

# State capacity and individual preferences: Evidence from Rwanda

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# Motivation

- ▶ I study the effects of the nationwide organization of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, in places with different experience with centralized government
- ▶ This experience matters, across countries 'state antiquity' affects prosperity today (Bockstette et al., 2002)
- ▶ We know less about its effects at a local level, and its interaction with policy (Scott, 1998)

# The Rwandan genocide

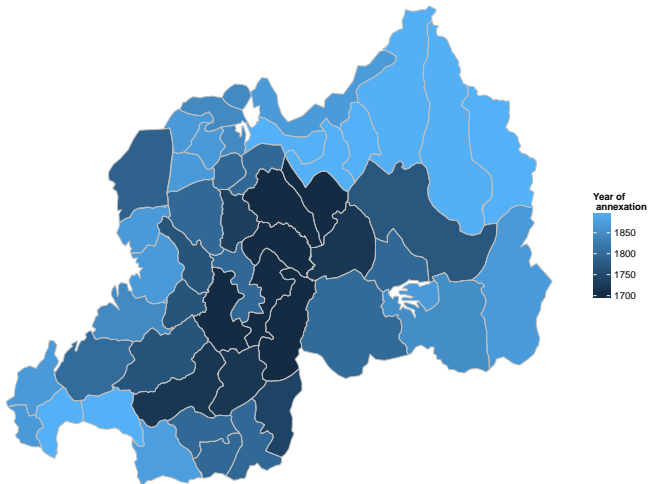
- ▶ Post-independence Rwanda was a one-party state. In 1991, it was invaded by Tutsi from Uganda who had fled in a previous coup
- ▶ Anticipating multiparty government, the ruling MRND party started arming the Hutu majority population and training militias
  - ▶ Military spending stood at 7.8% of GDP in 1992 (US: 4.7%)
- ▶ The MRND then organized and executed the Rwandan genocide. Between April and July 1994 between 500,000 and 1,000,000 Tutsi and politically moderate Hutu were killed
  - ▶ Popular participation was exceptionally high (14-17% of adult Hutu males)

## The historical state in Rwanda

- ▶ Rwanda has had a strong state for about three hundred years. This state expanded slowly, introducing spatial variation in the exposure to state institutions
- ▶ Many observers have linked Rwanda's long history of statehood to its effective implementation of the genocide
- ▶ "In Rwanda there was not total anarchy. State institutions stayed intact, as did norms of compliance, and both contributed to why so many men participated in the genocide." (Straus, 2006, p. 114).
- ▶ "Rwandese political tradition, going back to the Banyiginya Kingdom through the German and Belgian colonial period, is one of systematic, centralised and unconditional obedience to authority ... made it easier for the architects of the genocide to encourage or force both men and women to become murderers" (Prunier, 1995, p. 141).

# Map: historical boundaries 1700-1900

The expansion of the Nyiginya kingdom



## This paper

- ▶ Uses an identification strategy based on differential ease of access of Rwandan districts due to mountainous landscape
- ▶ Compares villages in districts with a longer tradition of centralized rule to villages with a shorter tradition
- ▶ Estimates reduced form effects on violence in the genocide
- ▶ Discusses and estimates the effect of several potential mechanisms through which the historical state may matter today
- ▶ Provides results from a lab-in-the-field experiment on rule following
- ▶ Estimates reduced form effects on violence in pre- and post-genocide Rwanda

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# Today

- ▶ Uses an identification strategy based on differential ease of access of Rwandan districts due to mountainous landscape
- ▶ Compares villages in districts with a longer tradition of centralized rule to villages with a shorter tradition
- ▶ **Estimate reduced form effects on violence in the genocide**
- ▶ Discusses and estimates the effect of several potential mechanisms through which the historical state may matter today
- ▶ **Provide results from a lab-in-the-field experiment on rule following**
- ▶ Estimate reduced form effects on violence in pre- and post-genocide Rwanda

## Preview of Results

- ▶ In villages with a longer state history, there is more violence during the genocide and participation rates are higher
- ▶ In these villages, the pre-genocide government is not more present, does not spend more, does not have more 'capacity' nor are more public goods provided
- ▶ Rather, individuals in these villages are more likely to report that they value rule following and obedience to authorities in survey questions
- ▶ They are also more likely to follow an unenforced rule in the experiment

