

**ARMED CONFLICT IN RWANDA,  
USING THE GREED AND `GRIEVANCE THEORIES**

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**Introduction**

Rwanda is a landlocked country located in the Great Lakes region of East Africa. It is bordered by Uganda to the north, Tanzania to the east, Burundi to the south, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the west. Rwanda was colonized by Germany in the late 19th century and later came under Belgian rule after World War I. The Belgians introduced a system of ethnic identification, categorizing the population into the Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa ethnic groups, which would later exacerbate tensions within Rwandan society. Historically, Rwanda's population was predominantly Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa. The Hutu were traditionally farmers, the Tutsi were cattle herders, and the Twa were hunter-gatherers. However, these distinctions were not purely ethnic but also socio-economic.

Rwanda gained independence from Belgium in 1962. Following independence, political tensions between the Hutu and Tutsi escalated, leading to periodic violence and instability. The most tragic event in Rwanda's recent history is the genocide that occurred in 1994. In a span of 100 days, an estimated 800,000 to 1 million Tutsi and moderate Hutu were killed by extremist Hutu militias.<sup>1</sup> The genocide was sparked by the assassination of President Juvenal Habyarimana, a Hutu, but underlying ethnic tensions and political grievances played a significant role. In the aftermath of the genocide, Rwanda faced immense challenges in rebuilding its shattered society and economy. Under the leadership of President Paul Kagame and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), the government embarked on a path of reconciliation, justice, and economic development. Rwanda has since made remarkable progress in areas such as economic growth, healthcare, and education.

Today, Rwanda is known for its efforts in reconciliation and nation-

building. It has achieved notable success in promoting gender equality, environmental sustainability, and technological innovation. However, the country still grapples with issues such as political repression, human rights concerns, and regional tensions. Understanding Rwanda's historical background and socio-political context is crucial for analyzing the drivers of armed conflict in the country, as it provides insights into the complex dynamics that have shaped its history and continue to influence its present-day challenges. This paper aims to address the above issues using the greed and grievance theories.

### **Theoretical Framework: Greed and Grievance**

The theories of greed and grievance are two frameworks commonly used to analyze the causes of armed conflict, particularly in the context of civil wars and internal conflicts. We shall begin with an explanation of each:

#### *The Theory of Greed*

The theory of greed posits that armed conflict arises primarily from economic motivations and opportunities for individuals or groups to pursue material gain through violence.<sup>2</sup> This material gain can include control over valuable resources such as land, minerals, oil, or illicit trade routes. In conflicts driven by greed, actors are motivated by the desire to accumulate wealth, power, or other tangible benefits. This may involve looting natural resources, engaging in illegal trade, or seizing control of lucrative economic sectors.

Greed-driven conflicts often involve a range of actors, including rebel groups, warlords, criminal organizations, and corrupt elements within governments. These actors exploit opportunities presented by weak governance structures, poverty, and inequality to further their economic interests through violence. Examples of conflicts with greed as a primary driver include conflicts over diamond mines in Sierra Leone, control of oil resources in the Niger Delta, and illegal drug trafficking in parts of Latin America.

#### *The Theory of Grievance*

As gleaned from Collier and Anke, the theory of grievance argues that armed conflict is primarily fueled by grievances; grievances can arise from a variety of sources, including political repression, discrimination, marginalization, social injustice, ethnic or religious persecution, or historical injustices. In conflicts driven by grievance, individuals or groups perceive themselves as victims of injustice or oppression and resort to violence as a means of addressing their grievances, seeking justice, or

redressing historical wrongs.

Grievance-driven conflicts often involve identity-based cleavages, such as ethnic, religious, or linguistic divisions, as well as broader social or political movements seeking to challenge oppressive regimes or discriminatory policies.<sup>3</sup> Examples of conflicts with grievance as a primary driver include the Rwandan Genocide, the civil war in Syria, and the conflict in South Sudan, where grievances related to political exclusion, ethnic discrimination, and socio-economic inequality have fueled violence and instability.

It's important to note that these theories are not mutually exclusive, and armed conflicts often involve a combination of greed and grievance as motivating factors. Additionally, the specific dynamics of each conflict may vary depending on the context, historical factors, and the interplay of various actors and interests involved. Below are a few cases of conflicts in history that are considered to be primarily driven by greed:

*The Scramble for Africa (late 19th-early 20th century):* European imperial powers engaged in a race to colonize and exploit Africa's vast natural resources, including minerals, rubber, timber, and agricultural land.<sup>4</sup> The competition for control over Africa's resources led to conflicts among European powers and with indigenous African groups resisting colonization. Examples include the Anglo-Zulu War in South Africa, the Franco-Dahomean Wars in West Africa, and the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, where European powers partitioned Africa among themselves.

