

The International Coffee Economy and the Production of Genocide in Rwanda

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Abstract:

This paper argues that the genocide in Rwanda is both an historical event as well as a lingering and productive part of our global social imaginary. I argue that much of the academic work on the genocide does not address the second aspect but instead uses either a methodologically social scientific or historicist approach to explain why the genocide occurred. Both approaches, however, tacitly adopt an empiricist and transitive theory of causality which cannot explain the structured material relations within which the genocide was produced. I turn to Louis Althusser's concept of structured causality to find an alternative method for historicizing the genocide; one which treats the genocide neither as part of a universal trend nor as a contingent historical anomaly. The second half of the paper re-imagines the genocide by placing it within the global coffee economy. This approach elucidates the economic, cultural, state, and ideological registers at which the genocide was eventually produced. Focusing on the social relations surrounding coffee production, ethnic tension between Hutu and Tutsi can be displaced as the primary cause of genocide. Representing the genocide in terms of structural causality illustrates how ethnic tensions exist as only one set of overdetermined exploitative relationships which—in addition to the relations between colonizer and colonized, rich and poor, farmer and *evolué*, northerner and southerner, coffee producer and coffee consumer, etc.—coalesced in genocide.

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Therefore, dealing with African societies' "historicity" requires more than simply giving an account of what occurs on the continent itself...It also presupposes a critical delving into Western history and the theories that claim to interpret it.

—Achille Mbembe

Here, then, are the two ends of the chain: the economy is determinant, but in the last instance...in the long run, the run of History. But History 'asserts itself' through the multiform world of the superstructure, from local tradition to international circumstance...Like the map of Africa before the great explorations, this theory remains a realm sketched in outline, with its great mountain chains and rivers, but often unknown in detail beyond a few well-known regions.

—Louis Althusser

The 1994 genocide in Rwanda was, and continues to be, a global event. While the vast majority of wounds were sustained within Rwanda's national borders, the violence was produced at many different locations through complex and highly stratified material relationships.² Foreign aid donors, commodity markets, and international lending institutions formed the economic-material base on which a deadly mixture of ethnic radicalization, arms exports, foreign military support, forced democratization, impotent UN intervention, hate radio, elite manipulation, individual complicity and regional instability fused with widespread fears of an invading Tutsi-refugee army. Even after the genocide has been declared over, its effects continue to reverberate globally in the form of refugee camps, an international war crimes tribunal, the redistribution of military alliances, economic relations, and humanitarian priorities as well as the stimulation of ongoing deadly conflicts throughout the region. In addition to these more (or less) material causes and consequences, the genocide continues to be discursively reconstituted through the mass media, documents by human rights groups, international acts of remembrances, expressions of collective guilt, confessions and testimonies, the production of a major motion picture, and numerous academic books, articles, and conferences on the topic. While many conflicts in Africa—like the war in the Congo, itself the

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²Mamdani, for example, highlights the fact that both academic and popular accounts of the genocide are “silent” concerning the degree to which the genocide resulted from processes external to Rwanda's national boundary creating “a widespread tendency to assume” that the genocide was “an outcome of processes that unfolded within the same boundaries”(8). However, while Mamdani portrays the genocide as a regional event, I understand the genocide as having been produced at many overlapping sites including the sub-national, national, regional, and international. To avoid discursively reconstituting the genocide as situated neatly within Rwanda's national borders, I refrain from using the phrase “Rwandan genocide” and instead employ “the genocide in Rwanda” or, simply, “the genocide.”

result of the genocide—linger on in relative obscurity, the violence in Rwanda is a commonly referenced global *sign* continually intersecting disciplined academic debates and public discourse alike. In short, the genocide was an international event which, through globalized mass communications, remains an important part of our global social imaginary.

For those—like myself—who did not experience the genocide first-hand, the genocide has become real only in its effects and as mediated through different apparatuses of representation. For many, the genocide in Rwanda is only known textually and, as a result, its meaning, history, and causal explanations cannot be separated from the political contestations within which those representations have been produced. This does not mean, however, that representations of the genocide are not real or do not produce their own effects. Johan Pottier (2002) argues that since the outbreak of genocide, “numerous journalist, aid and relief workers, diplomats, politicians and academics have involved themselves with Rwanda and embarked on a mental crusade to make sense of a situation seemingly drained of every form of logic and morality” (202). Through these efforts, Rwanda and eastern Zaire have come “to be re-imagined... through a synchronized production of knowledge” (4) in ways which have unfortunately helped justify the Rwandan Patriotic Front’s devastating expansion of the war into the Congo. This paper takes Pottier’s political challenge to “re-imagine Rwanda”. However, instead of focusing on the relationship between representations of genocide and immediate developments within the Great Lakes region, I argue that previous ways of imaging the genocide have constituted the violence as resulting from historically contingent ethnic conflict. Using Althusser’s concept of structural causality, I imagine the genocide as produced within the structured material relations of neoliberal and postcolonial capital.³ This re-imagining is important for two reasons: it translates the genocide into a fundamentally global phenomenon and it challenges the de-politicizing “ethnic conflict” accounts by re-articulating the genocide as a symptom of global capital.

The first representations of the genocide came mostly from journalists who—having learned the trope from the Bosnian conflict—falsely proclaimed the genocide to be a sudden

³While many scholars of the genocide address the “economic factors” present in Rwanda during the early 1990s, few offer a systematically critical/Marxist account. This is undoubtedly due to the belief that, in the case Rwanda, ethnic rivalry trumps class antagonism. Mamdani, for example, rightly points out that political economy perspectives like underdevelopment theory can “only explain violence when it result[s] from a clash between market-based identities: either class or division of labor” (19). Today, however, “postcolonial political violence” cuts “*across* social classes rather than between them” (19) therefore making these economic arguments largely outdated. This paper avoids an economic Marxist take on the genocide by offering an Althusserian theory of structural causality which describes the genocide as overdetermined contradiction taking place within a global and regional set of structured relationships.

explosion of “ancient hatreds.”⁴ These fallacious, racist, and ahistorical accounts provoked scholars—including specialists in the Great Lakes region, historians, and political scientists—to correct these popular, yet specious, claims. As identifying the causes of genocide becomes a cottage industry in itself, scholars have produced a considerable literature on the causes of genocide, much of which is more rigorously social scientific and historical than earlier journalistic accounts.

This paper identifies and critiques two different directions the scholarly writing on the genocide has taken—one methodologically social scientific and the other historicist. While these two approaches are vast improvements over “ancient hatreds” accounts, they both fail to grasp the highly contingent yet globally structured relations which produced the genocide. On the one hand, methodologically social scientific approaches identify and test key variables—“democratization,” “poverty,” “ethnic composition,” “elite manipulation”—to discover which ones lead to acts of violence like genocide. These accounts assume that the genocide in Rwanda is *essentially* similar to other acts of violence in Bosnia, Somalia, Cambodia, Palestine, etc. On the other hand, historicist approaches situate the genocide as a unique event playing out within a field of historical contingency. Historicist approaches tend to assume that the genocide is an isolated event emerging from particular, and often local, contexts.

Althusser’s concept of structured causality, however, opens up the possibility for of capturing both the particular historical realities as well as the globally structured social relations which produce genocide. Because structural causality is always complex and only knowable symptomatically, I do not claim to explicate *the* cause of genocide. Using Althusser as a theoretical guide, I instead arrange the historical evidence around the intersection of the Rwandan and international coffee economies thereby narrating the genocide as productive of, and produced through, complex circuits of global capital. While many causal explanations of the genocide are already well traversed within the academic literature—ethnic rivalry, elite manipulation, UN failure,

⁴For example, a week into the genocide Scott Peterson reported that “tribal bloodshed” and “savage killing” have created an atmosphere in which violence is “lurking around corners among muddy trains and behind thick undergrowth” (April 13, 1994). His next dispatches refer to the conflict as an “ethnic slaughter” (April 19, 1994a) erupting from “latent rivalries between the Hutu and Tutsi tribes” (April 19, 1994b). Donatella Lorch of the *New York Times* claimed that the assassination of President Habyarimana “reignited the centuries-old hatred between the majority Hutu ethnic group...and the minority Tutsis” (April 25, 1994). Keith B. Richburg of *The Washington Post* referred to the violence as “tribal bloodletting” (Sept. 24, 1994). In some cases these initial reactions were later adapted into sophisticated ethnic hatreds accounts whereby violence is represented as the *necessary* result of historically constituted ethnicities. The clichéd trope of “the heart of darkness” was also used to naturalize the violence, situating it within a well-worn narrative; the horror Marlow saw a hundred years ago still exists today. Jennifer Parmelee (April 24, 1994) of the *Washington Post*, for example, wrote that Rwanda was “plung[ing] deep, deep into the heart of darkness...There is no ideology or religious zeal at work—just raw hatred.”

economic crisis, etc.—such accounts often neglect the role structured material relationships played in producing genocide. I argue that by taking the coffee economy, as opposed to ethnicity, as the privileged framework of analysis it becomes possible to see the genocide as an overdetermined contradiction produced within the totality of global capitalism.

