

Political Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda

Filip Reyntjens's new book analyzes political governance in post-genocide Rwanda and focuses on the rise of the authoritarian Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF). In the aftermath of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, the RPF has employed various means – rigged elections, elimination of opposition parties and civil society, legislation outlawing dissenting opinions, and terror – to consolidate power and perpetuate its position as the nation's ruling party. Although many international observers have hailed Rwanda as a “success story” for its technocratic governance, societal reforms, and economic development, Reyntjens complicates this picture by casting light on the regime's human rights abuses, social engineering projects, information management schemes, victimization of the Hutu majority, and retributive justice system. He argues that the regime's deeply flawed political governance is likely to destroy the achievements of decent bureaucratic governance and may lead to new large-scale violence.

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To the best of my knowledge, this book takes into account developments up to the end of 2012.

Filip Reyntjens

List of Abbreviations

ADEP-Mizero	Alliance pour la démocratie, l'équité et le progrès
AFDL	Alliance des forces pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre
AFP	Agence France Presse
AFRICOM	Africa Command
AGI	Africa Governance Initiative
AI	Amnesty International
ALIR	Armée pour la libération du Rwanda
AP	Associated Press
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism
ARG	Association des rescapés du génocide à Butare
ARI	Agence rwandaise d'informations
AU	African Union
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BBTG	Broad Based Transitional Government
CAURWA	Community of Indigenous Peoples of Rwanda
CCAC	Concertation chrétienne pour l'Afrique centrale
CCOAIB	Conseil de concertation des organisations d'appui aux initiatives de base
CHRI	Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CIP	Crop Intensification Programme
Cladho	Collectif des ligues et associations de défense des droits de l'homme
CNDP	Conseil national pour la défense du peuple

COOIBO	Association for Development Cooperation
CRDDR	Comité pour le respect des droits de l'homme et la démocratie au Rwanda
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DFID	Department for International Development
DGP	Democratic Green Party
DMI	Directorate of Military Intelligence
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EICV	Enquête intégrale sur les conditions de vie des ménages
ESO	External Security Organisation
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FAR	Forces armées rwandaises
FARG	Fonds d'assistance aux rescapés du genocide
FDLR	Forces démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda
FDU-Inkingi	Forces démocratiques unifiées-Inkingi
FIDH	Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme
FOR	Forum des organisations rurales
FOS	Socialistische Solidariteit
FPR	Front patriotique rwandais
FRD	Forces de Résistance pour la Démocratie
FRF	Forces républicaines et fédéralistes
Frodebu	Front pour la démocratie au Burundi
GDP	Gross domestic product
GOR	Government of Rwanda
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICTR	International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia
IDP	Internally displaced person
IFEX	International Freedom of Expression Exchange network
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Nongovernmental Organization
IOB	Institute of Development Policy and Management

List of Abbreviations

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IPEP	International Panel of Eminent Persons
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IRDP	Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Network
LDF	Local Defence Forces
LDGL	Ligue des droits de la personne dans la région des grands lacs
Liprodhor	Ligue rwandaise pour la promotion et la défense des droits de l'homme
MDR	Mouvement démocratique républicain
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MONUSCO	Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en RD Congo
MP	Member of Parliament
MRNDD	Mouvement républicain national pour la démocratie et le développement
MSF	Médecins sans frontières
NCOS	Nationaal Centrum voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NEC	National Electoral Commission
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NORDEM	Norwegian Resource Bank for Democracy and Human Rights
NRM	National Resistance Movement
NSS	National Security Service
NURC	National Unity and Reconciliation Commission
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OIF	Organisation internationale de la francophonie
ORINFOR	Office rwandais d'information
OTP	Office of the Prosecutor
PAC	Presidential Advisory Council
PAM	Programme alimentaire mondial
PDC	Parti démocrate chrétien
PDP-Imanzi	Parti de défense du peuple-Imanzi
PDR-Ubuyanja	Parti démocratique pour le renouveau-Ubuyanja
PL	Parti liberal
PRGF	Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility
PRI	Penal Reform International

PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PSD	Parti social démocrate
PS-Imberakuri	Parti social-Imberakuri
PSP	Parti pour la solidarité et le progress
RDF	Rwanda Defence Forces
RDR	Rassemblement pour la démocratie et le retour des réfugiés
RFI	Radio France Internationale
RIG	Rwanda Investment Group
RNA	Rwanda News Agency
RNC	Rwanda National Congress
RNLM	Rwanda National Liberation Movement
RPA	Rwanda Patriotic Army
RPF	Rwanda Patriotic Front
RPG	Rocket-propelled grenade
RPR	Rassemblement du Peuple Rwandais
RPT	Rwanda pour tous
RSF	Reporters sans frontières
RUD	Ralliement pour l'Unité et la Démocratie
RWF	Rwanda Franc
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SNJG	National Service of the <i>Gacaca</i> Jurisdictions
TNA	Transitional National Assembly
TPIR	Tribunal pénal international pour le Rwanda
UDR	Union démocratique rwandaise
UN	United Nations
UNAMIR	United Nations Assistance Mission to Rwanda
UNAR	Union nationale rwandaise
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCHR	United Nations High Commission for Human Rights
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNHRFOR	United Nations Human Rights Field Operation in Rwanda
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
Uprona	Union pour le progrès national
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VOA	Voice of America
VRT	Vlaamse Radio en Televisie
WFP	World Food Programme

Introduction

There are two radically opposed perceptions of Rwanda. One is that of Bono, Pastor Rick Warren, Bill Clinton, and Tony Blair, who are just a few of the “Friends of the New Rwanda,” as well as most aid agencies. This perception focuses on technocratic/bureaucratic governance and hails economic progress; visionary leadership; reforms in education, health, and agriculture; women empowerment; and market policies, to name but a few.¹ This view is also informed by the genocide credit the regime enjoys and by feelings of guilt over international inaction in 1994. The other perception, shared by most academic observers, projects a highly critical view of the polity that emerged after the genocide. It focuses on political governance and denounces autocratic rule, gross human rights abuse, growing inequality and rural poverty, victimization of the Hutu majority, and injustice. This has created structural violence and will eventually lead to political instability and new conflict.² This book makes clear that I belong to the second school of thought.³

¹ When President Kagame received a Global Citizen Award in 2009, the statement of the Clinton Foundation read as follows: “From crisis, President Kagame has forged a strong, unified and growing nation with the potential to become a model for the rest of Africa and the World” (Clinton Foundation, “Former President Clinton Announces the Winners of the Third Annual Clinton Global Citizen Awards”, 23 September 2009).

² This view is well presented in S. Straus, L. Waldorf (Eds.), *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights after Mass Violence*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2011.

³ As this book is critical of the current regime, I have tried to discuss my findings with Rwandan officials. However, these attempts were in vain, as I never received replies to my repeated requests for a discussion of my manuscript.

Part hagiography, part journalism, Stephen Kinzer's widely read book on Kagame tries hard to reconcile the two Rwandas, and the two Kagames: "The greatest enigma to those who wonder about Rwanda's prospects is President Kagame himself. He is a visionary endowed with enormous energy and ambition. Yet he can also be an angry, vengeful authoritarian. Because he so totally dominates Rwandan life, his choices will decisively shape the country's future."⁴ The opposing views on Rwanda can be understood in light of the way in which Rwanda was "discovered" by the world in 1994. Although it was a widely researched country, particularly after 1945,⁵ knowledge was generated by a limited number of scholars working in Belgium and, to a lesser extent, France and the United States. The genocide led to an explosion of interest and a dramatic increase in writing of different kinds, ranging from political pamphlets and current-affairs articles to intense high-quality doctoral research, with many articles in scholarly journals in between. Many of the authors, be they journalists, aid workers, diplomats, or academic researchers, were newcomers to Rwanda and the wider region. While many initial publications suffered from lack of historical background, fell into a trap of simple answers, or even showed outright bias, the quality of research dramatically improved over the years. In addition, Rwanda is no longer the reserve of a handful of scholars (myself included) exercising some kind of oligopoly, and the geographic extension of interest has been considerable, with most researchers now coming from the English-speaking world.⁶

The discovery took place in very peculiar circumstances, through the lens of genocide. To some extent, this context still determines the way in which Rwanda is seen. As will be discussed in this book, nearly twenty years after the genocide, international feelings of guilt still come into play, obscuring both the historical background and the perception of current

⁴ S. Kinzer, *A Thousand Hills: Rwanda's Rebirth and the Man Who Dreamed It*, Hoboken NJ, John Wiley & Sons, 2008, pp. 4–5. Kinzer later feared that the second Kagame displaced the first one, and that he risked becoming "a tragic figure who built the foundations of a spectacular future for his country, but saw his achievements collapse because he could not take his country from one-man rule toward democracy" (S. Kinzer, "Kagame's Authoritarian Turn Risks Rwanda's Future", *The Guardian*, 27 January 2011).

