



Amnesty, Reintegration, and Reconciliation in RWANDA

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IMAGINE EVERY MAN, woman, and child in an American city of 781,000 brutally murdered in four months, the victims mostly hacked to death with machetes. In 1994, Rwanda, which lies at the crossroads of the Great Lakes Region of central Africa, experienced murder on such a scale—a genocidal frenzy. The following discussion examines what conditions could possibly set off such a horrific slaughter and how the country has attempted to recover from the calamity.

Until 6 April 1994, few people in the world knew about Rwanda or its rich history. Even as the slaughter occurred, the world knew little of the event, or that the major players in Rwanda’s internecine holocaust lived well beyond Rwandan borders. The country’s colonizers, Belgium and Germany, and world powers such as the United States and France helped create the conditions for genocide as much as the Hutus and Tutsis themselves did.

A Legacy of Hatred

Rwanda was born of European colonialism. The calculated policies of Belgium, Germany, and France divided Rwanda against itself for easier colonial rule. These policies of 19th century rule had a lasting effect and are currently the major reasons for obstacles to 21st century reconciliation and stability.

Different theories suggest origins for traditions that divide the Hutus from the Tutsis, but discernable facts prove that Hutus and Tutsis are ethnically and anthropologically the same. They have always shared the same language, territories, traditions, and taboos. Moreover, Hutus could (and still can) become Tutsis by marriage or the procurement of wealth. The arbitrary identity of Tutsi or Hutu could change based on the number of cattle a person owned. Classically, Hutus have been farmers and Tutsis have been herdsmen, a divide as ancient as the mythology of Cain and Abel.¹

This Hutu-Tutsi societal division thrived as a colonial caste system based on folklore and perpetrated through political policies.² Every European country responsible for the colonial rule of Rwanda exploited the so called “anthropology” of Hutuism and Tutsism for economic purposes. The Belgians, for instance, designated Tutsis as the administrators and Hutus as the workers under their rule.³ Two other factors accentuated this artificial distinction: the Belgian requirement that Hutus and Tutsis carry identification cards denoting them as such and the “Hamitic Theory” emphasized by the Hutus when they subsequently came to power in 1959.⁴

These societal distinctions led to official and unofficial bigotry before and after Rwandan independence. Before independence, the colonial departments

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PHOTO: Aftermath of Rwandan Genocide photo taken in 2001 during the visit of U.S. Representative Frank Wolf. Original caption states: Deep gashes delivered by the killers are visible in the skulls that fill one room at the Murambi School. (DOD)

governed through a Tutsi hierarchy. After independence in 1959, international support switched to the Hutus. During the entire period of Hutu governance, Tutsis became the scapegoats for all failed policies and suffered decreased educational opportunities, segregation from government positions, removal from positions of influence as teachers and judges, and massacre at the hands of the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR).⁵

Resentment from the societal divide has always threatened Rwanda's security environment with instability. From a political standpoint, the rift has led to the perceptions of nepotism in government positions, biases in the adjudication of justice, and divisive attitudes about governmental re-education of both Hutus and Tutsis. These conditions undermined efforts of any tribe or party that came to power. War and the cataclysmic genocide subsequently had a devastating effect on the Rwandan economy, totally destroying the country's basic industry, civil services, and key infrastructure.

Only by overcoming segregation and its humiliating effects will Rwanda become a functional, stable country. Progress will require internal and external security from a functioning government not based on a caste system. Recovery will also mean revitalizing an integrated economy through international funding and cooperation. The Rwandan government will have to develop political policies that encourage economic renewal for Hutus and Tutsis and a security apparatus that ensures the success of both. Full reconciliation will not be possible without these measures.

Today, Rwanda is rebuilding to this end, establishing new civil-support apparatuses, and trying to reconcile populations who have regarded themselves more as Hutus and Tutsis than as Rwandans. As

with conflict resolution case studies in other *Military Review* articles in this series, foundations for progressive change rest in the societal framework: the political, security, and economic policies forged by the country in transition.

