red and the Black*. Julien, a working class Frenchman who dreams of following his hero, Napoleon, chooses his profession based on how far it can advance him socially. On the verge of achieving great social standing through marriage, he is undone by the revelation of a previous transgression, and his fiancée's father then forbids the marriage. Here the mediator (or model), a real person, keeps attainment of the object (social position) at bay in what Girard calls *internally mediated triangular desire* (internal to the mediator). This erupts into violence as Julien returns to his hometown and shoots the woman with whom he had (and who revealed) his early transgression. She survives, but he is tried and executed.

Girard focused on these "triangular" relationships found in the works of the other three authors, and revealed the similarities underlying supposedly different plots. He pointed out that often the mediator is both the "model" the subject wishes to imitate and also the obstacle to achieving the object. If real, the model may be responsible for manipulating the components of social distance – perhaps social class, language or ethnicity – to prevent the subject from actually acquiring the object.

### *Mimetic Rivalry*

Girard further develops his ideas on triangular desire in subsequent works. In his second book *Violence and the Sacred* (Girard, 1977) he studies mimetic desire's escalation into violence. As the mechanisms maintaining the social distance degrade, *mimetic rivalry* can occur because perhaps the object cannot be possessed by more than one person at a time. The subject's desire for the object, possessed by the model, can become conflict *with* the model for the object, and the model becomes an obstacle. This is especially the case in which possession of the object is seen as a zero-sum proposition – if the object is, for example, a lover, or political power – something able to be possessed by only one. This rivalry can also be present when the subject,

who is moved to imitate, highly values individuality; the only way to maintain individuality is to both obtain the object and then eliminate the model. In that situation the model becomes a barrier to the subject's acquisition of the object and the possibility of violence increases:



The subject, having long been on the receiving end of manipulations designed to keep him or her from actually acquiring the object, may, in turn, imitate the model and use similar actions either against the model or against others. Or, actual possession of the object can lose importance as both the model and subject battle for the prestige associated with the object's possession. For example, a quick search on the internet pulls up replica Super Bowl Championship rings (as well as a few authentic ones) available to anyone who can pay. But simply possessing the ring does not convey the prestige of actually winning the championship.

### *Social Distance*

For Girard, maintaining social distance between the subject and model is what leads to an absence of violence in society. In his book *Violence and the Sacred* Girard writes: “[o]rder, peace, and fecundity depend on cultural distinctions; it is not these distinctions but the loss of them that gives birth to fierce rivalries and sets members of the same family or social group at one another’s throats” (Girard, 1979; p.49). In short: he believes social *inequalities* create an absence of violence. If the subject has no chance of ever obtaining the object, he or she can only dream and mimic, but never become a rivalrous contender. Girard notes that “[r]eligion invariably strives to subdue violence...” (p. 21), but does so paradoxically, by applying violence in a ritualized sacrifice. One example would be codified Jewish animal sacrifices found in the Old Testament; another would be the modern Catholic re-presentation at the Mass of Christ’s sacrificial death.

Girard recognizes three channels “... employed by man since the beginning of time...” that are used to prevent this violence from escalating into rivalries: “... (1) preventative measures in which sacrificial rites divert the spirit of revenge into other channels; (2) the harnessing or hobbling of vengeance by means of compensatory measures, trials by combat, etc., whose curative effects remain precarious; (3) the establishment of a judicial system—the most efficient

of all curative procedures” (1979; p. 21). The first channel includes religion and “friendly” competition – everything from classroom canned food drives and “best holiday lights” on the street to highly organized professional sports teams attached to large urban communities in many states (“New York” Jets, “Manchester” United). Rivalries develop (Washington Redskins vs. Dallas Cowboys football is a well known one in the U. S. mid-Atlantic region), and using football as an example, during the competition *real* team-against-team violence occurs and the object (victory, the Super Bowl Championship) can be had by only one ultimate winner. Democratic politics fall under Girard’s second channel: “trial by combat”, as candidates, supported by their “armies” of consultants, donors, and volunteers “battle it out” up through voting day. “Attack” ads, “mudslinging”, and accusations of moral improprieties (which amount to the breaking of social taboos) often abound.

The third channel – the judicial system – performs the function of the sacrifice of the scapegoat – quelling violence, by “rationaliz[ing] revenge” within the community and obviating the need for an actual scapegoat. But judicial systems need stable political powers to back them: how the politics of a state are organized – stable democracy, dictatorship, etc., – determines the success of the system. This was missing in the case of 1990 – 1994 Rwanda. Judicial systems also ultimately use violence themselves to both “oppress as well as liberate.” Placing suspected wrongdoers on “Most Wanted” lists, offering rewards for capture, punishments of hard labor, incarceration, and ultimately the death penalty are smaller acts of violence against those who have sought to shorten social distances (for example through theft, which moves objects from the model to the subject, or murder, which could be an outright elimination of the model: either from pre-meditated, first degree murder to the “disruption of the community” through the unintentional killing or involuntary manslaughter).

Girard notes that these procedures used to “...keep men’s violence in bounds have one thing in common: they are no strangers to the ways of violence” (1979; p.23). In his book *Battling to the End* (Girard, 2010), he examines the writings of Carl von Clausewitz in light of his own ideas, and though the main topic of this book does drift from the focus of this research, Girard situates the practice of politics as another expression of violence: the idea of justice being institutionalized revenge, and policy being the imposition and manipulation of social distances.

Girard does note that this view differs from popular thinking: “Modern society aspires to equality among men and tends instinctively to regard all differences, even those unrelated to the

economic or social status of men, as obstacles in the path of human happiness” (p. 49). Nevertheless he proposes that these distinctions are the basis of all natural and cultural orders, and that they give meaning, sequence, and definition to “... the objects and moral standards that men alter, manipulate, and transform” as well as allowing individuals to “... find a place for themselves in society” (p. 50).

### *The Scapegoat, and the Sacredness of Violence*

Because an actual outbreak of violence between subject and model could destroy the social group, once it becomes imminent, says Girard, this violence is redirected away from the community (preserving the subject, model, and social relations) and projected onto a *scapegoat*. It is critical that the scapegoat be innocent; as the persecution of an innocent creates a further bond among the persecutors – they are drawn together in the maintenance of the façade of the scapegoat’s guilt. The scapegoat must also be a group or individual easily identified as “different” – a foreigner, a handicapped person, a “different” ethnic group. But interestingly, it is also important that the victim not be too different from the group for which he, she, or they will eventually be “sacrificed.” If the scapegoat is too different, relationship to the social group is lost, and the scapegoat is then a member of another group which may exact revenge.

The human violence that will be inflicted upon the scapegoat holds great sacred value:

“[t]he sacred consists of all those forces whose dominance over man increases or seems to increase in proportion to man’s effort to master them... [f]ar outranking these, however, though in a far less obvious manner, stands human violence – violence seen as something exterior to man and henceforth as a part of all the other outside forces that threaten mankind” (Girard, 1979; p.31).

Girard comments: “[w]e have yet to learn how man succeeds in positing his own violence as an independent being” (p. 31) – but perhaps this is a social construction designed to prevent humans from facing their own role in its outbreak. The word *contagion* is sometimes used to describe the spread of violence, as if it is something outside of human experience that can be “caught” and in turn passed along. Nevertheless, it is violence used to quell violence – in the end a violent act occurs, but one directed against a scapegoat rather than against members of the group. This sacrifice is designed to halt the contagion, to stop the spread of violence within the community: “[t]he sacrifice serves to protect the entire community from its *own* violence” (emphasis original) (Girard, 1979; p. 8).

To the scapegoat, the community gives *both* the cause of the community violence *and* the solution to the community violence (through the elimination of the scapegoat). In this way the scapegoat is made sacred – by somehow “causing” dissent within in the group, the scapegoat must have access to “superior powers” to do so. The scapegoat has “dared” to step outside group norms. Cause is assigned through false accusations of heinous behaviors, usually ones breaking social taboos:

At first sight the accusations seem fairly diverse but their unity is easy to find. First there are violent crimes which choose as object those people whom it is most criminal to attack, either in the absolute sense or in reference to the individual committing the act: a king, a father, the symbol of supreme authority, and in biblical and modern societies the weakest and most defenseless, especially young children. Then there are the sexual crimes: rape, incest, bestiality. The ones most frequently invoked transgress the taboos that are considered the strictest in the society in question. Finally there are religious crimes, such as profanation of the host. Here, too, it is the strictest taboos that are transgressed.

All these crimes seem to be fundamental. They attack the very foundations of cultural order, the family and the hierarchical differences without which there would be no social order. (Girard, 1986; p.15)

While accusations may differ in particulars, they all have the same objective: to put the responsibility for community discord (which could include that which brings about discord, such as droughts, earthquakes or other natural disasters) on a person or persons who have no proven criminal activities. Thus “... it is possible to be persuaded that a small group, or even a single individual, can harm the whole society...” (1986; p. 16).

The solution to these problems is the elimination of the scapegoat, but it calls for the group to also “eliminate” a sacred being: “[b]ecause the victim is sacred, it is criminal to kill him – but the victim is sacred only because he is to be killed” (Girard, 1979, p. 1). The community will in (supposed) imitation of the scapegoat’s “violence” against the group, commit an act of violence against the scapegoat.

This assignment of both cause and solution to the scapegoat, called *double-attribution* by Girard, is understood by the community: violence against the scapegoat will bring peace. But by viewing the scapegoat as the both source and the solution, what this double attribution *actually* does is masquerade the true source of conflict – the imitative rivalry within the community: “... mimetic theory claims that this misunderstood phenomenon is the most important cause of



human violence, and that vengeance [against the scapegoat] is the most important form it takes” (Girard, 2009). What began in mimesis, the rivalry between subject and model for the object, ends in mimesis with the group once again imitating the scapegoat in violence (although to a lesser degree) and ultimately endeavoring to eliminate the scapegoat: “[v]engeance turns them into doubles” (Girard, 1987; p. 12). But since the true source of violence in the community, mimetic rivalry and a loss of social distance, is only temporarily resolved it will eventually escalate to violence again, and a new scapegoat will need to be found.

### *Girard and Constructivism*

Is Girard a constructivist, meaning someone who thinks that knowledge and meaning are generated from the interaction of experience and ideas? At first glance it may seem so, but in Girardian thought, while the social framework of violence and its means of deployment may be socially constructed, its base cause is not. Following Kyle Scott’s discussion in his article *A Girardian Critique of Liberal Democratic Peace Theory*, constructivists propose that states gain identities and interests through their interactions with each other. Instances of war can result from these identities and interests. By reconstructing identities and interests, peaceful solutions to conflicts can be found. Scott says that “Girard would agree with the constructivists that our future path does not have to be war but would disagree with the constructivists’ conclusion that war can be averted by simply changing an economic or political structure” (Scott, 2009; p. 55). He would say that constructivist solutions only result in a “change of scenery” because they do not take into account the origin of violence – *mimetic desire*. Eventually, the reconstructions will fail as well.

Scott says that Girard acknowledges that “...all social structures are mechanisms put into place to control the violence associated with desire” (p. 56) but that these constraints do not provide lasting solutions because they simply channel the violence into culturally acceptable expressions, but do not address the reason – again, desire – that the violence exists in the first place. In other words, while the deployment of violence may change from society to society, and time to time, that which sparks it – desire – does not. Finally, says Scott, “Girard and the constructivists are limited in the extent to which they communicate with one another, since the constructivists assume a world prior to interaction, while for Girard a world before interaction does not exist” (p.56).

Neither is Girard a pure essentialist, the term as used here meaning “the practice as regarding something (as a presumed human trait) as having innate existence or universal validity rather than as being a social, ideological or intellectual construct” (Merriam-Webster online dictionary, 2011). It is true that for Girard, both desire (stemming from the soul’s separation from God), and the victimage mechanism (elimination of the innocent scapegoat) are necessary to being human:

During the process of hominization, however, our ancestors very rapidly became carnivores and hunters. Strong discharges of adrenaline are necessary at the critical moment of the hunt and these can occur in different conditions, as in the middle of a family group, for example, under the effect of any sort of disturbance... [i]t is important to recognize that extreme rage becomes centripetal once it has been given free rein; it is never naturally centrifugal. The more exasperated rage becomes, the more it tends to turn toward those who are closest and most cherished, those who are most protected in normal circumstances by the rule against violence. The centripetal force of rage is not something to be treated lightly...

We know that the ineradicable character of mimetic rivalry means that the importance of any object as a stake in conflict will ultimately be annulled and surpassed and that acquisitive mimesis, which sets members of a community against one another, will give way to antagonistic mimesis, which eventually unites and reconciles all members of a community at the expense of a victim. Beyond a certain threshold of mimetic power, animal societies become impossible. This threshold corresponds to the appearance of the victimage mechanism and would thus be the threshold of hominization. (Girard, 1987; p.87-95)

*But*, while saying that desire is essential to being human, and the victimage mechanism as being unique to being human, Girard recognizes that *what we desire* is socially constructed by being in community, by seeing what others in the group desire.

If the source of this desire (the soul’s separation from God) is hard-wired into human existence, how can the species ever escape the violence arising from it? By choosing to do so, says Girard. Communities can recognize scapegoating for what it is, thus rendering it powerless, and then they can turn their attentions to solving the inter-group rivalries. Here Girard points to the Bible, saying it “...discloses certain truths about violence, which the readers are free to use as they see fit” (Hamerton-Kelly, ed., 1987; p. 41). Girard also recognizes that the expressions of violence are socially constructed, and dependent on the group’s particular culture: sports, hard labor, the death penalty, genocide. Perhaps he has one foot in essentialism and one in

constructivism, or perhaps political science needs to develop a new descriptor – essential constructivism – for a theorist like Girard.

### *Girard, power, and desire*

It would be easy to put power in the “object” category of triangular desire, something that the model is perceived as having or controlling, and which the subject, in imitation, desires and attempts to acquire. While perhaps realists view violence as a means of acquiring that power, Girard’s ideas explain the rational “why” of violence: “[i]t is the only way one can eradicate the disruptive characteristics of desire” (Scott, 2009; p. 55). In triangular desire, power is some measure of violence deployed as a check against its more violent forms, in constructs used by the model to maintain the social distance. Realists are motivated by state’s interests, and they work in constructed zero-sum worlds of tangible objects, such as territory and natural resources. In contrast Girard says desire is the great motivator, and not only does it originate in the intangible (being), it is not limited to the tangible: “[t]he object of desire for Girard is not necessarily a tangible product that makes one secure; rather, the desire is defined by the presence of an “other”... there is no desire without the other, but for realists, power is optimized when there is no other” (p.55).

### *What makes peace?*

René Girard’s work is focused on the source of violence in human society, and as such, he has not directly answered the question, what makes peace? Obviously, eliminating the scapegoat, while seen as bringing peace to the group, only masks and temporarily distracts from the group’s internal rivalries. The rivalries will eventually flare up again, because their basic cause (inter-group competition) remains; eventually necessitating yet another scapegoat to accuse and eliminate.

In both *The Scapegoat* (1986) and *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning* (2001) Girard writes about the story of Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection as the turning point in human history, the point at which the victimage mechanism was revealed for what it is – only a temporary solution to the conflict within the social group. After the persecution (scapegoating) and death of Christ, a small group of his followers refused to be drawn “back into the crowd,” due to the intervention of the *paraclete* (which translates from the Greek as “advocate” or “one summoned to help”).

