

**'MASTERING THE GENOCIDE NARRATIVE': AN ANALYSIS OF THE  
RWANDAN PATRIOTIC FRONT'S OFFICIAL NARRATIVE OF THE  
RWANDAN GENOCIDE**

by Edward Jeremy

MPhil. by coursework and dissertation (Justice and Transformation)

University of Cape Town

Thesis co-supervisors:

Prof. Annette Seegers

Prof. André du Toit

JRMEDW001/1334896

University of Cape Town

Faculty of Humanities

Department of Political Studies

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### **Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Research Question	p. 4
1.2 Definitions	p. 5
1.3 The Literature on the Rwandan Genocide, the RPF and its Official Narrative	p. 5
1.4 Research Design	p. 7
1.5 Methodology	p. 8
1.6 Chapter Outline	p. 9

### **Chapter 2: ANALYSING OFFICIAL NARRATIVES OF GENOCIDE**

2.1 Themes of Genocide-Narratives	p. 10
2.1.1 Content	p. 10
2.1.2 Authors	p. 11
2.1.3 Utility	p. 11
2.2 Israeli Governments and the Shoah-Narrative	p. 12
2.2.1 The Shoah Narrative: From 1945 to the early 1960s	p. 12
2.2.2 The Shoah Narrative after the Eichmann Trial (1961)	p. 15
2.3 The Armenian Genocide	p. 17
2.3.1 Turkish Governments and the Armenian Genocide	p. 17
2.3.2 The Armenian Republic Government and the Armenian Genocide	p. 19
2.4 The Namibian Government and the Herero Genocide	p. 20
2.4.1 An Emerging Herero Narrative?	p. 22
2.5 Conclusion and Comparative Observations	p. 23
2.6 Analytical Framework	p. 26

### **Chapter 3: THE CONTEXT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RWANDAN GOVERNMENT'S OFFICIAL GENOCIDE NARRATIVE**

3.1 The Post-War Context of the Development of the Genocide Narrative	p. 27
3.2 The Rwandan Government's Nation-Building Project	p. 29

#### **Chapter 4: ANALYSIS OF THE RWANDAN PATRIOTIC FRONT'S OFFICIAL NARRATIVE OF THE RWANDAN GENOCIDE IN 1994**

- 4.1 The Official Narrative of the Colonial Era and the Pre-History to the Genocide in 1994 p. 33
- 4.2 The RPF's 'War of Liberation' p. 34
- 4.3 The Genocide p. 36

#### **Chapter 5: CONTESTATION: THE RWANDAN GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSES TO CHALLENGES TO ITS OFFICIAL NARRATIVE**

- 5.1 Responding to Domestic Challenges p. 40
- 5.2 Responding to International Challenges p. 42
- 5.2.1 Manipulation of International Guilt and Shame p. 42
- 5.2.2 Political Pressure on the International Community p. 43
- 5.2.3 Cultural Elites p. 44

#### **Chapter 6: HOW THE OFFICIAL NARRATIVE IS BOUND UP WITH THE RPF GOVERNMENT'S AIMS AND OBJECTIVES AND SERVES TO JUSTIFY ITS POLITICAL ACTIONS AND POLICIES**

- 6.1 The RPF's Right to Rule p. 46
- 6.2 Justification of the RPF's Nation-building Policies p. 48

#### **Chapter 7: CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 The Context of the Construction of the Genocide Narrative p. 51
- 7.2 The Content of the Rwandan Government's Official Narrative of the Genocide p. 52
- 7.3 Contestation: The Rwandan Government's Response to Challenges to its Official Narrative p. 53
- 7.4 How the Official Narrative is Bound Up with the RPF Government's Aims and Objectives and Serves to Justify its Political Actions and Policies p. 54
- 7.5 Comparative Observations p. 55
- 7.6 Implications p. 56

#### **BIBLIOGRAPHY p. 57**

# 'Mastering the Genocide Narrative': An Analysis of the Rwandan Patriotic Front's Official Narrative of the Rwandan Genocide

## Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research Question

During a one hundred day period beginning on 7 April 1994, between five hundred thousand and a million civilians, overwhelmingly Tutsi, were murdered in Rwanda by Hutu extremists (Des Forges 1999, 15). These killings were ended on 18 July 1994, following the capture of the Rwandan capital Kigali on 4 July 1994 by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (the RPF), a rebel group who had been fighting against the Rwanda government since invading from Uganda on 1 October 1990 (Des Forges 1999, 3, 13 and 302). The RPF is now Rwanda's ruling political party, and its then commander, Paul Kagame, is Rwanda's president.

Today many scholars see the RPF Government as a repressive regime (Reyntjens 2010, 1-3). Kagame himself has been described as "unapologetically authoritarian" (Gourevitch 2009, 1). This repression has been justified by the RPF, and tolerated by the international community, for a number of reasons:

One reason is that the RPF's developmental achievements create moral standing. Since 1994, Rwanda has come to be considered "an island of stability in a volatile region" (Roth 2009, 1). During this period its economy has been one of the fastest growing in Africa and some already consider Rwanda as the Singapore of Sub-Saharan Africa (Dickinson 2009, 1). Another reason is that the observers from outside Rwanda have pro-RPF sympathies, in part encouraged by the growing moralism in world politics and guilt over what the international community had failed to do in 1994.

The RPF itself has made a spirited claim of moral superiority, largely based on the moral status of the victims of the genocide in 1994 (Kagame 2008, xxiii, 2009a). The RPF presents itself as a bulwark against future violence: it is Rwanda's "morally pure", post genocide spiritual guardian and protector (Pottier 2002, 3). Yet the RPF's purported moral superiority is predicated on a series of highly questionable assumptions and representations. Further, the significance of these representations goes well beyond respect for past victims; Hintjens, for example, has claimed that the RPF's official version of past events is "constantly being reinterpreted in light of current political priorities" (Hintjens 2008, 79). This leads to the question:

***How, and to what Political Ends, has the Rwandan Government constructed a Narrative of the Rwandan Genocide?***

The aim of this question is to identify the relevant facts about the Rwandan Government's construction of their narrative about the Rwandan genocide.

## 1.2 Definitions

A narrative is here understood as “an account of events occurring over time” (Bruner 1991, 6). A narrative is not necessarily factually accurate; but a narrative can be interesting for how it construes events. Narratives tend to take but an “ostensive reference [to] particular happenings” (Bruner 1991, 6).

An official narrative is here defined as a narrative consistently put forward by a government as the authoritative narrative of one or a set of events which is for public consumption (be it domestic or international). The narrative may be put forward by a government itself or a government may appropriate or endorse non-government narratives.

A national liberation narrative is here defined as a liberating and emancipatory type narrative, usually employed (by the victors) in the contexts of anti-colonialist or post colonialism struggles or in the context of a successful struggle against oppression of a national minority.

The term genocide was coined by the lawyer and academic Raphael Lemkin in 1944. It is a hybrid of the Greek “geno” (meaning “race”) and the Latin “cide” (from “caedere” i.e. “killing”). The term was first formally used in international law in the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (the “Convention”). Article II of the Convention provides a legal definition of genocide, listing certain acts which would amount to genocide if committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. While this definition is authoritative in the context of international law, genocide is not only a legal concept. Social scientists offer alternative definitions, for example, Helen Fein offers a sociological perspective on the definition of genocide (Fein, 2002 pp. 74-90) and Leo Kuper argues that political groups should be included amongst the list of protected groups in the Convention (Kuper, 1983, p. 67).

Here the term genocide refers to the intentional destruction of a national, ethnic, racial or religious group of people, in conformity with the legal definition of the term.

## 1.3 The Literature on the Rwandan Genocide, the RPF and its Official Narrative

There is a wealth of literature on modern day Rwanda and the genocide in 1994, including official accounts from the Rwandan Government and President Kagame, journalistic accounts, scholarly works, interviews with killers and victims, reports by human rights organisations and government bodies and documentation generated by the United Nations’ International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. Literature that directly considers the RPF’s official narrative of the genocide itself is far less extensive.

In terms of general overviews of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, Alison Des Forges’ *Leave None To Tell The Story* is considered by many to be a definitive work (Des Forges 1999). Of particular relevance to this thesis is the fact that Des Forges dealt with all human rights violations committed in Rwanda, including the human rights abuses committed by the RPF before, during, and after the genocide, and thus, as Lemarchand comments, Des Forges “also sees the other side of the genocidal coin” (Lemarchand 2008, 2). Des Forges’ criticism of the RPF is typical of the growing realisation since 1994 that the RPF is not the ‘White

Knights' that many academics had taken it to be and that its official narrative portrays it to be. For example, Gerard Prunier revised his original book *The Rwanda Crisis* to include an additional chapter called "Living in a Broken World" which contained a critical assessment of the RPF's first two years in government (Prunier 1997).

