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**Mahmood Mamdani: When Victims Become Killers**

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## Thinking about Genocide

I VISITED Rwanda roughly a year after the genocide. On July 22, 1995, I went to Ntarama, about an hour and a half by car from Kigali, on a dirt road going south toward the Burundi border. We arrived at a village church, made of brick and covered with iron sheets. Outside there was a wood and bamboo rack, bearing skulls. On the ground were assorted bones, collected and pressed together inside sacks, but sticking out of their torn cloth. The guard explained that the bones had been gathered from the neighborhood. A veteran of similar sites in the Luwero Triangle in Uganda roughly a decade ago, I felt a sense of déjà vu. Even if the numbers of skulls and sacks were greater in quantity than I had ever seen at any one site, I was not new to witnessing the artifacts of political violence.

The church was about twenty by sixty feet. Inside, wooden planks were placed on stones. I supposed they were meant as benches. I peered inside and saw a pile of belongings—shoulder sacks, tattered clothing, a towel, a wooden box, a *suferia* (cooking pot), plastic mugs and plates, straw mats and hats—the worldly goods of the poor. Then, amidst it all, I saw bones, and then entire skeletons, each caught in the posture in which it had died. Even a year after the genocide, I thought the air smelled of blood, mixed with that of bones, clothing, earth—a human mildew.

I scanned the walls with their gaping holes. The guide explained these were made by the Interahamwe (youth militia of the ruling party) so they could throw grenades into the building. He said that those in the church were lucky. They died, almost instantly. Those outside had a protracted, brutal death, in some cases drawn out over as long as a week, with one part of the body cut daily.

I raised my eyes, away from the skeletons, to look at the church wall. Much of it was still covered with some old posters. They read like exhortations common to radical regimes with a developmental agenda, regimes that I was familiar with and had lived under for decades. One read: “Journée Internationale de la Femme.” And below it, was another, this time in bold: “ÉGALITÉ—PAIX—DÉVELOPPEMENT.”

I was introduced to a man called Callixte, a survivor of the massacre in Ntarama. “On the 7th of April [1994], in the morning,” he explained, “they started burning houses over there and moving towards here. Only a few were killed. The burning pushed us to this place. Our group decided to run to this place. We thought this was God’s house, no one would attack us here. On the 7th, 8th, up to the 10th, we were fighting them. We were using stones. They had *pangas* (machetes), spears, hammers, grenades. On the 10th, their numbers were increased. On the 14th, we were being pushed inside the church. The church was attacked on the 14th and the 15th. The actual killing was on the 15th.

“On the 15th, they brought Presidential Guards. They were supporting Interahamwe, brought in from neighboring communes. I was not in the group here. Here, there were women, children, and old men. The men had formed defense units outside. I was outside. Most men died fighting. When our defense was broken through, they came and killed everyone here. After that, they started hunting for those hiding in the hills. I and others ran to the swamp.”

I asked about his *secteur*, about how many lived in it, how many Tutsi, how many Hutu, who participated in the killing. “In my *secteur*, Hutu were two-thirds, Tutsi one-third. There were about 5,000 in our *secteur*. Of the 3,500 Hutu, all the men participated. It was like an order, except there were prominent leaders who would command. The rest followed.”

I asked whether there were no intermarriages in the *secteur*. “Too many. About one-third of Tutsi daughters would be married to Hutu. But Hutu daughters married to Tutsi men were only 1 per cent: Hutu didn’t want to marry their daughters to Tutsi who were poor and it was risky. Because the Tutsi were discriminated against, they didn’t want to give their daughters where there was no education, no jobs . . . risky. Prospects were better for Tutsi daughters marrying Hutu men. They would get better opportunities.

“Tutsi women married to Hutu were killed. I know only one who survived. The administration forced Hutu men to kill their Tutsi wives before they go to kill anyone else—to prove they were true Interahamwe. One man tried to refuse. He was told he must choose between the wife and himself. He then chose to save his own life. Another Hutu man rebuked him for having killed his Tutsi wife. That man was also killed. Kallisa—the man who was forced to kill his wife—is in jail. After killing his wife, he became a convert. He began to distribute grenades all around.