Narrating the genocide's causality

Many social scientists attempt to isolate the genocide's causal variables in a quest to find the root cause of the violence. Bhavnani and Backer (2000), for example, expand Fearon and Laitin's model of spiral and in-group policing equilibria to explain the varying levels of violence between Rwanda and Burundi. Their model tracks how messaging and interactions change during an "episode of violence" (288) allowing them to "generate predictions about the duration and magnitude of collective violence" (305).⁵ Other social scientists use the genocide as one case study useful in proving, or disproving, a general set of hypotheses about intra-national conflict in general. For example, Jack Snyder (2000) deploys the genocide as supporting evidence for his claim that democratization creates instability when hijacked by nationalist elites (296-306). Likewise, Benjamin Valentino (2004) draws from eight cases, including Rwanda, to prove that "mass killing" is a strategic policy forged by elites and executed by a small group of "true believers" and psychopaths (178-188).⁶ Many writers in a methodological social scientific vein conclude their arguments by suggesting policy strategies for containing conflict.

While it may be argued that methodologically driven social scientific accounts help examine macro-political trends and offer potential policy solutions, these accounts tend to assume that Western academics are omnipotently and benevolently poised to prescribe cures for such conflict.

⁵While Bhavnani and Backer's (2000) analysis centers on Rwanda and Burundi, they claim that their model can "generate predictions about the duration and magnitude of collective violence" in places as varied as "Chechnya, East Timor, and Kosovo" (305). Likewise, de Figueiredo and Weingast (1999) use a rational choice model to explain why "citizens whose primary interest is in peace choose to support bloody ethnic conflict" (261). They find that, like in the case of former Yugoslavia, ethnic violence results when political leaders had a "tenuous hold on power" and there existed considerable "fear among the citizenry" and "uncertainty about the true intentions of propagators of violence" (263). Many other methodologically social scientific studies do not address the genocide in depth but instead examine the general causes of "ethnic conflict" or "interethnic violence" more generally. In these studies Rwanda appears as one data point among many. For example, Gurr (2000) identifies 116 nations with "[d]isadvantaged and politically active minorities" (12). He then assembles data—including size of the minority, percentage of total population, type of state government (old democracy through autocracy), the type of ethnopolitical group (ethnonationalists, indigenous peoples, religious sects etc.), demographic information, etc.—in order to compute which variable, if present, will lead to violence. In addition, Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler (1998) argue that civil wars, like the one in Rwanda, do not result primarily from the distribution and type of ethnopolitical groups but on income levels, presence of natural resources, and population densities (1998: 571). Using a rational choice model they later argue that Africa is particularly war-prone because "its economies have performed so poorly both absolutely and relative to other regions" (Collier and Hoeffler, 2002: 14).

⁶Snyder and Jervis (1999), for example, use the genocide as one example of how the security dilemma can explain the cause of civil wars.

The prominent African post-colonial theorist Achille Mbembe (2001), however, sees such scholarship as endemic of the academic work which merely reifies Africans as fundamentally devoid of human agency. Such literature, according to Mbembe, is essentially uninterested in “comprehending the political in Africa” or “producing knowledge in general” but instead produces exclusively “what is immediately useful” for the purpose of “social engineering” (7). This work tends to be “dogmatically programmatic,” “cavalier,” and “reductionist” (7). Furthermore, in assuming that the violence in Rwanda is essentially similar to other instances of intra-national violence many social scientists eviscerate history, replacing it with a certain timelessness and placelessness which assumes that the lived practices of particular Rwandans have no value since only Western observers can make meaning out of “senseless” violence.

With Mbembe’s critique in mind, the more convincing and attentive scholarship addressing the causes of genocide is often done by historians, regional specialists, and social scientists who situate the genocide within its particular historical, political, economic, and social conditions. Catharine and David Newbury’s article “A Catholic Mass in Kigali” (1999) provides a particularly compelling example of a well historicized causal account of the genocide. They argue that while the genocide is often considered an “ethnic conflict” it is important to recognize that ethnicity is neither “an enduring, unchanging element of social formation” nor “an instantaneous, recent invention” (294). Instead, political leaders carefully planned the genocide by mobilizing ethnic divisions during a time when “Rwanda’s state and society were in severe crisis” due to “changing configuration[s] of regional, class, and ethnic divisions in Rwanda” and “the growing militarization of state and society” resulting from the invasion by Rwandan Patriotic Front coinciding with failed “political liberalization and multipartyism” (296). They conclude their article by recognizing that while the genocide was planned by individual actors, it had “strong overtones of class conflict” even if ethnicity “served as the language through which these fears and ambitions were expressed” (316). Unlike the social scientific approaches, this account recognizes the complexity of the genocide and therefore refuses to boil it down to an underlying logic or set of variables. Other scholars similarly situate the genocide within a “complex” series of political, economic, social, international, and historical contingencies which made the violence possible.⁷

⁷For example, Peter Uvin (1998) argues that the “processes that led to genocide...were multiple and complex” and included extreme poverty, lack of education, governmental corruption, “deep-felt frustration and cynicism,” expanding inequality, elite manipulation, civil war, and institutionalized racism (3). Villia Jefremovas (2002) similarly contends that “the factors that made the genocide possible are “complex” and include “[e]conomic recession, economic restructuring, population growth, patterns of elite access to power, regional politics, civil war, ‘democratization,’ the politics of other

Historicist narratives have been invaluable in recognizing the genocide's complexity and refuting the "ancient hatreds" explanations for genocide. These accounts, however, often presuppose an uncritically contingent understanding of causality. Many scholars writing in the historicist vein tend to write about the "constructed" nature of ethnicity which recognizes that ethnicity is not an essential biological category but a social and historical relationship, constructed over time, which becomes mobilized by elites in order to cause genocide. This common narrative, however, still assumes that ethnicity is the primary motor of genocide which, once constructed, only needs to be switched on by self-serving elites. In focusing on the local contingencies which "construct" both ethnicity and elite decision-making, such accounts fail to recognize the deep, structural causes of genocide.

Althusser's concept of structural causality is important because it allows us to recognize knowledge as produced neither outside structured relations nor independent of ideology.⁸ For Althusser, the School is an important apparatus in which ideology is produced (Althusser, 2001) and, as such, is a potential site for political intervention. Like Hayden White who argues that no historical writing exists "which is not at the same time 'philosophy of history'" (1973: xi), I contend that attributing causality is ultimately a political act—the politics of academic representation takes place in the claim: "This caused that." Therefore, an argument which explores structural totality as opposed to ethnicity as the genocide's "cause" works to fashion an argument in which neo-liberal and post-colonial capital become implicated in the production of genocide. Doing so is an attempt to counter other academic ideological productions which claim that capitalism is benevolent, necessary, natural, and mutually beneficial.

Althusser and Structural Causality

Most attempts at understanding the genocide's root causes—whether methodological social scientific or historicist—assume what Althusser calls a transitive theory of causality. Transitive, or Cartesian, causality presupposes a "planar space" in which each phenomenon has "an object-cause" and plays out in a homogenous space in a "linear" fashion (Althusser & Balibar 1997, 182). In other words, causality is treated like billiard game "in which homogeneous but atomized elements bounce

countries of the Great Lakes region, and international policies..." (109). For other accounts for the genocide's historical causes see: African Rights (1995), Prunier (1995), Newbury (1998), des Forges (1999), and Chrétien (2003).