The historical context of the genocide, and the interplay between ethnicity and history, are of vital importance to the RPF's official narrative, which, as will be discussed in Chapter 4, portrays primordial ethnic distinctions within Rwanda as a prime motivating factor for conflicts within Rwanda and in particular, the genocide in 1994. In the context of Rwanda, Newbury and Newbury take a constructivist (rather than a primordialist or instrumentalist) approach to ethnicity, arguing that "it is important to understand ethnic identity as a historical product, not as an essentialist given or a political fabrication; both the internal components and the interrelations among ethnic categories vary over time" (Newbury and Newbury 1999, 313 and Newbury 1995). The significance of ethnicity within Rwanda, and the way that it is depicted in the RPF's official narrative, is discussed in Chapter 4 below.

A significant though controversial contribution to the question of ethnicity in Rwanda is Mahmood Mamdani's *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism and Genocide in Rwanda* (Mamdani 2002). Mamdani focuses on what he considers to be the politically and historically constructed identities of Hutu and Tutsi, and in this way he does consider various official narratives before 1994. He believes that the failure to transcend these identities is at the heart of what he refers to as a "crisis of citizenship" in post-colonial Africa (Mamdani 2002, 160). Mamdani argues that to break the stranglehold of 'Hutu Power' and 'Tutsi Power' on Rwanda's politics (and by implication, the cycle of violence), the truth of the genocide, and the truth of mass killings in Rwanda must be put into a proper historical context (Mamdani 2002, 160). This would mean recognising this violence as the outcome of the Hutu Power's reaction to an impending loss of a political power struggle, which would require viewing Hutu and Tutsi as political identities and thus seeing Rwanda's main problem as one of political power (Mamdani 2002, 34). In this way, Mamdani is concerned with how the past is represented in the official narrative of the Rwandan Government. Mamdani also offers insights into the background of the RPF, and provides context to the RPF's invasion of Rwanda from Uganda in 1990.

In the controversially titled article, "Provoking Genocide: A Revised History of the Rwandan Patriotic Front", Alan Kuperman suggests that the RPF made a significant contribution to the conditions that resulted in the genocide in 1994. On the basis of interviews with a series of high ranking RPF officers and former government officials, he suggests that the RPF knew that their struggle for power might provoke a retaliatory genocide, but considered this an acceptable price to pay for achieving their aims (Kuperman 2004).

Rene Lemarchand and Helen Hintjens have both considered genocide memory in Rwanda (Lemarchand 2008, Hintjens 2008). Lemarchand considers how the genocide has been remembered in Rwanda and in particular how elites have been forced to remember it. Lemarchand considers the RPF's decision in 2002 to ban the use of the labels "Hutu" and "Tutsi" in public discourse as dangerous (Lemarchand 2008, 75). Hintjens disagrees, and instead welcomes this as an attempt to overcome what she considers to be divisive racial

and ethnic stereotypes in Rwanda (Hintjens 2008, 98-99). Hintjens is however very critical of other areas of RPF's official policies, pointing out that the "RPF-dominated government's version of the genocide is that almost all Hutu benefited, or in some way stood to benefit from the event" (Hintjens 2008, 87). She is critical of the 'globalising' of the guilt of the Hutu in Rwanda in this way (Hintjens 2008, 89).

Johan Pottier's *Re-imagining Rwanda* sought to "dislodge and (re)contextualise the simplifying narratives" of Rwanda and its history (Pottier 2002, 202). He considers the manner in which the RPF enlisted "instant experts" to authentic a new version of Rwandan history to demonstrate "how beautifully integrated Rwanda-without-the-white-man had been" (Pottier 2002, 204). Pottier argues for a more nuanced account of Rwanda's past. Until such time, he argues that Rwanda will remain trapped in the official narrative that legitimates the use of violence (Pottier 2002, 207). Also concerned with the narratives of recent Rwandan history, Nigel Eltringham's *Accounting for Horror* (Eltringham 2004) looks at what he considers the limitation of the conventional narratives of Rwandan history. Rejecting absolutist narratives, Eltringham argues for more sophisticated accounts of Rwanda's past.

Lars Waldorf, a former Human Rights Watch staffer in Rwanda, writes about the current media climate in Rwanda in *The Media and The Rwanda Genocide* (Waldorf 2007). He describes how an authoritarian RPF regime in Rwanda continues to justify propaganda and censorship as a necessary safeguard against the risk of a return to genocide (Waldorf 2007, 404).

There is also literature that considers the narrative of recent Rwandan history offered by certain of those from Rwanda's Hutu community. Tom Ndahiro analyses what he considers attempts by the Hutu political party Rassemblement Republicain Pour La Democratie Au Rwanda (RDR) (who, he argues, maintain close links to the orchestrators of the genocide) to deny the genocide, and to blame the RPF for provoking the genocide. Ndahiro attributes to the RDR a narrative which depicts the Tutsi as "foreigners" or "outsiders" to Rwanda (Ndahiro 2008, 114).

As discussed further below, regrettably only English language literature has been studied in connection with this thesis, and therefore a large body of relevant French language literature has not been reviewed. Furthermore, Hutu perspectives on the RPF's narrative of the Rwandan genocide are not considered in any detail in this thesis.

It is however clear that there is a body of English language literature that deals with aspects of the RPF's official narrative of Rwanda's recent history. The literature is highly politicised, even polemical, with a pattern emerging of some scholars consistently identifying with particular actors. Debates between these writers and academics have become increasingly bitter, and they often attack one another in intemperate language. The ferocity of these debates, and the polemical nature of their content, implies that those who seek to construct an official narrative of these events are likely to find it expedient to rely on and support those authors who support their narrative, particularly those with leading reputations. The significance of such authors in the construction and control of the RPF's official narrative is considered in more detail in Chapter 5.

Thus the issue of official discourse has been identified in various writings on Rwanda, in particular Mamdani's (Mamdani 2002). What is lacking in the existing literature is an analysis of how, and to what political ends the Rwandan Government has constructed a narrative of the Rwandan genocide.

#### **1.4 Research Design**

How should the relevant facts about the Rwandan Government's construction of their narrative of the Rwandan genocide be established?

A frequent point of emphasis by scholars is that an official narrative usually is put forward by the dominant or ruling group to serve their interests: the contents and features of their narrative are capable of legitimating their claims to dominance. Different groups within that society might espouse alternative narratives of events. Neither the narratives of the dominant or ruling group, nor the challenging narratives are necessarily the most widely believed or influential account of a particular set of events. The most widely believed and influential narrative is usually referred to as a "master narrative". But official *and* challenging narratives compete to be the "master narrative". The 'Shoah' (the Hebrew term for "catastrophe") as the narrative of the genocide of the Jews of Europe is widely considered to represent the definitive master narrative of genocide and perhaps the twentieth century (LaCapra 1994 and 1998, Lipstadt 1986 and Maier 2000).

The discussion contained herein requires identification of a framework of issues relevant to official narratives: the construction of such a framework will be based on an analysis of (a) narratives of genocide and (b) three of the more prominent cases of official genocide-narratives. The chosen narratives are the Holocaust or Shoah, the Armenian Genocide and the Herero Genocide. Once constructed, this framework of analysis will then be applied to the official narrative of the RPF. The research design is thus a theoretical case study of sorts, with the theory distilled from scholarly literature on (a) and (b).

The case studies have been chosen because they represent the spectrum of narratives employed in the context of genocide: the Shoah as the master narrative of genocide; the Armenian genocide as a contested genocide narrative; and the Herero genocide as a 'silenced' genocide narrative.

#### **1.5 Methodology**

Both primary texts and secondary sources will be utilised for background information and relevant insights on Rwanda and its recent history. In order to identify the key categories for analysis of the RPF's official narrative of the Rwandan genocide, academic texts, commentaries, analyses and reports (media, human rights groups etc.) will be reviewed.

In analysing the RPF's official narrative, both primary texts and secondary sources will be analysed, but where possible the focus be on primary texts, and in particular, official government sources – for example, the website of the Rwandan Government. The official website of President Paul Kagame will also be analysed and it is noteworthy that the "History of Rwanda" section of Kagame's personal website contains the content that was originally located on the official website of the Rwandan Government (Kagame 2010,

OWRR 2008). In addition, interviews with, and articles by, President Kagame will be analysed, on the basis that he is the leader and senior mouthpiece of the RPF.

A limitation of this thesis is that only English language documents will be reviewed. This prevents access to a large body of French literature on Rwanda, which is a regrettable given that language plays an important role in the politics of Rwanda – the RPF preferring to use English, while their Hutu counterparts prefer to use French. This limitation also prevents a review of the genocide denialist literature that tends to be written in the French language. Prunier for example, has referred to “a rancid wave of revisionist literature - casting doubts on the scale of the genocide - that has begun to wash ashore, particularly in France and French-speaking Africa” (Prunier 2009, 1). Considering only English texts also inhibits access to an equally large body of German literature on the Holocaust and the Herero genocide.