Indeed, Girard proposes that this small group was forever set apart from the crowd by that intervention, and ultimately chose to *side with the victim* rather than return to the social group. The resurrection – by restoring life to the victim – finally revealed the cyclic nature of scapegoating violence by negating the “elimination” of the scapegoat. Drawing from this, Christ’s “Great Commandment” of “love the Lord with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself” essentially *eliminates the differences* among mankind. Although this idea is provocative to consider – loving someone as yourself no matter what the person’s ethnicity, social position, birthplace, etc., as compared with 20<sup>th</sup> century political experiments with communism and redistribution of wealth – it is outside the scope of the present work.

As shown by this short study of a specific state and time (Rwanda, 1990-1994), it can be argued that cycles of mimetic rivalry and violence set the stage for the 1994 genocide. Many scholars’ explanations of the violence have been written, but *none question the use of extreme violence itself*: why *do* ruling groups choose such extreme violence as a political tool, instead of other alternatives (isolation from foreign aid, imprisonment/penalties, deportation)? For the discipline of political science, the ideas of René Girard offer fertile ground for the study of violence – its origins *and* deployment. If conflict is a product of the violent escalation of mimetic rivalry, unchecked by social mechanisms and directed toward the elimination of a scapegoat, this suggests that perhaps a “short circuit” of the process can be developed as well, and appropriate mechanisms can be developed to resolve inter-group rivalries before they explode into violence.

In summary, Girard says that once in society, individuals imitate others – from the learning of language to social customs, and even in our desiring. He proposes that individuals like to think that their desires are authentic and unique to themselves but, he argues, human desire is actually mimetic: “[i]f our desires were not mimetic, they would be forever fixed on predetermined objects; they would be a particular form of instinct... [w]ithout mimetic desire there would be neither freedom nor humanity. Mimetic desire is intrinsically good” (Girard, 2001; p. 15). We learn what to desire by watching what others desire. The model possesses or desires to have an “object” – perhaps something material, such as a particular car or a house in a certain neighborhood, or perhaps something immaterial such as social status or political power. The subject attempts to acquire the object, but may be prevented from doing so by either the ultimate non-attainability of the object, or by the manipulations of the social distance (by the

model) that keep the model and subject apart. Mimetic desire can develop into rivalry, which in turn can escalate into violence within the group. This violence is redirected onto a necessarily innocent but markedly “different” scapegoat, who becomes both the source of and the solution to the group’s tensions. Elimination of the scapegoat is seen as eliminating the tensions and avoiding violence within the group.

The next chapter reviews the geographical and historical factors of Rwanda and its people, and discusses significant historical developments that can be understood by using Girard’s ideas, as a build-up to the third chapter’s in-depth examination of pre-genocide mimetic rivalry and accusative behaviors that led to the ultimate elimination of the scapegoat: the 1994 genocide.

## Chapter 2: Rwanda, Geography, Ethnicity and Early History through 1990

This chapter describes the geographic location of Rwanda, examines different ideas about the ethnicity of Tutsi and Hutu, and also takes a careful look at the early history of the area through 1990. Jan Vansina, professor emeritus in history at University of Wisconsin, wrote a remarkable book titled *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda: the Nyiginya Kingdom*. It was published ten years *after* the genocide (in 2004) and adds historical depth to the discussion: “[i]t is essential to know the early history of Rwanda... if one is to understand the history of the country in the twentieth century, for modern Rwanda was built on the economic, social, and political foundations *encountered by the first colonials*” (emphasis added) (Vansina, 2004; p. 3). While not downplaying or excusing colonial (particularly Belgian) influence in the construction of “official” ethnic identities, it is important to note that the Tutsi-Hutu divisions existed prior to colonial contact. These differences were easily exploited to colonial advantage: the leaders and social structures already in place were co-opted to serve colonial interests of raising cash crops, providing cheap labor for infrastructure development, maintaining political order, etc., but important to this thesis is that the differences were already there.

### *Geographic Features*

Rwanda is a small, landlocked country in the Great Lakes region of East-Central Africa. Its area of 10,169 square miles (slightly larger than the land area of Maryland) is characterized by rolling hills and a general slope in altitude from west to east. It is the most densely populated

country on the continent of Africa; its 2010 population was estimated at just over 11 million, giving it a population density of over 1,080 persons per square mile. Its name means literally “the surface occupied by a swarm or scattering” (Vansina, 2004, p. 35). Its French name of “mille-collines” means “thousand hills.” Many authors remark on the physical beauty of the country: “A land of almost ideal beauty”; “The Switzerland of Africa” (LeMarchand, 1970; p. 13); “a land of breathtaking beautiful vistas dotted with countless hills” (Prunier, 1995, p.2); “From the first moment I glimpsed its soft, mist-covered mountains, I loved Rwanda...full of fragrant breezes and unbelievable greenness...Rwanda seemed to me then a kind of garden of Eden” (Dallaire, 2005; p 57).

Sharing Rwanda’s Northwestern border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo are the volcanic Virunga Mountains on the edge of the Great Rift Valley, their endangered mountain gorilla population made famous by the primatologist Dian Fossey. Many Hutu fled to the DRC in 1994, contributing to the present political instability. To the north lies Uganda, which housed many Tutsi refugees after the 1959 revolution, later training and supporting their military incursions back into Rwanda. To the east is Tanzania, its well known savannah-type Serengeti plains stretching to the Indian Ocean. Tanzania is also the site of the oldest known human settlements, bones, and footprints (the Olduvai Gorge), and has a long history of trade with Arab nations and the Portuguese, and historic 20<sup>th</sup> century battles (World War I’s East African Campaign). Directly south is Burundi, which is sometimes called Rwanda’s “twin” (Prunier, 1995; p. 2) for having common ethnic groups with Rwanda. The two were historically yoked as “Ruanda-Urundi” until both became independent states in 1962.

Three main ethnic groups comprise Rwandan nationality: the Twa, a pygmy people who are believed to be the first settlers in the region, making up about 1%, the (perhaps) “Hamitic-origin” Tutsi comprising about 15% and the Bantu-origin Hutu, making up about 84% of Rwandans (*CIA World Fact Book*, 2011). Ethnicity can seem like such an obvious thing, as Brigadier Henry Kwami Anyidoho, Deputy Force Commander and Chief of Staff for UNAMIR, writes in his memoir:

The physical features of the ethnic groups are so pronounced that it does not take a visitor too long to easily identify a Hutu from a Tutsi. For example, while the Hutu is normally of an average height with a broad face, the Tutsi are usually tall and slim with an aquiline nose. Rwanda can boast of some of the most attractive people on the African continent. (Anyidoho, 1997, p. 1-2)

But like many aspects of our humanity, it is influenced by both biology and society. Several researchers (Prunier, 1995; Mamdani, 2001; Vansina, 2004; Twagilimana, 2004) have studied the question: are Hutu and Tutsi ethnic differences genetic or socially constructed? A good summation of the genetic point of view is found in Prunier's 1995 book, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide*. Prunier writes that the earliest European explorers recorded linguistic and cultural homogeneity, but noted physical differences. In keeping with "the almost obsessive preoccupation with 'race' in late nineteenth-century anthropological thinking", much theorizing followed. In addition to Speke's Hamitic Hypothesis, other proposals included claims that Tutsi were descendants of the Ancient Egyptians, or originated in Asia Minor, India, or Tibet. Some "theories" bordered on the fantastical, suggesting that perhaps Tutsi descended from a "primordial red race" that included the Maasai, or even Tutsi as the "lost race of Atlantis" (Prunier, 1995; p. 5-7). Prunier leans strongly towards the Tutsi people having originated outside the Great Lakes region (probably from the Horn of Africa), but over hundreds of years, with intermarriage, the differences became more socially constructed than genetic.

Mahmoud Mamdani, in his book *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nationalism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (2001; p. 45–46), notes that modern studies of Tutsi/Hutu differences have, for the most part, abandoned physical differences in favor of blood differences. For example, among Rwandan Hutu the sickle cell anemia trait statistically occurs at rates similar to nearby Bantu peoples, but is seldom found in Rwandan Tutsi. Mamdani notes another study that examined lactose intolerance – found at higher rates among traditional agriculturalists than in nomadic herder groups – and found that about 75% of Rwandan Tutsi can digest lactose, while only about 5% of a nearby Bantu people can. Interestingly, about one-third of Rwandan Hutu can digest lactose; this higher rate is speculated to be from intermarriage with the Tutsi.

Mamdani also mentions the 1987 study "Genetics and History of Sub-Saharan Africa", from the *Yearbook of Physical Anthropology* that classifies Tutsi as more closely related to people in Sudan and Ethiopia.

Jan Vansina, in *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda* also examines Rwandan ethnicity. Looking at kinship and family structures going back to the 16th century, he sees the development of clans related to the ruling family, either by blood or by permission. By the 17th century, with more centralized rule in place, clan identity was reduced in influence to local politics. Next by studying the non-territorial ethnonyms of the words "Twa", "Tutsi", and "Hima", (both herders

versus farmers) back to the 19th century, he finds that they differentiate those persons who were not the “normal” agriculturalists. Where “Tutsi” and “Hima” appear together to refer to pastoralists, the Tutsi were the elite among both. He closes with:

That an extensive endogamy has obtained for a very long time within the Twa and elite Tutsi groups is nearly certain, given the genetic diversity of the Rwandans. There is no doubt that present-day Rwandans really encompass three different biological “populations” and that whatever scenario is adopted to account for this fact, the differences among the groups run so deep that they must extend back millennia rather than centuries. (Vansina, 2004; p. 37-38)

Amiable Twagilimana, Rwandan by birth and currently professor at SUNY-Buffalo, extensively addresses ethnicity in his book *The Debris of Ham: Ethnicity, Regionalism, and the 1994 Rwandan Genocide*. First he examines two common theoretical approaches to Rwandan ethnic studies: essentialism and functionalism. He looks how functionalism operated through poems and myths to establish Tutsi superiority over both Hutu and Twa:

... [the] dynastic poem entitled “The Story of the Origins” has it that at the origin of history of Rwanda there was Kigwa, who fell from heaven and had three sons: Gatwa, Gahutu and Gatutsi. When he decided to choose his successor, he entrusted each of the three sons with a pot of milk to watch over during the night. At daybreak, Gatwa had drunk the milk; Gahutu had fallen asleep and in the carelessness of sleep has spilt the milk; and only Gatutsi had kept watch through the night, and only his milk pot was safe. So it was clear to Kigwa that Gatutsi should be his successor and by that fact should be exempt of any menial tasks. Gahutu was to be his servant. The utter unreliability of Gatwa was to make him a clown in society. As a result, Gatutsi received cattle and command whereas Gahutu would acquire cattle only through sweat and services to Gatutsi, and Gatwa was condemned to hunger and gluttony and would not acquire cattle. (Twagilimana; 2004, p.36)

Twagilimana also examines early European descriptions of the area. He writes: “[i]t is remarkable, however, that there is consensus in their description of the behavior of the Hutu and the Tutsi. This consensus, I believe, is more due to the European aristocratic bias and the grand metanarratives of the Enlightenment” (Twagilimana, 2004; p. 40). He then quotes examples of racist thought found in both Hume and Kant, and traces the process of colonization, and the spread of those stereotypes of inferiority of Africans throughout the world and the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Finally, he proposes that the Europeans, having found a sophisticated, centralized political system instead of the “savagery” they expected of Africans, adopted Speke’s Hamitic Hypothesis and thus assigned European qualities to the ruling Tutsi to explain their political successes.



These more “scientific” approaches aimed at classification of human beings based upon physical characteristics were typical of the time period, but fail to account for the fluidity of ethnicity found in Rwanda. Considering the social construction of ethnicity, Howard C. Cutler, in his book *The Art of Happiness in a Troubled World* uses insights from his interviews with the Dalai Lama to write:

... the long and complicated history of Rwanda – with shifting ruling parties, political agendas, and power structures – gradually created the belief among both Tutsi and Hutu that they were ethnically distinct... *but in fact the terms “Tutsi” and “Hutu” originated as social and economic...* [t]he formalized definitions of the separate “races” and ethnic groups was so arbitrary, however, that *in 1933, the Belgians classified an individual with fewer than ten cows as Hutu and an individual with more than ten cows as Tutsi.* (emphasis original) (Cutler, 2009; p. 62 – 63)

In Rwanda today the current Kagame government works to eliminate Hutu-Tutsi distinctions, notably through school curriculum requirements, under the view that those distinctions were a cause of the genocide:

The indigenous population consists of three groups, or *ubwoko* – Bahutu, Batutsi, and Batwa. Traditionally, the population also is affiliated with one of 18 clans– all with more than one *ubwoko* or group... As part of political efforts to overcome divisions that led to the genocide, the Rwandan Government does not collect data on *ubwoko* and banned its inclusion on identity cards. Rwandans share the same language and culture, so *ubwoko* today reflects a family identity that has been passed patrilineally and often a historical narrative. The Rwandan Government does not permit politicization of this identity, any form of discrimination, or “genocide ideology” (hate speech) based on *ubwoko*. (U.S. State Department website, 2011)

A post-genocide view of ethnicity is also expressed by Rwandan-born Joseph Mutaboba, professor at University of North London and currently UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon’s Representative to Guinea-Bissau, claims: “I know people are interested in knowing whether you are a Tutsi, Hutu, or Twa. I happen to be a Tutsi. I prefer, though, to be called Rwandese” (Godrej, 1994). But note that under the preference to be considered “Rwandese”, however, still lays the *knowledge* of being “Tutsi.”

It is a challenge for Rwanda to build a post-ethnic identity – even the website Facebook.com has a site dedicated to sorting out what it means to be “Rwandan.” Some commentators there say it’s the Kinyarwanda language, others say that it’s an attitude of loyalty to the Rwandan state. Although at this point in time, with ethnicity, meaning physical

differences, and being outlawed as reference points for forming identities, other social factors, such as language, will most likely emerge to help define differences. These differences are as necessary to the formation of identity as are features of sameness, so proposes political theorist William Connolly, and it is from among these differences that Girardian scapegoats are chosen. In the next sections, a look at the early history of Rwanda shows that while Tutsi-Hutu identities may have been codified in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by the Belgians and their use of national identity cards, the differences between the two based on supposed geographic origin, wealth, and political power, and supported through myth making, were already firmly in place before German contact in 1896.

### *Girard's Geometry of Violence and Rwanda's Political and Cultural History of Inter-Ethnic Conflict*

When writing about Rwanda many authors begin their history or background sections with either the year 1896 (when king Yuhi V Musinga submitted to German colonial rule), 1959 (the Hutu Revolution), 1962 (the date of recognized sovereignty) or even as late as 1973 (when Defense Minister Habyarimana took power from his friend, President Grégoire Kayibanda). Keeping in mind the effects of cultural myths, and that some of the accusations against the Tutsi prior to the genocide relied on characterizing them as “foreigners” (the equivalent of the “stranger” in Girard’s list of common characteristics of scapegoats) it is useful to incorporate a lengthier history and discussion of Rwanda’s people groups and their political structures. This lengthier discussion highlights the approximately 500 years that went into building – and maintaining – Tutsi-Hutu identities. It also shows instances of mimetic rivalry and their escalation to violence within Tutsi leadership, which, in Girardian fashion, was later imitated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Hutu political leaders when they “at last” came to power and sought redress (Girard’s legalized “revenge” through laws that favored Hutu) against the Tutsi.