⁸Ideology here does not mean extreme beliefs, falsehoods propagated for political gains, propaganda, etc. For Althusser, ideology is the whole system of language, symbols, ideas, texts, etc.—a semi-autonomous superstructure—which constructs the world as lived by the subject. In this way, ideology is not internal (i.e. ideas held in one's head) but instead the very structure through which one becomes a subject and acts meaningfully within the structural totality. Ideology, therefore, is present at all registers of human action and is the reproduction of the mode of production in everyday life (Althusser, 2001).

off each other in a linear and unique sequence lacking any general structure beyond the cumulative effects” of their individual interactions (Resch, 1992: 47).⁹ It is assumed that these interaction can be understood empirically by removed observers—a social scientist, historian, etc.—who separate the “pure” and “impure” essences (Althusser & Balibar 1997, 36). True knowledge, like gold, is found only when the outside dirt has been removed and the “real object,” the essence of a thing, is made visible (Althusser & Balibar 1997, 37). Such an empiricist approach to knowledge, however, rests on an assumed difference between the real object and the essence of the real object, which is always an abstraction. In the scholarly work on the genocide, for example, the “real object”—that which the observer sets out to discover—is often the genocide’s root cause. To say, therefore, that the genocide was caused by “ancient hatreds,” “deprivation,” or “elite manipulation” regiments the true complexity to an essential component which does not actually exist outside its complex contextually.

Althusser argues that Marx undermined this empiricist theory of transitive causality by imploding the distinction between real object and real object’s essence, contending instead that only real objects exists. Real objects, however, are never “‘pure’ sensuous intuition[s] or mere ‘representation[s]’” but always “an *ever-already* complex raw material” existing within a structured set of social relations (Althusser & Balibar 1997, 43). Furthermore, a transitive theory of causality cannot recognize the possibility that knowledge is itself produced. If knowledge is simply an arrangement of data bits received experientially, the empiricist must assume a stable relationship between observer and observed fact (Smith, 1984: 115-16). Althusser, however, recognizes that the production of knowledge is itself structured such that an “objective” methodological or historical analysis is impossible.

Althusser’s theory of structural causality not only avoids the empiricist assumptions of transitive causality but also situates the politics of knowledge production. For Althusser, there exists one structure—the mode of production—consisting of a base and a semi-autonomous superstructure made up of different registers including the economic, political, juridical, ideological, and cultural. Althusser contends that phenomena are not *caused* by identifiable sets of relationships but are “absent cause” and exists as “the entire system of *relationships*” (Jameson, 1981: 36). The structure is not, therefore, “an essence *outside* the economic phenomena which comes and alters their

⁹Althusser also critiques expressive causality, found most evidently in Hegelianism, which assumes that “the whole in question [can] be reducible to an *inner essence*” (RC, 186). This understanding of causality, however, is not relevant to our discussion here.

aspects, forms and relations” but is instead “immanent in its effects...*the whole existence of the structure consists of its effects*” (Althusser & Balibar 1997, 188-89). Different regions of the structure produce different, and often contradictory, effects. Instead, structured regions—“deep and complex” sets of relationships—operate within a global mode of production (Althusser & Balibar 1997, 184) and cannot be reduced to a simple chain of cause and effect. For example, the coffee economy in Rwanda can be seen as one region, with its own set of historical and contradictory relationships, which, nonetheless, is always part of the international coffee economy as well as the entire global mode of production. While the Rwandan coffee economy is effected by the totality, it also produces effects and is therefore part of the structured totality.

Because the structure is overdetermined and therefore irreducible to its parts, *the* cause of an event can never be ascertained. One can, however, understand the vague contours of the infinitely complex structural totality through a symptomatic analysis of certain key moments when overdetermined contradiction become uncontainable and the structure experiences the radical reformation of social relationships, a “ruptural unity” (Althusser, 1970: 100). The Russian Revolution, for Althusser, cannot be understood as a class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat—i.e. a transitive causal relationship between two identifiable groups in binary contradiction. Instead, the Russian Revolution was a “ruptural unity” created by many contradictions including those produced by “capitalist and imperialist exploitation,” contradictions between capitalist production and a medieval state, and class struggle *within* the ruling class (between Tsarists, rebellious nobility, industrialists, liberals, petty bourgeoisie, and anarchists), in addition to a series of “exceptional circumstances” including the presence of a sophisticated “revolutionary elite” and the support of the French and British who were also interested in overthrowing the Tsar (Althusser, 1970: 94-97). In other words, the Russian Revolution was possible because of the “accumulation and exacerbation of historical contradictions that would have been incomprehensible” anywhere other than 1917 Russia (*italics deleted*; Althusser, 1970: 97). Within a structured totality, overdetermined contradiction is neither the unfolding of random contingent events nor the manifestation of an overarching “general contradiction” (i.e. class struggle) but always a unique set of overlapping, intersecting, and irreducible contradictions at multiple registers.

My account of the genocide in Rwanda insists that events cannot be known by finding *the* root cause. Nor should Western academics like myself ever assume a privileged vantage point from which to make expert declarations about what actually caused the genocide. The narration below, therefore, should not be taken as a cohesive story but as a production of the genocide with a

particular political purpose in mind. Because narration is always political, an Althusserian examination of Rwanda's coffee economy makes new connections not possible if the genocide were once again articulated through ethnic categories. By destabilizing conventional ethnic understandings of the genocide, we can see how colonialists, colonized, Hutus, Tutsis, northerners, southerners, farmers, *evolués*, refugees, coffee producers, coffee drinkers, arms manufacturers, development agents, UN soldiers, etc—all produced the genocide. Secondly, by seeing the genocide in terms of structured materiality it becomes clear that genocide in Rwanda was not an isolated case of unthinkable ethnic violence but instead a particular example of the violence produced through radical rupture within the global economy.

Coffee: the Production of Genocide

1. Coffee: colonialism to independence

As the Rwandan kingdom was centralizing and expanding under the reign of Rwabugiri (c. 1860-1895), “Hutu” and “Tutsi” became important social, political, and economic categories. During this time, Tutsi came to denote lineages of cattle-wealthy chiefs close to the king while Hutu referred to everyone else (C. Newbury, 1988: 11). German and Belgian colonialists used these ethnic markers to expedite the extraction of resources from the kingdom. Guided by the need to erect an “economically solvent colonial state,” the colonial administration established indirect rule whereby Tutsi chiefs served as “intermediaries” between the European and Native populations (C. Newbury, 1988: 53). In exchange for overseeing the growing of cash crops and the building of infrastructure, chiefs received weapons and military support helping solidify their political control (C. Newbury, 1988: 53). As a result, many chiefs and subchiefs profited substantially from the colonial administration's efforts to “integrate Rwanda into the world economy” (des Forges, 1999: 35). The Europeans ideologically justified indirect rule using the Hamitic Myth asserting that Tutsis were Hamites while Hutus were inferior Negroids. The Hamitic hypothesis was also taught to Tutsis in schools and seminaries throughout Rwanda where it helped interpellate Tutsi subjects as superior to Hutus (des Forges, 1999: 36).¹⁰ The Church served as a powerful apparatus for the ideological

¹⁰The Hamitic Myth, as colonial ideology, developed differently within various contexts and needs. Sanders (1969), for example, illustrates how the story of Ham originated within Jewish oral tradition as a way to explain captivity. It was later used by Europeans to justify slavery by interpellating Africans as non-human. John Hanning Speke's version of the myth was produced within a European intellectual environment which needed not to justify slavery but to explain how Africans could be subhuman while still possessing the ability to create the complex political structures which were then being discovered. Speke's myth, therefore, was useful to maintain “the image of the Negro as an inferior being” while contending that “development could come to him only by mediation of the white race” (Sanders, 1969: 528-29). Speke's Hamitic Myth was used to argue that Tutsis were superior to Hutus because they were only half Negroid and half Hamite, i.e. European (Sanders, 1969: 528-29).

justification for an indirect rule founded on ethnic difference. For example, Léon Classe, a German priest influential in advising the Belgian take-over of Rwanda, vocally supported "medieval-style" land ownership with a Tutsi aristocracy ruling over the majority of landless Hutus (Chrétien, 2003: 273). Starting in the 1930s, this ideological separation between Hutu and Tutsi was reinforced through the policies of the colonial state which distributed ethnic identity cards in order to systematize the practice of reserving administrative jobs and higher education for Tutsis (des Forge, 1999: 37).

