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Placing genocide in context: research priorities for the Rwandan genocide

TIMOTHY LONGMAN

Prior to 1994, the country of Rwanda was little known outside the limited circle of African studies scholars. A reference in conversation to Rwanda, a small, landlocked country with few natural resources and no strategic importance, was likely to be met with blank stares.[1] The 1994 genocide, however, has bestowed on Rwanda a new notoriety. The extensive press coverage of the genocide and its brutalities, and especially the television coverage of millions of refugees fleeing across the borders, brought Rwanda to the consciousness of much of the world, making it synonymous with violence and disaster. This notoriety has attracted the attention of numerous journalists and other researchers, but unfortunately, not all of the numerous texts on Rwanda that have appeared since the genocide add substantially to one's understanding of the country and the terrible tragedy that has taken place there. Few of the texts are based on rigorous empirical research. Many of them rely overwhelmingly on secondary sources, peppered with a smattering of impressionistic accounts and a small number of original interviews. Many of the recent rash of publications simply rehash myths and inaccuracies from earlier accounts of Rwanda that have long been disproved, serving more to obfuscate than to clarify the situation.

At the same time, some excellent scholarship is slowly appearing. Despite its international obscurity, Rwanda was long a welcoming place for scholars—easy to navigate because of its small size and good roads, with a temperate climate and a government that placed few restrictions on researchers. As a result, a rich body of scholarship on Rwanda has appeared over the last several decades. Among the numerous publications that have appeared on Rwanda since the genocide, a small number follow in this tradition of fine scholarship, drawing on extensive original research. A series of promising empirical studies are currently being carried out, mostly by PhD students. Yet much remains to be explored. The genocide was a complex and catastrophic event that cannot be explained with simplistic accounts.

This article will review literature of interest to those seeking to understand the

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Rwandan genocide and will suggest directions for future research. While I make no attempt to catalogue the numerous publications on the 1994 genocide, much less the vast array of scholarship on general Rwandan history, politics, society, and economy, I do attempt to suggest the works, both on the genocide and on Rwanda more broadly, that I believe are most useful as background for anyone setting out to conduct research on Rwanda. It is my contention that the genocide cannot be understood in isolation but must be studied in historical, cultural, and regional context. To understand the genocide, why it happened and how, one must have a thorough understanding of Rwanda's historical background and the social, economic, and political developments that took place in the decades prior to the violence. It is also important to understand the lasting effects of the genocide, as it continues to reverberate not only in Rwanda but in ongoing violence in Burundi and Congo. The research most needed now is not overly ambitious comprehensive analyses of the genocide that rehash the same secondary sources but sectoral, thematic, and local-level research that tests theories of genocide and adds new data, creating building blocks upon which a more complex and complete understanding of Rwanda's terrible tragedy can be constructed.

Background reading and historical research

In order to understand the genocide in Rwanda, it is essential to place the events of 1994 within a broader context. Although nearly everyone who looks at the Rwandan genocide acknowledges the centrality of history to the cataclysm, too many recent authors begin their analysis of Rwanda with the genocide and read backward into Rwandan history as though all of Rwanda's past was an inevitable march toward the disaster of 1994. In fact, Rwanda has enjoyed a long and complex history, and the development of ethnic identities and ethnic conflict is only one of many issues that are developed in the country's rich historiography. As I will discuss in the next section, not only do authors neglect the regional context, but they write about Rwanda as though it exists in geographical isolation, ignoring how recurrent violence in Burundi, political transition in Uganda, and state decay in Zaire all affected the country's internal politics.

It is beyond the scope of this article to review all of the historical research on Rwanda and comparative work on its neighbors. David Newbury, along with Catharine Newbury and Bishikwabo Chubaka, has already provided several useful summaries of historical research on Rwanda and has pointed out directions for future research (Newbury, 2001; Newbury and Newbury, 2000). Instead in this section my intention is to review a few of the key works on pre-genocide Rwanda that can provide background for scholars contemplating conducting research on the genocide and to highlight a few of the historical themes most relevant to the genocide that need additional attention.