*The Congo Free State (1885-1908):* King Leopold II of Belgium exploited the Congo Basin for its vast reserves of rubber, ivory, and minerals, leading to widespread human rights abuses and atrocities against the Congolese population.<sup>5</sup> Forced labor, brutal exploitation, and violent suppression of dissent characterized Leopold's reign over the Congo, resulting in millions of deaths. International outcry and pressure eventually led to the Belgian government taking over control of the Congo from Leopold and instituting reforms.

*The Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970):* The conflict, also known as the Biafran War, was sparked by ethnic and economic grievances between the Igbo ethnic group, predominantly located in the southeastern region of Nigeria, and the Nigerian government.<sup>6</sup> The Igbo sought secession and the creation of an independent state of Biafra, driven in part by economic disparities and perceived marginalization by the Nigerian government. Control over oil resources in the Niger Delta also played a significant role, as both sides sought to secure control over lucrative oil-producing areas.

*The Civil War in Sierra Leone (1991-2002):* The conflict was fueled

by the exploitation of Sierra Leone's diamond mines by rebel groups, such as the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), who used proceeds from the illicit diamond trade to fund their insurgency. The RUF and other rebel factions engaged in brutal tactics, including widespread violence against civilians, amputation of limbs, and recruitment of child soldiers, in pursuit of control over diamond-rich territory.<sup>7</sup> The term "blood diamonds" became associated with diamonds mined in conflict zones, highlighting the role of greed and exploitation in fueling armed conflict.

These examples illustrate how greed-driven conflicts have been motivated by the desire to control valuable resources, exploit economic opportunities, or expand territorial influence, often at the expense of human rights and stability.

Significantly, a few cases of grievance-driven conflicts in history are highlighted below:

*The French Revolution (1789-1799):* Grievances over social inequality, political repression, and economic hardship fueled the French Revolution. The French populace, particularly the urban poor and peasants, rebelled against the absolute monarchy, aristocratic privileges, and oppressive taxation policies. The revolution resulted in the overthrow of the monarchy, the establishment of a republic, and significant social and political reforms.<sup>8</sup>

*The American Civil Rights Movement (1950s-1960s):* Grievances over racial discrimination, segregation, and systemic injustice drove the civil rights movement in the United States. African Americans and their allies mobilized through nonviolent protests, marches, and legal challenges to demand equal rights, voting rights, and an end to racial segregation. Key events include the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, and the passage of landmark legislation such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.<sup>9</sup>

*The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (ongoing):* Grievances over land, identity, and historical injustices drive the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Palestinians seek self-determination, an end to Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, and recognition of their right of return to lands they were displaced from during the establishment of Israel.<sup>10</sup> Israelis have concerns about security, historical persecution, and the right to exist as a Jewish state within secure borders.<sup>11</sup>

*The Troubles in Northern Ireland (late 20th century):* Grievances over sectarian discrimination, political marginalization, and ethno-national identity fueled the conflict between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland.<sup>12</sup> Catholics, who identified as Irish nationalists, sought

reunification with the Republic of Ireland and an end to discrimination by the Protestant-dominated government and security forces.<sup>13</sup> Protestants, who identified as unionists, sought to maintain Northern Ireland's status as part of the United Kingdom and protect their political and cultural identity.

*The Arab Spring (2010-2012):* Grievances over authoritarian rule, political corruption, economic inequality, and lack of political freedoms drove mass protests and uprisings across the Arab world. Demonstrators in countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Yemen demanded political reform, accountability, and an end to autocratic regimes. While the outcomes varied across countries, the Arab Spring highlighted the power of popular grievances in driving political change.<sup>14</sup>

These examples demonstrate how grievances related to social, economic, political, and identity-based factors can motivate individuals and groups to mobilize for change and challenge existing power structures.

### **A brief history of Rwanda leading up to the conflict**

Rwanda was inhabited by the Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa ethnic groups. Tutsis were traditionally cattle herders, while Hutus were predominantly farmers. The society was organized under a feudal system, with a Tutsi monarchy ruling over Hutu peasants. In the late 19th century, Rwanda came under German colonial rule, followed by Belgian rule after World War I. The Belgians imposed a system of ethnic identification, categorizing people based on physical characteristics and occupation, exacerbating existing social divisions.<sup>15</sup> The Belgians favored the Tutsi minority, granting them privileges and positions of authority, which further entrenched ethnic tensions.