“The killing was planned, because some were given guns. During the war with the RPF, many young men were taken in the reserves and trained and given guns. Those coming from training would disassociate them-

selves from Tutsi. Some of my friends received training. When they returned, they were busy mobilizing others. They never came to see me. I am fifty-seven. Even people in their sixties joined in the killing, though they were not trained. The trained were Senior 6 or Technical School leavers.” I asked how such killers could have been his friends. “I was a friend to their fathers. It was a father-son relationship. I think the fathers must have known.”

Who were the killers in Ntarama? Units of the Presidential Guard came from Kigali. The Interahamwe were brought in from neighboring communes. Youth who had been trained in self-defense units after the civil war began provided the local trained force. But the truth is that everybody participated, at least all men. And not only men, women, too: cheering their men, participating in auxiliary roles, like the second line in a street-to-street battle.

NO ONE can say with certainty how many Tutsi were killed between March and July of 1994 in Rwanda. In the fateful one hundred days that followed the downing of the presidential plane—and the coup d'état thereafter—a section of the army and civilian leadership organized the Hutu majority to kill all Tutsi, even babies. In the process, they also killed not only the Hutu political opposition, but also many nonpolitical Hutu who showed reluctance to perform what was touted as a “national” duty. The estimates of those killed vary: between ten and fifty thousand Hutu, and between 500,000 and a million Tutsi.<sup>1</sup> Whereas the Hutu were killed as individuals, the Tutsi were killed as a group, recalling German designs to extinguish the country’s Jewish population. This explicit goal is why the killings of Tutsi between March and July of 1994 must be termed “genocide.” This single fact underlines a crucial similarity between the Rwandan genocide and the Nazi Holocaust.<sup>2</sup>

In the history of genocide, however, the Rwandan genocide raises a difficult political question. Unlike the Nazi Holocaust, the Rwandan genocide was not carried out from a distance, in remote concentration camps beyond national borders, in industrial killing camps operated by agents who often did no more than drop Zyklon B crystals into gas chambers from above. The Rwandan genocide was executed with the slash of machetes rather than the drop of crystals, with all the gruesome detail of a street murder rather than the bureaucratic efficiency of a mass extermination. The difference in technology is indicative of a more significant social difference. The technology of the holocaust allowed a few to kill many,

but the machete had to be wielded by a single pair of hands. It required not one but many hacks of a machete to kill even one person. With a machete, killing was hard work, that is why there were often several killers for every single victim. Whereas Nazis made every attempt to separate victims from perpetrators, the Rwandan genocide was very much an intimate affair. It was carried out by hundreds of thousands, perhaps even more, and witnessed by millions. In a private conversation in 1997, a minister in the Rwanda Patriotic Front–led government contrasted the two horrors: “In Germany, the Jews were taken out of their residences, moved to distant far away locations, and killed there, almost anonymously. In Rwanda, the government did not kill. It prepared the population, enraged it and enticed it. Your neighbors killed you.” And then he added, “In Germany, if the population participated in the killing, it was not directly but indirectly. If the neighbor’s son killed, it is because he joined the army.”<sup>3</sup>

The Rwandan genocide unfolded in just a hundred days. “It was not just a small group that killed and moved,” a political commissar in the police explained to me in Kigali in July 1995. “Because genocide was so extensive, there were killers in every locality—from ministers to peasants—for it to happen in so short a time and on such a large scale.” Opening the international conference on Genocide, Impunity and Accountability in Kigali in late 1995, the country’s president, Pasteur Bizimungu, spoke of “hundreds of thousands of criminals” evenly spread across the land:

Each village of this country has been affected by the tragedy, either because the whole population was mobilized to go and kill elsewhere, or because one section undertook or was pushed to hunt and kill their fellow villagers. The survey conducted in Kigali, Kibungo, Byumba, Gitarama and Butare Préfectures showed that genocide had been characterized by torture and utmost cruelty. About forty-eight methods of torture were used countrywide. They ranged from burying people alive in graves they had dug up themselves, to cutting and opening wombs of pregnant mothers. People were quartered, impaled or roasted to death.