The historiography of Rwanda, particularly historical analysis of the country's ethnic relations, has been highly politicized, and political considerations continue

to distort the analysis of Rwanda's past. Historical accounts written during the colonial period served to bolster the developing political and social systems of the increasingly centralized state, helping, among other things, to define and solidify ethnic identities (cf. de Lacger, 1939; Kagame, 1972; Maquet, 1961; Pages, 1933). The supposed conquest of Rwanda by the Tutsi was used to justify their domination over the Hutu majority. During the period of anti-Tutsi revolt at the end of colonial rule, the same inaccurate historical account—based more on political needs than on fact—was employed to justify revolution. The architects of the genocide ultimately drew on this same historical fantasy to encourage popular participation in anti-Tutsi violence. Pottier (2002) provides an excellent review of the changing interpretations of Rwandan history and national identity.

Since at least the 1960s, scholars have sought to revise the account of Rwandan history, seeking to move beyond the self-serving sources from the central court used as a basis for the earlier histories to develop a much more complex and less teleological account of the development of Rwandan state and society (cf. Rennie, 1972; Sanders, 1969; Vansina, 1962). In the aftermath of the genocide, however, the reaction against the previous historical account has led to further distortions of history, but in the opposite direction. The government put into place by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), the largely Tutsi rebel movement that took control of Rwanda and put an end to the genocide, has aggressively sought to revise how Rwandans understand their own history. Figures such as President Paul Kagame have emphasized the basic unity of Rwandans prior to the arrival of the Europeans and have contended that ethnic identity was purely a colonial creation. A number of scholars have also adopted this perspective, claiming that the terms "Hutu" and "Tutsi" had no significant meaning in pre-colonial Rwanda and blaming Rwanda's divisions primarily on the Germans and Belgians (cf. Chrétien, 1997; Gourevitch, 1998; Mamdani, 2001).[2]

Most historical accounts offer a more nuanced version of the development of ethnic identities in Rwanda. It rejects the idea that identities grew out of the immigration of wholly distinct groups, yet dates the emergence of ethnic identities before the arrival of the Europeans. Schoenbrun (1998), for example, brings together an impressive array of archeological, ecological, linguistic, and ethnographic sources to trace the history of the region that includes Rwanda prior to 1500. While demonstrating that cattle have been present in the region for 2000 years, thereby disproving the idea that Tutsi brought cattle to Rwanda in a mass migration, he does find that identities similar to ethnic identities have existed in the region for centuries (cf. p 94) and that hierarchical political and social arrangements organized around cattle and access to land—like the distinction between Hutu and Tutsi—have a long history in Rwanda (cf. 131–134). Vansina (2001) updates his previous work on the Kingdom of Rwanda, finding that, while the kingdom was created later than previously thought, some of the systems of inequality, such as cattle clientage, date further back in time than was previously believed. His claim that political conflicts in

late pre-colonial Rwanda took on an ethnic character is quite controversial and needs additional testing.

In fact, research on the historical development of ethnic identities remains among the most important projects for helping to understand the remote origins of genocide in Rwanda. Newbury's (1988) careful study of a century of political and social developments in Kinyaga in southwestern Rwanda is an excellent example of the sorts of research that would be most useful. She found that hierarchically differentiated ethnic identities were relatively recently established in Kinyaga, but that they predate the arrival of European colonizers. Unfortunately, research such as Newbury's will be difficult to replicate, because it is based in large part on witness testimony, and with each passing year, historical memory becomes shorter as potential witnesses pass away. Nevertheless, many witnesses remain who remember the colonial period, and they represent a largely untapped resource for understanding the changes in social relations in general and ethnicity in particular over the past century. The extensive written records from colonial administrators and missionaries could be further perused, and Schoenbrun and Vansina both demonstrate that possibilities for research on pre-colonial Rwanda are abundant, even if the search for sources requires imagination.

On the colonial period, in addition to Newbury (1988), essential background reading includes Lemarchand (1970), Linden and Linden (1977), Des Forges (1972), and Reyntjens (1985). Lemarchand's (1970) work is probably most relevant for understanding the genocide as his purpose is to understand why violence broke out in Rwanda at the time of independence and not in Burundi. Linden and Linden (1977) look at the role of the Catholic Church in Rwandan political developments throughout the colonial period. Also useful for this subject, though not as carefully researched, is Kalibwami (1991). Des Forges (1972) provides an excellent political history of the rise and fall of King Musinga. Finally, Reyntjens (1985) considers the development of Rwandan law from the time of Belgian colonial occupation through the first post-independence regime. Although these works provide a rich understanding of colonial Rwanda, given the degree to which colonialism has been invoked to explain the genocide, more work is needed that specifically looks at the development of ethnic identities, power relations, and attitudes toward violence.

