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### ***Politics, Political Settlements and Social Change in Post-Colonial Rwanda.***

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*We cannot turn the clock back nor can we undo the harm caused, but we have the power to determine the future and to ensure that what happened never happens again ... as we begin the next stage of our journey, we will continue to entrench the values that have brought us this far – unity, hard work, mutual respect and shared responsibility – Paul Kagame*

## **Abstract**

Until 1994 Rwanda's post-colonial history was marked by episodes of political violence, attempted wars, and wars of different durations. Feeding the violence was the absence of an elite consensus about how best to take Rwanda forward after colonial rule ended, the rules for doing so, and the roles to be played by the holders and losers of power. This paper explores key aspects of Rwanda's political evolution from independence to-date. The critical stages are the events popularly known as the 1959 social revolution that preceded independence in 1962; the period from 1962 to the overthrow of Kayibanda's First Republic in 1973; from the Habyarimana-led military coup to 1994; and the Rwanda Patriotic Front -led post-genocide period.

The paper examines the different political coalitions that have ruled the country since independence, their impact on political stability and their role in catalysing or influencing the cycles of turmoil with which it is associated. In the case of the current coalition, this paper also provides a glimpse into the efforts they have made to promote the wellbeing of ordinary Rwandans. It first charts the historical origins and the current state of drivers of instability and elite fragmentation. It then identifies the nature of interactions between drivers of instability and political settlements over time, and their impact on governance and the pursuit of development.

**Keywords:** politics; coalitions; instability; elite fragmentation; political settlements; governance; development; social change

## **Acknowledgements**

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## **1. Conceptual Introduction**

The analysis concurs with the view that the kind of political settlement arrived at by the most powerful groups in a society (Khan, 2010; North *et al.*, 2009) determines whether peace and stability will prevail, and shapes the commitment and capacity of ensuing governments to deliver development. Stable political settlements or coalitions of powerful groups that bring together key political actors and that are held together by the alignment of interests, are said to be critical to establishing robust political systems that ensure long-term peace and stability (Parks and Cole, 2010). On the other hand, political settlements that exclude powerful groups with the capacity to mount a credible violent challenge or threat to the status quo do not endure.

Also, political settlements are dynamic 'rolling agreements' among political actors, not one-off events. They are therefore 'fluid and dynamic', "constantly adapting, being contested, and renegotiated", and are "primary in determining the success or failure of state-building and peace-building efforts" (Parks and Cole, 2010: viii).

"(...the) 'political settlement' refers to the balance or distribution of power between contending social groups and social classes, on which any state is based." (di John and Putzel, 2009: 4).

By focusing on the underlying power arrangements that underpin and shape the emergence and performance of institutions, the concept stretches beyond the institutionalist perspective that tends to dominate development thinking. It places elite bargaining at the centre of establishing stability and order, as well as incentivising elites to build institutions for delivering development and 'good-enough' governance, and enabling them to develop and function effectively. Factors that shape political settlements include relationships among political elites on the one hand and productive capitalists and broader social groupings on the other (Khan, 2010; di John and Putzel, 2009).

Clientelist political settlements predominate in developing countries. According to Khan (2010: 7-8) two aspects of these settlements explain why institutions perform differently: the organisation of the ruling coalition and the technological capabilities of productive entrepreneurs and their relationship of power with the ruling coalition. The ruling coalition refers to the ruling elite and their inter-relationships on the one hand, and on the other, their relationships with leading capitalists and other groups whose support they need to hold on to power.<sup>1</sup>

The paper concurs with Hickey (2012), that political settlements are located within and closely shaped by the globalised context involving interaction between national and transnational actors, institutions, processes and ideas, including international

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<sup>1</sup>See, for instance, Kjaer and Katusiimeh, 2012.

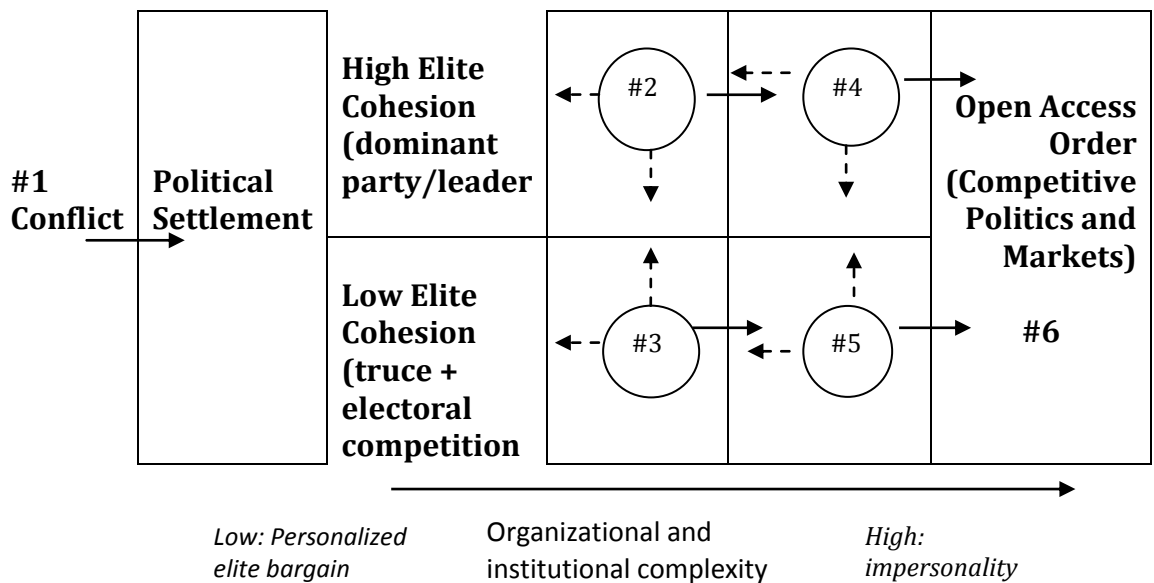
aid. Ideas are critical to developing an analytical focus combining Khan's rational-actor and incentives-based approach and the more discursive aspects of politics generally, and elite behaviour in particular. In addition, they shape elite behaviour. This too is important to our analysis.

It builds on Levy (2012) who identifies different types of political settlements and defines them in terms of their character and the extent of their institutional and organizational complexity (ibid: 4). Character defines how political power is organised: whether according to the dominant-party or dominant-ruler logic or that of 'competitive clientelism'. According to the typology, the dominant party/ruler type concentrates power in the hands of a party or leader, while under competitive clientelism "political settlements are anchored in a 'truce' in which competing forces agree on peaceful rules for political competition" (ibid: 6).

The dimension of institutional complexity derives from a focus on the role played by more impersonal and universal forms of public organisation within shifts from limited to open access orders (North *et al.*, 2009). Figure 1 below shows how Boxes #2 and #3 designate the 'early stage' of these two main types, with #4 and #5 as the 'later stage' of each, following moves towards more impersonal forms of organisation. Post-genocide Rwanda does not conform fully to either type. On the one hand, both President Kagame and the Rwanda Patriotic Front are sufficiently dominant for it to conform to the dominant leader/dominant party form of political settlement. On the other, the post-genocide power-sharing arrangements amount to a 'truce' premised on agreed rules for political competition among legally recognised political organisations (Golooba-Mutebi and Booth, 2013). Political parties in Rwanda are highly unequal in strength. The Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) possesses more financial and intellectual resources and therefore the capacity to organise and mobilise support than any other party. The RPF's dominance and the weakness of other parties rules out the possibility of any of them defeating it in elections in the foreseeable future. However, the system of proportional representation in place and the constitutional requirement that dominant parties share power with smaller parties are two aspects of the inclusive truce arrived at after the genocide and civil war, to which parties to the current political settlement subscribe.

In examining Rwanda's current political settlement it is essential to pay attention to the background and contextual factors that led to its emergence. They are critical to understanding the motivations behind it and why it has evolved in ways that are conducive to developing relations and institutions associated with delivering both structural transformation and improved levels of service delivery (Booth and Golooba-Mutebi, 2012a; Booth and Golooba-Mutebi, 2012b; Ensign and Bertrand, 2010). This has serious implications for the country's development prospects. The paper also suggests some ideas for further research into the connections between the current political settlement and outcomes in the social and productive sectors, where Rwanda has a growing reputation for high performance.

Figure 1: Different types of political settlement



From Levy (2012)

## 2. Historical Background: The pre-1994 political settlements

### 2.1 Independence and multi-party politics: A political settlement in flux

Rwanda's struggle for independence created new fissures, widened old ones, and portended deadly inter-elite political contestation in the years ahead. The colonial administration had governed and organised society in ways that had created and, over time, deepened divisions between the two major groups, the Hutu and Tutsi (Prunier, 1997). In the lead up to independence this translated into two political conflicts. On one hand, the struggle for independence consisted of Hutu and Tutsi nationalist elites pursuing a joint project: the end of Belgian colonial rule and its replacement with self-rule. On the other, it entailed Hutu nationalists pursuing 'liberation' for the Hutu majority, from both Belgian rule and what they claimed was Tutsi colonialism. The hasty introduction of competitive, adversarial, winner-takes-all, multi-party politics only contributed to the destabilisation of the country.

The colonial administration authorised the formation of political parties in 1959. Four prominent ethnicity-inspired parties emerged. Some, such as the UNAR<sup>2</sup>, purported to oppose discrimination while pursuing exclusionist agendas. Led by Tutsi traditionalists and monarchists, the UNAR showed no tolerance towards its opponents, Hutu or Tutsi (Strauss, 2006). Supporters of the ethnicity-obsessed APROSOMA<sup>3</sup> claimed Rwanda was a colony of the "Ethiopian Tutsi" whose

<sup>2</sup> Union Nationale Rwandais.

<sup>3</sup> Association pour la Promotion Sociale de la Masse.

dominance they sought to end, even through their extermination.<sup>4</sup> The clearly expressed objective of PARMEHUTU<sup>5</sup> was “Hutu emancipation”. Meanwhile extremists on both sides were united in their denunciation of the moderate, majority-Tutsi RADER.<sup>6</sup> Political party extremism eventually marginalised moderate Hutu and Tutsi elites who wanted compromise and gradual evolution.<sup>7</sup>

Multi-party politics spilled inter-elite animosity into the rest of society and transformed ethnicity into a political weapon. “Hutu Power” ideology postulated the right of the majority to rule. The granting of independence on the basis of majoritarian rule was therefore destined to lead to a dictatorship of the majority. The 1961 local elections showed what the future would look like, when extremist Hutu-led parties won overwhelmingly. Operating under its new name, PARMEHUTU-MDR, and having campaigned on an anti-monarchy and anti-Tutsi platform, PARMEHUTU bagged over 70 per cent of the vote. The end result was politically motivated and elite-instigated violence targeting Tutsi and their moderate Hutu allies, with violence first exploding in November 1959, on the eve of independence, and continuing in the form of occasional anti-Tutsi pogroms which lasted until 1973 and caused the mass exit of thousands of survivors (Strauss, 2006). Meanwhile the colonial authorities had adopted a pro-extremist Hutu stance that ensured impunity for perpetrators of violence, and which could have been interpreted as encouragement to murder and pillage. From a Tutsi-dominated monarchy, Rwanda evolved rapidly into a one-party state, a “one-party racial dictatorship” (Strauss, 2006: 182).

