

**STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AND THE  
STRUGGLE FOR STATE POWER IN  
RWANDA: WHAT ARUSHA GOT WRONG**

**Andy Storey**

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## ABSTRACT

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### **STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AND THE STRUGGLE FOR STATE POWER IN RWANDA: WHAT ARUSHA GOT WRONG**

The 1994 Rwandan genocide occurred despite the existence of a peace and power sharing agreement (the Arusha Accords) to which all parties to the conflict had ostensibly subscribed. This paper addresses the failings of the Arusha peace and power sharing process and makes three core arguments. The first is that the Arusha process was a part of the problem because it heightened tensions within élite circles and provided a channel through which aspirant élites could pursue their dangerous goals. The Arusha Accords also failed, and this is the second argument, because they neglected (or worsened) the structural conditions of life for the vast bulk of ordinary Rwandans. The concluding section of the paper examines post-genocide Rwanda and how the legacy of the Arusha Accords has been used to legitimise new forms of repression. Again, and this is the third core argument of the paper, a seemingly reasonable political agreement to share power is being co-opted for a very different purpose—to legitimate the power of a new ruling élite.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

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## STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AND THE STRUGGLE FOR STATE POWER IN RWANDA: WHAT ARUSHA GOT WRONG

### INTRODUCTION

Between April and July of 1994, 800-850 thousand people were slaughtered in Rwanda (Prunier, 1995: 265). The vast majority of the dead were members of the minority Tutsi ethnic grouping. However, members of the majority ethnic grouping—the Hutu—were also killed if they were seen as opponents of the genocide's (Hutu) organisers. The genocide occurred despite the existence of a peace and power sharing agreement (the Arusha Accords) to which all parties to the conflict had ostensibly subscribed, and which this paper seeks to critique.

There are three main dimensions to this critique. The first dimension is an argument that the Arusha process heightened tensions within élite circles and provided a channel through which aspirant élites could pursue highly dangerous goals. In Rwanda, such goals tend to be pursued in a zero-sum or “winner takes all” manner—state power is not easily shared in such circumstances. Nor were matters helped by the duplicitous and sinister role played by the French government. Thus, the Arusha Accords, while formally reasonable and conventional, generated intense reactions and dynamics by virtue of the structural characteristics of political élite competition.

However, even more fundamentally, the Arusha process, rooted as it was in power sharing modalities between various élite and aspirant élite actors, failed to tackle the most pressing problems of Rwandan society: chronic and worsening poverty; entrenched and intensifying inequality; the treatment of the poor with contempt; a pervasive sense of impunity in the context of egregious human rights abuses; and the oppressive presence of the state in all aspects of social life (Uvin, 1998: 45). This disastrous cocktail—creating what Uvin (1998) calls a situation of “structural violence”—laid the basis for mass participation in the genocide of 1994. I argue that, far from helping solve these problems, certain international interventions—especially economic “structural adjustment” that ran parallel to the Arusha negotiations—worsened the situation. The Arusha Accords also therefore failed, and this is the second dimension of the critique, because they neglected not just the actual dynamics of élite political competition, but also because they neglected the (worsening) structural conditions of life for the vast bulk of ordinary Rwandans.

The third dimension of the critique concerns post-genocide Rwanda and how the legacy of the Arusha Accords has, amongst other devices, been used to legitimise new forms of repression at the same time as the abuse and violence inflicted upon ordinary Rwandans (and their neighbours) has continued. A seemingly reasonable political agreement to share power is being co-opted to legitimate the inequitable and oppressive power of a new ruling élite.

In terms of structure, the paper begins with an overview of Rwandan history until 1994, before doubling back to examine: the crucial role of a state-based governing

elite (the akazu); the rise of poverty, inequality and “structural violence”; and the rise also of protest against the akazu-dominated regime. This is the context in which the Arusha Accords are then assessed and critiqued. Finally, the paper focuses on the post-1994 experience.

## RWANDAN HISTORY

Rwanda is a small country in central Africa but with a large population size – approximately 7.2 million before the genocide and growing by more than 3 per cent per annum—making it the most densely populated country in Africa (World Bank, 1994: 1; Uvin, 1998: 180). Prior to 1994, Rwanda’s population consisted of two main, indigenous ethnic groups—the Hutu, who accounted for approximately eighty-five per cent of the population, and the Tutsi, who accounted for most of the remaining fifteen per cent (with the Twa group accounting for probably less than one per cent). The two main ethnicities lived side by side, spoke the same language (Kinyarwanda), and shared membership of ethnically cross-cutting clan, religious and neighbourhood groups (Van Hoyweghen, 2000: 2).



The Tutsi (associated with a pastoral lifestyle) are frequently portrayed as invaders who came from the Horn of Africa and imposed a harsh monarchical regime on the earlier arriving Hutu (usually associated with cultivation of the soil). However, other assessments indicate that all of the different groups may have arrived in migratory waves over many centuries, and that theories of conquest must be abandoned (Takeuchi, 2000: 185). Some commentators suggest that the terms Hutu, Tutsi and Twa referred more to social status than to ethnicity in pre-colonial times (Hintjens, 2001: 27-8). In parts of the country, especially the north west, Hutu rulers enjoyed large measures of autonomy from the royal court (Takeuchi, 2000: 189).

