

## 5 From Violent Repression to Political Domination: Transitional Justice, Political Reform, and Development

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Today's dictators understand that in a globalized world the more brutal forms of intimidation – mass arrests, firing squads, and violent crackdowns – are best replaced with more subtle forms of coercion. Rather than forcibly arrest members of a human rights group, today's most effective despots deploy tax collectors or health inspectors to shut down dissident groups. Laws are written broadly, then used like a scalpel to target the groups the government deems a threat. Rather than shutter all media, modern-day despots make exceptions for small outlets – usually newspapers – that allow for a limited public discussion. Today's dictators pepper their speeches with references to liberty, justice, and the rule of law ... Modern dictators understand it is better to appear to win a contested election than to openly steal it.

– William J. Dobson, *The Dictator's Learning Curve*

### **Breakfast with the Secretary General**

The headquarters of the Rwandan Patriotic Front were housed in a building that previously served as a large private residence. Situated on the edge of Kimihurura, long one of Kigali's most fashionable neighborhoods, the office was located conveniently between downtown and Kacyiru, home to many government ministries. We arrived very early on a Friday morning – just 7 a.m. – because the Secretary General of the RPF, Charles Murigande, had granted us an interview and insisted that we not be late. He had a very busy day, his secretary had told us, and he could only accord us forty-five minutes.

We arrived early and parked our car on the dirt and gravel street in front of the RPF offices. An armed soldier opened the front gate, and we were invited inside and up the grand staircase to a hallway that had been furnished with chairs to serve as a waiting room. The house was quiet, with only a few people present, but Murigande was already hard at work in his office. After a few minutes of waiting, we were ushered inside a room that had once served as a bedroom, now furnished with

a dark wooden desk and heavy curtains. Murigande rose from behind the desk, greeted us, and offered us seats on the hard wooden upright chairs situated in front of his desk. I explained our purpose: The three of us – I, another American scholar, and a Rwandan political scientist – were conducting an assessment of the political situation in Rwanda for the United States Agency for International Development to help the US Government determine how to support democratic consolidation in Rwanda. “We are hoping that as the leader of the dominant political party in the country, you can provide some insight into the role of parties and how democracy can be strengthened here.” When I paused, without offering us an opportunity to pose our first question, the Secretary General of the RPF launched into a discourse about politics in Rwanda and the role of the RPF:

Since 1994, when the RPF was able to stop the genocide and drive out of power the government that was carrying out the genocide, it did something contrary to human nature. And perhaps that is why people have refused to accept it. It isn't natural for a party to win power and then invite other parties to share it. The RPF having as a primary goal the unity of the country, the RPF refused to be bound by human nature. Rwanda had a history of non-representative government. We put into place a broad-based government made of six political parties and put into place a transitional parliament of eight parties. It is difficult to understand why people refer to the RPF as the party in power, when you consider that in the government, all decisions are taken by consensus.<sup>1</sup>

Murigande spoke in deliberate and forceful English. Like many of the leaders of the RPF, Murigande was born in Rwanda but fled the country with his family when anti-Tutsi ethnic violence broke out in 1959. Unlike most of the top RPF brass, however, Murigande did not flee to Uganda. Since his family was from southern Rwanda, from Butare, they fled to neighboring Burundi. Murigande grew up in Bujumbura, the capital, and he began his university education at the National University of Burundi. He continued his studies at the University of Namur in Belgium, where he earned a Masters and PhD in mathematics, then returned to Burundi. While few Tutsi refugees from Burundi have held prominent positions in the RPF, Murigande had the advantage of having excelled at his studies of English in addition to his fluent French. In 1989, he assumed a position at Howard University in Washington, DC, placing him in a key position for representing the position of the RPF when their invasion of Rwanda began the following year. His loyalty to the RPF and his political stridency eventually earned him a position

<sup>1</sup> All quotes in this section from interview with Charles Murigande in Kigali, September 2002.

as a trusted confidant of Paul Kagame, who was himself in the United States – receiving military training at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas – at the time the war began in October 1990:

Anyone who states that a society that experienced genocide can be totally healed in just eight years is probably not a sane human being. That is my answer to anyone who claims that this society is not still fragile. How can you think that yesterday people who were being hunted down like deer can today be totally at peace? Or even those who were hunting human beings as though they were deer can be at peace. No they are not at peace. If the tragedy had stopped in 1994, then eight years could be sufficient time for healing, but don't forget that we have continued to confront those who want to carry out genocide ...

Murigande had a reputation for being serious and severe. He was widely known to be an *umurokore*, a strict born-again Christian, who eschews alcohol, cigarettes, and other vices, including corruption. In 1998–1999, he served for a year as the rector of the National University of Rwanda in Butare, but his rigid approach to discipline clashed sharply with the inevitable youthful tendency for rebellion among university students. When I taught at the NUR in 2001, students still told stories about the swiftness with which Murigande had expelled students who protested against the poor conditions of student housing. Yet Murigande's seriousness of purpose and strict probity are exactly the qualities that impress outsiders who praise the RPF for its good management and clear purpose. In fact, Kagame moved Murigande into the leadership of the RPF in 1998, when he was seeking to root out growing corruption in the party. Murigande's unwavering attention to rules also made him an excellent choice for maintaining party discipline under the guise of democratic governance:

One of the basic principles of working in the RPF is discussion, sometimes endless discussion. Usually all decisions are taken by consensus. We debate until consensus is achieved ... If you feel strongly about an issue, you can always ask that it be re-debated. That is something that distinguishes the RPF from other parties. But once the party decides on an issue, you can't go out and oppose it. Once your arguments are defeated, you must go along.

Having lived in both Europe and the United States, Murigande understood well the Western mindset, and like many in the RPF, he pointedly rejected the West as a model for Rwanda. The roots of the RPF can be traced back to the anti-colonial struggles of the late 1950s and 1960s. Like elites in many African countries, young Tutsi in Rwanda in the 1950s developed a strong anti-European and politically radical ideology and began a movement for independence from Belgium.<sup>2</sup> But an emerging

<sup>2</sup> Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*.

Hutu “counter-elite,” cultivated by Catholic missionaries and Belgian colonial authorities, raised concerns about the prospect of independence under Tutsi dominance.<sup>3</sup> When a 1959 attack on a Hutu sub-chief led to a wave of attacks on Tutsi leaders and counter-attacks on Hutu, Belgian authorities moved quickly to calm the situation by shifting Hutu into political offices. Many Tutsi, particularly those from elite families, fled into exile. The exiled Tutsi blamed the Belgians for the violence against them, and armed bands of Tutsi exiles sought to retake power from the new Hutu government in a series of attacks in the 1960s. Violent reprisals against Tutsi still in Rwanda killed hundreds and drove thousands more to flee the country.<sup>4</sup> Although the Hutu-dominated governments of independent Rwanda characterized the uprising in 1959 as a revolution, since the Hutu majority displaced the Tutsi elite, the Tutsi exiles in Burundi, Congo, and Uganda regarded the governments of Kayibanda and Habyarimana as reactionary puppets of Western interests.

Like many of the rebellions that arose in Africa after 1960, Uganda’s National Resistance Movement (NRM) was influenced by revolutionary principles drawn from Marx, Lenin, and Mao. Led by Yoweri Museveni, the rebel group that took to the bush in 1980 and fought its way to power in 1986 characterized its struggle as a “revolution” and implemented a Maoist structure of revolutionary councils that linked people from the most local level to the party leaders at the top.<sup>5</sup> Rwandan refugees Paul Kagame and Fred Rwigyema were among the twenty-six individuals who originally joined Museveni’s rebellion, and they modeled the RPF after the NRM. Even as the RPF leadership, like Museveni before them, jettisoned Marxist economic rhetoric and strongly embraced capitalism, the RPF leaders retained not only the Leninist principles of party organization and democratic centralism<sup>6</sup> – what Murigande described as allowing debate until a party decision had been made<sup>7</sup> – but also the

<sup>3</sup> Ian Linden with Jane Linden, *Church and Revolution in Rwanda*, New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1977.

<sup>4</sup> Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*; Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, pp. 61–74, 90–92.

<sup>5</sup> Dan M. Mudoola, “Institution Building: The Case of the NRM and the Military in Uganda, 1986–9,” in Holger Bernt Hansen and Michael Twaddle, eds., *Changing Uganda*, Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1991, pp. 230–246; J. Oloku-Onyanga, “The National Resistance Movement, ‘Grassroots Democracy,’ and Dictatorship in Uganda,” in Robin Cohen and Harry Goulbourne, eds., *Democracy and Socialism in Africa*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1991.

<sup>6</sup> V. I. Lenin, “Report on the Unity Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.,” 1906, available at [www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1906/rucong/viii.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1906/rucong/viii.htm), writes “Freedom of discussion, unity of action. That is what we must strive to achieve.” See also Michael Waller, *Democratic Centralism: An Historical Commentary*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1981.

<sup>7</sup> Gerald Gahima, *Transitional Justice in Rwanda: Accountability for Atrocity*, Routledge, 2013, confirms this approach to decision-making in the RPF, with extensive debate until a decision is made then expected conformity.

strong anti-imperialist and anti-Western attitudes typical of revolutionary movements.<sup>8</sup> The failure of Western states to intervene to stop the genocide – even the complicity of some states such as France – only reinforced an already powerful sense within the RPF leadership of the moral bankruptcy of the West. Murigande and other RPF leaders felt that Western countries had utterly failed to acknowledge their role in the genocide, using the ICTR as a smokescreen to cover their own complicity, and lacked authority to criticize the human rights abuses of the RPF, which, after all, stopped the genocide. Although RPF leaders actively courted Western political support and investment, they felt the West's attempts to interfere in Rwandan affairs were selfishly motivated forms of neo-colonialism that served only to reinforce those same ideas and individuals that had promoted the genocide:

Thanks to the VOA Kinyarwanda language programs and the BBC Kinyarwanda language programs, we continue to receive poison. I don't think the country is healed. I don't know any country that has more debate than in Rwanda ... You should go to the solidarity camps. No subject is taboo. People talk about everything.

At the end of forty-five minutes, at precisely ten minutes before 8 a.m., Murigande suddenly stopped, looked at his watch, thanked us, and offered us the door. The time was up, and our interview was concluded. As we left the office, we encountered a large line of people now seated in the waiting area hoping to ask Murigande for help with family problems or assistance in getting a job. Despite Murigande's protestations, many Rwandans believed that the RPF – not the government – was the real seat of power in Rwanda.

In the introduction to this section of the book, I presented two sharply contrasting perspectives on the RPF. While some observers consider Rwanda's ruling party a model of political leadership that promotes peace, stability, and development, others regard the RPF as a brutal, authoritarian regime, aggressively imposing its will on an oppressed population. In this chapter, I attempt to reconcile these contrasting perspectives. In this chapter, I do not offer a comprehensive analysis of the political developments and policy changes since 1994 nor catalog the human rights abuses that have informed my skeptical view of the RPF-led regime.<sup>9</sup> I instead focus on analyzing how the RPF has exercised

<sup>8</sup> In *The Rwanda Crisis*, Prunier writes that Rwigyema and Kagame shared with Museveni "the same left-leaning nationalist views, distrust of the West, hatred of dictatorship and belief in the redemptive powers of 'popular warfare'" (p. 68).

<sup>9</sup> For just such a detailed overview, see Filip Reyntjens, *Political Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

power. I first review the history of RPF repression in the years immediately after taking power and contend that violence was more extensive than is usually acknowledged today and set a foundation of intimidation and obedience that shaped how the population has responded to the extensive reform programs implemented after the RPF shifted to less violent means of rule around 2000. I also argue that efforts to promote political reform and economic development are driven by contradictory motivations. On the one hand, reform efforts are inspired by a compelling vision of societal purification and social uplift, closely tied to ideas of transitional justice. On the other hand, RPF leaders and the repatriated Tutsi who are their main supporters regard the general Rwandan population with suspicion and disdain, seeing them as either willing perpetrators or shameful victims of the 1994 genocide. Preventing future violence while transforming Rwanda according to the RPF's grand vision requires that they hold tightly onto power rather than ceding power to the majority. The ruling elite's strong belief in their right to rule and suspicion of the general population makes their policies particularly prone to top-down, heavy-handed implementation that requires active compliance regardless of the negative consequences of policy initiatives.

### **Establishing Control and the Road Not Taken: 1994–1995**

Immediately after the RPF took power in Rwanda in 1994, a tangible possibility existed for a broadly popular multi-ethnic effort to establish peace, rebuild Rwanda, and return the country rapidly to democracy.<sup>10</sup> As the RPF troops advanced across the country, many of the Hutu who stayed in their communities rather than fleeing with their neighbors to Tanzania, the DRC, or the French-controlled Zone Turquoise, chose to remain because they had opposed the Hutu Power regime that perpetrated the genocide and hoped that the RPF could bring peace and democracy to the country. Many welcomed the RPF victory and cautiously embraced its leadership and effort to reconstruct the country.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> While emphasizing the public's caution more than I do, Sibomana made a similar point about the opportunity that the RPF squandered: "When the RPF took control of Kigali in July 1994, everything was still possible. ... The vast majority of the population mistrusted the RPF, because of the propaganda of Hutu extremists or because of the crimes it had committed. But it could prove itself: by taking power, it could stop being a minority armed rebellion movement and commit itself to promoting a new Rwandan state." Sibomana, *Hope for Rwanda*, p. 138.

<sup>11</sup> This point was emphasized to me repeatedly during the year that I lived in Rwanda prior to the October 1996 closure of the refugee camps in the DRC, particularly in the south, where opposition to Habyarimana had been strong, but also among many Hutu with whom I interacted in Kigali.

Some early RPF actions gave cause for optimism. The RPF leaders promised to move rapidly toward democratic elections, and on July 19, 1994, the day after taking the last outpost of the genocidal regime, they named a government of national unity.<sup>12</sup> Based loosely on the 1993 Arusha Peace Accords, the government included nearly equal numbers of Hutu and Tutsi ministers drawn not only from the RPF but also from the main parties that had opposed the Habyarimana regime – the MDR, Social Democratic Party (*Parti Social Démocrat*, PSD), and Liberal Party. The RPF installed Hutu RPF official Pasteur Bizimungu as president and moderate Hutu leader Faustin Twagiramungu of the MDR as prime minister. Other well-respected Hutu in the government included human rights activist Alphonse Marie-Nkubito as Justice Minister and the RPF's Seth Sendashonga as Interior Minister.<sup>13</sup> When the government named new prefects in October 1994, the majority was Hutu, and only four of the eleven were from the RPF.<sup>14</sup> The RPF leaders decried revenge attacks and advocated national unity. They also tackled the difficult job of rebuilding the country's devastated infrastructure. International aid poured into Rwanda along with large numbers of international humanitarian workers, and the RPF quickly gained a reputation for competence and probity.<sup>15</sup>

Yet by the time I returned to Rwanda in late 1995, deep disappointment with the new regime had set in among many Rwandans. Within weeks of taking control, the RPF established a method of rule that combined eloquent rhetoric in support of a unified and peaceful country with an attitude of deep distrust and condescension for the populace. For all the talk of national unity and reconciliation, the population experienced RPF rule as highly oppressive. Rwandans swiftly learned that the best way to avoid becoming a target of violence or arrest was not only to show compliance with RPF directives but also to parrot RPF rhetoric, at least in public. Those who engaged in civil society or political party activity risked being seen by the regime as a threat, particularly if they were not

<sup>12</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, pp. 268–273, 295–305.

<sup>13</sup> The government named by Bizimungu in July 1994 included nine ministers from the RPF and nine from other parties. Ten were Tutsi and eight Hutu. In September and October, three more ministers were named, all Hutu. André Guichaoua, *Les crises politiques au Burundi et au Rwanda (1993–1994)*, Lille: Université des Sciences et Technologies de Lille, 1995, pp. 759–761.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 772–773.