In Rwanda's case, the three-part process of amnesty, reintegration, and reconciliation (AR2)—developed as a rubric for this series of articles—fits only roughly in helping understand what has so far transpired. For instance, at present, there is no amnesty in Rwanda, only a “victor's justice.” Theoretically, the country must have some form of amnesty to achieve reconciliation. As the AR2 model suggests it would, lack of amnesty has led to a retributive form of justice that inhibits reintegration and eventual reconciliation. Worse still, reconciliation in this case—not only forgiveness but also the belief that all Rwandans can contribute to Rwanda's success regardless of their social origins or caste—will mean overcoming hundreds of years of fear and ignorance created by forced segregation undergirded by policy, myth, and folklore. Such conditions present a formidable challenge to AR2. And without AR2, Rwanda will face bleak prospects in the future, which could include another civil war.



AP Photo, Jean-Marc Bouju

A pickup truck on the road near Rugende, some five miles east of Kigali, carries Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) rebels to front line positions closer to the Rwandan capital of Kigali, 14 May 1994.

War, Assassinations, and Genocide

The Rwandan civil war lasting from 1990 until August 1993 stemmed from the inability of Tutsis and Hutus to form a mutually nurturing society that benefited all Rwandans. Rwandan Government Forces (FAR), representing the politically and socially dominant Hutus, and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) (essentially exiled Tutsi rebels) fought a 4-year war. Rwanda was on the verge of reconciliation from this struggle via the Arusha Accords when the country collapsed into the final throes of civil war and genocide in April 1994.

In August 1993, when regional and international actors arranged detailed peace negotiations to be enforced by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), a brokered reconciliation effort began. From October 1993 until April 1994, there was little movement towards peace and reconciliation, or implementation of the Arusha Accords. Failures by both the Hutu-led government of President Juvenal Habyarimana and the RPF

bogged down the comprehensive peace plan.⁶ The Secretary General of the United Nations, as well as leaders of African regional neighbors (particularly Tanzania), made a concerted effort to put the peace initiative back on track.

During this effort, Rwanda's President Habyarimana flew to Dar-es-Salaam, Burundi, to meet with other signatories of the accords. On his return flight, Hutu extremists in the Presidential Guard shot down his plane on its approach to Rwanda's capital city, Kigali.⁷ This assassination ignited one of history's worst genocides.

Colonel Theoneste Bagosora, the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defense, seized power. Although Bagosora did not ascend to the presidency of Rwanda, his machinations led to the murder of Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana. In the first hours after the downing of Habyarimana's plane, Bagosora began consolidating Hutu-extremist power by proscribing key Tutsi and moderate-Hutu leaders. Within 48 hours, Bagosora replaced the entire government.⁸ Bagosora was able to whip the FAR and local militias, known as *interahamwe*, into a frenzy bent on mass extermination of all Tutsis.

Almost immediately, Major General Paul Kagame of the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA), the military arm of the RPF, began an offensive to halt the murderous FAR attacks on the civilian population. Kagame made his intentions known by remaining in constant contact with the UNAMIR force commander, Canadian General Romeo Dallaire. Kagame's RPA intended to capture Kigali and end the Tutsi slaughter. The RPA alone was responsible for ending the Rwandan genocide. From their offensive on 8 April 1994 until the fall of Kigali on 4 July 1994, Kagame's forces handily defeated the numerically superior FAR.⁹

However, during these four months, Hutu extremists massacred nearly one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus, with very little intervention from the international community. The UNAMIR force was militarily incapable of stopping the rampaging FAR. It lacked both the United Nations mandate to act as an armed reconciler and the military force structure to accomplish such a daunting task. Furthermore, on 21 April 1994, the UN Security Council (UNSC) amazingly voted to reduce the UNAMIR's mandate and force structure, further

WANTED FOR GENOCIDE

FELICIEN KABUGA AUGUSTIN BIZIMANA JEAN-BAPTISTE GATETE AUGUSTIN BIZIMUNGU THARCISSE RENZAHU

ARRESTED ARRESTED ARRESTED

DELPHONSE PRTEGEYINKA AUGUSTIN NDIRABITWE DELPHONSE NZEYIMANA PROTAS MURAVYA CALIXTE NZABONIMANA

YUSUF JOHN MUNYAKAYO RYANDIKAYO CHARLES SIKUBWABO ALOYUS NDIRIMBATI

INDICTED

Rewards of up to U.S. \$5,000,000 are offered for information that leads to the arrest of persons indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda for serious violations of international humanitarian law and their transfer to Tribunal custody. If you have information about any of the above persons, please contact Rewards for Justice through the telephone number or email below.

