



The political impact

RPF-led governments

With at least 10% of the country's population dead and a further 20% displaced, either internally or in neighbouring countries, the running of the country was bound to be a major problem for some years to follow. Remarkably, 20 years after the genocide, Rwanda has become one of the most stable countries in the African continent. Since 1994, gross domestic product has almost tripled and the population has increased by 25% to more than 10 million. Rwanda can claim to be one of the most well-ordered societies in the region.

For some, the political and economic advances have come at a cost. In July 1994, following the RPF success on the battlefield, the elimination of the Hutu Power Movement and control of the political process was a natural by-product of victory. The RPF took control of the government and attempted to reorganize it along the lines of the agreements reached at Arusha. A new government was created called the Broad Based Government of National Unity and headed by a Hutu, Pasteur Bizimungu. Bizimungu had been a significant figure in the Rwandan government of former President Habyarimana but had fallen out with him in 1990 and joined the RPF that same year, helping to negotiate the Arusha Accords. His appointment as the first president of a post-genocide Rwandan coalition government was in effect a sound decision politically, although many acknowledged that the Vice President, Paul Kagame, retained real political power behind the presidency.

The political process was heavily controlled with the radical Hutu party, the MRND, banned and the formation of new political parties prohibited until 2003. Meanwhile, the new government controlled the political debate through the repression of dissent. As ethnicity had been used to cause the genocide, the government abolished any discrimination based on ethnicity, race or religion. Unity, reconciliation and a collective national "Rwandaness" has been stressed. This has been at the heart of the political process. In addition one of the new government's first actions was to reopen schools and undertake a revision of school curricula. The importance of teaching history has long been recognized by all national governments and formal teaching of Rwandan history was not carried out in primary and secondary schools until at least 10 years after the genocide. Rwanda's entire school curriculum is undergoing a comprehensive overhaul and is due to be relaunched in 2016.

The RPF dominated the government after 1994, and Bizimungu soon came into conflict with Kagame over a number of issues including the suppression of Hutus, political dissent in general and the corruption charges which were levelled against him. The RPF claimed to have introduced stability and a multi-party democracy, but its critics claim it has centralized power within a Tutsi elite and crushed potential opponents. In March 2000, Bizimungu was forced to resign in a dispute over a new government cabinet and was replaced as president by Paul Kagame. In 2003, the first elections were held following the genocide and Kagame swept to power through a landslide victory, winning 95% of the vote. In the following year Bizimungu was put on trial, found guilty of embezzlement and inciting violence and sentenced to 15 years

in jail. He served his sentence until 2007 when Kagame released him under a presidential pardon.

The RPF have dominated Rwandan politics since the genocide. This is understandable given the horrors which preceded their takeover, and the priority of the RPF has been survival. The methods they have chosen to retain power have been considered by critics and liberals in the West to be harsh. Rwanda has a history of authoritarian rule and in this sense the domination of the political scene by one party is hardly an exception. The RPF has dominated the mechanisms to retain power in the country including the media, the state bureaucracy, the banks, many state-owned companies, the judiciary and the security services. However, under the RPF, the people of Rwanda are better off than before the genocide.

The economic impact

Rwanda prior to 1994 was already one of the poorest countries in the world and the state of the economy was a contributing factor to the onset of genocide. The events of that year decimated the population as well as destroying Rwanda's fragile economic base. To rebuild the economy was another major challenge facing the new government. However, Rwanda has made significant progress in attracting foreign investment and in stabilizing and restoring its economy so that since 1995, the Rwandan economy has been one of the fastest growing in Africa and the world. Real annual GDP growth averaged 8.2% from 1995–2001, more than double the sub-Saharan African average. The main reason for this impressive growth rate is that the country has been steadily recovering from the economic decline of the years prior to 1994 and, importantly, has received considerable assistance from foreign donors.