<sup>15</sup> According to the World Bank, net official development assistance to Rwanda rose from \$353.91 million in 1993 to \$711.75 million in 1994 and \$694.7 million in 1995. Foreign investment tapered off for a few years while Rwanda was involved in military interventions in the DRC, but climbed sharply again beginning in 2004 to reach a peak of \$1.264 billion in 2011. World Bank, “Net Official Development Assistance Received (Current US\$),” [www.data.worldbank.org/indicator/DT.ODA.ODAT.CD](http://www.data.worldbank.org/indicator/DT.ODA.ODAT.CD).

from the repatriated Tutsi community. As one Hutu civil society activist told me in 1996, “Those of us [Hutu] who stayed in the country, we had supported the RPF. But we were mistaken. Now we are all being harassed.”<sup>16</sup>

The RPF used substantial violence in gaining power and establishing its initial authority. According to HRW, between April and July 1994, “The RPF killed thousands of civilians both during the course of combat ... and in the more lengthy process of establishing its control throughout the country.”<sup>17</sup> In some places, as the RPF troops advanced, they opened fire on anyone they encountered.<sup>18</sup> In many communities, after seizing control, the RPF called a public meeting where they separated out a portion of the population – sometimes all men of fighting age, sometimes only those accused by their fellow citizens of having participated in the genocide – and took them away for summary execution.<sup>19</sup> In my research in Butare, Gikongoro, Kibuye, Kibungo, and Byumba from 1995 to 2006, individuals regularly pointed out the location of mass graves of victims of RPF violence, though the bodies from these graves were in some cases subsequently exhumed and reburied in mass graves for victims of the genocide. While these RPF killings were less systematic and not based on identity and thus cannot be equated with the genocide, they nevertheless represent serious war crimes and crimes against humanity.<sup>20</sup>

By September 1994, the RPF replaced the extensive use of violence with a strategy of dominating the population through widespread arrest and detention coupled with more selective disappearances and killings. As discussed in Chapter 4, the RPF used judicial action to intimidate and control the population, an approach made particularly effective because the lack of formal charges and absence of trials meant that unsubstantiated accusations could indefinitely remove from public life those viewed as threats to the regime, while their detention was easily justified as part of the effort to seek accountability for genocide crimes and to strengthen

<sup>16</sup> Interview in Kigali, May 14, 1996.

<sup>17</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, p. 702.

<sup>18</sup> One Tutsi man in Butare told me his family was killed in Kibungo by the RPF, who assumed anyone they found alive was a combatant. Interview in Butare, February 1995. Burnet, *Genocide Lives in Us*, reports similar cases.

<sup>19</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, pp. 705–722. See also, Amnesty International, “Rwanda: Reports of Killings and Abductions,” pp. 1–9.

<sup>20</sup> A Hutu civil society activist who was threatened by Hutu Power during the genocide and sought refuge behind RPF lines told me that at the camp for IDPs in Byumba where he spent several months, the RPF regularly took away individuals, particularly those suspected of having connections to the Habyarimana government; most were never heard from again. Interview in Kigali, April 1996. Judi Rever, “Rwanda’s Memory Hole,” *Foreign Policy Journal*, April 14, 2015, documents a massacre in Byumba Stadium in April 1994 and RPF efforts to suppress memory of the killings.



security in a still fragile post-conflict society. The threat of indefinite detention became a powerful weapon to silence would-be regime critics. By the end of 1994, 15,000 people were imprisoned on genocide charges, while by the end of 1995, the number had risen to 57,000, at a time before the closure of the camps in the DRC that presumably housed the majority of perpetrators.<sup>21</sup>

At the same time, the RPF continued to use violence in a limited and selective fashion. In early 1995, the RPF forcibly closed camps for IDPs that had been formed in southwest Rwanda when the region was under French control, including the camp at Kibeho where as many as 8,000 died.<sup>22</sup> During my work with HRW in Rwanda in 1995–1996, numerous witnesses told me about individuals killed, attacked, or disappeared, including government officials, journalists, and civil society activists as well as average Hutu killed after they returned home from the IDP camps.<sup>23</sup> Human rights activist Father Sibomana observed in this period:

It's always the same scenario: men, women, children, priests, and magistrates are killed, in the daytime or at night, with knives or with firearms. Witnesses accuse armed men wearing military uniforms who, strangely, move about freely without fear of being arrested. How can we fail to conclude that they are soldiers of the Rwandan Patriotic Army?<sup>24</sup>

When massacres and violent attacks on individuals were made public, the RPF responded wherever possible by denying connection to the violence, attributing it to remnants of the genocidal militias or to mere criminality. Where RPF involvement was obvious, as in the massacres at Kibeho, where international observers witnessed RPF soldiers firing

<sup>21</sup> Human Rights Watch, *World Report 1996*.

<sup>22</sup> Medecines Sans Frontiers, "Report on Events in Kibeho Camp, April 1995," Paris: MSF, May 25, 1995; Amnesty International, "Rwanda: Independent forensic inquiry and urgent protection needed for internally displaced persons following the massacre of several thousands," AFR 47/09/95, London: Amnesty International, April 24, 1995. Other large-scale massacres took place in 1995 in Kanama in Gisenyi Prefecture and in the Nyungwe Forest, Amnesty International, "Rwanda, Two Years After the Genocide: An Open Letter to President Pasteur Bizimungu," AFR 47/42/96, London: Amnesty International, April 4, 1996.

<sup>23</sup> In 1995 alone, assassinations of government officials included the Butare prefect in March, the deputy prefect of Gisenyi in July, and a judge and the deputy prefect of Gitarama in Butare in August. Human Rights Watch, *World Report 1996*.

<sup>24</sup> Sibomana, *Hope for Rwanda*, p. 140. Amnesty International, "Two Years After the Genocide," reported in April 1996, "a pattern of killings and 'disappearances' of unarmed civilians by members of the Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA) has developed over the last year ... [I]ndividuals – unarmed civilians, including women, young children and the elderly – have been mysteriously murdered by members of the RPA or 'disappeared' without trace, in various parts of the country ... Although there is no evidence that the government directly ordered each of these killings, there has been little official action to break the pattern." (p. 5).

on unarmed civilians, RPF leaders claimed that troops who perpetrated violence were rogue agents seeking revenge for the murder of their fellow Tutsi or driven unavoidably to unfortunate actions because of the horrible legacy of insecurity left by the genocide. The regime sometimes made a public show of investigating and even occasionally prosecuting RPF members accused of abuses, but real accountability was almost entirely lacking.<sup>25</sup>

### **National Unity Through Repression: Securing RPF Dominance 1995–1999**

The pattern established in the first year of RPF rule of combining moderate rhetoric and ostensibly positive policy initiatives with intolerance of criticism and strict control of social and political life, backed up by a willingness to use coercive force where necessary, continued over the next five years and set the context for the post-2000 political agenda, when overt repression was replaced by popular mobilization and less violent means of control. The RPF's most widespread use of force after 1995 was across Rwanda's borders in the Democratic Republic of Congo (called Zaire until 1997). In 1996, the RPF organized a Congolese rebel movement and joined them in invading Eastern DRC. The RPF bombed and forcibly closed the refugee camps, demanding that Rwandan refugees return to Rwanda, then systematically hunted down those who chose instead to flee into the Congolese rainforest.<sup>26</sup> Gaining support from local ethnic militias, the Ugandan and Burundian armies, and numerous deserters from the Congolese army, they swiftly advanced across the DRC, ultimately driving long-time dictator Mobutu Sese Seko out of power in May 1997 and installing rebel leader Laurent Kabila as president.<sup>27</sup> For

<sup>25</sup> The commander of troops at Kibeho, Fred Ibingira, was found guilty of non-assistance to persons in danger but acquitted of murder. Although sentenced to eighteen months in prison, he was immediately released and subsequently promoted to brigadier general. Filip Reyntjens and Steff Vandeginste, "Rwanda: An Atypical Transition," in Elin Skaar, Siri Gløppen, and Astri Suhrke, eds., *Roads to Reconciliation*, Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2005. Similarly, four officers tried in a military court for a massacre of more than 100 civilians in Kanama, Gisenyi, in August 1995 were ultimately sentenced only for non-assistance to persons in danger. Sibomana, *Hope for Rwanda*, p. 142.

<sup>26</sup> The Rwandan camps did include armed elements who were legitimate targets and were preventing refugees from returning to Rwanda, but as I wrote for Human Rights Watch at the time, the AFDL and RPF forces "went beyond simply opening a path for those who wanted to return; they also fired on camps where there were no more soldiers present to force people in the camps to return to Rwanda." Longman and Des Forges, "Attacked by All Sides."

<sup>27</sup> There is a rich and growing literature on the two wars in Congo. C.f., Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *Congo: From Leopold to Kabila*, London: Zed Books, 2002; Séverine Autesserre, *The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010; Thomas Turner, *The*

many of the Rwandans interviewed in my research, the experience of violence in Congo shaped how they viewed the RPF and its initiatives. As I discuss in the next section of this book, the complete lack of accountability for this violence and its erasure from public memory affect how people experience transitional justice programs focused exclusively on the genocide.<sup>28</sup>

Ironically, in driving the Hutu militia away from the Rwandan border, the intervention in Congo forced many militia members back into Rwanda, actually adding to insecurity. Following the closure of the camps, insurgent attacks in Rwanda increased, particularly in the northwest. Seeking to contain the insurgency, the RPF attacked Hutu civilians in the northwest, carrying out summary executions of suspected militants and in several cases massacring civilians, particularly in communities where insurgents killed RPF soldiers in attacks. As many as 10,000 civilians were killed between October 1997 and January 1998.<sup>29</sup> Combat, threats from the insurgents, and RPF counterattacks drove thousands to flee their homes, with nearly half a million in IDP camps by mid-1998. The RPF began to move people forcibly out of their homes in a regroupment policy that sought to separate the civilian population from the insurgents by creating new concentrated settlements, primarily along roadsides, where they could be closely monitored.<sup>30</sup>

Growing tension between the Rwandan leadership and the Kabila government led the RPF to support a second rebellion in Congo. Rwandan and Ugandan troops re-entered Congo in August 1998 to support a new rebel group comprised primarily of Banyamulenge defectors from the Congolese army. Although initially highly successful, the intervention of

*Congo Wars: Conflict, Myth, and Reality*, London: Zed Books, 2007; Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters*; Lemarchand, *The Dynamics of Violence in Central Africa*; Reyntjens, *The Great African War*.

<sup>28</sup> The best account of the violence against Hutu refugees in Congo is Marie Béatrice Umutesi, *Surviving the Slaughter: The Ordeal of a Rwandan Refugee in Zaire*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000. See also Amnesty International, "Rwanda: Human Rights Overlooked in Mass Repatriation," AFR 47/02/97, London: Amnesty International, January 1997; Human Rights Watch, "Zaire: Transition, War and Human Rights," New York: Human Rights Watch/Africa, April 1997; United Nations High Commission for Human Rights, "Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1993–2003: Report of the Mapping Exercise documenting the most serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed within the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo between March 1993 and June 2003," Geneva: UNHCHR, August 2010.

<sup>29</sup> Filip Reyntjens, "Rwanda, Ten Years On: From Genocide to Dictatorship," *African Affairs* 103, 2004, p. 195; Amnesty International, "Rwanda: Ending the Silence," AFR 47/32/97, London: Amnesty International, September 25, 1997; Amnesty International, "Rwanda: Civilians trapped in armed conflict. 'The dead can no longer be counted,'" AFR 47/044/1997, London: Amnesty International, December 19, 1997.

<sup>30</sup> Human Rights Watch, *World Report 1999*; Human Rights Watch, "Rwanda: Uprooting the Rural Poor," New York: Human Rights Watch, May 1, 2001.

Angola, Zimbabwe, and other African countries on behalf of Kabila produced a stalemate on the battlefield and fracturing of the rebel movement, including a rupture between erstwhile allies Rwanda and Uganda. A humanitarian and human rights disaster ensued, in which all sides engaged in attacks on civilians.<sup>31</sup> The second Congo war pushed the Hutu militias deeper into Congo and put them on the defensive. Since late 1999, the RPF has experienced no organized armed resistance, and the RPF has engaged in no large-scale attacks on civilians within Rwanda.

In most of Rwanda, after the initial wave of violence in 1994 and 1995, the RPF shifted to subtler means of control. By appearing moderate and inclusive in their governance, quickly and effectively rebuilding the infrastructure, and promoting rapid economic growth, they hoped to build legitimacy and gain support from as much of the Rwandan population as possible – not only genocide survivors and repatriated Tutsi, but sympathetic Hutu as well. The RPF leadership appealed to the international community for financial assistance, playing on the diplomatic community's guilt over the failure to stop the genocide and promising that resources would not be squandered on corruption and inefficiency. International inputs focused at first on emergency assistance but shifted to development of the infrastructure and social services, allowing the government to provide direct benefits to the population.<sup>32</sup> Education was an early major policy focus, as the RPF sought to expand the number of schools, increase the percentage of children matriculating, and improve the quality of education. The government shifted to a merit-based system of advancement, both eliminating the ethnic quota system that limited opportunities for Tutsi and demonstrating a willingness to provide opportunities to Hutu.<sup>33</sup>

Contradictions in RPF policy ultimately undermined efforts to promote legitimacy. On ethnicity, for example, the RPF discouraged open discussion of ethnic identities and issued new identity cards that eliminated mention of ethnicity, but at the same time, the calculated

<sup>31</sup> Research that I conducted in Goma and Bukavu in March 2000 confirmed that the RPF was directly involved in major human rights violations during the second war. Longman, "Eastern Congo Ravaged." See also, John F. Clark, ed., *The African Stakes of the Congo War*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002; Reyntjens, *The Great African War*; Autesserre, *The Trouble with the Congo*.

<sup>32</sup> Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Geographical Distribution of Financial Flows to Aid Recipients: Disbursements, Commitments, Country Indicators*, Paris: OECD, 2001, 2006, 2011; World Bank, "Net Official Development Assistance Received."

<sup>33</sup> King, *From Classrooms to Conflict in Rwanda*; Freedman et al., "Confronting the Past in Rwandan Schools." The policies to expand education were motivated both by the presumed economic benefits of a more educated population and a belief that ignorance was a major reason the population participated in the genocide.

appointment of Hutu to top government posts in the effort to appear inclusive demonstrated a continuing consciousness of ethnicity. Despite a façade of inclusivity, in practice RPF leaders feared relinquishing real control to anyone outside their immediate constituency, and real power remained in the hands of Tutsi from the RPF, mostly former refugees from Uganda. In ministries and other offices led by Hutu, the second- or third-ranked position was always held by a Tutsi RPF officer, usually Anglophone, who retained real control.<sup>34</sup> Rwandans widely believed that Paul Kagame, the Tutsi RPF leader who served as vice-president and minister of defense, was more powerful than President Bizimungu and actually called the shots.<sup>35</sup> In August 1995, five Hutu ministers – including Nkubito, Twagiramungu, and Sendashonga – resigned from the Government of National Unity, complaining about their lack of real power and the continuing violence perpetrated by RPF soldiers.<sup>36</sup>

The approach to civil society and the press similarly undermined efforts to promote legitimacy, as they contradicted claims about the irrelevance of ethnicity and demonstrated the RPF's willingness to use force. The RPF allowed civil society groups to proliferate but sought to rein them in, ensuring that people they could trust were in leadership positions – generally repatriated Tutsi, but also sometimes genocide survivors.<sup>37</sup> Where necessary, the RPF used coercion to force groups to change their leadership to preferred candidates. For example, churches faced pressures to appoint leaders trusted by the RPF. In the Free Methodist Church, RPF troops reportedly encircled a national church board meeting in 1995 until it selected the RPF's preferred candidate, while the regime froze the bank accounts of the Episcopal and Pentecostal churches until they agreed to leadership changes.<sup>38</sup> Among human rights organizations, two largely Tutsi groups received strong RPF backing, as did the main umbrella group for human rights organizations, after they selected as

<sup>34</sup> Gahima, *Transitional Justice in Rwanda*, confirms this as the RPF's method of control.