### *Early History and Establishment of the Nyiginya Kingdom*

In his book *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda: The Nyiginya Kingdom*, historian Jan Vansina combines both archaeological and oral history records to tell the story of human settlement. The Twa people are the oldest known inhabitants of Rwanda’s region, and it is believed that somewhere between 700 and 1000 A.D. the Hutu, a Bantu people group, began

moving into the Great Lakes region from the Congo basin area (present day Democratic Republic of the Congo). They practiced a more settled, agrarian way of life and began to displace/dominate the Twa. Around 1400 - 1500 A.D. some believe (based on pottery patterns found at archaeological sites, and improvements in hammer and hoe technology) that another people group arrived from the north, the ones who became known as Tutsi, who were primarily nomadic herders (Vansina, 2004, p. 17 -21).

Although the archaeological record does not provide unquestioned support for the migration of this people group – some believe the items could have been traded – this belief of Tutsi as “foreign invaders” played a crucial role in the social construction of later Rwandan culture. Being a “foreigner” is a classic characteristic of Girard’s scapegoats. Indeed, around 500 years later, in November of 1992, Leon Mugesera called on fellow Hutu “to send the Tutsis *back* to Ethiopia by way of the Nyabarongo River [a Rwandan river which empties into the Nile]” (emphasis added) (Gourevitch, 1998; p. 53).

During some time in the 1600s a great leader known as Ndori emerged, perhaps with ties to royalty in the north as his clan name, *nyiginya*, means “relatives of the king, mainly on his mother’s side”<sup>1</sup>. Vansina speculates that:

...coming from the grasslands of the north, Ndori probably arrived with great herds (that likely numbered hundreds of heads of cattle)... [i]t was perhaps this profusion of cattle rather than sheer force that was the main cause of his success. For the tales underline that he found a good dozen local allies and that he managed to subdue central Rwanda thanks to their help. (Vansina, 2004; p. 47)

It is thought that Ndori gave dozens of heads of cattle to each of his allies, in part to gain their allegiance and also (practically) because Rwanda lacked the large hectares of grassland needed to maintain such a large herd; it is also thought Ndori introduced a stringent form of social/economic contracts called *ubuhake*, so stringent “that to accept a contract of this sort was to submit to the king” (Vansina, 2004; p. 47). Basically with *ubuhake*, the *shebuja* (patron) gave cattle to the *umugaragu* (client) but retained sole ownership. In return the *umugaragu* is assured of protection under the *shebuja*, and also becomes his servant, working for him as demanded. Such a strict practice, in Girardian terms an example of internally-mediated triangular desire, served to maintain the social distance between the subject (*umugaragu*) and the model (*shebuja*),

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<sup>1</sup> From Vansina, quoting K. Oberg, “The Kingdom of Ankole in Uganda,” 140.

making it difficult for the subject to “own” the objects of desire (the cattle). This contract was hereditary in nature and could only be broken by the shebuja; the cost being a return of all cattle (the original plus any offspring) to the shebuja. Vansina notes: “[t]he relation therefore essentially traded political submission for military protection. Thus the cow as much as the bow and spear founded the Nyiginya kingdom” (Vansina, 2004; p. 47).

Family groups also provided *corvée* labor, usually as portage or labor at the court as a tax to the king. Punishment for noncompliance was usually a public whipping. The family could choose whom to send for this labor (often a wayward son or nephew).

For each region – usually a hill – there were three chiefs under the king – one in charge of land holdings, one to oversee taxation, and one “chief of men” – “who ruled not the land but the bodies” (Prunier, 1995; p. 11), and was responsible for recruiting warriors for the king’s army. This arrangement provided excellent checks and balances on local power holders.

Eventually the area of central Rwanda became politically organized under Ndori: he founded the court and its associated rituals (enthronement, harvest celebration, etc.), established the penurious ubuhake, built permanent residences for his court members, and formed corporations charged with the task of supplying various court needs (included here was a military corps), as well as centralized power under himself. The last two characteristics – an army and centralized power – were unique in the Great Lakes region and remained as such when the Europeans first encountered the region (Vansina, 2004; p. 65).

### *The 1700s: Centralization of Power*

Throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century Nyiginya kings expanded ubuhake so that it was understood that *all* cattle belonged to the king. The king had to simply 1) ask, or 2) put one of his cattle with those of the desired herd, and thus a new “official” herd was formed. From a Girardian perspective, this interestingly eliminates ownership of the objects by the subject – in other words, only the ultimate model – the king – could determine which subjects (shebuja) could ever possess the object (cattle). Perhaps effective in reducing rivalry between umugaragu, this would encourage rivalry between court families who, maybe, began to wish for power rather than cows.

Also in the mid-1700s armies became permanent and specialized. Before, the army would dissolve upon the death of the king, with a new one forming from that unit to which the new king had belonged. Specialization occurred as well – with some men being bow/spear warriors,

provisioners, or cattle rustlers. The court grew as a geographic and power center, and the king, once enthroned, was considered no longer a mere mortal but a god: royal whims became royal decree. One king in particular adored cows and kept his favorites nearby, watering their grass with honey mead and salt water. His absolute favorite cow was named Nyagahoza, and she reportedly drank only milk. An expression lasting into the 20<sup>th</sup> century: “Do I have to pay for Nyagahoza?” protested required heavy labor – labor some thought was an eternal punishment enacted upon all Hutu for the consumption, by a Hutu, of Nyagahoza upon her death (Vansina, 2004; p. 65). Again, the incident carries the mythological power of a Hutu breaking a social taboo and literally eating the sacred (or at least beloved) cow, and the idea that Hutu may suffer indefinitely for the transgression.

#### *1800s: Competition Rises Among Court Families*

In the late 1700s civil war erupted, with the end result being a destruction of the king’s personal power and a rise in power wielded by court families. Population was growing and these families kept increasing in size as well, making it more and more difficult to find lucrative government postings for sons. New positions were created by dividing current holdings. As land holdings became smaller, taxes on peasants increased in order to keep the family’s “take” level. Occasionally, rival families were ousted and their goods and lands taken, as mimetic rivalry escalated into violence. Ultimately unsatisfying as the true source of conflict (inter-family, and perhaps, even *intra*-family rivalry) remained unresolved, families continued to clash and these rivalries spurred territorial gains: “[t]he elite acted on all these options at the same time and, in consequence, the internal rivalries at the court grew, becoming ever more bitter. This competition fueled an expansion of the realm...” (Vansina, 2004; p. 126); the rivalries ultimately resulted in violence against others.

The population growth (both natural and by immigration) also put pressure on farming; marshland cultivation and simple irrigation came into practice to alleviate food shortages. Populations also shifted away from the court, partly to relieve pressure and partly because being further from court meant less corvée labor (labor required as a tax to the king).

### *1867 – 1897: A Time of Extreme Turbulence*

The years 1867 – 1897 were a period of transition and violence, a time of intense family rivalries spurring external violence under the weak King Rwabugiri. Rwabugiri was considered “touchy, impulsive, irascible, very suspicious by nature, and...was easily convinced of treason” (Vansina, 2004; p. 185). At evening meals in court it was common for one family to bring charges against another, the accused usually losing possessions at least and often their lives. The atmosphere at court encouraged mimetic rivalries to escalate into violence and often death. Sometimes whole families were executed, but usually one child was left to provide requisite ancestor worship. Unfortunately, one of the demands of ancestor worship was vengeance against those killed, thus birthing a new cycle of plotting and violence. Sometimes, as the king suffered from illnesses he attributed to revenge-seeking survivors, he would restore property and court privileges to relatives of those he executed. Kinship ties among royal families broke down under political intrigue as well.

Cattle remained the objects of desire, with court families needing increasingly more cattle to command ever more clients and thus materially “keep up with the Joneses.” These cattle were primarily obtained by raiding and looting neighboring areas. Again, rivalry led to violence against outsiders. More cattle need more grazing lands; this led to the invention of reserved herding domains, accessible only by royal clients. In Girardian terms these restrictions maintained the social distance between the elite court families and the commoners, and also assured reliable support for the objects (cattle) in play; essentially a “fuel” for continued rivalries.

Thus the elite now had no accountability to the local chief, and guaranteed access to grazing at the expense of the commoners. Many commoners, who would have simply inherited lands, were now left with no economic security: “[t]he process unleashed by the invention of restricted domains in fact generated a chaos that allowed the elites to multiply pretexts for exploiting their inferiors, whether herders or farmers. The result was the general pauperization of the bulk of the inhabitants of the country...” (Vansina, 2004; p. 133).

To further insure social distance, also around 1870 a new farmers tax was developed (*uburetwa*) in which farmers relinquished a large portion of their crop *and* half their labor to the land chief (in addition to tributes paid to the king). This “... was the straw that broke the camel’s back. Very soon it provoked a rift that was to divide society from top to bottom into two

hierarchized and opposed social categories, henceforth labeled “Tutsi” and “Hutu”... [f]or only Hutu owed *uburetwa* because of their tenure of arable land, and only Hutu were obliged to perform menial work required by the chief” (Vansina, 2004; p. 134-135). Thus a few, very close to the king benefitted greatly at the expense of the majority, essentially maintaining the exclusivity of object access/ownership.

Overall, this was a period “characterized by major upsets in the balance of power at the court...” and echoing Girard, Vansina continues: “... each of these cycles was followed by a wave of executions and persecutions as well as realignment of the various factions” during which the kingdom’s wars were results of struggles between court families rather than a response to external threats or an effort to expand (Vansina, 2004, p. 165). These cycles of violence occurred every seven to nine years throughout this thirty year period, and saw a growing role for violence not just in the political realm but also, importantly, *culturally*. Vansina writes:

In the last analysis, then, the blaze of violence owed to the growing number of adversaries facing each other. In the end, this overgrowth of aristocracy generated a sort of anarchy in which everyone threatened everyone else and in which an active king was always ready to give credence to any accusation and to order its immediate resolution. The nearly permanent recourse to violence finally engendered so much tension and created such a climate of insecurity among the common people as well as among the elites that it succeeded in dissolving the cohesion of even the most basic social groups. Everyone reacted by resorting to violence him- or herself, hoping thereby to rid oneself of one’s enemies and to build up wealth so as to obtain more power. (Vansina, 2004; p. 181)

Violence had been unleashed in the group, and scapegoats were needed. Expansionist actions were the “safety valve” for this violence – acts of violence would still be committed, but would be directed against neighboring groups in efforts to restore peace to the Tutsi court.

Eventually, in 1896, the king was murdered and the queen mother, with the help of her brother, installed her own son as the new *mwami* (king), Yuhi V Musinga. Musinga ruled from 1896 until 1931; backing by the Germans secured his power and tamped court family rivalries (Vansina, p. 179).

### *1896: European Discovery and Colonial Rule*

John Hanning Speke and Richard Burton were the first Europeans known to have explored the Great Lakes region from 1856-58; they were searching for the headwaters of the Nile (*East Africa Living Encyclopedia*, 2010). Speke described physical differences between

Tutsi (tall, thin, lighter skin) and Hutu (stockier builds and darker skin), and proposed what became known as the Hamitic Hypothesis to explain these differences (Speke, 1868; pp. 241 – 245). Because Hamitic peoples resembled Europeans in their facial features as well, they came to be considered a sub group of Caucasians who had migrated from the Middle East to northern Africa (Hamitic derives from Ham, one of Noah's sons). Eventually this gave rise to the idea that the Tutsi could be a formerly Christian people (a lost tribe of Coptic Christians).

The Berlin Conference of 1884 – 1885 assigned the region to German control. In 1899 mwami Yuhi V Musinga submitted to German power; the Germans ruled the area by keeping traditional political structures and practices in place. This greatly helped Musinga retain power. In 1911 the Germans helped the king put down a Bakiga (who are often considered Hutu) rebellion in the *northern* part of Rwanda – led by one of Rwabugiri's widows who had fled to the region after his death. This incident birthed a discourse of the region's independence from centralized power, which would eventually grow into a northern-southern Hutu division, resulting ultimately in the 1973 coup d'état.

Overall, ignorant of the history and complexity of local politics and fueled by her preoccupations with putting down rebellions in neighboring Tanganyika; Germany was content to maintain a light presence in Rwanda. True to the time, however, and to encourage coffee planting, Germany collected *and required* cash instead of agricultural products for tax payments (Prunier, 1995; p. 25).

Beginning in 1916 (during World War I) Belgium occupied the territory and in 1923, five years after the war's end, she was given a mandate by the League of Nations to rule it. To Belgium, Rwanda "mattered" as part of her colonial holdings and she took great interest in its management. After a "wait and see" period during which various approaches to the royal court were considered, Belgium began enacting reforms between 1926 and 1931. Two in particular changed the traditional society: that of concentrating chiefly powers into the hands of one person, and revamping the corvée system to be required of *each* person *individually* rather than from a family or clan. Belgium also did not recognize the "lineage rights" to landholdings, and declared them legally unoccupied and able to be disposed of as the state (meaning the King) wished, after a due (and usually miserly) compensation. Tutsi elite took advantage of this to confiscate much land in both the north- and south-western areas (Prunier, 1995; p. 26 – 28).



With the creation of identity cards, the Belgians helped reinforce and institutionalize the social/racial categories of Hutu and Tutsi: using the popular science of that era (early anthropology, craniometry, etc., referred to today as “scientific racism”) and beliefs (Africans as an inferior people, “white man’s burden”) of the day, they favored the Tutsi people based on their height, lighter skin tones and supposedly Ethiopian (Hamitic) origin (Twagilimana, 2003; p. 47 – 50). Overall, Hutu were legally discriminated against in terms of access to political power, education, land ownership and economic opportunities; Tutsi were generally wealthier, better educated, and the holders of political power (Prunier, 1995; p. 23 – 40).

### *Colonial Rule, Post World War II and early 1950s*

Several changes occurred in the span of a few decades – some having global impetus, others local – leading to shifts in the balance of power between Tutsi and Hutu. The tightly controlled social distance began to crumble, as Hutu saw possibilities to access those objects – wealth, education, political power – traditionally belonging to their models, the Tutsi.

After World War II Rwanda and Burundi were declared a UN protectorate with Belgium in charge; and a “perfect storm” of changes struck Rwandan society, as nicely detailed in Amiable Twagilimana’s 2003 book *The Debris of Ham*. Intellectually, Europeans began questioning the intellectual traditions justifying Europe’s “civilizing” and categorization of persons. Worldwide, colonies clamored and fought for independent rule, and following in those footsteps the decree of July 14, 1952 allowed for council elections at various levels of government. Rather than a redistribution of power, however, this acted more as a diffusion of power among Tutsi elite. Spiritually, the Belgian Catholic Church’s Walloon priests were gradually giving way to Flemish priests, who, having come from a similar situation in Belgium, sympathized with the oppressed-majority Hutu. Also a shift from European clergy to Rwandan clergy was also underway, although it was still mostly Tutsi who were being educated in seminaries. To counter this imbalance, a Hutu newspaper edited by Grégoire Kayibanda, one of the Hutu elite, was distributed throughout parishes. Socially and with support from the Church various cultural, clan-based, and mutual-security organizations formed; within a few years these provided bases of Hutu political power and influence. Political power, though now in motion, was still under Tutsi control (Twagilimana, 2003; p. 59 – 61). To use Girard’s lens, the “subjects” (Hutu) were then seeing the opportunity to actually acquire the objects (education,

political power) of their “model” (Tutsi), and mimetic desire moved towards mimetic rivalry – a challenge to the model by the subject for the objects.