On many occasions, death was the consequence of ablation of organs, such as the heart, from alive people. In some cases, victims had to pay fabulous amounts of money to the killers for a quick death. The brutality that characterised the genocide has been unprecedented.<sup>4</sup>

A political commissar in the army with whom I talked in July 1995 was one of the few willing to reflect over the moral dilemma involved in this situation. Puzzling over the difference between crimes committed by a minority of state functionaries and political violence by civilians, he re-

called: “When we captured Kigali, we thought we would face criminals in the state; instead, we faced a criminal population.” And then, as if reflecting on the other side of the dilemma, he added, “Kigali was half empty when we arrived. It was as if the RPF was an army of occupation.” His sense of ambiguity was born of the true moral and political dilemma of the genocide. Just pointing at the leadership of the genocide left the truly troubling question unanswered: How could this tiny group convince the majority to kill, or to acquiesce in the killing of, the minority?

The violence of the genocide was the result of both planning and participation. The agenda imposed from above became a gruesome reality to the extent it resonated with perspectives from below. Rather than accent one or the other side of this relationship and thereby arrive at either a state-centered or a society-centered explanation, a complete picture of the genocide needs to take both sides into account. For this was neither just a conspiracy from above that only needed enough time and suitable circumstance to mature, nor was it a popular *jacquerie* gone berserk. If the violence from below could not have spread without cultivation and direction from above, it is equally true that the conspiracy of the tiny fragment of *génocidaires* could not have succeeded had it not found resonance from below. The design from above involved a tiny minority and is easier to understand. The response and initiative from below involved multitudes and presents the true moral dilemma of the Rwandan genocide.

In sum, the Rwandan genocide poses a set of deeply troubling questions. Why did hundreds of thousands, those who had never before killed, take part in mass slaughter? Why did such a disproportionate number of the educated—not just members of the political elite but, as we shall see, civic leaders such as doctors, nurses, judges, human rights activists, and so on—play a leading role in the genocide? Similarly, why did places of shelter where victims expected sanctuary—churches, hospitals, and schools—turn into slaughterhouses where innocents were murdered in the tens and hundreds, and sometimes even thousands?

### THREE SILENCES: A STARTING POINT

Accounts of the genocide, whether academic or popular, suffer from three silences. The first concerns the *history* of genocide: many write as if genocide has no history and as if the Rwandan genocide had no precedent, even in this century replete with political violence. The Rwandan genocide thus appears as an anthropological oddity. For Africans, it turns into a Rwandan oddity; and for non-Africans, the aberration is Africa. For both,

the temptation is to dismiss Rwanda as exceptional. The second silence concerns the *agency* of the genocide: academic writings, in particular, have highlighted the design from above in a one-sided manner. They hesitate to acknowledge, much less explain, the participation—even initiative—from below.<sup>5</sup> When political analysis presents the genocide as exclusively a state project and ignores its subaltern and “popular” character, it tends to reduce the violence to a set of meaningless outbursts, ritualistic and bizarre, like some ancient primordial twitch come to life. The third silence concerns the *geography* of the genocide. Since the genocide happened within the boundaries of Rwanda, there is a widespread tendency to assume that it must also be an outcome of processes that unfolded within the same boundaries. A focus confined to Rwandan state boundaries inevitably translates into a silence about regional processes that fed the dynamic leading to the genocide.

We may agree that genocidal violence cannot be understood as rational; yet, we need to understand it as thinkable. Rather than run away from it, we need to realize that it is the “popularity” of the genocide that is its uniquely troubling aspect. In its social aspect, Hutu/Tutsi violence in the Rwandan genocide invites comparison with Hindu/Muslim violence at the time of the partition of colonial India. Neither can be explained as simply a state project. One shudders to put the words “popular” and “genocide” together, therefore I put “popularity” in quotation marks. And yet, one needs to explain the large-scale civilian involvement in the genocide. To do so is to contextualize it, to understand the logic of its development. My *main* objective in writing this book is to make the popular agency in the Rwandan genocide thinkable. To do so, I try to create a synthesis between history, geography, and politics. Instead of taking geography as a constant, as when one writes the history of a given geography, I let the thematic inquiry define its geographical scope at every step, even if this means shifting the geographical context from one historical period to another. By taking seriously the historical backdrop to political events, I hope to historicize both political choices and those who made these choices. If it is true that the choices were made from a historically limited menu, it is also the case that the identity of agents who made these choices was also forged within historically specific institutions. To benefit from a historically informed insight is not the same as to lapse into a politically irresponsible historicism. To explore the relationship between history and politics is to problematize the relationship between the historical legacy of colonialism and postcolonial politics. To those who think that I am



thereby trying to have my cake while eating it too, I can only point out that it is not possible to define the scope—and not just the limits—of action without taking into account historical legacies.