<sup>35</sup> Joseph Sebarenzi, with Laura Ann Mullane, *God Sleeps in Rwanda: A Journey of Transformation*, New York: Atria Books, 2009, National Assembly Speaker from 1997 to 2000, wrote, "[I]t was no secret that Kagame held the reins of government and that Bizimungu had little power ... Because Bizimungu was a Hutu and member of the RPF, his presidency gave the government a diverse face and made the international community think it was inclusive, not a Tutsi-dominated government. In reality, Bizimungu's presidency was window-dressing, not a commitment to reconciliation" (p. 139).

<sup>36</sup> Reyntjens, "Rwanda, Ten Years On."

<sup>37</sup> For example, the Iwacu Center was a development group that was important in fostering civil society opposition to Habyarimana. After the war pro-RPF official Antoine Mugesera took over and ensured the group provided no resistance to the new regime. A group of returnees from Congo relaunched Pro-Femmes Tweschamwe, an umbrella organization for women's groups that successfully pushed for important advancements on women's rights without fundamentally challenging the RPF.

<sup>38</sup> Interviews in Kigali, April 1996 and October 2002.

president a Tutsi genocide survivor with close ties to the regime who discouraged the group and its member organizations from researching RPF abuses.<sup>39</sup> By contrast, groups headed by Father Sibomana and former Justice Minister Nkubito faced considerable harassment. After Nkubito died in 1997, the RPF exploited his group's status as a voluntary organization by flooding its membership roles with RPF supporters who redirected the group away from investigating RPF abuses. The executive secretary, Richard Nsanzabaganwa, himself a Tutsi genocide survivor, fled Rwanda in 1998.<sup>40</sup> While ostensibly allowing newspapers to publish freely, in practice, journalists who criticized the RPF or challenged its vision for Rwanda were routinely harassed. As Allan Thompson writes, "Shortly after coming to power, the RPF began to censor independent journals and persecute independent journalists."<sup>41</sup>

Selective use of violence also helped the regime keep the population in line. Although relatively rare, assassinations remained a tool to silence political opponents and send a message to other would-be dissidents. Two Hutu RPF members who fled Rwanda and became regime critics, Sendashonga and member of parliament Théoneste Lizinde, were assassinated in Nairobi in 1997 and 1998. Occasional attacks on journalists and civil society activists had a chilling effect on others who might speak out against the government.<sup>42</sup> The general Hutu population also faced periodic disappearances and summary executions, helping to keep ordinary citizens in line, though large-scale violence was limited to Congo and northwest Rwanda.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Interview in Kigali June 2001.

<sup>40</sup> Personal communication with Alison Des Forges, December 1998.

<sup>41</sup> Allan Thompson, *The Media and the Rwandan Genocide*, London: Pluto Press, 2007, p. 407. Cases of journalists beaten or killed, like Edouard Mutsinzi, the editor of *Le Messager-Intumwa* and Manasse Mugabo, director of the Kinyarwanda service for the United Nations radio station, who disappeared in August 1995, had a chilling effect. Sibomana, *Hope for Rwanda*, p. 143; Amnesty International, "Rwanda: Jean RUBADUKA, magistrate and human rights activist Abbé André SIBOMANA, acting bishop and human rights activist and other human rights activists," AFR 47/23/95, London: Amnesty International, November 30, 1995.

<sup>42</sup> In April 1997, after the journal *Umuravumba* published descriptions of RPF massacres, it was seized by the government and its editor was assassinated. A deputy chief justice, Vincent Nsanzabaganwa, was killed at his home in Kigali in 1997. Thompson, *The Media and the Rwandan Genocide*, p. 408. A former judge in Cyangugu working with the NGO *Avocats sans Frontiers* on defense for genocide cases was strangled in January 1998, and a few days later, a Croatian priest, Vjeko Curic, a close associate of Abbé Sibomana, was shot dead in the middle of the day in downtown Kigali. Amnesty International, "The Hidden Violence."

<sup>43</sup> During the insurgency in the northwest, a number of people originating in Gisenyi and Ruhengeri disappeared in Kigali and elsewhere, apparently taken by soldiers who believed that they were connected with the insurgency. In Umutara at least a hundred people, nearly all Hutu returned from refugee camps in Tanzania, disappeared in December 1997 and January 1998, apparently linked to conflicts over land. At least

The threat of arrest and detention ultimately became more common than the actual use of violence to control both Hutu elites and the general population.<sup>44</sup> The number of Hutu arrested on genocide charges continued to mount. In 1996, the government adopted new laws governing genocide crimes, and in December they began the first genocide trials. A 1996 policy requiring all Rwandans to return to their communes of origin to receive new identity cards forced genocide suspects living in Kigali and elsewhere to return to their home communities, where many were arrested. Thousands of Hutu who returned from Congo in 1996 were also arrested. By the end of 1998, 126,000 people were in prison on genocide charges.<sup>45</sup>

While initial RPF efforts to maintain control focused on Hutu, beginning in 1999, Tutsi critics of the government faced increasing threat of reprisal, something that has remained a factor in Rwandan politics, belying the effort to explain Rwandan politics in simple ethnic terms. In November 1999, the RPF arrested around 200 people in Kigali and charged them with supporting a supposed new security threat, "The Army of the King." Although a Tutsi, the Rwandan King, living in exile since 1961, by custom represented interests of all Rwandans. Some Rwandans hoped for his return, believing that he could provide a rallying point for a multi-ethnic alternative to Kagame and the RPF. The idea of the king's return gained support not only among Hutu, but among some Tutsi genocide survivors frustrated with the post-genocide government and even among repatriated Tutsi from Burundi and Congo, frustrated at the dominance of Tutsi repatriated from Uganda. As HRW explained at the time, "The multi-ethnic nature of the monarchist group poses a major challenge to authorities who previously could discredit opposition groups for being composed only of Hutu and for including persons implicated in the genocide."<sup>46</sup> The willingness to target Tutsi became an important element in Kagame and the RPF's move to further consolidate control.

### Toward a New Political Order

The *imidugudu* program was an early RPF attempt to radically reconstruct Rwandan society and drive development. It served as a forerunner to the more extensive programs for social engineering implemented after

thirty bodies were later found. Also in 1998, several dozen people were killed in parts of Gitarama. Amnesty International, "The Hidden Violence," pp. 5–9; Human Rights Watch, *World Report 1999*.

<sup>44</sup> Waldorf, "Mass Justice for Mass Atrocity."

<sup>45</sup> Human Rights Watch, *World Report 1999*.

<sup>46</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Rwanda: The Search for Security and Human Rights Abuses," New York: Human Rights Watch, April 1, 2000.

2000. In December 1996, the government adopted a National Habitat Policy in which they proposed to move all Rwandans in rural areas out of their traditional scattered homesteads and into villages, known as *imidugudu* (singular, *umudugudu*). The immediate impetus for the policy was the conflict over housing arising from the mass return of refugees from Tanzania and Congo, since many of the repatriated Tutsi who had returned to Rwanda beginning in 1994 had occupied homes abandoned by Hutu who had gone into exile and now had returned, seeking to reclaim their property. However, the RPF had been talking about the need for reorganizing rural life since the 1993 Arusha Accords, and housing built by the government, UNHCR, and other international agencies since 1994 for genocide survivors and repatriated refugees was entirely in concentrated settlements. The primary justification stated in the law for moving rural people into concentrated settlements was economic development – to facilitate the provision of public services and allow land redistribution. A January 1997 law banned building new homes outside designated sites, and in February the government began implementing the villagization policy in the eastern prefectures of Umutara, Kibungo, and Kigali-Rural. Authorities ordered residents to abandon their homes and build new houses in designated locations. At the same time, they also redistributed land in many areas to repatriated Tutsi. The *imidugudu* policy was expanded into in Gisenyi and Ruhengeri as order was restored in 1998 and 1999, with displaced families in many areas required to move into newly constructed villages rather than returning to their homes.<sup>47</sup>

Not surprisingly, the attempt to force people to leave their homes and move into the new settlements met with considerable resistance. By tradition, Rwandans did not live in villages but in scattered homesteads, and the smallest unit of social organization was the hill (*umusizi*). The traditional pattern of habitation throughout Rwanda consisted of families living in an enclosed compound surrounded by banana groves and fields, with adult children and other relatives often living in close proximity in their own compounds. The new *imidugudu* were often quite far from fields, requiring farmers to walk long distances to cultivate and making

<sup>47</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Uprooting the Rural Poor”; Saskia Van Hoyweghen, “The Urgency of Land and Agrarian Reform in Rwanda,” *African Affairs*, 98, 392, July 1999, 353–372; Herman Musahara and Chris Huggins, “Land Reform, Land Scarcity, and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: A Case Study of Rwanda,” in Chris Huggins and Jenny Clover, eds., *From the Ground Up: Land Rights, Conflict, and Peace in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, June 2005; Ansoms, “Re-engineering Rural Society”; Catharine Newbury, “High Modernism at the Ground Level: The *Imidugudu* Policy at the Ground Level,” in *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights After Mass Violence*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011, pp. 223–239.



protecting fields from theft difficult. Despite the claim that a major goal of the program was to improve the quality of rural life, services arrived slowly to most *imidugudu*. Although foreign donors supported construction in some areas, the new houses were often inferior to those that families were forced to abandon. In many cases individuals had to build new homes without any assistance or resources. Because of resistance, government officials employed threats and sometimes fined individuals who refused to move, though little violence was reported. Many people were also required to destroy their existing homes even before the new homes were constructed.<sup>48</sup>

Although the program of forced villagization was put on hold in 1999 because of strong resistance from donors, the government made clear that it intended eventually to pursue villagization,<sup>49</sup> and the land reform policies adopted a few years later continued to call for villagization of most rural residents. Discussing agrarian and land reform, Saskia van Hoyweghen contended that the repatriated Tutsi, "have not only brought with them different experiences but most of all a vision of what their home country ought to be like and a strong will to re-shape it to fit the mould."<sup>50</sup> While part of an ostensibly well-intentioned program to promote development and improve rural life, popular resistance required the government to force compliance. As many of those who resisted expected, the final result of the program was actually to make conditions worse for most of those affected. As with many later policies in Rwanda, good intentions were tempered by security concerns that ended up dominating much of the *imidugudu* policy's implementation. HRW's research indicates that Tutsi genocide survivors were particularly affected by the policy, many of them resisted, and many faced government coercion forcing them to relocate.<sup>51</sup>

The year 2000 marked a major shift in the RPF's governance of Rwanda, as the party assumed overt control of public institutions, Paul Kagame assumed more direct control of the party, and the government launched a much broader and more ambitious program of social and political transformation. A series of weekly meetings held at Village Urugwiro, the presidential residence, from May 1998 through March

<sup>48</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Uprooting the Rural Poor"; Musahara and Huggins, "Land Reform, Land Scarcity, and Post-Conflict Reconstruction."

<sup>49</sup> The Ministry of Land said in July 1999 that, "Imidugudu will [be] the only recommended and promoted form of settlement in rural areas. The ultimate objective of the government is to enable the *entire* rural population to live in grouped settlements." Quoted in Human Rights Watch, "Uprooting the Rural Poor."

<sup>50</sup> Van Hoyweghen, "The Urgency of Land and Agrarian Reform," p. 365.

<sup>51</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Uprooting the Rural Poor."

1999, brought together Rwanda's key political leaders to discuss the country's future.<sup>52</sup> The proposals that emerged from the meetings set the agenda for aggressive political reform and popular mobilization in the following decade – the promotion of national unity and fight against “sectarianism,” adoption of new national symbols, transition to a democratic system “suitable for Rwanda,” adoption of gacaca to speed the prosecution of genocide crimes, fighting corruption, land reform, promoting rapid economic development, and, above all, the need for popular participation.<sup>53</sup> Transitional justice programs were thus embedded in a broader reform agenda, and the ethos of transitional justice, the idea of reshaping memory and identity through popular mobilization, pervaded other programs not obviously tied to truth-telling and accountability.

The consolidation of political power in the hands of the RPF began around 1998. While previously the RPF strove to be the dominant party in a coalition of independent political parties, in the late 1990s RPF leaders became increasingly intolerant of political independence and sought to establish more complete hegemonic control over Rwanda's political life. The RPF sought to weaken and co-opt other political parties. While continuing to name ministers from other parties, the RPF stopped consulting party leaders on whom from their parties to appoint.<sup>54</sup> Within the National Assembly, the RPF pushed through the creation of a Forum of Political Parties, a supra-parliamentary committee with the power to vet members and refuse to seat or remove those deemed unfit to hold office – allegedly those involved in corruption or promoting ethnic division, but in practice, those who challenged the supremacy of the RPF. The RPF dominated the Forum, giving them a veto over other parties' members, thus creating a de facto one-party state.<sup>55</sup>

At the same time that the RPF acted to control other parties more thoroughly, Kagame moved to consolidate both the power of the executive

<sup>52</sup> The Village Urugwiro process was somewhat like the national conferences held in much of francophone Africa earlier in the decade, but under more direct control of the regime. John F. Clark and David E. Gardinier, eds., *Political Reform in Francophone Africa*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1996.

<sup>53</sup> Republic of Rwanda, “Report on the Reflection Meetings Held in the Office of the President of the Republic from May 1998 to March 1999,” Kigali: Office of the President of the Republic, August 1999.

<sup>54</sup> As Joseph Sebarenzi, Speaker of the National Assembly during this period, pointed out, “This shifted appointees' allegiance from their political parties to the RPF. After all, if the RPF put them in office, keeping the RPF happy would be their priority.” Sebarenzi, *God Sleeps in Rwanda*, p. 141.

<sup>55</sup> Sebarenzi, *God Sleeps in Rwanda*, writes that, “The forum is unconstitutional and unjust. It also works against the very principle of separation of powers ...” (p. 149). It was written into the 2003 constitution as a permanent and official feature of the Rwandan system.

branch and his own personal power. Although his role in the decisions was usually well hidden, Kagame sought to strengthen his hand by forcing the replacement of a number of ministers and other officials in the executive branch, including Alexis Kanyarengwe, a Hutu defector from the Habyarimana regime who served as chairman of the RPF during the 1990–1994 war and was vice prime minister and minister of the interior after 1994. Several individuals were driven out under charges of corruption, sometimes after parliamentary investigations; some Hutu were accused of having hidden their involvement in the genocide.<sup>56</sup> Several prominent military officials were sent overseas as ambassadors or for military training, which served to neutralize their political influence as well as allowing Kagame to root out corruption that had been growing since the RPF's intervention in mineral-rich DRC.<sup>57</sup> Kagame also moved to rein in the independence of the judiciary. In 1998 and 1999, the RPF leadership pushed out five of the six supreme court justices. While two were Hutu, three were repatriated Tutsi members of the RPF, but they were not part of Kagame's trusted inner circle; all were replaced by Kagame loyalists.<sup>58</sup>

Having laid the groundwork in 1998 and 1999, Kagame dramatically changed Rwanda's political landscape in early 2000 by replacing the country's three top officials, personally assuming the presidency, and making clear that his regime would not tolerate dissent or insubordination even from Tutsi genocide survivors. The first national leader to be forced out was the speaker of the National Assembly, Joseph Sebarenzi. Although he was not in Rwanda in 1994, having fled after being arrested in the sweep of Tutsi following the October 1990 RPF invasion, Sebarenzi was closely identified with the survivors' community. A well-respected man of high integrity from the Liberal Party that

<sup>56</sup> Sebarenzi, who was involved in the investigation and removal of several ministers, wrote, "I later learned that Kagame supported our investigation of these ministers because he wanted many of them out of office himself. His support was tactical, not principled" (p. 155). Among those removed were Hutu from other parties, like Minister in the Presidency Anastase Gasana (MDR) and Minister of Communications Charles Ntakirutinka (PSD), but also some within the RPF whom Kagame saw as threats.

<sup>57</sup> One highly placed individual in the Kagame regime explained to me a few years later his observation that at this time Kagame's inner circle – those people with real decision-making power – shrank as he moved to eliminate his rivals, while at the same time the RPF's outer circle – those people with important positions that gave them a degree of influence over national policy – was expanded with the creation of the national commissions and other institutions to include more women, new members of the RPF, and Hutu, giving an impression of inclusivity. Personal communication, Kigali, September 2002. While other observers challenge the idea that any expansion took place, since repatriated Tutsi, particularly from Uganda, continued to occupy most positions, the observation on the consolidation around Kagame is clearly well founded.