### **1.6 Chapter Outline**

Chapter 2 discusses official narratives of genocide in order to construct an analytical framework for discussing the Rwandan Governments’ official genocide narrative. Once developed, this analytical framework is applied to Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Chapter 3 looks at the context of the development of the Rwandan Government’s Official Genocide Narrative.

Chapter 4 focuses on the content of the Rwandan Governments’ official genocide narrative.

Chapter 5 considers the Rwandan Government’s responses to challenges to its official narrative of the Rwandan genocide.

Chapter 6 looks at how the Rwandan Government’s official narrative is bound up with its aims and objectives and serves to justify its political actions and policies.

Chapter 7 provides a conclusion to this thesis.

## **Chapter 2: ANALYSING OFFICIAL NARRATIVES OF GENOCIDE**

The aim of this chapter is to identify some key dimensions of official narratives of genocide. This will be done, first, by an introduction of generic themes, and second, through a survey of three case studies. The purpose of this survey is to create a framework within which the relevant features of the Rwandan Government's narrative of the 1994 genocide can be identified and analysed.

### **2.1 Themes of Genocide-Narratives**

All narratives, official or not and regardless of type, typically involve a 'plot' of some kind, with a beginning, key protagonists and adversaries, a conventional storyline and an ending (Bruner 1991, White 1981). Notable foci of the literature on genocide-narratives are:

#### **2.1.1 Content**

What are the main features of the content of genocide-narratives?

According to Maier there have been two main types of these narratives in the twentieth century. Firstly, 'Western' narratives of moral atrocity that tend to focus on the Holocaust and/or Stalinist/Communist political killing as the most significant historical experiences of the twentieth century. Secondly, there are anti-colonial moral atrocity narratives, that focus instead on imperial conquest, followed by neo-colonial domination by 'the West', which established global inequality as "the preeminent historical scaffolding of the century" (Maier 2000, 826). These narratives reveal a distinction between instances of killing and mass murder on the one hand, and on the other, narratives that focus on structural violence such as economic exploitation. The first type of narrative tends to dominate.

Narratives of moral atrocities or genocides often stress this excessiveness of violence in order to emphasise the supposed uniqueness of the scale of the violence involved in a particular narrative. The Shoah as the narrative of the Holocaust is perhaps the best example of a stress on "unique awfulness" (Maier 2000, 827). This uniqueness claim in respect to the Holocaust relies on two things: the number of people killed and the particularly inhumane way in which people were killed. This narrative therefore presents the suffering of the victims as "so horrific that all other suffering must be diminished in comparison or inflated to its standards" (Bartov 1998, 809). In this way, victimhood and suffering become central. Victim-centric narratives emphasise the negative experiences of the victims, while downplaying the significance of possible positive experiences. They tend to "obscure moments of resistance or even small victories by the political community, and paper over individual and collective resilience and survival – much less achievements and affirmative experiences – of the community despite their suffering" (Khalili 2007, 743). In this respect then, victims are presented as morally blameless. Genocide-narratives tend to be patently simplified and selective representations of the events they recount.

Within narratives that involve loss of life, those who are killed or injured in atrocities are not necessarily represented as 'victims'. Traditionally they have also been constructed as 'casualties of war', 'heroes', 'sacrifices' 'martyrs' 'enemies' or 'collateral damage' in patriotic, nationalistic, imperial or revolutionary narratives. Yet it is a constitutive feature

of genocide narratives that they bring the moral logic of 'victims' and 'perpetrators' to bear on the same events that may be recounted in other narratives in terms of 'struggle', 'resistance' or 'betrayal'.

Finally, narrative accounts of the past are dependent on the political circumstances of the present; as such, narratives change as the present political landscape changes (Braun 1994, 175). Political landscapes clearly appear in a range of perspectives, from the local to the international. Laleh Khalili, for example, has considered the trajectory of the narrative of the Palestinian struggle, which has changed over the years from a heroic narrative, to a tragic narrative. She considers the primary reasons for this narrative shift as, on an international scale, due to a "transformation in dominant transnational discourses from a revolutionary Third Worldism to the discourse of suffering prevalent in human rights circles" – this tragic narrative is therefore intended to appeal to "international audiences" (Khalili 2007, 755).

### **2.1.2 Authors**

Narratives contain 'subjects' in two different senses, firstly, the actual and implied authors generating these accounts; and secondly, the key individuals or groups figuring as protagonists in the narrative itself. Typically the victim-subjects of atrocity narratives tend not to be the author-subjects generating these accounts themselves.

As well as governments, author-subjects might also include cultural elites or local and outside observers, including journalists, academics and human rights observers. Operating as 'cultural entrepreneurs', they can play a crucial role in the articulation and dissemination of narrative accounts of genocides (Novick 1999). Though not themselves in positions of political or military power, such intellectuals may play important facilitating and legitimating roles in representing the plight of victims to those who are in positions of power. By contrast, victim-subject narratives of atrocities are accounts given by the victims themselves, such as at truth commission hearings where individual victims describe their own sufferings (Peters 2005, 253).

### **2.1.3 Utility**

It is frequently the case that "historical narratives serve as legitimation of present political, moral or aesthetic judgements about the past" (Braun 1994, 175). Thus narratives about the past can legitimate political and moral actions in the present.

Founding narratives or myths, such as the classic Roman foundational myth, contained in the story of Romulus and Remus, are intended to legitimate a new political order by narrating how the new order came into being (Tudor 1972, 65). Historical 'narratives of a nation', for example the central role of Magna Carta given by some in the political history of the United Kingdom constructs principles that are intended to guide the behaviour of individuals and groups (Stuchtey 1999, 39). 'Conspiratorial narratives', such as the anti-Semitic myth of "the Protocols of the Elders of Zion" are often used for the purposes of political mobilisation (Cohn 1966). In respect to narratives that stress victimhood, Laleh Khalili, writing on the narrative of the Palestinian struggle, states that "narratives of suffering use the...dead as evidence of victimhood and lay claim to the audiences' sympathies and assistance" (Khalili 2007, 753). The implication here is that narratives that

stress victimhood can be used not only to legitimate certain political or moral actions, but also provide a resource for generating sympathy (including deflecting criticism) and assistance (political, economic and otherwise) on a national and international level.

## **2.2 Israeli Governments and the Shoah-Narrative**

One interpretation of the genocide of the Jews, namely the officially standardised and popular version of the *Shoah*, has become the most widely believed and influential narrative. How did this happen and what does this have to do with Israeli Government(s)?

### **2.2.1 The Shoah Narrative: From 1945 to the early 1960s**

Despite the discovery of the concentration camps during the closing stages of World War II, and the subsequent criminal prosecutions of top German military and political leaders at the Nuremberg Military Tribunal, a Shoah-master narrative of the genocide of the Jews during World War II did not emerge until the 1960s. Before such time “[h]istory books of the era focused on the cult of Hitler and the Nazi terror but generally did not identify the slaughter of the Jews as a central part of the story of World War II” (Popper 2010, 2). General knowledge of the mass killings of the Jews and other minority groups such as the Gypsies did exist in the immediate aftermath of the War. Indeed, the 1948 Genocide Convention was created partly as a consequence of the mass killings of the Jews during the Second World War and this established the legal and conceptual framework for genocide narratives. Despite these factors however, at this time there was not yet an official narrative focused on the genocide of the Jews in particular, and certainly not to the extent that would later come about.

Previously it was noted that the emergence of genocide-narratives can be dependent on conditions at both national and international levels. On the national level, perhaps one of the reasons that the narrative of the Shoah took time to emerge was because until the 1960s, a different narrative predominated in relation to the persecution of Jews and the founding of Israel as a Jewish state. This earlier narrative was a Zionist nationalist narrative with a general narrative frame that stressed victory, defeat and collaboration, in contrast to a genocide-narrative with a focus on victimhood. In the Israeli national context, the focus was on “the heroic nationalist figure of the pioneers – gun in one hand and plough in the other” (Khalili 2007, 753). Thus the genocide of the Jews during World War II was related to a Zionist heroic-nationalist narrative frame.

Within this narrative, the Holocaust was treated as a case of national humiliation and vulnerability. Judt argues that, during this time, “Israel’s initial identity was built upon rejecting the Jewish past and treating the Jewish catastrophe as evidence of weakness: a weakness that it was Israel’s destiny to overcome by breeding a new sort of Jew” (Judt 2008, 4). In this way the Holocaust could be utilised to support the Zionist argument for a new Jewish national “type” in an independent Jewish state. Victimhood functioned within this narrative to support a nationalist argument. As Bartov argues, “[t]his combined sense of shame and anxiety made it appear all the more urgent during the post-war years in Palestine and then Israel rapidly to convert the arriving survivors from Diaspora Jews into Zionist Israelis, that is, to erase those qualities in the new arrivals that allegedly made the victims go “like sheep to slaughter” and remake them as patriotic citizens of the Jewish state” (Bartov 1998, 802). It was the humiliating and catastrophic consequences of this

victimhood, along with the acquiescence of Jews to their fate, that entrenched the Zionist conviction of the importance of a Jewish nation state.