The German colonial administration was established at the end of the nineteenth century and was succeeded by that of Belgium after the end of World War I; both German and Belgian administrations exploited the hierarchical structure of



Rwandan society as a mechanism of indirect rule, with a certain stratum of Tutsi deployed as a colonial ruling class (Mamdani, 2001: 27). The Hutu kingdoms in the north west of the country that had previously enjoyed a measure of autonomy were brought under the control of the central Tutsi court with the military assistance of the colonisers, and Hutu chiefs throughout the country were replaced by Tutsi at the instigation of the colonial powers (Van Hoyweghen, 2000: 4). Whatever fluidity and ambiguity had previously existed in the system was greatly restricted as a system of ethnic identity cards was introduced (in 1933) and ethnicity thus became a strict (patrilinear) inherited characteristic (Hintjens, 2001: 30). Tutsi were systematically favoured in employment and education and accorded the status of a superior “race”.

The run-up to independence (in 1962) saw a reversal of the colonially imposed order, with some Hutu seizing control and beginning a series of pogroms against the Tutsi population, with tens of thousands killed and many others forced into exile (Human Rights Watch, 1999: 39). The post-colonial régime was initially dominated by Hutu from the south of the country, but from 1973 onwards power became concentrated in the hands of a northern Hutu élite under the leadership of President Habyarimana, who took power in a military coup. He instituted a single-party state, with every citizen an automatic member of that party—the Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement (MRND).<sup>1</sup> Parallel state-party structures tightly monitored and controlled the population (Longman, 1999: 342). Those Tutsi who remained in Rwanda after 1962 were the subject of discrimination in education, employment and other areas.

Meanwhile, those Tutsi driven into exile—many of whom grew up in refugee camps in Uganda—became the main source of a rebel movement, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) with a military wing called the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA), which was to attack the régime in 1990, demanding the right to return to the land they and/or their parents were expelled from.<sup>2</sup> After being initially repulsed by the Rwandan army, the RPF regrouped and undertook a prolonged guerrilla campaign involving sporadic offensives from their northern bases and occasional (short-lived) captures of large towns. However, the RPF found little in the way of popular support inside Rwanda (from Tutsi or Hutu), and the war contributed to the “structural violence” of Rwandan society (discussed below).

Following the mysterious killing of Habyarimana himself in April 1994,<sup>3</sup> the army and government-run militias initiated and led the genocide. The RPF succeeded in militarily defeating the government forces in July 1994 and the present government is dominated by the RPF—its record will be discussed in the last section of this paper.

### **THE AKAZU: AT THE HEART OF THE STATE**

Akazu is a Kinyarwanda word meaning “little house”. In the 1980s, it came to be applied to the country’s ruling clique—the northern-based politico-commercial network centred around President Habyarimana’s family (Reyntjens, 1994: 189). The akazu was heavily involved in criminality and corruption, using its control of the

state to enrich itself and its allies (Braeckman, 1994: 109-11; Reyntjens, 1995: 284). After October 1990 the akazu focus tended to be on diverting resources—including from the state employees' pension fund—towards military ends (Hintjens, 1999: 257; Melvern, 2000: 64-8). The director of a local magazine published, in 1992, an article identifying 25 members—including the President and members of his family—of a group operating as “death squad” organisers targeting those seen as threats to the régime (cited in Reyntjens, 1996: 247). A report from Amnesty International in May 1992 documented the involvement of state agents in mass murder and torture (Amnesty, 1992: 1). Amnesty's findings were confirmed by an international commission of inquiry on human rights abuses in Rwanda—its report, in March 1993, found that the Rwandan government had, since October 1990, been responsible for the deaths of some two thousand people and that these deaths were sanctioned by the very highest forces in the land (cited in African Rights, 1995: 33).

What above all else facilitated the practice of illegal and repressive activities on the part of the akazu was control of the state. Without state control—direct and indirect—over the economy and society, the akazu could not function, economically or politically (Cart, 1995: 476). Habyarimana, for example, could demand that private enterprises contribute to his cause because they needed state approval and concessions to ensure business profitability (Human Rights Watch, 1999: 43), and foreign aid “could only be appropriated through direct control of government power at high levels” (Prunier, 1995: 84). In Rwanda, battles over the distribution of economic resources were (and are) battles over control of the state. The question of who would retain or assume “ownership” of this apparatus of control was the key stake of political struggle in Rwanda in the early 1990s.