Rwanda has been a major recipient of international development assistance since the genocide. Some have argued that this has been partially to compensate for ignoring the genocide but, for whatever reason, between 1995 and 2000 almost US \$4 billion was pledged to support the rebuilding of Rwanda's economy. Assistance levels remain among the highest in Africa with the EU, World Bank, IMF, and bilaterally, the USA and the UK as the largest donors. Rwanda's rebuilding of its economy since the genocide has been driven by three main sources: the export of tea and coffee; foreign aid and, more recently, tourism. Economic growth has averaged an 8% growth since 2001. The government has restored security throughout the country, rebuilt rural and urban infrastructure and controlled price inflation. All these factors have contributed to Rwanda's economic recovery. Rwanda's economic growth has also been dependent upon a well-educated middle class, but it is still one of the most densely populated countries in the world with 75% of the population tied to agriculture, and coffee and tea providing almost 80% of Rwanda's export revenues.

Poverty nonetheless remains severe among some of the population; recent figures estimate that 45% of the population live in poverty with an income of less than \$1.50 per day. With very few natural resources, the government's main economic challenge is to cultivate new areas such as information and communication technology and to diversify agricultural production. Foreign donors supply Rwanda with a significant percentage of their aid budget and largely turn a blind eye



to the regime's deficiencies. This is partly out of consideration for its security concerns, and partially because the RPF-controlled government has done such a good job of rebuilding the nation.

Continued warfare in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire)

In 2014, on the 20th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, the former president of the Security Council in 1994, Colin Keating, made a speech in which he said:

Twenty years later, you are still dealing with the consequences in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The failure in Rwanda in 1994 caused not only genocide, but it also led to an appalling humanitarian catastrophe in eastern DRC in 1995. This led directly to the civil wars in the DRC and to human tragedy on an even larger scale. Some estimates suggest that up to 5 million died. Major instability afflicted the region.

What had started in Rwanda spiralled beyond the borders of the country to have an impact on others, but most emphatically the DRC, formerly the country of Zaire.

The existence of a large number of Hutu soldiers, militia and hard line genocidaires so close to Rwanda's border was a thorn in the side of the new RPF government and one they could not tolerate for long. The UN refugee agencies and NGOs were incapable of preventing incursions back into Rwanda, and Zairian President Mobutu was unwilling to curb the actions of the Hutu refugee forces. The existence of the latter was both a political and a military problem and not simply a humanitarian one for all concerned. The RPF itself had begun as a refugee army and had now taken power in Rwanda.

In 1996, a human rights report confirmed the complicity of Mobutu and the Zairean army in the arming of Hutu soldiers. This problem was compounded by the situation in North and South Kivu, two provinces located in eastern Zaire which had been centres of opposition to the regime of President Mobutu and which also contained a mixed ethnic population of Tutsi and Hutu. These ethnic groups are known as the **Banyarwanda**, located primarily in North Kivu, and the Banyamulenge who lived in the south. Many of them were Tutsi, (sometimes known as Congolese Tutsi) and had also been persecuted by the Zairean government. It was fertile ground for conflict. There is evidence that the RPF government supported the Tutsi in Zaire to frustrate the Hutu as well as to signal their discontent with the attitude of the Mobutu government.

Opponents to the Mobutu regime also included the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (ADFL) under Laurent-Désiré Kabila. Kabila had been a Marxist, and had been assisted by Che Guevara when the famous revolutionary was in the Congo in the mid-1960s. Kabila was a self professed Marxist and an admirer of Mao Zedong who had waged rebellion in the east of Zaire for the last thirty years. According to Che Guevara, he was not a committed nor an effective leader. Naturally, Kabila was seen as a committed communist by the USA who later backed the Mobutu regime. The ADFL came together in October 1996 with the backing of Rwanda and three more of

Class discussion

What might be the impact of the considerably larger numbers of Hutu refugees who were displaced in the surrounding countries of Tanzania, Burundi and now Zaire?

Banyarwanda

Meaning "those who come from Rwanda".