Internationally, there was a reluctance to publicly acknowledge the historical fate of the Jews. This was for a variety of reasons: in Eastern Europe many were complicit in war time crimes against the Jews and therefore preferred to forget, others focused instead on the many non-Jewish East Europeans (e.g. in Poland) who had been victims of atrocities (LaCapra 1994 and 1998). In Western Europe, post war governments in formerly occupied countries such as France, Belgium and Holland also preferred to forget the humiliating experience of the war, which included extensive collaboration during their Nazi occupation (Marcus and Lee 2013). Furthermore, the onset of the Cold War, and the related geopolitical recalibrations, meant it became “inopportune to emphasize the past crimes of present allies” and any remembrance therefore tended to focus instead on the heroics of those that resisted: an approach in keeping with the narrative framework of the then prevailing nationalist narrative in Israel, and beyond (Judt 2008, 1-2).

It was not until the 1960s that awareness of the destruction of the European Jews increased. In particular, in 1961 a major and influential study of the Holocaust was published in the form of Raul Hilberg’s three volume *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Hilberg 1961). With this increased awareness, a new narrative of the Holocaust emerged: a narrative, which placed victimhood at its heart. The trial of Adolf Eichmann partly reflected and partly facilitated the emergence of this narrative. Eichmann was responsible for organising the mass deportations of Jews to the extermination camps in Eastern Europe. After the war he fled to Argentina where, under a disguised identity, he lived with his family until 1960 when he was kidnapped by the Israeli government and taken to Israel where he was tried for war crimes and crimes against humanity. He was found guilty and executed in May 1962.

The Eichmann trial was a major international media event and had considerable impact in establishing the Shoah as a genocide-narrative. Eichmann’s trial was utilised by the Israeli government and the state prosecutor to “establish a politically and ideologically motivated historical narrative” (Braun 1994, 184). The trial served both to place moral responsibility on the community of states to guarantee that such a horror would not happen again, and to offer, indirectly, a new, post-national legitimation for the state of Israel: “some post-war states were victors, others went down to defeat, but none could claim to be the victim of a tragic history like Israel” (Braun 1995, 184). Compared with the previous Zionist narrative, the purpose of this narrative included state building, but the main focus was on the genocide of the Jews.

As already noted, it is a generic feature of genocide-narratives that they tend to lay claim to a “unique awfulness” (Maier 2000, 827). In this new narrative of the Shoah, it was the uniqueness of Jewish victimhood at the hands of Nazis like Eichmann that was emphasised. This exceptionalist claim to an incomparable intensity and extent of suffering by the Jews (both in terms of numbers killed and the manner of their destruction) as the victims of the Shoah provided a moral dimension to the narrative.

Yet the moral logic of this narrative, with the binary opposition between Jewish victims and German perpetrators, was not without controversy. This controversy was exemplified

by the reaction to the writing of Hannah Arendt and Raul Hilberg; a controversy which revealed the tension between the respective frameworks of the Zionist narrative, and the Shoah narrative, and in particular, their treatment of victims and perpetrators. Hannah Arendt covered the Eichmann trial on behalf of *The New Yorker* and subsequently wrote a book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (Arendt 1963). Arendt's reporting of the trial revealed the tension between these two narrative frames. The focus of her reports and the book based upon them, was not on the victims (as was the focus of the Israeli court), but on the bystanders and the perpetrators (Braun 1995, 188). To the extent that Arendt did focus on the victims, her conclusions proved extremely controversial. In respect of the perpetrators, the logic of the Shoah narrative represented the perpetrators as inherently evil, and the victims as entirely innocent. Yet, this was not Arendt's analysis. Her view was that Eichmann was not an evil monster, but rather a bureaucrat. "The trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal" (Arendt 1963, 253).

Along with rejecting a narrative frame that placed victimhood at its heart, Arendt also discussed the moral complicity involved in Jewish collaboration with the Nazis. Specifically, she considered the Jewish councils in Nazi-occupied Europe and found that many of these councils willingly cooperated with Nazis, performing administrative and police work and in some instances assembling Jews for deportation and worse (Arendt 1963, 117). "Wherever Jews lived, there were recognized Jewish leaders, and this leadership, almost without exception, cooperated in one way or another, for one reason or another, with the Nazis" (Arendt 1963, 125).

Arendt's work in part built upon the work of historian Raul Hilberg and in particular, his book, "The Destruction of the European Jews". Written in 1961, it was the first comprehensive historical study of the Holocaust (Hilberg 1961). This work significantly increased the level of information and general knowledge about the genocide of the Jews during the Holocaust. Yet Hilberg's work was also controversial; implicitly his account also diverged from the logic of the emerging master narrative of the Shoah, and in particular, the role afforded to the victimhood of the Jews within that narrative. He argued that throughout their history, Jews had always made accommodations with their anti-Semitic rulers in order to avoid persecution, and that this policy resulted in disastrous consequences in the case of the Holocaust. Indeed, in the very first chapter of "The Destruction of the European Jews", Hilberg sketches a brief timeline of persecution of Jews throughout European history, starting with the Roman Empire under Constantine and ending with the Holocaust (Popper 2010, 3). For Hilberg then, the Holocaust had a long pre-history, which was taken up to become part of the historical narrative of the Shoah. This view of history conflicted with Arendt's "strong belief that the Holocaust was something entirely new--a product of modern society and the totalitarian system" (Popper 2010, 3).

Arendt and Hilberg's writings on the Holocaust fitted neither with the Zionist heroic narrative frame of Jewish resistance, nor with the emerging narrative of the Shoah, which placed the moral logic of evil German perpetrators and innocent Jewish victims at its heart. As a consequence, both Arendt and Hilberg were marginalised and discredited by certain Israeli and Jewish cultural, legal and political elites. In Arendt's case, critics included one of

the judges from the Eichmann trial, Justice Musmanno, while critics of Hilberg included Nathan Eck, through a piece in *Yad Vashem Studies*, entitled "Historical Research or Slander?" (Musmanno 1967 and Eck 1967). It is noteworthy that debates around the Holocaust narrative were primarily between Jewish intellectual writers and intellectuals – and remain so to this day. Such debates have not been between Germans and Jews.

### **2.2.2 The Shoah Narrative after the Eichmann Trial (1961)**

From the 1960s, the narrative of the Shoah became increasingly prominent both in Israel and internationally. It is clear that the Israeli government played a key role in this, as evidenced by the manner in which it instrumentalised the Eichmann trial to serve as the dominant narrative of the Holocaust, both domestically and internationally. Indeed "[b]oth Ben-Gurion and the chief prosecutor transgressed well-defined limits of the legal process with the announcement that it is not an individual that is in the dock at this historical trial, and not the Nazi regime alone, but anti-Semitism throughout history" (Braun 1994, 183).

Yet it was not only the Israeli government that played a role in perpetuating this new narrative. Elite cultural entrepreneurs also did so, particularly in the international context. Indeed, their efforts were often intertwined. This point is demonstrated by the reception of the Eichmann trial in America and beyond. The "Eichmann trial, along with the controversies over Arendt's book...effectively broke fifteen years of near silence on the Holocaust in American public discourse" (Novick 1999, 144). Bartov goes further, arguing that the trial "heralded the emergence of the Holocaust in the United States and subsequently also in Western Europe, as the paradigm of evil and the fate of the Jews as the epitome of victimhood" (Bartov 1998, 803).

Elite cultural actors perpetuated this narrative in a number of ways, including through representations in contemporary mass media, in particular film. By the 1980s, this narrative was increasingly found in books, cinema and television. For example, referring to NBC's series "Holocaust" in 1978, Peter Novick argues "more information about the Holocaust was imparted to more Americans over those four nights than over all the preceding thirty years" (Novick 1999, 209). This was followed by a number of other dramatisations, including Claude Lanzmann's "Shoah" in 1985, and perhaps the most significant Holocaust film of them all, Stephen Spielberg's "Schindler's List" in 1993. This was described by *Time* magazine as "the greatest sequence of chaos and mass terror ever filmed" (Avisar 1997, 21). In this way, the Shoah entered the realm of popular culture. Acknowledging the political nature of this cultural representation, Dorland argues that "the meanings attributed to the Holocaust in the American case have followed such a pattern of fluctuation, from an initial shocked high, then to low, and subsequently increasingly higher again, tied as well to the United States' changing relationship to Israel after the Six Day War" (Dorland 2007, 421).

Since the 1990s, the Shoah as the narrative of the Holocaust was reflected not only in books, cinema and television, but also in official apologies, national commemorative monuments and museums. Now, firmly part of popular culture, the "Shoah is a universal reference" (Judt 2008, 2) and an entire industry has been built around the memory of the Holocaust. However some, such as Norman Finkelstein, argue that this has resulted in the debasing of the memory of the Holocaust (Finkelstein 2003).