Surprisingly little research has been conducted on post-colonial Rwandan politics and society. In line with the political priorities on economic development, particularly during the Habyarimana regime, much of the research conducted in Rwanda in the 1970s and 1980s focused on issues such as agricultural change, development projects, health, and the impact of overpopulation (cf. Pottier, 1993, 1996; Taylor, 1992). Beyond Lemarchand (1970), whose analysis includes only the first years after independence, and Reyntjens (1985), who looks at legal issues in the Kayibanda regime, the political developments and social changes in the First and Second Republics have received little attention. Reyntjens published several short articles on aspects of the Habyarimana regime, but no one has yet written a comprehensive analysis. Many writings on the

genocide have, in fact, treated the post-independence governments either quite simplistically as one-dimensional bigots whose only purpose was to carry out genocide or else as virtually irrelevant, since the genocide is treated as a legacy of colonial rule.

Considerable work needs to be carried out on a range of political and social issues during the post-colonial period. Work on the administrative structures and their political development could help to illuminate the institution that proved crucial to the implementation of the genocide. Research on other political institutions, such as political parties, could also be illuminating. Kimonyo (2003) begins his analysis of the role of political parties in the lead up to independence and under the Kayibanda regime and then during the period of the early 1990s when the country returned to multi-party democracy. A history of the single party under Habyarimana, the Mouvement Revolutionaire National pour la Démocratie (MRND), has not yet been written. In my own work, (Longman, forthcoming) I attempt to trace the development of church–state relations under Kayibanda and Habyarimana, but much more could be done on state–society relations. A history of ethnic politics since independence would be useful, since contrary to current presumptions, policies were not unremittingly and immutably focused on excluding and oppressing Tutsi. A study of ideology in the Habyarimana regime and how it came to focus increasingly on anti-Tutsi bigotry in the 1990s would be particularly useful.

Genocide research

Scholars seeking to conduct research on the 1994 Rwandan genocide benefit not only from the rich historical research available but from a number of studies of the genocide already published that serve as a basis upon which to build future research. Unfortunately, the most widely distributed books are not necessarily the most thoroughly researched, nor the most carefully analyzed, and they do not provide a good introduction to the genocide. Despite extensive research conducted in Rwanda, Gourevitch (1998), now widely assigned in classrooms, provides a biased analysis that remains impressionistic and episodic. Although beautifully written, Gourevitch demonstrates little understanding of Rwandan culture and history, treating the genocide as pre-programmed by colonialism and Hutu as inherently violent. Meanwhile, he treats the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), which was guilty of its own human rights abuses, entirely uncritically. Africa Rights (1995) provides a detailed analysis of the genocide, but readers should be highly cautious, as the research for the book was conducted quickly, without verification of the facts, and, as a result, details are often flawed. Like Gourevitch, African Rights is deeply influenced by the RPF regime, and its account reflects this influence. Mamdani (2001), also widely praised, provides a more sophisticated analysis, but it is based on little original research. Mamdani attacks the type of area studies research that has been carried out in Rwanda, even as he relies almost entirely on it for his sources. A number of other books include Rwanda in their analysis (cf. Peterson, 2001) but draw entirely on secondary

sources and often repeat mistakes made in earlier research. A growing number of first-hand accounts of the genocide, many by journalists (cf. Jennings, 2000; Keane, 1996) and a few from Rwandan survivors (cf. Mukagasana, 2001; Uzabakiliho, 2001), make compelling reading, but they tend to be overly sensationalistic and give an impressionistic account of events. A growing number of accounts by international actors in the Rwandan tragedy and its aftermath (cf. Goldstone, 2002; Kahn, 2001) are somewhat more useful because of the inside information they provide, but their overall analysis is sometimes weak. General Romeo Dallaire's (2003) memoir may prove particularly useful, given his key role. A substantial number of television and film documentaries on the genocide have appeared in the past decade providing a useful visual introduction to those unfamiliar with the Rwandan case but offer little of use to researchers. Nearly all of these journalistic and personal works provide a short summary of the context of the genocide, and nearly all of these summaries are teeming with errors. Those seeking an introduction to the genocide are better off turning to a more established Rwanda specialist.

The best analysis of the genocide is found in Des Forges (1999), based on interviews and archival research conducted over five years by an international team of researchers.[3] Des Forges provides extensive evidence of the organized nature of the genocide, and she carefully explains the ideology behind the killing, the administration of the genocide, and the quiescence of the international community. For those daunted by the size of Des Forges' text, Prunier (1995) also provides a useful analysis, though based primarily on secondary research. The analysis is best in discussing the RPF and the French government, subjects about which he had particular knowledge. Guichaoua (1995) is an extremely useful collection of essays and data on both Rwanda and Burundi. Reyntjens (1994) was completed just prior to the genocide, but it provides an excellent analysis comparing the build-up to violence in Rwanda with events in Burundi.

