

## **CERS Working Paper**

### **The Rwandan Genocide, religion, radio and citizens**

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#### **Introduction**

In 1994, an event occurred in Rwanda that is widely considered to be unforgettable due to its magnitude. Within a period of 100 days around 800,000 Rwandans were murdered in what is known as the Rwanda genocide. Chalk and Jonassohn (1990:23) define 'genocide' as "*a form of one-sided mass killing in which a state or other authority intends to destroy a group, as that group and membership in it are defined by the perpetrator*". This definition is provided for the purpose of clarity and a framework from which to work upon within this essay, and arguments provided by writers such as Shaw (2007) who propose that definitions of this nature can be unhelpful and potentially harmful will be acknowledged, but put to one side. The Rwanda genocide is often compared to the Nazi holocaust due to its central purpose being the extermination of a particular people, however, as this essay will explore, the nature of the Rwanda genocide sets it apart distinctly from the calamity in Germany (Melvern, 2000).

The victims of the Rwanda genocide were predominately the Tutsi, and the perpetrators predominately the Hutu. The Tutsi and Hutu are the two main ethnic groups that reside in Rwanda, the Hutu being the majority. These are both alongside the third ethnic group called the Twa, who are the clear minority in terms of the demographic of the population. This essay will provide an in-depth analysis of the 1994 genocide, and predominately focus upon reasons for its emergence. It will carry out this analysis within the framework of the processes of racialisation, and use these processes as a forefront in the explanation of the genocide. 'Racialisation' is a term used by many academics within the field of sociology to describe the emergence of phenomena relating to ethnic boundaries and divisions. Law (2010:59) describes it as a "*dynamic process by which racial concepts, categories and divisions come to structure and embed themselves in arenas of social life*". Therefore, the processes of racialisation allude to the ways in which these concepts, categories and divisions can be seen to have embedded themselves within society, and in this particular context, within Rwandan society.

For the purpose of this essay, four keys dimensions of the genocide have been selected which attempt to explain how and why it happened and provide reasons for why people took part in it. The first of these dimensions is an overview of the history of racial ideology Rwanda, including the influence from outsiders such as travellers and from the change in Rwandan society during the period of colonialism. The second moves on to study how religion, namely Christianity, had an effect upon the perception and relevance of the ethnic divide in Rwanda, and how religion became a focal and powerful part of its society. The third is further along chronologically and includes an analysis of how the media influenced the processes of racialisation running up to the genocide and subsequently incited and sustained racial hatred during the genocide. These initial three dimensions will work from a chronological framework in order to demonstrate how the ideology surrounding the Tutsi and Hutu changed over time. Lastly, the fourth dimension seeks the voices of the Rwandan perpetrators themselves and attempts to uncover some of the reasons why individuals carried out the killings and brutal attacks during the genocide. This essay will cover few post-genocide issues as its focus is upon how the processes of racialisation, over a wide span of history and within the 100 days of the genocide itself, led to this tragic event in Rwanda.

#### **Background: location and demographic**

Rwanda, known as the 'Land of a Thousand Hills', is located in Central Africa, east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UNICEF, 2003). It is a landlocked country with an area slightly smaller than Maryland. It is bordered by neighbouring countries Burundi, Democratic Republic of

Congo, Tanzania and Uganda (CIA, 2014). It is now the most densely populated country in Africa, with over 300 people per square kilometre (UNICEF, 2003). Its population is made up of three distinct ethnic groups; the Tutsi, Hutu and Twa. Before the 1994 genocide, the Hutu made up 84-90%, the Tutsi made up 9-15% and the Twa made up just 1% of the population. The Hutu and Tutsi both live in the same region and speak the same language; Kinyarwanda. The Twa are forest dwelling 'pygmy' people who are believed to have descended from the earliest inhabitants of Rwanda (Straus, 2006). For the purpose of this essay, the Hutu and Tutsi will be predominately focused upon as they were the two main ethnic groups involved in the 1994 genocide.