⁵ M. d'Hertefeldt, D. de Lame (Eds.), *Société, culture et histoire du Rwanda: Encyclopédie bibliographique 1863–1980/87*, 2 vols., Tervuren, Royal Museum for Central Africa, 1987.

⁶ Twenty-two of the twenty-seven authors of *Remaking Rwanda* are native speakers of English. While I myself mainly published in French until the mid-1990s, most of my writings are now in English, as a response to the shift in readership.

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political and social dynamics. It comes as no surprise that those, such as the “Friends” mentioned earlier, who have a very limited and simplified knowledge of Rwanda should embrace the current regime. The academic researchers, who have engaged much more profoundly with present-day Rwanda and who have worked for long periods in and on the country, have developed a more sophisticated and critical view. In many cases, this evolution took time, and many of those who now write critically about the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) initially were supporters.⁷

The quality of modern-day scholarship on Rwanda is high, and it is mainly the product of younger researchers who have accumulated extensive field experience, far from towns and main roads, in extraordinarily difficult circumstances. The background and ever-present sequels of the genocide were traumatizing, and working under an oppressive and autocratic regime exercising a high degree of control was demanding and destabilizing for both the scholars and their Rwandan interpreters, “fixers,” and participants in the field. Being unable to work in Rwanda myself,⁸ the research of these scholars has allowed me to stay in tune with the micro level⁹ and, eventually, to write this book.

This book makes no apology for the two features that some will hold against me. The first is that it is unabashedly empirical. I believe that only by accumulating a great deal of factual data can I show the characteristics of governance in post-genocide Rwanda and the response (or lack of it) by the international community. It is precisely this accumulation that allows one to go beyond anecdotal evidence and to demonstrate the existence of systemic features. This also means that this book is a case study of limited comparative and theoretical interest. Large numbers of intense case studies

⁷ For instance Susan Thomson, who is now attacked by the regime for her writings, wrote that “when I left Rwanda for Canada in January 2001, I was a strong supporter” (S. Thomson, *Resisting Reconciliation: State Power and Everyday Life in Post-Genocide Rwanda*, PhD thesis, Dalhousie University, 2009, p. xxiv).

⁸ I have been persona non grata in Rwanda since early 1995 for having written, after a visit in October 1994, a moderately phrased memo expressing concern about the RPF’s way of running the country (F. Reyntjens, “Sujets d’inquiétude au Rwanda, octobre 1994”, *Dialogue*, 179 [November–December 1994], pp. 3–14, translated and summarized in English as F. Reyntjens, “Subjects of Concern: Rwanda, October 1994”, *Issue*, 23:2 [1995], pp. 39–43).

⁹ As far as the macro political level is concerned, I have come to realize with surprise and relief that the information flows are such that it is possible to follow developments closely even while remaining abroad. This is not to say that I would not rather prefer to go to Rwanda regularly, but the handicap of not being allowed in has proven much less constraining than I anticipated.

are needed to complement the broad statistical Collier-like¹⁰ approaches that offer very valuable overall insight but cannot address, much less explain, country or regime specificities and deviances. When reading Collier, I often realized that the “laws” he deducts from statistical correlations do not always fit situations I observe in the part of Africa that I study.¹¹ This is inevitable as a correlation that is “statistically significant” does not apply to all cases. In-depth case studies are as important as large-N studies, and they may contribute to answering the question of why deviances occur.¹²

A second feature is that this book focuses on political governance. Rwanda is hailed for its good technocratic/bureaucratic governance, and donors consider their money there “well spent.” The regime’s achievements in this field are undisputable, and they have been highlighted in many publications. There is no doubt that the RPF has a vision that it has successfully implemented, particularly in economic development, and an ambitious modernization drive more generally. The praise it has received internationally is understandable, as progress can be physically witnessed. Kigali has seen a building spree, and the city is clean and safe. Elites are competent and cosmopolitan, civil servants are at their desks, and there is little petty corruption. In particular since 2000, economic and social statistics have shown significant improvement. The regime knows how to deal with donors and speaks their language. For visitors and expats who do not leave towns or main roads, Rwanda is indeed a miracle after the utter human, social, and material devastation it suffered in 1994.