While general analyses of the 1994 genocide will undoubtedly continue to be produced, they are likely to add little to our understanding until more thorough research has been conducted both on specific aspects of the genocide and on specific localities. Studies are needed that focus on the various actors in Rwandan society and on various elements of the genocide. For example, no studies have yet been carried out on the role of the Rwandan Armed Forces and the gendarmes in the genocide, though it is universally agreed that their involvement was key. Research on the civilian militias, such as the Interahamwe, the primary killers during the genocide, is essential. Kimonyo's (2003) recent dissertation studies the role of political parties in the genocide, focusing on Butare and Kibuye, but his assertion about the centrality of political parties to the genocide needs testing in other regions of the country. In particular, it would be useful to look at the diversity within parties, to better understand the divergent motivations of those within the "opposition" parties that allied themselves with Hutu Power and those that remained in real opposition, many of whom became targets of the genocide. More work on the use of the

administrative structures to carry out the genocide could be done as well. Biographical work on specific individuals involved in the genocide would also be highly useful.

The role of civil society in the genocide, as both victim and supporter, is an area ripe for additional research. The role of the media in promoting the genocide has been thoroughly explored (Chrétien, 1995) as has the role of Christian churches in the genocide (Bizimana, 2001; Gatwa, 2001; Longman, 1998, 2001, forthcoming; Rutembesa *et al*., 2000). The role of Islam, however, has yet to be studied, despite considerable discussion about the apparent resistance of Muslims to the genocide. Research on the role of the Pentecostal Church and the *Abarokore* (saved) movement would also be interesting, since participants in this movement seem to have been much more likely to resist genocide. The role of women's groups, youth organizations, and development cooperatives, both at the national and the local levels, could be the focus of useful research. Analysis of the impact of the genocide on human rights organizations could also be insightful, particularly since considerable controversy prevails over whether human rights activists participated in the genocide.

Research focused on specific aspects of the genocide is also much needed. The gender dimension, for example, deserves careful consideration. Nowrojee (1996) has provided a first glance at the use of sexual violence as a weapon in the genocide, but the subject is far from exhausted. Convincing militants to kill Tutsi women required particular effort, since women have traditionally not served as combatants and they cannot bestow ethnicity in Rwandan culture (since children take the ethnicity of their fathers). Tutsi women were thus singled out for particular scorn in pro-genocide propaganda, and additional research is needed into the ways in which gender and sexuality figured into the genocidal ideology and how that ideology was received and interpreted by the population. Taylor (1999) has argued that the gendered nature of the genocidal ideology represented a reaction against the advances that women of all ethnicities had been making in Rwandan society. Research comparing the targeting of women in various parts of the country could be illuminating. Were women spared in some communities more than others? Where was rape used more systematically and why? Were there areas where sexual servitude was more common? What happened in inter-ethnic marriages and relationships? Did legal marriage serve as a greater deterrent than common law arrangements? Research on youth involvement in the genocide, which all evidence indicates was crucial, would also be extremely useful. Research on the Twa and how they were involved in and affected by the genocide would be interesting.

The degree of popular involvement in the genocide could prove to be as controversial a question in the Rwandan case as it has become in Holocaust studies. Many of the authors whose interest in Rwanda was sparked by the genocide (Gourevitch, 1998; Mamdani, 2001) assume a high level of popular participation, while most authors with a longer-term interest in Rwanda have tended to emphasize the importance of national authorities and other elite in organizing the genocide (Des Forges, 1999; Reyntjens, 1994). Careful research,

particularly at the local level, could help to illuminate the ways in which the general population participated in the genocide and the extent of their participation. Research could help to reveal which particular segments of the population participated more than others—unemployed youths, the poor, the educated, those of mixed ancestry, those with connections to the government?