Rwanda gained independence from Belgium in 1962. However, power struggles between the Hutu majority and Tutsi elite persisted, leading to periodic violence and political instability. The Hutu-dominated government implemented discriminatory policies against the Tutsi population, including restrictions on education and employment opportunities. In 1973, General Juvenal Habyarimana, a Hutu, seized power in a coup, ushering in a period of single-party rule under the National Revolutionary Movement for Development (MRND). The Habyarimana regime promoted the ideology of "Hutu Power," exacerbating ethnic tensions and marginalizing Tutsis from political and economic participation.

### **Socio-economic and political conditions in Rwanda pre-Conflict**

Before the Rwandan Genocide, Rwanda was marked by significant

socio-economic and political tensions. Here's an overview of the conditions, for further clarity:

*Ethnic Tensions:* The Belgian colonial administration exacerbated ethnic divisions by favoring the Tutsi minority over the Hutu majority, leading to deep-seated resentment and mistrust between the two groups. Tutsi dominance in political and economic spheres fostered grievances among the Hutu population, who felt marginalized and excluded from power.

*Political Instability:* Rwanda experienced political instability following independence in 1962. Successive governments, dominated by the Hutu elite, were characterized by authoritarianism, corruption, and repression. Political opposition was suppressed, and dissenting voices were silenced, contributing to a climate of fear and insecurity.

*Economic Inequality:* The Rwandan economy was primarily agrarian, with the majority of the population engaged in subsistence farming. However, economic opportunities were limited, and poverty was widespread, particularly in rural areas. Tutsi elites and small Hutu elite controlled key economic sectors, exacerbating socio-economic disparities between the ruling elite and the majority of the population.

*Social Exclusion:* Tutsi and Hutu identities were rigidly enforced, with individuals' social status and opportunities determined by their ethnic affiliation. Tutsi were often favored for educational and employment opportunities, while Hutu faced discrimination and barriers to advancement. Discriminatory policies, such as identity cards specifying ethnic identity, further entrenched social divisions and reinforced perceptions of "us versus them."

*International Factors:* Regional geopolitics and Cold War dynamics also influenced Rwanda's internal dynamics. Rwanda's neighbors, such as Uganda and Burundi, experienced their own political upheavals, which spilled over into Rwanda. External support for the Rwandan government, particularly from France and Belgium, provided tacit approval for repressive policies and shielded the regime from international scrutiny. Overall, the socio-economic and political conditions in Rwanda pre-conflict were characterized by deep-rooted ethnic tensions, political repression, economic inequality, and social exclusion. These factors created a volatile environment ripe for the eruption of violence and mass atrocities during the Rwandan Genocide in 1994.<sup>16</sup> Hence this paper will now apply the theories of greed and grievance in addressing the perceived drivers of conflict in Rwanda.

### **Drivers of Armed Conflict in Rwanda, using Greed Perspective**

From a greed perspective, the drivers of armed conflict in Rwanda can be analyzed through economic motivations and the pursuit of material gain. Succinctly captured below are how greed contributed to the conflict:

*Resource Competition:* Rwanda is rich in natural resources, including fertile land, minerals such as tin, tungsten, and tantalum, and agricultural products like coffee and tea. Control over these resources became a significant driver of conflict. Competing groups, including the Hutu-led government and rebel factions such as the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), sought to gain control over lucrative resource areas to finance their military operations and sustain their power bases.

*Economic Inequality:* Economic disparities between different ethnic groups, exacerbated by colonial policies favoring Tutsi elites, fueled grievances and resentment among the Hutu majority. The Hutu-led government and elite sought to maintain their economic privileges and control over resources, leading to competition and conflict with Tutsi groups seeking to challenge their dominance.

*Illicit Trade and Profiteering:* During periods of conflict, illicit trade in natural resources, particularly minerals, flourished as armed groups sought to finance their activities through the exploitation and smuggling of resources. Warlords, militia leaders, and government officials engaged in corrupt practices, including illegal taxation, extortion, and smuggling, to enrich themselves at the expense of the population.