### **A history of racial ideology: from early myths to colonialism**

The conflict between the Tutsi and Hutu, according to Totten and Ubaldo (2011), is one that requires a look back over some 125 years in order to fully understand its nature. Cook (2006) identifies that Rwanda's social structure and history are intertwined; therefore it is crucial to understand the two in order to understand the 1994 genocide. This section of the essay will analyse a history of Rwanda and locate certain points which are believed to be of importance, and which demonstrate how racial ideology has been created, influenced and subsequently sustained. These events are located within the essay as they believed to be key occurrences of the processes of racialisation, which can be used to partly explain how and why the 1994 genocide took place.

Firstly, it is worth studying a brief history of Rwandan beliefs in order to understand how the processes of racialisation seen during the genocide evolved and spurred such hatred between ethnic groups. Melvern (2000) identifies that from early history Rwanda was poor and reliant on agriculture, and due to its landlocked geography, remote location and its few exploitable resources it was of little interest to the outside world. She argues then that in these circumstances any racial ideology that existed in Rwanda in its early history came from myths and legends. Mamdani (2001) accounts three main Rwandan myths that can be traced through history and linked to the modern day ethnic ideology. The first of these myths narrates that the monarchy originated from a heavenly king called Nkuba, who lived in heaven with a wife and three children called Kigwa, Tutsi and Nyampundu. It is told that one day these three children fell from heaven to Rwanda. On earth, Kigwa and Nyampundu married and are believed to be ancestors of the Abaryiginya clan. Tutsi married one of his nieces and is believed to be the ancestor of the Abeega clan. The second of these myths follows on from the first and is the story of Kigwa and his three sons; Gatwa, Gahutu and Gahtutsi. These three sons were believed to be absent of social faculty and therefore decided to ask God for it. Gatutsi received anger, Gahutu received disobedience and labour and Gatwa received gluttony. The last myth follows on to demonstrate an important early instance of racial superiority in Rwandan belief. It entails the three brothers being tested of their abilities by being required to care for a churn of milk for one night. After the night, Gatwa had drunk all his milk; Gahutu had spilled his milk and only Gatutsi had kept his milk intact. Mamdani (2001) speculates that these beliefs provided the Tutsi aristocracy with a belief that they were superior in sacred terms. The conclusion of the myth entails Gatutsi being entrusted to be in command of his two brothers. This myth reflects the idea that the Tutsi are inherently superior and has carried on throughout history, most importantly into the colonial period.

Moving on in history and away from early myths and legends, processes of racialisation have been arguably influenced and sustained by outsiders coming into Rwanda and interpreting its social phenomena. Melvern (2000) locates a traveller called John Hanning Speke within history as one of the first outsiders to enter Rwanda. Speke, along with other travellers at the time, interpreted the Rwandan population as being divided up into three 'tribes', despite the fact they did not exhibit any of the characteristics that constitute a 'tribe', in that they shared the same Bantu language, lived side by side, and intermarried (Prunier, 1998). Melvern (2000) presents more of Speke's theorising, in that he believed that 'savage Negroes' could not achieve the political or religious sophistication that he observed. Therefore, he concluded with little evidence that the Tutsi must be more than 'common negroes', as they had not only achieved social order but from his observation were more intelligent and had a larger emotional span, which he believed was uncommon in 'primitive people'. Speke concluded that the Tutsi must have come from the north from Ethiopia, and therefore technically outsiders to Rwanda. Speke's theories demonstrate that his pre-existing racial prejudices caused him to divide Rwanda into racial groups that he believed were natural in origin, in this case then overlapping racism and racial ideology can be seen to have altered future beliefs concerning ethnic

identity within Rwanda. Prunier (1998) identifies that Speke also described the group that later became the Tutsi as the 'conquering superior race', and these beliefs were taken up by later explorers and eventually made their way into scientific theory (Prunier, 1998). These beliefs show that the Tutsi from an early stage were considered not only dominant and above the Hutu, but as outsiders who came into Rwanda and subsequently subordinated them. When reflecting upon the 1994 genocide, there is arguably a clear link between these early assumptions made by outsiders coming into Rwanda and the concrete beliefs regarding the separation of distinct 'races' within a hierarchy held by Rwandan's preceding and during the genocide.