### COLONIALISM AND GENOCIDE

The genocidal impulse to eliminate an enemy may indeed be as old as organized power. Thus, God instructed his Old Testament disciples through Moses, saying:

Avenge the children of Israel of the Medianites: afterward shalt thou be gathered unto thy people. And Moses spake unto the people saying, Arm ye men from among you for the war, that they may go against Median, to execute the LORD's vengeance on Median. . . . And they warred against Median, as the LORD commanded Moses, and they slew every male. . . . And the children of Israel took captive the women of Median and their little ones; and all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods, they took for a prey. And all their cities in the places wherein they dwelt, and all their encampments, they burnt with fire. And they took all the spoil, and all the prey, both of man and of beast. . . . And Moses said unto them, Have you saved all the women alive? Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and so the plague was among the congregation of the LORD. Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. But all the women children that have not known man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves.<sup>6</sup>

If the genocidal impulse is as old as the organization of power, one may be tempted to think that all that has changed through history is the technology of genocide. Yet, it is not simply the technology of genocide that has changed through history, but surely also how that impulse is organized and its target defined. Before you can try and eliminate an enemy, you must first define that enemy. The definition of the political self and the political other has varied through history. The history of that variation is the history of political identities, be these religious, national, racial, or otherwise.

I argue that the Rwandan genocide needs to be thought through within the logic of colonialism. The horror of colonialism led to two types of genocidal impulses. The first was the genocide of the native by the settler.

It became a reality where the violence of colonial pacification took on extreme proportions. The second was the native impulse to eliminate the settler. Whereas the former was obviously despicable, the latter was not. The very political character of native violence made it difficult to think of it as an impulse to genocide. Because it was derivative of settler violence, the natives' violence appeared less of an outright aggression and more a self-defense in the face of continuing aggression. Faced with the violent denial of his humanity by the settler, the native's violence began as a counter to violence. It even seemed more like the affirmation of the native's humanity than the brutal extinction of life that it came to be. When the native killed the settler, it was violence by yesterday's victims. More of a culmination of anticolonial resistance than a direct assault on life and freedom, this violence of victims-turned-perpetrators always provoked a greater moral ambiguity than did the settlers' violence.

More than any other, two political theorists, Hannah Arendt and Frantz Fanon, have tried to think through these twin horrors of colonialism. We shall later see that when Hannah Arendt set out to understand the Nazi Holocaust, she put it in the context of a history of one kind of genocide: the settlers' genocide of the native. When Frantz Fanon came face-to-face with native violence, he understood its logic as that of an eye for an eye, a response to a prior violence, and not an invitation to fresh violence. It was for Fanon the violence to end violence, more like a utopian wish to close the chapter on colonial violence in the hope of heralding a new humanism.

### *Settlers' Genocide*

It is more or less a rule of thumb that the more Western settlement a colony experienced, the greater was the violence unleashed against the native population. The reason was simple: settler colonization led to land deprivation. Whereas the prototype of settler violence in the history of modern colonialism is the near-extirpation of Amerindians in the New World, the prototype of settler violence in the African colonies was the German annihilation of over 80 percent of the Herero population in the colony of German South West Africa in a single year, 1904.<sup>7</sup> Its context was Herero resistance to land and cattle appropriation by German settlers and their *Schutztruppe* allies. Faced with continuing armed resistance by the Herero, German opinion divided between two points of views, one championed by General Theodor Leutwein, who commanded the army in the colony, and the other by General Lothar von Trotha, who took over

the military command when General Leutwein failed to put down native resistance. The difference between them illuminates the range of political choice in a colonial context.

General Trotha explained the difference in a letter:

Now I have to ask myself how to end the war with the Hereros. The views of the Governor and also a few old Africa hands [*alte Afrikaner*] on the one hand, and my views on the other, differ completely. The first wanted to negotiate for some time already and regard the Herero nation as necessary labour material for the future development of the country. I believe that the nation as such should be annihilated, or, if this was not possible by tactical measures, have to be expelled from the country by operative means and further detailed treatment. This will be possible if the water-holes from Grootfontein to Gobabis are occupied. The constant movement of our troops will enable us to find the small groups of the nation who have moved back westwards and destroy them gradually.