*Political Power and Control:* Control over political power and state institutions was closely tied to access to economic resources and opportunities. Political elites, including the ruling Hutu government and rebel factions, vied for power and control over the state apparatus to advance their economic interests. The struggle for political dominance and control over resources led to cycles of violence, including coups, assassinations, and repression, as competing factions sought to consolidate power and eliminate rivals.

*Foreign Interests and Exploitation:* External actors, including neighboring countries and international corporations, also played a role in fueling conflict by exploiting Rwanda's resources for their own economic gain. Foreign governments and companies supported various factions in the conflict, providing military aid, arms, and funding in exchange for access to resources or geopolitical influence, exacerbating tensions and prolonging the conflict.

*Political Power and Hegemony:* The Hutu-led government, dominated by the ruling elite, sought to maintain its grip on political power



and prevent challenges to its authority. This desire to retain control over state institutions and governance structures fueled competition and conflict with opposition groups. The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), composed primarily of Tutsi exiles and dissidents, emerged as a key challenger to the Hutu-dominated government. The RPF sought to overthrow the existing regime and establish a more inclusive and equitable political system.

*Ethnic Tensions and Divisions:* Ethnic divisions, exacerbated by colonial policies and historical grievances, contributed to political instability and power struggles within Rwanda. The Hutu majority and Tutsi minority vied for political influence and control over state resources, leading to polarization and conflict. The Hutu-led government, fearing loss of power and privilege, enacted discriminatory policies and incited ethnic hatred against the Tutsi population, further exacerbating tensions and fueling violence.

*Authoritarian Rule and Repression:* The Habyarimana regime, characterized by authoritarianism and political repression, stifled dissent and opposition through censorship, intimidation, and violence. Opposition parties were banned, political opponents were silenced, and dissenting voices were persecuted. Political repression created a climate of fear and mistrust, driving opposition groups underground and fueling resentment against the government. The desire to challenge and overthrow the repressive regime became a rallying cry for opposition movements, including the RPF.

*International Influence and Proxy Conflicts:* Rwanda's political instability and power struggles attracted the attention of neighboring countries and external actors seeking to advance their own interests in the region. Foreign governments, particularly France and Belgium, supported the Hutu-led government, providing military aid, training, and diplomatic backing in exchange for economic and strategic advantages. This support prolonged the conflict and contributed to the regime's ability to maintain power. Regional rivalries and proxy conflicts, including tensions between Rwanda and Uganda, further destabilized the region and fueled internal divisions within Rwanda, exacerbating political instability and violence.

In all, power struggles and political instability in Rwanda were driven by the desire of competing factions to control state resources, institutions, and governance structures. Ethnic tensions, authoritarian rule, and external interference compounded these dynamics, contributing to the outbreak of armed conflict and the devastating consequences of the Rwandan Genocide. Overall, from a greed perspective, armed conflict in



Rwanda was driven by the pursuit of economic interests, including control over resources, economic privileges, and political power. Greed-driven motivations exacerbated ethnic tensions, political instability, and violence, leading to the devastating consequences of the Rwandan Genocide in 1994. We shall now use the grievance theory to analyse armed conflict in Rwanda.

### **Drivers of armed conflict in Rwanda using the Grievance Perspective**

From a grievance perspective, the drivers of armed conflict in Rwanda can be understood as stemming from deep-seated grievances related to historical injustices, ethnic discrimination, and socio-economic inequalities. Enumerated below are how grievance factors contributed to the conflict:

*Ethnic Grievances:* The colonial legacy of ethnic categorization and favoritism fueled long-standing grievances between the Hutu majority and Tutsi minority. Tutsi dominance during the colonial era and subsequent discrimination against Hutu after independence created resentment and feelings of marginalization among the Hutu population. Hutu extremists exploited these grievances, using anti-Tutsi propaganda and incitement to inflame ethnic tensions and mobilize support for their cause. This fueled resentment and fear among the Tutsi population, contributing to the escalation of violence.

*Historical Injustices:* The history of oppression and discrimination against the Tutsi minority, including land confiscations, forced labor, and political exclusion, created a sense of historical injustice among Tutsi communities. Memories of past atrocities such as the 1959 Hutu revolution and subsequent waves of violence targeting Tutsi, fueled intergenerational trauma and grievances, driving a desire for justice, recognition and redress.