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Poster for fugitives wanted for the Rwandan genocide made by the U.S. Government for the Rewards for Justice program to assist the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, 20 February 2003.

weakening its capability to stop the genocide. In May 1994, the UNSC reversed itself, increased the UN mandate, and increased the troop strength to 5,500 in order to help restore peace, but it was already too late.¹⁰ The genocide did not end until the RPA achieved a fragile peace with the fall of Kigali and the routing of the remaining FAR forces to Zaire in July 1994.

Even with the RPA's victory, Rwanda faced complex internal, external, and regional security problems. Reintegration and reconciliation required a degree of security not then found in Rwanda. Indeed, the Hutu-Tutsi conflict spilled into the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi. The challenges of securing Rwanda thus began immediately after the fall of Kigali in July 1994. Hundreds of thousands of Hutu Rwandans fled into neighboring Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of Congo. Intermingled with the fleeing civilians were the interahamwe, the Hutu militia that had carried out most of the genocide. The exodus also included key FAR leaders, and 20,000 FAR soldiers with 62 armored vehicles and numerous heavy weapons.¹¹

Other Hutu extremists escaped into a security zone created during Operation Turquoise. In June 1994, the French government declared it would set up a "safe zone" in the southwest of Rwanda. On 20 June, France introduced a draft resolution to the UNSC that authorized the French-led force for a two-month mandate. After two days of consultations and the personal approval of the UN Secretary General, the Security Council adopted the draft as UNSC resolution 929. Operation Turquoise began on 23 June 1994 when a force of 2,550 French and approximately 500 African troops from Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Chad, Egypt, Niger, and the Republic of the Congo entered Rwanda. They established a safe zone (known as Zone Turquoise) that comprised a fifth of the country. This action largely stopped the mass killings; however, several smaller-scale Hutu operations to kill Tutsis in the zone continued. The UN force left when its mandate expired on 21 August.

For approximately the next two years, Hutu forces launched attacks into Rwanda against the RPA. Finally, the RPA allied with the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL) and counterattacked into Zaire, raising the ire of the international community but

effectively securing Rwanda's western border. The RPA incursion also led to the Zaire government's fall and a UN Mission that secured the Zaire-Rwandan border.¹²

Continuing the conflict into Zaire placed enormous strain on the RPA. Already stretched thin by casualties from four years of fighting and conducting the campaign to seize Kigali and operations to secure the western Rwandan border, the RPA had to police Rwanda, secure internally displaced persons, and guard the overcrowded prison systems. Beset with untrained volunteers and expatriates, and no longer the well-trained, disciplined force that had achieved victory over the FAR, the RPA began seeking revenge for the genocide.¹³



A view of the Kibumba refugee camp. An estimated 1.2 million Rwandan refugees fled to Zaire after a civil war erupted in their country, August 1994.

The RPA's incursion into Zaire had drawn the Great Lakes Region states into the fighting, but it all seemed to end with the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement on 10 July 1999. The DRC, Rwanda, Angola, Namibia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe agreed to end the conflict.¹⁴ The Lusaka Agreement failed within months of its implementation however, as fighting ignited again. The struggle only ended later in 2002 with the signing of the Pretoria Agreement.¹⁵

By then, hatred between Hutus and Tutsis had magnified, having festered in the 12 years of armed conflict. Thoughts of amnesty and reconciliation were unimaginable. Rwandans still faced cross-border attacks from Hutu insurgents despite the presence of the largest on-going peacekeeping mission on record, the United Nations Mission in the DRC. Facing constant threats to their security, Tutsis felt no sympathy for Hutus displaced beyond Rwanda's borders or for Hutu citizens in Rwanda. Lack of empathy and inability to forgive their enemies for the genocide persisted after the Pretoria Agreement. And although Rwanda had achieved a ceasefire, the social divisions between Hutus and Tutsis continued to make an offer of amnesty out of the question.