The upheavals that led to the killing of large numbers of Tutsi, the flight into exile of others and the exclusion of the Tutsi elite from politics produced a post-colonial political dispensation, in which the right to participate in politics or compete for leadership became a monopoly of members of the Hutu community. The immediate post-colonial political settlement was built around ethnic solidarity and the idea that numerical superiority entitled the Hutu to exclusive access to power. The resultant pan-Hutu coalition brought together Hutu of diverse political outlooks whose collaboration rotated around the idea of a unified Hutu nation against the “Tutsi invaders”<sup>8</sup>, who were excluded.

However, whilst he set about building his power base on the Hutu nation as a whole at a macro level, at a micro level Gregoire Kayibanda, the leader of PARMEHUTU-MDR and Rwanda’s first president, sought to privilege fellow southern Hutu. As with Tutsi who had not fled the country and were labelled *inyangarwanda* (*enemies of Rwanda*), the regime pushed northern Hutu to the margins, having banned all the other parties and imposed a one-party state. In 1973, amidst growing discontent, northern-Hutu military officers led by Major-General Juvenal Habyarimana mounted a

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<sup>4</sup> See Murego, 1975: 885.

<sup>5</sup> Parti du Mouvement de l’Emancipation Hutu. It later became the Party of the Movement for Hutu Emancipation – Rwanda Democratic Movement (PARMEHUTU-MDR).

<sup>6</sup> *Rassemblement Democratique Rwandais*

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Strauss, 2006 (chapter 7).

<sup>8</sup> Communauté Rwandaise de France, 1990.

successful coup d'état and liquidated many of the southern Hutu political elite that had surrounded Kayibanda.

## **2.2 Single-party rule and power concentration under the Second Republic**

After he seized power, Habyarimana founded the National Revolutionary Movement for Development (MRND)<sup>9</sup> in July 1973 and re-introduced one-party rule. Formal military rule ended and in its place came dual party and army control (Rusatira, 2005). Inclusive politics under the new regime came in the form of compulsory membership in the ruling party. Habyarimana went on to accumulate power as the MRND's Founder President, President of its Central Committee, Prime Minister, Army Chief of Staff, Minister of Defence, and President of the High Judicial Council.<sup>10</sup> In 1978 he won the presidential elections in which he was the only eligible candidate, courtesy of constitutional amendments approved in a specially organised referendum. In 1981, an organ of the MRND, the National Council for Development<sup>11</sup>, replaced the National Assembly.

For well over a decade, after the coup, Rwanda was a peaceful and stable country with a dynamic high-growth economy (Uvin, 1997). Before 1990 the government neither instigated nor authorised the mass killing of civilians, Tutsi or Hutu (Strauss, 2006). The seeming departure from past practice did, however, contain a subterranean 'politics as usual' continuity. The post-Kayibanda political settlement contained elements of its predecessor in that it was also built around Hutu pre-eminence within a dominant party, single-party framework in which ethnic and regional discrimination was pursued as a means to promote equity. The policy was, however, deceptive. In reality quotas established to ensure group representation were never adhered to: all 143 mayors, the 10 heads of prefectures and 68 of the 70 parliamentarians were Hutu. The army had only one senior Tutsi officer<sup>12</sup>, whose elevation happened before Tutsi were locked out of the higher echelons of the officer corps. There was only one Tutsi in government.<sup>13</sup> While aggressive anti-Tutsi actions and pronouncements ceased, the exiles who had fled from previous political violence were not allowed to return.

By the mid-1980s, a third of the 85 most important appointments in government and almost the entire leaderships of the army and security agencies were from Gisenyi prefecture, Mrs Habyarimana's birthplace in the North. People from Gisenyi and Ruhengeri, Habyarimana's birthplace, also in the North, dominated the leaderships of public enterprises and access to scholarships to study abroad.<sup>14</sup> In terms of making claims on the state, the Tutsi continued to face limited possibilities for employment in

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<sup>9</sup> Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement (MRND).

<sup>10</sup> Nkuzumwami, 1996: 74.

<sup>11</sup> Conseil National de Développement (CND).

<sup>12</sup> Colonel Epimaque Ruhashya.

<sup>13</sup> Communauté Rwandaise de France, op.cit.: 25.

<sup>14</sup> Reyntjens, 1994: 34.

the army, forces of law and order, and in much of the public sector. Just as exclusion of northern Hutu had undermined Hutu solidarity under Kayibanda, the marginalisation and isolation of southern Hutu under Habyarimana turned them into active opponents of the regime. To discontent fuelled by continued ethnic and regional exclusion, the government responded by self-assertive repression (Gakusi and Mouzer, 2010).

As with the Kayibanda regime and successive regimes in neighbouring Uganda whose politics of exclusion led to violent regime change, the Habyarimana government left only one option for its opponents to acquire power: violent contestation.<sup>15</sup> The MRND's "irregular tactics" (Strauss, 2006), designed to lock large sections of the elite out of power, prepared the ground for political violence. Consequently, by the late 1980s when the RPF started organising and mobilising the exile community in Uganda and Rwanda's other neighbours for war, internal discontent was already high. Indeed, as the invasion by the Rwanda Patriotic Army approached, some of the regime's internal opponents were already collaborating with the exiles<sup>16</sup>, with key figures having already joined the RPF (Otunnu, 2000b).

### **2.3 Economic crisis and the external environment**

Alongside its authoritarianism<sup>17</sup>, the Habyarimana regime boasted a strong development and economic management track record, despite Rwanda's intrinsic disadvantages of being a landlocked, highly populated, and natural-resource-poor country.<sup>18</sup> For example, while the agricultural (primary) sector had accounted for 80 per cent of GNP in 1962, by 1986 it accounted for only 48 per cent, with the service sector having grown from 8 per cent to 21 per cent, and manufacturing from 12 per cent to 31 per cent. School enrolment stood at 61.8 per cent in 1986, up from 49.5 per cent in 1978.<sup>19</sup> And until the mid-1980s the country's external debt was considerably lower than the average elsewhere in Africa at the time (28% of GNP in 1987).<sup>20</sup>

Nonetheless, the late 1980s ushered in a period of economic crisis, particularly after coffee prices collapsed. Dependence on foreign aid grew from less than 5 per cent in 1973 to 11 per cent in 1986 and 22 per cent in 1991<sup>21</sup>. In 1990, the government undertook a structural adjustment programme with the assistance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, leading to \$216 million in pledges of new aid. The Rwandese franc was devalued, culminating in sharp price increases, a reduction in social expenditures, and a freezing of civil service wages. Citing the government's failure to meet set conditions, including the elimination of coffee price

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<sup>15</sup> For a discussion of the effects of power monopoly on the calculations of rival elites to those in power in Africa, see Tull and Mehler, 2005; also Herbst, 2006.

<sup>16</sup> Interviews, December 2012 and January 2013.

<sup>17</sup> Reyntjens, 1994; Lugan, 1997; Prunier, 1997; also Uvin, 1997.

<sup>18</sup> see, for example, Reyntjens (1994: 35); also Prunier, 1997.

<sup>19</sup> Prunier, *ibid.*: 101.

<sup>20</sup> Reyntjens, *op.cit.*: 35.

<sup>21</sup> Prunier, *op.cit.*: 102.



guarantees and reduction of the budget deficit to 5 per cent, donors withheld the aid promised following the adoption of structural adjustment (Porter *et al.*, 2011).

The economic crisis coincided with the end of the Cold War, which significantly shifted the interests of Western powers in Africa. The inattention of Western powers to the brewing political crisis in 1980s Rwanda seems to explain why the Museveni government in Uganda was able to facilitate, directly or indirectly, the RPF's preparations for war and the war's subsequent evolution.<sup>22</sup> Despite the deteriorating domestic situation, large aid inflows continued, and international development workers continued to laud Rwanda as a showcase of success (Uvin, 1997; Adelman, 2000). When they reacted to the growing unrest in the country, Rwanda's main development partners at the time, France and Canada, decided to make continued assistance conditional on 'democratisation'.

That said, Habyarimana continued to rely on the support of two major external actors. Whilst it was keen to impose democratisation as a condition for continued aid, France avoided criticising the Habyarimana government. Observers at the time contend that this had to do with "personal and patrimonial ties" resulting from "personal contacts" between President Habyarimana and French President Francois Mitterand (Callamard, 2000; Wallis, 2006). The regime could also rely on the assistance of President Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire. By the early 1990s Zaire not only provided the Rwandan government with moral support, but had a pact with it, providing for "common security services, the sharing of security information, military co-operation, and interdiction of opposition movements on each other's territory".<sup>23</sup>

Despite the continued military support of France and Zaire (which increased after the war began in 1990), the multiple crises faced by the already desperate government, together with the imposition of economic and political conditionality, pushed it into a corner and forced it to adopt more repressive measures to protect its power and authority. Many Rwandans were by then disenchanted with the MRND's prolonged political monopoly and alienated by political repression, regionalism, and corruption. The more repressive it became, however, the more turmoil it caused, and the further it pushed the country towards political violence (Lugan, 1997; Callamard, 2000; Adelman, 2000).

## ***2.4 Exile experiences and the journey towards war***

Although they had fled Rwanda and settled elsewhere, exiles maintained the desire to return home<sup>24</sup>, motivated by a failure to integrate fully into host societies where they felt excluded and discriminated against (Waugh, 2004; Otunnu, 2000b; Prunier,

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<sup>22</sup> On the Museveni government's role in facilitating the RPF as well as consequent diplomatic activity aimed at stopping it, see Otunnu, 2000b; Adelman, 2000.

<sup>23</sup> Gachuruzi, 2000:58.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Muganwa, 2012.

1997; Gachuruzi, 2000; Mamdani, 2001; Stearns, 2011).<sup>25</sup> However, both the Kayibanda and Habyarima regimes rejected this idea, citing high population density, poor soil productivity, poverty, and environmental degradation as reasons for permanent exclusion. In 1982 the Habyarimana government allowed refugees who did not pose a threat to the government to return and visit their relatives; this policy refinement responded to political developments in Uganda, where the government of Milton Obote was at the time battling an insurgency led by Yoweri Museveni, which some Rwandan refugees had joined.<sup>26</sup> The war against the Idi Amin regime three years earlier had also seen a number of Uganda-based Rwandan refugees join the rebel forces, making Habyarimana nervous about the large number of potential insurgents next door in Uganda (Otunnu, 2000b).

The stalemate created by the refugees' determination to return and the government's commitment to blocking this catalysed efforts to seek a permanent solution to their predicament. At an exile conference in the United States in August 1988, delegates affirmed their determination to return home, but The Special Commission on the Problem of Rwandese Emigrés set up by the government in 1989 failed to break the deadlock. That year the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) was established and began to prepare for war (Otunnu, 2000a and 2000b; Gachuruzi, 2000; Prunier, 1997). By then many refugees had participated in Uganda's civil wars, acquiring training and combat experience. Thousands were still serving in what was then Uganda's national army, the National Resistance Army.<sup>27</sup> The connections between wars in Uganda and the refugees' subsequent ability to use the experience they had acquired as combatants coincided with an internal environment already ripe for war.