Economically, a cash economy was developing which led to the decreased importance of cattle ownership and thus changes to the traditional wealth and power structures. The *ubuhake*, once benefitting the local chiefs, was officially banned in 1954 but with Tutsi elite as the legal landholders, it remained in practice (Prunier, 1995; p. 46). Judicially, as Belgians brought in their formal judicial systems, the clientship system and authority of local chiefs weakened, reducing the social safety net of those under the *shebuja*, as he was expected to protect as well as mediate his clients (Twagilimana, p. 61). Politically, reforms returning/redistributing land and wealth from Tutsi to Hutu were enacted, and with the introduction of the secret ballot many Hutu began gaining political influence (Prunier, p. 45).

#### *Colonial Rule, Late 1950s*

A Hutu emancipation movement developed, and in 1957 Grégoire Kayibanda and eight other Hutu intellectuals authored *Notes on the Social Aspect of the Racial Native Problem in Rwanda*, commonly called the “The Hutu Manifesto.” This document denounced the treatment of Hutu:

The problem is basically that of political monopoly of one race, the Mututsi. In the present circumstances, this political monopoly is turned into an economic and social monopoly... [a]nd given the de facto selection in school, the political, economic and social monopolies turn into cultural monopoly which condemns the desperate Bahutu to be forever subaltern workers, even after an independence that they will have contributed to gain without even realizing what is in store for them. The *ubuhake* has been legislated away, but these monopolies have replaced it with an even stronger oppression. (Prunier, 1995; p.45 – 46)

Perhaps surprisingly, the Hutu Manifesto called for ethnic identity to *remain* on identification cards:

In order to monitor this race monopoly we are strongly opposed, at least for the time being, to removing the labels “Mututsi”, “Muhutu”, and “Mutwa” from identity papers. Their suppression would create a risk of preventing the statistical law from establishing the reality of facts. (Prunier, 1995; p.46)

This call for “statistical law [to establish] ... the facts” would have been a most modern way to “quantify” the political problem. After World War II the “hard” sciences (chemistry, physics) enjoyed primacy of place both academically and culturally. The Space Race was on, with

Sputnik launched in October of 1957, and many of the social sciences (such as geography, politics, and sociology) were beginning to quantify their techniques as well.

The Manifesto's authors called for reform at many levels. Politically, they asked for free speech, laws and customs to be formally codified, to eliminate justice being distributed based on non-written laws and the so-called "custom of the nation", and also regular elections (to give Hutu better political access). For education, they asked for race to be considered as part of the high school and college admission processes. Economically, the authors wanted an immediate end to the *corvée* labor, the creation of a rural promotion fund from which Hutu could obtain grants and loans, and legal land ownership by individuals (Twagilimana, 2003; p. 62 – 65). This was, in effect, a bid for the model's objects.

As expected, the Tutsi elite reacted defensively, and answered about a year later with the *Premier Ecrit of Nyanza* (the First Writing of Nyanza) signed by twelve Tutsi from the royal court. In it the authors appeal to the founding myths, restating the ideas that the Tutsi were set apart *from creation* to be the rulers over both Hutu and Twa:

The situation being as it is, one can ask how the Bahutu are now asking their rights to share the common patrimony...our kings conquered the lands of the Bahutu by slaying their kings and have thus enslaved the Bahutu, how come now these can claim to be our brothers? We, the faithful servants of the king... (Twagilimana, 2003; p. 65)<sup>2</sup>.

Here it is interesting to note that *both* sides accept and perpetuate the myth of "Hamitic superiority" – the Hutu elite, by characterizing the peasant classes as *only* Hutu and not accounting for the *petits Tutsis* (living side by side with Hutu in the villages), and the Tutsi elite by resorting to a myth as justification for their rule: "... it showed that the whole ideology had been swallowed whole and that a socio-political problem was now dealt with in 'racial' terms" (Prunier, 1995; p. 46). Referring to the Tutsi elite response, Twagilimana points out the role of myths in societies:

[s]o to use the mythological characters to claim difference and superiority was another way of solidifying the other myths about Tutsi superiority, including the Hamitic Hypothesis that called the Hamites the civilizing agents in central Africa. Myths have always helped shape political ideologies and practices in all societies

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<sup>2</sup> Twagilimana is quoting F. Nkundabgenzi, ed., *Rwanda Politique* (Bruxelles: CRISP, 1962), 35-36 (his own translation).

and continue to do so, even in this age we call postmodern. (Twagilimana, 2003; p. 66)

As the social distance between model and subject continues to close, and the models make an appeal to long-standing myths (and divine appointment) in an effort to keep both the social separation intact and their access to that ultimate object – political power – unchanged.

Soon the division between the Belgian administration and her royal Rwandan protégés became quite public, accompanied by a radicalization of the social discourse on all sides as the situation dissolved into bitter ethnicity-based political rivalries. Members of the royal court, who were elite Tutsi, were pitted against the highly taxed peasant class, broadly classed as Hutu – but also including “petits Tutsi” – the peasant “petits” found themselves strangely aligned with a group of well educated, moderate Tutsi who favored an end to the monarchy *along* with independence from Belgium. Several political parties formed:

- ***Mouvement Social Muhutu*** (Hutu Social Movement) or **MSM**, founded by Grégoire Kayibanda; this became the **Mouvement Démocratique Rwandaise/Parti du Mouvement et de l'Emancipation Hutu** (Rwandese Democratic Movement/Party of the Mouvement and of Hutu Emancipation) or **MDR-PARMEHUTU** later known as just **PARMEHUTU**; having mainly regional appeal in the Astrida - Butare area of southwest Rwanda
- ***Association pour La Promotion Sociale de la Masse*** (Association for the Social Promotion of the Masses) or **APROSOMA**, founded by charismatic businessman Joseph Gitara; supposedly a class-based party but attracting almost exclusively Hutu; having great regional appeal in the Gitarama - Ruhengeri region of central and northwest Rwanda
- ***Union Nationale Rwandaise*** (Rwandese National Union) or **UNAR**, founded by Tutsi conservatives who favored the monarchy *and* immediate independence from Belgium; and recipient of aid money and backing from various Communist states (Cold War politics)
- ***Rassemblement Démocratique Rwandais*** (Rwandese Democratic Union) or **RADER** created by Chief Prosper Bwanakeri, a moderate Tutsi party and the recipient of initial support from Belgium; distrusted by both diehard monarchists and Hutu alike, it remained a marginal influence

As Prunier notes “[t]he whole climate became poisoned as political rivalry went into heavily symbolic disputes, not amenable to reason” (Prunier, 1995; p. 47). One particular symbol of Tutsi power was especially offensive – *Kalinga*, the sacred royal drum – which was traditionally

adorned with the testicles of Hutu princes defeated in battle. In the interest of national unity Hutu leaders asked for its physical and pictorial removal; Tutsi strongly protested giving up their historical symbol. Although never a part of Rwandan insignia, *Kalinga* remains prominent in current heraldic insignia (Prunier, 1995; p. 47).

Worsening the situation was the unexpected death of the mwami, King Mutara II Rudahigwa on July 25<sup>th</sup>, 1959. The king was at meetings in Burundi when he took ill and died, shortly after seeing his Belgian doctor. Assassination rumors circulated, and he had left no male heirs. Court families managed to get his younger brother appointed to the throne. Jean-Baptiste Ndahindurwa became mwami Kigeli V, and “ruled” until the 1961 coup at which point he went into exile (in 1992 he petitioned for asylum in the United States, and at this writing he is still alive and living in Washington D.C.).

This political tension finally exploded in the *muyaga* (strong wind) which began November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1959, with the false rumors of the death (he had been attacked, but was only injured) of a Hutu sub-chief at the hands of Tutsi youth. Tutsi homes were burned, both elite and *petits*. In retaliation, on November 6<sup>th</sup>, 1959, the mwami and UNAR responded with organized attacks against Hutu, especially APROSOMA members. In Girardian terms, mimetic rivalry had escalated tensions into this violent *muyaga* first through false accusations, then scapegoating and attacks first against innocent Tutsi, then against innocent Hutu.

On November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1959, Belgium “launched the idea of self-government” (Prunier, 1995; p. 51). Sporadic violence continued for the next several months and was especially harsh in the northwest regions. Tutsi continued to flee to neighboring Uganda and then-Belgian Congo.

In July 1960 communal elections were held; those elected were called *bourgmestres* after the Belgian model and they ruled over 229 communes of which 160 were now Hutu led; only 19 were Tutsi led. At this point the UN Trusteeship Commission got involved, which led to Belgium initiating a legal coup and on January 28<sup>th</sup>, 1961 the sovereign Republic of Rwanda was formed:

The United Nations Trusteeship Commission which was...under the influence of the Third World members...who were themselves largely aligned on colonial questions with the Eastern bloc. The communist countries had supported the UNAR party because it seemed to them to be the one most opposed to Belgian, i.e., capitalist western interests... [t]he world body was asking Brussels to try to organize some form of national reconciliation...to prevent any further tinkering

by the UN [Colonel Logiest and Grégoire Kayibanda]...called the 3,125 *bourgmestres* and municipal counselors to an emergency meeting in Gitarama, Kayibanda's birthplace, where 'the sovereign Republic of Rwanda' was declared by acclamation. (Prunier, 1995; p. 53)

September 1961 brought legislative elections in which PARMEHUTU won 78% of the vote and UNAR only 17%, but violence continued with thousands of homes being burnt and about 22,000 persons displaced. The UN Trusteeship Committee Report of March 1961 noted "[t]he developments of these last eighteen months have brought about the racial dictatorship of one party... An oppressive system has replaced another one... It is quite possible that someday we will witness violent reactions on the part of the Tutsi" (Prunier, 1995; p. 53). This is Girard's double: the subject (Hutu) imitates the model (Tutsi) in all aspects – even in continuing violence as a political option. Says Prunier: "The ethnic trap had sprung shut" (p. 53). Rwanda became formally independent on July 28<sup>th</sup>, 1962 with Kayibanda as president. Overall, tens of thousands of Tutsis were killed and about 150,000 were exiled to neighboring Congo and Uganda during this time (Prunier, 1995; p. 41 – 92). The subject had, indeed, eliminated the model and acquired the objects of desire.

#### *The Republic of Rwanda, 1962 – 1973 with President Grégoire Kayibanda*

Great enthusiasm abounded for the new Republic when conscious efforts to be "unlike" the monarchy were implemented. Elections were held and democracy was favored, but soon the administration discovered that tolerance also meant challenges in the form of criticisms of its power. The government began to push for centralization and power consolidation, and with the absence of a dominant caste to push Hutu together, schisms within the Hutu community were exacerbated. These inter-group rivalries had not been resolved with the elimination of the "Tutsi scapegoat" – only temporarily masked.

René Lemarchand, political scientist, East Africa expert, professor emeritus at University of Florida as well as USAID consultant, authored a book in 1970 titled *Rwanda and Burundi*. This source has been extremely useful as it documents and comments upon the political changes and violence that occurred just after independence, without looking through the "lens" of 1994's genocide. In his book, he focuses on the differences and suggests that the greater social mobility between elite ranks in Burundi allowed their move to democracy to occur by degrees, while the closed access to elite ranks found in Rwanda precipitated their violent transition. Perhaps the

book “shows its age” a bit because, unlike other “revolutions” in Africa, Lemarchand characterizes Rwanda’s as being ethnically based rather than based in social inequalities. He determines this by the involvement of elite, Westernized Hutu opposing the Tutsi monarchy. Nevertheless, it is one of the few academic descriptions of Rwandan politics pre-genocide.

The new Republic did include some Tutsi in positions of power, and the UNAR party was allowed to have a headquarters in Kigali, to print a newspaper (*Unité*), and to have free criticism of the government. But by 1969 this had changed dramatically: “this spirit of tolerance has all but vanished. The present (1969) government is an all-Hutu government...the local UNAR headquarters have been dissolved, its leaders executed, its newspaper banned” (Lemarchand, 1970; p. 197). Tutsi exiles were scattered across Burundi, the Congo, Uganda and Tanzania.

Their figurehead, Mwami Kigeli V, had no lasting residence-in-exile as he moved from place to place: Dar es Salaam, Kampala, Ngaida (Congo), Peking (Communist China played both sides, giving money to Kigeli V and also arms, advisors, and money to the ruling Hutu), and eventually Nairobi, all in about a three-and-half year period. This made it difficult for Tutsi leaders to meet and discuss strategies. Internal divisions also threatened: long standing differences of ‘progressive’ versus ‘conservative’, democracy versus monarchy, the taking of military action from outside Rwanda versus political negotiation/reform originating from inside. Tutsi refugees fared poorly in many places; as sometimes prejudices would rear ugly heads as locals feared the Tutsi would seek to dominate and exploit them. Many still claimed property and land in Rwanda to which they hoped to return (Lemarchand, 1970; p. 207 -216).

In addition to small skirmishes and back-and-forth killings, between March 1961 and July 1966 there were ten major Tutsi cross-border raids, none successful at bringing down Kayibanda’s government, but all incurring disproportionate revenge massacres against innocent Tutsi. One example:

... the repression that followed the raid of March 25, 1962, on the commune of Nkana in the prefecture of Biumba, when four Hutu... were killed and the communal cash box stolen... exasperated by these repeated acts of terrorism, the Hutu population of Biumba decided to teach the *inyenzi* [which means ‘cockroaches’ in Kinyarwanda] a lesson. On March 26 and 27, between 1,000 and 2,000 Tutsi men, women and children were massacred and buried on the spot, their huts burned and pillaged and their property divided among the Hutu population. (Lemarchand, 1970; p. 219)

Of importance in this event is the escalation of violence: between 1,000 and 2,000 men, women, and children killed in retaliation for four Hutu deaths. Writing in *Battling to the End* (2010), Girard acknowledges this phenomenon: “[y]ou are right to identify reciprocal action with the mimetic principle. Violent imitation, *which makes adversaries more and more alike*, is at the root of all myths and cultures” (emphasis original) (Girard, 2010; p. 10). The subjects imitate, and escalate, the violence of their models. This occurred again in 1963.

In December of 1963 the Tutsi leaders attempted to organize four simultaneous attacks from Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, and then-Republic of the Congo. The raiders numbered only a few hundred in each instance, and were easily repulsed and/or routed. The initial response of the Kayibanda government was to round up and execute Tutsi leadership, including ministers and UNAR party heads. Kigali radio continued to broadcast emergency warnings against Tutsi terrorists, and retaliation killings began in Gikongoro: “[w]e are expected to defend ourselves. The only way to go about it is to paralyze the Tutsi. How? They must be killed” said the local prefect – and kill they did, indiscriminately torturing, raping, mutilating and killing about 5,000 Tutsi in that prefecture alone (Lemarchand, 1970; p. 223). The reprisal spread and overall between 10,000 and 15,000 Tutsi lost their lives, and an additional 100,000 – 150,000 fled to neighboring countries (*Political Handbook of the World*, 2010; p. 1217). While these killings were not an official policy of the Kayibanda government, the *carte blanche* given to prefects was seen by many as a “license to kill” (Lemarchand, 1970, p. 225). Lemarchand also notes the lack of response from other African, western, or eastern states: in part due to an enforced news blackout and the classification of the dispute as a ‘domestic’ affair.