Political Hurdles to Reconciliation

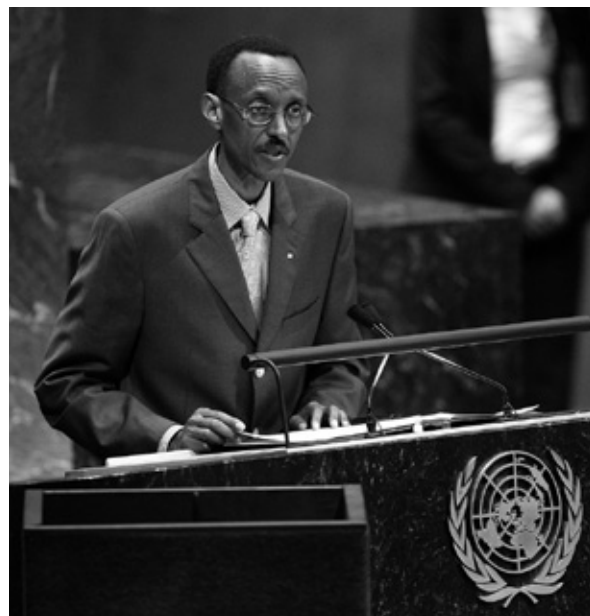
After 12 years of armed conflict and attempts to gain international recognition, Rwanda is finally implementing policies allowing reconciliation. The Rwandan Patriotic Front placed many of its military leaders in government leadership positions to stabilize the country, restore infrastructure, and bring the perpetrators of genocide to justice.

Rwanda is ostensibly a democracy with the RPF as the government. (Rwanda moved from being an authoritarian to a semi-authoritarian state after holding elections in 2003.) Like the former Hutu regimes, the RPF killed or exiled its adversaries. Currently, political parties with views contrary to those of the RPF, such as the Democratic Republican Movement, are said to have a "genocidal ideology" or are seen as threats to state security and have been disbanded. Tutsis, and a smattering of Hutu moderates that ascribe to the political and ideological beliefs of the Tutsis, make up the current regime led by President Paul Kagame.¹⁶ The authoritarian/semi-authoritarian path gives the

government great latitude to implement two major policies for reconciliation and reintegration—the *gacaca* (grassroots) courts and the *ingando* camps. These institutions have replaced the international community's initial attempt to implement justice for the Rwandan genocide.

Gacaca courts. Perhaps Rwandan reconciliation began in November 1994 with UN Security Council Resolution 955, which implemented the International Tribunal for Rwanda to prosecute crimes from the genocide.¹⁷ The tribunal was supposed to bring the interahamwe to justice. However, when many of those convicted faced execution, the retributive justice of the tribunals further widened Rwanda's societal divide. In addition, given the large number of persons charged with crimes, experts estimated that the international tribunal process would require almost a century of adjudication to complete. As a result, the Rwandan government introduced the *gacaca* tribal justice courts to speed up the process and to deliver restorative justice.¹⁸

The *gacaca* court system placed the power of reconciliation with the people. Local populations elected the judges of the courts. After a short training period, during which judges received instruction on types of genocidal crimes, punishment, and how to interpret the laws, local communities



Paul Kagame, President of the Rwandese Republic, addresses the general debate of the 62d session of the General Assembly at UN headquarters in New York, 27 September 2007.

UN Photo, Marco Casiro

could begin implementing their gacaca courts. The genocide law passed in 1996 determined four levels of interahamwe:

- Planners, organizers, and leaders of the genocide.
 - People guilty of voluntary homicide.
 - People who committed violent acts without intent to kill.
 - People who committed crimes against property.
- Gacaca courts could adjudicate all but the highest level of interahamwe.¹⁹

The gacaca courts lightened the burden on Rwanda's traditional court system and began a kind of low-level reconciliation within Rwandan communities by meting out punishments ranging from community service to life imprisonment.

Although innovative, the gacaca system has its drawbacks. When accused persons confess to committing acts of genocide, they must meet three criteria to gain their freedom. First, they must give the court all information about the crime they committed. Second, they must apologize to those against whom they committed the crime. Third, they must implicate their co-conspirators in the crime. The final requirement creates the possibilities of false accusations and acts of revenge that could slow the reconciliation process. Even so, the gacaca system is the best vehicle to achieve reconciliation without further aggravating the societal rift that has long divided the Rwandan people.