<sup>58</sup> Sebarenzi, *God Sleeps in Rwanda*, pp. 142–146, 151–152.

drew its primary support from genocide survivors, Sebarenzi attempted to build the independence of the legislative branch and provide oversight on executive action, which brought him into regular disagreement with Kagame. As a Tutsi who had been outside the country in 1994, he could not be slandered with accusations of genocide complicity; instead, he was falsely accused of working with the deposed king to overthrow the government and of misusing public funds. Under pressure from the RPF – ultimately including direct pressure from Kagame – Sebarenzi resigned his position in early January 2000 and secretly fled the country, fearing for his safety.<sup>59</sup>

Pierre-Célestin Rwigema, a Hutu from the MDR who had succeeded Twagiramungu as prime minister, was forced to resign in February, under accusations of corruption and fled to the United States.<sup>60</sup> The RPF ultimately brought genocide charges against him and sought his extradition from the United States, which was rejected.<sup>61</sup> Bernard Makuza, another Hutu from the MDR became prime minister, but unlike Rwigema, he was handpicked by Kagame, lacked a constituency within the party, and ultimately left the MDR to join the RPF. Kagame's next target was President Bizimungu, who had found himself increasingly at odds with Kagame. After Théoneste Lizinde's and Sendashonga's departures (and assassinations) and Kanyarengwe's resignation in 1997, Bizimungu was the last leading Hutu in the RPF leadership. Along with appointing Hutu to important government posts, allowing a few parties to operate with limited freedom, and portraying the image of a balance of powers between the executive, legislature, and judiciary, placing Hutu in prominent roles in the RPF leadership was part of the strategy used until 2000 to disguise the real nature of power in Rwanda. With an official transition to democratic government and planned elections, it became important both for the RPF's supremacy to be more firmly established and for Kagame to situate himself more clearly as national leader. The removal of Sebarenzi and Rwigema, along with the creation of the Forum of Political Parties, helped to weaken the independence of the other parties. Although few Rwandans believed Bizimungu was ever at the center of RPF power, he had become an obstacle to Kagame's ambitions. He resigned under

<sup>59</sup> Reyntjens, "Rwanda, Ten Years On," p. 181; Sebarenzi, *God Sleeps in Rwanda*, pp. 166–182.

<sup>60</sup> Reyntjens, "Rwanda, Ten Years On," p. 181.

<sup>61</sup> Rwigema returned to Rwanda in October 2011, amid reports that he had been provided cash and promises that his genocide case was to be dropped. He joined the RPF and was named a representative in the East African Parliament. "Pierre Celestin Rwigema, the Rwandan exiled prime minister returns as revealed before," *Umuwugizi*, October 24, 2011. Sebarenzi, *God Sleeps in Rwanda*, p. 159.

pressure in March 2000 and immediately faced charges of tax fraud and other forms of corruption.<sup>62</sup>

With Bizimungu's resignation, Kagame assumed the presidency, stepping from behind the curtain that had obscured his power to situate himself publicly as the key player in Rwandan politics. Yet the actual organization of power within the RPF remained concealed. Sebarenzi wrote that, "Kagame controlled people through secrecy. No one ever knew what he really thought about anything until it was too late."<sup>63</sup> Kagame was at the center of a shifting group of powerful RPF officials that grew progressively smaller as he concentrated control increasingly in his own hands and those of a few people that he trusted but did not view as serious contenders for his power. As four powerful members of the RPF's inner circle who broke with Kagame and fled Rwanda in the late 2000s wrote in 2010:

The RPF has, over time, been transformed into a vehicle to serve the political and economic interests of one person – the party president. President Kagame does not tolerate dissenting views within the RPF ... All major decisions affecting the organization are made by the party leader, President Paul Kagame. Organs of the party are merely rubber stamps that serve to legitimize decisions already made by the party leader and his very few close advisers behind the scenes. The party, like the rest of the country, is engulfed by fear, held hostage to President Kagame's arbitrary and repressive rule.<sup>64</sup>

### **Control Through Co-optation and Intimidation: RPF Rule 2000–2015**

After taking direct power in 2000, Kagame and the RPF shifted further away from general use of violence and increasingly sought to exercise authority over the population through implicating them in a wide range of mass mobilization programs. The government required the general public to mobilize for gacaca courts, constitutional reform, elections, *umuganda* community labor, *ingando* re-education camps, land reform, and other programs. Failure to participate led not only to reprimands and fines but to heightened official scrutiny that

<sup>62</sup> Reyntjens, "Rwanda, Ten Years On," p. 181. As Sebarenzi explained, "When Kagame decided that he didn't like someone, they weren't just removed from power, they were ruined. Smear campaigns would begin from which the victims hardly ever recovered. 'Everyone ignores a dead dog in the road until it begins to smell – then they want it removed,' Kagame was supposedly fond of saying." Sebarenzi, *God Sleeps in Rwanda*, p. 159.

<sup>63</sup> Sebarenzi, *God Sleeps in Rwanda*, p. 169.

<sup>64</sup> Kayumba Nyamwasa, Patrick Karegeya, Theogene Rudasingwa, and Gerald Gahima, "Rwanda Briefing," unpublished document, August 2010.

made government services harder to access and exposed noncompliant individuals to the possibility of harassment, arrest, and even violence. Those people willing to embrace the RPF and its initiatives overtly and enthusiastically received preferential treatment, political positions, and other incentives. This created a system of punishments and rewards that pushed those outside the RPF's main constituency to adapt their behavior, strengthening RPF control and undercutting potential opposition. As Anuradha Chakravarty pointed out, "Under conditions of the unrivaled dominance of the RPF, elite political actors learned over time to regulate themselves in anticipation of benefits and protections, and to avoid targeted punishments."<sup>65</sup> The system of incentives and punishments pressured not just the elite but ordinary Rwandans as well.

The programs for popular mobilization were part of a broad agenda of social, political, and economic transformation launched in 2000 that, taken together, marked a sweeping effort to reorganize public life and ultimately change the character of Rwandan society. Many of the RPF's reform initiatives seemed motivated by a sincere desire to improve the lives of the Rwandan people. Yet the population experienced the numerous new regulations, repeated popular mobilizations, and ongoing institutional and spatial restructuring as heavy-handed and intrusive exercise of state power. As several scholars of post-genocide Rwanda have already noted,<sup>66</sup> James Scott's study of failed state-sponsored social engineering, *Seeing Like a State*, sheds light on how the RPF program for Rwanda can combine apparently well-intentioned ambitions for social improvement with disturbingly authoritarian tactics. According to Scott, many centralized modern states, directed by a vision of social improvement and technocratic expertise, have implemented plans for social reform that failed because they were imposed in a top-down fashion and did not adequately consult the populations most directly affected.<sup>67</sup> A "high modernist" ideology, "involving uncritical belief in the possibilities for the comprehensive planning of human settlement and production" and implemented by a bureaucratic

<sup>65</sup> Chakravarty, *Investing in Authoritarian Rule*, p. 74.

<sup>66</sup> On "high modernism" in Rwanda, see Scott Straus and Lars Waldorf, "Introduction: Seeing Like a Post-Conflict State," in Scott Straus and Lars Waldorf, eds., *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights After Mass Violence*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011, pp. 3–21; Newbury, "High Modernism at the Ground Level"; Purdeková, *Making Ubumwe*; and Huggins, "Seeing Like a Neoliberal State?"

<sup>67</sup> James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

and authoritarian state unconstrained by an independent civil society, has driven programs like *ujamaa* villagization in Nyerere's Tanzania or the construction of planned cities like Brasilia.<sup>68</sup>

Yet in Rwandan, the RPF's authoritarian implementation of programs was driven not only by technocratic arrogance but also by the beliefs that most of the Rwandan people were "willing executioners"<sup>69</sup> of their neighbors and that genocide ideology remained deeply rooted within the population.<sup>70</sup> Hence, the RPF's agenda sought not simply to improve society according to a technocratic ideal but to transform Rwanda comprehensively and completely. The RPF regarded the population as not only ignorant but also flawed and morally deficient. Programs for political reform and economic development, thus, were linked directly to the ideas of transitional justice. Policies for urban renewal and agricultural restructuring sought to create a new prosperous country, rooted in a transformed unified national Rwandan identity. To resist the new Rwanda – for example, to object to being forced out of your home into a new suburban development or to oppose the requirements that you grow specified crops – was to hold onto the old Rwanda, the Rwanda of ignorance and genocide. Criticizing the government or challenging reforms demonstrated a genocidal ideology that had to be eliminated. To fail to buy into the narrative of the RPF as a progressive force for change was to embrace the narratives of the previous regime and to justify your exclusion from public life.

For much of the population, the supposedly benevolent initiatives to promote economic development, political participation, reconciliation, national unity, and accountability were built on a foundation of violent and repressive rule that prevailed between 1994 and 1999. As I will develop in the second half of the book, although the regime's use of violence diminished after 2000, the experiences of losing family members to RPF violence, being driven violently from an IDP or refugee camp, or being imprisoned for years without the possibility of a trial remained in many people's memories and shaped how they reacted to efforts to promote accountability, reconciliation, national unity, political participation, and economic development. Attempts to erase RPF oppression

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.

<sup>69</sup> This from the title of Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's controversial text asserting that Germans were much more actively supportive of the Holocaust than most scholarship indicates. *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, New York: Vintage Books, 1997.

<sup>70</sup> Recall Secretary General Murigande's assertion that the tragedy did not stop in 1994 but that, "we have continued to confront those who want to carry out genocide." Interview with Charles Murigande in Kigali, September 2002.

from popular memory ran up against people's lived experiences and encouraged cynicism.

### **Confronting the Past and Envisioning the Future through Political Reform**

The 1998–1999 Village Urugwiro meetings provided the starting point for many of the post-2000 political programs and reforms. The government created the National Human Rights Commission and National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) (both mentioned in the Arusha Accords) in 1999. While the Human Rights Commission has maintained a low public profile, the NURC launched an extensive, highly visible program to promote national unity, influenced by the idea drawn from transitional justice of confronting the past to move forward. Under the leadership of dynamic executive secretaries – Aloysia Inyumba, then from 2002 Fatuma Ndagiza, who as a Muslim woman in an key leadership post embodied the very sort of inclusivity that the NURC and the RPF claimed to promote – the NURC initiated programs in civic education and conflict mediation. Intentionally multi-ethnic in its work, the NURC regularly referenced the genocide but focused more on building current community relations.<sup>71</sup>

Among the most important NURC initiatives was *ingando* re-education camps, organized to teach the RPF's ideas on national unity to returned refugees, released prisoners, entering university students, and others. With roots in secret training camps for Tutsi held during the 1990–1993 civil war,<sup>72</sup> the Ministry of Youth Culture and Sports sponsored *ingando* within Rwanda as early as 1996, primarily for repatriated Tutsi. The idea to expand the program for more of the population came from the Village Urugwiro meetings. In 1999, the NURC began to sponsor *ingando* for ex-combatants returning from the DRC and Hutu militia members demobilized after the uprising in the northwest. The program was later required for prisoners released from detention, then expanded to include those perceived as future leaders – university students and newly elected government officials.<sup>73</sup> The NURC official in

<sup>71</sup> Paul Nantulya, Karin Alexander, Didace Kanyugu, et al., "Evaluation and Impact Assessment of the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC)," Kigali: Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, November 2005.

<sup>72</sup> Chi Mgbako, "Ingando Solidarity Camps: Reconciliation and Political Indoctrination in Post-Genocide Rwanda," *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, 201, 2005, 201–224, citation p. 208. Several survivors that I knew from before 1994 confirmed after the war that they had attended these camps and then returned to Rwanda.

<sup>73</sup> Purdeková, *Making Ubumwe*, offers the most complete consideration of the *ingando*.



charge of the *ingando* program told me that they had, “three objectives in civic education: to dispense education that will help inform the population, to help the population know their rights, and to help the population arrive at social unity.”<sup>74</sup> He stated that the schedule included analysis of Rwanda’s history, with a focus on “the origins and nature of divisions ... and the role of the community in the struggle against these divisions.”<sup>75</sup> He and other officials insisted that the *ingando* held open discussion in which people were free to air their perspectives on Rwandan history.

My own interviews with *ingando* participants confirmed Chi Mgbako’s conclusion that “political indoctrination is a dominant part of the *ingando* experience.”<sup>76</sup> While defenders of *ingando* claimed that they used a Socratic teaching method, in which students were challenged through questioning to determine their own basic ideas, the method was actually closer to a Maoist struggle session, in which students were pushed to engage in self-criticism and led to a pre-determined set of ideas about history, politics, and society. Participants in the *ingando* were indoctrinated in the historical narrative described in Chapter 2, with emphasis on cultural unity and what Andrea Purdeková calls “de-ethnicization,” the attempt to deconstruct and discredit ethnic identities.<sup>77</sup> Susan Thomson concluded that despite this focus, “The graduates of these *ingando* camps that I met do not believe in the national unity of the re-imagined past or in the reconciliation of a re-engineered future. Rather, they see the camps and their ideological discourse as efforts to exercise social control over adult Hutu men.”<sup>78</sup>

In 2007, the NURC adapted *ingando* into a new program called *itorero*, referencing the historic training at the royal court of *intore*, the sons of chiefs destined to lead the Rwandan kingdom. The *itorero* now trains civil servants and other community leaders into a new class of *intore*, elites with a commitment to building the country “due to a change of

<sup>74</sup> Interview with Edouard Nkurayija, Director of Civic Education at the NURC in Kigali, May 30, 2001.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Mgbako, “*Ingando* Solidarity Camps,” p. 211.

<sup>77</sup> Andrea Purdeková, “Repatriation and Reconciliation in Divided Society: The Case of Rwanda’s ‘Ingando,’” Refugee Studies Center Working Paper 43, Oxford University, January 2008. For the most extensive discussion of *ingando*, see Purdeková, *Making Ubumwe*, especially pp. 174–202.

<sup>78</sup> Having been detained and forced to attend an *ingando*, Susan Thomson, “Reeducation for Reconciliation: Participant Observation on *Ingando*,” in Scott Straus and Lars Waldorf, *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights after Mass Violence*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011, pp. 331–339, provides a particularly interesting perspective. Citation p. 338.



Figure 6 Rwanda's new national flag (Photo by author).

the mindset, behavior and efficiency [*sic*] in work" who could serve as catalysts for national development.<sup>79</sup>

In another political reform seeking to reject Rwanda's past and create a new Rwandan identity, in 2001 the government announced plans to change the country's national symbols. Officials argued that the national anthem was divisive, because it contained references to the three ethnic groups, and that the flag and the national seal brought back hurtful memories to genocide survivors because the seal included an image of a machete (meant to symbolize Rwanda's agricultural nature) while the flag included red, which some said represented the blood of the Tutsi. The general population was invited to submit designs for the new symbols, and much was made of the fact that the winning entry for national anthem was composed by a Hutu man in prison on genocide charges. The reform thus allowed the regime to wipe away vestiges of previous regimes while appearing to be responsive to the public will. (See Figure 6.)<sup>80</sup>

Reforms of state structures also combined efforts to confront the past and reshape Rwandan political identities for the future. Beginning in

<sup>79</sup> National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, "Itorero Ry'gihugu," Kigali: NURC, January 12, 2010. Also Penal Reform International, "From Camp to Hill: The Reintegration of Released Prisoners," Research Report on the *Gacaca* VI, Paris: May 2004, 111; and Government of Rwanda, "National Itorero Commission (Strategy)," Kigali, November 2011.

<sup>80</sup> "Rwanda Adopts New Flag, Anthem in Effort to Heal," *Los Angeles Times*, January 1, 2002.