*Socio-Economic Inequalities:* Economic disparities between ethnic groups, exacerbated by colonial policies and discriminatory practices, deepened socio-economic grievances. Tutsi elites historically enjoyed privileged access to education, employment, and land, while Hutu were relegated to lower socio-economic positions. Economic inequality and perceived ethnic favoritism in resource allocation fueled resentment and grievances among the Hutu majority, who sought to challenge the existing socio-economic hierarchy and gain greater access to resources and opportunities.

*Political Exclusion and Repression:* Political repression and exclusion of dissenting voices by the Hutu-led government marginalized opposition groups and fueled grievances over lack of political representation and participation. Opposition parties, civil society

organizations, and independent media were suppressed, limiting avenues for peaceful dissent and exacerbating feelings of frustration and alienation among the population.

*International apathy and betrayal:* The failure of the international community to intervene and prevent the genocide despite early warning signs and pleas for assistance deepened grievances among survivors and the Rwandan diaspora. The perception of abandonment by the international community, particularly by former colonial powers and the United Nations, reinforced feelings of betrayal and mistrust, exacerbating post-genocide trauma and grievances.

Let's address resource competition, economic inequality, power struggles, and political instability as additional drivers of armed conflict in Rwanda from a grievance perspective:

*Resource Competition:* Grievances over resource competition were deeply intertwined with ethnic tensions and historical injustices in Rwanda. The colonial legacy of land confiscations and unequal distribution of resources exacerbated competition and resentment between ethnic groups. Tutsi elites historically controlled valuable resources such as land, cattle, and economic opportunities, leading to perceptions of ethnic favoritism and exclusion among the Hutu majority. Grievances related to resource competition were manipulated and exploited by political elites to mobilize support and justify violence, further escalating ethnic tensions and conflict.

*Economic Inequality:* Economic inequalities between ethnic groups, compounded by historical injustices and discriminatory practices, were key drivers of grievances and conflict in Rwanda. Tutsi elites historically enjoyed privileged access to education, employment, and economic opportunities, while the Hutu majority faced systemic discrimination and marginalization. Economic grievances were exacerbated by disparities in access to land, wealth, and social status, fueling resentment and anger among the Hutu population and contributing to the polarization of society along ethnic lines.<sup>17</sup>

*Power Struggles:* Grievances related to power struggles centered on political dominance and control over state institutions and resources. The Hutu-led government, dominated by the ruling elite, sought to maintain its grip on power and prevent challenges to its authority. Opposition groups, including the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), sought to overthrow the existing regime and establish a more inclusive and equitable political system. Grievances over political exclusion and repression fueled aspirations for political change and reform, driving competition and

conflict between competing factions vying for control over the state.

*Political Instability:* Political instability in Rwanda was fueled by grievances over authoritarian rule, political repression, and lack of democratic governance. The Habyarimana regime suppressed dissent and opposition through censorship, intimidation, and violence, creating a climate of fear and mistrust. Opposition groups, marginalized by the government, sought to challenge the existing political order and demand greater political representation and accountability. Grievances related to political instability were exacerbated by external interference and regional rivalries, further destabilizing the country and prolonging the conflict.

Therefore, it can be said, from a grievance perspective, that armed conflict in Rwanda was driven by unresolved historical injustices, ethnic discrimination, socio-economic disparities, and political exclusion. These grievances were manipulated and exploited by political elites and extremist groups to mobilize support and justify violence, leading to the tragic consequences of the Rwandan Genocide in 1994. Added to those are resource competition, economic inequality, power struggles, and political instability as interconnected drivers of armed conflict in Rwanda, exacerbating ethnic tensions, historical grievances, and socio-economic disparities. These grievances were manipulated and exploited by political elites to mobilize support and justify violence, leading to the tragic consequences of the Rwandan Genocide in 1994. It would be instructive to highlight some strengths and weaknesses of the greed theory in explaining armed conflict in Rwanda:

### **Strengths of the Greed Theory**

With respect to Strengths, we shall address three factors, which include economic motivations, material gain and Interplay with political factors.

*Economic Motivations:* The greed theory effectively highlights the role of economic motivations, such as resource competition and economic inequality, in driving armed conflict. In Rwanda, control over resources such as land, minerals, and economic opportunities played a significant role in fueling tensions and violence.

*Material Gain:* The greed theory emphasizes the pursuit of material gain, including wealth, power, and control over resources, as key drivers of conflict. As noted earlier, in Rwanda, political elites and armed groups sought to enrich themselves through illicit trade, corruption, and exploitation of resources, contributing to the escalation of violence.