Ingando camps. Another government policy to heal the rift in Rwandan society is the policy of ingando, or solidarity camps, aimed at illuminating Rwandans about their history, bringing them together as one people, and indoctrinating them in the principles and ideologies of the Rwandan Patriotic Front. The ingando program is for all members of Rwandan society, from former soldiers of the Hutu regime to prostitutes to gacaca judges. Its goal is to make Rwandans identify themselves as Rwandans instead of as Hutus or Tutsis. The program seeks to wipe out the Hutu-Tutsi caste system in Rwandan society. Rwanda's public education system teaches ingando principles at all levels of education. While ingando is well intentioned, it has several shortfalls. It does not acknowledge all of Rwanda's history, it identifies colonialism as the root of Rwanda's societal division, and it has characteristics that tempt some to compare it to Marxist-Leninist indoctrination.²⁰

The goal of ingando camps is to ensure that all members of Rwandan society have upward mobility and that identifying labels based on a caste system do not hamper their aspirations. If the program achieves its goal, it could change the country's future. By allowing all members of society to compete equally regardless of their previously assigned or inherited social caste, Rwanda will be able to grow and compete economically with other countries on the African continent.

Economics and Reconciliation

The greatest international aid to Rwanda has come in the form of economic assistance. At the focal point of the international aid is the World Bank, which funds the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP):

MDRP complements national and regional peace initiatives, providing vital support for the social and economic reintegration of ex-combatants. It provides comprehensive support for demobilization and reintegration by helping establish standard approaches throughout the region, coordinating partner initiatives, and providing financial and technical assistance in the demobilization, reinsertion, and reintegration of ex-combatants.²¹

The MDRP is vital to Rwandan reintegration and reconciliation. It provides needed financial support to critical programs that will enable Rwanda to reconcile itself with the 12 years of conflict it endured.

MDRP has four objectives in Rwanda:

- Demobilize an estimated 36,000 ex-combatants from the RPF and other armed groups and support their transition to civilian life.
- Support the repatriation of ex-FAR in the spirit of the Arusha Agreement.
- Support the social and economic reintegration of all demobilized ex-combatants who remain socioeconomically vulnerable.
- Facilitate the reallocation of government expenditures from defense to the social and economic sectors.²²

Founded in 2002 by the World Bank, the MDRP coordinates funding, but the funds come from a multitude of sources. It also provides expertise to help rebuild Rwanda's government and economic infrastructure. By integrating 10 different UN programs, the World Food Program, the International Labor Organization, the European Union,



MDRP Secretariat, Harald Hinkel

Demobilization of FDLR combatants (FDLR: forces démocratique de la libération du Rwanda), 2005.

the African Union, and the Food and Agriculture Organization, the MDRP is helping Rwanda solve many economic problems with expertise rivaling that of developed nations.²³

The MDRP is thus bringing about change in Rwanda. By reconciling and reintegrating ex-combatants—whose numbers include most of Rwanda’s male population—the MDRP is helping build a country that observes the rule of law, contributes economically to the region, and respects its neighbors. With economic progress, Rwanda could become a stalwart of stability in the Great Lakes region of Africa.

Building a New Rwanda

Amnesty, reintegration, and reconciliation are conceptual tools for clearing centuries of moral debris from the Rwandan societal landscape. One of the RPF’s failures was its inability to forgive the Hutus and grant them amnesty. Because of the genocide’s ferocity and the ensuing civil war, the RPF had to begin reconciliation in 2002 without granting amnesty. The RPF also has not acknowledged facts pointing to the illegal actions of some members of the RPA during the conflict and the possible need to grant amnesty to them as well.

The failure to grant amnesty has mired the reconciliation process. Despite the international tribunals, the gacaca courts, and the ingando camps, an undercurrent of hatred still exists between Hutus and Tutsis. This hatred, coupled with the semi-authoritarian regime, could lead to another humanitarian crisis in Rwanda.

The policies of the current regime neither include nor forgive Hutus. They do not recognize that throughout the civil war both sides committed atrocities against each other, and one way to overcome the cyclic legacy of those crimes is to forgive the perpetrators and grant them amnesty. Rwandans have taken great strides in the last five years, but they still have a long way to go to complete reintegration and reconciliation.

Throughout its history, Rwanda has been divided. Only a true AR2 process can pull Rwanda out of a downward spiral and make it a viable member of the international community. For that to happen, Rwanda must have an amnesty that all members of society accept.

A government policy of amnesty is only half the solution. The people of Rwanda must embrace that policy. From amnesty, the roots of reconciliation and reintegration can grow, beginning the stabilization of Rwanda for future generations. **MR**

NOTES

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