The end result of these disorganized Tutsi efforts was the exact opposite of what was intended. Rather than destabilization, the Kayibanda government had a fresh cohesion and gained popular support: “[o]ne Rwandan official freely admitted to this writer: ‘Before the attacks of the *inyenzi* the government was on the point of collapse. We were faced with enormous dissensions among ourselves. Not only have we survived the attacks but the attacks made us survive our dissensions’” (Lemarchand, 1970; p. 227). Thus was the Hutu community drawn together, and dissent was subdued.



Those dissensions would soon appear again, as Kayibanda's administration set upon a course of power consolidation (he won reelection in 1965 and 1969) under the idea of developing solidarity for the fledgling Republic. Several factions formed:

- **APROSOMA vs. PARMAHUTU:** Slowly the moderate APROSOMA party was eliminated in favor of the more radical PARMAHUTU, which also meant regional favoritism (PARMAHUTU drawing the bulk of its support from the northwest area). On local levels APROSOMA party members were replaced with PARMAHUTU as well.
- **Intellectuals vs. the Establishment:** New groups of intellectuals were coming up: primary school teachers, lower level civil servants, and university students. The gap between the official emphasis on social justice and the actual outcomes preoccupied many.
- **Bakonde vs. Bagewera:** Older landowners vs. their tenants. First was the issue of hereditary land ownership's incompatibility with republican ideals. Then, in the northwest in particular, was the schism between the *bagewera coutumiers* and the *bagewera politiques*. The coutumiers were those tenants chosen by the bakonde, while, after the circa 1911 Tutsi takeover of the area, the politiques were tenants put in place by Tutsi chiefs and obligated to those same chiefs. This issue pitted northern traditions against the "law" of the south. Who gets to use the land? A Special Provision Council was established to decide. The bakonde won out, despite republican concerns, and were able to evict/chase new tenants obligated only to them. (Lemarchand, 1970; p. 228 -240).

Many of the northern Hutu who rose to prominent positions within the Republic were bakonde (landowners), among them Callixte Habumenshi (Minister of Justice) Balthazar Bicomumpaka (Minister of Agriculture, Minister of the Interior and President of the National Assembly), and Juvenal Habyarimana (Minister of the Armed Forces and Police). All controlled large tracts of land with "substantial" clientele, which translated into both monetary and political support.

### *The "Second" Republic, 1973 – 1990 with President Juvenal Habyarimana*

And it was Juvenal Habyarimana who became president of the Second Republic by ousting Kayibanda in a "bloodless" coup in 1973. Kayibanda's administration had become increasingly isolated: "[b]y mid-1972, President Kayibanda, increasingly a recluse in the government palace, knew that his regime was in a state of animation. He tried... to recreate around himself the atmosphere of unanimity which had accompanied the *Inyenzi* threat,

particularly the December 1963 attack” (Prunier, 1995; p. 60). Knowing that his leadership was in question, he cast about for a scapegoat. But this time it would fail, as his rivals saw a real chance to “acquire the object” – political power – and to do away with their *southern Hutu* “model.”

Legally Kayibanda was not permitted to serve a third term, which meant he could not run for reelection in 1973, an election year for which opposition groups had waited. In order to continue the current regime, however, the constitution was changed to permit Kayibanda another term. This caused a rapid rise in hostility between factions – especially the regional ones. The south/central contingent had been in power for a decade of independence, discriminating against not only Tutsi but northern Hutu as well (*Political Handbook of the World*, 2010; p. 1217). There were concerns with the government’s non-response to anti-Tutsi violence at the National Butare University, and worries that Tutsi-ruled Burundi would militarily intervene in return (p. 1217). So on July 5, 1973 Grégoire Kayibanda was relieved of his presidency and Juvenal Habyarimana, Minister of the Armed Forces and Police, took his place. Over the next four years 56 government officials, lawyers, and business were put to death. Kayibanda and his wife were jailed until their 1976 deaths, supposedly by starvation rather than any means which would spill blood, as Habyarimana was worried that harm would befall himself if his blood oath of loyalty to Kayibanda was violated (Prunier, 1995; p. 82). Thus the “subject” (Habyarimana) had literally eliminated not only the “model” (Kayibanda), but the model’s supporters as well.

The first several years were perceived as calm and prosperous by many Westerners, especially in light of the struggles of neighboring countries (Jones, 2001; p. 25). The Habyarimana regime was mostly free from violence, albeit restrictive politically. The National Assembly was dissolved, and the 1962 constitution was partially suspended (*East Africa Living Encyclopedia*, 2010). Political parties were immediately outlawed; about a year later Habyarimana founded a single party, the *Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement* (MRND) to which everyone belonged, even infants and the elderly. Once a week MRND meetings (called *animations*) were held in which songs of praise to the 1959 revolution, the 1973 revolution, and even Habyarimana were to be sung and skits were performed (Twagilimana, 2003; p. 79-80). In 1978 the constitution was changed to formally establish a one-party system, which eventually developed its network of “spies” who hoped to benefit by ratting on the not-so-loyal. This single-party system served to, as in the days of the

king owning any cattle he wished – monopolize access to the “object” by denying any rivals to develop. Travelling was allowed, but official permission was needed to actually change residences and if denied, could mean the non-pursuit of education or job opportunities (Prunier, 1995; p. 76-77). Tutsi gained some successes under Habyarimana – not in politics at all, but in business and education as instituted by ethnic quota programs (Jones, 2001; p. 25). Hutu, at 85% of the population were still greatly favored – *especially* Hutu from the north, particularly those from the Gisenyi and Ruhengeri prefects:

There was a very short period at the end of the 1970s when it was commonly said in the south that a Tutsi from Gisenyi and Ruhengeri was better treated than a Hutu from the South. This proposition does not necessarily mean that the few Tutsi living in those two prefectures were treated well; if anything, it reflects the deep bitterness created in the south by what was perceived as the hegemony of the north. (Twagilimana, 2003; p. 78)

Habyarimana himself came from the Karago commune, but there he was not a man of “noble” lineage (although he did control tracts of land), perhaps even having a grandfather who immigrated from either Uganda or the Congo; his wife Agathe, on the other hand, came from a wealthy and prominent family in the Bushiru region – a family who enjoyed independent rule from the Tutsi kings into the 1920s. Habyarimana relied heavily on her family’s ties for support, and rewarded them with political appointments. Known as *le clan de Madame* or the *akazu* (little house), Agathe’s close relations held prominent positions under Habyarimana. A *short* list includes:

- Her **brother, Colonel Pierre-Célestin Rwagafilita**, military leader Rukara Commune
- Her **brother, Protais Zigianyirazo** (*Mons Zed* or “Mr. Z”), Préfet of Ruhengeri, an animal trader (and probable illegal animal exporter) with a strong financial interest in tourism (gorilla tourism in particular); suspected in the death of Dian Fossey (Melvern, 2006; p. 30). He was eventually formally accused by the ICTR of genocide (having organized, armed and coordinated roadblocks around his properties and ordering the death of all Tutsi thereby detained); was convicted but had the sentence overturned and is now free
- Her **brother, Séraphin Rwabukumba**, CEO of Centrale (bank) who, along with Pasteur Musabe, the director general of the Banque Continentale Africaine, funded newspapers whose articles supported the Habyarimana regime

- Her **cousin, Elie Sagatwa**, private secretary to Habyarimana (and died with him in the plane crash of April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1994)
- ‘Close associate’ **Colonel Laurent Serubuga**, from Gisenyi, Army Chief of Staff, later, Chief of Intelligence
- ‘Close associate’ **Noel Mbonabaryi**: “the Godfather” of the *akazu*
- ‘Close associate’ **Théoneste Bagasora** born in Giciye commune, Gisenyi prefecture (Bushiru) ; Director of the Cabinet in Rwanda's Ministry of Defense

Under Habyarimana the economic picture also brightened, as Rwanda gained in per capita earnings, going from seventh from the bottom in 1976 to nineteenth from the bottom by 1990. Her GNP percentages shifted as well, seeing a decrease in revenue from the agricultural sector and increases in secondary activities and services, as the country gained in manufacturing, services, and education provision (although agriculture remained the major economic sector). Infant mortality rates fell as access and type of medical care improved, and many more children were attending school. Notable, however, was the increased reliance on foreign aid, going from less than 5% of the GNP in 1973 to 22% of the GNP by 1991: “[a]s one former expatriate joked, Rwanda was not only ‘the land of the 1,000 hills’, it was also ‘the land of 1,000 aid workers’ (Prunier, 1995; p. 79). Belgium remained the main donor, but Germany, the United States, Canada, and Switzerland were also happy contributors. Prunier cites Pfarrer Herbert Keiner from ‘Allmählich schwand die Bewunderung für “Habis” regime’, *Frankfurter Rundschau* (5 November 1992): “[In the early 1980s] we used to compare the near idyllic situation in Rwanda with the post-Idi Amin chaos in Uganda, the Tutsi apartheid in Burundi, the ‘real African socialism’ of Tanzania and Mobutu’s kleptocracy in Zaire, and we felt the regime had many positive points” (Prunier, 1995; p. 78 – 80). Author Bruce Jones suggests that this period of relative peace and prosperity was actually masking a power consolidation by elite Northern Hutu, specifically those of the Bushiru clan, who came to greatly benefit economically by dominating the political administration, state banks, government contracts, the two major industries of coffee and tourism, regional prefectures, church leadership, and of course the army command: “by 1980 some 80 percent of the command positions in the armed forces were held by members of Habyarimana’s family” (Jones, 2001; p. 26).

The 1973 escalation to violence (although “bloodless”, more than fifty persons were eventually killed) which eliminated the southern “model” (Kayibanda) only masked divisions

within the northern group. With the “sacrifice” of the scapegoat, peace returned to the Hutu elite, but only for a few years. As the northern clan increased its power, dissent and division began to surface once again:

[t]he ‘Second Republic’ he created in 1973 had initially been a northern revenge over the PARMEHUTU southerners. But once it became clear that cabinet posts [and] economic opportunities ... would go first and foremost to northerners, they began competing among themselves to know who would get more. The President and his wife favored the people of Gisenyi *prefecture* over the Ruhengeri...[s]o the Ruhengeri boys were forced to take second place to their Gisenyi cousins. But it did not stop there. Favour ranking went by communal affiliation...” (Prunier, 1995; p. 86).

In the 1980s trouble began brewing for the regime, with scandal, internal rivalries, and economic troubles all weakening it. In April of 1980 a failed coup attempt by intelligence director Théoneste Lizinde resulted in scandal. During his trial (held in Ruhengeri) information came to light concerning knowledge and involvement of top leaders (including Habyarimana) in the deaths of Kayibanda, his wife, and his supporting ministers, businessmen, and lawyers. Lizinde eventually was jailed, escaped, joined the rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front in Uganda, and was ultimately assassinated in Nairobi Airport (supposedly to eliminate his knowledge of Paul Kagame’s involvement with Habyarimana’s assassination).

During the early 1980s critics of the regime, especially those from the south, were jailed, or died “accidentally”: Felicula Nyiramutarambirwa, a Member of Parliament who publicly questioned the government’s awarding of road construction contracts, and Father Silvio Sindambiwe, who wrote about government corruption and abuses, both died in staged auto accidents (Twagilimana, 2003; p. 90; also Prunier, 1995, p. 89).

Rivalries between the northern clans were also heating up. They turned deadly in April 1988, with the murder of Habyarimana’s good friend Colonel Stanislas Mayuya. Rumored as being groomed for the vice-presidency, and eventually, perhaps, president, Mayuya was one of Habyarimana’s “own” men – not indebted to Agathe’s Bushiru clan; his rise in power would undoubtedly mean less access to power and riches for the *akazu*. His murder was organized by Colonel Serubuga; later the triggerman was murdered in jail and the case’s prosecutor was also murdered. This was “the spark which ignited the powder keg and soon the various clans were at each other’s throats” (Prunier, 1995; p. 87). These inter-clan Hutu rivalries would become more

violent; with the 1990 invasion by exiled Tutsi (the RPF) soon providing a perfect scapegoat to which to turn their attentions.

Economically, world market coffee prices had been falling since 1977, though Rwanda had been able to replace much of its coffee export revenue with tin. But in the mid-1980s world tin prices also collapsed. A 40% reduction in the domestic budget (which also reduced income opportunities for the elite) coupled with a burgeoning population's pressure on land and food resources, led to high unemployment and unrest in the form of student and political protests. In their own form of mimetic rivalry, students agitated for what their models (the elite) had: income. Habyarimana turned to France's President Mitterrand for aid; in the new post-Cold War era this aid was to be tied to democratization. Mitterrand pressed Habyarimana to establish a multiparty system. Thus after a presidency of founding and enforcing the MRND's single party monopoly, Habyarimana came to publicly speak of a multiparty system. Immediately support for a multiparty system came from within Rwanda as well. This would spell doom for the *akazu*'s control of the political and economic sectors of Rwanda.

This chapter gives a detailed summary of Rwandan history, from about the 1500s to 1990. Throughout the history of Rwanda – whether under a Tutsi monarchy or a Hutu Republic – violence became a cultural part of politics. Both Tutsi and Hutu embraced cultural myths about each other: the Tutsi being divinely set to rule over Hutu and the Tutsi being “foreign invaders” of Hutu lands. Intergroup rivalries, both with court families under the Tutsi monarchy and with the north-south clan split under the Hutu, spurred violence against the other. Again and again, through a Girardian lens, we see mimetic rivalry escalating into violence against a scapegoat.

Early on, Ndori's use of cattle-as-objects and corvée labor maintained social distances between his ruling group and the local peoples. Later, rivalries between Tutsi court families sparked expansionist violence against neighbors (scapegoats) as well as a climate of anarchy at court, resulting in the assassination of the king – the elimination of model, and the seizing of his power. German colonial powers basically kept the ruling structures in place, but insisted on cash payments instead of agricultural payments in order to “encourage” coffee growing. Later, the Belgians codified Hutu-Tutsi differences through national identity cards that listed ethnicity. In the mid-twentieth century an intellectual questioning of colonial philosophies, worldwide agitation for independence, and the development of a cash economy disrupted the traditional

power structures, causing the long standing social distance between Tutsi and Hutu to drastically narrow. The 1959 Hutu revolution saw the subjects – Hutu – actually acquire the object (political power) from their models, the Tutsi elite. This came at the price of the violent deaths of thousands of Tutsi. Fourteen years later inter-Hutu rivalries exploded and power shifted from the southern Hutu elite “models” to *their* “subjects”, the northern Hutu elite. Tutsi continued to be legally discriminated against, but so now did southern Hutu, actually to the point of death by famine as the next chapter discusses in its similarly detailed (but not quite so lengthy) look at the shorter time period of 1990 – 1994, the period of civil war preceding the genocide.

### Chapter 3: Focus: The Rwandan Civil War, 1990 – 1994

The complexities of this short time period are numerous, and were influenced by everything from a frost in Brazil to the falling of the Berlin Wall. This section examines several sources of pressure that came to bear on the Habyarimana regime: the organization and militarization of the Tutsi in neighboring Uganda, the drop in world market prices for coffee and tin, the fall of the Soviet Union and consequential shifts in economic aid strategies, the effects of democratization itself on the privatization of state violence, and the weaknesses of the Arusha Accords. All of these pressures threatened the akazu’s political control, and effectively shortened the social distance between the subjects (both Hutu and Tutsi political rivals) and the models (the akazu).