## Interpretation

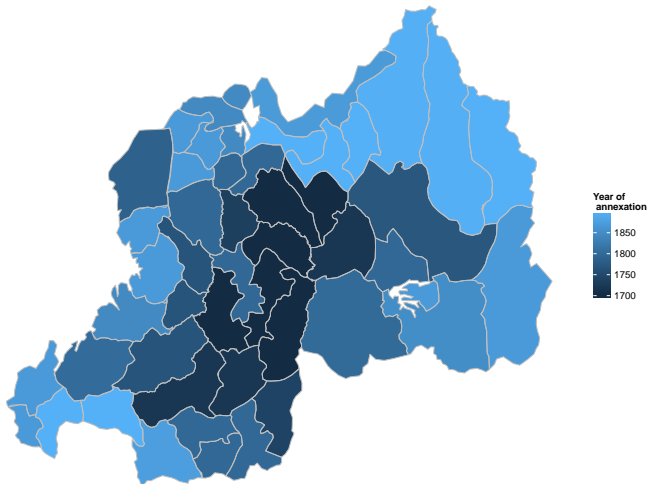
- ▶ It is easier to implement policy in places with a long history of centralized government because individuals are more likely to follow government directions, especially in uncertain environments
- ▶ In these places, individuals are easier to mobilize for socially unproductive ends as well. Policies aimed at building 'civic' or 'social' capital should therefore be implemented with caution

## Effects on violence and participation: Data

- ▶ Data are drawn from the Gacaca proceedings. The Gacaca was a system of 8000 courts throughout Rwanda that tried perpetrators. I focus on individuals tried for violence or for murder
- ▶ These data vary at the village level
- ▶ I reconstruct the expansion of the historical state from Vansina (2004) and Belgian colonial records

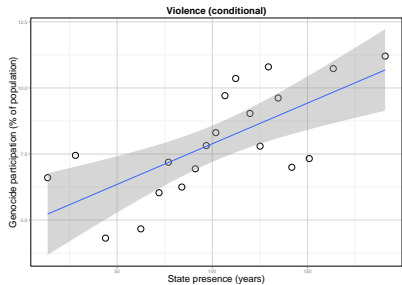
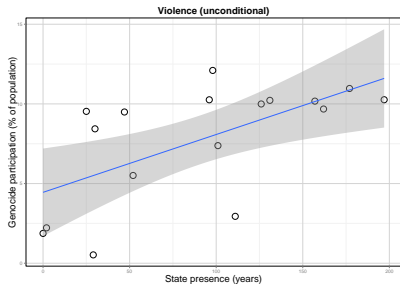
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The expansion of the Nyiginya kingdom

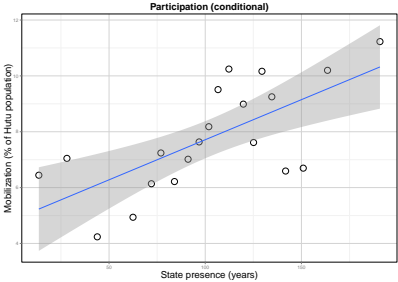
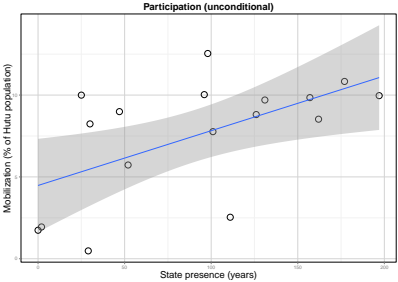