*Interplay with Political Factors:* The greed theory recognizes the interplay

between economic interests and political factors in shaping armed conflict. In Rwanda, economic motivations were closely intertwined with power struggles, political instability, and ethnic tensions, highlighting the complex dynamics driving the conflict.

### **Weaknesses of the Greed Theory**

A few of the weaknesses of the greed theory would include the following:

*Ethnic Dynamics:* The greed theory may overlook the significance of ethnic grievances and historical injustices in fueling armed conflict, however in the case of Rwanda, ethnic tensions and discrimination played a central role in shaping the conflict, alongside economic motivations.

*Complexity of Motivations:* While economic motivations are important, armed conflicts often have multiple and overlapping causes, including political, social, and cultural factors. The greed theory may oversimplify the complex motivations driving conflict in Rwanda, failing to capture the full range of factors at play.

*Limited Predictive Power:* The greed theory may have limited predictive power in explaining specific instances of armed conflict, as it focuses primarily on economic factors and may not fully account for the unpredictable and dynamic nature of conflict dynamics.

*Contextual Factors:* The greed theory may not adequately consider the unique historical, social, and political context of each conflict. In Rwanda, the specific historical legacy of colonialism, ethnic divisions, and regional dynamics shaped the conflict in ways that cannot be fully explained by economic motivations alone.

However, while the greed theory offers valuable insights into the role of economic motivations in armed conflict, it is important to complement this perspective with an understanding of the broader socio-political context and the diverse array of factors driving conflict in specific contexts like Rwanda.

### **Key actors in Rwandan conflicts and their motivations**

In examining the key actors and their motivations in the Rwandan conflict, it's important to consider both the government forces and rebel groups involved:

#### **Government Forces (Hutu-led government): Motivations**

*Political Power:* The Hutu-led government, under President Juvénal Habyarimana, sought to maintain its grip on power and prevent challenges

to its authority. Political elites within the government were motivated by a desire to retain control over state institutions and resources.

*Ethnic Dominance:* The government promoted a Hutu supremacist ideology, emphasizing the primacy of the Hutu ethnic group and advocating for the exclusion and marginalization of the Tutsi minority. Ethnic prejudices and fears of Tutsi dominance motivated government officials to suppress dissent and incite violence against Tutsi civilians.

*Economic Interests:* Members of the ruling elite within the government benefited from economic privileges and access to resources. Corruption, cronyism, and illicit economic activities, such as illegal taxation and resource exploitation, served to enrich government officials and their supporters.

### **Rebel Groups (Rwandan Patriotic Front - RPF): Motivations**

*Ethnic Justice:* The RPF, primarily composed of Tutsi exiles and dissidents, sought to challenge the discriminatory policies and ethnic persecution perpetrated by the Hutu-led government. Motivated by a desire for ethnic justice and recognition, the RPF aimed to end the marginalization and oppression of the Tutsi minority.

*Political Reform:* The RPF advocated for political reform and democratization, aiming to establish a more inclusive and equitable political system that would represent the interests of all Rwandans, regardless of ethnicity. The RPF sought to overthrow the existing regime and replace it with a government that would promote reconciliation and respect for human rights.

*Return of Exiles:* Many members of the RPF were Tutsi exiles who had fled Rwanda due to persecution and violence. The desire to return to their homeland and reclaim their rights and identities as Rwandan citizens served as a powerful motivator for RPF fighters.

These key actors in the Rwandan conflict were driven by a complex interplay of political, ethnic, and economic motivations. While the government forces sought to maintain their grip on power and perpetuate ethnic dominance, rebel groups like the RPF aimed to challenge the existing regime, promote ethnic justice, and advocate for political reform. Understanding the motivations of these actors is crucial for comprehending the dynamics of the conflict and the factors that contributed to its escalation.

### **Case study: the Rwandan Genocide**

As noted earlier, the Rwandan Genocide was a genocidal mass slaughter that occurred in Rwanda in 1994, resulting in the systematic

extermination of an estimated 800,000 to 1 million people, primarily from the Tutsi ethnic group, as well as moderate Hutu who opposed the genocide. The genocide unfolded over a period of 100 days, from April 7th to mid-July 1994, and had devastating consequences for Rwanda and its people. Here's an overview of the Rwandan Genocide:

The Rwandan Genocide was preceded by decades of ethnic tensions, discrimination, and political instability in Rwanda. Ethnic divisions between the Hutu majority and Tutsi minority were exacerbated by colonial policies favoring Tutsi elites, as well as discriminatory practices and incitement to violence by successive Hutu-led governments.