The next period of time of significance is Rwanda's period of colonialism, whereby power was taken on by the Germans and the Belgians respectively. During this time, Pieterse (1997) states that differences between the Hutu and Tutsi became fixed in a 'tribal matrix', and ethnic identities that were previously unclear became delineated in racial terms. Melvern (2000) provides an account of the first period of colonialism beginning in 1885, at the Berlin Conference when Rwandan territory and rule was given to Germany. She states that in pre-colonial times, Rwandan society was structured in four levels; provinces, districts, hills which were occupied by Tutsi and neighbourhoods which were occupied by Hutu, with the former being the most superior and power decreasing in subsequent levels. After the German's took over rule from the Belgian's, they allowed this social structure built on a racial hierarchy to exist in order to maintain faithfulness and support from Rwandan's, as it was common that citizens did not take kindly to the new rule. This therefore sustained an existing racial ideology that involved the subordination of the Hutu compared to the Tutsi. Adelman and Suhrke (1999) further this sentiment arguing that during the German rule, Rwandan alliances and conflicts were exacerbated. One the ways in which this was caused was through the rigorousness but shifting nature of national boundaries depending on political and economic command. These boundaries often divided ethnic groups and families and accentuated ethnic identity, which in turn often caused conflict. These brief examples demonstrate how racial ideology in Rwanda, during German rule, was not only allowed but also sustained.

The German's continued rule over Rwanda until the First World War, when it was replaced by a Belgian rule (Adelman and Suhrke, 1999). Rwanda was included in the League of Nations mandate, which was initially created to provide an opportunity between nations (Melvern, 2000). Unlike Germany, Belgium exercised more power and upheld a stricter rule. It was predominately in this time that racial ideology in Rwanda was influenced and sustained, due to the extent to which the Belgians altered its social order, which commonly involved placing the Tutsi in higher positions than the Hutu. Prunier (1998) identifies that early Rwandan society was based on a collective responsibility, however, during Belgian rule all able bodied people were obliged to conform to the European taxation model, and other reforms implemented by the Belgians. For example, the governor Charles Voisin set out a series of measures called 'les réformes Voisin' that took effect between 1926 and 1931. These reforms included firing many Hutu chiefs and replacing them with Tutsi, and merging the three existing chief positions into one, which was dominated by Tutsi. Shortly after these reforms, in 1933, Melvern (2000) pinpoints a crucial change made by the Belgians. This was the introduction of a census of the whole population which classified everyone as Tutsi, Hutu or Twa. Within each group physical features were measured and applied as markers that a Rwandan citizen belonged to their group. This effectively gave grounding to a racial divide within Rwanda and produced a framework of concrete difference between the emergent 'races'. Furthermore, every Rwandan was issued an identity card that included their group on it. Totten and Ubaldo (2011) identify that these cards were used during the genocide to check a person's ethnicity, and for the Tutsi, served as a death warrant. Later, in 1945, Rwanda was transferred from its League of Nations mandate and introduced into the United Nations (UN). Following this induction, UN ambassadors described Rwanda as having "*rigid ethnic, linguistic and territorial lines of demarcation*" (Melvern, 2000:12). This is an example of another clear sign of the perception of racial difference within Rwanda from outsiders, which arguably helped sustain racial boundaries. Lastly, moving forward to 1952, Adelman and Suhrke (1999) identify another set of political reforms that were the first instance of the superior position of the Tutsi being threatened, and one of the early instances before the 1994 genocide of violence between the Tutsi and Hutu. From this point onwards tension escalated and violence often broke out between the Tutsi and Hutu, until the 7 April 1994 where tensions evoked from political influences partly caused over half a million Rwandans to be slaughtered.