Equally illuminating is General Trotha's rationale for the annihilation policy: "My intimate knowledge of many central African tribes (Bantu and others) has everywhere convinced me of the necessity that the Negro does not respect treaties but only brute force."<sup>8</sup>

The plan Trotha laid out in the letter is more or less the fate he meted to the Herero on the ground. To begin with, the army exterminated as many Herero as possible.<sup>9</sup> For those who fled, all escape routes except the one southeast to the Omeheke, a waterless sandveld in the Kalahari Desert, were blocked. The fleeing Herero were forcibly separated from their cattle and denied access to water holes, leaving them with but one option: to cross the desert into Botswana, in reality a march to death. This, indeed, is how the majority of the Herero perished. It was a fate of which the German general staff was well aware, as is clear from the following gleeful entry in its official publication, *Der Kampf*: "No efforts, no hardships were spared in order to deprive the enemy of his last reserves of resistance; like a half-dead animal he was hunted from water-hole to water-hole until he became a lethargic victim of the nature of his own country. The waterless Omaheke was to complete the work of the German arms: the annihilation of the Herero people."<sup>10</sup>

Lest the reader be tempted to dismiss General Lothar von Trotha as an improbable character come to life from the lunatic fringe of the German officer corps, one given a free hand in a distant and unimportant colony, I hasten to point out that the general had a distinguished record in the annals of colonial conquest, indeed the most likely reason he was chosen

to squash a protracted rebellion. Renowned for his brutal involvement in the suppression of the Chinese Boxer Rebellion in 1900, and a veteran of bloody suppression of African resistance to German occupation in Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanzania, General Trotha often enthused about his own methods of colonial warfare: “The exercise of violence with crass terrorism and even with gruesomeness was and is my policy. I destroy the African tribes with streams of blood and streams of money. Only following this cleansing can something new emerge, which will remain.”<sup>11</sup>

Opposition to Trotha’s annihilation policy had come from two sources: colonial officials who looked at the Herero as potential labor, and church officials who saw them as potential converts.<sup>12</sup> Eventually, the Herero who survived were gathered by the German army with the help of missionary societies and were put in concentration camps, also run by missionaries along with the German army. By 1908, inmates of these concentration camps were estimated at 15,000. Put to slave labor, overworked, hungry, and exposed to diseases such as typhoid and smallpox, more Herero men perished in these camps. Herero women, meanwhile, were turned into sex slaves. At the same time, those who survived were converted en masse to Christianity. When the camps were closed in 1908, the Herero were distributed as laborers among the settlers. Henceforth, all Herero over the age of seven were expected to carry around their necks a metal disk bearing their labor registration number.

The genocide of the Herero was the first genocide of the twentieth century. The links between it and the Holocaust go beyond the building of concentration camps and the execution of an annihilation policy and are worth exploring. It is surely of significance that when General Trotha wrote, as above, of destroying “African tribes with streams of blood,” he saw this as some kind of a Social Darwinist “cleansing” after which “something new” would “emerge.” It is also relevant that, when the general sought to distribute responsibility for the genocide, he accused the missions of inciting the Herero with images “of the bloodcurdling Jewish history of the Old Testament.”<sup>13</sup> It was also among the Herero in the concentration camps that the German geneticist, Eugen Fischer, first came to do his medical experiments on race, for which he used both Herero and mulatto offspring of Herero women and German men. Fischer later became chancellor of the University of Berlin, where he taught medicine to Nazi physicians. One of his prominent students was Josef Mengele, the notorious doctor who did unsavory genetic experiments on Jewish children at Auschwitz.<sup>14</sup> It seems to me that Hannah Arendt erred when she presumed a relatively uncomplicated relationship between settlers’

genocide in the colonies and the Nazi Holocaust at home: When Nazis set out to annihilate Jews, it is far more likely that they thought of themselves as natives, and Jews as settlers. Yet, there is a link that connects the genocide of the Herero and the Nazi Holocaust to the Rwandan genocide. That link is *race branding*, whereby it became possible not only to set a group apart as an enemy, but also to exterminate it with an easy conscience.

