

PLS 343

Politics of Sub-Saharan Africa

Week 10, Lecture 2:

Political violence—genocide and recent trends

Recap

- Paucity of interstate war
- Prevalence of civil conflicts

Plan for today

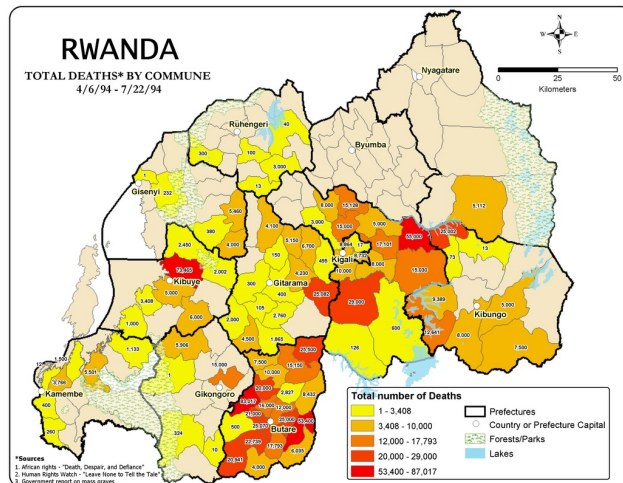
- Genocide:
 - Conceptualization
 - The case of Rwanda
- Recent trends

Genocide

- UN Convention on Genocide (1948):
 - “Acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group”

Genocide in Rwanda

- April-June 1994
– 100 days
- 500-800,000 dead
- Hutu and Tutsi



Popular explanations of the genocide in Rwanda

TIME

Monday, Apr. 18, 1994

Descent into Mayhem

By MARGUERITE MICHAELS; Clive Mutiso/Nairobi and Mark Thompson/Washington

Alarming as they were, the first, unconfirmed reports turned out to be understated. "We are lying prone on the floor," Christian Georlette, an aid worker for Oxfam, managed to phone back to the British aid group's headquarters on Thursday. "Every window in the house has been shattered by shrapnel and machine-gun fire, and soldiers are attacking the house next door with grenades. The fighting is really bad." Only later, however, would the full carnage of the latest ethnic violence in Rwanda be confirmed: the streets littered with corpses; the thousands killed in less than three days; the murder of 10 Belgian peacekeepers and groups of Catholic priests. And it would be Saturday before the French air force could land at Rwanda's Kigali airport and most of the country's 255 Americans could be reported as close to joining 330 Marines in the relative safety of neighboring Burundi.

In the two small Central African nations of Rwanda and Burundi, where politics is still dominated by the ancient rivalry between the predominant Hutu and minority Tutsi tribes, pure tribal enmity was behind the bloodshed. Last week's violence exploded after a plane carrying Presidents Juvenal Habyarimana of Rwanda and Cyprien Ntaryamira of Burundi, both Hutus, crashed Wednesday night on the approach to Kigali airport, killing both leaders. Witnesses reported hearing heavy weapons fire moments before the plane went down. "What happened was not an accident but an assassination," said Jean Damascene Bizimana, Rwanda's ambassador to the U.N. The two leaders were returning from a conference in Tanzania.

Its topic: the ending of decades of Hutu-Tutsi savagery.

The path to the genocide in Rwanda

- Precolonial Tutsi monarchy and the legacy of statehood
- Colonialism and the Hamitic hypothesis
- Hutu political mobilization in the 1950s
- Hutu Revolution in 1961
- Independence in 1962