German imperialists were originally attracted to the kingdom of Rwanda because of its good agricultural conditions and well-organized political structure. Around the turn of the century, missionaries brought coffee cultivation to German East Africa. While the missionaries grew primarily vegetables for local consumption, they often experimented with coffee on plantation farms surrounding the missions (Kieran, 1969: 52). After World War I, the Belgians, upon replacing the German colonial administration, transformed coffee production from a monastic hobby to an enforced state practice. During the 1920s colonial powers intensified African coffee production as European countries sought to undermine Brazil's international coffee monopoly (Dinham and Hines, 1983: 52). As a result, African coffee production increased ten-fold during the 1930s as Europeans used tariffs to exclude Latin American producers from European markets (Dinham and Hines, 1983: 53). By 1931 colonial authorities in Rwanda began pursuing official policies requiring chiefs and subchiefs to force their subjects to cultivate coffee for export (C. Newbury, 1988; 141-42). Tutsi chiefs used their "traditional authority" to levy *uburetwa* (labor tribute) which meant forcing the peasantry to work on the chief's plantations and build infrastructure for the colonial government. Because Tutsis were excluded from *uburetwa*, the greatest burden fell on the Hutu population. Eventually *uburetwa* became codified into colonial law giving chiefs further backing from the colonial state making it increasingly difficult for Hutus to avoid (C. Newbury, 1988; 142-43). In 1949 *uburetwa* was officially abolished and replaced with taxation justified as more humane than forced labor. In reality, however, taxation did not replace *uburetwa* but augmented it as Hutus were forced to pay taxes as well as work on private plantations owned by local chiefs (C. Newbury, 1988; 146). Supported by colonial powers, chiefs and subchiefs increasingly consolidated control over land, tax revenue, agricultural products, and labor (C. Newbury, 1983; 263). The colonial state began enforcing coffee cultivation as well as specific pruning, spraying, and mulching procedures which brought farmers increasingly under the colonial state's authority (Newbury and Newbury, 2000; 868).

By mid-century the drastic economic and political inequalities within Rwanda had become impossible to ignore. Many Hutus—especially those in North and West Rwanda which were conquered by the Belgian military and subjected to Tutsi control as the 1920s—began vocally opposing the Tutsi chiefs. In the southwest (Kinyaga) and northwest (Gisenyi and Ruhengeri) Hutu leaders, with the help of a newly sympathetic Catholic Church,¹¹ openly expressed their dissatisfaction with Tutsi rule. For example, between 1958 and 1959 the Catholic newspaper *Kinyameteka* published a series of articles detailing Hutu exploitation at the hands of the Tutsis. These voices of opposition, however, were possible, in part, because changing in the global mode of production made the clientship system increasingly untenable. By the end of the Second World War:

Social relationships became grimmer and more full of conflict at a time when, paradoxically, the neo-traditionalist forms of clientship...had become less and less a way of making money. The War had brought with it a vast expansion of the cash economy in which the Hutu had shared. The old clientship system, which was basically part of the non-monetary economy, was accordingly becoming increasingly obsolete...the old oppressive forms were perceived (and often wielded by their socially obsolescent 'beneficiaries') more harshly as they lost their real power and as their cultural legitimacy waned. (Prunier, 1995: 42)

The obsolete patron-client system of indirect rule was further challenged by the newly formed United Nations which, after sending a 1948 Visiting Commission to Rwanda, recommended that the Belgian administration push for democratization (C. Newbury, 1988: 184). Amidst growing domestic criticism, UN pressure, and the growing infeasibility of colonial rule, the Catholic Church and the colonial administration took the first steps toward democratization by providing educational and political opportunities to Hutus.

The newly educated and politicized class of Hutu *évolués* publicized the economic and political oppression to Europeans audiences as well as to the United Nations and the Catholic Church. Furthermore, they consolidated mass support through emerging political parties, social groups, and periodicals (C. Newbury, 1988: 184-90). In 1956, to aid impoverished Hutu farmers, Father Louis Pien donated a hectare of land to establish the coffee co-operative TRAFIPRO (Travail, Fidélité, Progrès) in Gitarama (Linden, 1977: 239). TRAFIPRO became an important economic and leadership opportunity for “the growing Hutu counter-élite” (Prunier, 1995: 45). In 1957 Gregoire Kayibanda, a southern Hutu businessmen and eventual first president of Rwanda,

¹¹By the late 1930s the older, European leadership within the Rwandan Catholic church was dying off. While figures like Fathers Classe and Hirth—“upper class men with rather conservative political ideas”—had been highly influential in supporting the early policies of Tutsi superiority, they were slowly being replaced by Flemish clergy from primarily working class backgrounds (Prunier, 1995: 44). This change in personnel meant that the Catholic Church was becoming increasingly sympathetic to the Hutu cause.

became head of TRAFIPRO. From this position, Kayibanda launched the *Mouvement Social Mubutu* (MSM)—the precursor to the *Parti du Mouvement et l'Emancipation Hutu* (PARMEHURU)—and established the circle which eventually became the ruling clique at independence (Mamdani, 2001: 118; Linden, 1977: 258). It was within this emerging social formation that Kayibanda and other Hutu elites wrote the Hutu Manifesto. The Manifesto—which contended that the “problem is above all a problem of political monopoly...held by one race, the mututsi” (cited in: C. Newbury, 1988: 191)—was widely circulated through the relatively new Hutu newspapers.

A few months later, Joseph Habyarimana Gitera, one of the manifesto's signatories, broke with Kayibanda and the MSM to form *l'Association pour la Promotion Sociale de la Masse* (APROSOMA). While Gitera was popular for his “impassioned, vitriolic attacks on the monarchy” he, unlike Kayibanda, “called for freedom of all oppressed groups in Rwanda, Hutu as well as poor Tutsi” (C. Newbury, 1988: 192-3; see also: Mamdani, 2001: 121-125). While Gitera could potentially appeal to both Hutu and Tutsi, Kayibanda, being a “teacher and leader of several organizations” including TRAFIPRO, had the skill and opportunity to build “an organization at the grass roots, based on a structure of local cells, with a party organizer on each local hill” (C. Newbury, 1988: 192-93). In addition, Kayibanda worked hard to create “linkages” between the Hutu *évolue* and the rural population (C. Newbury, 1988: 188). Despite their differences, MSM, APROSOMA, and other contemporary Hutu organizations worked to interpellate, articulate, and mobilize a Hutu identity as a “people reaching for power” under the common banner of Hutu Power (Mamdani, 2001: 117). In the face of the economic invariability of colonial rule, ethnicity became an important opportunity to mobilize against existing exclusionary political and economic structures.

However, while ethnicity was successfully being mobilized by Hutu elites, economic and political inequality remained largely unchanged. For example, by 1958 the success of Rwandan coffee sales transformed TRAFIPRO into a prosperous organization worth half a million francs and representing more than a thousand members (Linden, 1977: 239). However, despite originally being an organization for Hutu farmers, by 1958 the membership and board of directors was dominated by Tutsis (Linden, 1977: 239).

During the 1950s, a series of democratic reforms, resulting from domestic and international pressure, led to a gradual slippage of power away from Tutsi chiefs. In 1956 the Belgian colonial authority oversaw popular elections for the subchiefdom electoral colleges resulting in Tutsis retaining only 33 percent of the seats (C. Newbury, 1988: 187). By the time king Mutara Rudahigwa died in 1959, the transition to democracy was becoming increasingly ethnicized. “Moderate parties”

which organized both Hutus and Tutsis lost seats to the Hutu power PARMEHUTU and the royalist Tutsi party, Union Nationale Rwandaise (UNAR) (des Forges, 1999: 38). In January 1961, 80 percent of Rwandans voted to end the Tutsi monarchy thereby opening the door for a transition toward independence. After independence in July 1962 Kayibanda's PARMEHUTU party won a large majority declaring a "Hutu Revolution." Shortly before and after independence, a failed invasions by Tutsi refugees sparked a series of pogroms against the Rwandan Tutsi population killing tens of thousands and turning hundreds of thousands into refugees (Uvin, 1998: 20). These attacks were used by the newly minted Hutu politicians to create a "myth of the Hutu revolution" and a broader sense of "Hutu solidarity" (des Forges, 1999: 39). These reprisals also benefited many Hutus who received both pillaged goods and land from Tutsi victims (des Forges, 1999: 39).