The RPF's decision to launch the war on October 1, 1990 marked the final stage of the country's descent into violence. The invasion provoked fear and suspicion between the Hutu and Tutsi communities inside the country and provided elite demagogues with grounds for inciting anti-Tutsi violence. Politically it further complicated matters for the ruling party, already wracked by friction between its liberal and extremist wings and under pressure from an emboldened internal opposition.<sup>28</sup> As the Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA) gained ground, the extremists started recruiting ethnic militia to kill Hutu dissidents and Tutsis. The violence dragged Rwanda into full-blown mass killing, genocide against the Tutsi and eventual regime change that saw the RPF seize power.<sup>29</sup> As with the Kayibanda regime before it, the evolution and eventual demise of the Habyarimana regime proves the

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<sup>25</sup> Gachuruzi, 2000.; Otunnu, 2000b. Also interviews with former members of the Rwandan Diaspora in former Zaïre, Burundi, and Uganda (2005/6).

<sup>26</sup> Among the small group of insurgents who launched the NRA insurgency were two Rwandese refugees, Fred Gisa Rwigema who led the RPF/A's invasion of Rwanda in 1990, and Paul Kagame who succeeded him after he was killed on the battlefield. Both had also been members of Yoweri Museveni's Front for National Salvation (FRONASA) which had participated in the Tanzania-aided war that toppled Idi Amin.

<sup>27</sup> For a comprehensive rendering of the RPF's infiltration of the Ugandan military in preparation for the insurgency, see Prunier (1997) and Otunnu (2000b).

<sup>28</sup> Lugan, *op.cit.*: 481.

<sup>29</sup> For details of how the war and the internal crisis unfolded, both of which are beyond the scope of this paper, see, for example, Gourevitch, 2000; de Forges, 1999, Prunier, 1997.

point: political settlements that exclude significant elite factions with the capacity to mount an armed challenge are prone to instability and do not endure.

### **3. The War Aftermath and the New Political Settlement: 1994-2013**

After the war, the RPF inherited a broken state and a devastated country but moved quickly to reconstitute and reconstruct it, re-establishing control within a short time. Reyntjens captures the rapid turn-around:

“A mere two years after the extreme human and material destruction of 1994, the state had been rebuilt. Rwanda was again administered from top to bottom, territorial, military and security structures were in place, the judicial system was re-established, tax revenues were collected and spent. The regime was able in a short time to establish total control over state and society... While many other African countries tend towards state collapse, the Rwandan state has re-affirmed itself vigorously.”<sup>30</sup>

The following discussion attempts to identify factors that have enabled the new government to achieve this success. It tries to tease out the possible role of politics within the context of the RPF-led reconfiguration of the political system and re-ordering of what is simultaneously a dominant leader/dominant party and a consensus-driven multi-party dispensation.

#### **3.1 Political inclusion and the new politics of consensus**

In a departure from the winner-takes-all logic of previous regimes, after it seized power the RPF opted to form a government bringing together all political groupings that were active in the country, some of which it had already established formal contact with long before it won the war. Excluded from the start through an outright ban were the MRND and CDR, the two parties seen as bearing the greatest responsibility for planning and executing the genocide.<sup>31</sup> These steps conformed to the broad outlines of the externally brokered Arusha Accords to which the RPF and other political forces had acquiesced.

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<sup>30</sup> Reyntjens, *ibid.*: 209.

<sup>31</sup> It is important to note, however, that individual former members of the MRND who were not tainted by participation in the genocide or who were accused of involvement and then absolved by the gacaca courts did not suffer exclusion and have taken up important roles in the post-genocide government, some as members of the RPF.

Table 1: Power sharing in the first post-genocide government

Stakeholders	Provisions by Arusha Agreement	Implemented after the genocide	
		As per the legal provision	As practiced
MRND	5	0	-
RPF	5	10	8
MDR	4	4	4
PL	3	3	3
PSD	3	3	3
PDC	1	1	1
Independent	-	-	2

Source: Republic of Rwanda, National Parliament, 2010: 116

The 1993 Arusha Agreement provided for competitive, adversarial multi-party politics and emphasized the legitimacy of a democratic opposition. However, after the war, with the MRND totally defeated, the RPF was the only political organisation with an armed wing. In addition, it possessed the authority that came from winning a decisive victory and the legitimacy deriving from having stopped the genocide and the attempt to exterminate politicians opposed to the MRND, and their supporters. It could have easily been emboldened by its monopoly over the use of force to ignore the Arusha Accords in their entirety and to govern as the sole legal political organisation, in the same way the MRND, PARMEHUTU and older liberation movements across Africa had done. Already the National Resistance Movement (NRM) in Uganda, from which it had learnt many useful lessons, had followed the same pattern and established a no-party system in which it remained the sole active political organisation, albeit with strong inclusive features (Golooba-Mutebi, 2008).

However, conscious of the consequences of political exclusion of which they and their supporters had been victims for over three decades and probably inspired by Uganda's NRM in which some of its officials had served or began their careers, the RPF's leaders sought to bring their potential rivals and adversaries into the government rather than shut them out.<sup>32</sup> Under the new dispensation, the right of political parties to exist was recognised, albeit with interim measures placing limits on their activities. The aim was to prevent disruptive political contestation through adversarial competition. Having agreed the contours of the new dispensation with its partners and closed the door on adversarial contestation, the RPF as the leading actor secured the necessary space to lay the foundation of the country it sought to build, and to strengthen and consolidate its authority. Also, in bringing potential rivals into the government, it opened the way for them and their members to serve in the

<sup>32</sup> It is important to note that well before the RPF captured power, it had established contact with several anti-MRND parties with similar aspirations to its own (interviews with the non-RPF party leaders, Kigali, December 2012 and January 2013).

government and to gain valuable experience in the management of the state. That said, a verdict on the capacity building impact of the inclusive arrangements must await future evaluation after full-fledged competitive politics is re-introduced.

Table 2: Power sharing in the National Transitional Assembly during the first five years of transition

Stakeholders	Provisions by Arusha Peace agreement	As Implemented during the first 5 years of transition (1994-1999)
MRND	11	0
RPF	11	13
MDR	11	13
PL	11	13
PSD	11	13
PDC	4	6
Other parties	11	6
National Army	-	6
Total	70	70

Source: Republic of Rwanda, National Parliament, 2010

In another important deviation from PARMEHUTU and MRND policies on inclusion, the RPF and its new partners rejected regionalism and ethnicity as bases for citizens making claims on the state or seeking advantage or access to opportunity. Some have misinterpreted these measures as amounting to banning ethnicity<sup>33</sup> and disregarded their role in helping to establish the principle of equality of access. To concretise the rejection of ethnicity as a basis for bargaining among political elites or citizens demanding rights, the national identity card that bore the holder's ethnicity was abolished. While sceptics would question the extent to which this is itself a sufficient safeguard against discrimination, the decision was more than simply symbolic. The return of large numbers of the RPF's members and supporters from exile and the fact that they had grown up outside the country and therefore could not identify with specific regions as 'home', ruled out regionalism as a factor in politics.

A notable manifestation of the new political values, an important factor in the government's widely acknowledged effectiveness in such arenas as service delivery, is its approach to combatting corruption and malfeasance, including abuse of office. While elsewhere in the Great Lakes region corruption has undermined the integrity and standing of the state, in Rwanda the seriousness of the slogan "zero tolerance of corruption" is evident in the frequent indictments or administrative removals from office of civilian and military officials accused of malpractice. Wide agreement among Rwandans that anti-corruption measures are impartial and impersonal points to the state's increasing organisational and institutional complexity and suggests it is evolving towards an open access order according to the typology proposed by Levy (2012). The seriousness with which the government of Rwanda tackles corruption is responsible for anti-corruption legislation and its enforcement easily accounting for

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Shraml, 2011.

the second highest number of prosecutions in the country after genocide-related charges; for the government's reputation as generally clean; and for Rwanda's record as the least corrupt country in the Great Lakes region.<sup>34</sup>

Despite its widely acknowledged technocratic and managerial capacities, however, the government remains the subject of trenchant criticism by some analysts and observers mainly in academia, human and media rights activists, and journalists.<sup>35</sup> Much of the criticism focuses on violation of human rights, including freedom of association and speech; suppression of media freedoms; political exclusion; discrimination; nepotism; electoral malpractice; and politically motivated murder and what some have termed "disappearances". The disappearances refer to people, usually critics of the government or individuals who are accused of crimes of one kind or another, who go missing from time to time.<sup>36</sup>

The government, or specifically the RPF, has also been faulted for what some critics claim are its exclusionist practices and opposition to democratisation. For example, according to Reyntjens, "Rwanda is experiencing not democracy and reconciliation but dictatorship and exclusion"<sup>37</sup>, a claim that disregards all the inclusive elements of the new ruling coalition and the negotiations that led to its formation. Others accuse the government of nepotism, with the charge deriving from alleged reserved "access to power, wealth and knowledge to Tutsi".<sup>38</sup> This particular criticism suggests parallels with its immediate predecessor under Habyarimana. According to Reyntjens, it has "a clientelistic network, "the akazu", which "accumulates wealth and privileges".<sup>39</sup> While the members of the Habyarimana-era akazu were known, which gave credit to claims of a privileged and untouchable inner circle, Reyntjens neither names nor describes the members of the new akazu.<sup>40</sup> Close scrutiny reveals that far from resting on a clique with family ties, the government brings together diverse cross-ethnic and cross-regional tendencies. Also important is that the so-called Ugandan Tutsis said to be disproportionately represented in important positions, are not immune from dismissal or prosecution when they violate the law or turn out to be

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<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Ligami, 2012. According to this report, Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index for the year 2012 has Rwanda as the least corrupt country in East Africa, with Burundi the most corrupt followed by Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and then Rwanda.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Strauss and Waldorf, 2011.

<sup>36</sup> Some of the disappearances for which the government has been held responsible, however, have been only temporary and not the handiwork of state agents. Others have involved suspects running away from the law (Times Reporter, 2013). Those involving people who disappear permanently remain the subject of widespread debate and speculation and form the basis for the pattern of accusatory finger pointing targeting the government and based on plausible but not proven claims (see, for example, Reyntjens, 2004). In some cases people have staged their own disappearances only for human rights activists and their allies in academia to jump to conclusions before the disappeared persons re-appear.

<sup>37</sup> Reyntjens, *ibid.*: 177.

<sup>38</sup> Reyntjens, *ibid.*: 187.

<sup>39</sup> Reyntjens, *ibid.*: 208.

<sup>40</sup> The previous is known to have brought together the President's close relatives and friends, and those of his wife. See, for example, Gakusi and Mouzer, 2010.

incompetent in the execution of their duties<sup>41</sup>, a reality that further emphasises the state's increasing organisational and institutional complexity. Meanwhile it is widely agreed that members of the Habyarimanas' inner circle enjoyed un-paralleled exclusive privileges and impunity (Semujanga, 2003; Prunier, 1997; Uvin, 1997).

A close examination of the post-genocide ruling coalition reveals the ever-shifting composition of influential people within both the government and the RPF itself as a result of reshuffles, sackings, re-deployment and, in a few cases in recent years, retirement from active politics.<sup>42</sup> Many of those who are reshuffled or redeployed sometimes end up in relatively un-influential positions, only to resurface later in even more influential ones than those they held previously.<sup>43</sup> While these movements may indeed represent episodes of falling out of favour for some officials from time to time, over all this demonstrates a fact many Rwandans are familiar with: there are no untouchable sacred cows in the government. Under the Habyarimana regime, often equated directly or indirectly with aspects of the way the current government goes about its business<sup>44</sup> in order to try and argue that little has changed, this was not the case.