In the earlier Zionist perspective, with its epic narrative frame of foreign occupation, patriotic resistance, collaboration and national emancipation, the fate of the European Jews as genocide victims was a source of shame and humiliation. After 1960 the Shoah-narrative changes the role of victimhood; in this revised narrative, victimhood operated to legitimate by providing a source for moral and political entitlements. In the context of the Palestinian struggle, Khalili argues that this “discourse of suffering” is used to firstly “acquire sympathy and political/financial support” and secondly to “legitimate demands...to be recognized and granted a series of rights usually promised by charters of universal human rights” (Kahlili 2007, 752). In the Israeli case, the aim was to gain international support for the state of Israel, indeed it was the “moral authority of the historical narrative that was used for establishing political legitimation” (Braun 1994, 184).

Ironically the legitimating significance of Jewish victimhood in the narrative of the Shoah has in practice extended to legitimation of violence by the Israeli state in the context of its ongoing violent struggles with the Palestinians and other state and non-state actors on its borders. Thomas Friedman has written of Israel’s “living political science experiment”, with threats posed to it by Gaza, South Lebanon, Syria and the Sinai Desert of Egypt (Friedman 2012). The development of the narrative of Shoah has to be analysed in the context of the ongoing challenges of this “Israeli experience” in a tough neighbourhood in the Middle East (Friedman 2012).

This narrative is occasionally invoked as a justification for aggression, or to deflect criticism of its military ambitions. This was recently indicated in a March 2012 speech by Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, in which he invoked the memory of Auschwitz in criticising U.S. reluctance to acknowledge that Iran is developing nuclear weapons. The Israeli Prime Minister invoked the memory of the Holocaust and referred to an unsuccessful request by the World Jewish Congress to the US war department to bomb Auschwitz in 1944 (McGreal 2012, 1). Here the memory of the Holocaust is employed to lay the basis for military action against Iran, and to remind the US of the consequences of their inaction in the face of Jewish requests for assistance in the past.

Similarly victimhood is used to deflect criticism of Israel. As Judt argues, when Israel is today criticised, “its defenders prefer to emphasise the memory of the Holocaust...they suggest, robust criticism of Israel doesn’t just arouse anti-Semitism. It is anti-Semitism” (Judt 2008, 5). Yet an unforeseen consequence of this approach, is that “by shouting ‘anti-Semitism’ every time someone attacks Israel or defends the Palestinians, we are breeding cynics” (Judt 2008, 5). The risk is that such political uses of this narrative results in the unintended consequence of diminishing the significance of Jewish victimhood, or even debasing the memory of the historical event of the genocide itself.

Another unintended consequence resulting from the stressing of victimhood within this narrative, and in particular, the ‘unique awfulness’ of the Jewish experience, is the exclusion of the memory of non-Jewish victims of the Holocaust (Snyder 2009). For example, Ian Hancock argues that the lack of scholarly work on gypsy victims of the Holocaust is at least in part attributable to efforts by certain scholars to emphasise the uniqueness of the fate of the Jews (Hancock 2004, 383 – 396).

The counterpart of the claims to moral entitlement inherent in victimhood is the unmitigated evil of perpetrators. Within genocide-narratives, 'victims' are necessarily part of a binary construction, with 'perpetrators' as their conceptual opposites. In respect to the Shoah narrative, the victims are the Jews and the perpetrators are the Germans. The narrative logic of these moral absolutes ensures that, within this conceptual framework, Jews can only ever be considered victims and Germans as perpetrators. Within this narrative therefore, to the extent that Germans have a voice, it is in the role of perpetrators, and cannot be that of victims. Historically it was the case that large numbers of Germans were also victims – of Allied civilian bombings, ethnic cleansing and mass forced removals. Yet shared victimhood of this nature does not fit within the simplifying moral logic of the narrative and thus these voices cannot feature.

It should be clear that it is not the victims themselves to whom victimhood matters the most but to the politicians, as we can see in the Eichmann trial, as well as to allied cultural entrepreneurs and elites. Arendt and Hilberg, Jews themselves, were subject to state-sponsored criticism when their conceptions of victims and perpetrators were at odds with those propagated by the Israeli state. Victimhood was used to legitimize certain government behaviour, to deflect criticism and to provide a source for moral and political entitlements; in particular, international support for a Jewish state.

### **2.3 The Armenian Genocide**

In 1915, at least one million Armenians, comprising possibly half of their population, are estimated to have been killed or marched to death by the Ottoman government (Whitaker 1985, 8).

#### **2.3.1 Turkish Governments and the Armenian Genocide**

There were two opposing Turkish and Armenian narratives of the mass killings of the Armenians in 1915. The Armenian narrative claimed that the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), the party that controlled the 'Young Turk' Ottoman government at the time, were "waiting for a suitable opportunity to undertake the wholesale liquidation of the empire's Armenian population, and the outcome of World War I provided that opportunity" (Dadrian 2002, 59). According to the Armenian narrative, the genocide was thus planned and intentional.

The opposite, Turkish narrative, argued that various forms of Armenian disloyalty during wartime forced the Turkish government to relocate, through deportation, large sections of the Armenian population. According to this narrative, Armenian deaths were not attributable to the murderous intentions of the CUP, but were an unintended consequence of civil war, and of efforts to remove 'fifth columnists' that presented a risk of linking up with a Russian invasion. According to this narrative, in large part the mass deaths were consequences of "poorly administered measures of deportations, including exhaustion, sickness, starvation, and epidemics" (Dadrian 2002, 52 and 59). Thus this narrative attributes the mass murders to "inter-communal warfare" and incompetence, rather than to any sort of state sponsored genocide (Balakian 2003, 379). In this way, the fact of the Armenian deportations is not disputed, but rather the purpose of those deportations and the manner in which the Armenian deportees died.

There were widespread contemporary reports and accounts of these events, many of which were from eyewitnesses: journalists, missionaries, diplomats and aid agencies. Despite this, and despite the 'living memory' of the Armenian survivors, individually and collectively, accounts by the survivors of the atrocities in the form of 'historical accounts' of these atrocities took longer to emerge. This was perhaps partly due to the fact that the Armenians were not able to generate any sort of official genocide-narrative, due in part to the Armenian population not having a state of their own at this stage (other than during a brief period between 1918 – 1920). Instead, they were "either deeply traumatized survivors living in wretched refugee camps or terrified individuals keeping a low profile in ruined villages" (Ungor 2009, 5). The Armenians were therefore not in a position to generate an official account of their story, and certainly not in a position to develop a coherent narrative in respect of these atrocities.

In contrast, Turkish governments constructed an official narrative in the decades that followed the mass murders. Though this did not explicitly address the mass killings of Armenians in 1915 it did so by implication. The CUP government of the Turkish Republic sought to create an official national narrative for the new Turkish nation-state from its founding in 1913 (Ungor 2008, 25). This official national narrative involved a retrospective "Turkification" process that focused on foundational myths and heroic images of the Turkish nation (Ungor 2008, 26). This national narrative omitted any mention of the mass violence that had characterised the early twentieth century, regardless of whether the Turks had been victims or perpetrators of such violence (Ungor 2008, 24).

Through this policy of sanitising the national narrative of incidents of violence, the government of the Kemal dictatorship continued the previous regime's policy of suppressing information on the 1915 genocide. Ungor points to a series of memoirs of Armenian survivors, as well as history books, published in the decades that followed the events of 1915. These were either prohibited from entering Turkey, or where they were found to have been imported, they were destroyed (Ungor 2008, 24). Legal measures to control this narrative included the 1931 Press Law, which "served as a catch-all for any texts the regime considered as dissent" (Ungor 2009, 5).

To the extent that the national narrative of the founding of the Turkish state did make reference to incidents of violence, the narrative depicted the Armenians as the aggressors. 'Official' government historians played a key role in the process. For example, Ungor points to a book that the historian Bendr Gunkut produced, that focused on the region of Diyarbakir. In this book, Gunkut went to great lengths to stress "Turkishness" and to erase all non-Turkish cultures from Diyarbakir history. Ungor describes this account as a "remarkable reversal of the historical account, [in which] all violence in Diyarbakir had been committed by the Armenians against the Turks" (Ungor 2008, 25).

Initially, the Young Turks were focused only on the control of their narrative within Turkey, "it did not matter much that Armenians wrote and circulated memoirs among themselves – as long as memory was produced and consumed within an Armenian milieu and it did not trickle back into Turkey" (Ungor 2008, 24). An early exception to this came in 1935, with the ultimately successful moves by the Turkish government to prevent a US film studio making Franz Werfel's novel *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* into a film (Bloxham 1999).