The rise of PARMEHUTU to power, however, did little to ease the deprivation experienced by the impoverished Hutu majority. The European population and former Tutsi aristocracy maintained the "well-paid jobs, foreign education opportunities, cars and fuel, brick houses, telephones, and other instruments of development and power" (Uvin, 1998: 20). In fact, the majority of the rural population saw little change in their economic condition while the new Hutu "state class" of politicians and cronies enjoyed the political and economic benefits once reserved for Tutsi elites (Uvin, 1998: 21).

2. The Beginning of the International Coffee Agreement

Shortly after independence Rwanda became a member of the newly formed International Coffee Agreement (ICA). Arranged during a 1962 United Nations conference, the ICA set out to stabilize the coffee market through imposing quotas and price controls on the forty-three exporting and twenty-four importing countries comprising 99 percent of the world coffee market. Large coffee roasters, such as General Foods, backed the agreement since stabilizing the commodity market would provide more accurate profit predictions and allowed them to secure long term, reduced price contracts (Bates, 1995: 150-53). Large coffee producing countries, such as Brazil and Columbia, also favored the ICA because they were coming under siege by cheaper African Robusta coffee¹² and sellers predicted that fixed prices would attract buyers to superior quality.

¹²The international coffee market is bifurcated between two commercially grown species—Arabica and Robusta. Arabica represents 70 percent of the current world coffee production and is grown mostly in Brazil and Colombia where the conditions and altitude are most suitable. Robusta coffee is more durable, pest resistant, and suitable to low altitudes and humid conditions found in Indonesia, West Africa, Brazil, and Vietnam (Dinam and Hines, 52). Robusta requires fewer inputs and less labor to produce larger, lower valued yields. In contrast, Arabica coffee requires more intensive cultivation for smaller, yet more valuable, yields (Carr, 1993: 24 & 32). Robusta coffee is used primarily in instant coffee and, as a result, became increasingly valuable during the 1960s and reached its high-value mark in the 1970s when

The ICA was structurally designed to concentrated control over the coffee economy in the hands of the United States, Western European countries, and the large South American coffee producers. Votes within the ICA's overseeing body—the International Coffee Organization (ICO)—were distributed in proportion to the volume of coffee produced or imported. For example, in 1968, Brazil (the largest exporter) received 332 votes while the United States (the largest importer) received 400 votes. Rwanda received 6 votes (Austrian Treaty Series, 1968). This was particularly difficult for African countries who received fewer votes despite the fact that larger percentages of their total economy were coffee dependent. Burundi, for example, received 8 votes despite being dependent on coffee for 93 percent of its exports (Dinham and Hines, 1983: 56).

The debates over the ratification of the ICA illustrate the changes in the global mode of production away from national production and toward increased global market integration. For example, Ethiopia's delegate, Mr. Ogbagzy, contended that the ICA would help cap the total coffee production thereby both keeping the price of coffee high and creating incentives for underdeveloped countries to diversify their economies (United Nations, 1962: 33). Similarly, delegates from the largest importing countries argued that the ICA is a strategy for diversifying the global economy and building stability into global markets. The representative from the United States contended that even though his country “traditionally believed in open trade and free enterprise” there were definitely times when “government intervention became a matter of necessity” (United Nations, 1962: 25).

The ICA was a mixed blessing for many African countries. On the one hand, fixed prices insured prices above 1962 levels. On the other hand, quotas locked many African countries into small and inflexible market shares during a period when they foresaw being able to out-produce these levels as international demand for Robusta coffee increased (Dinham and Hines, 1983: 57). Many African countries signed the ICA fearing that failure to do so would result in Brazil selling its massive coffee reserves thereby bottoming out international coffee prices and destroying the fledgling African coffee economy. As the international cost of coffee increased after the signing of the ICA,¹³ the Rwandan Hutu elite began to consolidate control over the increasingly valuable domestic coffee market.

demand for instant coffee was at its peak (Dinam and Hines, 52 & 54). The geography and climate of Rwanda make it suitable for the cultivation of Arabica coffee.

¹³Bates (1997: 25) cites three studies which all conclude that the ICA quota system resulted in higher international coffee prices. One study found that prices were 47% higher in 1982 and 17% higher in 1983 than they would have been without quotas. Another concluded that prices were overall 42% higher with quotas than without.¹³ While Bates argues

After independence President Kayibanda transformed TRAFIPRO into a state-run marketing board which, by 1966, maintained 27 national shops and 70 coffee purchasing points throughout Rwanda (Pottier, 1993: 11). Northern Hutu elites were highly skeptical of the economic power of TRAFIPRO and argued that it was a monopoly operating in favor of southern businessmen from Gitarama at the expense of those from the north (Pottier, 1993: 11). By the late-1960s TRAFIPRO was responsible for fostering “regional bias, corruption and [a] climate of terror” as it became “the backbone of an authoritarian regime” in which “northern businessmen found themselves pushed out of business and out of politics” (Pottier, 1993: 11). Such intense regionalism created a considerable legitimacy problem for Kayibanda who—despite the regionalized inequality existing in Rwanda—claimed to rule for the entire Hutu majority. To ward off challengers, Kayibanda once again rallied around the “intrinsic worth of being Hutu” forging an rhetorical “congruence between demographic majority and democracy” (Prunier, 1995: 58). Kayibanda’s racialized democratic ideology was tenuous, however, since it contradicted the fact that very few Hutus actually benefited outside a small circle of political cronies (Prunier, 1995: 58).

As coffee became more valuable and access to the coffee economy became increasingly monopolized by a handful of Southern business elites, Kayibanda’s regime deflected the regionalist divisions by targeting Tutsis. By 1967 20,000 Tutsis had been killed and 300,000 forced to leave Rwanda (des Forges, 1999: 40). By 1973 “Public Safety Committees” were carrying out routine violence against Tutsis. Some speculate this violence was started by southern Hutus trying to “minimize differences with northerners” while others believe the violence to be provoked by northern Hutus who hoped to create the conditions for a military coup (des Forges, 1999: 40-41). These reprisals also took a regional dimension when “northern and southern Hutu politicians” used the “vigilante committees” to “settle personal accounts with figures of authority, quite apart from the ethnic context” (Prunier, 1995: 61). The violence, carried out by both Kayibanda’s government and northern Hutu groups, were intending “to resolve differences among Hutu at the expense of the Tutsi” The resulting uncertainty, however, created the conditions allowing Major-General Juvénal Habyarimana, supported by northern elites, to seize power in a July 1973 bloodless coup.

Habyarimana’s coup was situated within a moment when the previously colonial ethnic and regional divisions had become further solidified within the post-colonial state apparatus. While

that these studies might contain methodological flaws, he concludes himself that the ICA was successful in raising international prices.

Habyarimana helped ease the ethnic tensions which had become the hallmark of Rwandan politics during the 1960s and early 1970s (Mamdani, 2001: 140), the contradictions between the impoverished rural population and the small urban population continued to grow. Exacerbated urban and rural divisions were produced, in part, through the efforts of Habyarimana to gain the favor of Western liberal capitalist countries. Fearing the regional political and economic power centralized in TRAFIPRO, Habyarimana abolished the coffee cooperative (Pottier, 1993: 23 & 11). In addition, Habyarimana instituted a series of economic reforms, known as "planned liberalism," which pushed for greater privatization under the assumption "that peasant living standards could be improved even while encouraging an unrestrained private sector" (Newbury and Newbury, 2000; 872). These policies resulted in greater economic disparities as much of the rural "commercial outlets, agricultural supplies, consumer goods, credit, [and] transport" came to be owned by well-connected individuals such as "traders, absentee landlords, civil servants, and military personnel" (Newbury and Newbury, 2000; 873-74).