### *Natives' Genocide*

In the annals of colonial history, the natives' genocide never became a historical reality. Yet, it always hovered on the horizon as a historical possibility. None sensed it better than Frantz Fanon, whose writings now read like a foreboding. For Fanon, the native's violence was not life denying, but life affirming: "For he knows that he is not an animal; and it is precisely when he realizes his humanity that he begins to sharpen the weapons with which he will secure its victory."<sup>15</sup> What distinguished native violence from the violence of the settler, its saving grace, was that it was the violence of yesterday's victims who have turned around and decided to cast aside their victimhood and become masters of their own lives. "He of whom they have never stopped saying that the only language he understands is that of force, decides to give utterance by force." Indeed, "the argument the native chooses has been furnished by the settler, and by an ironic turning of the tables it is the native who now affirms that the colonialist understands nothing but force."<sup>16</sup> What affirmed the natives' humanity for Fanon was not that they were willing to take the settler's life, but that they were willing to risk their own: "The colonized man finds his freedom in and through violence."<sup>17</sup> If its outcome would be death, of settlers by natives, it would need to be understood as a derivative outcome, a result of a prior logic, the genocidal logic of colonial pacification and occupation infecting anticolonial resistance. "The settler's work is to make even dreams of liberty impossible for the native. The native's work is to imagine all possible methods for destroying the settler. . . . For the native, life can only spring up again out of the rotting corpse of the settler . . . for the colonized people, this violence, because it constitutes their only work, invests their character with positive and creative qualities. The practice of violence binds them together as a whole, since each individual forms a violent link in the great chain, a part of the great organism of violence which has surged upwards in reaction to the settler's violence in the beginning."<sup>18</sup>

The great crime of colonialism went beyond expropriating the native, the name it gave to the indigenous population. *The greater crime was to politicize indigeneity in the first place*: first negatively, as a settler libel of the native; but then positively, as a native response, as a self-assertion. The dialectic of the settler and the native did not end with colonialism and political independence. To understand the logic of genocide, I argue, it is necessary to think through the political world that colonialism set into motion. This was the world of the settler and the native, a world organized around a binary preoccupation that was as compelling as it was confining. It is in this context that Tutsi, a group with a privileged relationship to power before colonialism, got constructed as a privileged *alien settler* presence, first by the great nativist revolution of 1959, and then by Hutu Power propaganda after 1990.

In its motivation and construction, I argue that the Rwandan genocide needs to be understood as a natives' genocide. It was a genocide by those who saw themselves as sons—and daughters—of the soil, and their mission as one of clearing the soil of a threatening *alien* presence. This was not an “ethnic” but a “racial” cleansing, not a violence against one who is seen as a neighbor but against one who is seen as a foreigner; not a violence that targets a transgression across a boundary into home but one that seeks to eliminate a foreign presence from home soil, literally and physically. From this point of view, we need to distinguish between racial and ethnic violence: ethnic violence can result in massacres, but not genocide. Massacres are about transgressions, excess; genocide questions the very legitimacy of a presence as alien. For the Hutu who killed, the Tutsi was a settler, not a neighbor. Rather than take these identities as a given, as a starting point of analysis, I seek to ask: When and how was Hutu made into a native identity and Tutsi into a settler identity? The analytical challenge is to understand the historical dynamic through which Hutu and Tutsi came to be synonyms for native and settler. Before undertaking this analysis, however, I propose to discuss both how native and settler originated as political identities in the context of modern colonialism, and how the failure to transcend these identities is at the heart of the crisis of citizenship in postcolonial Africa.

## ORGANIZATION AND SCOPE

*Chapter One* elaborates the theoretical perspective that guided my research, at the same time as it got modified as I learned of new facts and relationships. I begin with the need to differentiate political identities

from cultural and market-based identities, so as to understand them as a direct consequence of the process of state formation. I focus on two forms of the colonial state in Africa. Characterized by direct and indirect rule, these state forms legally enforced race and ethnicity as two salient political identities. I also contrast the experience of Uganda and Congo, both the sites of indirect rule colonialism, with that of Rwanda, which Belgian rule turned into more of a halfway house between direct and indirect rule. Unlike in Uganda and Congo, colonial law in Rwanda recognized only race, and not ethnicity, as a political identity.