However extensive popular involvement in the genocide was, much research is needed to determine why those who did participate chose to do so. Existing literature on the genocide has advanced a range of motives, including ethnic hatred, economic frustration, greed, fear of reprisal, and a culture of obedience. Much more empirical work is needed to test the extent to which each of these factors played a part in the choices of individuals to participate in the killing. Strauss's (forthcoming) dissertation based on extensive interviews with prisoners who have confessed to participation in the genocide shows much promise, but there is room for much more work on popular participation. Verwimp (2003) has provocatively applied rational choice theories to explain participation in the genocide. McDoom (forthcoming) has conducted both a province-level survey and cell-level qualitative analysis to understand popular participation, with particular attention to living conditions in the build-up to genocide. Our understanding of the choice to participate would also be enhanced by research on those who refused to participate or who resisted the genocide in various ways. Who saved Tutsi and why? Were family connections significant? Was religion an important factor? Finally, useful research could be carried out on how the Tutsi themselves reacted to the threat of extermination. Much has been made of the Tutsi who held off the death squads for days at Bisesero in Kibuye, but what other examples of resistance are there? What strategies did Tutsi use to survive? To what extent did survival depend upon support from friendly Hutu?

A number of prominent authors have sought to explore how ethnicity was mobilized during the genocide (Chrétien, 1997; Des Forges, 1999; Mamdani, 2001); however, the question of ethnicity is far from settled. Just as questions remain over the historical origins and meaning of ethnic identities, the role that ethnicity played in the genocide remains unclear. While the ideology put forth by the organizers of the genocide sought to demonize Tutsi as alien interlopers, it is unclear how widely the general population accepted these characterizations. While authors such as Mamdani (2001) and Chrétien (1997) believe that ethnic hatred was the primary force motivating the genocide, they offer little empirical support, and the degree to which ethnic hatred motivated the killing remains to be proved. My own research just prior to the genocide found considerable ethnic tensions even as most Hutu I interviewed contended that they had no innate hatred for their Tutsi neighbors. In fact, the high rate of intermarriage and the historical flexibility of ethnic categories made the ethnic divisions in Rwanda both complex and amorphous, and it is unclear the degree to which people actually embraced anti-Tutsi ideologies. More work looking at the ideologies used to justify the genocide and how those ideologies were understood and adopted by the population would be useful.

Cultural factors in the genocide are also in need of research. Many authors

discuss the "culture of obedience" in Rwanda in passing, but no one has yet explored this supposition in depth. Despite the tradition of hierarchy and respect for authority often used to help explain participation in the genocide, Rwanda also has a long tradition of rebellion, often religiously inspired (cf. Berger, 1981; Des Forges, 1986). Careful research is needed, thus, to determine the degree to which attitudes toward authority affected participation. There is a range of other possibilities for research on cultural aspects of the genocide. Taylor (1999), while rejecting "cultural determinism" as a cause of the 1994 genocide, has analyzed the ways in which Rwandan culture shaped the genocidal violence. Mironko (forthcoming) offers a linguistic analysis of the language of genocide in Rwanda, seeking to understand the local meaning of genocide. Additional research on Rwandan attitudes toward violence, social morals, and sense of community would be useful. In particular, it would be useful to study the cultural interaction between indigenous Rwandan culture and Western influences, such as Christianity and market capitalism, and whether these interactions have any relationship to the genocide.

Economic issues are also clearly important to understanding the genocide. Since Rwanda was the most densely populated country in Africa and consistently among the poorest countries in the world, many observers see economic motives behind both elite and popular participation in the genocide. Several scholars conducted research on land tenure, agriculture, and social relations in Rwanda just prior to the genocide, and their works provide an excellent understanding of how scarcity contributed to increased social tension. Bézy (1990) provides a helpful overview of growing inequality in Rwanda just prior to the outbreak of hostilities and the democracy movement. André and Platteau (1998) and de Lame (1996) provide in depth studies of changing economic relations in small communities in Gisenyi and Kibuye, respectively, while Olson (1995) provides an analysis of changing agricultural conditions in the region of Gikongoro. While the research for these works was conducted mostly prior to the genocide, the authors use their data to consider how economic issues created fertile grounds for genocide. The most complete consideration of the role of economic issues in the genocide is to be found in Uvin (1998). Drawing on a range of economic and agricultural studies conducted in Rwanda in the decades leading up to the genocide, Uvin argues that increased disparities in wealth, exacerbated rather than diminished by international development assistance, fostered frustration in the general population, which thus became vulnerable to manipulation. Jefremovas (2002) looks at the intersection of class and gender in the lead up to the genocide. None of these studies, however, adequately explains how economic frustration was channeled away from those with the greatest wealth and power, mostly Hutu, to the Tutsi, who were generally as poor as their Hutu neighbors.