2000, the RPF made substantial reforms to state institutions that directly affected how people organized themselves and related to the state. The government adopted a program of political decentralization that claimed to give greater autonomy to local communities. As part of decentralization, 154 communes governed by burgomasters were consolidated into 91 districts and 15 municipalities governed by mayors and executive committees.<sup>81</sup> The government reordered political geography even more radically in 2006 by consolidating the country's twelve prefectures (already renamed provinces in 2001, with prefects renamed governors in 2003) into five large provinces with reduced authority, while consolidating districts from 106 into 30. Sectors, the level below districts, were vested with increased responsibilities.<sup>82</sup> The reordering of political space sought to reorient political loyalties and shape popular memory by – twice in five years – changing the names and boundaries of the units of government and the names of all government offices that people encountered most regularly and directly in their daily lives.

The RPF implemented the decentralization program of which the redrawn boundaries was the most visible part, “on the assumption that if decision making is undertaken at the local level where the problems are felt, there will be increased effectiveness, efficiency in service delivery, empowerment of citizens, and maximum participation of communities.”<sup>83</sup> In practice, decentralization policies did more to streamline central state control than to transfer power to the local level.<sup>84</sup> The first administrative reorganization showed promise of transferring greater

<sup>81</sup> Pierre Munyura, “Rwanda Decentralization Assessment,” Kigali: Strategies 2000 SARL, for USAID, July 2002, pp. 13–22; Jean-Paul Kimonyo, Noël Twagiramungu, and Christophe Kayumba, “Supporting the Post-Genocide Transition in Rwanda: The Role of the International Community,” Democratic Transitions in Post-Conflict Societies Project, Working Paper 32, The Hague: The Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, 2004.

<sup>82</sup> “Rwanda: Government Said Planning to Redraw Provincial Boundaries,” *The East African*, September 6, 2005; Oscar Kimanuka, “Rwanda: Giving Power to the People,” *The East African*, January 10, 2006; “What Happens after Re-Demarcation?” *The New Times*, September 12, 2005.

<sup>83</sup> Munyura, “Rwanda Decentralization Assessment,” p. 1.

<sup>84</sup> Comparative research demonstrates that decentralization has often involved the lack of a real shift of power to the local level. More substantial decentralization has generally been carried out by leaders who believe that it furthers their strategic interests. C.f., Richard Stren, “Decentralization: False Start or New Dawn?” *United Nations Human Settlement Program, Habitat Debate*, 8, no. 1, March 2002, 1–2; Kent Eaton, “Risky Business: Decentralization from Above in Chile and Uruguay,” *Comparative Politics*, 37, no. 1, October 2004, 1–22; Kent Eaton, “Decentralization’s Undemocratic Roots: Authoritarianism and Subnational Reform in Latin America,” *Latin American Politics and Society*, 48, no. 1, 2006, 1–26; Kent Eaton, Kai Kaiser, and Paul Smoke, *The Political Economy of Decentralization Reforms: Implications for Aid Effectiveness*, Washington: World Bank, 2010; James Manor, *The Political Economy of Democratic Decentralization*, Washington: World Bank, 1999.

power to the local level by vesting local governance in elected executive committees. At the district level, the councils included a mayor and several vice-mayors, each with a distinct portfolio. The 2006 reform, however, eliminated much of the power (and salaries) of the executive committees and councils and transferred most responsibilities to paid administrators appointed by the central government. The appointed executive secretaries became the most important leader in each sector, and they were not beholden to the local population.<sup>85</sup>

Central control over these executive secretaries was strengthened through a required annual performance contract with the president, in which each executive secretary agreed to specific targets for how his or her district will work toward national goals in the coming year. These contracts were called *imihigo*, referring to an oath that warriors made with the king in pre-colonial Rwanda.<sup>86</sup> As Bert Ingelaere stated, the nature of the *imihigo* “implies that the chain of accountability goes upwards toward higher authorities and not downwards toward the population; the most powerful person is appointed, not elected.”<sup>87</sup> While each district now established its own development plan, these were based directly on national goals set by the central government.<sup>88</sup> Continuing control over financing for districts and sectors reinforced central power. The result of all this, according to Purdeková, is that the new structure “effectively ‘dispatches’ rather than ‘decentralises’ control. The latter would suggest that the centre loses some of its hold, but what we witness is not devolution of power to conceive and decide, just the devolution of implementation.”<sup>89</sup> State restructuring thus combines a rejection of the previous political system (in throwing out the political lines drawn by Habyarimana), a nod to pre-colonial Rwanda (in naming the *imihigo* system), and a contradictory approach to reshaping the Rwandan future

<sup>85</sup> Bert Ingelaere, “Living the Transition: A Bottom Up Perspective on Rwanda’s Political Transition,” Discussion Paper 2007.06, Institute of Development Policy and Management, University of Antwerp, November 2007 provides an excellent overview of the reformed local administrative structure.

<sup>86</sup> David Booth and Frederick Golooba-Mutebi, “Developmental Patrimonialism? The Case of Rwanda,” *African Affairs*, 111, no. 444, May 2012, 379–403; Ansoms, “Re-engineering Rural Society,” p. 306; Ingelaere, “Peasants, Power, and Ethnicity,” pp. 228–289.

<sup>87</sup> Ingelaere, “Peasants, Power, and Ethnicity,” pp. 288–289.

<sup>88</sup> Ansoms, “Re-engineering Rural Society,” p. 306.

<sup>89</sup> Andrea Purdeková, “‘Even If I am Not Here, There are So Many Eyes’: Surveillance and State Reach in Rwanda,” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 49, no. 3, 2011, 475–497, citation p. 486. Malin Hasselskog and Isabell Schierenbeck, “National Policy in Local Practice: the Case of Rwanda,” *Third World Quarterly*, 36, no. 5, 2015, 950–966 similarly found that in decentralization “neither local participation nor downward accountability was enhanced,” p. 962.

(purported devolution of power to the population that actually increases the power of the central government).

The transition to a supposedly democratic political system was another example of the inherent contradictions in RPF initiatives. Kagame's ascension to the presidency took place at the beginning of a political process that the government characterized as a democracy transition. Elections for public offices were phased in beginning in 1999 at the level of the smallest administrative units, the cell and sector, expanding to the district level in 2001. The RPF leaders hoped that shifting to elected leaders would increase public connection to the government and improve domestic and international legitimacy. At the same time, they lacked confidence that the population was ready for a fully free electoral process. The actual transition, thus, sought to address legacies of authoritarian governance but actually consolidated authoritarian rule.

In 2001, the government launched a constitutional reform process that involved popular consultation but was tightly controlled by the RPF. Former head of the RPF's political wing and member of the RPF inner circle, Tito Rutaremara, chaired the Legal and Constitutional Reform Commission. They presented proposed constitutional principles at public meetings around the country ostensibly seeking feedback, but the setting was not conducive to honest exchange. As one civil society leader told me, "The Constitutional Commission has a consultation process, but the population is skeptical. People doubt that their ideas will be taken into account. They say that they are going to consider the opinions of the majority, but how will this be determined?"<sup>90</sup> The constitution was put up for a vote in May 2003 and passed with 90 percent support. Although the constitution guaranteed human rights and democracy, many Rwandans questioned the degree of democracy that the RPF would allow. The leader of a national civil society group told me:

Democracy and good governance are good principles, but they need to be put into action. That is always the problem, to put them into action. I don't personally see much democratic opening. It is true that just after the war, all of life was militarized. That has diminished. But as for democratic opening, I don't really see it. According to some testimonies, there were cases where the authorities elected were not the ones who won. There were candidates that the RPF absolutely wanted elected, and in most cases, they were elected.<sup>91</sup>

The transition culminated in 2003 with presidential elections in August and parliamentary elections in September and October. While the RPF claimed that the 2003 elections marked a transition to full democracy,

<sup>90</sup> Interview in Kigali, August 29, 2002.

<sup>91</sup> Interview in Kigali, August 27, 2002.

in fact the RPF leadership tightly controlled the elections and the results allowed the party to assume an even more dominant hold on government. In the 2003 elections, only parties in close alliance with the RPF were allowed to operate freely, while parties that sought to remain independent of the RPF were suppressed. The Forum of Political Parties was written into the 2003 constitution, allowing the RPF to veto parties and candidates, yet at the same time the regime continued to aggressively suppress parties it deemed as presenting a potential threat. In May 2001, former President Pasteur Bizimungu announced the formation of a new party, the Party for Democratic Renewal-Ubuyanja (PDR-Ubuyanja). As he asserted at the time, "If you do not share the ideas of those in power, you are threatened and put in jail."<sup>92</sup> As if to prove his point, the government immediately banned the party, and the organizers were arrested, beaten, killed, or disappeared. Bizimungu was himself arrested, tried, and sentenced in 2004 to fifteen years in prison, though Kagame pardoned him in 2007.<sup>93</sup>

Even more extensive actions were taken to subdue the RPF's most persistent rival, the MDR. In March 2003, a parliamentary commission issued an official report charging the MDR with encouraging "divisionism" and "genocide ideology," and in April, the parliament voted unanimously to ban the MDR. The report accused forty-seven individuals by name of supporting divisionism; one disappeared shortly before the party was banned and several others fled the country.<sup>94</sup> The MDR presidential candidate, former Prime Minister Twagiramungu, was allowed to appear on the ballot as an independent, but the government forbade him from organizing rallies and confiscated his campaign literature, while the pro-RPF press attacked and threatened him. According to official results, Kagame won the 2003 elections with 95.1 percent of the vote, compared to Twagiramungu's 3.6 percent, but outside observers widely condemned the elections as fraudulent, both because of the pressure on the population to vote for Kagame and the manipulation of the results.<sup>95</sup> In the parliamentary elections, the RPF and its official allies won 73.8 percent of the vote. The rest of the vote went to

<sup>92</sup> Quoted in Reyntjens, "Rwanda, Ten Years On," p. 193.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Preparing for Elections: Tightening Control in the Name of Unity," New York: Human Rights Watch, May 8, 2003; Amnesty International, "Rwanda: Escalating Repression Against Political Opposition, AFR 47/004/2003, April 22, 2003; Republic of Rwanda, *Rapport de la Commission Parlementaire*, 2003.

<sup>95</sup> The observer team from the Norwegian Center for Human Rights noted that, "even though the presidential elections were conducted in a technically good manner, the degree of pressure to vote for the incumbent candidate cannot be underestimated." Ingrid Samset and Orrvar Dalby, "Rwanda: Presidential and Parliamentary Elections

parties allied with the RPF.<sup>96</sup> The Rwandan population experienced the elections not as a transition to democracy but as a series of forced mobilizations that ultimately helped to consolidate RPF rule.

Subsequent elections have been no more free or fair. After the 2003 vote, rumors spread that districts that voted too heavily for the opposition were punished by cuts in funding and projects, while their administrators were sacked. People also claimed that despite a supposedly secret ballot, individuals who voted for Twagiramungu were harassed and intimidated.<sup>97</sup> In subsequent elections the population thus feared the consequences of voting against the RPF, and administrators worked to ensure that their communities provided the RPF with maximum votes possible. In 2008 parliamentary elections, official results gave the RPF coalition only 78.8 percent of the vote, but a European Union Election Observation Mission found that actual support for the RPF was 98.4 percent,<sup>98</sup> suggesting that the RPF artificially inflated results for other parties to make the elections appear more legitimate.

Blatant intimidation marred the 2010 presidential elections. A group of dissident RPF members, mostly Anglophone Tutsi returnees from Uganda, formed the Democratic Green Party of Rwanda (DGPR) in 2009 but were prevented from holding an official foundational convention. Both the DGPR and another new party, the United Democratic Forces-Inkingi (*Forces démocratiques unifiées Inkingi*, FDU-Inkingi), were prevented from officially registering and so could not field presidential candidates. Victoire Ingabire, the FDU-Inkingi's leader, was physically attacked, then later arrested for "genocide ideology" after she spoke publicly at a genocide memorial about the need to commemorate both the Tutsi victims of the genocide and Hutu victims of crimes against humanity. She was released on bail then re-arrested just after the elections and ultimately tried and sentenced to eight years in prison. The Social Party-Imberakuri was allowed to register in 2009, but its president and general secretary were arrested, preventing the party from fielding a presidential

2003," Oslo: Norwegian Center for Human Rights, 2003, [www.cmi.no/publications/file/1770-rwanda-presidential-and-parliamentary-elections.pdf](http://www.cmi.no/publications/file/1770-rwanda-presidential-and-parliamentary-elections.pdf). Chakravarty quotes a respondent as saying, "We were ordered to elect Kagame because he was the only candidate...we could not refuse to elect a King who came back" (p. 248). Anuradha Chakravarty, "Navigating the Middle Ground: The Political Values of Ordinary Hutu in Post-Genocide Rwanda," *African Affairs*, 113, no. 451, 2014, 232–253.

<sup>96</sup> European Union Election Observation Mission, *Rwanda: Élection présidentielle 25 Août 2003; Élections législatives 29 et 30 Septembre, 2 Octobre 2003* (final report), Brussels: European Union, 2003.

<sup>97</sup> Begley, "Resolved to Fight the Ideology of Genocide."

<sup>98</sup> European Union Election Observation Mission, "Final Report: Legislative Elections to the Chamber of Deputies," 15–18 September 2008, Brussels: European Union, September 2008, [www.euromrwanda.org/EN/Final\\_Report.html](http://www.euromrwanda.org/EN/Final_Report.html).

candidate. On July 13, 2010, the vice-president of the DGPR was assassinated. Without any serious opposition and in a climate of intimidation, Kagame won re-election with 93.8 percent of the vote.<sup>99</sup>

The RPF's use of elections confuses many outside observers, who feel either that the RPF's high election numbers serve as evidence of its popularity or reveal the regime's authoritarian nature, leading them to ask why the regime bothers with elections at all.<sup>100</sup> In fact, the use of elections has long been a standard feature of authoritarian regimes seeking to mobilize and distract their populations and build international legitimacy.<sup>101</sup> What distinguishes the form of elections practiced by the RPF from elections sponsored by past authoritarian regimes is the inclusion of other political parties and candidates that give a greater appearance of competition, even though the final result is pre-determined. Yet this practice – what Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way term “competitive authoritarianism”<sup>102</sup> – is common to many post-Cold War authoritarian regimes. As William Dobson points out from a comparison of Russia, Venezuela, Malaysia, and Egypt, allowing highly constrained competition can bolster regimes by appeasing the international community and distracting and enervating potential opponents.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Amnesty International, “Pre-Election Attacks on Rwandan Politicians and Journalists Condemned,” London: Amnesty International, August 4, 2010, [www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/pre-election-attacks-rwandan-politicians-and-journalists-condemned-2010-08-05](http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/pre-election-attacks-rwandan-politicians-and-journalists-condemned-2010-08-05); Eric Brown, “Rwandan Genocide: Is Rwanda Gearing up for Another Genocide,” New York: Human Rights First, February 23, 2010; “Disturbing Events Marred Rwandan Leader’s Re-Election, US Says,” *New York Times*, August 15, 2010; Sudarsan Raghavan, “Rwanda’s Success Story Fails to Silence Concerns about Rights: Slayings and Censorship Mar Campaign Season, Top Opponents Barred,” *Washington Post*, August 9, 2010.

<sup>100</sup> In an interview for a syndicated public radio program surrounding the 2010 presidential elections, after I had described the ongoing political repression in Rwanda, the interviewer asked, “Well why is Kagame so popular?” When I asked her basis for believing that he was popular, she said, “He’s expected to win the elections by a wide margin,” as though that proved his popularity.

<sup>101</sup> Rejecting the idea that autocracies use elections to promote domestic legitimacy, Jillian Schwedler and Laryssa Chomiak, “And the Winner Is ... Authoritarian Elections in the Arab World,” *Middle East Report*, Spring 2006, argues that, “The explanation for why authoritarian regimes hold elections is more likely to be found among these five reasons: to carry out a real commitment to democratization; to distract citizens from other crises; to respond to foreign pressure; to display state power; and simply because they have held them in the past,” 13. See also, Fred M. Hayward, ed., *Elections in Independent Africa*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1987.