The immediate trigger for the genocide was the assassination of President Juvénal Habyarimana, a Hutu, when his plane was shot down on April 6, 1994. The identity of the perpetrators remains disputed, but the event served as a catalyst for the eruption of violence. Following Habyarimana's death, extremist Hutu elements within the government, military, and Interahamwe militia launched a pre-planned campaign of ethnic cleansing aimed at exterminating the Tutsi population and eliminating moderate Hutu who opposed the genocide.<sup>18</sup>

The genocide was characterized by systematic and organized massacres carried out by government forces, militias, and ordinary civilians. Tutsi civilians were targeted for extermination, with killings conducted through machete attacks, shootings, sexual violence, and other brutal methods. Roadblocks were set up across the country to identify and slaughter Tutsi individuals, while radio stations and propaganda campaigns disseminated hate speech and incited violence against Tutsi and moderate Hutu.

The international community largely failed to intervene to prevent or halt the genocide, despite mounting evidence of atrocities and pleas for assistance from Rwandan civilians and peacekeepers. The United Nations peacekeeping mission in Rwanda, UNAMIR, was unable to stop the violence due to a lack of political will and inadequate resources. The genocide unfolded amidst a context of global indifference and inaction, with many countries hesitant to intervene due to geopolitical considerations and a reluctance to intervene in the internal affairs of sovereign states.<sup>19</sup>

The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a predominantly Tutsi rebel group led by Paul Kagame, ended the genocide by seizing control of the country in July 1994. Kagame became the *de facto* leader and later president of Rwanda. The RPF government embarked on a path of reconciliation, justice, and reconstruction. Efforts were made to prosecute perpetrators of the genocide, promote ethnic reconciliation, and rebuild

the economy and infrastructure.<sup>20</sup> Rwanda has since made remarkable progress in areas such as economic development, healthcare, and education. However, the legacy of the genocide continues to shape Rwandan society and politics. This brief history highlights the complex socio-political dynamics and ethnic tensions that culminated in the Rwandan Genocide and its aftermath.

### **Aftermath and Reconciliation**

As noted above, the genocide came to an end in mid-July 1994 when the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a predominantly Tutsi rebel group, seized control of the country and halted the massacres. The RPF's victory marked the beginning of a new chapter in Rwandan history, with efforts to rebuild the country and promote reconciliation. Rwanda has since made significant strides in rebuilding its society and economy, promoting ethnic reconciliation, and seeking justice for the victims of the genocide. The country's journey of recovery and healing continues to this day, with ongoing efforts to address the legacies of the genocide and promote peace and stability. The Rwandan Genocide stands as one of the darkest chapters in modern history, serving as a stark reminder of the consequences of ethnic hatred, political violence, and international inaction.<sup>21</sup>

### **The Role of Greed and Grievance theories in the Rwandan Genocide**

Both greed and grievance theories offer valuable insights into understanding the Rwandan Genocide, as they shed light on the complex motivations and underlying factors that drove the violence. As can be gleaned from above, below are how these theories apply to the genocide.

*Resource Competition:* Greed theory emphasizes economic motivations and the pursuit of material gain as drivers of conflict. In the context of the Rwandan Genocide, resource competition played a significant role in fueling violence. Control over resources, such as land, minerals, and economic opportunities, was closely linked to power and political dominance. The Hutu-led government and extremist factions sought to maintain control over resources and economic privileges, leading to competition and conflict with the Tutsi minority. Economic interests including access to land, wealth, and economic opportunities motivated elites within the government to incite violence and target Tutsi civilians as a means of preserving their economic privileges and political power.

*Illicit Trade and Profiteering:* Greed theory also highlights the role of illicit trade, corruption, and profiteering in driving conflict. During the genocide, economic motivations fueled by greed led to the exploitation of



resources and the perpetration of atrocities. Government officials and militia leaders engaged in corrupt practices, including illegal taxation, looting, and plundering of property, to enrich themselves at the expense of the population. The genocide provided opportunities for economic exploitation and profiteering through the seizure of property and resources belonging to Tutsi victims.

*Ethnic Grievances:* Grievance theory emphasizes grievances related to historical injustices, ethnic discrimination, and social inequalities as drivers of conflict. In Rwanda, deep-seated ethnic tensions and grievances contributed to the eruption of violence. Decades of ethnic discrimination and oppression, including colonial policies favoring Tutsi elites and subsequent Hutu supremacist ideology, created a climate of resentment and animosity between ethnic groups. The genocide was fueled by ethnic grievances and a desire for revenge against perceived oppressors.