### **MASS IMPOVERISHMENT, GROWING INEQUALITY, RISING PROTEST**

Impoverishment was on the rise in the Rwanda of the 1980s and early 1990s. A principal problem lay in the evolution of global commodity markets: between 1985 and 1992, the real world price of coffee (Rwanda's main export) fell by seventy-two per cent; between 1986 and 1992, the real purchasing power of Rwanda's export earnings fell by fifty-nine per cent (Woodward, 1996: 19, 21). This very severe foreign exchange problem arose in the context of an agricultural sector already structurally crisis-ridden by a chronic shortage of land and rapid population growth. By the early 1990s, more than half of all Rwandan farmers occupied farms of less than one hectare, often on ecologically fragile soils, while up to 25 per cent of the population was landless (Mullen, 1995: 23). Forty-three per cent of all farm households lacked enough land to subsist upon (Uvin, 1998: 113). One desperate response to the tightening population-land pincer movement was to switch from cereal and bean cultivation towards that of root crops, so that many people's diet became increasingly protein-deficient (Mamdani, 2001: 146).

In addition, the arrival of the AIDS virus in the early 1980s, drought (in 1984), excessive rain (in 1987) and plant disease (in 1988) all weighed in to contribute to declining production and food security levels (Uvin, 1998: 57). By 1989, an estimated one in six Rwandans was affected by famine (Pottier, 1993: 5), one

quarter of all children was severely malnourished (World Bank, 1991: 1), and some 50 per cent of all children suffered from stunting (Uvin, 1998: 112). From October 1990 civil war was costing an estimated \$100 million per annum and causing massive displacement and disruption, especially affecting the most fertile northern regions (Marysse et al, 1994: 10). The resulted in the displacement of 15 per cent of the population—1 million people (Marysse et al, 1994: 83).

Falling levels of income were increasingly unequally distributed. Akazu members and associates were taking over land previously under the control of smaller, often indebted farmers (Braeckman, 1996: 106). In the rural areas, the percentage of income held by the richest 10 per cent—themselves often traders or civil servants not actually resident in those areas—is estimated to have risen from 20 per cent in 1982 to 41 per cent in 1992 (Maton, 1994: 29; see also André and Platteau, 1998). The inequality-enhancing effects of land concentration were compounded by the scarcity of non-farm employment opportunities, and by the fact that those opportunities were themselves unequally distributed (Clay and McAllister, 1991: 37).

Peter Uvin (1998) argues that Rwanda of the early 1990s had become what he terms a “structurally violent” society. This condition is characterised by extreme poverty—Rwanda, proportionately, may have had more absolutely poor people (perhaps 90 per cent of the population) than anywhere else in the world (Uvin, 1998: 117). But it was also characterised by (rising) inequality, injustice, discrimination, corruption, and treatment of the poor with contempt. The poor—the vast majority of the population—were subjected to humiliation and a state of permanent exclusion from the benefits of “development”, benefits that neither they nor their children could ever hope to achieve but which were flaunted in their faces by wealthy locals and foreigners. “Peasant life was perceived as a prison without escape in which poverty, infantilisation, social inferiority, and powerlessness combined to create a sense of personal failure” (Uvin, 1998: 117).

Thus, the activities of a ruling élite were contributing to societal inequality, mass impoverishment and a situation of “structural violence”. This was generating resentment on the part of the mass of the population (the vast majority of whom were Hutu) and undercutting the legitimacy of the régime. A demonstration of this resentment was the action of southern (mostly Hutu) farmers in tearing up anti-erosion devices and destroying communal wood lots which they had been forced to dig or construct under the government’s compulsory communal labour programme (umuganda) (Mamdani, 2001: 147), and the uprooting of up to 300,000 coffee trees, cultivation of which was also meant to be compulsory (Kimonyo, 2000: 50).

The advent of multi-party democracy provided a channel through which popular discontent could be further expressed and raised the very real prospect of the akazu losing its grip on the organs of state power. Longman (1999: 344) describes a situation characterised by “declining legitimacy of the regime, decreasing compliance with state directives, increasing criticism of state officials and practices, and growing formal and informal protest”.

## THREATS TO AKAZU CONTROL OF THE STATE

Habyarimana was forced by international pressure to legalise opposition political parties in 1991, and a large number of such parties quickly became active (Prunier, 1995: 126). The most important of these were: the Movement Démocratique Républicain (MDR), the largest party and broadly representing the southern Hutu who had been marginalised after Habyarimana's "northern" coup of 1973; the Parti Libéral (PL), a party associated with the business sector and including a number of Tutsi businesspeople; the Parti Social Démocrate (PSD), a largely anti-sectarian and left-leaning party; and the Parti Démocrate Chrétien (PDC), associated with the Catholic Church. By early 1992, "Prominent opponents of the regime and democracy activists were confident that power was on the brink of changing hands" (Longman, 1999: 339). In April 1992 Habyarimana formed a new, coalition government, consisting of ten ministers from his own party and nine from the erstwhile opposition (still mainly referred to as opposition parties in this paper, to minimise confusion). The new ministers moved to ensure that their own supporters gained key posts in central and local government, and also sought to end the systematic discrimination in education policy which had assured children from north-west Rwanda disproportionate access to school places (Human Rights Watch, 1999: 54-5; Prunier, 1995: 145-6).