<sup>102</sup> Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

<sup>103</sup> William Dobson, *The Dictator’s Learning Curve: Inside the Global Battle for Democracy*, New York: Random House, 2012. See also, Jason Brownlee, *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007; Dan Slater, *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.



The organization of elections is important in mobilizing the population and integrating them into the state,<sup>104</sup> but the RPF does not trust Rwandans to use democracy wisely. As Tito Rutaremara, then head of the Legal and Constitutional Reform Commission, told me:

If you give freedom to someone who is ignorant and incompetent, he will not know how to use it ... Here in Rwanda, democracy doesn't mean democracy; it means majority. Officials and others hide behind ethnicity and call it democracy. But when you go to the population, they tell you something different: 'The problems come from the middle class. You people from political parties, you people from Kigali, come to consensus.' We need a period of building consensus before we come to a more confrontational democracy.<sup>105</sup>

The 2003 constitution included a two-term limit for the presidency, a principle President Kagame claimed at the time to accept. Yet in advance of 2017 elections, calls for term limits to be eliminated proliferated. Kagame supporters organized a campaign to collect signatures in favor of amending the constitution and delivered thousands of petitions to parliament. Yet as I discuss in Chapter 6, this did not reflect the popular will, as people were coerced into signing the petitions. Though he claimed to be reluctant to stay on, Kagame apparently dismissed two senior members of the RPF leadership from ministerial posts because they opposed his bid for a third term.<sup>106</sup> Parliament adopted the proposed constitutional amendment unanimously, and 98 percent of the population voted in favor of the change in a December 2015 referendum.<sup>107</sup>

One aspect of the RPF's program of political reform deserves particular praise – the promotion of women's political participation. Women have served in a number of influential national positions, including as president of the Supreme Court, president of the gacaca courts, leader of the NURC, Mayor of Kigali, and Ombudsman. The post-genocide governments regularly included a number of women in the cabinet. Women were well represented at other level as well. The RPF ensured that the new electoral system adopted in 2003 would guarantee significant representation for women, setting aside 30 percent of seats in the lower house for women while also requiring parties to include women in their party lists. As a result, in the 2003 parliamentary elections, women won

<sup>104</sup> Murray Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964.

<sup>105</sup> Tito Rutaremara, Head of Legal and Constitutional Reform Commission, Interview in Kigali, August 29, 2002.

<sup>106</sup> Edmund Kagire, "Kagame drops last two RPF 'historicals,'" *The East African*, June 1, 2013.

<sup>107</sup> "Rwandan Senate Votes to Allow Third Term for Kagame," Aljazeera, November 17, 2015; Tracy McVeigh, "Rwanda Votes to Give President Kagame Right to Rule until 2034," *The Guardian*, December 19, 2015.

48.8 percent of seats, giving Rwanda the highest percentage of women in any legislature. In the 2008 elections, Rwanda became the first country in the world where women constituted a legislative majority. While the authoritarian nature of the Rwandan state limits the influence of the parliament, including for women representatives, significant legal reforms to benefit women have been adopted, such as increasing women's inheritance rights.<sup>108</sup> The RPF created opportunities for other marginalized groups as well, such as handicapped and youth, who were also guaranteed representation in government institutions.

### Limiting Dissent, Manufacturing Support

Just as the RPF gradually extended control over all formal political society by co-opting, threatening, or banning every competing political party, they also systematically subdued civil society and the media. They initially used extralegal means – attacks, illegal detentions, and assassinations – to silence critics, but after 2000 the RPF used the law itself as an effective tool to hobble groups that they believed threaten their hegemony. The RPF drew on the legacy of the genocide and laudable goal of preventing future ethnic violence to adopt a legal framework that allowed them to crack down on critics in the name of accountability and genocide prevention. Charges of genocide complicity continued to be used to disqualify some Hutu politicians and activists, but a series of other laws proved very effective tools for suppressing potential dissent. In 2001, Rwanda's parliament adopted a Law on Prevention, Suppression, and Punishment of the Crimes of Discrimination and Sectarianism that included language criminalizing the undefined crime of "divisionism." This law made the growing taboo on discussing ethnic identity formally illegal. This law effectively precludes complaints of discrimination against Hutu and also allows those who would criticize the government to be accused of fomenting division. The government cracked down on Bizimungu's PDR-Ubuyanja with accusations

<sup>108</sup> Longman, "Rwanda: Achieving Equality or Serving an Authoritarian State?"; Jennie E. Burnet, "Gender Balance and the Meanings of Women in Governance in Post-Genocide Rwanda," *African Affairs*, 107, no. 428, May 2008, 361–386. Jennie E. Burnet, "Women Have Found Respect: Gender Quotas, Symbolic Representation, and Female Empowerment in Rwanda," *Politics and Gender*, 7, no. 3, September 2011, 303–334, finds that the increasing political representation of women in Rwanda has produced tangible benefits, including a greater willingness for women to speak out in public, greater access to education, more women involved in business, and more equity in marital relations. Yet she also notes that women's involvement in politics has done little to improve the perceptions of a political system that many see as corrupt and undemocratic.

of divisionism. Other groups and individuals were accused of association with PDR-Ubuyanja and by extension of promoting divisionism. Laurien Ntezimana was a long-time organizer of Catholic reconciliation programs whose organization, Association Modeste et Innocent (AMI) included the word “ubuyanja,” a term meaning rebirth or renewal, in the masthead of their journal, *Ubuntu*. In January 2002, Ntezimana and two others from his organization were arrested. Though released after a month, their organization was banned and *Ubuntu* was forced to cease publication.<sup>109</sup>

Laws banning negation of the genocide and “genocide ideology” have been used to similar effect. Article 13 of the 2003 constitution declared that, “Revisionism, negationism and trivialisation of genocide are punishable by the law.”<sup>110</sup> The constitution also sets as the state’s first “fundamental principle,” “fighting the ideology of genocide and all its manifestations; – eradication of ethnic, regional and other divisions and promotion of national unity.”<sup>111</sup> Banning the denial that the killing of Tutsi in 1994 was genocide resembles European laws banning Holocaust denial, but as Lars Waldorf explained, in Rwanda genocide denial has been conflated with genocide ideology in a way that “has made it much harder to distinguish true negationism from unwanted political criticism.”<sup>112</sup> In 2004, a process similar to the one used to ban the MDR was directed against Rwanda’s last remaining independent human rights organization, the LIPRODHOR, which had faced growing harassment for several years. A parliamentary report claimed that some members of LIPRODHOR had been involved in the 1994 genocide and that others were guilty of promoting genocide ideology. The report linked LIPRODHOR to recent attacks on Tutsi genocide survivors and urged that the organization be banned.<sup>113</sup> A list was leaked of LIPRODHOR activists to be arrested, leading a number to flee the country. The parliamentary report also named several international non-governmental

<sup>109</sup> Interview with Laurien Ntezimana, Butare, September 3, 2002. See also Human Rights Watch, “Preparing for Elections.”

<sup>110</sup> Government of Rwanda, “Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda,” June 4, 2003.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 9.

<sup>112</sup> Lars Waldorf, “Instrumentalizing Genocide: The RPF’s Campaign against ‘Genocide Ideology,’” in Scott Straus and Lars Waldorf, eds., *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights after Mass Violence*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011, pp. 48–66.

<sup>113</sup> Parliament of Rwanda, “La où l’Idéologie Génocidaire se fait Observer au Rwanda,” Kigali, June 2004, available at [www.grandslacs.net/doc/3301.pdf](http://www.grandslacs.net/doc/3301.pdf).

organizations, including Care, Norwegian People's Aid, and Trocaire, as purveyors of genocide ideology.<sup>114</sup>

A 2006 Senate commission issued a lengthy report on genocide ideology that "conflates genocide ideology with any ethnic discourse, political criticism, revisionism, and negationism."<sup>115</sup> A fourth parliamentary commission issued a report in 2007 focused on genocide ideology in schools, accusing some school administrators, teachers, and students of manifesting genocide ideology, leading a number to flee the country. Parliament adopted a law in 2008 against genocide ideology that included only a vague definition of the term, allowing considerable discretion in enforcement.<sup>116</sup> The desire to prevent genocide ideology and stop people from promoting social divisions is understandable, but in practice accusations of divisionism and genocide ideology have been used mostly to silence government critics.

Other strategies allowing the RPF to assert control over civil society and the media included a 2001 civil society law that required non-governmental groups officially to register, allowing considerable control over their organization, financing, and activities. Following the model of the Forum of Political Parties, the regime used self-regulation to enforce its will, with the four leading civil society umbrella groups establishing a Civil Society Platform in 2004 that regulated relations between civil society and the government, while the Media High Council regulated the content of the media. In 2009, a new media law regulated journalists by setting educational and other standards that are selectively enforced.<sup>117</sup> The RPF also continued to use co-optation to take control of organizations. In 2013, the government again targeted LIPRODHOR – weak but still functioning – to install a sympathetic board of directors.<sup>118</sup> Even the organization of genocide widows, Association of Genocide Widows Agahozo (Association des Veuves du Génocide Agahozo, AVEGA), was led by a repatriated Tutsi rather than a survivor. When necessary to assert control, the RPF remained willing to use coercive force. The government seized and suspended newspapers and shut down radio stations.

<sup>114</sup> Amnesty International, "Rwanda: Deeper into the Abyss – Waging War on Civil Society," AFR 47/013/2004, London: Amnesty International, July 6, 2004; Amnesty International, "Safer to Stay Silent: The Chilling Effects of Rwanda's Laws on 'Genocide Ideology' and 'Sectarianism,'" AFR 47/005/2010, London: Amnesty International, August 2010, p. 32.

<sup>115</sup> Waldorf, "Instrumentalizing Genocide," p. 54.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> Amnesty International, "Safer to Stay Silent."

<sup>118</sup> Amnesty International, "Rwanda: Official Interference in Affairs of Human Rights NGO Places Independent Human Rights Work in Peril," London: Amnesty International, August 16, 2013.

The BBC's Kinyarwanda-language broadcasts were twice suspended.<sup>119</sup> Anjan Sundaram, who ran a training program for journalists in Kigali for five years, listed sixty journalists killed, attacked, arrested, or otherwise harassed in Rwanda between 1995 and 2014. The government's efforts to control journalists, he argued, forced them to self-censor and silenced journalists with fear and paranoia.<sup>120</sup>

RPF efforts to rein in civil society and the media have targeted all ethnic groups. The umbrella survivors organization, Ibuka, became increasingly critical of the government in the late 1990s, decrying the government's failure to provide financial compensation to genocide survivors. Leaders of the community of genocide survivors saw the 2000 assassination of Assiel Kabera, former prefect of Kibuye Prefecture and advisor to President Bizimungu, as a warning, since one of his brothers was vice-president of Ibuka and the other was executive secretary of the National Fund for Genocide Survivors (FARG). Both fled the country, as did founding Ibuka member Bosco Rutagengwa and Secretary General Anastase Murumba.<sup>121</sup> The board of Ibuka then appointed Antoine Mugesera, a member of the RPF Central Committee who was outside Rwanda in 1994, as new executive secretary. The observations of Janvier Kanyamashuli, Director of FARG, effectively revealed the government's perspective on the affair:

The original [Ibuka] founders are out of the country, they have fled. They were very hot, but they were not close to the members of Ibuka. They wanted a war with the government. Their confrontational approach was not advantageous to the government. Ibuka today works closely with the NURC. They have taken a major role in gacaca. They have opted for a method of consensus and compromise.<sup>122</sup>

RPF efforts to quash dissent have extended to every corner of society. In 2014, Kizito Mihigo, a genocide survivor and popular gospel singer, fell afoul of the regime when he released a song, "The Significance of Death," in which he called for honoring the memory not only of victims

<sup>119</sup> Timothy Longman, "The Uses and Abuses of the Media: Rwanda Before and After the Genocide," in Clara Ramirez-Barat, ed., *Transitional Justice, Culture, and Society: Beyond Outreach*, New York: Social Science Research Council, 2014.

<sup>120</sup> Anjan Sundaram, *Bad News: Last Journalists in a Dictatorship*, New York: Doubleday, 2016.

<sup>121</sup> Interview with Noel Twagiramungu, Executive Director of LDGL, Kigali, August 28, 2002; International Crisis Group, "Rwanda at the End of Transition: A Necessary Political Liberalization," Brussels: ICG, November 13, 2002; Human Rights Watch, "The Search for Security." Kabera himself was outside Rwanda in 1994, but his two brothers were considered survivors. Kayijabo was also head of the human rights collective CLADHO.

<sup>122</sup> Interview with Janvier Kanyamashuli, Director of the National Fund for Genocide Survivors, Kigali, August 31, 2002.

of the genocide but also of victims of massacres, presumably meaning Hutu. He was arrested and charged with conspiring against the regime then confessed in a public press conference where he was handcuffed and appeared to show signs of torture.<sup>123</sup>

Rwanda today boasts numerous civil society organizations, but almost none are independent of the state. Rwanda has moved toward a corporatist structure, in which civil society groups help to implement government policy rather than serving as vehicles for interest groups to express their ideas to the state. A journalist close to the regime reflected the attitude of RPF supporters that civil society and the media were more a threat than a resource. "We have been able to contain the elites who might otherwise do bad. We need to continue to limit elite society."<sup>124</sup> Human rights leader Noel Twagiramungu told me that after Bizimungu launched his political party, President Kagame made clear to civil society that they needed to stop relying on international support and instead ally with the government: "At a speech a few weeks later, Kagame said 'The international community is not ready to help us, just to use us. There is no free lunch ... You in civil society, you have to make a choice: working with your government hand in hand or remaining beggars ... Neither for the government nor for civil society, there is no free lunch.'"<sup>125</sup> The head of a leading civil society group said that his organization:

still works, but we have troubles. Many of the founders have left the country ... There is a general impression that civil society has lost its weight. Since 1997, we have seen a weakening of groups due to the infiltration of some of them and the intimidation of others ... There are no longer any activists. Some have left the groups, many have fled the country, a few have been brought into government. The press merely plays a role in diffusion of information from the government. They just read what they are given.<sup>126</sup>

No obvious options exist for those unhappy with the government and its policies to express their discontent. The RPF even showed its willingness to pursue Rwandans who would try to criticize the regime from abroad. A former close Kagame ally turned dissident, Kayumba Nyamwasa, survived two assassination attempts in exile in South Africa, while former intelligence chief Patrick Karegeya was killed in Johannesburg in 2014.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>123</sup> Jonathan W. Rosen, "Dissident 'Choirboy': Rwandan Gospel Star on Trial," *Al Jazeera English*, December 11, 2014; Emmanuel Hakizimana and Gallican Gasana, "Le Président Kagame Vient de Révéler sa Plus Grande Peur," *L'Aut' Journal*, April 17, 2014.

<sup>124</sup> Interview in Kigali, September 5, 2002.

<sup>125</sup> Noel Twagiramungu, Executive Director of LDGL, August 28, 2002.

<sup>126</sup> Interview in Kigali, August 27, 2002.

<sup>127</sup> David Smith, "Rwanda's Former Spy Chief 'Murdered' in South Africa," *The Guardian*, January 2, 2014.

Not content to limit the ability of Rwandans to dissent, the regime has sought to mobilize the population to display active support. After the 2000 transition to direct RPF rule, the regime began to require popular mobilization for a variety of public programs. People were required to attend numerous public meetings held to discuss the transition, the proposed constitution, and elections, and people were mobilized to vote in a series of elections between 1999 and 2003. The *gacaca* courts involved extensive and regular popular mobilization beginning in 2001. Once the courts were launched nationally in 2005, communities had to gather weekly for much of a day to deliberate on genocide cases. A program of collective public labor called *umuganda*, originally implemented by the Habyarimana regime to bring communities together to repair roads, build bridges, terrace fields, and do other community improvement projects, was gradually reinstated in communities across Rwanda as early as 1998. In 2007, the parliament adopted a law mandating *umuganda* throughout the country, with all adults required to join their communities in service programs on the last Saturday of each month (though in many communities, particularly in rural areas, *umuganda* occurs more often).<sup>128</sup>

Some of these public programs, such as *umuganda* and *gacaca*, levied fines against those who failed to attend. Others, such as public meetings or the annual genocide commemorations, do not legally require attendance, but participation is expected. Officials note those who do not participate and identify them as potential troublemakers who need to receive increased scrutiny. Thus, when RPF party leaders or government officials call, most people show up because they fear the consequences of failing to do so.