*Political Exclusion and Repression:* Grievance theory also highlights grievances related to political exclusion, repression, and lack of democratic governance. The authoritarian rule of the Hutu-led government stifled dissent and marginalized opposition groups, fueling grievances over lack of political representation and participation. Tutsi opposition groups, such as the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), sought to challenge the existing regime and advocate for political reform as a means of addressing grievances related to political exclusion and repression. The failure of the government to address these grievances through peaceful means contributed to the escalation of violence.

It can be said, therefore, that both greed and grievance theories offer complementary perspectives on the Rwandan Genocide, highlighting the interplay of economic motivations, resource competition, ethnic grievances, and political factors in driving conflict. The genocide was fueled by a toxic combination of greed-driven economic interests and grievances rooted in historical injustices and ethnic discrimination, underscoring the complexity of the underlying causes of the violence.

### **The Nexus between Greed and Grievance in Rwanda**

The interplay between greed and grievance in Rwanda provides a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics that drove the conflict and ultimately led to the Rwandan Genocide. Here's how greed and grievance intersected in Rwanda.

#### **Resource Competition and Ethnic Grievances:**

Greed Perspective: Resource competition, particularly for land and

economic opportunities, was closely intertwined with ethnic dynamics in Rwanda. The Hutu-led government, motivated by economic interests and the desire to maintain power, implemented discriminatory policies that favored the Hutu majority and marginalized the Tutsi minority.

**Grievance Perspective:** These policies fueled ethnic grievances among the Tutsi population, who were systematically excluded from political power and economic opportunities. Tutsi communities harbored deep-seated resentments over historical injustices and discrimination, creating fertile ground for the manipulation of grievances by political elites and extremist factions.

### **Political Power Struggles and Economic Interests:**

**Greed Perspective:** Political power struggles within Rwanda's ruling elite were driven by a desire to control state institutions and resources for personal enrichment. Economic interests including access to land, wealth, and economic privileges, motivated government officials and militia leaders to perpetrate violence and suppress dissent.

**Grievance Perspective:** Political exclusion and repression marginalized opposition groups, exacerbating grievances over lack of political representation and participation. The RPF, composed primarily of Tutsi exiles and dissidents, sought to challenge the existing regime and advocate for political reform as a means of addressing grievances related to political exclusion and repression.

### **Illicit Trade and Profiteering Amidst Ethnic Tensions:**

**Greed Perspective:** Illicit trade, corruption, and profiteering flourished amidst the ethnic tensions and violence in Rwanda. Economic motivations fueled by greed led to the exploitation of resources and the perpetration of atrocities by government forces, militia groups, and opportunistic individuals.

**Grievance Perspective:** The economic exploitation of resources further exacerbated ethnic grievances and fueled perceptions of injustice among marginalized communities. The exploitation of resources belonging to Tutsi victims served to reinforce narratives of victimization and persecution, contributing to cycles of violence and retaliation.

**International inaction and betrayal amidst Economic and Political considerations:**

**Greed Perspective:** International inaction and betrayal during the genocide can be attributed to geopolitical considerations and economic interests. Many countries, including former colonial powers and neighboring states, were hesitant to intervene due to concerns about

political stability, strategic interests, and economic investments in the region.

Grievance Perspective: The failure of the international community to intervene effectively in Rwanda despite mounting evidence of atrocities deepened grievances among survivors and the Rwandan diaspora. The perception of abandonment by the international community reinforced feelings of betrayal and mistrust, exacerbating post-genocide trauma and grievances.

## CONCLUSION

The interplay between greed and grievance in Rwanda illustrates how economic motivations, resource competition, and political power struggles intersected with historical injustices, ethnic grievances, and social inequalities to fuel the conflict and atrocities of the Rwandan Genocide. Understanding this complex interplay is essential for comprehending the underlying causes of the violence and the factors that contributed to its escalation.

This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the Rwandan Genocide, examining the roles of economic, political, and ethnic factors in driving the conflict and highlighting the complex interactions between greed and grievance. Overall, future research and policy efforts should aim to address the complex interplay of economic, political, and social factors that drive armed conflict, with a focus on promoting peace, justice, and reconciliation in conflict-affected regions like Rwanda.

## Endnotes

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