Such moves prompted, by way of reaction, a powerful coalition of interests determined to defend the old order. This extended beyond the akazu itself to include state employees who feared that the new political forces would use state patronage to employ their "own" people at all levels of the hierarchy. With economic crisis and "structural adjustment" (discussed further below) simultaneously placing a cap on the total number of jobs available, "Low-ranking officials in the villages—including administrators, teachers, agricultural extension workers, health workers and policemen—saw their prospects of promotion vanish, and even faced the possibility of losing their jobs altogether" (African Rights, 1994: 19). If the Arusha Accords (see next section) had been implemented, all administrative positions were to be reviewed within three months of the formation of a new government (Human Rights Watch, 1999: 126). And to this list should be added the members of the newly expanded army, who lived "relatively well—from exactions if not from salary", and who "dreaded demobilisation", an especially acute fear amongst the senior officers who were targeted for first-stage demobilisation (Human Rights Watch, 1999: 60, 125; see also Prunier, 1995: 150).

Despite the ability to draw on this constituency of support, the akazu still faced a powerful threat because most Hutu were excluded from the benefits of state patronage, a situation which particularly rankled with some southern Hutu who bitterly resented the north-western monopoly over power (Voyame et al, 1996: 139). How was the akazu to deal with this challenge? One response was simple violence, including targeting and repression of opposition activists (Longman 1999: 348). Ruling party militias disrupted opposition party rallies and became more generally involved in what Longman (1999: 348-9) terms the "organisation of chaos"—the carrying out of seemingly random bomb attacks, robberies, rapes and other crimes, with the apparent intention of simply heightening public insecurity and

therefore generating “nostalgia for single-party authoritarian rule” (Longman, 1999: 350).

Another tactic was to seek to manipulate the democratisation process: crucially, in early 1992 a party called the Coalition pour la Défense de la République (CDR) was formed, pushing a Hutu extremist agenda and criticising the MRND(D) for conceding too much to the RPF and the other opposition parties. This party is widely reckoned to have been a creation of the akazu itself, and its role was to state positions that Habyarimana and the MRND(D) themselves believed but preferred not to be seen saying (Human Rights Watch, 1999: 52-3). Co-option of leading figures in other opposition parties was also a favoured régime tactic, with Habyarimana establishing “Hutu Power” (usually referred to simply as “power”) factions within the main opposition parties (Prunier, 1995: 181; Uvin, 1998: 65). It was in this context of extreme violence and instability that the Arusha Accords were negotiated.

## **ARUSHA AND ITS DISCONTENTS**

### ***Process and outcome***

As mentioned above, in April 1992, Habyarimana had installed a multi-party government consisting of ten ministers from his own party and nine from the opposition. Between May and June 1992, representatives of three of those “opposition” governing parties—the MDR, the PSD and the PL—met with the RPF and it was agreed that peace negotiations between all parties should be initiated (Mamdani, 2001: 210). The Arusha peace negotiations opened in July 1992 under the auspices of the Organisation for African Union (OAU) and facilitated by the government of Tanzania. As well as the various Rwandan parties, there were also delegations from other African and Western countries. The only major party to be excluded from the negotiations was the CDR. The RPF refused to negotiate with the CDR on the grounds that it was simply a front for the MRND(D) and that it was overtly racist—no one with even a Tutsi grandparent could join the CDR (Melvern, 2000: 54). All other parties to the talks wanted the CDR included and British and US diplomats pressured the RPF to agree to this, but to no avail: “Western governments saw the exclusion of the CDR as a departure from constructive negotiations, insisting that a more substantive role should be given to those who stood to lose power” (Melvern, 2000: 54).

The Rwandan government delegation was first led by the Minister for Foreign Affairs – Boniface Ngulinzare of the MDR—and later by the Minister for Defence – James Gasana of Habyarimana’s MRND(D) (Mamdani, 2001: 210). Neither man spoke for the hardline Hutu faction—Gasana fled into exile later in 1993 and Ngulinzare was killed in the genocide in April 2004 (Mamdani, 2001: 210). The hardliners were represented by Colonel Théoneste Bagosora, who frequently attended at Arusha to monitor developments (but not to negotiate) and who would go on to be the main coordinator of the genocide (Prunier, 1995: 163). It was also far from clear that the government delegation spoke for Habyarimana himself, whose exact relationship to the hardliners was itself unclear. In November 1992,

Ngulinzare stated: “the MRND keeps talking in contradictory ways. On the one hand, it pretends to support the peace negotiations and on the other hand it keeps sabotaging them” (in Prunier, 1995: 171). This tension was evident when a provisional power sharing agreement was agreed in January 1993 that envisaged the creation of a Broadly Based Transitional Government (BBTG) with 5 cabinet posts allocated to each of the MRND(D) and the RPF, 4 to the MDR, 3 to each of the PSD and the PL, and one to the PDC. MRND(D) and CDR supporters demonstrated in Rwanda against the deal and the MRND(D) national secretary claimed that his party had rejected the agreement (Prunier, 1995: 173).