Violent elimination of the subjects, in an effort to maintain social distance, was severely limited by external pressures to democratize. Power sharing agreements, beginning with the legalization of multiple political parties in 1990 to Habyarimana’s signing of the Arusha Accords in 1994, served as transfers of the object – political and military power – from the model to the subject. Indeed, the subjects (Tutsi refugees in this case) had already started acquiring military power and foreign support in the form of the Rwandan Patriotic Front.

#### *The Development of the RPF*

It is worth examining *why* the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) formed in the first place, as it is not the usual practice of political refugees to launch an armed return to their birth country. Many years of struggle preceded the development of the RPF, a movement which had grown up and militarized among the Tutsi refugee community in southern Uganda. In his 2001 book *When*

*Victims become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and Genocide in Rwanda*, Mahmood Mamdani devotes a chapter to the “politics of indigeneity” surrounding the cultural and political diasporas of both Hutu and Tutsi from Rwanda. Briefly, successive waves of Tutsi refugees in 1959, 1963-64, and 1973 built up the existing *Banyarwanda* (those who speak Kinyarwanda) community inside Uganda, a community that already consisted of nationals and migrants (going back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century). Uganda, in turn, had the strictest refugee policies in the Great Lakes area: once a refugee, always a refugee, and so were your children. Adult Tutsi refugees, for the most part, remained in designated camps: they did not assimilate and were not granted Ugandan citizenship, and neither were their children who were born in Uganda considered to be “citizens.” Being refugees did convey one advantage, however, and that was access to UN scholarships for education. Therefore, most of the youth left the camps to pursue high school and college educations in Uganda, Kenya, and even Europe and the United States. These grown children returned to Uganda and eventually joined the elite, educated class within Ugandan society, but were still considered “refugees” and not “Ugandans.” Throughout various, complicated conflicts in the ‘70s and ‘80s the Tutsi camp refugees were first expelled, then allowed to return. Many Banyarwanda joined the National Resistance Army (pro-Museveni, anti-Idi Amin and later anti-Obote). Interestingly, as the resistance gained popularity at the village level, leaders developed their own way of dealing with “culture versus politics.” Politics won the day, and it was decided that residency, not “history”, would determine the future:

The truly radical side of the NRA’s response was to sublate this colonial inheritance by altering the line that distinguished the political subject from the nonsubject. In doing so, it distinguished politics from culture, and future from history ... [b]y redefining the political subject as the resident, and by considering the historical fact of migration as politically superfluous, the reform moved away from the inherited world of the settler and the native in one single stroke (Mamdani, 2001; p. 171).

At talks in Washington, D.C. in 1988 it looked agreeable for Tutsi who had been in Uganda for more than ten years to become citizens, while Tutsi with financial means to return to Rwanda would be allowed to do so. Unfortunately, these ideas were never implemented, and after Museveni gained power there were actually more expulsions of Banyarwandans and also much criticism of the number and seniority of positions they held in the military. So, “refugees” they remained, looking for both political power and a home territory. From there the Rwandan Patriotic Front was born. On the heels of Uganda’s August 1990 decision *not* to include



Banyarwandan refugees in a ranchland resettlement scheme, Tutsi public opinion shifted from a desire to establish citizenship where they were, to support for an “armed return” to Rwanda (Mamdani, 2001; p. 182).

Two RPF leaders, Fred Rwigema and Paul Kagame were both from families that fled Rwanda just after the 1959 Hutu Revolution. Both became educated soldiers – Paul Kagame was actually in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas for additional training under the U.S. military when the initial invasion took place – and Fred Rwigema had been a long time friend of Salim Saleh (currently a Ugandan military advisor and brother of the president, Yoweri Museveni). Rwigema in particular had considered himself a “Ugandan” until a series of anti-foreigner, Tutsi persecutions under both Idi Amin and Milton Obote inspired him to take up rebel arms under Museveni (Kinzer, 2008; p. 39 - 40).

Every military needs funding for weapons and matériel, and the RPF was no exception. Some financial support came from Tutsi abroad, but most of the support came from Museveni himself, who saw an easy out to the demobilization of his NRA. At the time, however, Uganda’s ambassador to the U.S., Stephen Katenta-Apuli, stated that NRA personnel who participated in any attacks against Rwanda would be considered deserters and subject to court martial and possibly execution. They would not be allowed to cross back into Uganda. In reality, the soldiers regularly did cross back to access rear bases, but ultimately would not ever be considered “Ugandans”:

After all, the Banyarwanda in the RPF were no strangers to Ugandan society... [s]ome observers even thought of [them] as functioning like an army within an army... [t]his point of view stressed that [they] had already been organized inside the NRA as a separate command answerable to Rwigyema (sic.). It is this command structure that was said to have been activated at the time of the invasion, as part of the foreign-funded demobilization exercise within the NRA... “[t]hey demobilized by crossing the border in completely equipped units, taking their insignia off”... [y]ears later, President Museveni [said] Uganda decided “to help the Rwandese Patriotic Front materially, so that they are not defeated because that would have been detrimental to the Tutsi people of Rwanda and would not have been good for Uganda’s stability”... [w]hen the RPF crossed the Uganda Rwanda border in October 1990 it was also an armed repatriation of refugees from Uganda. (Mamdani, 2001; p 183-184)

Armed invasion to reclaim old homelands seemed the only remaining choice, when, in essence, thirty years previously the Tutsi were forced to become the subjects when their own subjects, the Hutu, fought and won away the object of political power in Rwanda. Now, the

Ugandan Tutsi had no land to settle and no state of which to be a citizen, and many of their fellow Tutsi were suffering under Hutu rule. Wanting to regain land, and perhaps a sense of belonging somewhere, the Ugandan Tutsi now escalated the rivalry to violence. The Tutsi subjects would imitate their model, and use violence to reclaim the object(s) – land, certainly, which represents its own power to survive and perhaps thrive, political power, and perhaps status as well – that was taken away in 1959 by the Hutu.

#### *World Market Pressures and an Unchecked Famine*

In addition to right of return pressures and the militarization of Ugandan Tutsi, the Rwandan government was fighting fires on many fronts: a decline in world market prices for key exports, a recent famine in the southern region, and post-1989 pressures to democratize. Two main Rwandan exports, coffee and tin, had dropped in value on the world market. Coffee prices had been in decline for about a decade, stemming from a freak frost in Brazil in 1975 which caused a sharp rise in coffee prices worldwide, bringing coffee in the U.S. up to as much as \$3.50 per cup then – equaling about \$13.00 in 2011 – and a corresponding decline in demand (Time.com, 1977). Rwanda was able to make up much of the difference through her tin exports until the mid-1980s, but then tin prices also fell drastically due to a decline in demand, the U.S. sell off of tin reserves, and unsuccessful attempts by the Malaysian government to corner the market to maintain higher prices (DanielXX, 2008).

Beginning in 1984, successive crop failures resulted in severe famine in the Butare and Gikongoro (southern) regions of Rwanda by 1989. Habyarimana's government consistently refused not only ameliorative actions, but actually denied knowledge of the situation. Philip Verwimp, combining nutrition survey data plus political economics in his 2002 article *Agricultural Policy, Crop Failure and the 'Ruriganiza' Famine (1989) in Southern Rwanda: a Prelude to Genocide?*, speculates that this may have been intentional:

The Rwandan government did not react to the crop failure, it did not provide food or other aid and thus allowed a crop failure to develop into famine. The height of the famine occurred in June 1989... [t]he regime did not mention the famine, no government agency or ministry studied it or reacted to it. Only in March 1990, after the publication of a documentary film about the famine, [did] the government [start] providing food aid. Although famine conditions became evident from March 1989 onwards, government disbursed aid only one year later. (Verwimp, 2002; p. 45)

Verwimp then gives reasons for the government's actions. First, it would counter the Habyarimana political agenda of food self-sufficiency, second, in the 1988 elections, with Habyarimana as the only candidate on the ballot, many in Butare voted against him. Third, the long standing animosity between his administration and southern Hutu was widely known: southern Hutu were rarely appointed or promoted to government positions and fourth, these areas had large Tutsi populations. By 1989, Habyarimana was familiar with the 1988 Washington talks favoring right of return for Tutsi and was also aware of massing, armed Tutsi in Uganda. He feared Tutsi in the south would be quick to join, and ultimately, this fear proved true (Verwimp, 2002; p. 47). Here is "politics as violence": denying political aid so as to allow one's perceived enemies to die, without actually having to engage them directly.

#### *Pressures to Democratize, and their effects*

In addition to falling commodity prices and the unacknowledged famine, post-1989 pressures to democratize were now being tied to continued foreign – mainly French – economic aid. These pressures were well-received by opposition groups inside Rwanda, but may actually have led the Habyarimana regime to shift its violent responses to opposition from the state to the private realm. Phillip G. Roessler, in his 2005 article *Donor Induced Democratization and the Privatization of State Violence in Kenya and Rwanda*, examines the links between democratization efforts and state violence. After the collapse of the Soviet Union many countries were no longer interested in giving aid to strategic Cold War clients. Instead countries such as the U.S., United Kingdom, Japan, and France, began to tie continuing aid to democratization, human rights, and "good" governance. Roessler notes that in the early 1990s over half of the number of African nations received external pressures to democratize. Of those, he demonstrates that the ones most likely to privatize state violence were those (such as Rwanda) that had, in the past, high degrees of politicization of ethnicity:

The degree of previous politicization and militarization of ethnicity tends to separate those states that pursued a strategy of privatized state violence from those that did not. Leaders who had formerly mobilized and militarized ethnic identity to consolidate political control, often favoring their ethnic groups at the expense of others and stacking the military with ethnic kin, found it easier to privatize state violence and incite communal conflict to neutralize political challengers. (Roessler, 2005; p. 211-212)

Marie-Eve Desrosiers also studied the fallout from external pressures in her article *Demos and Ethnos: Dangerous Democratization in Pre-Genocide Rwanda*. Indeed, at the June 1990 Franco-African Summit at La Baule, French President François Mitterand stated that France's continued aid to her African friends would be closely tied to their steps towards multiparty, election-based democracies. Mitterand also personally urged his friend, Habyarimana, to institute multiparty reforms. In response, Habyarimana did enact a new constitution. In June 1991, a new constitution was adopted which guaranteed not only multiple political parties but also freedom of the press and freedom of expression. Many political parties sprouted, and the official party of the Habyarimana regime, the *Mouvement Républicain National pour la Démocratie et le Développement* (MRND) remained, but added "development" to its name. A few months later in March of 1992 its racist, radical component, the *Coalition pour la Défense de la République* (CDR) formed as a political party. This was essentially a formalization of the akazu's network, and included MRND ministers, army chiefs, businessmen, and of course the akazu inner circle.

Through these parties Habyarimana and his elite were able to maintain political control by both playing the other parties off against each other, and using party-origin media transmissions and even violence against political enemies. Eventually both groups would militarize (with training help from France) their youth wings: for the MRND, this became the infamous *interahamwe*, and for the CDR, the *impuzamugambi* (Desrosiers, 2007; p. 76-79). Thus violence against political enemies could continue without repercussions to foreign aid (Roessler, p. 216). Democratizing efforts didn't necessarily curb violence, but only changed its perpetrators.

In her thesis *Media in Rwanda: 1990 – 2003*, Kamilla Ekholdt Christensen also connects this push for democracy to the development of anti-Tutsi hate propaganda, mainly through newspapers and radio. With the push for democracy also came a push to liberalize the media. Immediately after the new constitution was adopted in June 1990, the number of newspapers exploded, with many being attached to the particular, new parties that were cropping up. Habyarimana made statements that supported the new media in its *objective* attempts to educate and inform, saying that could aid development, but also urged journalists to focus on "a sense of national record" (Christensen, 2006; p.51) and to refrain from disparaging remarks that could earn enemies. But not one to take his own advice, an MRND-backed newspaper, *Kangura*

(meaning “wake others up” in Kinyarwanda) became known for printing virulent anti-Tutsi propaganda. Two months after the initial RPF invasion, in its December 1990 issue, *Kangura* published the “Hutu Ten Commandments”, warning Hutu away from personal and business relations with Tutsi – and encouraging the spread of “Hutu Ideology” and the teaching of the 1959 Social Revolution to all Hutu. Not surprisingly *Kangura* was popular in the northern Gisenyi-Ruhengeri areas (Habyarimana’s “hometown”); the publication was formally taken over by the extremist CDR upon the group’s formation in February of 1992 (Melvern, 2004; p. 49).

There had long been stereotypes and social myths of Twa, Hutu, and Tutsi, and Twagilimana mentions a few common sayings in *Debris of Ham*:

“If you polish the teeth of a Tutsi, tomorrow he will use them to bite you”; “you let a Tutsi sleep in your living room and during the night he invades your bed [for your wife]”; “A Hutu is not thanked twice” (meaning that a Hutu can’t do well more than once); and “When a Twa satisfies his hunger he burns the barn” (meaning Twa live only for the moment and cannot plan for the future). (Twagilimana, 2004; p. 39)

But with free speech and cheap mass media – mainly newspapers and radio – these messages can be disseminated and received with authority, *especially* when they appeared in a medium backed by the official party of the president. In the content of the Hutu Ten Commandments we see classic Girardian scapegoating in the form of accusations against the Tutsi of violating social taboos, in this case the sexuality of Tutsi women and the dishonesty of Tutsi men. The first three commandments particularly warn against Tutsi women and those who consort with them, the fourth warns against the “inherent” dishonesty of Tutsi men in business. Five, six, and seven advocate for government, education, and military control to be in the exclusive hands of the Hutu. Eight and nine exhort Hutu to band together against Tutsi, and the tenth calls for a spread of Hutu ideologies from the 1959 Revolution:

1. Every Hutu should know that a Tutsi woman, whoever she is, works for the interest of her Tutsi ethnic group. As a result, we shall consider a traitor any Hutu who marries a Tutsi woman, befriends a Tutsi woman, [or] employs a Tutsi woman as a secretary or a 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 Tutsi in business
  - invests his money or the government's money in a Tutsi enterprise
  - lends or borrows money from a Tutsi
  - gives favours to Tutsi in business (obtaining import licenses, bank loans, construction sites, public markets, etc.).
5. All strategic positions, political, administrative, economic, military and security should be entrusted only to Hutu.
6. The education sector (school pupils, students, teachers) must be majority Hutu.
7. The Rwandan Armed 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 of their Hutu brothers. The Hutu inside and outside Rwanda must constantly look for friends and allies for the Hutu cause, starting with their Hutu brothers. They must constantly counteract Tutsi propaganda. The Hutu must be firm and vigilant against their common Tutsi enemy.
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. (Berry, 1999; p. 113-115).

Although there was dissension among Hutu, especially along the north-south geographic split, note that the rhetoric was against the “traditional” enemies *and foreigners*, the Tutsi. This is also in keeping with Girard’s idea of the scapegoat as being already “different” in some way – in this case the social myth of the Tutsi as foreign invaders, and breakers of social taboos, being the cause of current political and economic woes. Also, the Tutsi being accused are necessarily *innocent* of any crimes – they are not the Tutsi leaders amassing armed forces in Uganda, for example, or the exiled King Kigeli V, but the reader and listener’s neighbors. The scapegoats must be innocent to help the persecutors bond in their crime against them.