### **Vision 2020: An Ambitious Development Agenda**

The restrictions on political and civil life described above were premised in part on mistrust of the population and an assumption that security remained fragile, but limitations on free expression and political participation were also justified on the assumption that what most Rwandans ultimately really wanted was peace and prosperity. As one NURC official told me:

I don't think that the Rwandan population is ready for a democracy of one-man-one-vote. There are prerequisites. The population is not ready for multiparty

<sup>128</sup> On a variety of these community mobilization programs, see Huggins, "Seeing Like a Neoliberal State?"

government. We need to teach them more. They first need to eat. We need to fight poverty. We need to teach people about their rights. We need to train the population to respect diversity. The elections next year will be really hot. What the peasants want is not that but security. The intellectuals want elections. But for peasants, hunger is a greater concern.<sup>129</sup>

Peace was regarded as a necessary precondition for economic development, and dissent was regarded as disruptive and destabilizing. Kagame held up Singapore as a model for rapid economic development – a small densely populated country without natural resources where strict government control and good governance pushed the population into prosperity that gained the government popular support despite its authoritarian practices.<sup>130</sup>

RPF leaders had a strong commitment to modernization as an engine for economic growth. The six pillars of Vision 2020<sup>131</sup> that have guided much of Rwanda's policy program since 2000 reflect a technocratic approach to governance that places great faith in economists and other experts.<sup>132</sup> The flip side of the faith in expertise and modernization is a distrust and disdain for ordinary Rwandans, particularly rural farmers. The approach Rwandan leaders take to policy development and implementation reflects a belief that most Rwandans are backward and must be pushed to embrace new modes of behavior, social structures, and economic practices they are likely to resist but that will ultimately benefit them. According to An Ansoms:

The social engineering ambitions of the Rwandan government officials reveal a very top-down developmentalist agenda without much room for grassroots participation or for bottom-up feedback. Instead, the elite approaches law and policy as tools for 'shaping' society, and often neglects to consider the institutional and environmental conditions in which the new law(s) will operate ... The elite believes in a rapid modernization and professionalization of the agricultural

<sup>129</sup> Interview in Kigali, August 31, 2002.

<sup>130</sup> Christina Caryl, "Africa's Singapore Dream: Why Rwanda's Leader Styles Himself as the Heir to Lee Kuan Yew," *Foreign Policy*, April 2, 2015.

<sup>131</sup> The six pillars are, "Good governance and a capable state"; a shift to a knowledge-based economy; promotion of free-market private enterprise; development of the infrastructure; commercialization of agriculture; and regional and international integration. Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, "Rwanda Vision 2020," pp. 11–19. For useful discussions of Vision 2020, see An Ansoms and Donatella Rostagno, "Rwanda's Vision 2020 Halfway Through: What the Eye Does Not See," *Review of African Political Economy*, 39, no. 133, September 2012, 427–450 and Sterling Recker, "Vision 2020: An Analysis of Policy Implementation and Agrarian Change in Rural Rwanda," PhD Dissertation, University of Missouri-St. Louis, July 2014.

<sup>132</sup> On technocratic governance, see Beverly H. Burris, *Technocracy at Work*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1993 and William Easterly, *Tyranny of Experts: Economists, Dictators, and the Forgotten Rights of the Poor*. New York: Basic Books, 2015.



sector, and strongly rejects subsistence-based agriculture, although it remains the way of life for the majority of the rural population.<sup>133</sup>

Christopher Huggins notes, “The ‘good governance’ concept in Rwanda [one of the pillars of Vision 2020] has greater emphasis on efficiency and anti-corruption principles, and less on citizen empowerment, than elsewhere.”<sup>134</sup>

The *imidugudu* program was a first major attempt to restructure Rwandan society. Motivated by the ideas that villages make greater economic sense and are more sustainable and that concentrating settlement facilitates service delivery, the villagization program, which remains official policy, represents a major reordering of Rwanda’s rural social structure.<sup>135</sup> Since 2000, the government has implemented a variety of additional rural economic programs, many of them also highly disruptive to traditional social structures and practices. As a group of scholars of rural development in Rwanda has written:

[T]he government’s vision for a professional, market-driven and efficient agricultural sector appears incompatible with traditional Rwandan habitat and cultivation patterns as well as landownership arrangements ... and risk-averse agricultural practices, common among Rwandan peasants. Therefore, Rwandan authorities believe that a profound reorganization of rural space is required.<sup>136</sup>

Land reform has been a major government initiative. As families have grown and fields have been divided and subdivided over the generations, an increasing number of Rwandan households farm land that is simply too limited to produce the food necessary for subsistence. Since families cannot allow fields to lie fallow but must keep them in constant cultivation, the soil has become increasingly infertile.<sup>137</sup>

<sup>133</sup> Ansoms, “Re-Engineering Rural Society,” pp. 308–309.

<sup>134</sup> Christopher Huggins, “‘Control Grabbing’ and Small Scale Agricultural Intensification: Emerging Patterns of State-facilitated ‘Agricultural Investment’ in Rwanda.” *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, May 14, 2014, 368.

<sup>135</sup> Saskia Van Hoyweghen, “The Rwandan Villagisation Programme: Resettlement for Reconstruction?” in Didier Goyvaerts, ed., *Conflict and Ethnicity in Central Africa*, Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, 2000, pp. 209–224. These ideas are surprisingly similar to the justifications for the *ujamaa* villagization policy in Tanzania in the 1970s, a policy almost universally recognized as a major failure in both social and economic terms. See Goran Hyden, *Beyond Ujamaa in Tanzania: Underdevelopment and an Uncaptured Peasantry*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.

<sup>136</sup> An Ansoms, Giuseppe Cioffo, Chris Huggins, and Jude Murison, “The Reorganization of Rural Space in Rwanda: Habitat Concentration, Land Consolidation and Collective Marshland Cultivation,” in An Ansoms and Thea Hilhorst, eds., *Losing Your Land: Dispossession in the Great Lakes*, Suffolk: James Currey, 2014, pp. 163–185.

<sup>137</sup> Catherine André and Jean-Philippe Platteau, “Land Relations Under Unbearable Stress: Rwanda Caught in the Malthusian Trap,” *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, 34, no. 1, 1998, 1–47.

Land distribution and use are thus very serious problems, and to address them, the government has adopted several land reform programs. The government began to develop a new land policy in 2000, which culminated in the 2005 Organic Land Law and 2013 Land Law that required all land to be officially registered and all land sales to be regulated by the state. The idea of providing poor farmers with formal titles to their land and then regulating land sales within a market system, popularized by Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto, has become a key idea promoted by international development agencies and embraced by the RPF regime to fight poverty and promote rural development.<sup>138</sup>

While the land reform laws make economic sense on their surface, in practice like other well-meaning government policies, they take little account of local realities and have been implemented in a heavy-handed fashion. Rwanda's policy encourages land consolidation, even though "small family farms make up over 90 percent of all production units."<sup>139</sup> Rwandan farmers have traditionally maintained a number of dispersed fields as a risk aversion strategy, since fields on drier high hillsides produce in years with heavy rains, while fields in valleys produce in dry years. Pushing for consolidation thus exposes farmers to greater risk. In an attempt to prevent land from being subdivided into unsustainably small plots, the law forbids families from passing on holdings smaller than one hectare. Yet "three quarters of all households have landholdings below one hectare."<sup>140</sup> A number of factors in the land policy favor wealthy farmers. The land registration process required farmers to pay small fees that many poorer farmers did not feel that they could pay; meanwhile, wealthier farmers paid the fees and received land titles.<sup>141</sup> According to Huggins, while Rwanda has prevented large-scale land acquisition by foreign investors and has less illegal land grabbing than many African countries, because policies favor land consolidation, land dispossession and consolidation have continued to occur.<sup>142</sup>

Until fairly recently, marshlands in much of Rwanda were considered public land and not cultivated. Many marshes began to be cleared in the

<sup>138</sup> Hernando de Soto, *The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else*, New York: Basic Books, 2000.

<sup>139</sup> Ansoms, "Re-engineering Rural Society," p. 299.

<sup>140</sup> Ansoms et al., "The Reorganization of Rural Space in Rwanda," p. 169.

<sup>141</sup> An Ansoms and Jude Murison, "De 'Saoudi' au 'Darfur': L'Histoire d'un Marais au Rwanda," in Filip Reyntjens, Stef Vandeginste, and M Verpoorten, eds., *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs: Annuaire 2011–2012*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2012.

<sup>142</sup> Christopher Huggins, "Land Grabbing and Land Tenure Security in Post-Genocide Rwanda," in An Ansoms and Thea Hilhorst, eds., *Losing Your Land: Dispossession in the Great Lakes*, Suffolk: James Currey, 2014, pp. 141–162.

1970s, with small farmers setting up new fields that could augment food sources available to families but were unreliable because of flooding. One government strategy to encourage land consolidation and commercialization has been to establish greater control of these marshlands. The land law does not allow private claims to the fields in marshlands and requires that they only be cultivated by cooperatives. As research by Ansoms and Jude Murison indicates, however, in practice organizations presented as cooperatives have been controlled by powerful individuals who regulate what is cultivated and charge high fees for access to the fields. These fees prevent many poor farmers from farming these lands that were previously an important resource for them.<sup>143</sup>

A major element of the government's strategy to commercialize agriculture has been to promote mono-cropping. Rwandan farmers have traditionally planted a diversity of crops in their fields, often interspersing crops like corn, manioc, beans, coffee and bananas in the same plot. The approach promoted by recent agriculture policies in Rwanda pushes farmers to plant a single crop in a field, planted in straight rows and supplied with fertilizer to increase production. Local government officials promote the crop that the central government has determined to be best for their region. While the strategies of mono-cropping and regional specialization expose farmers to greater risk, the government pressures farmers to adopt them by making seeds and fertilizer available only for the specified crop and providing extension support only for this crop.<sup>144</sup>

Approaches to urban development, particularly focused on Kigali, have been similarly driven by a technocratic approach, with outside experts lacking local cultural knowledge brought in to develop grandiose plans whose effect will be highly disruptive to many people. Before 1994, Kigali was a small, sleepy town of 236,000, more of an administrative center than a real metropolitan area. Rwanda had a distinctly rural identity, with 94 percent of the population living in the countryside, among the lowest rates of urbanization in the world.<sup>145</sup> But over the past two

<sup>143</sup> Ansoms and Murison, "De 'Saoudi' au 'Darfur'"; Ansoms et al., "The Reorganization of Rural Space in Rwanda."

<sup>144</sup> Ansoms, "The Re-organization of Rural Space in Rwanda," pp. 435–436. Catherine Newbury, "Rwanda: Recent Debates over Governance and Rural Development," in Goran Hyden and Michael Bratton, *Governance and Politics in Africa*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1992, pp. 193–219 noted similar policies were implemented under Habyarimana.

<sup>145</sup> World Bank, "Rwanda Urban Infrastructure and City Management Project," [www.documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/895731468106440461/Rwanda-Urban-Infrastructure-and-City-Management-Project](http://www.documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/895731468106440461/Rwanda-Urban-Infrastructure-and-City-Management-Project); Pierre Sirven, *La Sous-urbanisation et les Villes du Rwanda et du Burundi*, Published by the author, 1984.

decades, the population of Kigali skyrocketed, as a large portion of the repatriated Tutsi settled in the city, genocide survivors left the hillsides where their families were slaughtered to seek a new beginning in the capital or one of the country's smaller cities, and tens of thousands of Hutu also migrated to Kigali, seeking opportunity in the city because of growing land scarcity or fleeing the increasingly oppressive exercise of control at the local level.

While in many cities around the world, rapid urbanization has compromised the quality of life, as crime, pollution, and squalid slums proliferate, Kigali has become more attractive as it has grown. Kigali's streets were newly paved and lined with sidewalks of elegant interlocking brick. Gardens with fountains and statues at the center were placed in the middle of major intersections. New shopping and entertainment areas emerged, with cinemas, supermarkets, and nightclubs. Attractive new residential districts included housing that ranged from large apartment complexes to imposing single-family homes. Shiny new glass towers gave Kigali an impressive skyline. The recent changes in Kigali are only the beginning of a more radical reorganization of the city envisioned in the Kigali Conceptual Master Plan (KCMP), adopted by parliament in 2008 as part of the government's Vision 2020.

The development of Kigali epitomizes the social transformations that the RPF has propelled in Rwanda since 2000, involving a grand and compelling vision for the future, partnerships between the government and its allies in business and society, crucial support from the international community, coupled with a dark underside of coercive implementation and the sacrificed interests of powerless and marginalized individuals in the name of the interests of the society. According to the Rwanda Development Board, the KCMP was "initiated as a vision by President Kagame"<sup>146</sup> then developed by a high-powered American team that included OZ Architecture, the engineering firms AECOM and Tetra Tech, and the non-governmental organization Engineers without Borders. The 160-page KCMP has won awards from the American Planning Association and the American Academy of Landscape Architects.<sup>147</sup>

The KCMP involves a radical reconceptualization of Kigali as a carefully planned city along the lines of Brasilia, Dubai, or Abu Dhabi and includes drawings of gleaming glass towers and pristine shopping

<sup>146</sup> Rwanda Development Board, "Kigali Conceptual Master Plan," brochure, [www.kcps.gov.rw/index.php/?id=21#Master%20plan](http://www.kcps.gov.rw/index.php/?id=21#Master%20plan), p. 1.

<sup>147</sup> The Master Plan Team (OZ architecture, EDAA, Tetra Tech, ERA, and Engineers without Borders), "Kigali Conceptual Master Plan," prepared for the Rwanda Ministry of Infrastructure, November 2007.

districts along tree-lined boulevards.<sup>148</sup> The comprehensiveness of the plan is breathtaking, a fantastic example of Scott's high modernist vision. The plan recognizes the challenges posed by the fact that many of the areas slated for development are already occupied, yet suggests a process of community involvement in "redevelopment and upgrading in the existing urban area,"<sup>149</sup> including "informal settlements," the crowded districts where migrants from rural areas have built small homes, usually without authorization:

The transformation of informal urban settlements to achieve the goals and objectives ... depends on a clear understanding of existing conditions, development opportunities and constraints, and incorporating the vision and capabilities of the residents. This plan proposes a prototype for the transformation of informal settlements based on three planning principles: the inclusion of local knowledge, the strategic allocation and retrofitting of infrastructure, and the consolidation of basic services into community venues.<sup>150</sup>

Such a benign process may be possible in democratic societies, but in a country like Rwanda where public discourse is highly constrained, the implementation of a grand vision of this sort will almost unavoidably involve considerable coercion. The rehabilitation of Kigali began several years before the KCMP was drafted. Beginning as early as 2001, the Kigali city government oversaw the laying of sidewalks and planting of gardens. The work often employed prisoners, who could be seen participating in works crews in their bright pink prison uniforms. The use of prisoners expanded substantially after the *gacaca* process was reformed in 2005 so that most confessed *genocidaires* would not conduct community service within their local neighborhood as originally envisioned but would instead serve a period of community service in labor camps, a large number of which were built encircling Kigali.<sup>151</sup> While the plan to reduce prison sentences through public service requirements had merit, the use of prison labor to rebuild Kigali certainly lay beyond the naïve vision of the KCMP.

<sup>148</sup> The Master Plan Team, "Kigali Conceptual Master Plan."

<sup>149</sup> The Master Plan, Kigali Conceptual Master Plan, Chapter 4, Section 4.4, p. 84.

<sup>150</sup> The Master Plan, Kigali Conceptual Master Plan, Chapter 4, Section 4.4.1, p. 86.