In claimed response to government-organised massacres of Tutsis, the RPF broke a ceasefire in February 1993 and restarted the war (Prunier, 1995: 174). France sent military aid and troops to support the government. Between February and March 1993, the “opposition” parties met with the RPF (in Burundi) and issued a call to, amongst other things, renew the peace negotiations (Prunier, 1995: 179). However, by now Habyarimana had created the “power” factions of each opposition party (see above) and representatives of these factions simultaneously grouped with the MRND(D) and the CDR in Rwanda to condemn the RPF (Prunier, 1995: 179).

As late as July 1993, Habyarimana was resisting signing up to a deal. However, in late July aid donors (including the World Bank) insisted that aid to the government would be halted unless a deal was reached; even Habyarimana’s most ardent supporter, France, joined in this effort (Human Rights Watch, 1999: 124; Kuperman, 2005: 75). The composition of the BBTG (with cabinet seats to be allocated as agreed in January) was confirmed in the August 1993 agreement—this was to hold power for a maximum of 22 months until elections could take place (Melvern, 2000: 53). The agreement also contained provisions for a merged national army made up of the existing Rwandan army (the FAR, 60%) and the RPA (40%), with the officer corps to be split 50:50; the right of return for all refugees was also accepted, a crucial demand of the Tutsi exiles (Mamdani, 2001: 210-1). There was no provision for any amnesty for human rights abuses (Melvern, 2000: 53). The Accords also covered a range of other areas, including establishment of the rule of law and the creation of transitional institutions to oversee the political transition.

Habyarimana almost immediately sought to derail the agreement by insisting that the MDR, PL, PSD and PDC government ministers come from the “power” factions of those parties and that the BBTG be broadened yet further to include the CDR (Kuperman, 2004: 76). The appetite for implementing the agreement was also weakened by the assassination in October 1993 of neighbouring Burundi’s first Hutu president by Tutsi soldiers and subsequent massacres of Hutus in that country, events that were portrayed as confirming the dangers of allowing any Tutsi role in government and, crucially, the army (Kuperman, 2004: 76).

### ***What derailed Arusha? Or, whose interests did Arusha serve?***

#### **A fragmented Rwandan government delegation**

The negotiators for the Rwandan government were disproportionately drawn from MRND(D) “liberals” and from the opposition parties who had entered into coalition with the MRND(D), in part because Habyarimana wanted to distance himself from the process (Clapham, 1998: 203). In part, they were using the Arusha negotiations to enhance their own power against that of Habyarimana and the MRND(D) (Prunier, 1995: 163; Stettenheim, 2002: 225). (And they were also in opposition to the “power” factions within their own parties). It was therefore not surprising that the final settlement

gave an extraordinary weighting in the proposed transitional government to parties with no military strength, no control of territory, and an as yet undetermined level of popular support. Confident in their ability to capitalize both on their Hutu ethnic identity (which would enable them to sideline the RPF), and on the unpopularity of the Habyarimana regime, the minor parties then hoped to establish themselves more firmly in power through early elections (Clapham, 1998: 205).

But these parties were vulnerable to the charge that by granting so many concessions to the RPF, they were “betraying” the Hutu people—a charge vociferously levelled against them by the CDR and their own “power” factions (Mamdani, 2001: 211). They were not helped by the lack of external support available to them relative to that available to the RPF (from Uganda and the wider Tutsi diaspora)<sup>4</sup> and to the MRND(D)/CDR (from France especially). Nor were they helped by the belligerence of the RPF.

### **The strategy of the RPF**

Kuperman (2004) attributes much of the blame for the genocide to the RPF. His list of charges includes: invading in the first place; launching military offensives in 1991 and 1992; being opposed to compromise during peace negotiations in 1992 and 1993; breaking the ceasefire in early 1993; refusing any renegotiation of Arusha in late 1993; refusing ceasefire offers at the start of the genocide in April 1994; and pursuing a military strategy during the genocide that prioritised military victory over the protection of ordinary Tutsi (Kuperman, 2004: 62). The RPF is itself estimated to have massacred tens of thousands of civilians between April and September 1994 (Reyntjens, 2004: 194). In addition to those civilians they themselves killed, from the beginning of their campaign, Kuperman argues, “the rebels expected their invasion to trigger a violent backlash against Tutsi civilians in Rwanda” (2004: 61). To this charge list may be added the (contested) claim that it was the RPF that shot down Habyarimana’s plane and directly triggered the genocide in April 1994 (Lemarchand, 2006: 6; Robinson and Ghahraman, 2008).

Specifically in the context of the Arusha Accords, the RPF—the most capable and determined party to the negotiations—pursued a maximalist agenda, especially with regard to the division of the military. According to the then US Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, “RPF demands concerning the future of the military were guaranteed to push the regime into a state of total paranoia” (in Kuperman, 2004: 75). The insistence on excluding the CDR may be seen as another example of this approach (Mamdani, 2001: 211; Melvern, 2000: 54).