Two and a half years later in July, 1993 – the *Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines* (Mille Collines Free Radio and Television or RTLM) began broadcasting a combination of popular music, humor, and anti-Tutsi rhetoric. It quickly became popular among the younger crowd as a “hip” alternative to the more staid state-sponsored radio. Given the economic collapse and high unemployment among the young, the hate-filled messages were quickly picked up. RTLM also had “official” backing and akazu connections through the CDR. The

International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), in its summary judgment in *Prosecutor vs. Ferdinand Nahimana, Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza, and Hassan Ngeze* (case number ICTR-99-52-T), examined the ownership of RTLM. The court found that RTLM:

... was owned largely by members of the MNRD party, with Juvenal Habyarimana, President of the Republic, as the largest shareholder. CDR leadership was represented in the top management of RTLM through Barayagwiza ... and Stanislas Simbizi, a member of the CDR executive committee who was added to the [RTLM] Steering Committee in 1993. (Thompson, 2007; p.284)

Not coincidentally, all three men were from the northern prefects: Nahimana was from Ruhengeri and both Barayagwiza, and Ngeze were from Gisenyi (eventually all were convicted by the ICTR; Nahimana and Ngeze are serving sentences of greater than thirty years – Barayagwiza has since died in prison).

This scapegoating rhetoric was widely disbursed, in an appealing way (cartoons, pop music), and with the president's government party backing it. Added to the RPF's actual invasions, this invective served to arouse suspicion and hatred of one's neighbors: could you trust the traditional oppressors of the Hutu not to side with their armed Tutsi brothers? Those who "caused" the social unrest would also be its "solution" through their elimination.

### *The Disintegration of the Akazu*

For the elite of the regime there were three sources of enrichment: coffee and tea exports, briefly tin exports, and creaming off foreign aid. Since a fair share of the first two had to be allocated to running the government, by 1988 the shrinking of sources of revenue left only the third as a viable alternative. Hence there was an increase in competition for access to that very specialised resource, which could only be appropriated through direct control of government power at high levels. So the various gentlemen's agreements which had existed between the competing political clans since the end of the Kayibanda regime started to melt down as the resources shrank and internal power struggles intensified. (Prunier, 1995; p. 84)

With such a variety of pressures in 1988 – commodity prices falling, internal and external pressures to democratize, the militarization of Tutsi refugees, and the looming loss of political power – rivalries within the akazu became more heated. Already there were splits between moderate and hardliner Hutu. This culminated in the murder of Habyarimana's right-hand man (and probable successor) Colonel Stanislas Mayuga. The assassin, a (rare) Tutsi army major by name of Baroli, was also assassinated soon after, as was the lawyer in charge of prosecuting the

case. Fearing for his life as well, Mayuga's brother, Pasteur Bizamungu, also head of the government-owned corporation ELECTROGAZ, fled the country. Although Hutu, he later joined the RPF and returned as Rwanda's first post-genocide president (Strizek, 2003; p. 16-17). The objects of power and wealth belonging to the akazu were becoming threatened, and rivalry within the group escalated to violence within. Habyarimana's regime was desperate to transfer this rivalry to an outside group in order to retain "peace" and political power.

### *The RPF Invasion*

Encouraged by democratization processes and also by the many crises plaguing Habyarimana's regime, the RPF was seriously preparing for invasion. The Habyarimana regime was aware of these preparations and took political measures in the hopes of drawing down support for the RPF. One of the measures was the revival of the *Commission Spéciale sur les problèmes des émigrés Rwandais* (Special Commission on the Problems of Rwandan Refugees) which drafted a pilot repatriation plan set to begin in November of 1990. The RPF accelerated their war preparations in response, concerned that their supporters would abandon a military response in light of peaceful repatriation efforts (Jones, 2001; p. 32). Having experienced leadership and arms (both thanks to the Ugandan army) and money (through fundraising efforts among exiled Tutsi in Africa, Europe, America and even Hutu business interests opposing Habyarimana) the RPF invaded northern Rwanda on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1990 (Prunier, 1995; p. 90 - 102). This was the time for the subjects (actually former models) to (re)claim the object of political power and homeland from a weakened model (and former subjects).

During this invasion, however, the RPF leader, Fred Rwigyema, was reportedly murdered by a sub-commander during an argument over strategy (Kinzer, 2008; p. 291); morale weakened and the invasion was repulsed. After regrouping the RPF invaded again in January of 1991 and an attack on Ruhengeri not only netted weaponry and the freeing of sympathetic prisoners (including Lizinde), but also struck a blow to the heart of Habyarimana's power base. Recruiting efforts intensified on both sides, but the FAR was not successful in dislodging the RPF. By early 1992 the RPF occupied a significant portion of the northern part of Rwanda including the "breadbasket" agricultural area of Byumba. The occupation of this particular area was crucial: "[its] economic and financial impact on the Rwandan state was perhaps more important than the simple military loss" (Jones, 2001; p.32). In addition, by April of 1992, Habyarimana formally



introduced a coalition government in response to international and domestic pressures. By June the Habyarimana regime agreed to begin formal peace talks; these talks began in Arusha in July of 1992.

At this point war efforts subsided and political efforts gained strength; the formal talks consisted of several “phases” and stretched over thirteen months, and moved between Arusha, Tanzania, Kampala Uganda and Kigali, Rwanda. The negotiations were notable for the incorporation of both formal and informal negotiations, truly neutral parties (the United States for example), the Vatican (very informally), neighboring countries (who had great stake in the refugee problems), the UN, and representatives not only of the Government of Rwanda and the RPF, but the fledgling political parties as well:

The Arusha peace process, launched in June 1992, is an extraordinary story of a sophisticated conflict resolution process gone disastrously wrong. The process itself was deliberate, inclusive, communicative, informed by cogent analysis, and supported by a range of external parties, many of whom cooperated beyond what might have been expected. The end result was celebrated in the region and by some participants as the framework for a “new order” in Rwanda: a comprehensive agreement that went beyond the traditional *settlement* of conflict and made real inroads into *resolving* some of the underlying tensions that had sparked the civil war. (Jones, 2001; p. 69)

A detailed analysis of these proceedings is beyond the scope of this section, and has been covered in other publications (Stettenheim, 2000). Three important characteristics should be noted, however: the differences in professionalism between the Rwandan government negotiators and the RPF team, the exclusion of the CDR from any power holding position in the transitional government, and the 50-50 power split in the new national army. First, many observers noted that the RPF negotiators “were extremely disciplined and effective”, “well equipped with cellular telecommunications” (allowing private negotiations of their agenda), and showing “a high level of RPF commitment to the process” (Jones, 2001; p. 72 – 73). In contrast the Government of Rwanda was “divided, undisciplined and ineffective as a negotiating team”, “was often placed in the position of having to communicate with Kigali via the public payphone”, and demonstrated “insincerity” in the negotiations (Jones, 2001; p. 72 – 73). The rivalries amongst the “models” were visible and put them in a position of disadvantage as compared to the highly motivated “subjects.”

Second, as the talks proceeded, the CDR was excluded from holding any positions of power in the new/transitional government, despite lobbying on the behalf of such inclusion by the Rwandan government, the French and even the United States. The latter two recognized the extremist views of the CDR, but argued that it was much safer to keep the CDR inside any new government rather “than on the outside where it could wreak havoc” (Jones, 2001, p. 81). On this point the CDR lost and was entirely excluded from the presidency, prime minister, or any cabinet posts in the transitional government. Madame Agathe and her clan were out, except for *one* seat in the new assembly (compared to eleven seats *each* for the RPF, the MRND, and three other parties) which they announced no intention of occupying (Jones, 2001; p. 81 – 82). In Girardian terms, not only had the models lost the object (power) entirely, the object was practically “given” to the subjects by outside decision makers.

Third, in early February of 1993, shortly after the above negotiations, anti-peace process demonstrations broke out particularly in the provinces of Ruhengeri and Gisenyi. Several hundred Tutsi were killed. Looking at this in a Girardian light, areas giving Habyarimana greatest support (and with the most to lose) were early in striking out against the scapegoat, in actuality imitating the same violence (deadly attacks) that they feared would be visited upon them if the scapegoat was not eliminated. This prompted an escalation on the part of the RPF, who then launched another major offensive which got within 15 miles of Kigali, having gained control of about one-third of Rwanda’s territory. It was also a chance to demonstrate the superior firepower of RPF forces. At this point France intervened militarily on behalf of Habyarimana’s administration, due to a long standing mutual defense agreement between the two countries, and in March the RPF returned to its pre-offensive lines as a condition of returning to political negotiations. Their formerly captured territory then became a UN-patrolled Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) (Jones, 1997).

From their position of recently-demonstrated military strength, the RPF were able to negotiate the combining of armed forces into one national army also to their favor. On August 4, 1993 this last plank of the Arusha peace process was signed, giving the RPF concessions of a 50-50 split on power holding extending to field command levels, in a national army 13,000 strong with a gendarmerie of 6,000. The negotiations also resulted in about 600 RPF troops being left in Kigali with the task of protecting Tutsi politicians, as the government transitioned to the political and military Hutu-Tutsi power sharing arrangements as agreed upon at the Arusha

Accords. It was also agreed that a “Neutral International Force” should be deployed to assist in securing the peace and power-sharing agreements. The UN Assistance Mission to Rwanda (UNAMIR) was formed and deployed in October of 1993. Armed forces actions were held in check; negotiations in Arusha continued, but social unrest increased, spurred on by the infamous government-sponsored anti-Tutsi newspaper *Kangura* and RTLM radio broadcasts (Jones, 1997).

On April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1994 Habyarimana signed the Arusha Accords; that evening he returned to Kigali on his private jet. That night his jet was shot down as it approached Kigali airport, killing both Habyarimana and the Hutu President of Burundi, Cyprien Ntaryamira (as well as all others on board). This assassination (perpetrators unknown) was the spark used by extremist Hutu to explode the country into a well planned, rapid and brutal genocide. In approximately 100 days between 500,000 and 1 million (estimates vary) persons died, often at the hands of neighbors and relatives, as is well documented in many other sources (Dallaire, 2003; Gourevitch, 1998; Keane, 1995; Prunier, 1995; etc.) UNAMIR troops were poorly supported during the genocide, and other countries were reluctant to intervene (Jones, 1997; Melvern, 2004).

This chapter examined some of the influential events of 1990 – 1994, the years preceding the genocide. The prices of two main exports, coffee and tin fell worldwide. The Soviet Union collapsed, ending Cold War interests, and swiftly external pressures to democratize were tied to continuing foreign aid. Previously conquered enemies were now armed invaders given a seat at the negotiating table, and ultimately access to both the political and military power once the exclusive domain of the president’s inner circle. These events led to tremendous pressures and the loss of political power (and thus access to lucrative incomes) for the akazu. In keeping with the ideas of mimetic rivalry and the scapegoat mechanism as detailed by René Girard, contentious rivalries escalated within the Hutu ruling party prior to the release of violence against the Tutsi. Competition within the group did increase, resulting first in accusations through popular media against an innocent, though convenient, mythically “foreign” enemy, and ultimately, genocide.

## Chapter 4: What Can Girard Add to the Body of Knowledge Concerning the 1994 Rwandan Genocide? And What's Next?

Today, one cannot say “Rwanda”, without explicitly or implicitly referencing the genocide. It is as much a part of the word “Rwanda”, as is its location in Africa. The historical accounts of both Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrate how instances of mimetic rivalry, and its escalation into terrible violence, can be drawn out of the history of Rwanda, particularly the inter-Hutu rivalries of 1990 – 1994 that resulted in genocide. Woven throughout both chapters is commentary pointing out how political behaviors of both the early-Tutsi and later-Hutu leadership fit Girardian patterns of mimetic desire, rivalry, and scapegoating.

Early Tutsi “invaders” captured power through the use of cattle as an object of desire controlled by Tutsi elite; they regularly deployed tactics of power (including scapegoating through expansion of the kingdom to resolve tensions between court families) to maintain a social distance between themselves and the “indigenous” Hutu. Having gained the support of the colonizing powers, the myth of Tutsi superiority was codified in identity cards that classified by a partly genetic, partly socially constructed idea of “ethnicity.” In the mid-century wave of European colonies gaining independence, the majority Hutu at last gained political power. The first ruling group was from the geographical south of Rwanda; after the 1973 coup power holding moved to a group of northern-born Hutu. Both Hutu groups mimicked their former oppressors in the legal discrimination and sometimes violent treatment of Tutsi *and* each other.

With economic and democratization pressures being brought to bear on the ruling Hutu elite, which resulted in a loss of income and status for them, the northern group began to splinter. This caused infighting plus imprisonment and assassinations – even of the president’s own close compatriot – as well as of moderate Hutu and others who spoke out. Responses to internal and external pressures to implement a multiparty democracy, and its accompanying liberalization of media channels, led to an elite-controlled media campaign. This campaign used language and images to access old myths of Tutsi goals of domination with the goal of stirring up fear of and hatred towards Hutu, thus preparing the society for the ultimate scapegoating – genocide – of Tutsi.

Again and again mimetic rivalries resulted in the scapegoating and destruction of an identified “other” – through early subjugation of Hutu, the expansion of the Tutsi kingdom at

Hutu expense, and the double-double scapegoating and genocide of Tutsi by Hutu, by which the Hutu became everything they accuse the Tutsi of being.

### *What Girard Offers*

Dozens of explanations have been published in efforts to account for or explain human behavior during the genocide, ultimately repeating the age-old question as posed by Scott Straus in his book *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power and War in Rwanda*: “[w]hy did people kill...and why was the violence on such large scale”? (Straus, 2006; p. xi). Straus acknowledges that other authors have proposed many ideas as to why the genocide occurred: “[h]uman rights activists showed that particular leaders planned the violence. Historians showed the deep roots of identity. Propaganda was a fascination. But how specifically did all this relate to the actual violence”? (Straus, 2006; p. x). Girard provides an “answer” by relating the violence to desire; violence is a perversion of our desire – the desire for *being*, resulting from the soul’s separation from God. This longing is turned toward others (models) in the group, who are perceived as having *being*. Within the group, individuals imitate each other in an attempt to gain being. When mimetic desire becomes rivalrous group cohesion is endangered, thus violence is transferred to the scapegoat – a constructed “other.”

Several authors analyze the effects of Western policies (Barnett, 2002; Klinghoffer, 1998) including colonialism (Mamdani, 2001). Colonial policies certainly exacerbated and codified ethnic differences in Rwanda, but it’s important to note that an historical analysis (Chapter 2) shows that ethnicities were already well defined *before* German contact in 1896. There were already categorizations of Tutsi and Hutu, complete with characteristics (Tutsi as more intelligent, destined to hold power, wealthy; Hutu as less intelligent, peasant workers, needing to be cared for) and supporting mythologies (mostly authored by Tutsi, as a means of maintaining power over the Hutu). Colonialism by itself cannot be blamed for the genocide. Girard’s ideas give explanation for the violence that occurred before and after colonialism, as well as after independence when political power shifted from the minority Tutsi to the majority Hutu.

Another category of books (Cohen, 2007; Melvern, 2009) seeks to explain how the genocide was “allowed” to happen by looking at the efforts – or lack thereof – of Western governments. In *One Hundred Days of Silence: America and the Rwanda Genocide* Jared Cohen

examines both political and cultural factors playing into U.S. decision making processes before and during the genocide, specifically naming the loss of American soldiers and the failure of Operation Gothic Serpent in Somalia (of *Black Hawk Down* movie fame) and celebrity incidents (OJ Simpson's arrest, the death of Kurt Cobain) that competed with Rwanda for public interest. Cohen names both those who could have made efforts to intervene but chose not to (Bill Clinton) as well as those who did make efforts (Prudence Bushnell). But these studies neither address the 1990 – 1994 time period, nor explain why scapegoating/genocide became a political solution, fully supported through the Hutu regime's use of mass media channels to prioritize ethnic differences. Girard's ideas do speak to the "why" of that prioritizing and use of violence to "resolve" problems.