Considerable additional research is needed to isolate economic issues as a factor in the genocide. A range of research projects could be envisioned in this realm. Many local communities have already dealt extensively with property issues arising from the genocide—which involved considerable looting of goods

and destruction of property—and gacaca will undoubtedly provide much more information on what exactly was looted and by whom. Gathering and analyzing these data could provide an interesting window into greed as a motivating factor in the genocide. It would be particularly useful to study how local authorities sought to control the distribution of looted goods, which could be done by reviewing records of communal security meetings. Did variations in how authorities treated looting affect participation in the genocide? Although all of Rwanda was poor, factors such as population density, levels of development investment, and economic arrangements varied substantially across the country. Research comparing regions with differing economic conditions could help to illuminate how economic issues figured into the genocide.

Closely related to the economic issues are ecological issues that some also argue helped drive the genocide, particularly serving to motivate popular participation. Willame (1995) looks at the role of overpopulation in the genocide, as does Verwimp (2003). The degree to which overpopulation played a role could be studied by comparing areas with high population densities with areas with lower densities. Other ecological factors that could be studied include the AIDS epidemic, which was already far advanced in Rwandan and gaining increasing public acknowledgement at the time of the genocide. Particularly among the young men who participated in the militias, the AIDS epidemic may have contributed to a sense of nihilism growing out a belief that the future was not certain.

The international context for the genocide is an area needing considerable research. Barnett (2002) provides an account of the United Nations' failure in Rwanda from the perspective of an insider in the New York offices, while Castonguay (1998) studies the United Nations troops on the ground in Rwanda. Power (2001, 2002) has well documented the role that the United States played in obstructing United Nations intervention, while a number of authors have discussed the French support for the genocidal regime (Ambrosetti, 2001; Mas, 1999; Verschave, 1994). While any of these topics could be pursued in greater depth, the involvement of other African countries in the conflict in Rwanda has received only cursory attention (cf. Adelman and Suhrke, 1999), which is unfortunate, since the regional dimension of the conflict is absolutely essential to understanding the genocide. The dynamic relationship between Rwanda and Burundi touched upon by Lemarchand (1970, 1994), Reyntjens (1994), and Chrétien (1997) is a particularly important area needing much greater attention. Violence in each country has tended to reverberate in the other, as the assassination of Ndadaye in particular had a profound impact within Rwanda. Analysis of the roles of Uganda in supporting the RPF and of Zaire in supporting the Habyarimana regime and its genocidal successor is also needed. David Newbury (forthcoming) looks at the role of refugee movement in the conflicts in the Great Lakes Region.

The RPF itself has been the focus of very little analysis, in large part because research on the organization and its activities remains highly sensitive. Authors such as Des Forges (1999) and Prunier (1995) who have looked into RPF abuses

even briefly have faced severe criticism from the government and have had difficulty returning to Rwanda, and the RPF as a subject may remain impossible to pursue in the current political climate, at least from within Rwanda. Nevertheless, for a more comprehensive understanding of the genocide we need not only a better understanding of the organization, strategies, and operations of the RPF but also information about the leadership's knowledge of the genocide and attitude toward it. The RPF leaders present themselves as altruistic fighters who stopped the genocide, while critics such as Lemarchand (1998) and Reyntjens (1999) accuse them of pursuing their war in the bold search for power without regard for the consequences for Tutsi living within Rwanda and of carrying out massacres both in the territory they occupied and, later, in Zaire. Careful research could help to inform this debate and move it beyond politically motivated assertions.

A growing range of archives on the genocide is available for those intending to conduct national-level research. The ICTR has gathered extensive materials that have so far been mined only for the purpose of cases. Gaining access to the ICTR files may prove difficult, particularly since they are not systematically organized, but they could provide a wealth of information. Linda Melvern is accumulating an archive on the Rwandan genocide, particularly on the reaction of the United Nations, available at the Hugh Owen Library of the University of Wales. The survivors' organizations Ibuka and Avega have each begun projects to gather testimonies from survivors which, in connection with the series of memoirs being published, could in the future become a useful resource for researching questions about the experience of those targeted by the genocide as well as the modalities by which the genocide was carried out.