To conclude, this section attempts to demonstrate how Rwanda's history has been plagued with a racial ideology that has separated the Tutsi and Hutu as distinctly different beings, and how influences from outside interpreted, evolved and ultimately sustained this ideology until the atrocities in 1994.

### **Christianity and the Church: power and ideology**

The next section of this essay will provide an account of the presence of the Christian faith within Rwanda in the time before, leading up to and during the genocide. McCullum (1995) identifies that 90% of Rwandans were baptised Christians at the height of the churches conversions, with 65% being Catholic, 20% being Protestant or Anglican and 5% being Adventist. This section will mainly focus upon the role of the churches within Rwanda and study the influence they had upon the creation and sustenance of a racial ideology, but also analyse the actions taken by religious figures during the genocide.

Longman (2010) argues that it is useful to study early Christian involvement in Rwandan society as the Church in Rwanda actively maintained a close alliance with the state and was closely linked with ethnic politics. He identifies that the first Catholic missionaries arrived in Rwanda in 1900; they were called the Society of Missionaries of Africa, but were more commonly known as the White Fathers. Mamdani (2001) states that these missionaries from the Catholic Church were some of the first people to study ethnicity in Rwanda, aside from the previously discussed travellers and other outsiders, and they initially came as they believed there would be no competition to prevent them from spreading their faith, for example, Muslims or Protestants. Upon arrival, the White Fathers saw the ethnic relations as a predominant feature of Rwandan society (Longman, 2010). Theories from missionaries, in 1902 during the Belgian rule, saw the Tutsi as 'supreme humans'. In order to establish these theories the head of the Catholic Church, Léon Classe, presented the Belgian government with a document in 1916 that outlined a racial policy and advocated a racial way of thinking about the divide between the Tutsi and Hutu, with the Tutsi being the dominant group (Mamdani, 2001). Therefore, as Longman (2010) identifies, the Catholic missionaries saw their goal as appealing to and converting the Tutsi, as they were perceived to be the most powerful group. They believed that converting the Tutsi would give them the best chance of spreading their faith and therefore actively defended the interests of the Tutsi over the Hutu. Furthermore, Longman (2010) adds that the missionaries prioritised converting those in power as this would create an accommodating environment for the conversion of the public. This meant that they aimed their efforts mostly at Tutsi leaders and were careful not to come into conflict with or alienate them. During times of conflict, this entailed taking the side of the king, as he had the most legitimate authority. Following this analysis of the conversion of the king, Prunier (1998) alludes to the replacement of King Yuhi V Musinga with Mutara III Rudahigwa in November 1931, during the Belgian rule. He highlights that the Church disliked the former king due to his lack of Western values, and therefore embraced the new king. The new king was dressed in Western clothes, given his own car, expected to and did conform to Western values and most importantly on the Churches agenda, converted to Christianity. These few examples demonstrate the extent to which the Church had a hold upon Rwanda's politics and imperatively its racial ideology, and how their perceptions of the significance of the ethnic divide between the Tutsi and Hutu caused it to become racial and delineated in nature.

To discuss the Church's influence upon racial ideology in Rwanda in more depth, this essay will allude to its relationship with the educational institutions within Rwanda, whereby it continued its attempt to 'Christianize' Rwanda. The first Western style schools were opened by the White Fathers in 1905 and were only available to the sons of Tutsi chiefs, with the objective to making them the elite within society (Mamdani, 2001). In 1927, as Prunier (1998) identifies, the Belgians were re-structuring Rwandan society in their time of rule, and consequently it was becoming increasingly more Western in nature. New elites in society replaced the former powerful members who were previously constituted of a mix of Tutsi and Hutu. To become an 'elite' in the re-structured society a Rwandan citizen, by influence of the Church, had to be a Christian. The Church then became a dominant social institution within Rwandan society and saw some hundreds of thousands of citizens converted. Relating this change to racial ideology, the Church still maintained its viewpoints concerning the dominance of the Tutsi over the Hutu and therefore gave educational priority to the Tutsi. Mamdani (2001) follows on this prioritisation when studying the educational reforms in the 1930s. At this time the missionaries had eventually gained full control of the education system and applied their ideology concerning the Tutsi's dominance to it. They effectively created a two tier