## **Excluding the CDR**

Spears (2000: 115) argues that “the lesson of Rwanda is that one cannot afford to leave anyone out of the political process”. A diplomat who was involved in the Arusha negotiations is quoted as claiming that “the 1993 Arusha Accords were the perfect example of the failure of power-sharing because of a basic decision to exclude a group of people”—the CDR, who were left to choose between losing power or violently subverting the Accords (in Lemarchand, 2006: 5).

But whether the CDR could have been included in the government has been forcefully challenged by Clapham (1998: 205-6):

These groups [CDR/akazu] were fundamentally irreconcilable to any resolution of the conflict through a negotiated settlement...The incorporation of such groups into the Arusha process could only have aborted the process itself. It could certainly be argued that this would have revealed the futility of the negotiations, and compelled a resort to war...but there is no plausible basis for the belief that it could have led to a viable settlement.

A “settlement” involving the CDR could only have been premised on their being in charge or their being defeated (Clapham, 1998: 209). But the CDR could not easily be defeated so long as they received external backing from France.

## **French intervention**

France consistently and substantively supported the Habyarimana government and the akazu (Prunier, 1995: 162-3). French military support was crucial in repelling the RPF offensive of early 1993 (300 new French troops were rushed to the country), and French instructors deployed at this time trained the militias who would go on to perpetrate the genocide the following year (Prunier, 1995: 164-5, 176). The French Secret Service spread disinformation about the RPF offensive (such as massacre allegations) to help justify further French intervention (Prunier, 1995: 176).

In February 1993, the French Minister for Cooperation, during a visit to Kigali, asked non-MRND(D) parties to “make a common front” with Habyarimana in opposition to the RPF (Prunier, 1995: 178), a direct undermining of the ostensible French commitment to inclusive negotiations at Arusha. Though the French government did press Habyarimana to agree to the deal in July 1993, Habyarimana expected the French to back him in subverting the Accords after their signing (Stettenheim, 2002: 226). France supplied arms to Rwanda in January 1994 in contravention of the Arusha Accords (Stedman, 1997: 23), and French military aid continued even after the genocide had begun in 1994 and a UN Security Council arms embargo had been imposed (Andersen, 2000: 441).

## ***Arusha: preparing the apocalypse?***

Those who had most to lose from a power sharing agreement in Rwanda did not meaningfully participate in the Arusha negotiations, and even if they had done so

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they would not have been willing to genuinely commit to any significant diminution of their power. And their stubborn refusal to cede power was backed up by the military and political support of France. Those who did participate on the “opposition”/government side were mostly seeking to enhance their own political prospects rather than, necessarily, instituting a stable and sustainable settlement. The RPF pursued a hardline approach that heightened the insecurities of the akazu and their allies, making it more rather than less likely that extreme violence would be precipitated, which may well have been what they really wanted all along (Kuperman, 2004). This was a recipe for disaster.

### ***The role of structural adjustment***

Economic “structural adjustment”, simultaneously pushed at this time by Western actors and institutions, also wreaked considerable harm. The most notable short-term impact of adjustment was a massive increase in development aid to help (or so it was intended) the Rwandan government implement the economic reform measures (Uvin, 1998: 87-8, 91). This funding of the Rwandan state enhanced its legitimacy and may well have encouraged it to believe it could get away with still further abuses (Storey, 2001).

Structural adjustment also impacted directly on ordinary Rwandans through devaluation-induced food price rises (Woodward, 1996: 20), while increased user fees for health and education services “contributed significantly to social tensions and fears” (Newbury, 1995: 14). This last point is also made by Sellstrom and Wohlgemuth (1996: 20) who cite “ample evidence that the introduction of higher fees for health and education, among other things, added to the already heavy burden on Rwanda’s poor”. Even for those not at the cutting edge of poverty – state employees – adjustment’s cap on public sector recruitment would have contributed to fear and insecurity, especially when allied with the Arusha-related threat of new political masters making new appointments (see above).

The structural violence under which Rwandans lived has been persuasively argued to be a key motive force for mass participation in genocide (Uvin, 1998). Hundreds of thousands of people perpetrated atrocities (Mamdani, 2001: 5-6). Uvin links this to the frustration, hopelessness and anger engendered by structural violence. These, in turn, Uvin argues, provoked a desire for scapegoating because the identification and persecution of a scapegoat, at a socio-psychological level, helped to combat low self-esteem and provided some sense of hope and direction. The existence of deeply rooted racism meant that a scapegoat (the Tutsi) was readily to hand and élite (akazu) manipulation ensured that was the direction towards which anger was channelled. By enhancing élite capacities and adding to structural violence, structural adjustment made its own contribution to this explosive mix.

## **BACK TO THE FUTURE: THE LEGACY OF THE ARUSHA ACCORDS**

Rwanda at the end of the genocide was a devastated country: at least 800,000 people were dead; 2 million refugees had fled abroad; 1 million people were living in “internally displaced” camps inside the country; some 500,000 “old caseload”

Tutsi refugees had returned after many years in exile; most civil servants were dead or were refugees (Reyntjens, 2004: 178). Furthermore, the country's infrastructure lay in ruins, crops and livestock were mostly destroyed, and banks and businesses had been ransacked (Reyntjens, 2004: 178). In the midst of this chaos, the victorious RPF affirmed it remained committed to the Arusha Accords, though insisting that the MRND(D) be excluded as having been a party to genocide. A minister in the new government argued that "Arusha was well negotiated. It offered the promise of political stability. It was our bible" (in Bruce, 2007: 11).