On the issue of democracy and rights, Strauss<sup>45</sup> argues: "Inside Rwanda, the RPF is allergic to political dissent. Free political expression remains severely limited; the government has frequently shut down the critical press as well as independent civil society organisations, especially those advocating human rights". That open political dissent in Rwanda is the exception rather than the rule is hardly a secret. Nor is the government's occasional cracking down on sections of the media, civil society, and political groups seeking to register as political parties. However, stated in these terms without delving into detail, particularly concerning events surrounding specific episodes of clamping down, these assertions can be misleading. For example, the aversion to open political dissent has to be understood in the context of the emergence, through weeks of negotiations, of a post-war political settlement that privileges consensus building over adversarial contestation among the different political groups and the establishment of organs such as the national forum of political parties to facilitate it.

The widely acclaimed rapid recovery (Kinzer, 2008; Crisafulli and Redmond, 2012) would have been extremely difficult to achieve, possibly unachievable, in the

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<sup>41</sup> Also, for example, while a great deal of attention has been paid to the attempted assassination of exiled General Faustin Kayumba Nyamwasa in South Africa and the fear other exiled dissidents are said to express about their personal safety, no questions are asked about the reasons why they fled. Claims by the government of Rwanda that some exiles are fugitives from the law are dismissed casually or treated with almost predictable skepticism, rather than investigated

<sup>42</sup> These shifts are usually seized on by critics of President Kagame, the Government of Rwanda and the RPF as indicators of "divisions within the RPF" which, they go on to assert, point to its imminent collapse.

<sup>43</sup> Usually when influential people are removed from their positions, critics then turn to speculating about power struggles within the government (Reyntjens, op.cit.).

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, Uvin, 2001; Gakusi and Mouzer, 2010. .

<sup>45</sup> 2006: 243-244.

absence of a broad internal elite consensus around the rules and values that would guide post-war reconstruction and state building. There is a certain consensus among political groups that are party to these arrangements that differences can be and are indeed best sorted out through dialogue rather than avenues that are potentially disruptive of public order such as protests.<sup>46</sup> There are, of course, Rwandans and outsiders who disagree strongly. The political settlement as it stands inside Rwanda, however, tilts the balance in favour of consensus politics, which explains why actors seeking to operate outside it meet with resistance from the government. That includes independent civil society groups, and would-be political parties that sometimes conduct themselves in ways the government considers potentially disruptive of public order.

Having learnt the lessons of previous regimes, the government encourages all Rwandans living outside the country to return.<sup>47</sup> Unlike its predecessors, it has not used shortage of land or any other reason to bar or place obstacles in the way of exiles wishing to return. On the contrary, its preoccupation with ensuring the right of all Rwandans to return has been the driver in recent years behind negotiations with the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and countries hosting Rwandan refugees to end their blanket refugee status. Although international human rights groups have opposed these efforts on the grounds that the safety of the returnees cannot be guaranteed, thousands of refugees have returned from Uganda, Zambia, Tanzania, Gabon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo and farther afield and been resettled<sup>48</sup>, with the UN willing to reserve refugee status for only individuals with reasonable cause to fear for their safety.<sup>49</sup>

In extending efforts to attract exiles back into the country to officials and politicians who served in previous regimes, the RPF-led government seeks first of all to neutralise a potential source of future insecurity and turmoil: the exclusion of significant factions with the capacity to destabilise. Secondly, it seeks to open the way for returnees to participate in public life and contribute to reconstruction and development efforts. For the government, the benefit of these developments is that they strengthen prospects for long-term stability, allow it to worry less about refugees becoming a security threat, and to devote more time and resources to long-term-horizon planning and public goods delivery than on short-term political calculus focused on narrow considerations of regime maintenance.

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<sup>46</sup> Interviews with politicians across a range of political parties in and outside government (December, 2012 to February 2013).

<sup>47</sup> Through the Directorate of Diaspora Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the government continues to make pro-active efforts to encourage exiles not only to return if they so wish, but also to invest in the country even if they do not wish to return in the immediate or near future (Interview, Directorate of Diaspora Affairs, January 2013). See, also, Kanyesigye, 2011; Kabeera, 2011a; Karuhanga, 2008.

<sup>48</sup> Among notable returnees is former Prime Minister and Leader of the now outlawed MDR party, Pierre Celestin Rwigema who responded to overtures from the government (interview, January 2013). See, also, Kabeera, 2011b; and Tasamba, 2009.

<sup>49</sup> Kabeera, 2011c.



### **3.2 The RPF and the politics of dissent**

Critics of the RPF<sup>50</sup> accuse its leadership of practicing political exclusion from the beginning and of 'Tutsification' of national leadership over time. For example, Gakusi and Mouzer (2003) argue that the post-genocide political innovations were calculated to enable the RPF to control and exercise power without the risk of losing it in a competitive multi-party system. Although while still new the government accepted the imperative of involving political parties in the country's management, it prohibited the formation of party structures at sub-national level and restricted party activities to the district.<sup>51</sup> The RPF has been criticised because during the period the restrictions were in place, it had its cadres operating at all levels of society.<sup>52</sup> Whatever the RPF's intentions, this criticism is difficult to dismiss. Whether by omission or commission, these measures placed other political organisations at a disadvantage (Beswick, 2010). Nonetheless, the dangers of opening the way to party politics of any kind so soon after the genocide ought not to be discounted. Moreover, the restriction lasted a relatively short time, suggesting they were not meant to aid in the establishment of a permanently inflexible system.<sup>53</sup> In 2006 they were lifted. Henceforth all parties could open offices, recruit members, and engage in legally mandated political activities below the district.

In addition to providing for participation in politics through political parties, the power- and responsibility-sharing arrangements provided for citizens who did not belong to political parties to participate as independents. The objective is to draw as much as possible from the talent available outside of mainstream political parties, another inclusive feature hitherto unknown in Rwanda.

#### *3.2.1 The constitutional process*

A key feature of the evolution of post-genocide politics was the ending of the divisionism of the past, and the search for home grown approaches to addressing the challenges that Rwanda faced. The search began with a series of debates convened by then President, Pasteur Bizimungu at the Office of the President at Urugwiro Village. The debates commenced on May 9, 1998, and brought together Rwandans from a wide range of backgrounds.<sup>54</sup> Among the important decisions made was the

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<sup>50</sup> See, for example, Reyntjens, 2006; Stroh, 2009; Rafti, 2004.

<sup>51</sup> Rwanda has a 5-tier local government system: village (umudugudu); cell (akagari); sector (umurenge); district (akarere), and province (umutara). The Akarere (district) is the basic politico-administrative unit. The law was amended in 2007 to allow for party activity right up to the village.

<sup>52</sup> See, for instance, Purdekova, 2008.

<sup>53</sup> The government's critics rarely acknowledge signs of this kind of inbuilt flexibility that seems to explain the gradual shifts in policy overtime which are observable in many spheres (see, for example, Booth and Golooba-Mutebi, 2012a).

<sup>54</sup> They included members of the executive arm of the government, members of the legislative assembly, representatives of the judiciary (judges and prosecutors), leaders of the legally recognized political parties, provincial authorities, senior security (army and gendarmerie) officials, civil society and private sector representatives, religious leaders, academics, elders, and other guests invited on the basis of their experience and expertise.

decision to introduce the *gacaca* courts<sup>55</sup> to try genocide-related cases, decentralise power, responsibility and resources to local authorities, and incorporate traditional practices, among them *imihigo* and *ubudehe*<sup>56</sup>, into modern administrative practices.

Ultimately, the Urugwiro process led to the establishment and cementing of a political system seen by participants as based on national experiences and lessons learnt and driven by the imperative to pursue consensus and shun adversarial politics. Some observers have, however, dismissed the new arrangements as designed to facilitate the RPF's political dominance and exclude opposition groups in exile (Stroh, 2009; Rafti, 2004). Others who remain un-persuaded by these developments claim: "the RPF has not brought liberation, inclusiveness and democracy, but oppression, exclusion and dictatorship" (Reyntjens, 2006: 1104).

Another important decision was the creation of a constitutional review commission, itself reflective of the diversity of political forces in the country, to conduct countrywide consultations to inform the making of the country's new supreme law, to ensure that it reflected the wishes of the general public. Reyntjens has criticised the 2003 constitution because, among other reasons, it was passed "without a single dissident voice in the country" and because "there was no campaigning to explain why it was bad".<sup>57</sup> The criticism disregards the consultation process that gave citizens the opportunity to express their views about it, and the discussions that preceded its adoption on 23 April and promulgation on June 4, 2003. Although denounced as "tailor-made to legitimise the regime under the guise of 'democratic governance'" (Reyntjens, 2006: 1108), viewed in less judgmental terms, it should be credited for providing the legal basis for power sharing on a scale never before seen in Rwanda's history.

However, although it provides for a multi-party system<sup>58</sup>, it does not allow for the "laissez-faire approach" where political parties exist without "certain restrictions".<sup>59</sup> Those who would like the government to embrace conventional multi-party democracy criticise it for imposing such controls.<sup>60</sup> However, they disregard the role unrestrained party competition has played in destabilising the country in the past and the arrangements for power sharing which are intended to prevent the re-emergence of the highly destabilising winner-takes-all politics of the Kayibanda and Habyarimana eras.

Other criticism of the arrangements dismisses the government's claims of inclusiveness as an "illusion". This reflects a particular reading of the departure into exile of a number of political elites, Tutsi and Hutu, between 1995 and 2000 (Reyntjens, 2006: 1105), after they fell out with the government. Also used to

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<sup>55</sup> On the *gacaca* courts, see, for example, Clark, 2011.

<sup>56</sup> Respectively performance contracts and mutual self-help.

<sup>57</sup> See Reyntjens, 2006: 1108.

<sup>58</sup> Article 52.

<sup>59</sup> Republic of Rwanda, National Parliament, 2010: 128.

<sup>60</sup> See, for example, Melvin, 2012.

question the inclusivity of the government is the banning of political parties, which, some commentators claim, on the basis of unspecified criteria, “represented the most credible challengers to the RPF” (Beswick, 2010: 236). However, many Hutu and Tutsi belonging to political parties other than the RPF stayed in the country and currently serve in the government because of the power-sharing arrangements on which it is built. Others that do not qualify for membership in parliament or the government participate in decision making via the forum of political parties.<sup>61</sup>

According to Reyntjens (2006: 1105), parties other than the RPF “are tolerated if they agree not to question the definition of political life drawn up by the RPF”. Leaders of these parties dismiss these claims as uninformed. They point to long-drawn-out debates they have participated in concerning numerous aspects of the post-genocide political dispensation. They argue, for example, that negotiations leading to the formation of the first government of national unity lasted for weeks precisely because consensus had to be arrived at on a wide range of issues.<sup>62</sup> They emphasise that the search for consensus guides all policymaking.

Nonetheless, even where consensus is sought on all matters, as it is in Rwanda, some actors are bound to exercise more influence than others. What matters in the setting of goals and the general mapping of the future is that compromise is achieved among rival political actors about how to move forward. A major factor underlying the stability of the current settlement is the requirement by the constitution that political parties share the most important political positions in the country. Article 58 requires the President and the speaker of the Chamber of Deputies to belong to different political organizations, while article 116 (4) requires members of the cabinet to be selected from political organizations on the basis of their seats in the chamber of deputies. Meanwhile article 116 (5) stipulates: “a political organization holding the majority of seats in the chamber of deputies may not exceed fifty (50) per cent of all members of the cabinet”.