### 2.3.2 The Armenian Republic Government and the Armenian Genocide

During the 1990s, the mass killings of the Armenians in 1915 became part of an Armenian narrative – a state building national narrative that began with Armenian independence from 1991 onwards (Smith 1999). The mass killings of the Armenians in 1915 formed part of the official "Armenian national myth, one that assumed that all Armenians come from the same stock, share a common history, and merit their own state" (Fearon, Laitin 2006, 4). Thus this atrocity featured within a unifying, Armenian national narrative. Ethnic Armenians are in the majority in Armenia.

Cultural elites, such as Turkish Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, editor of the Turkish newspaper 'Agos', also played a key role in developing awareness of the mass killings of the Armenians. Dink stated that he wished to "challenge the accepted version of history because I do not write about things in black and white" (Mahoney 2006, 28). Dink was prosecuted three times in Turkey for 'denigrating Turkishness' under Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code and in January 2007 he was murdered outside the Istanbul office of Agos by a 17-year-old Turkish nationalist (Amnesty International 2007).

Beyond Turkey's borders, the Turkish government has gone to great lengths to challenge the Armenian narrative, with the collaboration of cultural entrepreneurs. In his recent legal opinion on whether there was an Armenian genocide, Geoffrey Robertson highlights the role played by the Turkish government in disputing the Armenian narrative. He identifies political lobbying of the British government via its ambassador to the UK. The Turkish Ambassador sent the UK government work of an American historian, Justin McCarthy, which portrayed the "1915 killings as having been provoked by "Armenian terrorists" who continue to murder Turkish diplomats to this very day" (Robertson 2009, 27). Robertson attributes the later decision by the UK government to exclude the Armenian massacres from Holocaust Memorial Day in the UK as "influenced by the flawed perspective of the Eastern Department [of the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office], overly concerned to maintain good relations with Turkey" (Robertson 2009, 27).

Another historian closely aligned with the Turkish government, whose opinions the UK government has relied on in failing to officially recognise the Armenian genocide, is Dr. Heath Lowry. He provoked controversy after Princeton University "accepted a large sum of money from the Turkish government and appointed him to the "Ataturk Chair" which that government sponsored" (Robertson 2009, 30). There was widespread criticism when it subsequently emerged that Dr. Lowry had drafted a letter for the Turkish Ambassador, which denied the genocide (Robertson 2009, 30).

The Armenian narrative has obviously been influenced by the Shoah-narrative. Further, debates around the narrative focus not just on the mass killings as an atrocity but on the question of whether these mass killings meet the technical legal definition of 'genocide', as defined in the 1948 Genocide Convention. For example, in 2008, a UK government official stated that, in respect of the events in Armenia in 1915: "neither this government nor the previous governments have judged that the evidence is sufficiently unequivocal to persuade us that these events should be categorised as genocide, as defined by the 1948 UN Convention of Genocide" (Malloch-Brown 2008). Significantly, although the Turkish official narrative serves to deny that the mass killings of the Armenians amounted to

'genocide' (by the criteria of the 1948 Convention), Turkish governments do not deny altogether the mass killings of the Armenians. Why should this be important?

One reason is damages. If the mass killings of the Armenians are acknowledged as 'genocide' within the meaning of the Convention, the Armenians are innocent victims of the 'crime of crimes' and the perpetrators may be expected to provide compensation. Another reason is that such a depiction of the Armenians makes the perpetrators out to be pure evil. Suggestions that the mass killings came about as part of collateral consequences of civil war and forced deportations, or that the Armenians were also involved in acts of aggression would significantly qualify the historical entitlements generated by 'victimhood'.

New statehood has played a particularly important role in the Armenian narrative. The lack of an Armenian state in any meaningful sense until 1991 hindered the emergence of a narrative of the atrocities suffered by the Armenians. The nationalist narrative of the Turkish state, in deliberately obscuring any reference to violence in the past, constrained the emergence of an Armenian genocide-narrative. To the extent that the Turkish national narrative did acknowledge past atrocities involving the Armenians, it was the Armenians that were represented as the aggressors. On Armenian independence, an official Armenian narrative of the 1915-genocide did emerge, but this is but a small part of a bigger national, state-building narrative.

#### **2.4 The Namibian Government and the Herero Genocide**

The mass killing of the Herero took place in 1904 in German South-West Africa (now Namibia) during the German colonial wars. It is estimated that 80% of the Herero population died, which amounted to approximately 80,000 people (Dederling 1993, 80 and 87). Contemporary accounts recorded how the German military leader General von Trotha drove the Herero into the Omaheke Desert after poisoning the watering holes and blocking the exits from the desert. Von Trotha is then said to have issued the 'Vernichtungsbefehl' or 'Extermination Order' which "announced that Herero, including women and children, would be shot on sight and that they would be driven into the Omaheke desert (Sandveld), to be left to die" (Dederling 1993, 82).

In the aftermath of the mass killings of the Herero, information about these events did emerge, and the destruction of the Herero was discussed "quite openly and unambiguously" (Dederling 1993, 1). For evidence of the 'living memory' of the genocide on the part of the surviving members of the Herero community the *'The Report on the Natives of South-West Africa and their Treatment by Germany'*, better known as the *'Blue Book'*, is a major contemporary source. The Blue Book contained key eyewitness accounts of the extermination of the Herero after their defeat at Waterberg in 1904. According to Jeremy Silvester and Jan-Bart Gewald, the *Blue Book*, though controversial (some alleged it was produced by the South African government to discredit Germany's colonial record), was a "prime source of material presenting an early African perspective on the particular features of the colonial genocide" (Silvester and Gewald 2003, xxxvii).

On the German side, official documentation of the German General Staff recorded the key events of the atrocities in detail. For example, Dederling points to the published records of German General Staff in 1906 and to a book by Paul Rohrbach, a German government

official in Namibia, which “unequivocally deplores the attempt to exterminate the Herero” (Dedering 1993, 82 and 87). Despite this availability of information about the genocide of the Herero, no popular or public narrative account of these atrocities emerged until much later. A number of factors might explain this delay:

Of those Herero who did survive, some fled to Botswana, while others were scattered throughout Namibia, many ending up as labourers on German farms. It is highly likely that this had the effect of precluding the conditions under which a ‘living memory’ of the genocide could have been sustained by the surviving members of the Herero community. The First World War saw the Germans driven out of Namibia by troops from the Union of South Africa, and thereafter, Namibia was administered as a South African territory in terms of the League of Nations mandate. This brought further changes for the Herero, many of whom had returned to Namibia after the Germans had gone. In due course many found themselves subject to the South African government’s policy of apartheid, and then later, they became (a minor) part of the South-West Africa People’s Organisation’s (SWAPO) struggle for independence from the South Africa, which was finally achieved in March 1990 (Bensman 1998, 1). During this time, to the extent that there were any attempts to draw attention to the Herero atrocities, these received no sympathy from the South African regime or the local white German descendants. The prevailing master narrative of the time was that of the ‘communist threat’ or ‘communist conspiracy’ (Bensman 1998, 1). For example, when in 1966 Horst Drechsler wrote *Let Us Die Fighting: The Struggle of the Herero and the Nama Against German Imperialism (1884-1915)*, his classic study of the Herero struggle (Drechsler 1980), this was dismissed on the basis that it simply propagated Marxist views (Dedering 1993, 80).

It is also conceivable that during this time the “overwhelming significance of Auschwitz and the Shoah, as the most devastating breach of civilisation imaginable, actually stood in the way of a closer examination of German colonialism and the violence that it engendered” (Kundrus 2005, 300). To the extent that there was any official narrative during this time, it was a narrative which portrayed the Herero as warmongers who were responsible for provoking the war and therefore responsible for the Herero deaths that followed as a result (Omo Kustaa 2004, 2).

In 1985 the United Nations’ Whitaker Report stated that the German war against the Herero represented the first genocide of the twentieth century (Whitaker 1985, 9). Perhaps in response to this acknowledgement by the UN, and maybe in anticipation of an official Herero narrative emerging as a consequence, certain ‘revisionist’ historians began to dispute the events surrounding the Herero atrocities. Thus the historian Brigitte Lau, writing in the Namibian journal “Mibagus” in 1989, denied that the Herero were victims of genocide at the hands of German soldiers in 1904 (Dedering 1993, 87). An example of Lau’s historical revisionism concerns the infamous ‘Extermination Order’ given by German General von Trotha in October 1904. While the majority of historians have taken this order at face value, Lau attempted to explain it as an example of psychological warfare, that was never intended to be implemented literally (Lau 1989, 46, Dedering 1993, 87).

### 2.4.1 An Emerging Herero Narrative?

When independence came to Namibia in 1990, five years after the Whitaker Report, Herero leaders realised that democracy would “condemn Herero descendants of the massacres to second-class citizenship” (Bensman 1998, 1). This was in comparison to the Ovambo tribe in Namibia, who dominated the former independence movement and now Namibia’s government, led by SWAPO, and now have majority representation in Namibia’s government. Having largely avoided German colonial violence, the Ovambo are wealthier and more populous than the Herero (Bensman 1998, 1).