In order to attract international investors, Habyarimana renamed the ruling political party the *Mouvement Revolutionnaire National pour le Développement* (MRND) and parliament was termed the National Development Council (Uvin 1998: 24). As a result of "liberalization", wealthy farmers had bought so much land belonging to poor farmers that by the mid-1980s nearly 26 percent of the population was landless (Uvin, 1998: 112-13). By 1991 43 percent of the land was held by 16 percent of the landowners (des Forges, 1999: 45). The urban elite shielded itself from rural discontent by enforcing colonial restrictions on movement preventing the growing landless population from moving to Kigali and other urban centers (Uvin, 1998: 116). During this time the urban elite in Kigali prospered enjoying unprecedented wealth, paved roads, increased automobile ownership, and plentiful fuel, building materials, and food (Newbury and Newbury, 2000; 873). On the eve of the genocide, the wealthiest Rwandans consumed 51 percent of rural revenues compared with 10 percent in 1982 (Toussaint, 2004).¹⁴

Much of this wealth was accumulated through increasing coffee revenue. The government purchased coffee from the rural population at a fixed price through its marketing board, *Rwandex*. During the coffee boom in the 1970s and 1980s, *Rwandex* increased the purchasing price for coffee from 60RFW to 120RFW thus providing substantial incentive for coffee production (Verwimp, 2003; 172.). Given that overall incomes were falling and land was becoming increasingly scarce,

¹⁴Citing: Jef, Maton. 1994. *Développement économique et social au Rwanda entre 1980 et 1993. Le dixième décile en face de l'apocalypse*. Université de Grand, Faculté de Sciences économiques, 42.

many poor farmers turned larger percentages of their land over to cash crops such as coffee (Pottier, 2002: 21). In order to further maximize the amount of coffee produced, Habyarimana instituted a series of policies favoring coffee production which included: restricting fertilizer exclusively to coffee and tea crops, delivering harsh penalties against those who “intercropped, neglected, abandoned or destroyed” their coffee trees, and vilifying those who grew competing commodities such as bananas (Verwimp, 2002: 16, 28-29). During this time international coffee sales made up the vast majority of Rwanda’s exports.¹⁵ However, the considerable gains made during this period were never reinvested as elites recklessly spent coffee profits. In fact, the money from the price stabilization fund (*Fond d’égalisation*)—established to collect the boom-time profits to secure the producer price during bust years—was channeled back to the government coffers, ultimately leaving no security net (Verwimp, 2003; 172.). The corruption and conflict of interests were so profound that, for example, Seraphin Rwabukumba—brother of Habyarimana’s wife Agathe Kanziga—ran *La Centrale* (the official importer of high-end consumer goods) as well as the National Bank’s foreign currency division. From this position, he diverted hard currency generated by the sale of coffee back into the hands of the well-connected elite (Verwimp, 2002; 23-24).

Such reckless economic policies, however, cannot be summarily dismissed as prime examples of gross mismanagement and corruption. Instead, the fragile economic structure inherited at independence, the production and proliferation of ethnic and regional tensions, and international pressure placed Rwandan elites in a position where networks of political alliances, rural pacification, and economic stability depended, to a large degree, on access to coffee revenue. During the 1980s, the high price of coffee benefited both farmers and political elites. Farmers were able to survive on small parcels by converting land to coffee production. As the rural population grew more coffee, the Habyarimana regime, in turn, secured rural loyalties by purchasing coffee at higher prices from an increasingly dependent rural population. The dual approach of both legally enforcing and economically encouraging coffee production meant more coffee was being grown, purchased from farmers in Rwandan francs and sold on the international market for hard currency. High international coffee prices, therefore, helped solidify vast patronage networks between the urban and rural populations as well as within elite circles.

¹⁵Coffee exports expanded fairly continuously from coffee’s introduction into Rwanda until the mid-1980s. By 1986 exports reached more than 42,000 tons and comprised 82% of Rwanda’s total income from exports (Sellström, 1996). In 1989 nearly 700,000 of Rwanda’s farmers were growing coffee meaning that 60 percent of the rural population was growing coffee with an average 150 bushes per household (Sellström, 1996).

Habyarimana's National Food Strategy, unveiled in the early 1980s, was an attempt to provide food security for the large rural population. This policy promoted inter-regional trade and food aid marketing designed to limit the foreign currency spent on food-stuffs. In 1988 the government took this policy to the next level by banning all food imports (Verwimp, 2002; 22). While these policies were designed to increase Rwanda's agricultural self-sufficiency, they also served to squeeze the rural population even further. The official policy of agricultural self-sufficiency and export controls provided the regime with sole control over the out-flow of foreign currency thereby freeing up increasing amounts of hard currency for the importation of luxury goods consumed by tourists, the national elite, and the small urban population (Verwimp, 2002; 23-24). The policy of forced self-sufficiency, in the end, ensured that the farming population was self-sufficient while still providing the Rwandan state with coffee beans and other exportable agricultural goods.

The siphoning of wealth from the rural population for use by northern Hutu elites created considerable food insecurity for Rwanda's large rural population. In 1987, the Rwandan government, with support of the European Community, established the *Office pour la Promotion, la Vente et l'Importation des Produits Agricoles* (OPROVIA) to stabilize the prices of key staple crops like beans and sorghum. These institutions were designed to lessen the hardships caused by shocks to Rwanda's fragile food networks. However, OPROVIA often purchased foodstuffs at above market rates while selling surplus stocks during times of shortage far below market value. While this project was helpful in stabilizing key commodities, the control of OPROVIA over food markets was limited since Habyarimana remained skeptical of centralizing commodities based on his experience with TRAFIPRO. As a result, the safety net was intentionally sabotaged when the government never reimbursed OPROVIA for the huge financial losses it suffered (Pottier, 1993: 21- 29). In 1989 Rwanda was hit simultaneously by drought and falling coffee prices which, in the absence of food reserves, culminated in the deadly *ruriganiza* famine killing hundreds and sent more than 10,000 refugees to Burundi and Tanzania in search of food. Because the *ruriganiza* famine occurred in the southern Gikongoro prefecture—a region considered “quasi-lost to the RPF”—it is quite possible that the Habyarimana government intentionally withheld food aid, choosing instead to hoard the limited food reserves for military use during the anticipated RPF invasion (Verwimp, 2002: 48-50). Many elites responded to the 1988-89 *ruriganiza* famine by seizing land from farmers fleeing to Tanzania for food. Stories began circulating about officials using World Bank development funds to buy up land and cattle for personal gain (Prunier, 1995: 87-88).

As a result of these policies, a graduate deterioration of rural life took place along political and regional lines with districts previously supportive of Kayibanda being hit the hardest. For example, despite possessing 20 percent of the population, the prefectures of Gitarama and Butare received only 1 percent of the government's funding (Newbury and Newbury, 2000; 873). In addition, much of the development aid arriving during this time was channeled into the hands of the northern Hutu elite. Between 1982 and 1984 ninety percent of public investment went either to Kigali or the northern provinces of Ruhengeri, Gisenyi, or Cyangugu (Uvin, 1998: 124).

It is easy to see the contradictions built into the Rwandan economy in the years preceding the genocide. The agricultural sector became seriously strained as the large rural population was expected to be both self-sufficient and provide increasing amounts of national wealth. As more land was turned to coffee production, the system became increasingly dependent on high international coffee prices which allowed the government to buy coffee from farmers at rates high enough to offset lost food production. Despite these growing contradictions, the Rwandan economy reaped the benefits of high international coffee prices during the 1970s and early 1980s. The country experienced an average 4.9 percent annual GDP growth (1965-1989), increased school attendance, and record low inflation (4 percent) among sub-Saharan African countries (Chossudovsky, 1995).

During this time Rwanda—despite its authoritarian rule and highly stratified society—was the darling of the First World. In addition to receiving massive amounts of development aid (Uvin 1998), Rwanda was heralded as an African success story. Much of this foreign praise came from those foreigners who believed Habyarimana's rhetorical claim that Rwanda was the African paragon of democracy because it was governed by the Hutu majority (Prunier, 1995: 83). However, below the surface, "political stability" in Rwanda fluctuated with the international price of coffee with inner elite rivalries flaring up when the "sufficient financial lubrications" was found lacking (Prunier, 1995: 82).