Furthermore, it provides for a consultative forum of political parties. Four delegates represent each legally recognized party<sup>63</sup>, and decisions are made through consensus. As with many aspects of political organization in post-genocide Rwanda, the forum, characterised correctly by one observer as having the “explicit objective of serving as a forum for mediation and consensus building between parties” (Silva-

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<sup>61</sup> Interviews with leaders of Parti Social Imberakuri and Parti de la Solidarite et du Progress (January 2013). As of January 2013, Christine Mukabunani, Chairperson of SS-Imberakuri, Rwanda’s youngest party (registered in 2009) was also chairperson of the Forum of Political Parties.

<sup>62</sup> Interviews, January 2013. The influence of other parties on policy is also evident in the fact that, for example, Parti Social Democrate (PSD) has championed community health insurance and had it as a party policy as early as 1991, long before anyone knew the RPF would seize power. Today community health insurance is one of the policies for which the government is highly praised. The PSD has also been instrumental in influencing current policies and laws on land use and ownership.

<sup>63</sup> The term ‘delegates’ is important in that they are deployed by their respective parties to present and represent party, not individual views. Occasionally they are required to consult the parties on matters arising (interview with RPF official, 15.01.08).

Leander, 2008: 1613), is simply dismissed by others. It has, for example, been criticised for “stifling political opposition and obstructing debate rather than generating consensus”.<sup>64</sup> The government, on the other hand, argues it is “a platform for dialogue and exchange of ideas among political organizations on the country’s problems and national policies”<sup>65</sup>, a view echoed even by leaders of the country’s smallest political parties that have no representation in the Chamber of Deputies or the Senate.<sup>66</sup> The Government points out, “all political organizations constituting the forum have equal voting powers” (ibid.). Leaders of the parties represented confirm this. Also, financial resources channelled into the forum by the government are shared equally among all parties regardless of size and influence, in accordance with the law, which again points to the growing complexity of state institutions.

### *3.2.2 The annual national dialogue*

Known in the local language, Kinyarwanda, as *Inama y’Igihugu y’umushyikirano*, the two-day Annual National Dialogue held every December is one of several exercises intended to open up aspects of the government’s business to public scrutiny.<sup>67</sup> It is an obligation enshrined in the 2003 Constitution.<sup>68</sup> In addition to efforts at power sharing already described, it adds to the uniqueness of Rwanda’s political system within the Great Lakes region. It is also one of the features of the political system to which critics of the government with special interest in questions of political space and inclusivity pay little or no attention. It is therefore necessary to describe its workings in some detail, based on attendance over three years.<sup>69</sup>

It is attended by the President and members of the cabinet, members of both chambers of parliament, local government leaders, members of all registered political parties, of the Rwanda Diaspora, representatives of the private sector, diplomats representing different countries in Rwanda and representing Rwanda in other countries, religious leaders, and members of civil society and representatives of the military, police, and security agencies. Discussions focus on matters of general national interest and of concern to different groups and individuals within the country and the Diaspora. Each year, discussions include a stock taking exercise focusing on the implementation of decisions and programmes and activities identified and agreed collectively during the previous year’s meeting. Those unable to attend, whether they are in or outside the country, can follow live broadcasts of its proceedings on radio and television or via live streaming on the Internet. Alternatively they can participate in the discussions via toll-free telephone lines or transmit their views via short messaging services (SMS) and e-mail. Listeners can and do call in and criticize, complain about, or compliment officials for their work.

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<sup>64</sup> Silva-Leander, 2008:1613, citing a report by the International Crisis Group (see ICG, 2002).

<sup>65</sup> Republic of Rwanda, National Parliament, 2010: 152

<sup>66</sup> Interviews, January 2013.

<sup>67</sup> There are other processes which are also intended to render government more transparent but which are beyond the scope of this paper.

<sup>68</sup> Article 168

<sup>69</sup> I first attended this two-day event in 2008, then in 2010 and 2011.

A thousand people attended in 2010, with 70,000 following proceedings via the worldwide web. On the second day, 100,000 followed it on the web.<sup>70</sup> Some of those who called or sent text messages were concerned about unemployment, while others alleged corruption and nepotism in local government. Others mentioned poor performance in hospitals and health units, and influence peddling by leaders. Some leaders were mentioned by name in connection with specific complaints from members of the public, upon which they were called upon to react.

The 2010 dialogue was particularly important. Among members of the Diaspora who attended, over 200 had returned to Rwanda for the first time since emigrating or fleeing into exile just before or after the RPF seized power in 1994. Some had become vocal critics of the RPF and the post-genocide government since leaving the country. To open channels of communication with such members of the Diaspora, the government launched an initiative dubbed 'come and see'. Part of this campaign entailed visits by President Kagame, government officials and several members of the political, business and other elite to several countries hosting large numbers of Rwandan refugees and exiles, such as Belgium, Congo Brazaville, Zambia, and Malawi. The 'come and see' campaign had two key objectives: to encourage members of the Diaspora, regardless of why they had left the country, to visit Rwanda and gauge the prevailing situation for themselves; and to reduce the influence the government's detractors exerted over exiled members of the Diaspora through the dissemination of second- and third-hand information. Volunteers were given free air tickets and accommodation in Kigali. Upon arrival in Rwanda, they could travel wherever they wished without restriction. The impact of their visits and attendance at the dialogue became evident from the statements many made at the closing of the meeting. A common refrain was to pledge to be the government's "unpaid ambassadors" wherever they live, and to undertake to oppose whoever may want to use them to badmouth the country or undermine its security.<sup>71</sup> One has to be careful what kind of conclusions to draw from these kinds of encounters. However, they highlight the government's on-going pursuit of inclusiveness that goes beyond simply bringing political parties into the government.

### *3.2.3 Redesigning accountability*

In 2000 the government launched a decentralisation programme seeking to build upon pre-existing formal and informal participatory mechanisms. This and the achievement of the strategy's objectives are at the core of the government's efforts to steer the country away from its history of division and exclusion and its aspirations to build an inclusive society. Essential to realising the ambition of inclusiveness are *ubudehe* and *imihigo*, tools of collective action and accountability respectively.

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<sup>70</sup> Interview with Dr. Anastase Shyaka, Director, Rwanda Governance Advisory Council (December, 31, 2010).

<sup>71</sup> Karuhanga, 2010.

The objective of the initiative *ubudehe mu kurwanya ubukene*, popularly known simply as *ubudehe*, was to help address challenges Rwanda faced after the genocide. The idea is in line with action planning and derives from the age-old tradition of mutual assistance in rural areas where neighbours assist each other with tasks in agricultural fields. Under the initiative entire communities get involved in local-level anti-poverty activities conceived either by their own members acting collectively, or through the intervention of local governments or the central government in partnership with local authorities. In addition to stimulating collective action for the purposes of poverty eradication, *ubudehe* has facilitated the introduction of a system of empowerment for selected poor families, two per village, which are identified by members of the community. The intention is to enable the poor to analyse their own situation using lived experience and their stock of skills. Underlying the strategy is a desire to encourage community dialogue and strengthen local governance, accountability, transparency, and empowerment.

The concept of *imihigo* refers to performance contracts signed at different levels of the public administration system from the lowest to the national level. The initiative draws inspiration from ancient Rwandan traditions of targeting and self-evaluation. As (re)introduced by the post-genocide government, *imihigo* entails the signing of contracts among leaders at different levels of government, from the centre right through to the grassroots. They can therefore be looked at as a management strategy, strategic planning concept, or a service delivery instrument. Of significance is that the empowerment and responsabilisation of communities has been taking place within the context of a local government system that is protected from party politics. While leaders are free to belong to parties of their choice, election to office is not on the basis of competition as political-party candidates, but as individuals on the basis of their personal merit. The idea behind this is that people at the grassroots should not be influenced to vote for candidates on the basis of affiliation to any political organisation, but by their evaluation of his or her abilities.

There are indications that practice does not always tally with the aspirations of the architects of this system<sup>72</sup>. However, sources indicate that formal prohibition of political-party competition at the lower levels of local government means that, in electing leaders, voters are not necessarily driven by political party affiliation. However, it is worth investigating to establish what impact it has had on local politics and service delivery.

### **3.3 Mapping the ruling coalition**

The ruling coalition in Rwanda today cuts across ethnic and other lines and brings together actors from a wide range of social, economic and political backgrounds.

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<sup>72</sup> See, for example, Ingelaere, 2011.

### 3.3.1 *The military*<sup>73</sup>

The Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) was built around a core formerly constituting the Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA), the majority of whose officers and rank and file were descendants of mainly Tutsi who had fled Rwanda for exile just before independence and during the first decade of self-rule. Soon after seizing power the new government moved quickly to re-integrate elements of the Forces Armées Rwandaises (FAR) into the new military. Since 1994, up to 39,000 members of the FAR and militia groups, including those that returned from insurgent groups in the DRC, have joined the new army. Some have subsequently been demobilised alongside their former RPA colleagues and assisted to reintegrate back into society to start new lives as civilians.<sup>74</sup> Many ex-FAR officers now occupy important commissioned ranks within the Rwanda Defence Force.<sup>75</sup> Although to date the army's top-most leadership remain mainly Tutsi and originally RPA, with many senior officers having been born or grown up in Uganda, those who joined up later, both as fresh recruits and ex-FAR, now feature not only in junior to middle-level officer ranks, but also at senior officer level.

Nonetheless, perceived Tutsi dominance elicits criticism as evidence of the extent to which real power lies in the hands of "Ugandan Tutsi". There are, however, historical and professional reasons, both largely disregarded by critics, why the RDF has evolved in this way. Historically most of the army's top leaders were pioneers of the Rwanda Patriotic Army. Having fought their way into Rwanda and gone on to play key roles in efforts to pacify and secure the country, they have been instrumental in the country's transformation and are therefore a major reservoir of skills and experience. This, along with the emphasis placed on the imperative to adhere to the highest standards of discipline, account for the RDF's international acclaim as a well led and effective military. Critics query the absence of non-RPA officers at the highest levels of military leadership and criticise the continued occupation of many high positions by ex-RPA officers as amounting to Tutsi domination. By implication, they would like to see ex-FAR officers in such positions.

In professional terms, the RDF aspires to evolve into a full-fledged professional army in which career advancement through promotion is based strictly on merit judged on the basis of individual conduct and performance. To start retiring, redeploying or promoting officers on the grounds of their ethnicity in order to satisfy critics looking

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<sup>73</sup> The section draws significantly on formal interviews and informal conversations with military officers, ex-RPA and ex-FAR, since 2006.

<sup>74</sup> Two cases illustrate the army and government's approach to dealing with returnee officers. Current Minister for Disaster Preparedness, formerly Minister of Defence General Marcel Gatsinzi, Major General Laurent Munyakazi and Major-General Paul Rwarakabije, the former commander of rebel forces that waged a guerrilla war against the new government for some time during the 1990s, were integrated into the RDF upon their return from exile. All three were then subsequently accused by genocide survivors of genocide crimes and tried in Gacaca courts. Major-General Rwarakabije and General Gatsinzi who was based in the southern city of Butare during the genocide, were eventually acquitted on grounds of insufficient evidence against them. Meanwhile Major-General Laurent Munyakazi who had been based in Kigali was convicted and imprisoned.

<sup>75</sup> Interviews with officials at the Ministry of Defence, the Rwanda Demobilisation and Reintegration Commission, and army veterans since 2006.

for ethnic balancing would undermine these aspirations, including in the eyes of young officers whose recruitment and training emphasise the importance of personal attributes such as discipline, commitment and performance as the key determinants of the trajectory their careers will take in terms of promotion and advancement.