<sup>151</sup> Penal Reform International, "Monitoring and Research Report on the Gacaca Community Service, Areas of Reflection," London: PRI, March 2007. According to the website of the Rwanda Correctional Service, "TIG [the acronym for community service in Rwanda] is aimed at punishing, strengthening Unity and Reconciliation of Rwandans and impacting on national development. Some of the activities under TIG include speeding up the construction of classrooms under the nine and twelve (9 & 12) Years Basic Education programme, environment protection through terracing, building and repair of roads, land consolidation, construction of houses for vulnerable genocide survivors, paving stones, planting cassava, coffee/tea among others." [www.rcs.gov.rw/camps](http://www.rcs.gov.rw/camps)

The implementation of policies seeking “the transformation of informal urban settlements” was particularly troubling. In the name of urban renewal, the government of Kigali bulldozed homes in poor neighborhoods such as Kimisagara, Kimicanga, and Gacuriro. The authorities justified the demolitions because of the unsafe conditions of the homes due to poor quality construction, lack of water, sewage, and electricity, overcrowding, and dangers of flood and landslide. While the government has generally provided limited compensation to residents and homeowners, the construction of new housing for people has lagged, creating demand that has drastically driven up the price of both land and housing. Much of the new affordable housing is being built in areas far removed from the city center, such as the largely rural Gasabo district.<sup>152</sup> As Vincent Manirakiza and An Ansoms stated:

The stringent conditions for urban settlements in line with the city master plan are unrealistic for a large majority of the urban poor. In practice, the implementation of such urbanization policies therefore leads to geographic dualisation, characterized by a rising gap between the living quality in planned urban quarters and living conditions in spontaneous or peri-urban areas.<sup>153</sup>

The destruction of part of Kiyovu reinforced the idea that Kigali’s redevelopment is disproportionately benefitting the elite. A neighborhood in central Kigali, Kiyovu is divided in two by a main road. The upper area boasts nice single-family homes, including the new presidential estate, while the lower area, known as “Poor Kiyovu,” had crowded housing, including many informal buildings. Lower Kiyovu was largely demolished in 2008, while the upper area was left untouched. Residents complained that they received too little compensation to cover the expense of new housing, were moved to areas far from the city center, and had no choice in their new housing.<sup>154</sup> According to one press report:

After claims from residents that bulldozers were arriving without warning to demolish homes and that the compensation given was not enough, the mayor

<sup>152</sup> James Munyaneza, “City Authorities Need to Review Strategy on ‘Illegal’ Houses,” *The New Times*, January 10, 2011; Alex Mugisha and Frances Rwema, “In Rwanda, Rapid Urbanization Chases the Poor Out of Town,” *Inyenyeri News*, March 6, 2012; Alexandra Topping, “Kigali’s Future, or Costly Fantasy? Plan to Reshape Rwandan City Divides Opinion,” *The Guardian*, April 4, 2014.

<sup>153</sup> Vincent Manirakazi and An Ansoms, “‘Modernizing Kigali’: The Struggle for Space, in the Rwandan Urban Context,” in An Ansoms and Thea Hilhorst, eds., *Losing Your Land: Dispossession in the Great Lakes*, Suffolk: James Currey, 2014, p. 187.

<sup>154</sup> Jenny Ford, “Rethinking Relocation in Rwanda,” *The Chronicles*, May 30, 2012; “Kiyovu Residents Decry Demolitions,” *The Rwanda Focus*, July 29, 2008.

responded in July 2008 by calling on “Rwandans who love their country to embrace positive change” ... The authorities expropriated poor Kiyovu’s inhabitants in order to place them in better housing, but also so they could build fashionable new apartments on the former shantytown. The families were moved to houses which aren’t central and are expensive.<sup>155</sup>

The KCMP may have been motivated by laudable concerns over challenges created by rapid urbanization, such as water supplies, sanitation and sewage, and the dangers of building on steep hillsides, and the plan’s recommendations are reasonable enough, attempting to account for Rwanda’s modest means.<sup>156</sup> In practice, however, the KCMP – like other parts of Vision 2020 – provided justification for the government to implement policies that officials regarded as serving the public good but that might not have gained popular support through democratic processes. Technocratic governance was undertaken with the ostensible best interests of the population in mind, and the good intentions and grand vision of policymakers and civil servants impress many observers.<sup>157</sup> Yet even with the best of intentions, high modernist policies like these, implemented in a context in which residents were not free to share their “vision and capabilities,” nor even free publicly to complain without facing potential dire consequences, contributed to the sense of oppressive rule that has come to dominate Rwandan politics.

Even relatively simple efforts to improve the orderliness and sanitation of the city were implemented in a heavy-handed fashion that reinforced an impression that reforms were not for the good of the general public but to serve the interests of the country’s new elite. In 2006, for example, Kigali’s city government identified a need to better regulate the numerous kiosks that had popped up around the city, often selling sodas and sundry items like soap and batteries. The Kigali City Council implemented a regulation allowing only approved, standardized, and licensed kiosks. The city then summarily demolished existing kiosks, without compensation. Kigali residents told me at the time that the licenses were prohibitively expensive for most previous kiosk owners – around US\$500 – and that, at any rate, they were only being issued to people with connections

<sup>155</sup> François D. and Maurice M., “The Ones that Got Left Behind in Kigali’s Demolished Shantytown,” *Les Observateurs*, March 12, 2010.

<sup>156</sup> The urban population in 2012 was estimated at 19.4 percent (compared to 6 percent in 1994), with a 7.9 percent annual growth rate. UNICEF, “Rwanda: Statistics,” [www.unicef.org/infobycountry/rwanda\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/rwanda_statistics.html).

<sup>157</sup> An economist who visited Rwanda briefly in 2014 (at the express invitation of President Kagame) told me that “They’re really trying to help the people!” Notes from meeting, Boston, June 30, 2014.

to the government.<sup>158</sup> Enterprising individuals eventually ignored regulations and constructed new kiosks. When the city acted again in 2008 to demolish the kiosks and take possession of the goods they contained, the newspaper reported that the action was taken, “as required by the new Kigali Master Plan.”<sup>159</sup>

Apparently taking Singapore as a model, the regime has instituted a large number of laws in both urban and rural areas that, like the demolition of kiosks, are ostensibly in the interests of public order, public health, and environmental protection. Since 2000, the government has banned public urination and spitting, required people to wear shoes in public, banned the use of plastic bags, required motorcyclists to wear helmets and forbid women from sitting side saddle on a motorbike, forbid people from baking bricks and roof tiles in traditional ovens, banned the use of reed straws for drinking sorghum and banana beers, required circumcision of all male babies, banned traditional thatched roofs and traditional charcoal production, required every home to have a compost bin, required people to dry dishes on a table rather than on the grass, and banned churches from meeting outside formal church buildings.<sup>160</sup>

Each of these regulations could be justified as sound policy choices, yet they have significant social and economic impacts. For example, using communal straws can spread germs, so banning their use made public health sense. Yet sharing reed straws in a calabash or bottle passed from person to person was a core social practice in Rwanda, a way of demonstrating trust and friendship. Forbidding people from sharing straws eliminated a meaningful cultural practice, and though the ban made good technocratic sense, it did not make cultural sense.<sup>161</sup> The central government decreed these quality of life laws with no public consultation, and their enforcement was often draconian. For example, banning the use of plastic bags made good environmental sense, but the law that went into effect in 2005 did not simply ban stores

<sup>158</sup> Interviews in Kigali, June 2006.

<sup>159</sup> Godfrey Ntagungira, “Rwanda: KCC Evicts Kiyovu Kiosk Owners,” *The New Times*, June 21, 2008. Also Godfrey Ntagungira, “Demolished Kiosk Owners Drag KCC to Court,” *The New Times*, July 14, 2008.

<sup>160</sup> Ingelaere, “Living the Transition,” p. 37; Ansoms, “Re-engineering Rural Life,” pp. 303–304.

<sup>161</sup> As Olivier Nyirubugara, *Complexities and Dangers of Remembering and Forgetting in Rwanda*, Sidestone Press, 2013, explains, “Until the last decade, one straw was used to pass from one mouth to the other, and that was a sign of friendship and brotherliness. Wiping or cleaning the straw before introducing it to one’s mouth was the most unacceptable insult. Due to the threat such a practice posed to public health, the entire cultural, and friendship-building philosophy behind the straw was sacrificed for the good of the people, who have to *invent* new cultural ways of exteriorizing friendship” (p. 160).



from giving out plastic bags, as ordinances in some cities around the world have done, but made possession of plastic bags illegal in Rwanda. Even though Rwandans used plastic bags for a variety of purposes and rarely discarded them, plastic bags disappeared from Rwanda overnight.<sup>162</sup>

Many of the quality of life laws have significant economic implications. Most are enforced with fines. Ingelaere provides a long list of twenty-nine “measures improving general well being” for which people can be fined. Many of the laws require individuals to spend money, so the poor are left with a choice of, for example, buying shoes or paying a fine. Ansoms stated that in her research, “Several people reported that when arriving at the market without shoes, their food money was taken from them forcibly by the local authorities to buy them shoes.”<sup>163</sup> Other measures have added to the cost of living. The ban on baking bricks and roof tiles in the traditional way has driven up the cost of building and maintaining a home. The added costs and fines happen alongside a variety of new fees, such as registering land and paying the annual fee for Rwanda’s new national health insurance program.<sup>164</sup> Together, these policies have affected the poor disproportionately while creating opportunities for those with more means. Traditional brickmaking, for example, has historically been a method for people to earn off-farm income and for some to establish themselves as small-scale entrepreneurs.<sup>165</sup> But the costs associated with the “modern” brickmaking equipment have pushed out small-scale brickmakers in favor of wealthier businesspeople who can afford approved brick-making ovens.<sup>166</sup> Marc Sommers has demonstrated that the rising costs of building a home has created a housing crisis that prevents poor young men from being able to marry and settle down, keeping them from attaining social adulthood and driving youth to flee from the countryside to the city.<sup>167</sup>

<sup>162</sup> Flying into Kigali, airlines now advise passengers to remove duty free items from plastic bags before disembarking. Personal observation, Kigali, May 2016.

<sup>163</sup> Ansoms, “Re-Engineering Rural Life,” p. 304.

<sup>164</sup> Ansoms and Rostagno, “Rwanda’s Vision 2020 Halfway Through,” write that farmers are confronted with a multitude of financial obligations (mutuelle de santé, costs to register landholdings, cost for young households to build houses in the agglomeration) and fines (fines for not keeping cows in stables, fines for not reaching targets from local authorities, fines for not having decent roofing, etc.), pp. 441–442.

<sup>165</sup> Villia Jefermovas, *Brickyards to Graveyards in Rwanda: From Production to Genocide in Rwanda*, Albany: SUNY Press, 2002.

<sup>166</sup> An Ansoms, “Views from Below on the Pro-Poor Growth Challenge: The Case of Rural Rwanda.” *African Studies Review*, September 2010, citation p. 102.

<sup>167</sup> Sommers, *Stuck*.

### Governance, Development, and Inequality

Although the Rwandan government asserts that the policies implemented under Vision 2020 are working, using their own statistics to tout a decline in the overall poverty rate, the severe poverty rate, and the rate of inequality since 2006,<sup>168</sup> fieldwork by a variety of scholars challenges the claims of policy success.<sup>169</sup> The research by these scholars indicates that not only have policies involved coercive enforcement and significant social disruption, but also their economic impact on the majority of the population has been less favorable than reported. Ansoms and Donatella Rostagno, for example, wrote with some irony that, “The recently reported spectacular decrease in poverty is surprising. Not least because many of Rwanda’s poverty and inequality issues are inherent in the growth model applied ... In practice, the concentration of strong economic growth in the hands of a small elite results in a highly skewed developmental path with limited trickle-down potential.”<sup>170</sup>

Yet even if the benefits of the government’s development policies are in fact trickling down to the common people, even if education and healthcare are more widely available and poverty rates are declining, the implementation and enforcement of these policies severely undermines their ability to add to the regime’s legitimacy. Policy decisions are made by the central government with little to no popular consultation then enforced in a draconian fashion. Those making and enforcing the policies come from a different social background from the vast majority of Rwandans, who live in rural areas and have deep roots in farming, and they approach the population with a highly condescending attitude that common Rwandans find insulting.<sup>171</sup> People obey the regulations out of fear, but they also feel resentful and angry.

Average Rwandans today still struggle just to survive, much less to get ahead. Having conducted extensive interviews in 2006–2007 with Rwandan young people about their life circumstances and hopes, Sommers asserted that, “the collective story they described was persistently discouraging ... [M]any youth in Kigali face circumstances ... that

<sup>168</sup> Ansoms and Rostagno, “Rwanda’s Vision 2020 Halfway Through,” p. 428.

<sup>169</sup> See Ansoms, “Striving for Growth, Bypassing the Poor”; Ansoms, “Re-engineering Rural Society”; Ansoms et al., “The Reorganization of Rural Space in Rwanda”; Ansoms and Rostagno, “Rwanda’s Vision 2020 Halfway Through”; Ansoms and Murison, “De ‘Saoudi’ au ‘Darfur’”; Huggins, “Seeing Like a Neoliberal State?”; Huggins, “Control Grabbing’ and Small Scale Agricultural Intensification”; Ingelaere, “Peasants, Power, and Ethnicity”; Sommers, *Stuck*.

<sup>170</sup> Ansoms and Rostagno, “Rwanda’s Vision 2020 Halfway Through,” p. 441.

<sup>171</sup> Ansoms, “Re-engineering Rural Society.”

have made them fatalistic in the extreme.”<sup>172</sup> Unfortunately, as a result of the government’s authoritarian practices, common people like those that Sommers interviewed regard the state as a problem to be avoided rather than as an ally in the struggle to improve their lives.

The popular impression that development is not being done for the good of the general population but for the good of the elite is a major political problem in Rwanda today. As Ted Gurr has argued, poverty alone does not cause people to rebel. Instead, people rebel because of frustrated expectations.<sup>173</sup> As I explore in greater depth in the next chapters, many average Rwandans feel that the constant mobilization they face serves to enrich a limited group of those who are already rich and powerful. They chafe at the condescending attitudes and lack of cultural understanding of those with authority over them, and they resent the coercion used to force them to follow government mandates. Particularly problematic, given Rwanda’s history, is a belief that those in charge and those benefiting from post-genocide government policies are from a specific social group – repatriated Tutsi, particularly Anglophone returnees from Uganda. As Ansoms writes, “The current Rwandan elite is mostly Tutsi, urban-based and often born outside Rwanda, while the Rwandan peasantry is mostly Hutu, rural-based and born in the country.”<sup>174</sup> Significantly, the relevant social divisions cannot be understood exclusively in ethnic terms. Ethnicity is a factor, but so are the division between those who were inside Rwanda in 1994 and those who were outside and the class divisions between the urban elite and the rural poor.

The social, economic, and political context that I have described here – both the more obvious authoritarian practices of the years immediately after the genocide and the less violent but equally oppressive authoritarian practices used since 2000 – set the context within which transitional justice initiatives in Rwanda must be understood. Rewriting history, memorializing and commemorating the past, and organizing trials for perpetrators of genocide have all occurred in an environment in which the government severely limits free speech, the ruling elite mistrusts and underestimates the population, and the common people believe that the government is being used to advance the interests of its supporters rather than the general interest. The various official initiatives for memory and transitional justice described in this book are part of a larger program of radical social engineering in which the population is constantly mobilized in a sort of permanent revolution

<sup>172</sup> Sommers, *Stuck*.

<sup>173</sup> Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971.

<sup>174</sup> Ansoms, “Re-engineering Rural Society,” p. 308.

intended to create “new Rwandan citizens.”<sup>175</sup> As my research with average Rwandans shows, despite widespread popular belief in justice and accountability and support for the idea of reconciliation, the context of authoritarian rule and social and economic inequality have undermined the tools of transitional justice that have been employed in Rwanda. In fact, from the perspective of most Rwandans, rather than promoting justice, accountability, and reconciliation, transitional justice in Rwanda has been a tool of domination used by a small group to secure their power and increase their wealth.

<sup>175</sup> This terminology from Huggins, “Seeing Like a Neo-Liberal State?”