The government that was inaugurated on July 19, 1994, was a genuine government of national unity. It was fully in the spirit of the Arusha Peace Agreements of August 1993...The new president, Pasteur Bizimungu, was an RPF Hutu who had been a government civil servant in the 1980s. Of the twenty-one ministries, the lion's share (eight) had gone to the RPF; the rest were evenly distributed, with four ministries going to the...[MDR], three to the... [PSD], three to the Liberals, two to independent personalities, and one to the small Christian Democratic Party. In ethnic terms fifteen of the new ministers were Hutu and only six were Tutsi. After such a catastrophe the new cabinet looked like a small miracle of reason in a sea of madness (Prunier, 2009: 7).

And yet, within barely a year, that "miracle of reason" would be revealed as a shallow façade. On a range of issues—justice (the often arbitrary arrest and detention of alleged genocide suspects), the possession/repossession of property, monopolisation of economic resources (Dorsey, 2000: 324-6) and others—a clique within the RPF leadership began to monopolise power (Prunier, 2009: 43). In April 1995, government troops massacred thousands of Hutu "internally displaced people" at a camp in southern Rwanda (Prunier, 2009: 37-42). The Minister for the Interior, Seth Sendashonga (unusual in being a Hutu member of the RPF), opposed this and other human rights abuses. In August 1995 Sendashonga, along with other ministers, was fired and he and the prime minister (Faustin Twagiramungu, an MDR Hutu) were placed under house arrest (Prunier, 2009: 46). Both fled the country in late 1995, and Sendashonga was murdered by RPF agents in Kenya in 1998 (Prunier, 2009: 365-8).

Tens of thousands of civilians were killed by government forces in 1997 and 1998 in counter-insurgency operations (Reyntjens, 2004: 195). Another wave of high-profile political resignations (forced or otherwise) followed in 2000, including that of the Hutu President Pasteur Bizimungu (to be replaced as president by the head of the RPF, and de facto national ruler, General Paul Kagame); the MDR was banned as a political party in 2003 on the grounds of promoting "divisionism" (Reyntjens, 2004: 184). Kagame won a Presidential election in 2003 in a context of widespread intimidation and vote rigging (Prunier, 2009: 295). Parliamentary elections later in 2003 saw all candidates not members of, or allied to, the RPF debarred or intimidated out of the electoral running (Reyntjens, 2004: 186), following a pattern established at deeply flawed local elections in 2001 (Reyntjens, 2004: 182). Kagame won another Presidential election in 2010, again in a context of systematic exclusion and harassment of the opposition (Beaumont, 2010).

After 2001, abuses such as extra-judicial killings had escalated even outside periods of electoral contestation (Front Line, 2005). Media freedom became increasingly circumscribed through legal and extra-legal measures (Reyntjens, 2004: 181; Human Rights Watch, 2010: 151). The space within which civil society can genuinely contest government policy is severely circumscribed (Beswick, 2010; Front Line, 2005). In 2004, a number of national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were accused by a parliamentary organisation of contributing to “divisionism” and either suppressed or expelled (Buckley-Zistel, 2009: 47).

Meanwhile, “The benefits of the country’s economic progress have been channelled almost exclusively to the new elites living in their large villas in Kigali, while 90 per cent of the people continue to scrape together an existence below the poverty line in rural areas” (Oomen, 2005: 900). Food and asset vulnerability, along with continuous food shortages, remain pervasive in rural areas (Hintjens, 2008: 20). “Distress sales” of land are once again common, dependence on food aid for survival is common, and many of the rural poor lack access to even basic healthcare and education services (Hintjens, 2008: 20, 21).

The population is, as in the past, closely surveilled and tightly controlled (Ansoms, 2009: 304-5; see also Ingelaere, 2010a). This has a pronounced ethnic dimension: control is exercised through appointed (not elected) officials who draw state salaries and whose career prospects are dependent on following government diktats – these people are often Tutsi (though a small number of all Tutsi) with no prior connection to the area and who are accountable upwards to central government but not downwards to the people (Ingelaere, 2010b: 288-90).

In addition to its regressive record at home, the RPF government has attracted significant international condemnation for its direct interventions in neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Initially, in 1996, this involvement had the main objective of closing the refugee camps in which the former genocidal forces and hundreds of thousands of civilians had become ensconced after their flight from Rwanda in 1994—these camps were indeed closed, and mass killings of civilians by the RPF and its allies were carried out in the process (Reyntjens, 2004: 205). A second major phase of conflict began in August 1998 and has led to considerable criticism of all parties involved (including several other governments in the region) over extensive civilian deaths, other human rights abuses, and the looting of DRC resources (Human Security Report Project, 2010: 36-48). A UN Panel report on the issue in 2001 constituted a damning indictment of the Rwandan government’s piracy of DRC resources—including coltan and gold (UN Panel, 2001: 3). Another UN-established expert group on the DRC reported in 2008 that Rwanda maintained support for murderous militia groups within the DRC (Group of Experts, 2008), and a further UN report released in October 2010 documented massive human rights violations in the DRC, in which the armed forces of Rwanda (and other countries) are implicated (Onyiengo, 2010).