The books mentioned above as well as many others reviewed for this research cover various dimensions of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and together have contributed greatly to a broad understanding of the multitude of factors involved. Yet, all have implicit the underlying assumption that *the violence was a failure of* particular agents and organizations. This thesis does benefit from the above particulars, but adds to them with a Girardian approach that seeks an explanation based on the *source* of violence in society, as developed through mimetic rivalry and scapegoating. Using that perspective, governments, political organizations, etc. become attempts to contain, mitigate, and channel this rivalry – unsuccessfully in the case of 1994 Rwanda. In the Girardian universe violence is not a part of politics; rather, politics is a part of violence. The violence erupts when channels to contain or redirect it fail, or when rivalry in the social group reaches a critical point necessitating the transfer of violence to a scapegoat.

Critical to this transfer of violence during Rwanda's genocide was the role of media. Both radio and print were used by agents (political parties) of those in power to drum up a frenzy of suspicion and dislike of Tutsi among ordinary Hutu. In his book *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* Dr. William E. Connolly proposes that identities form, not just in attachments to similarities, but in relation to differences. He incorporates theism's "problem of evil", which he divides into two parts. The first part contains theology's efforts to maintain an all-powerful, all-good Supreme Being that is "exempt" from the responsibility of evil events on earth. The second part, says Connolly, is where the solution to the first part come into play via "diverse political tactics through which doubts about self-identity are posed and resolved by the constitution of an other against which that identity may define

itself ...” and “... to confess a particular identity is also to belong to difference” (Connolly, 1991; p. ix-x, p. xiv). In short: “[i]t is the proclivity to marginalize or demonize difference to sanctify the identity you confess” (p. xv).

Considering these ideas in light of pre-genocidal Hutu politics, what is immediately thrown into relief is the use of the RTLM and the Kangura newspaper to spread hate propaganda. The Hutu identity relied in large part on their *historical* differences with the Tutsi, *in particular the differences in the distribution of power*. Even *after* the majority Hutu gained political power in 1959, they continued to nurture this sense of threat to themselves by the Tutsi. As part of this identity, whenever Hutu were killed in any number by Tutsi (between 1959 and 1994), it was surely a resurrection of the old power relationships – the Tutsi seeking to again gain domination over the Hutu. In contrast, when Hutu killed Tutsi, it was a matter of defending themselves against attempts at domination.

While it is certainly valid to focus on the knowledge, construction and deployment of identities, what is once again missing is *why* these identities form in the first place. Girardian thought again offers an explanation: desire for being, expressed in society as mimetic desire, *forms* identity through imitation of a model, which necessarily rejects other models (differences). Violence erupts when difference (social distance) *between the subject and model* disintegrates; *not* in relation to those not imitated. This is clearly seen in Rwanda prior to the genocide. Democratization pressures in particular were lessening the social distances between the northern, clan-based ruling Hutu party and southern Hutu, who were eager to form opposition *Hutu* political parties. It was not a situation of Hutu versus Tutsi directly, but of Hutu versus Hutu and violence transferred to Tutsi.

Tangential, but perhaps important is a mention of Western perceptions of Rwandan ethnicities. At this point in time (2011), *in general*, when one considers the 1994 genocide, the Hutu are easily viewed as the “bad guys” and the Tutsi as the “good guys” who suffered terribly but were eventually victorious in wresting away power from their killers. Obviously this oversimplifies the situation. Throughout Rwanda’s history, however, the majority (84%) Hutu were under the political control of the minority (15%) Tutsi. The Tutsi controlled the political power, the land, and the resources (such as labor, cattle and agricultural harvests). The Tutsi in power were favored by the colonial powers as well, and cooperated with them in the exploitation of Hutu labor. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s embrace of self-determination, the calculus “should” have

resulted in political power and “justice” for the oppressed majority at the “expense” of the minority oppressor. But in 1994, the minority oppressor (so to speak) regains power – *with international support and sympathy* – and their post-1994 solution to these Hutu-Tutsi differences has been to cease acknowledging them at all – officially, everyone is now “Rwandan.”

What may indicate a storm gathering on Rwanda’s horizon, however, is the growing prominence of anti-Kagame rumblings (found on the internet by “googling” “anti-Kagame campaign”), including calls for international scrutiny of RPF actions during the 1990 – 1994 civil war, as well as investigation into the Kagame government’s involvement (supposedly based on ethnic ties) with neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo’s internal politics. So, is it “impossible” to be Rwandan? What is needed to build a “Rwandan” identity, and who needs to be the “other” to it? Will the majority Hutu again overcome rule by the minority Tutsi? Will historical myths once more be accessed to (re)build identities?

Returning to the focus of this research – a consideration of Girard’s ideas in pre-genocide Hutu politics – the Girardian view of identity formation would emphasize mimetic desire (as a social mechanism) as an inescapable aspect of constructing identity. For Girard, the “object” might *be* identity, and the mimetic rivalry concerned with who possesses and propagates it. Propagation of identity does have power behind it. In Foucauldian terms power is not necessarily a repressive force emanating from an authority, but can be a productive force, circulating, throughout society. It is omnipresent and multifaceted. Also present is the idea of the state *as a body*, needing *power* for its survival, and the exercise of power in the interest of fostering life can have a dark side indeed. When what is at stake is life itself, most actions that have the aim of protecting that life can be justified and carried out with impunity. Here is where Foucault connects to genocide. If the “body” of the state feels itself or its quality of life threatened, it is “justified” in excising the threat to its health much like a person would have a cancer removed. If a people group is identified as the threat to the “life of the state”, it can be eradicated with impunity (genocide).

For Girard the threat to the “body” does not come from outside, but from *within the body itself*, a perversion of human desire for being, and the violence that would destroy the body is then deflected to an exterior organism. This exterior organism – the scapegoat – is given the



perceived power to “infect” – as well as, by its elimination – the power to cure. Violence is inflicted upon an “other” to cure disease originating *within* the body.

Girard actually distances himself from these ideas of Modernity, about which he says the old “inert, passive” obstacles deriving from religious and cultural prohibitions are not done away with, but are replaced by the “active, mobile, and fierce” obstacle of mimetic desire. He categorizes Foucault’s ideas of power as merely a *changement* of the tactics of mimesis, not an elimination of the obstacle: “they replace the myth of prohibition with one that invokes an omnipresent and omniscient ‘power’” (1987; p. 286). Addressing Modernity’s view of desire, Girard says:

[m]odern people still fondly imagine that their discomfort and unease is a product of the straight-jacket that religious taboos, cultural prohibitions and, in our day, the legal forms of protection guaranteed by the judiciary system placed upon desire. They think that once this confinement is over, desire will be able to blossom forth; its wonderful innocence will finally be able to bear fruit.

None of this is true. To the extent that desire does away with the external obstacles that traditional society uses to keep it from spreading ... the living obstacle of the model that is transformed into a rival – can very advantageously, or rather disadvantageously, take the place of the prohibition that no longer works...

In place of this obstacle established by religious prohibition, they have to reckon increasingly with the model metamorphosed into rival, interested in personally crossing them and well-equipped to do so (p. 285-286).

...Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud... merely offer us scapegoats [of bourgeoisie, capitalists, slave morality, the resentment of ‘others’]... people are tempted to multiply the innocent victims, to kill all the enemies of the nation or the class, to stamp out what remains of religion, or the family as the origins of all forms of ‘repression’, and to sing the praises of murder and madness as the only true forces of ‘liberation’. (1987; p. 287)

Once social distances (Foucault’s prohibitions) are shortened or eliminated, the model becomes an actual rival and obstacle to the subject’s acquisition of the object. The prohibitors themselves become the scapegoats, but desire and rivalry remains between subject and model.

Originating in literature and passing into anthropology and other social sciences, Girard’s ideas offer valuable consideration for politics. They are not without criticism, however, and the next sections examine these.

### *Criticisms of Girard's ideas*

It seems Girard's ideas have received criticism from two main areas: his interpretation of Biblical texts, and his lack of accounting for the benefits of positive mimesis. These criticisms tend to be confined to the theology/religion academic disciplines. One example would be Dr. Robert M. Price, who in his 2000 book *Deconstructing Jesus* basically agrees with Girard's premises but picks a bone with his conclusions concerning the Gospel account of the crucifixion being the "break" from the cycle of mimetic rivalry. Price proposes that a consistently applied Girardian ethic would reveal the Gospels themselves as myth. He suggests that perhaps Girard is projecting his (Girard's) own ideas onto a particular reading of the Gospels (Price, 2000; p. 169-211), in effect crafting a *logos*-based circular argument type of informal fallacy.

In his online blog Boston University history professor, Richard Landes, takes issue with Girard's claim that Jesus was innocent. He writes that Girard uses the term "Christ" – not Jesus – and is working with the "myth of the Christ" rather than the real person of Jesus, who was not innocent at all in the eyes of those in power at the time. Indeed, says Landes, the Romans viewed him as a dangerous division maker, a disturber of the *pax romana*, "whose peace the Romans nailed down, literally, with crucifixion" (Landes, 2008).

Other critics point to Girard's lack of a role for *positive* mimesis. In her article "Transforming Space: Creativity, Destruction, and Mimesis in Winnicott and Girard" Martha Reineke, a religion professor at the University of Northern Iowa, looks at the work of British psychoanalyst J. W. Winnicott as compared to Girard's ideas of mimetic rivalry. Winnicott "[argued] for the positive role of aggression in processes of infant and child maturation" and that "[a]ggression precedes and founds the human capacity for creativity and relationships" (Reineke, 2007; p. 79). She suggests strengthening Girardian thought by developing a role for positive mimesis within it.

Since one of the purposes of this thesis is to move Girard's ideas into the field of political science, it's important to be aware of criticisms and potential weaknesses in the ideas of Girard. The criticisms concerning Biblical interpretations and positive mimesis, however, may not be of great concern here. For the most part, international relations scholars don't fret about "how many angels are dancing on the head of a pin", but instead are concerned with which angels are engaging the others violently and why.

### *Take Away: Girard's usefulness to Political Science*

As mentioned, many authors have tried to “explain” the genocide (Cohen, 2007; Jones, 1997; Klinghoffer, 1998; Krosiak, 2008), and still, it is not clear what the international community should “take away” from the event. There are the obvious lessons: international donors should keep careful track of the wealth – in any form – transferred to authoritarian leaders, and insure that the wealth does not become concentrated in the hands of a few for political expediency. This could help prevent wealth from becoming an object. Of course human rights should be promoted and closely monitored along with multi-party systems with viable candidates. Perhaps these can be tied to continuing aid as well.

But when a problem between groups is brought to international attention, it might be useful to incorporate a Girardian approach, and make efforts to discern whether there is division or conflict, that could possibly escalate to violence against a scapegoat, *within* the complainant parties. Naming the victimage mechanism as such and refusing to participate in it negates it by bringing to light the false charges being brought to bear against the innocent. Once identified, work could then be directed towards identifying the true source of unrest in the group, and efforts directed towards resolving them; incidents of violence could then be diminished or avoided.

As long as there are three humans remaining on earth, most likely conflict will remain as well. One will be the model, the second, the subject, and the third, a scapegoat. There will always be objects. When conflict does erupt, perhaps Girard can offer a way to “short circuit” potential mass killings by looking for the *true* source of conflict *within the group* bringing a complaint against another.

### *What Next? Some Thoughts for Future Research*

In regards to further applications of Girard to Rwanda, an examination of “cattle as object” would be of interest, as would a Girardian study of French actions in Rwanda, in light of long-standing French-Anglo-Saxon rivalries.

In regards to the Middle East, how can Girardian thought explain the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, whose death sparked regime change in Tunisia and the spread of unrest across many other Arab states? Have Girard's ideas been applied to Middle East tensions at all?

Totally unrelated but with appeal would be a historical study of King Henry the VIII and his friend, Thomas More. With King Henry as a past “Defender of the Faith” and More as an exemplary upholder of it, did Henry essentially “destroy the model” by sentencing More to death?

In addition some other studies concerning Girard and Foucault could be pursued. First, reading more from Foucauldians on the 1994 Rwandan genocide would be of interest. There is a growing body of literature in that regard (McNamee, 2007). Second, I came across Jean Hatzfeld’s 2005 book *Machete Season: The Killers in Rwanda Speak* which is a collection of interviews with genocide perpetrators. I was immediately struck by the many instances of silence on the part of the victims as reported by the killers. The killers were surprised that, in the final moment, many victims did not cry out, or even pray. This reminded me of Foucault’s discussion of power relations, and how everyone agrees to “play the game”, but that participation is voluntary and even in the most severe circumstances (his example was a government threatening death if an individual did not give up information) an individual can choose not to participate in the power game anymore by literally choosing death. This would make an interesting project, a Foucauldian analysis of that particular phenomenon in Rwanda. And finally, both Foucault and Girard address desire, albeit in very different ways. It would be worth investigating more fully the similarities and differences therein.

Opening political science’s door to Girard offers many interesting possibilities, and I hope other scholars in the discipline will take up incorporation and development of his ideas as well.

### *Conclusion*

The ideas of Girard have disseminated throughout the academic disciplines of literature, theology, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, and psychology, but uptake in the field of political science has been slower, despite the obvious fertile ground for application to politics, perhaps because of a lack of familiarity with Girard’s work. This is changing, and there are a few political scientists (Praeg, 2008; Scott, 2009) working to bring Girard’s ideas into the discipline. The 1994 genocide in Rwanda was a particularly brutal and efficient mass murder – an estimated one million Tutsi killed by Hutu gun or machete in just 100 days – and was remarkable as well for the lack of international involvement. Many countries, led by the United States, worked to

characterize the “conflict” as a “civil war” rather than as genocide, thus absolving them from taking action under the 1948 U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Thus “Never Again” happened once more as the world stood by and watched.

Afterwards many writers in trying to answer the question “Why?” pointed fingers at Tutsi-Hutu ethnic rivalries, exacerbated by colonialism. Taking a Girardian approach, however, reveals that a cauldron of tensions among the Hutu power holders bubbled up just prior to the genocide. What astounds is their intimate level. Yes, there was a geographical North-versus-South Hutu rivalry, but there was also a North-versus-North sector, divided along family lines according to who was married/related to the assassinated president and who was not.

What does this mean to present politics? Are we doomed to witness the repetition of mass killings as communities seek to quell their inner unrest by scapegoating innocent populations? With recent tensions flaring in Islamic-ruled nations in the Middle East, will new leaders call for war against Israel as a way to revive pan-Arabism? Are West-East ideologies doomed to forever be the tinder for ever-escalating violence?

Perhaps, says Girard, who puts forth in his most recent book *Achever Clausewitz* (English title, *Battling to the End*, 2010) that we may be in the apocalypse now, hurtling towards a final Armageddon. But there is an escape: if scapegoating is named for what it is – the transfer of inter-group violence to an innocent – it loses its power to quell inter-group conflict by revealing that the scapegoat is *not* the cause of the group’s conflict. And perhaps this is what political scientists – and policymakers – need to look for: what is the *inter-group* source of conflict in the community at question? Next time, name the source beforehand, and maybe “Never Again” will *really* mean it.

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