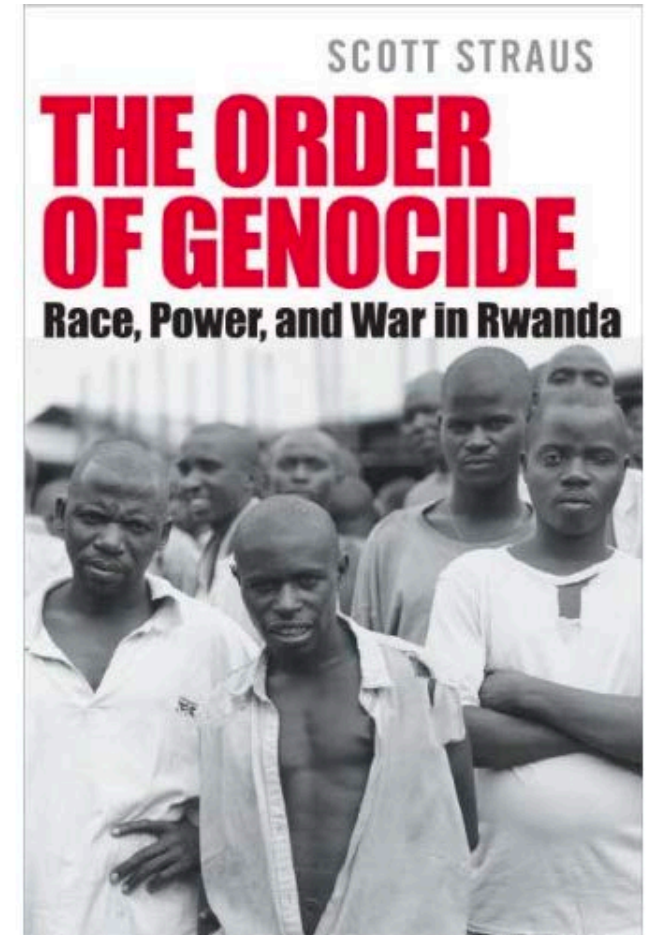
The path to the genocide in Rwanda

- Tutsi displacement in the 1970s
- RPF invasion in 1990
- 1994 assassination
- Interahamwe