Studies on African politics have been relatively silent on the question of race, whereas a vigorous discussion has developed on that of ethnicity.<sup>19</sup> This discussion has swung from one extreme to another; the colonial pre-supposition that ethnicity was a primordial identity has given way to an instrumentalist notion that it is manipulated by special interests. The claim that political ethnicity is an outcome of elite manipulation resembles the nationalist conviction that ethnicity (“tribalism”) was no more than a colonial prejudice. I disagree with both the primordial and the instrumentalist notions. By understanding political identities as embedded in particular institutions, I conceptualize them as historical and not primordial, and institutionally durable as opposed to being available for instant manipulation by those in power or seeking power. By treating race and ethnicity as identities that are legally enforced and institutionally reproduced, I analyze both as political identities.

*Chapter Two* begins by tracing the long debate in Rwandan studies on the origins of Hutu and Tutsi. Why is it that contending positions in this debate—whether between colonial officials and nationalist intellectuals, or among church officials, or between different categories of “disinterested” scholars—have come to be identified with a Hutu versus a Tutsi position? Besides acknowledging important differences that mark the stakes in this contest, I argue that both share a common concern with facts of conquest and migration as central to understanding Rwandan history. More than anything else, this preoccupation with *origins* reflects how colonial power sketched the boundaries of colonial and postcolonial scholarship.

In contrast to this mainstream preoccupation in Rwandan studies, I discuss Hutu and Tutsi as political identities that have changed from one historical period to another, each period indicating a different phase in the institutional development of the Rwanda state. There can, thus, be no single answer to the question posed so often: Who is a Hutu and who is a Tutsi? True, the association of Tutsi with power, and with privilege underwritten by power, can be traced to the period before colonialism;

yet, this fact should not detract us from the critical change that takes place with the colonial period. It is Belgian reform of the colonial state in the decade from the mid-1920s to the mid-1930s that constructed Hutu as *indigenous* Bantu and Tutsi as *alien* Hamites. It is also Belgian colonialism that made for a political history in Rwanda different from that in standard indirect rule colonies, like Uganda and Congo, in tropical Africa.

*Chapter Three* traces the history that racialized the Hutu/Tutsi difference in Rwanda. It does this in two ways, first, as an ideological discourse, by tracing the notion of race to the grand colonial discourse—called the Hamitic hypothesis—which explained away every sign of civilization in tropical Africa as a foreign import, no doubt an appealing claim at a time when humanity in the black skin was being devalued through capture and exchange for commercial gain. And it does this, secondly, by showing how notions of racial difference got embedded in and reproduced through durable institutions, why it would take more than just an intellectual challenge to cast this legacy aside. What did it mean for the difference between Hutu and Tutsi to be *racialized* rather than to be *ethnicized*? What did it mean for Tutsi to be constructed as nonnatives, even if colonized, and thus occupy a contradictory middle ground between settler citizens and nativized subjects?

*Chapter Four* focuses on the revolution of 1959 and on the intellectuals who tended to eulogize it. Unlike some who write after the genocide of 1994 and caricature the Revolution, I take its social claims seriously. But unlike those who turn the social and economic record of the revolution as reason enough to embrace it, I turn to its political record to *problematize* the revolution. The single most important failure of the revolution was its inability to transform Hutu and Tutsi as political identities generated by the colonial power. If anything, the revolution built on and reinforced these identities in the name of justice. The underside of the Rwandan revolution, its political tragedy, was that this relentless pursuit of justice turned into a quest for revenge. That quest was the hallmark of the First Republic.

*Chapter Five* is concerned with the political record of the Second Republic, ushered into power in 1973 with the Habyarimana coup. I take a fresh look at the Second Republic through a single fact whose significance has gone unnoticed by most: the Second Republic redefined the Tutsi from a race to an ethnicity. The Habyarimana regime tried to join the First Republic's discussion of justice in the aftermath of the "Hutu Revolution" to the need for reconciliation to give the revolution a truly national character. In this context, it began a discussion of the Tutsi as an



indigenous ethnic group as opposed to a nonindigenous race, and of Tutsi rights as minority rights. But the more it tried to carve a niche for the “internal” Tutsi in the civil and political life of Rwanda, the more precarious became the situation of the “external” Tutsi—exiles from 1959, 1963, and 1973. The failure to address the citizenship demands of the “external” Tutsi marked the single most important failure of the Habyarimana regime. While the reconciliation pursued by the Second Republic softened the critique from the “internal” Tutsi, it tended, if anything, to exacerbate the critique from the “external” Tutsi.