I argue, however, that Rwanda’s dangerously flawed political governance not only risks destroying the achievements of technocratic/bureaucratic governance, but that it has also engendered large-scale structural violence. Straddling the African Rift Valley, the metaphor that naturally

¹⁰ For instance P. Collier, *Wars, Guns, and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places*, New York, Harper, 2009.

¹¹ While it offers numerous useful insights (and is great fun to read), Collier’s book has the weakness typical of large-N studies: it is often uninformed and on occasion flawed on particular cases, about which it contains many errors of facts and analysis.

¹² Flyvbjerg has published a strong defense of case study research, arguing that a scientific discipline without a large number of thoroughly executed case studies is a discipline without systematic production of exemplars, and a discipline without exemplars is an ineffective one (B. Flyvbjerg, “Five Misunderstandings about Case-Study Research”, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12:2 [2006], pp. 219–245). This does not mean that he rejects research that focuses on large random samples or entire populations: “The advantage of large samples is breadth, whereas their problem is one of depth. For the case study, the situation is the reverse. Both approaches are necessary for a sound development of social science” (*idem*, p. 241).

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comes to mind about Rwanda is that of a volcano waiting to erupt, thus opening the way for renewed violence, the scale and consequences of which are as yet impossible to predict. I do realize that the focus on political governance, at the expense of achievements in other fields, may cause some to consider this book as partial.

The book is organized as follows: Chapters 1, 2, and 3 address the way in which the RPF took power after the genocide, and then how it set out to consolidate it. While there is, of course, no clear-cut line, I distinguish between two periods, with the first studied in Chapter 1 and the second in Chapters 2 and 3. The first period ends around 2000, when reconstruction was by and large completed, the threats emanating from insurgent forces in the DRC and at home had disappeared, and the RPF exercised full control allowing it to embark on an ambitious engineering project. This was laid out in *Rwanda Vision 2020*, a document that came out in 2000, which was also the year marked by the unfolding of a profound political crisis, when the president, the prime minister, and the speaker of parliament were forced to resign. The first ended up in jail; the two others fled abroad. This episode allowed Kagame to become president and cleared the remaining hurdles on the road to full control. One of the means to achieve this was the creation, also in 2000, of the Forum for political parties that was to become a powerful tool in the RPF's hegemonic project. Strict laws on "divisionism" and on NGOs came out in 2001, and during the same year the adoption of a new national flag, seal, and anthem symbolized the full takeover. Chapters 2 and 3 analyze the post-2000 period. Chapter 2 studies the way in which elections were used, as instruments not of democratization but of regime consolidation. All the elections held at the local and national levels since 1999 were fundamentally flawed, but a pliant international community let the RPF get away with it. Chapter 3 addresses other means used to manage political space, mainly through the elimination of the remaining dissident voices. The following chapters study defining traits in a number of important areas: human rights (Chapter 4), the way in which the regime dealt with the world and the region (Chapter 5), the regime's ambitious engineering project (Chapter 6), its successful bid to manage information and to impose its vision of truth (Chapter 7), and the politics of justice in Rwanda, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), and third countries (Chapter 8). A conclusion follows.

Besides analyzing regime behavior at home and abroad, the book pays considerable attention to the failure of the international community to rein in the RPF's violent and authoritarian project, thus contributing to the risk of another tragedy in the Great Lakes region. It attempts to shed light on

the strategies deployed to capture and consolidate power by one of Africa's most enigmatic and misunderstood dictators, and it invites one to revise drastically the assumptions about the impact of Kagame's rule in the new Rwanda and throughout the entire region. This book starts where other books ended. Indeed, much has been written on the genocide, its antecedents, and its effects, but just one edited volume (*Remaking Rwanda*, mentioned earlier) addresses post-genocide Rwanda generally.¹³