system, whereby only Tutsi could inhabit the upper tier, and both Tutsi and Hutu were included in the lower tier. However, even at this lower level, Mamdani (2001) highlights that the Tutsi were still favoured. Lastly, the allegiance of the Church changed closer to the genocide. McCullum (1995) identifies that during the Belgian rule the church had a good relationship with the Tutsi royal court and exercised power in the colonial period in order to ensure the Tutsi were favoured. However, in the 1950s the church changed its focus from the ruling Tutsi to the subordinated Hutu. By the 1961 independence of Rwanda, the Catholic Church was predominately connected with the Hutu, demonstrating how its nature was to only take one side within what it saw as a racial divide in Rwanda.

The arguments presented concerning the Catholic Church serve to demonstrate how it advocated a perception of the Tutsi and Hutu division as a racial one, with the Tutsi being superior. They also outline how it used its educational and political power in order to support its own agenda of making Rwanda more Western and converting as many Rwandans to Christianity as possible, arguably without considering the consequences of its actions.

### **The radio in the genocide: broadcasts of hate propaganda**

As presented above, a foundation of racial ideology had been laid down and sustained by myths, travellers, political institutions, religious institutions and other means. This essay will now move onto a period of time closer to the genocide, and relate the media, in particular the radio, to the processes of racialisation that were occurring in the lead up to the horrors of 1994. The main argument that will be put forward will concern the content of radio broadcasts, and argue that this content led to a further and more prominent separation of the Tutsi and Hutu, as well as inciting hate and directing the killing that ensued. As Adelman and Suhrke (1999) state, the radio was part of the hate propaganda which spurred ethnic hatred, and was also a clear warning sign of a potential of genocide. However, for the purpose of this argument, it is important to note that the media was not a direct cause of the conflict, but rather a terrain which provided a means of the mobilisation and dissemination of an ideology (Pieterse, 1997).

Adelman and Suhrke (1999) identify that the first signs of hate propaganda can be seen in 1990. This did not include the radio at this time; early propaganda was disseminated using newspaper and magazine articles. They depicted the Tutsi as being outsiders and infiltrators. One of the first magazines to be published was called 'Kangura', which was a bi-monthly issue made by Nassan Ngeze. Melvern (2000) highlights that 'Kangura' was responsible for posting the 'Hutu Ten Commandments', that were instructions on how to treat and perceive the Tutsi. However, these forms of dissemination were short lived due to a number of reasons. Firstly, as Thompson (2007) states, many Rwandans could not read or write and therefore were not able to receive the messages. Furthermore, the Rwandan written press had limited printing abilities. Therefore there were never more than around 3,000 copies of an issue, which often only circulated around Kigali, the capital (Adelman and Suhrke, 1999). Due to high illiteracy rates and deficient printing abilities, the radio became a valuable source of information for Rwandans. It was also very widespread; Rwanda had as many as 400,000 to 500,000 AM/FM short wave radio receivers in homes and offices. It was a service that reached a broad public audience, even those in rural areas (Adelman and Suhrke, 1999). The main radio services in Rwanda in the time leading up to the genocide were 'Radio-Télévision Libre des Mille Collines' (RTLNC) and Radio Rwanda. Melvern (2000) states that RTLNC began broadcasts in 1993 and was initially seen as a joke due to its rowdiness, offensive language and generally poor conduct; with announcers often being drunk when on air. It was in direct contrast to Radio Rwanda, which aired more formal and discussion led broadcasts. The difference between these two stations was that RTLNC was funded by Hutu extremists, who had a significant influence upon its content. Thompson (2007) highlights that after the assassination of the Burundi president in October 1993 RTLNC began to change its stance. He states that it reported the assassination in a sensationalised way and blamed the Tutsi, despite the perpetrators being military officers. This heightened the fear and perceived brutality of the Tutsi and subsequently enforced the belief that the Tutsi and Hutu were inherently different.