In 2004, centennial commemorations of the Herero genocide were held at local and regional levels in Namibia but, significantly, there was no national commemoration (Omo Kustaa 2004, 1; Melber 2005, 142). Furthermore, no national monuments exist in Namibia to remember those Herero who fell victim to German colonial violence (Akinyemi 2010). The Namibian government’s failure to commemorate the struggles of the Herero against German colonialism and to acknowledge the national significance of these events reflects a failure to appreciate that the German colonial war and its accompanying system of economic exploitation and political repression impacted upon all Namibians. In effect this amounts to a silencing of a potential official narrative of the Herero genocide. Even though the anti-colonial struggle of the Herero against the German government arguably provided the foundation of SWAPO’s struggle for Namibia’s independence (Kustaa 2004, 1 and 11), the atrocities against the Herero are not part of the dominant national narrative of the Namibian liberation struggle.

In 2004, Namibia’s Minister of Information and Broadcasting announced that in the interests of national reconciliation, the government would not make special acknowledgement of the Herero cause (Melber 2005, 142). Instead, ‘national reconciliation’ within Namibia should take account of the fact that there are other communities who, together with the Herero, also fell victim to the violence of German soldiers during the German-Namibian colonial war. These include the Nama, Damara and San communities (Melber 2005, 141). In this context Government concerns over national reconciliation might also relate to the 25,000 or so white German-speaking citizens of Namibia, who continue to be influential in Namibian politics. They reputedly control over half of the farmlands in Namibia, much of which is said to be formerly Herero territory, and it is for this reason perhaps that this group oppose the Herero’s claims for land reform and reparations (Bensman 1998, 1). The Namibian government is “almost in silent agreement with those among the German-speaking minority in Namibia and those representing the official position of the German government” (Melber 2005, 143).

More recently there have been attempts to revive interest in the Herero narrative. In 2005, a film was produced called “100 Years of Silence” (Halfdan Muurholm 2005) and two new substantial books have recently been published on the Herero genocide, David Olusoga and Casper Erichsen’s *The Kaiser’s Holocaust: Germany’s Forgotten Genocide and the Colonial Roots of Nazism* (2010) and Jeremy Sarkin’s *Germany’s Genocide of the Herero: Kaiser Wilhelm II, His General, His Settlers, His Soldiers* (Sarkin 2011). Therefore while there has not yet been any sort of proliferation of cultural entrepreneurs willing to publicly tell the genocide-narrative of the Herero, it is clear that the Herero genocide is no longer so

effectively 'silenced', although such accounts operate at the level of history rather than forming any sort of genocide narrative.

In terms of acknowledgement of the atrocities against the Herero, the official position of the German government was to resist providing any sort of apology to the Herero, mainly on the basis that an admission of genocide would render the German government liable to reparations (Kandetu 2005, 66 and Kuteeue 2004). However in August 2004, the official position of the German government took an unexpected change of course. At a commemoration of the battle at Ohmakari nearing the Waterberg, the German Minister for Economic Cooperation admitted guilt and remorse on behalf of the German government. She stated that the German colonial war in Namibia would by today's definition of the term constitute genocide (BBC 2004). However, at the time of the apology reparations were ruled out and there remains a "lack of visible subsequent consequences, which would indicate that this has resulted indeed in a direct change of policy towards the issues of compensation" (Melber 2005, 144). It is worth noting however that the film and two recent books on the Herero genocide, referred to above, followed that acknowledgement by the German government.

The indifference to the Herero genocide highlights the extremely selective nature of this acknowledgement and remembrance of German atrocities (Melber 2005, 146). In illustration of this point, an article recently appeared in the UK newspaper, *The Guardian*, which focused on the debate over the opening of a new Hitler exhibition in Berlin. The article, written by Jan-Werner Mueller, a member of Princeton University's politics department, was entitled "Has Germany really come to terms with its past?" (Mueller 2010). Mueller referred to Germany's "two difficult pasts" as the East German state socialist dictatorship on the one hand, and Nazism and the Holocaust on the other. Despite commenting on how successful Germany has been in coming to terms with the past, describing them as "world champions in remembrance", no mention was made of the Herero colonial genocide (Mueller 2010). Perhaps even more significantly, in an online discussion of this article, not one of the 238 comments mentioned the Herero.

Following Namibian independence in 1990, the official narrative was a national liberation narrative articulated by the Ovambo-dominated government. The Herero genocide has not yet assumed an important role within the post-1990 Namibian Government's narrative. As long as the Ovambo continue to dominate the government, there is no reason to expect that position to change. It is even likely that over time, the Herero genocide-narrative will become even further marginalised.

## **2.5 Conclusion and Comparative Observations**

The introductory discussion contained in this Chapter 2 has focused only on the construction of an official or state narrative of genocide. This discussion has also been confined only to those governments, regimes and states that are "new" in one way or another. Three major examples of new states constructing official narratives of genocide are Turkey, Israel, and Namibia. Turkey was carved out of the Ottoman Empire. Israel emerged out of the post-WWII dismantling of the League of Nations mandate-system. Namibia, also once a mandate, became independent through armed struggle. In these three

new states, the most obvious features of how and why the government constructs a narrative of genocide are:

The genocides themselves occurred in relation to or in a context of war. The Armenian genocide occurred in WWI; the Shoah in WWII; and the Herero genocide in the colonial wars fought by Germany between the Congress of Berlin and WWI. These war-contexts are not exceptional: most genocides occur in or around wars. The construction of the three governments' narratives of the genocide should thus be understood as a post-war phenomenon.

More specifically, the narratives develop in post-war contexts where the government incumbents are pursuing policies of nation-building. The governments of Pasha and Ataturk in Turkey were like this, as was that of the successive Israeli governments and the SWAPO Government in Namibia.

State-sponsored nation-building narratives can delay the emergence of genocide narratives. In the Shoah example, the fate of the European Jews as genocide victims was initially a source of shame and humiliation and thus, at least until the 1960s, a genocide narrative gave way to a Zionist nationalist narrative. In the Armenian example, the nationalist narrative of the Turkish state deliberately obscured any reference to violence in the past, thereby constraining the emergence of an Armenia genocide narrative. An Armenian genocide narrative did develop following Armenian independence in 1991, but this was but a minor part of a larger, national narrative of the newly created Armenian state. In terms of a Herero narrative of the genocide in 1904, this has long been obscured by the official national liberation narrative of the Ovambo-dominated Namibian government.

A comparison of the content of the governments'/official narratives of the genocides shows similarities and differences involving victims and perpetrators. It is clear that the narrative construction of victimhood plays a key role in genocide narratives. This moral logic has a typical binary structure: 'victims' are constructed as blameless innocents whose human rights have been grossly violated by evil 'perpetrators' who should be held accountable for these violations. By implication 'victims' have no independent agency within these genocide narratives; at the same time the moral and political status of 'victims' serve to legitimate measures of retributive justice and/or entitle them to reparations. Not only do atrocity narratives of genocide centrally involve the notions of 'victims' and 'perpetrators', they also insist upon the incomparable severity of the atrocities committed; indeed, these atrocities are at the heart of such narratives. In these genocide narratives, 'victims' are presented as having unique moral qualities: they are portrayed as passive, and entirely innocent. By comparison, the perpetrators are presented as irredeemably evil.

Information that complicates this moral dichotomy is excluded from the genocide narrative. Thus the complicity of the Jewish councils highlighted by Hilberg and then by Arendt is excluded from the Shoah narrative. So too are Arendt's observations that Eichmann, an arch 'perpetrator' was not irredeemably evil, but rather "terribly and terrifyingly normal" (Arendt 1963, 253). Furthermore, the logic of the genocide narrative works to exclude the roles and voices of bystanders, collaborators or beneficiaries. In this

respect, genocide narratives are simplified, and exclude information that goes against their binary moral logic.

The role of the actual victims in the narrative construction of 'victimhood' is revealing. Crucially it is not the literal victims of the atrocities who themselves construct the narrative, but others who claim to represent these victims. In this respect, victimhood is used as a narrative resource; the victims themselves are not in control of the genocide narrative, but rather function as a discursive object in the narrative. The politics of the relation between those who construct genocide narratives, and the actual victims themselves, is clearly an important area for analysis of genocide narratives.

The implementation of the "official story" usually stimulates challenges on political and intellectual grounds and from domestic or international sources. Governments often respond vigorously to challenges of their narrative and their responses include censorship, legislation, intimidation and sponsorship of cultural and intellectual actors in an effort to hold their ground. For many scholars the contestation around the Shoah is the best example of such a struggle.

Intellectuals as cultural entrepreneurs play a key role in constructing and controlling genocide narratives, at times acting with government support, and at other times acting independently. Cultural entrepreneurs of this kind have played a major part in establishing the successful master narrative of the Shoah, but had a lesser role in the construction of the genocide narratives of the Armenians and the Herero. An internationally dispersed and politically influential Jewish diaspora no doubt plays a key role here while the Armenian diaspora has been much less effective and a Herero diaspora hardly exists. Those that contest the government's position in respect of a particular narrative are censured or discredited, at times both, as indicated by the treatment of Hilberg, Arendt in the case of the Shoah narrative and Dink in the case of the Armenian genocide narrative.