However, a brief reminder of events up to the genocide may assist the reader. The Rwandan civil war started on October 1, 1990, when the RPF, mainly made up of Tutsi refugees who had fled the country between 1959 and 1973, attacked from Uganda with Ugandan support. This happened at a moment when the Habyarimana regime was attempting to settle the refugee problem while at the same time moving from single-party rule to multiparty politics, in line with an evolution seen elsewhere in Africa after the end of the Cold War. Indeed the RPF had to attack when it did, as progress in both those fields would have gravely diminished the legitimacy of a violent attempt at overthrowing the regime. Nevertheless, the political transition continued: in June 1991, a new constitution introduced multipartyism, and in April 1992, a coalition government came into place with a prime minister from the opposition. The transition took place against the background of an atypical civil war. Indeed the rebel force, while being Rwandan, (1) invaded the country from a neighboring country, by which it was supported and of whose army it was part; (2) was seen largely by the majority ethnic group of Hutu¹⁴ and even by many in the Tutsi ethnic minority as a threat; and (3) represented a small constituency (in particular the Tutsi refugee community). Trust in the RPF and its legitimacy was limited, although the internal opposition initially saw it as an objective ally in its struggle against the former single party.

Negotiations with the RPF started after the coalition government was formed. Through several protocols (on the rule of law, power sharing, refugee repatriation, and integration of government and rebel forces into

¹³ A number of aspects, particularly in the areas of justice, local-level politics, and rural policies, have been addressed in a sizable number of journal articles. Johan Pottier has written an important book on the current regime's information management to which I refer on several occasions. This book was under review when another edited volume was published: M. Campioni, P. Noack (Eds.), *Rwanda Fast Forward: Social, Economic, Military and Reconciliation Prospects*, Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. The disconnect between the editors' introduction and most chapters in the book is striking.

¹⁴ Hutu constitute about 90 percent of the population, Tutsi about 10 percent; the pygmoid Twa are well below 1 percent.

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one national army), an overall accord was signed in Arusha on August 4, 1993. In addition to being a peace accord, this was a fundamental reshuffling of political cards. From executive, the presidency became ceremonial. The transitional government and assembly were to be put in place by the main political parties including the RPF, along consociational lines (for instance, decisions in the “broad-based transitional government” were to be taken by two-thirds of its members, and the support of at least four parties was needed to attain a majority in the “Transitional National Assembly”). The new national army was to be made up of 60 percent government army and 40 percent RPF, except in command functions from battalion level upward, where both components were to share half the positions. Many Hutu felt that the RPF secured a deal that was better than it deserved.

Even among the domestic opposition, the belief in the good faith of the RPF rapidly dwindled, particularly after the rebels launched a new offensive in early 1993. By mid-1993, from tripolar (the former single party¹⁵ – the unarmed opposition – the RPF), the political landscape became bipolar (MRNDD and allies versus RPF and allies), thus destroying the balance that lay behind the Arusha peace accord. This bipolarity increasingly developed along ethnic lines, and was further compounded by the October 1993 coup d’état in neighboring Burundi where a Hutu president was assassinated by the predominantly Tutsi army. This led many Rwandan Hutu to believe that the RPF would never accept genuine democracy. By the end of 1993, the Arusha accord was dead, the process of putting into place the transitional institutions was stalled by both parties, and the downing of President Habyarimana’s plane on April 6, 1994, heralded the resumption of the civil war, the genocide against the Tutsi by the Hutu extremist interim government, and war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by both parties to the conflict. The RPF declared victory on July 18, 1994.¹⁶

¹⁵ The Mouvement républicain national pour la démocratie et le développement (MRNDD).

¹⁶ On the run-up to the genocide, see F. Reyntjens, *L’Afrique des grands lacs en crise: Rwanda, Burundi 1988–1994*, Paris, Karthala, 1994; G. Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis, 1959–1994: History of a Genocide*, London, Hurst, 1995 (new edition 1997 with an additional chapter very critical of the RPF); A. Guichaoua, *Rwanda: de la guerre au génocide. Les politiques criminelles au Rwanda (1990–1994)*, Paris, La Découverte, 2010. On the genocide, see A. Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda*, New York and Paris, Human Rights Watch–International Federation of Human Rights, 1999.