Local-level research

The local level is both the most fertile field for finding data on the genocide and the area of greatest need for research. Despite its small size, Rwanda contains considerable regional diversity. The territory that today comprises Rwanda contained numerous independent chieftancies and kingdoms that were incorporated into the central Rwandan kingdom over a number of centuries, a process that continued into the early twentieth century. Regions such as Gisaka and Bugesera in the east, Kinyaga in the southwest, and large areas of the north and northwest retain distinct cultural identities that affect how they relate to the rest of the country.[4] The various prefectures and communes set up by the post-independence government had diverse relationships with the central state, depending in large part on their patronage ties to the regime. The genocide, because of its decentralized nature, reflected the country's regional diversity. Differences in the ethnic distribution, political party affiliations, presence of refugees, and time of RPF occupation, among other factors, affected how the genocide was carried out in various localities.

Scholars wishing to pursue local-level research on the genocide are fortunate that there is a rich tradition of regional and community-level research in Rwanda

that can serve as background. Newbury (1988) offers a meticulous study of changing social relations in Kinyaga to the end of the colonial period. Olson's (1995) work on Gikongoro is only one example of the numerous works on agricultural development, environmental change, and economic relations. Gravel's (1968) case study of a community in eastern Rwanda has been too often overlooked. De Lame (1996), André and Platteau (1998), and Jefremovas (2002) provide more recent community-based studies in Kibuye, Butare, and Gisenyi. De Lame's detailed account of social relations in Murundi is particularly useful.

The project of understanding the local variations in the 1994 genocide has already begun, but much more work remains to be completed. Des Forges (1999) compares the workings of the genocide in Ngoma (Butare-Town) and Nyakizu communes of Butare and several communes in northern Gikongoro. Kimonyo (2003) studies Nyakizu and Kigembe communes of Butare, with particular attention to the involvement of political parties in implementing the genocide at the local level. In my own research (Longman, forthcoming), I have analyzed the genocide in the communes of Bwakira and Mwendo in Kibuye, focusing on the role of the churches. Strauss (forthcoming) also studies the genocide in five communes in various parts of the country. McDoom (forthcoming) looks at Butare and Ruhengeri prefectures. These studies, however, cover only a very small portion of Rwandan territory. The vast majority of prefectures and communes remain wide open for researchers who want to make an original contribution.

The possible sources for local-level research are abundant. Anyone who was in Rwanda at the time of the genocide has a story to tell and could serve as an informant. While initially most Hutu were reluctant to speak openly about the genocide, the gacaca trials are forcing every community to discuss the genocide, and the movement for confession among prisoners has created a climate where discussing even one's own involvement in the genocide is no longer taboo.

In addition to interview research, there is a massive, largely untapped supply of documents. Rwanda was a highly bureaucratic society, and the administration kept regular detailed records, even during the height of the genocide. In fact, even as the genocide was beginning to spiral out of control in the last several weeks before the fall of the regime as Hutu militia members began to fight amongst themselves, communal councils and commune-level security committees continued to meet and discuss the situation. Secretaries continued dutifully to type up the notes from these meetings and to send copies to the office of the prefecture and the Ministry of the Interior. The availability of these documents varies substantially. In some places, they have been carefully preserved and are still to be found, catalogued by year, neatly shelved in government offices. In others, the old documents are viewed as superfluous and are stored haphazardly if at all, as in the prefecture office in Kibuye, where documents from before 1994 were simply dumped in a large heap in a back storage room. With the consolidation of political units initiated in 2001, the status of documents from some former communes is now unclear, and researchers would do well to act quickly to locate documents before they are destroyed. Nevertheless, where

written documents have been lost or destroyed (as in much of the French-controlled zone), carbon copies of the documents are often still available in another archive, due to the efficiency of the bureaucracy.

The possible topics for local-level research are almost limitless. Theories to explain the genocide advanced by authors such as Des Forges (1999), Mamdani (2001), and Uvin (1998) need to be tested. Yet there are an extraordinary number of originals topics that could also be pursued, looking at political parties, local administration, militias, women, religion, civil society, ideology—the list goes on. Studies that simply explain how the genocide occurred in various communities would be extraordinarily useful for building a general understanding of how the genocide occurred throughout the country.

Post-genocide reconstruction

If, as I have argued, the genocide must be understood in context, the aftermath of the genocide must also be taken into consideration. The genocide was not a finite event whose total impact came to a close with the arrival of the RPF into power in July 1994. Instead, the social, economic, political, and even spiritual effects of the genocide continue to be profoundly felt within Rwanda and throughout the region. The genocide initiated profound changes in Rwandan society, and both the government of Rwanda and the international community have undertaken extensive efforts to encourage even more changes. The impact of the genocide has resonated sharply within the region, in Burundi and Congo in particular, where violence continues.