By 1994, after the death of the Rwandan President Habyarimana, authorities were using both RTLNC and Radio Rwanda to direct and mobilise Tutsi murder. This began after Radio Rwanda had been pressured by RTLNC to take up a Tutsi opposition, and after the subsequent fleeing of its former

director (Thompson, 2007). Melvern (2000) identifies that during the genocide the radio named people who they believed should be killed, for example, Agathe Uwilingiyimana, a pro-democracy politician who was in opposition of the Hutu and Prime Minister of the coalition government. The radio demonstrated a deadly ability to order attacks on specific, high status people who they believed would stop them from carrying out the genocide. The radio also, as Thompson (2007) highlights, spurred a collective identity of the Hutu to rise up against the Tutsi, spread hate by giving the Tutsi nicknames such as ‘cockroaches’, and congratulated the Hutu who were ‘successfully’ killing Tutsi. The radio then became a mobilising force for the location and subsequent slaughter of the Tutsi.

Lastly, Thompson (2007) reviews some of the reasons why the radio was allowed to run for as long as it did during the genocide. He identifies that the Human Rights Watch argued at the time that it should be jammed in order to prevent the directions it was administering and a legitimising of the genocide. However, the US State Department were reluctant to jam the radio’s transmission as they believed this could be a violation of freedom of speech. Furthermore, they did not wish to become involved in a ‘complicated’ conflict that may result in them having to deploy US troops.

To conclude this section, the arguments put forward demonstrate the extent to which the radio contributed to a ‘conditioning’ of Rwandan citizens (Thompson, 2007), in the sense that it highlighted and instilled a racial ideology within Rwandans before the genocide had occurred, so that when it came around many citizens firmly believed that what they were doing was legitimate and justified.

### **How citizens became killers: a ‘genocide society’**

The Rwanda genocide stands out due to the enormous number of people killed in a short space of time, and for the mass civilian involvement and the nature of the killings (Smeulers and Hoex, 2010). The final section of this essay seeks the voices of those involved in the genocide, and analyses the question of how ordinary citizens were driven to such brutality. It will retain the arguments presented before regarding a racial ideology which was sustained by various institutions and other means and build on them from a micro and more social perspective.

The predominant question that is in need of an answer concerns the vast amount of people who seemed to suddenly turn to intense violence at the time of the genocide, and why they seemingly chose to do it. In order to address this question it is necessary to analyse the nature of the killings and the ways they were carried out. Smeulers and Hoex (2010) identify that killings predominately took place in groups, whether small or large. Therefore, it is important to understand group dynamics when attempting to explain why people acted the way they did. Fujii (2009) adds to this sentiment by outlining different ways ordinary citizens became part of a killing group. Firstly, many joined unwillingly and were forced to participate in the killing for fear of their own life being taken. Those who did not participate in the killing were considered enemies themselves, Tutsi or Hutu. Hatzfeld (2008) conducted interviews with a number of Rwandan perpetrators in the genocide. One called Jean-Baptiste reported that he was forced to kill a Hutu man who was believed to be a ‘traitor’ for sheltering Tutsi, and he states that if he had not killed this man his Tutsi wife would have been killed. Secondly, Fujii (2009) highlights that there were many perpetrators who truly believed in the cause they were fighting for, and joined killing groups as they believed in an imminent threat from the RPF. This can be seen as a reflection of the racial ideology which was being reinforced by various means, as previously discussed in this essay. Referring back to the notion of a group dynamic, Fujii (2009) argues that during the genocide groups were powerful homogenising forces. People in a group left behind an individual identity and adopted a new group identity. This offered a sense of collectiveness and presented a common, justified goal of the extermination of the Tutsi. Once part of a group, citizens could blend in and go with the group momentum. Jean-Baptiste, a perpetrator in the genocide, states that upon joining a group he became accustomed to killing, as he quotes: *“later on we got used to killing without so much dodging around”* (Hatzfeld, 2008). Fujii (2009) argues that it was the social environments of the killing groups that lead to a process of normalisation which she calls the ‘logic of contamination’. This entailed citizens adopting the beliefs, actions and attitudes of those around them in their group, which ‘infected’ them with the ultimate and prevailing ideology of ethnic hatred.