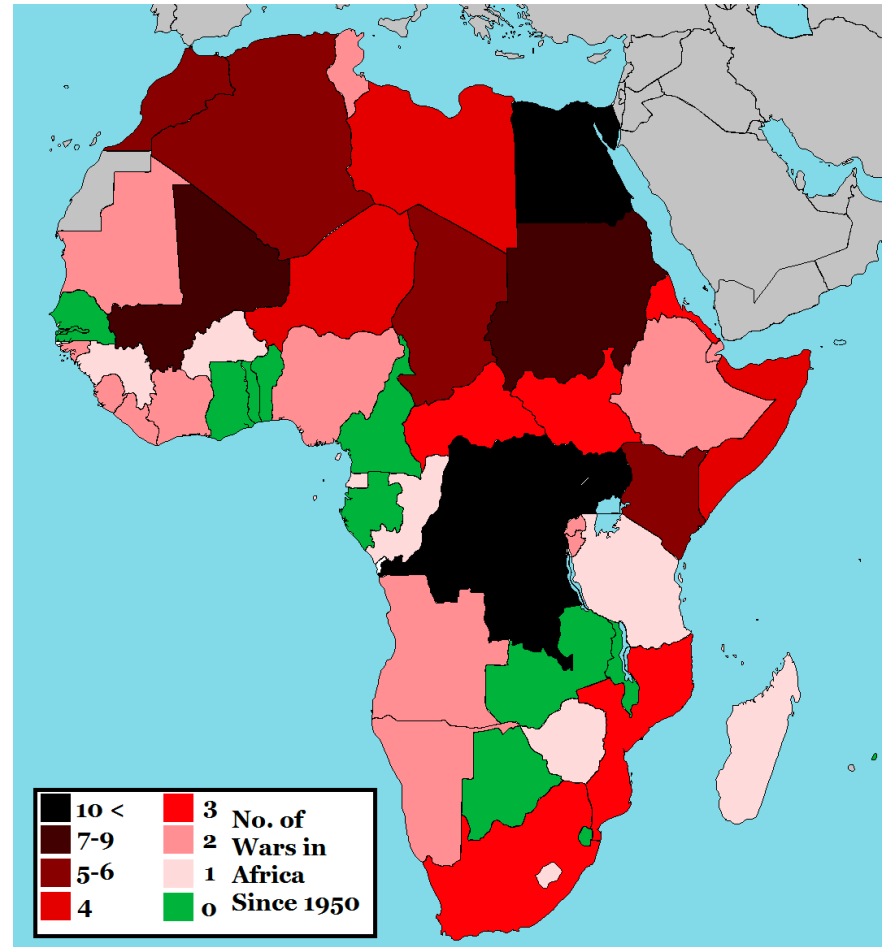


Causes of the genocide in Rwanda

- Straus:
 - Underlying conditions:
 - Power (and security) vacuum + political competition
 - Strong state
 - Easily mobilizable ethnic cleavage +
 - Tipping point —>
 - Genocide
 - Straus, Scott. 2008. *The order of genocide: race, power, and war in Rwanda*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.



Variation



Recent trends according to Straus

- Decline in the frequency and intensity of political violence in Africa since the 1990s

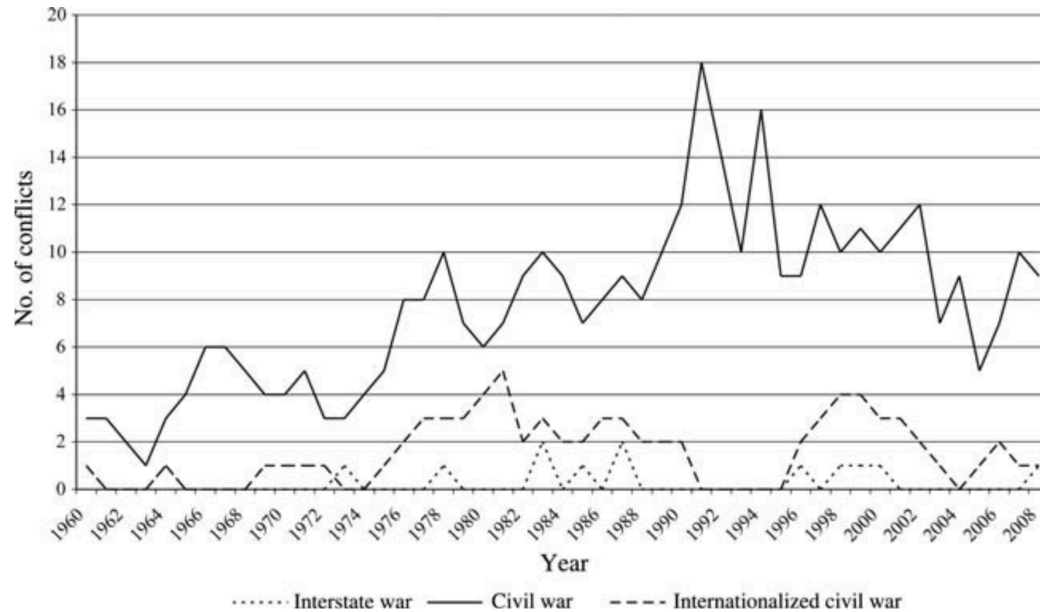


Figure 1. Armed conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa by type, 1960–2008.