3. The end of the ICA

In 1989 the world's largest coffee exporters and importers worked together to torpedo the renegotiation of the ICA.¹⁶ Many opponents of the ICA argued that abandoning the agreement would boost market liberalization in line with the newly hegemonic Washington consensus. In June

¹⁶Brazil was confident that it could increase its market share if the quota system was abandoned (Blackwell, 1989). Furthermore, during the twenty plus years of market quotas Brazil had successfully diversified its economy so that coffee represented only 7 percent of its exports, down from nearly half. The United States was highly critical of the ICA for two reasons: quotas limited the supply of increasingly popular Arabica coffees in favor of undesirable Robusta varieties while the "two-tier market" allowed producers to sell coffee to non-treaty countries at half price (Mooney 1989). For similar reasons the EC also joined the US in opposing the continuation of the ICA (*The Financial Times* 1989).

1989, amidst fears that the ICA would fall apart, massive sell-offs began and the international coffee prices dropped from \$1.80/pound to \$1.00/pound (Bates, 1997: 25). Prices dropped another 40 cents after July 4th when the quotas were officially ended. As the international price of coffee lost 66 percent of its value in less than two months, international institutions established to stabilize commodity prices in Africa were unable to cushion the blow. Falling coffee prices were so dramatic that in 1990, Uganda, Rwanda, and Ethiopia alone had already exceeded the European Union's Stabilization of Agricultural Exports Receipts System (Stabex)¹⁷ fund by \$847.84 million (Sharma 1992).

The collapse of coffee prices seriously impacted rural life. In 1990, the government's price for coffee fell from 125 to 100 FRw/kg forcing many farmers, despite severe penalties, to uproot their coffee trees in favor of food crops (Verwimp, 2003; 174). Habyarimana attempted to retain rural loyalties by heavily subsidizing the coffee sector.¹⁸ With no accrued savings and an increasingly desperate domestic policy of purchasing coffee at prices dramatically higher than international rates, the *Fonds d'egalisation* accrued sizable debt. It was this debt that the IMF and World Bank would first attempt to manage.

The coffee crisis also seriously undermined Habyarimana's ability to consolidate power over the ruling elites. A lack of governmental revenue started a resource scramble in which "the various gentlemen's agreements which had existed between the competing political clans since the end of the Kayibanda regime started to melt down as the resources shrank and internal power struggles intensified" (Prunier, 1995: 87-88). This struggle reached a flash point in April 1988 when Habyarimana's friend and potential future vice-president Colonel Stanislas Mayuya was murdered. The government deployed further violence to cover-up these stories: in August 1989 Parliamentarian Félecula Nyiramutarambirwa was killed after criticizing the government for corruption in road-building contracts; Father Silvio Sindambiwe, a vocal critic of the regime, was killed in November; many journalists covering these events were also arrested (Prunier, 1995: 89). By 1993 Habyarimana's regime—being severely revenue starved—began “substitut[ing] loyalty for

¹⁷Under the Lome IV convention—between the EU and 66 African, Caribbean, and Pacific states—Stabex received ECU 1.5 billion (\$1.8 billion) for the period 1990-94 to help stabilize the revenue for those states which exported agricultural goods to Europe (*European Report*, 1995).

¹⁸While the Rwandan government always subsidized the coffee sector—in 1987 the government invested 3 billion FRw, 1.6 billion in 1988, 2 billion in 1989, 4.6 billion in 1990, 1 billion in 1991, 2 billion in 1992, and 1 billion in 1993—falling prices meant that these subsidies became an increasingly large percentage of the government's overall budget (Verwimp, 2003; 174-75).

repression” by encouraging "arbitrary arrests, killing of opposition members by government agents, several massacres of Tutsi, confiscation of property, rape, etc." (Verwimp, 2003; 175).

By the 1990s, Rwanda was highly dependent on the IMF and World Bank. As the international price of coffee began to fall, the *Fonds d'egalisation* increasingly proved unable to maintain the purchaser price of coffee without accruing sizable debt. In 1988 the World Bank had already suggested that Rwanda adopt macro-economic reforms including trade liberalization, currency devaluation, lifting of agricultural subsidies, the privatization of state enterprises, and a reduction in the number of civil servants (Chossudovsky, 1995). Intent of boosting coffee exports, the Rwandan government, under World Bank advisement, devalued the Rwandan franc by 40 percent in November 1990 and another 15 percent the following June (Uvin, 1998: 58). The first devaluation, however, took place just six weeks after the invasion of the RPF and sparked massive inflation, a collapse of real earnings and dramatic price increases for consumer goods (Uvin, 1998: 58). While Rwanda had \$49 million in foreign debt in 1976, by 1994 this number had reached \$1 billion (Toussaint, 2004).

In the years following the IMF austerity measures, state-owned enterprises went bankrupt, health and education services collapsed, child malnutrition surged, and the absence of drugs allowed malaria cases to increase 21 percent (Chossudovsky, 1995). The escalating prices of fuel and consumer essentials led to a 25 percent reduction in coffee production as farmers switched back to food crops since coffee revenues no longer even covered inputs (Chossudovsky, 1995). The Rwandan government, under stern advisement from the IMF, also froze the purchasing price of coffee which, in combination with the already shattered economy, pushed hundreds of thousands of small coffee farmers into unemployment.

IMF and World Bank policies also provided the Habyarimana regime the hard currency required to expand the military and arm the growing militias. The sudden influx of World Bank and IMF loans allowed the cash-strapped Rwandan government to purchase military hardware including small weapons and grenades (Melvern 2000: 33; Uvin 1998: 88) and well over a half a million machetes, hoes, axes, and hammers (Melvern 2000: 64-65). The largest importer of machetes during this period was Félicien Kabuga, a friend of Habyarimana and wealthy coffee exporter (des Forges, 1999: 127). *Rwandex Chillington*, a joint venture between the British company Plantation & General Investments and the coffee production company *Rwandex*, was the largest domestic producer of metal tools and sold more machetes in February 1994 than during the entire previous year (des Forges, 1999: 127). During this period the Rwandan government spent \$112 million to arm the

population (Melvern 2000: 67) including \$10.861 million in weapons from Egypt between October 1990 and April 1991 and \$6 million in small arms, mortars, and ammunition in March 1992; France's national bank, Credit Lyonnais, provided the credit guarantees which made these transactions possible (Human Rights Watch 1994: 5; Melvern 2000: 66). Rwanda also received more than \$56 million in arms from South Africa between October 1990 and May 1991 (Melvern 2000: 66). Many of the arms purchased during this period were distributed to Rwandan households loyal to Habyarimana (Human Rights Watch, 1994: 27) and were later used to execute the genocide. Foreign loans also made it possible for the ailing government expanded its military from 5,000 to 40,000 soldiers in a matter of weeks (Chossudovsky 1995).

Much of the foreign currency used to purchase these weapons was deposited directly into the *Banque Nationale du Rwanda* by the IMF and World Bank (Melvern 2000: 67).¹⁹ These loans were ended in 1993 when it became clear that the government had abandoned its intentions to use the money for development projects and debt restructuring. The government's surplus funds held in foreign bank accounts, however, were never frozen and, as a result, internationally donated hard currency continued to fund the preparations for the genocide (Toussaint, 2004).

During this period the Habyarimana regime faced increased demands—international and domestic—to democratize Rwanda. In the late 1980s poor economic conditions and increasing evidence of corruption within the Habyarimana government caused many Rwandan journalists, intellectuals, and politicians to demand an end to single party rule (des Forges 1999: 47; Newbury 1998: 89). In addition, foreign governments and international aid organizations—all proponents of rapid liberalization resulting from post-Cold War optimism—began pressuring Habyarimana to establish a power-sharing government (Uvin 1998: 62; Klinghoffer 1998, 20). At the Franco-African summit in June of 1990 French President Mitterrand told Habyarimana that future economic aid was linked to political democratization and the establishment of a multi-party system (Melvern 2000: 38). While Habyarimana knew that democratization would place the nation's stability in jeopardy, he was also desperate for the foreign aid necessary to keep his government afloat. In July 1990,

¹⁹Since the IMF and World Bank loaned Rwanda money for development programs and debt payments, the massive expansion of government expenditures on arms was in clear violation. However, the government was able to conceal these transactions by manipulating bank records, doctoring invoices, reselling imported gasoline, and diverting development purchases like vehicles, gasoline, and other supplies toward the military (Melvern 2000: 66-67; Toussaint 2004). When the World Bank eventually became skeptical of the Rwandan government's expenditures, World Bank President Lewis Preston challenged Habyarimana in a letter. Habyarimana replied that he had full intention of reducing military spending but in the meantime the weapons were essential to defeat the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RFP) who, if victorious, would undermine the development work conducted by the World Bank in Rwanda. Preston responded: "I take note of your intention to reduce military expenditure and I encourage you to do it urgently" (quoted in: Melvern 2000: 67).