What this section of the essay suggests, following the theories provided, is that the killings of the 1994 genocide can be partly explained on a macro level through the social changes that occurred,

which left citizens in a newly created ‘genocide society’. At the time of the genocide ordinary citizens relinquished themselves of their normal daily activities and took on a new ‘job’; to exterminate all Tutsi. For example, Smeulers and Hoex (2010:349) quote from a Rwandan perpetrator, “*life changed totally... people started to kill instead of going to work*”. Within this new ‘genocide society’ there were rules, regulations and laws. Killings were carefully planned and directed by group leaders, often the Interahamwe. New norms, shaped around a racial ideology, were created. Those who did not conform to these new norms were sanctioned, often with death. Those who succeeded were given rewards. Within this ‘genocide society’, killing the Tutsi was not only justified, it was encouraged. Therefore, even citizens who were previously law abiding and considered themselves to be ‘good people’ could still justify killing innocent people, as they were following a set of newly legitimised norms imposed by a new temporary society. To conclude, this newly created society acted as a normalising force for the genocide. Citizens were caught up in violence and due to the overwhelming homogeneity of belief they took on a set of norms and values that justified them killing their neighbours, and therefore taking part in a mass slaughter of the Tutsi.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude this essay, the genocide that occurred in Rwanda in 1994 demonstrated a mobilisation of extreme violence and an ideology that fostered a fierce hatred towards the Tutsi group. Within the 100 days that ensued, killings were planned and deliberate. Militias were specifically trained to kill quickly and efficiently, as many as 1,000 human beings every 20 minutes (Melvern, 2000). There are numerous accounts of this shocking incident, whereby authors have attempted to provide reasons for how an event of this magnitude could occur. When studying the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, it is important to recognise that it cannot be explained solely through one institution or phenomena alone. There are a range of different factors, spreading across a large space of time, that can be called upon to explain the violence. This essay provides an overview of four different lines of explanation of the genocide, and links them to one overarching explanation. This explanation involves the processes of racialisation that were occurring within Rwanda through its history, leading up to and during the genocide. These processes refer to the ways in which previous, and often harmless, ethnic differences between the Tutsi and Hutu were transformed into more concrete racial differences. As Totten and Ubaldo (2011) state, ‘Tutsi’ and ‘Hutu’ previously were more occupational titles rather than racial titles, and there was often an overlap as a citizen could become a Tutsi or Hutu by partaking in particular work. But, as argued by Pieterse (1997), the differences between the Tutsi and Hutu were created, which subsequently led to hatred and violence. When viewing the differences between the Tutsi and Hutu within a racial framework, many contributors over Rwanda’s history saw the two groups as fundamentally different; despite the fact they shared the same language, religion and other cultural practices. Therefore, when developing an idea of how the genocide came about, it is important to create links between different institutions and phenomena in order to obtain a comprehensive account. This essay argues that the four specific dimensions discussed above, which are considered to be of particular importance, all contribute and relate to a process of racialisation, involving a sustaining of a racial ideology within Rwanda, which advocated a belief that the Tutsi were somehow different, dangerous and inherently delinquent, and therefore compelled and justified ordinary citizens to partake in a tragic mass slaughter of around 800,000 people.

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