This is especially important in the light of the deliberate steps the military has taken to encourage all who qualify to join up. Informed sources inside and outside the RDF<sup>76</sup> suggest that increasingly the lower ranks of the military contain more Hutu than Tutsi. This, according to informed observers with past and current ties to the RDF, is as much the outcome of young Tutsi preferring not to join, or leaving the army for opportunities in other spheres, as much as it is of a deliberate policy by the government and the military to increase Hutu representation.

A major driver of these efforts is the critically important ambition to make the RDF a truly national army and, as a consequence, avoid placing responsibility for ensuring the country's security in the hands of one section of the community, as was the case under both the Kayibanda and Habyarimana regimes, which, history has shown, was a mistake. As a tool for securing the country and ensuring that the current political stability endures, the new multi-ethnic army is an important member of the ruling coalition as was the case with its predecessors. A key difference is its active efforts designed to help it evolve into a professional and politically non-partisan organ of the state.

### *3.3.2 Political parties and political elites*

As already discussed, Rwanda is a multi-party democracy, albeit one in which adversarial political contestation among political parties has been rejected in favour of consensus building designed to elicit the greatest level of cooperation between the RPF, the most dominant party, and other political organisations. Cooperation among the country's legally registered parties is built around three core values: power and responsibility sharing among political organisations with a commitment to both ruled-governed rather than clientelistic pursuit of power; anti-sectarianism; the promotion of development in pursuit of durable reconciliation and long-term political stability. Political organisations that demonstrate a propensity to want to breach this consensus are shut out via such measures as denial of permission to register. Two leaders of such organisations, Bernard Ntaganda of PS-Imberakuri and Victoire Ingabire of FDU-Inkingi, have been prosecuted and imprisoned on account of promoting sectarianism, among other charges.

In 1994, the RPF and other political parties decided to work within the framework of the Arusha Agreement but also to alter key aspects of it to enable the exclusion of the MRND and CDR on the grounds of their involvement in planning and executing the genocide. The political and military elites who fled the country ahead of the

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<sup>76</sup> Interviews 2006.



collapse of the MRND government and opted not to return continue to contest the new settlement militarily and politically.<sup>77</sup>

Also, in the late 1990s the new ruling coalition started to fracture over disagreements connected to the conduct of the then on-going insurgency concentrated mainly in the northwest (African Rights, 1998), matters of law and order, and questions over when the country would return to multi-party competition, which some elites with an eye on ethnic arithmetic felt was overdue (Reyntjens, 2004; Sebarenzi, 2009). Mounting tensions led to the exit and ejection from the government of a number of politicians and their flight, alongside some military officers, including those belonging to or aligned with the RPF, into exile.

Critics quickly drew conclusions. Some predicted the disintegration of the government and imagined a plot designed to “Tutsify” the government, despite some of those who had fled being Tutsi, including a genocide survivor whose departure became the subject of extravagant claims as evidence of a falling out between Tutsi returnees and the entire community of genocide survivors (Reyntjens, 2004). Indeed the period presented stiff challenges for the new government. However, the new coalition did not collapse as predicted. Instead, it has weathered other storms and held the country together. At the level of the political elite, therefore, Rwanda’s ruling coalition is more inclusive than in the past and, despite operating under the dominance of President Kagame, emphasises the supremacy of the law and state institutions over individual influence, status, and power. While it was rocked quite heavily by internal dissent and subsequently large numbers of defections during the late 1990s and mid-2000s, it has remained relatively cohesive and stable, presiding over arguably the most effective of post-conflict states in the Great Lakes region.

### *3.3.3 The business community and productive elites*

As with other sections of society, the genocide and the political upheavals of the late 1980s and early 1990s devastated Rwanda’s business community as some of its members were killed and others fled. The new government therefore inherited a small and much weakened community. Its rebuilding and expansion have entailed the establishment of new businesses by members of the ex-refugee community, the return of members of the pre-genocide community who had fled the country, efforts to attract foreign direct investment, and the entry into business by the Rwanda Patriotic Front and the Rwanda Defence Force (Booth and Golooba-Mutebi, 2012b). Although somewhat coloured by partial insights and an overly technocratic interpretation of the post-genocide business environment in Rwanda, analysis by Gokgur (2012) shows the extent and strength of ties among different actors in the business world, not only the Rwandan state but also the RPF and to an extent the

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<sup>77</sup> For an insight into the nature, range and scope of opposition groups in exile, see Rafti, 2004.

military. The ties point to co-investment in numerous sectors and the sharing of experience, skills, and expertise.<sup>78</sup>

Over and above direct participation by the RPF and the military in doing business, a notable peculiarity of the Rwanda business environment is the absence of corrupt patron-client ties between business and politics. Indeed, the capacity to generate its own financial resources has freed the RPF from possible dependence on members of the business community to finance its political activities. Consequently, the exchange of money for political favours that one sees in other countries, including in Rwanda's own neighbourhood, is absent. More important, it has enabled the party to channel resources into areas in which other members of the business community have shown no interest either due to lack of sufficient capital or expertise, or for sheer lack of a pioneering spirit (Booth and Golooba-Mutebi, 2012b).

Further, through its membership in the business community, the party and vicariously the government over which it presides is able to gain a fuller understanding of the challenges it faces. This may explain why, while in other countries chambers of commerce are founded by members of the business community with a view to championing their collective interests, in Rwanda the impetus for the establishment of the Private Sector Federation came from the government. These attributes of the business sector in Rwanda, it seems, combine to make for a community that has the ear of key decision makers while also being rule-bound and less prone to corruption in ways its counterpart in Uganda, for example, is not (Golooba-Mutebi and Hickey, 2013).

### *3.3.4 The media*

Rwanda has a small and weak media industry. This is the result, partly, of the effects of the genocide in which many media professionals were killed, and the exodus of refugees both before and after the post-genocide government was installed. However, the numbers of radio stations and of registered newspapers are large. There are few government newspapers and one RPF-owned daily, with limited circulation, and one public broadcaster, ORINFOR, with a single radio and television station. The vast majority of registered newspapers and radio stations are therefore privately owned. Radio stations broadcast mainly news and music. With few exceptions, they do not broadcast programmes that discuss public affairs in-depth, the kind that in countries such as Uganda and Kenya, are increasingly important channels for holding public officials to account and keeping governments on their toes. Public media and the RPF-owned *The New Times* newspaper are, by definition, supportive of government policies and positions and, far from subjecting them to critical scrutiny, merely communicate them to the reading general public.

Consequently, for critical analysis of whatever the government may be doing or planning to do, one has to look to independent print media. As one would expect in a

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<sup>78</sup> Interviews with members of the business community (2010).

developing country context such as Rwanda's with little history of free-ranging policy debates, rendered even more difficult or sensitive by the country's recent history in which media played a key role in mobilising people to participate in the genocide, relations between independent media and the government have tended to be fraught. As with many aspects of public life in post-genocide Rwanda, government-media relations are riven with controversy. However, the balance of opinion tends to tilt in favour of the general view that the post-genocide government is hostile to free media. Emblematic of this view, rehearsed without question by many commentators on government-media relations, is the one-time characterisation of President Kagame as a 'media predator' by the media rights organisation, Reporteurs Sans Frontiers.<sup>79</sup>

There are several reasons for this. First, since 1994 there have been several cases of journalists fleeing the country and seeking asylum, mainly in Western countries, on account of what they have claimed was persecution by the authorities because of their work. Others have been prosecuted for things they have written or published and been imprisoned, some times for long periods of time. There have also been cases of disappearances and deaths, the most recent death being in the run-up to the presidential elections of 2010. Some independent newspapers have also been shut down or had their publication suspended for periods of time by the once government-affiliated but now independent media regulation body, the Media High Council.

There is a tendency by human and media rights organisations, academics and media commentators, to lump all these cases and incidents together, without examining the details of each case or, where individual cases are examined, without cross-checking with several sources, to slap the government with a single charge: violator of media rights. Usually the condemnation is couched in terms that almost suggest that journalists in Rwanda ought to be above the law, regardless of the facts of each case of alleged harassment. The single-minded conviction that the government is always at fault and that journalists are blameless is captured by reactions to the death by shooting of independent journalist Ronald Rugabage in 2010. Although two suspects were arrested, charged and sentenced to prison terms, commentators continue to cite the death as if the government was responsible for it, and as if the actions taken by the police do not count.<sup>80</sup>

Also criticism of the government's record on media never mentions the independent newspapers that continue to publish and whose editors and proprietors have experienced no harassment, or even steps taken by the government to enact progressive legislation designed to create an environment for the media's self-regulation and good relations with the state. Nor do they mention the interactions between the media and the government via regular press conferences and other fora with government officials and President Kagame, where sometimes subjects for discussion include how problems faced by media should be addressed. This is not to

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<sup>79</sup> [En.rsf.org/predator-paul-kagame](http://En.rsf.org/predator-paul-kagame), 42472.html (accessed 09.05.13).

<sup>80</sup> Musoni, 2010; Kabano, 2010.

argue that state-media relations in Rwanda are without friction. Rather, it is to make the point that some commentators are guilty of sensationalism, others of jumping to conclusions, while some conveniently avoid stories, cases and incidents that would undermine their slanted analyses (Johnson, 2013). For our purposes here, however, it remains the case that overall the media are weak, with some supportive and, indeed part of, the ruling coalition, while others attempt to be independent and critical and encounter difficulties, including limitations connected with weaknesses in their own internal capacity that undermine their role as accountability watchdogs.

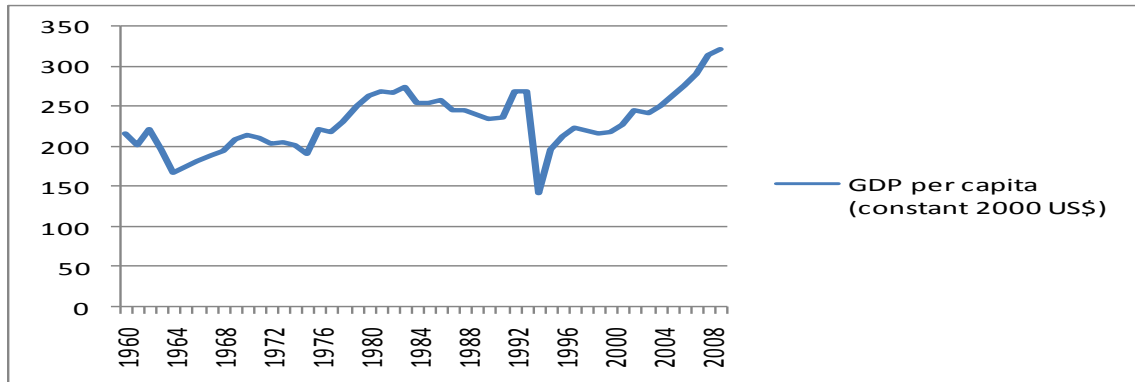
#### **4. Inclusive development under the current political settlement**

Since the end of the genocide and the crafting of the current political settlement Rwanda has transitioned through a number of phases and undertaken several policy initiatives seeking to promote social, economic and political transformation. The first phase from 1996 to 1999 was the reconstruction and rehabilitation phase. It entailed intense elite bargaining for purposes of, among other objectives, laying the ground for national reconciliation. In the second phase (2000-2005) the government focused on poverty reduction and also laid the ground for decentralisation. Currently it is engaged in implementing two major development strategies: the medium-term Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy, which is in its second phase (EDPRS 2), and long-term Vision 2020. A rapid survey of changes over the post-colonial period pre-dating the genocide is important in helping to put into perspective the scale of change that has taken place since 1994.