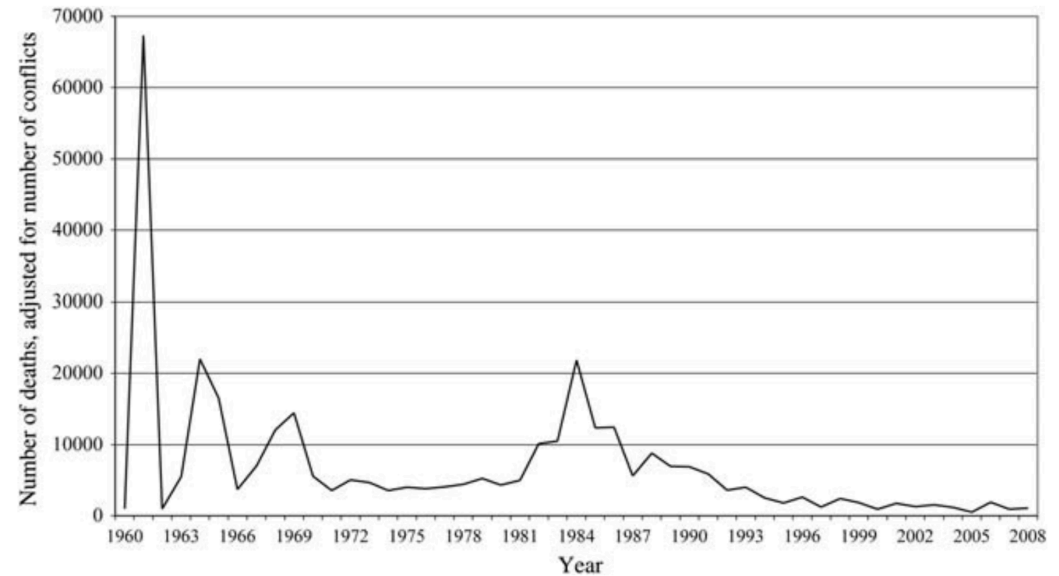


Figure 4. Battle deaths in civil wars in sub-Saharan Africa, 1960–2008.

Recent trends according to Straus

- Contemporary conflicts:
 - Typically small-scale
 - Involve factionalized insurgents typically unable to hold significant territory or capture state capitals
 - Fought on state peripheries and sometimes across multiple states
 - Increased electoral violence and violence over livelihood resources

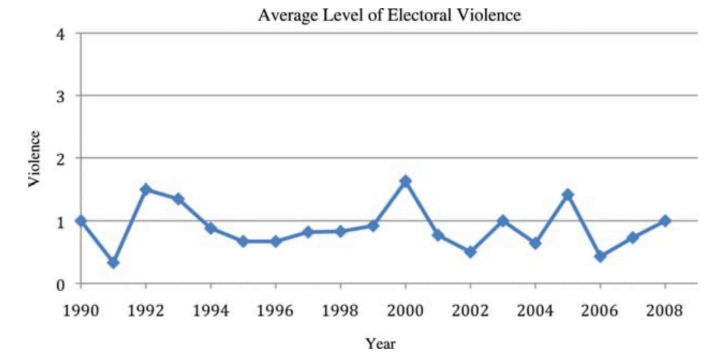


Figure 5. Electoral violence in sub-Saharan Africa, 1990–2008.

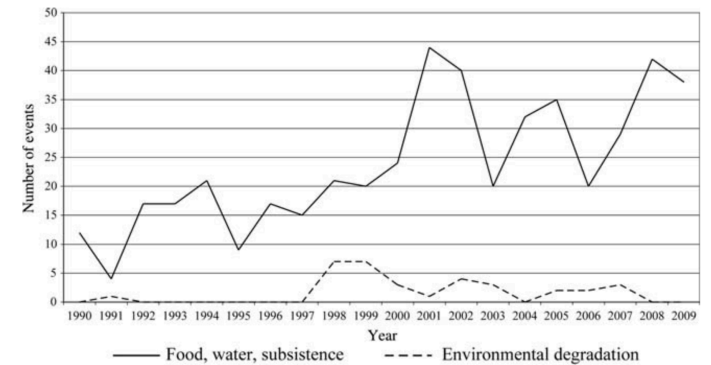


Figure 6. Violence over access to livelihood resources in sub-Saharan Africa, 1990–2009.

Tigray war

- TPLF's ouster and Abiy Ahmed's ascension in 2018
- Eritrean and (federal) Ethiopian invasion of the TPLF-controlled Tigray Region, November 2020
- Quick capture of Mekelle but continuing TPLF resistance
- Humanitarian catastrophe and reports of mass killings



Takeaways

- Preoccupation with—and misrepresentation—of rare extreme events such as the Rwandan genocide
- Large-scale armed conflict on a downward trajectory, the concerning case of war in Tigray notwithstanding