# Violence



# Participation

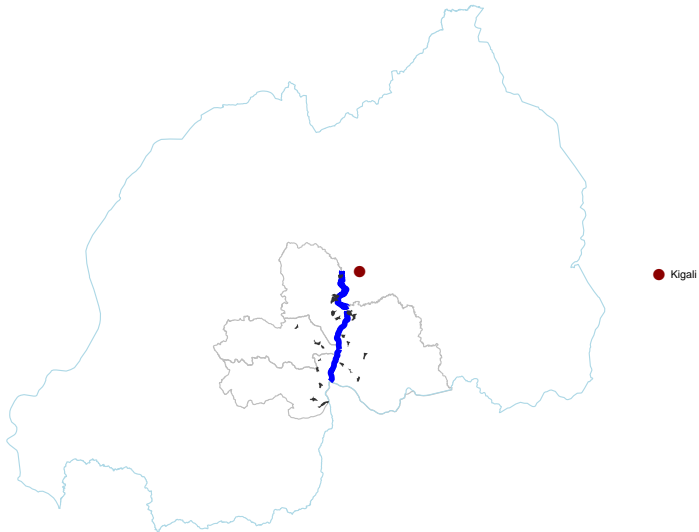


# Mechanisms

- ▶ Many mechanisms potentially drive this pattern, I focus today on compliance
- ▶ In the uncertainty surrounding the invasion from Uganda and the start of the genocide, individuals followed government directives as a “rule of thumb”
- ▶ “Here respondents said that they joined attacks because doing so was ‘the law’ (igeteko). Others said that they went with murderous groups or killed because they were ‘obeying’ what they had been told to do. Still others said that they participated because they had been authorized’ to kill Tutsis. In these accounts, respondents stressed that ‘the state’ or ‘the authorities’ had mandated participation for all able-bodied Hutu men. Killing was ‘the law’.” (Straus, 2006, p 137)

# Map: experimental sample

Villages in the fieldwork



## Mechanisms: Sampling

1. Select modern districts adjacent to the Akanyaru river: Bugusera, Kamonyi, Ruhango and Nyanza
  2. Randomly sample villages from cadastral lists
  3. First visit: Randomly sample participants, informed consent and pick fieldwork date
  4. Second visit: survey and experiment
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- ▶ 422 participants, 261 on early state side of the river, 161 on other side

## Mechanisms: Measuring compliance

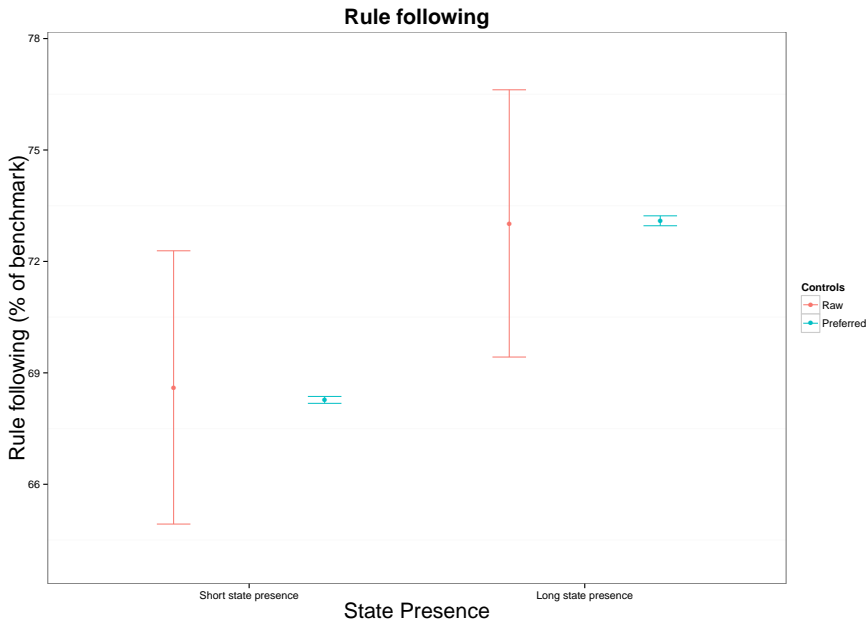
Specific experimental instructions (Hruschka et al. 2014, Lowes et al. 2015, Jian, 2013):

1. Associate an envelope with the government, and one with yourself
2. Out of 6000RWF, take a stack of two coins of 100RWF
3. *Follow this rule:* Flip a coin supplied by the enumerator
  - ▶ If the coin comes up tails, you do not have to pay tax
  - ▶ If the coin comes up heads, you have to pay tax (rate = 25%)
4. Repeat 30 times for each stack of 200RWF
5. Hand government envelope back to the enumerator
6. Keep the other envelope

## Experimental setting emphasizes anonymity



# Rule following





## Conclusion

- ▶ It is easier to implement policy in places with a long history of centralized government because individuals are more likely to follow government directions, especially in times of uncertainty.
- ▶ In these places, individuals are easier to mobilize for socially unproductive end. Policies aimed at building 'civic' or 'social' capital should therefore be implemented with caution