##### **4.1 Patterns and sources of economic growth**

High world prices for Rwanda's three main exports (coffee, tea and tin) boosted wealth after independence, raising the country to 19th from the bottom among countries in terms of per capita income in the world (UN Comtrade statistics). However, in 1985 the market for tin, the second-largest foreign-exchange earner, collapsed. Coffee prices also fell by 50 per cent in 1989, with coffee exports declining from \$144 million in 1985 to \$30 million in 1993 and weakening the government's financial position. Economic stagnation combined with high rates of population growth resulted in declining per capita GDP throughout the 1980s and 1990s (figure 2). The civil war accentuated the economic decline and despite the sharp fall in the population due to the genocide, per capita production in 1994-1996 averaged only half of the level in 1980-82. Real GDP fell by 10 per cent between 1989 and 1993, and the percentage of income held by the top 10 per cent rose from 10 per cent in 1982 to 41 per cent in 1992. Famine struck in 1987, 1989-1990, 1991, and 1993. By 1993, 86 per cent of the population was living beneath the poverty line, the highest level of poverty in the world.

Figure 2: Evolution of Rwanda's GDP per capita (1960-2008)



Source: Graphs computed from World Development Indicators, 2011.

Post-genocide Rwanda has achieved remarkable economic growth. Its GDP per capita has increased from less than US\$200 in 1994 to US\$540 in 2010 (Malunda, 2012). Between 2005 and 2009 the average annual growth rate in GDP was 8.8 per cent. At the end of post-conflict reconstruction in 2000, Rwanda registered a steady rise in both GDP and GDP per capita growth until 2008 when GDP growth declined as a result of the global economic crisis (National Bank of Rwanda, 2010).

Rwanda has a high degree of export concentration. The top five products have accounted for over 60 per cent of all exports over the last 15 years, a risky heavy reliance on a very limited number of goods. Exports are still dominated by tea, minerals and coffee even as their share of exports declined from 94.4 in 2001 to 79.12 in 2008. Between 1980 and 1989, the share of coffee, its primary export product, ranged between 70 and 95 per cent. Between 1995 and 2004, as the share of coffee fell to about 50 per cent, Rwanda closed the gap with sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2007). The next three largest export products, with growth rates of over 100 per cent, are alcoholic beverages, vegetables and non-alcoholic beverages. In 2008 they represented 5.4, 3.7 and 3.7 per cent of exports, from near zero in 2001.

Table 3: Rwanda's Manufactured Exports (2001-2008)

	Value (million)		Annual growth	Share of exports		Technological Sophistication
	2001	2008		2001	2008	
Tea and mate	16.57	125.45	29%	29.8%	36.2%	Primary
Base metal	20.89	94.32	21%	37.6%	27.3%	Resource-based
Coffee/coffee	15.01	53.87	17%	27.0%	15.6%	Primary
Alcoholic beverages	0.03	18.82	126%	0.1%	5.4%	Resource-based
Vegetables,	0.00	12.83	235%	0.0%	3.7%	Primary
Beverage non-alcohol	0.01	12.73	138%	0.0%	3.7%	Resource-based
Live animals except	0.00	3.62		0.0%	1.0%	Primary
Passenger cars etc	0.00	2.99		0.0%	0.9%	Medium-tech.
Hide/skin (ex fur) raw	0.72	2.50	17%	1.3%	0.7%	Primary
Art/collections/antique	0.07	1.67	48%	0.1%	0.5%	Other transactions
Ferrous waste/scrap	0.00	1.49		0.0%	0.4%	Resource-based
Lime/cement/constr	0.00	1.35	148%	0.0%	0.4%	Resource-based
Worn clothing etc	0.01	1.35	98%	0.0%	0.4%	Primary
Precious metal	0.00	1.26		0.0%	0.4%	Resource-based
Plastic articles	0.00	1.23		0.0%	0.4%	Low-tech.
Rolled plated m-steel	0.07	1.19	42%	0.1%	0.3%	Low-tech.
Footwear	0.01	1.02	87%	0.0%	0.3%	Low-tech.
Perfume/toilet/cosmetic	0.09	1.01	35%	0.2%	0.3%	Resource-based
Pearls/precious stones	0.00	0.96	238%	0.0%	0.3%	Resource-based
Flour/meal	0.00	0.95		0.0%	0.3%	Primary
wheat/meslin						

UN Comtrade statistics

Trade, financial and exchange rate reforms positively affected aggregate productivity in the Rwandan economy over the period 1995-2003 (Coulibaly *et al.*, 2008). Evidence of this productivity growth is shown by increases in export activity over recent years, with new exports including hides, skins, fruits, vegetables, flowers, dried pepper, cement, mineral water, and some re-exports<sup>82</sup>. Although the share of manufactured exports in total exports is growing, the growth is at a slower rate than in neighbouring countries due to the fast increase in non-manufactured exports, particularly minerals, tea and coffee. Table 3 presents the principal manufactured export products by value, share of exports and annual growth in 2001 and 2008. Table 4 shows the different measures of export concentration in Rwanda over the pre-genocide period (1970 to 1994), which started decreasing due to reforms taken after the 1994.

In 2006 the 2005 Tax Law came into force together with the Law on investment promotion. The increase in foreign direct investment (FDI) has been dramatic since 2006 when the new fiscal regime came into force. In the new fiscal regime, Rwanda embraced a market economy marked by continuation of trade reforms and liberalization of monetary and financial policies. Tariffs were reduced considerably with the average rate decreasing to 18 per cent. Liberalisation of the monetary and financial sectors led to the adoption of new currency exchange regulations, the

creation of new private commercial banks, and the privatisation of banks that had been state-owned. Current account operations (imports, exports, services) were liberalized, and some of the previous restrictions on capital flows were either reduced or eliminated. The latter included the transfer of capital and revenues related to FDI, and the allowance of free withdrawal from foreign exchange accounts in commercial banks (Kanimba, 2004).

Table 4: Different measures of export diversification in Rwanda (1980 to 2004)

Year	No. of products exported (>10,000USD)	Average Herfindhal index-5years	Share of top 5 products	Share of top 10 products	Share of top 20 products
1970	11	0.5	0.97	0.99	1
1975	21	0.43	0.97	0.99	1
1980	27	0.57	0.98	1	1
1985	41	0.59	0.96	0.99	1
1990	37	0.6	0.95	0.99	1
1995	42	0.49	0.9	0.96	0.98
2000	51	0.45	0.91	0.95	0.97
2004	46	0.35	0.94	0.96	0.99

Source: UN Comtrade SITC1 data

In addition the government prioritised the development of a good ‘soft’ environment for business in order to gain a competitive edge. Rwanda’s 58<sup>th</sup> ranking in the 2011 *Doing Business Index* is now significantly above that of the other members of the EAC. As a result of the new fiscal regime, FDI increased from \$14million in 2005 to \$173 million in 2010. FDI as a percentage of gross capital formation grew from 3.2 per cent in 2005 to 12.7 per cent in 2008. The growth in the latter is likely a sign of confidence in the economic development and political stability of Rwanda. It suggests that investors are confident of a future return on their investment.

#### 4.2 Trends in Poverty Reduction

There is a general consensus that although post-genocide Rwanda has registered sustained high growth, for many years its impact on poverty was limited. Inequality, as measured by the Gini coefficient, increased from an already high level of 0.47 in 2000/01 to 0.51 in 2005/06, undermining the poverty-reducing effect of consumption growth by lowering the growth elasticity of poverty reduction (NISR, 2007b).<sup>83</sup> A preliminary government report examining changes over the period 2001-2006 acknowledges: “because growth over this period has been accompanied by increasing inequality, this has reduced its impact on the reduction of poverty levels” (GoR, 2006a).

<sup>83</sup> Poverty Assessment for Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS).

Table 5: Gini Coefficients for Rwanda 2001 to 2006

	2001	2006
Kigali urban	0.49	0.47
Other towns	0.52	0.52
Rural areas	0.37	0.44
National	0.47	0.51

*Source: GOR, 2006a*

While urban inequality decreased, an increasing gap between the poor and the rich in the rural setting was the main cause of the increasing inequality in Rwanda. Results from the 2007-08 Rwanda Interim Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) showed that during that time, in urban areas, 59 per cent of households were in the highest wealth quintile compared with only 12 per cent of households in rural areas. By comparison, in urban areas only 9 per cent of households were in the lowest (poorest) wealth quintile, compared with 18 per cent in rural areas.

The 2006 national household survey showed that 57 per cent of the population lived below the poverty line, with 37 per cent in extreme poverty. With a growth elasticity of poverty of  $-0.40$  for the 2001-2006 period, the pro-poor character of Rwanda's economic growth remained exceptionally low despite the implementation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) policies (World Bank, 2000). Poverty incidence decreased from 60 per cent to 57 per cent between 2001 and 2006. However, this measure is in percentage terms and hides the evolutions in absolute numbers.

Given an average population growth of 2.38 per cent between 2001 and 2005, the absolute number of people living in poverty increased from 4.8 to 5.4 million over the period 2001-2006. In addition, the decrease in the percentage of overall and extreme poverty was most pronounced in urban Kigali and least marked in the rural areas. The absolute numbers of poor people also strongly increased in non-Kigali urban areas where a lot more poor people resided in 2006 in comparison with 2001. In rural areas poverty increased, with an additional 500,000 people living in poverty and 170,000 more confronted with extreme poverty (GoR, 2006a).

Nonetheless, despite the limited poverty reduction, data from poverty surveys show an improved picture in the different dimensions of poverty among the poorest segments of the Rwandan population. Surveys in 2009 by the Vision 20/20 Umurenge Programme (VUP) show that extreme income poverty among the poor decreased from 39 per cent in 2006 to 34.5 per cent in 2009, indicating a 4.5 per cent fall in poverty among the poorest segments in Rwanda. The fall in extreme income poverty was concentrated among male-headed households (from 37.4 per cent to



31.4 per cent) while female-headed poor households reported no significant fall, from 42.6 per cent to 42.2 per cent (Asselin, 2009).

In 2008 infant mortality<sup>84</sup> stood at 62 per 1000 live births.<sup>85</sup> While it had stood at 85 before the genocide, it increased dramatically during and after the tragic events and reached a peak of 107 in 2000. It then fell drastically to 85 by 2005 and further to 62 in 2008. Recent data from the Health Management Information System (HMIS) suggests that in 2010 the rate may already have fallen to 32 per 1,000 live births (RoR/Ministry of Health, 2009). In addition to child immunisation, the provision of clean water, sanitary conditions and mosquito nets are other ways in which high death rates among babies and young children are being reduced. The Ministry of Health has increased preventive measures at the community and village levels, including treatment, follow-ups, and sensitisation about family planning (Chambers and Golooba-Mutebi, 2012).