Despite overwhelming evidence of its murderous brutality (at home and abroad), the absence of any real democracy in the country, and the (at best) uneven nature

of economic progress, the Rwandan government retains substantial external support, particularly from Britain and the USA. Hayman concludes that “donors have remained largely supportive even in the face of signs of increasing authoritarianism and poor political governance” (2009: 177). Why should this be the case? One answer is that some donors are impressed at the government’s reconstruction and development efforts (Beswick, 2010: 246; Uvin, 2001). Another is that the RPF government has been highly effective at creating and cashing a “genocide credit”: by portraying itself as the saviour and defender of the Tutsi ethnic minority, and highlighting the past failure of external actors to protect that minority, it has enhanced its negotiating hand with Western powers in particular (Pottier, 2002). The Rwandan government has also proved very skilled in speaking the language of international development, as manifested in strict adherence to neo-liberal economic policies and stated commitments to “poverty reduction”, “participation”, and other beloved buzzwords of the international development sector (Hayman, 2009: 175; Oomen, 2005: 901). For the staff of aid agencies who rarely venture into rural areas this may be a persuasive discourse (Ingelaere, 2010a).<sup>5</sup>

The RPF élite has, in summary, decisively established its domination over Rwandan society and has been able to align itself sufficiently well (rhetorically or in reality) with the goals of international actors so as to attract substantial international support and ward off any particularly significant international censure. Crucially, one such international goal is the idea of power-sharing and “national reconciliation”, as conceived under the Arusha Accords. According to the official Rwandan government website,<sup>6</sup> the “principal provisions [of Arusha] now constitute the Fundamental Law of the Republic of Rwanda”. Non-RPF and Hutu ministers continue to hold cabinet positions (however non-existent their real power is): the letter of Arusha is (partly) observed even as its spirit is violated.

## CONCLUSION

At the start of this paper, I argued that the Arusha peace process was flawed in three main ways. The first was that it provided a channel through which élites and aspirant élites could pursue state power – power that they had little or no interest in genuinely sharing. The second was that it did not address the structural violence of Rwandan society—the chronic impoverishment, and deep senses of deprivation and humiliation, that laid the bases for mass participation in the 1994 genocide; indeed, another external intervention at that time—structural adjustment—actually made this structural violence worse. The third was that Arusha has, since 1994, been co-opted by the RPF élite to legitimise its grip on power.

Indeed, the current Rwandan situation parallels the early 1990s in important ways. The new ruling élite uses its claimed commitment to the Arusha Accords as a device to legitimise its monopolisation of state power—both because that power is essential to its (political and economic) reproduction as an élite, and also because any diminution of its grip on state power would expose it to severe, quite possibly fatal, threat. The fig leaf of power sharing conceals a naked refusal to share any real power with anyone outside the élite. And while the Arusha Accords are being

strategically appropriated to legitimise the élite claim to monopoly power, the underlying condition of “structural violence” for the vast mass of ordinary people is, if anything, intensified.

The question then arises: what can be done? Or, what should have been done before 1994? Should external actors have even attempted to help construct a settlement? What such efforts must, at the very least, do is take proper account of the structural (élite and societal) characteristics of a country like Rwanda and factor those into any conflict resolution efforts. Most urgently, allowing a state to claim adherence to a power sharing settlement (as the current Rwandan government does vis-à-vis Arusha) while it is violating the rights of its citizens discredits the whole conflict resolution project.

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<sup>1</sup> In July 1991, the words "et la Démocratie" were added to the party's name, thus turning the acronym into MRNDD; I mainly use the term MRND(D) to denote the party under both monikers.

<sup>2</sup> The RPF also contained some prominent Hutu members who had broken with Habyarimana's regime (Mamdani, 2001: 159-84).

<sup>3</sup> It has long been thought that the most likely explanation of his death is that he was killed by members of the ruling élite itself, concerned at his alleged betrayal of the Hutu extremist cause (Prunier, 1995: 213-29). However, more recent evidence from (not necessarily fully reliable) RPF defectors suggests that it was the RPF which shot down Habyarimana's plane (Lemarchand, 2006; Robinson and Ghahraman, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> There is circumstantial evidence that the RPF was backed, to some extent, by the US government (Herman and Peterson, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Jacques and Tuckey (2008) also claim that US support (the US is the largest single aid donor to Rwanda) is based on the interests of US companies in accessing DRC resources and Rwandan cooperation in the US-led "war on terror".

<sup>6</sup> [www.gov.rw](http://www.gov.rw), accessed 9<sup>th</sup> July 2010.