*Chapter Six* focuses on postcolonial Uganda, the location from which the “external” Tutsi launched their critique in 1990. It is in Uganda, more than anywhere else, that the 1959 Tutsi exiles cast their lot with indigenous citizens who sought to reform the state inherited from colonialism, in the hope that the reformed state will give them political room to make a new home. As they reformed local power in “liberated” areas, the guerrillas of the National Resistance Army redefined the basis of citizenship from indigeneity to residence. In line with this revolutionary heritage, the victorious leadership of the post-1986 government redefined the requirement of citizenship from ancestry to a ten-year residence, thus extending citizenship to 1959 Tutsi exiles. The chapter explains how this remarkable innovation was jettisoned when the National Resistance Movement (NRM) faced its first political crisis in power. The decision to return to ancestry as the basis of citizenship was taken in August 1990 in the face of the Mawogola uprising; a month later, the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) crossed the border into Rwanda. I argue that the crossing needs to be understood as both an invasion of Rwanda and an armed repatriation from Uganda. With the repatriation, the NRM government exported its first political crisis to Rwanda, why the invasion needs to be understood as a confluence of a dual crisis of postcolonial citizenship, in both Rwanda and Uganda.

*Chapter Seven* is concerned with a single aspect of the political violence that developed in the aftermath of the civil war and grew into massacres that took on the proportions of genocide. My central concern is with *mass participation* in the Rwanda genocide. Defeat in the civil war provided the context for at least three different types of killings in Rwanda in the hundred days between January and April 1994: *first*, the killing of combatants (and civilians) on both sides, killings that were directly an outcome of the civil war; *second* the killing of Hutu by Hutu, whether for political reasons (as when Hutu nationalists killed “moderate” Hutu as RPF collaborators) or for social reasons (as when poor Hutu killed rich

ones and appropriated or redistributed their property); and *third*, the killing of Tutsi civilians by civilian Hutu mobs, whether or not organized by state authorities. The Rwanda genocide refers to the third type of killing, that of Tutsi by Hutu. It is this killing *alone* that is the focus of my concern. I begin with the understanding that the genocide was not a local but a Rwanda-wide affair. To be sure, there was a difference between localities, as there was between killers—those enthusiastic, those reluctant, and those coerced—but the killing was not a local affair. Too many experts on Rwanda have shied away from this troubling fact, the “popular” agency in the genocide, by casting the genocide as a state project and not also as a social project. To show how the unthinkable becomes thinkable is my central objective. It is this fact that needs confronting, not because of what it can tell us of Rwanda and Rwandans, but because of what it can tell us about ourselves as political beings—as agents with a capacity to tap both the destructive and the creative potential in politics.

*Chapter Eight* turns from Rwanda to Congo. The genocide gave birth to Tutsi Power in Rwanda, a power shaped by a diasporic sense of obligation for the welfare of all Tutsi globally. As with the crisis that engulfed Rwanda from 1990, it is the confluence of this external factor with the internal crisis of citizenship in postcolonial Congo that explains the growing crisis in eastern Congo after 1994. In tracing the historical thread to this crisis, and documenting its dimensions through interviews, I seek to press home a conclusion both intellectual and political. Just as when it first crossed the border from Uganda into Rwanda in 1990, the RPF’s second crossing, that from Rwanda into Congo in 1997, calls for a regional analysis to be understood.

The *Conclusion* returns to Rwanda as the epicenter of a regional crisis and argues that the political nature of the crisis demands a political solution, just as its regional manifestation calls for a regional approach. If the postcolonial pursuit of justice turned into revenge and built on the colonial legacy, one needs to be aware lest postgenocidal reconciliation also turns into an embrace of the colonial legacy. To steer clear of both horns of the dilemma, I argue for the need to rethink different forms of justice—victors’ justice and survivors’ justice—this time in the context of democracy, so as to recognize that each would build on and reinforce different political identities, and a different political future.