The process of social reconstruction in the aftermath of the genocide in Rwanda is of considerable academic interest, but social and political research is tending to concentrate in only a few areas. Both domestic and international judicial responses to the genocide are already receiving extensive scholarly attention. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) has been the topic of numerous publications, ranging from more journalistic accounts, to law journal articles such as Carroll (2000) and Alvarez (1999). More systematic research on the ICTR and its operations needs to be carried out. Peskin's (forthcoming) work on relations between the ICTR and its sister tribunal in The Hague and the affected governments should prove quite interesting. I have been involved in a project that, among other things, is seeking to understand the impact that the ICTR is having within Rwanda (cf. Longman *et al.*, 2003), but more work needs to be done in this area. Nowrojee is following up her earlier work on sexual violence to analyze what impact prosecution in the ICTR of sexual offenses has had.

Within Rwanda, the innovative grassroots, nonprofessional judicial initiative *gacaca* is receiving extensive attention from scholars, journalists, NGOs, and others. The National Commission for Unity and Reconciliation and the supreme court chamber overseeing the gacaca have established a standard mechanism for issuing gacaca research and observation authorization, and hundreds of observers have already been approved. Meanwhile, the regular Rwandan genocide courts,

where thousands of people have already been judged and all of the most serious genocide cases will be heard, are receiving virtually no attention. The topic of memory in the aftermath of the genocide is also gaining a degree of attention, as it is a topic of my own current research and is also treated by Burnett (forthcoming).

Meanwhile, a number of other aspects of social reconstruction have so far received insufficient scholarly attention. The post-genocide government has not been a subject of study, despite its extraordinary impact on the society. The struggle for political power within the government could make a compelling topic for research, as an ostensible "government of national unity" has become more overtly controlled by the RPF. Various government policies also have been neglected. The government has initiated a program of "solidarity camps" known as *ingando*, in which segments of the population, including politicians, prospective university students, returned Hutu refugees, and released prisoners, are taken through political re-education classes and paramilitary training. While the ingando may ultimately have as large an impact on reshaping Rwandan political culture as gacaca, they have yet to receive any academic study. The creation of a civilian police force has been an important factor in contributing to greater internal security and could make a good research topic. The civil defense forces, unpaid local volunteer police, could also be an interesting subject for research. Research on how long-time Tutsi refugees have reintegrated into Rwanda would be important to understanding the rate of programs of Rwanda' reconstruction.

Various international topics are also of interest. Weil (forthcoming) has researched the international humanitarian response to the genocide as well as the 1996 and 1998 wars in Congo. Rall (forthcoming) studies the efforts of international NGOs to institute trauma counseling programs based on Western biomedical notions of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Work on the UN in Rwanda including the post-genocide UN intervention and the field office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights would be useful. Adelman and Suhrke (1999) seek to understand the relationship between violent conflicts throughout the region, but the essays contain only limited empirical data. Both Clark (2002) and Reyntjens (1999) consider the two wars in Congo from a regional perspective that relates them to the Rwandan genocide. More extensive work looking specifically at the Rwandan involvement in Congo would be valuable, particularly looking at the Rwandan involvement in violence there, both perpetrated by the former regime and by the RPF. Greater work on the relationship between rebellions in Rwanda and Burundi would be valuable.

Conclusion

This brief review is by no means comprehensive and undoubtedly overlooks some useful research on Rwanda, including some projects currently being conducted. However, as the review hopefully indicates, although much research relevant to the Rwandan genocide has been conducted, numerous possibilities for future research remain. What is most needed today is detailed analysis of

specific topics and sectors of society and communities rather than global analyses. Before a comprehensive understanding of the genocide can be developed, before we can say with greater certainty why the genocide happened and why people participated, much more empirical data are necessary. Different parts of the country and different social groups experienced the genocide differently, and existing research only scratches the surface of this diversity. If we hope to prevent future violence in Rwanda and elsewhere, we need much more research that will help us understand the tragedy that took place in 1994.

Notes

1. When I was preparing to travel to Rwanda for dissertation research in the early 1990s, a few people actually asked me, "Rwanda? Isn't that a woman's name?"
2. On the politicization of historiography since the genocide, see Vidal (1998) and Newbury (1998).
3. I served as one of the researchers and wrote initial drafts of the chapters on Nyakizu.
4. See Newbury (2001) on the historic regional diversity in Rwanda and Burundi.

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