Immunisation played a role in the dramatic reductions in infant and under-five mortality. Vaccination coverage is improving with a rise in the proportion of children having all vaccinations from 76 per cent in 2000 to 80 per cent in 2007-8. The target for the proportion of children immunised against measles has almost been achieved and the rate is likely to continue to go up. By 2008 the proportion of children aged 12–23 months vaccinated against measles stood at 91 per cent (NISR, 2009: 8). For measles, this rate is adequate to break the cycle of transmission.<sup>86</sup>

There has also been a significant decrease in maternal mortality, with Rwanda making good progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target of reducing the rate from 1,300 per 1000,000 live births in 1990 to 325 in 2015. By 2005, the last year for which validated data are available, the MMR was 750. Unconfirmed figures from the Ministry of Health suggest that the MMR has declined significantly since 2005. The main reason for the improvement is an increasing number of women giving birth in a health-care facility attended by a qualified health care professional (NISR 2007b<sup>87</sup>: 30; NISR, 2006: 173). The proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel has risen, with 52 per cent of mothers now being cared for by a skilled health-care worker during delivery (NISR 2007a: 31; NISR 2009: 11).

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<sup>84</sup> The 2007 Rwanda MDG Country Report (NISR 2007b) suggested that the infant mortality rate might not be reliable due to under-reporting of neonatal deaths; however the *2007-08 Interim Demographic and Health Survey's* analysis of infant deaths found no evidence to support under-reporting or misreporting of infant deaths (RoR/MoH *et al.*, 2009).

<sup>85</sup> 28 per 1000 between birth and 1 month, 34 per 1000 between 1 month and 12 months.

<sup>86</sup> [www.immunisation.nhs.uk/about\\_immunisation/Science/Factors\\_affecting\\_herd\\_immunity](http://www.immunisation.nhs.uk/about_immunisation/Science/Factors_affecting_herd_immunity), last accessed 25<sup>th</sup> April 2010

<sup>87</sup> The rate for 1990 is the revised estimate by WHO and UNICEF, developed to enable progress towards achieving the MDG for maternal mortality to be measured. It is significantly higher than the rate of 611, which was reported in the 2007 Rwanda Country Report (NISR 2007b) and is higher than the figure used in Hogan *et al.*'s 2010 analysis. Measuring maternal mortality has been difficult because of poor quality data (Hogan *et al.*, 2010).

Although less than 25 per cent of pregnant women attend the four antenatal visits as recommended by the World Health Organisation, 96 per cent of women receive antenatal care and this varies little by economic stratum (NISR, 2009: 57). Knowledge of modern contraception methods amongst women of childbearing age and men in the same age cohort is high, with 27 per cent of women of reproductive age using modern methods of contraception (NISR, 2009: 32). As with infant and child health, maternal mortality is associated with poverty and poverty reduction is associated with improvement in the health of mothers and reduction in mortality. Protecting expectant mothers from infections and diseases, including malaria, is a priority. Available data show that 65 per cent of pregnant women sleep under mosquito nets and 55 per cent are protected against malaria during their pregnancy through taking antimalarial drugs (RoR/Ministry of Health,, 2009: 86).

In 2003 the government adopted a population policy whose main goal was to improve the quality of life of the majority of the population by slowing population growth. The rate of population growth remains high, however, not least because of low take-up of contraception, despite knowledge of modern contraception methods being high as is the desire to limit family size. The total fertility rate remains high and is above women's desired fertility level of 4.3 children (RoR/MINECOFIN, 2007).

However, two health providers in each health centre have been trained in contraception methods (RoR/Ministry of Health, 2008: 23). Knowledge of family planning is reported to be nearly universal, with 97 per cent of women and 99 per cent of married women having knowledge of at least one method of contraception. Similarly, 98 per cent of men have knowledge of at least one method of contraception and the same proportion have knowledge of at least one modern method (RoR/Ministry of Health 2009: 37-38). Knowledge of contraception methods is high for all sub-groups (age, wealth quintile, education level and residence).

The number of married women using contraception increased between 2000 and 2007, from 13 per cent using any type to 36 per cent, and from four per cent using modern forms of contraception to 27 per cent. However, this remains a long way from the target of 70 per cent by 2015. For married women the rates are higher, with 23.7 per cent of married 15-19 year olds and 34 per cent of 30-34 year olds using modern contraception (RoR/ Ministry of Health, 2009: 38).

### **4.3 Strategies of Poverty Reduction**

The post-genocide government has over the years put in place policies and measures designed to reduce and eradicate poverty and improve the quality of life of Rwandans. Here we review the better-known programmes with a national profile and the potential to have significant impact.

*Vision Umurenge Programme (VUP)* is a rural development and social protection programme. It aims to eliminate extreme poverty by 2020 through releasing the

productive capacity of the very poor. It includes public works, credit packages and direct support to the most vulnerable, and is implemented at village level using participatory methods, key among which is the afore-mentioned *ubudehe*.

*One cow per family (Girinka) programme* is a presidential initiative based on Rwanda's cattle culture. It aims at fighting poverty through distribution of cows to poor families. Poor families receive a cow each. Once it calves, the calf is given to a neighbour who is also poor. The idea is for cattle ownership to improve nutrition through milk consumption, and increase incomes from milk sales, with the manure from cow dung used to improve soil fertility and subsequently food security.

*Umurenge SACCO* is a nationwide savings scheme used to mobilise finances at the small administrative unit called *umurenge* (sector). Locals in a given sector make frequent contributions to this savings scheme and once their savings reach a given threshold, the government contributes to the scheme at sector level. Locals can then use these savings to invest in productive activities.

*Umuganda Evaluations* are procedures for evaluation of progress towards achieving the MDGs by communities themselves which provide useful information for monitoring and evaluation. Every last Saturday of the month, members of local communities take part in mandatory communal work (*umuganda*).<sup>88</sup> After communal work, information for indicative monitoring of progress towards achieving the MDGs is collected. This enables communities themselves to evaluate progress towards achieving MDGs and Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) targets in their community, raises awareness of the MDGs, and stimulates collective responsibility for improving the health and wellbeing of all members of the community. It also enables communities to put forward proposals for the more user-friendly delivery of services and the development of self-help strategies.

*Performance contracts (imihigo)* are signed at the lowest level of local government to enable the central government and local communities to hold local authorities to account for their performance in agreed EDPRS targets. As with local administration, poverty eradication efforts have as a central feature, the empowerment of citizens. Performance contracts encourage entrepreneurship and seek to promote the building of social capital. Through active participation in defining their preferences and priorities, citizens are supposed to formulate their own solutions to problems, including those that cause or perpetuate poverty.

The *Crop intensification programme (CIP)* and *land consolidation* are two of the pillars of Rwanda's Agricultural policy which is embodied in the strategic plan to transform the agricultural sector (PSTA), now in its second phase. There are four interrelated programmes: intensification and development of sustainable production

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<sup>88</sup> *Umuganda* takes place on the last Saturday in the month and all able-bodied residents under 65 years of age are expected to take part in general maintenance work in their own community.

systems; support for the professionalisation of producers; promotion of commodity chains and agribusiness development; and institutional development. Under the crop intensification programme, small farmers combine their land holdings to grow specific crops determined by the government. This programme has increased land use efficiency amidst land scarcity. However, critics argue that it may reduce opportunities for farmers to grow food for their own consumption and leave them vulnerable to crop failure and fluctuations in prices in the short run.<sup>89</sup> While the government is commended for commercialising farming and increasing productivity, there seems to be a need for clear and realistic policies to absorb the estimated 35 per cent of the rural population who as a result of the bid to commercialise, are likely to become surplus labour.

Rwanda has implemented a community-based health insurance scheme known as *mutuelles de santé*. It is meant to make curative health services affordable, increase utilisation, and ensure sustainability of financing. *Mutuelles* are community-based health groups established around voluntary, non-profit health insurance schemes for people outside the formal sector, and are used to raise revenues for curative health services. About 50 per cent of mutuelle funding comes from annual membership premiums. Households pay roughly the equivalent of US\$1.81 per person, per year. For those who are unable to pay the individual or family premium up-front, microfinance institutions provide individual loans for the purpose, to be repaid within a year of disbursement with a 15 per cent rate of interest. Donors and the government support *mutuelles* by paying fees for those that are indigent and cannot afford any level of coverage. The remaining half of *mutuelle* funding is obtained via transfers from other insurance funds, charitable organizations, NGOs, development partners, and the government.

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<sup>89</sup> See, for instance, Ansoms, 2008.

## **5. Conclusion**

Several internal and external factors have driven the recurrence of political violence in Rwanda. Key among them is the failure by political elites to forge an inclusive political settlement bringing together significant political, social and economic elites behind a broad unified or unifying agenda for the country. The source of this failure is hotly contested, with some, including the current government, blaming Belgian colonialism for sowing the seeds of disunity, while others assert that claims of pre-colonial harmony are exaggerated and not borne out by evidence. It is true, however, that the colonial government's favouritism towards Tutsi at the expense of Hutu and then its reversal and incitement of Hutu against Tutsi left a legacy of bitterness and animosity that politicians of the First and Second Republics were unable to overcome. Even then Rwanda managed to register economic and social gains that, for much of the Habyarimana period until the economic crisis of the late 1980s, enabled it to stand out among its neighbours.

In addition to the economic crisis, associated immiseration and pressure for democratisation rendered the country ripe for upheaval. The violent exclusion and forced displacement of Tutsi and other political dissidents into surrounding countries, and the subsequent withholding of their right to return, also played an important role in preparing the ground for, and causing, violent conflict. This was helped by the proliferation of regional wars from which the refugees acquired valuable military training and combat experience. Another important factor was the support Rwanda enjoyed from its international allies. A combination of lack of pressure for internal reform and the government's own determination to exclude the refugees permanently drove the country inexorably towards an armed confrontation.

After the war, in a departure from past practice, the post-genocide government opted for a political settlement bringing together the country's significant elites, that had neither planned nor executed the genocide, behind a collective vision of a new Rwanda and how it would work. Since assuming power, the government has been variously praised for the advances it has made in reconstructing the country, rebuilding the state, and improving quality of life for its citizens. In addition to establishing an inclusive political settlement in which political actors subscribing to the critically important values of non-sectarianism, relentless pursuit of socio-economic development and unwavering enforcement of rules, the government has sought actively to encourage members of the Diaspora who would like to return, to do so, albeit without making compromises on those with crimes to answer for, facing the courts of law.

Also, the government has been criticised on the grounds that it has re-enacted the discriminatory and repressive policies of its predecessors and, as a result, placed Rwanda once again on the road to future ethnic violence. Also, it is accused of violating basic freedoms, including those pertaining to free speech and expression. Much of this criticism, however, disregards the fast-changing nature of the Rwandan context and the changes that occurred as a result. It largely applies to the early post-

genocide period when the government was still struggling to find its feet and grappling with the challenges of consolidating its power and authority.

One important question that this exploration of Rwanda's post-genocide political settlement has not addressed adequately is what impact it has had on the lives of ordinary Rwandans, especially the poor and vulnerable. This question calls for focused research on how the settlement has shaped efforts to transform sectors with a direct bearing on the day-to-day existence of the ordinary Rwandan, such as the agricultural sector, especially the overwhelmingly dominant smallholder farming, and also the health and education sectors with regard to service provision in primary health care and primary education.

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## **Appendix 1: Suggestions for ESID Research in Rwanda**

### **Programme 2: Politics of Accumulation**

To what extent and in what ways has the over-arching political settlement, and the dynamics therein, shaped the efforts directed at the pursuit of agricultural transformation, e.g. the transformation of smallholder agriculture from almost purely subsistence to market-driven?

### **Programme 3: Politics of Redistribution through Social Provisioning**

To what extent and in what ways has the over-arching political settlement, and the dynamics therein, shaped the delivery of goods in the social sectors both in terms of volume and quality, e.g. health, education?

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