Habyarimana announced some “timid” political changes and by July 1991 the constitution was amended to make multiparty competition fully legal (Newbury & Newbury 1999: 305). Within months more than fifteen political parties were registered, eventually forcing Habyarimana to agree to a power-sharing government (des Forges 1999: 52-53).

As in the 1960s, the push for democratization induced heightened radicalization along ethnic lines. However, unlike in the 1960s, the pressure for democratization also converged with international threats of economic sanctions, falling coffee prices, rural unrest, famine, elite power struggles, and ethnic and regional tensions which constrained Habyarimana making increasingly uncontainable contradictions impossible to negotiate.

During the negotiations over the creation of a multi-party government, a new party—*Coalition pour la Défense de la République* (CDR)—emerged rallying behind the platform that no party, not even Habyarimana’s MRND, stood for the true beliefs of the Hutu majority. This stance raised considerable speculation that the CDR was merely a front for more radical elements of the MRND including the *akazu*, a group of extremists centered around Agathe Habyarimana (des Forges 1999: 52-53). As early as 1991, the first-lady’s brother, Colonel Serubuga, recommended that the MRND distribute weapons to party officers to stave off enemies using the new political parties and free press to infiltrate Rwanda (Melvern 2000: 64). The push for democratization took place at the same time the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a guerilla army of Tutsi refugees, invaded Rwanda from Uganda. In this conjuncture, the RPF, opposition parties, and Tutsis living within Rwanda became articulated by the northern Hutu elites as one common enemy—a threat which was everywhere, both inside and outside Rwanda. To make this point, the regime faked a RPF attack on Kigali in October 1990 resulting in the imprisonment of 13,000 Tutsis said to be RFP collaborators (des Forges, 1999: 49).

The new opposition parties, recognizing the need to have party loyalists in local administration, began campaigns of terror “encouraging” local politicians to join their party. Opposition groups, especially the *Mouvement Démocratique Républicain* (MDR), targeted MRND members, their family, and property forcing some to change party allegiance. This practice—known as *kuboboza*, or “liberation” (Wagner 1998: 32; Des Forges 1999: 54-57)—provoked the MRND to conduct its own retaliatory acts of political violence causing political violence to escalate. Each party, as a result, developed a youth wing which served as the primary tool for intimidation. The MRND’s *Interahamwe* was especially potent because of its substantial size and professional military training (des Forges 1999: 55-56). Furthermore, as weapons became increasingly available, the

MRND distributed many of them to the *Interahamwe* (Human Rights Watch 1994: 27). The political violence practiced during multi-party rule was essentially training for what followed: “[f]ull-fledged genocide was...but a short step from the mundane routinized violence that had already taken over everyday life” (Wagner, 1998: 34).

The low intensity violence during this period existed on many different registers. First of all, the MNDC was highly integrated within the rural population through a series of prefectures, sub-prefectures, communes, sectors, and cells most of which were overseen by loyalists of the Habyarimana regime. This organization made it easy to distribute weapons, organize violence, punish defectors, and choose victims with maximum efficiency (des Forges, 1999:41-43; Wagner, 1998). Violence between elite factions also increased. For example, in May 1993 Emmanuel Gapyisi, a vocal opponent of both the RPF and President Habyarimana, was assassinated by either the CDR or people close to the president. Gapyisi was a young MDR politician with whom Habyarimana was attempting to forge a new coalition. This assassination revealed the growing divide between the multi-party moderates and the ‘new opposition’ which viewed the president as too soft (Prunier, 1995: 185-86; des Forges, 1999: 113). This caustic situation was exasperated by Habyarimana’s desperate attempt to buttress his failing support by “sacrifice[ing] the Tutsi in hopes of uniting all Hutu behind him” (des Forges, 1999: 49). The new opposition—composed of the CDR, the *akazu*, Zero Network (a paramilitary death squad), the *Interahamwe*, and army extremists—employed ethnic difference as a way to galvanize support using newspapers, radio stations, and ethnic massacres to induce fear and undermine Habyarimana’s authority (Prunier, 1995: 182).

Oblivious to the degree of domestic turmoil, many in the international community not only supported multi-party democracy but pushed for power-sharing with the RPF. For those foreign diplomats negotiating the Arusha Accords the process of establishing a democratic government became indistinguishable from achieving peace with the RPF (Uvin 1998: 98). However, after nearly a year of negotiations, Habyarimana, fearing domestic retaliation, remained unwilling to sign the Accords. The deadlock came to an end in July 1993 when donor nations including France and the World Bank informed Habyarimana that they would withhold funds if he failed to accept the Accords (des Forges 1999: 124). On August 4th Habyarimana signed the treaty ending the civil war. Most of the radical MRND and the CDR members strongly opposed the Arusha Accords and made plans to maintain power through violent means.

On April 6th 1994, with the downing of President Habyarimana’s plane, the different levels of contradiction—ethnic tensions, elite conflict, civil war, regional divides, rural deprivation,

international pressure, economic collapse—proved structurally uncontainable, reaching a point of ruptural unity. The genocide which followed would eventually kill more than a half million Tutsis and moderate Hutus. While this violence was particular to Rwanda’s historical conjuncture, it was also more than a series of contingent events or an inevitable result of colonialism, deprivation, liberalization, or falling coffee prices. The genocide was structured by a series of historically complex contradictions between colonizer and colonized, Hutu and Tutsi, rural and urban, northerner and southerner as well as contradictions between elites and between Rwandan realities and international demands. Many of the resulting social formations, subjectivities, ideologies, and contradictions were embedded within, and overdetermined by, oppressive economic relationships. Many of the ideologies (the Hamitic Myth, “planned liberalism,” the Washington Consensus) and subjectivities produced in Rwanda were themselves products of structured material relationships. This does not mean, however, that the genocide was the necessary result of class struggle. Instead, within each conjuncture subjects fashioned and refashioned themselves as both cause and effect of the changing social relationships: Tutsi chiefs appropriated colonial rule for personal gain; Hutu *évolué* used ethnic and democratic ideology to advance the Hutu cause; farmers grew coffee in response to increasingly favorable prices; a small circle of Hutu extremists carefully planned a genocide in order to wrestle power from a president they saw as compromised. These subjectivities, ideologies, and social formations existed within a semi-autonomous superstructure which, in the last instance, was always already violently determined by the relations of global capital.

Appendix

In addition to identifying the structured material relations and the overdetermined contradictions which produced genocide, an Althusserian understanding must also address the *reproduction* of genocide as also situated within a structured material reality. As such, the genocide is fundamentally different at today’s conjuncture than it was more than a decade ago. Right now it exists for many only as a *sign* whose referent is becoming increasingly distant as time passes. This does not mean, however, that the event of genocide is becoming less real. Instead, the genocide remains a material, ideological thing continually narrated and reproduced. These reproductions continue to have profoundly political consequences. However, the genocide’s representation is also structured by different ideological apparatuses—the media and the University, for example—within which it is reproduced. However, academic and journalistic reproduction of the conflicts in Rwanda, Bosnia, Liberia, Haiti, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc. tend to focus on ethnic, religious, or nationalist extremism thereby providing the ideological cover which allows capital—in

its neoliberal and postcolonial manifestations—to remain invisible to critique. As subjects within a structured totality, journalists and academics should—as Althusser urges us to do—use our words as “weapons, explosives or tranquilizers and poisons” (Althusser, 2001: 8) to struggle against the ideological productions which serves to justify continued capitalist exploitation. A radical critique of neoliberal and postcolonial capital can begin by re-narrating the present structured materiality in ways which show how genocidal practices are not anomalous, extremist events but instead produced from within the very mode of production itself.

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