

TRUST IN THE AFTERMATH OF GENOCIDE: INSIGHTS FROM RWANDAN LIFE HISTORIES

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Abstract

We study changes in inter- and intra-ethnic trust in Rwanda. We focus on the impact of the 1994 genocide against Tutsi, which is a case of group-selective violence marked by a clear perpetrator- and victim-group. In our empirical analysis, we rely on more than 400 individual life histories in which intra- and inter-ethnic trust were systematically ranked for all life history years. Overall, we find that, while intra-ethnic trust remains largely unchanged, inter-ethnic trust decreases with the onset of violence and sharply so for those targeted in the genocide. Inter-ethnic trust gradually recovers over time. Only a subset of the victim-group, namely those with the highest probability of individual physical exposure to violence, portray signs of continued outgroup mistrust, 17 years after the genocide. Our results suggest that taking into account the element of time, establishing a fine-grained differentiation of the relevant in- and outgroups in the conflict, as well as identifying the level of exposure to violence, are necessary steps to better understand the impact of political violence on trust.

Figure 1. Visual aid for ranking exercise

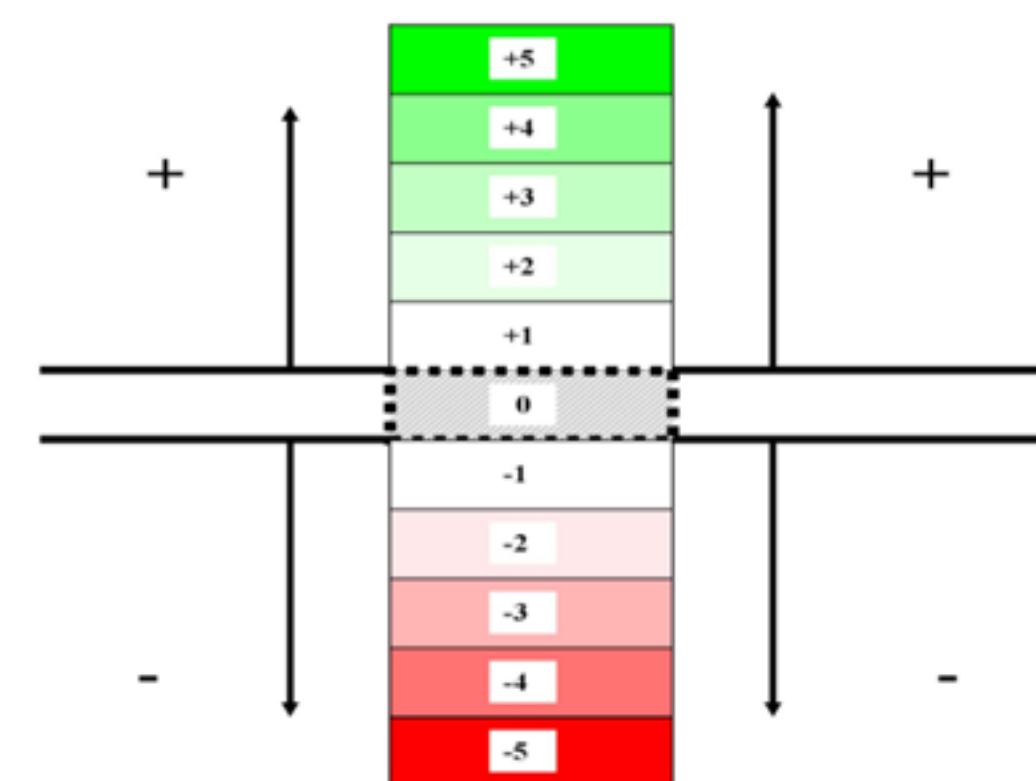
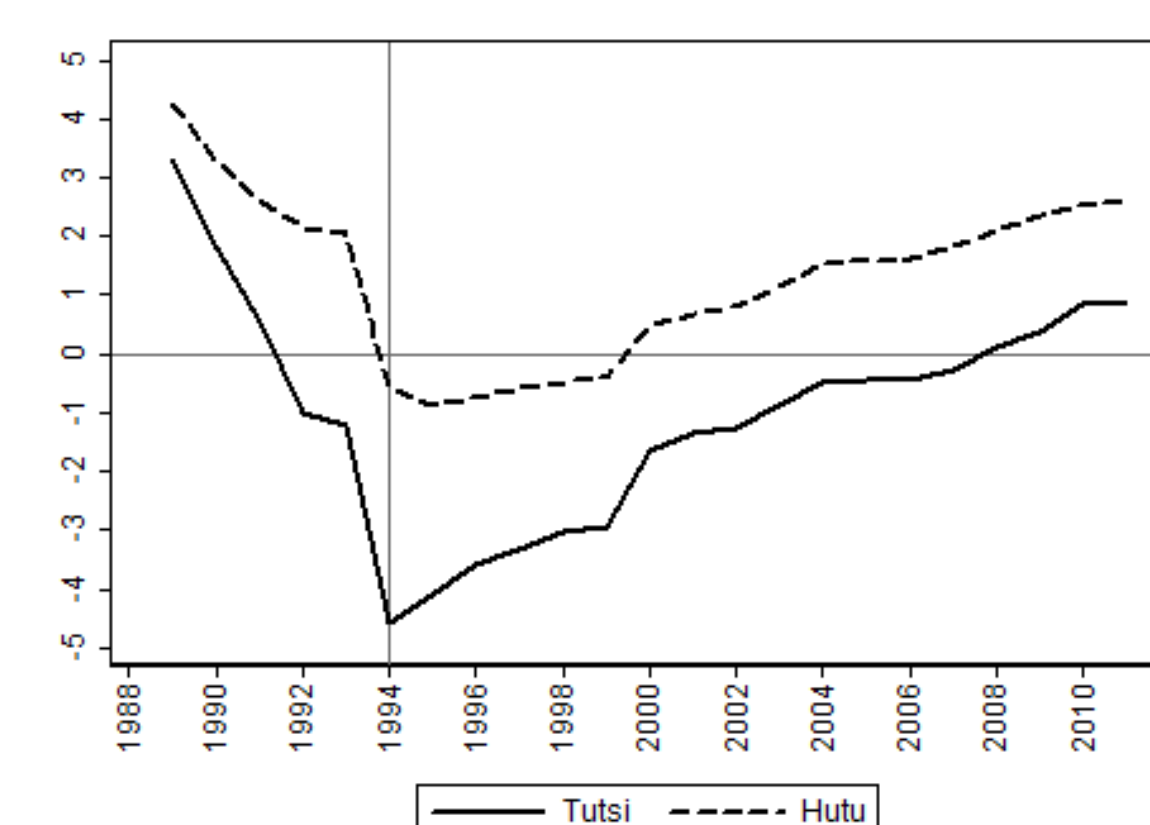
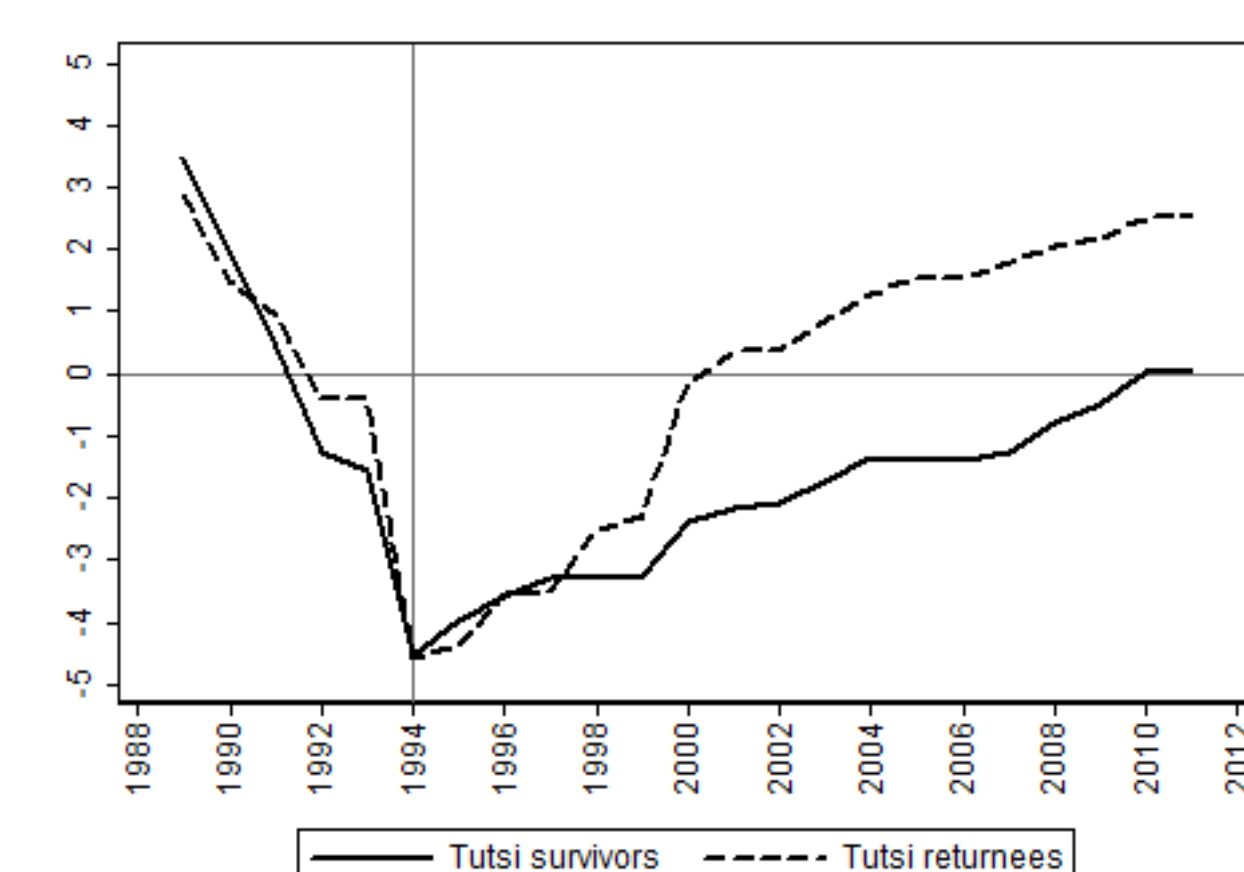


Figure 2. Inter-ethnic trust over time

Panel A. Hutu vs. Tutsi



Panel B. Tutsi survivors vs Tutsi returnees



Notes : the data points in the figure rely on the subsample of the 412 respondents that could be traced across the two survey rounds. Round 1 data series are used for the overlapping period 2000–2007. Round 2 data series start from 2007 onwards. The round 2 series are shifted up- or downwards in order for the end point of round 1 to coincide with the starting point of round 2. In a series of robustness checks in Supplementary Appendix A5 we show that neither of these choices affects our qualitative conclusion.

Keywords

1. Inter-ethnic trust
2. Intra-ethnic trust
3. Categorical violence
4. Rwanda
5. Life histories

Output so far

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More information

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