The significance of the (details of the) content of the official narrative, as well as the vigour of its defence, is that it legitimates incumbents' political ends. Victimhood, for example, entitles the survivors, or more particularly, those that purport to speak on behalf of such survivors. What actually happened in the genocide does not determine its significance; it is later political ends and needs that provide genocides with their significance.

Victimhood, and the associated discourse of suffering, also has important implications for genocide narratives. The discourse of suffering so prevalent in a genocide narrative can help a political group acquire sympathy and political support on one hand, and on other, legitimate the behaviour of such a group. Thus behaviour, which can include censorship and violence, is justified in a world attuned to the Shoah narrative and the maxim of "never again". In this respect the narrative of Shoah serves as a general framing device for other narratives of genocide. In respect to the Armenian genocide, there is the contemporary focus on whether or not it meets the technical definition of 'genocide' while in the case of the Herero, German acknowledgement of past atrocities focuses on the Holocaust, to the detriment of other atrocities perpetrated by Germany. Thus the master narrative of the Shoah influences certain narratives, and overshadows others.

## 2.6 Analytical Framework

In the analysis of the Rwandan Government's genocide narrative, the following will be the primary foci:

2.6.1 The Context of the Construction of the Rwandan Governments' official genocide narrative: this will be analysed with a particular focus on the post-war context of the development of the genocide narrative and a focus on the role the official narrative plays within any sort of nation-building project of the Rwandan government.

2.6.2 The Content of the Rwandan Governments' official genocide narrative: particular attention will be given to the depiction of victims and perpetrators within the official narrative;

2.6.3 How the Narrative is implemented: this is likely to involve contestation. Particular focus will be placed on how the Rwandan Government responds to challenges to its official narrative; and

2.6.4 Political Ends: Justifying What? The political ends of the Rwandan Government's official narrative will be considered, as well as how its official narrative serves to justify its political actions and policies.

### **Chapter 3: THE CONTEXT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RWANDAN GOVERNMENT'S OFFICIAL GENOCIDE NARRATIVE**

With reference to the analytical framework developed in the previous chapter, this chapter will proceed in two sections: the first will focus on the development of the genocide narrative in the post-war context and the second will consider the Rwandan government's nation-building project as a relevant context for analysing the official narrative of the 1994 genocide.

#### **3. 1 The Post War Context and the Development of the Genocide Narrative**

Each of the case studies concerned narratives of genocide developed in relation to, or in the context of, war. The case studies also suggested that the particular aftermath of such wars had an important bearing on the development (or non-development) of the different genocide narratives concerned.

As regards the Rwandan context, referring to the exhibition at the Kigali Memorial Centre, the official website of the Republic of Rwanda states as follows: “[i]t does not give examples of all genocidal massacres because of limited space. It can only illustrate a few examples, representing a tragic cross-section of a century of genocide” (OWRR 2012). Since the independence era, mass killings have been a frequent occurrence within Rwanda. President Kagame's website states that “[t]he first massacres in Rwanda took place in 1959. Thereafter, almost in regular manner, killings of the Batutsi became a common practice” (Kagame 2010b).

While this frequency of mass killings by the state may render Rwanda an exceptional case in Africa, it is not exceptional in comparison to say, Eastern Europe (Mazower 2002 and Naimark 2001, 8). Scholars have noted that political acceptance of state violence and war-readiness is a part of Rwandan political culture (Reyntjens 2010, 2).

The genocide in Rwanda in 1994 was the culmination of a civil war that began in 1 October 1990 with the invasion of Rwanda from Uganda by a group of Rwandese refugees, led by Paul Kagame, who referred to themselves as the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) (Mamdani 2002, 184). It is clear that the RPF's subsequent military victory “ended the genocide and saved those Tutsi who were still alive by July [1994]” (IPEP, 70). Following this victory, the Interahamwe, the Hutu militia of Rwanda's “Hutu Power” movement, were forced by the RPF to flee Rwanda for the forests of North Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The ethnic Hutu Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) was formed out of this exiled group. In 1996 Rwanda invaded the DRC, ostensibly to eliminate the threat posed to its security by the FDLR who were supported by the DRC's then ruler, Mobutu Sese Seko. The result was Africa's first continental war, drawing in Angola, Burundi, Chad, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe, all helping Rwanda to topple Mobutu and replace him with their handpicked candidate, Laurent-Désiré Kabila (The Economist, 5 March 2009).

Within 15 months of coming to power in the DRC, Kabila was again at war, this time with (among others) his former backers, Rwanda and Uganda. Kabila was not willing to share political power with North Kivu's ethnic Tutsi population, the Bamyamulenge, despite the fact that they had supported Kabila in his efforts to topple Mobutu. In 1998, bowing to an

“anti-foreigner” nationalist sentiment in the DRC, Kabila ordered all foreign armies out of the country. This triggered a rebellion that resulted in a second Congo war, between, amongst others, an alliance led by Rwanda and Uganda (which included UNITA) on the one side, and on the other, the DRC and Angola (Reyntens 1999).

Since 1996, Rwanda, through intermittent military action and rebel sponsorship, has been in effective economic control of the DRC’s mineral rich provinces of North Kivu. In 2006, multiparty elections were held in the DRC. These were judged to be transparent and credible by international observers. The incumbent, President Joseph Kabila (who succeeded his father when he was assassinated in 2001) was elected and turned his focus on securing the mineral rich eastern province. This triggered further violence, in part attributable to fighting between the government army (Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo or FARDC) and Laurent Nkunda’s 6,000 strong National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP). The CNDP officially claimed to be fighting to protect North Kivu’s ethnic Tutsi population, the Banyamulenge, from the Hutu FDLR and activities of The Coalition of Congolese Patriotic Resistance (PARECO) (a combination of community militias known as “Mai-Mai” in North Kivu). However, evidence seems to suggest that efforts of the CNDP were aimed mainly at DRC army’s efforts to regain sovereignty over the natural resource rich eastern provinces, with the presence of the FDLR providing a useful pretext for CNDP’s activities, as well as Rwanda’s sponsorship of them (Reyntjens 1999, Polgreen 2008).

Within this context, the official narrative, in its first phase, initially had a focus on power-sharing and political pluralism in Rwanda:

“On 19 July, 1994, the RPF established the Government of National Unity with four other political parties – the Liberal Party (PL), the Social Democratic Party (PSD), the Christian Democratic Party (PDC), and the Republican Democratic Movement (MDR). Weeks later a 70-member Transitional National Assembly was formed consisting of representatives of the RPF, the four other political parties plus three other smaller parties, namely, the Islamic Party (PDI), the Socialist Party (PSR), and the Democratic Union for Rwandese People (UDPR), as well as six representatives of the Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA)” (Kagame 2010b).

However, the RPF moved quickly from a willingness to share power to near total control of the government. In August 1995 three leading Hutu members of the coalition government (the Prime Minister, Interior Minister and the Justice Minister) were forced to resign and further high profile resignations followed in early 2000 (the Speaker of Parliament, the Prime Minister and the President) (Reyntjens, 2004). The RPF’s main coalition partner, the MDR, was banned on the eve of the legislative and presidential elections in 2000, by which time Rwanda, according to some, “had become for all intents and purposes a single-party state” (Lemarchand 2006).

One of the main ways in which the RPF was able to consolidate its political power was through the Organic Law No 16/2003 of 27/06/2003 on Governing Political Organisations and Politicians (“2003 Organic Law”). Introduced in 2003, the 2003 Organic Law, which governed political organisations and politicians, meant that political parties in Rwanda could only be registered under certain strict conditions (Hintjens 2008, 88). For example,

political parties must “reflect the unity of the people of Rwanda” (Republic of Rwanda, Organic Law No 16/2003 of 27/06/2003 on Governing Political Organisations and Politicians, Article 5). The 2003 Organic Law prohibits “negationism or trivialisation of genocide” (Article 40.14) as well as “betraying other politicians and the country” (Article 41.4).

This consolidation of power by the RPF coincided on the one hand with Rwanda’s involvement in conflict in the DRC (specifically, its engagement of the FDLR), and on the other, the emergence of Rwanda’s economy as one of the fastest growing in Africa (Dickinson 2009, 1). Moreover, it is estimated that in the six years that followed the genocide in 1994, Rwanda’s government received more than \$4 billion in aid (Anglin 2001, 165). In 2009, Bill Clinton described Kagame as “one of the greatest leaders of our time” (Asiimwe 2009).

More recently however, there have been increasing concerns about the degree of political pluralism in Rwanda. On August 9, 2010, Paul Kagame won the Rwandan Presidential election with 93% of the vote, thereby securing a second seven-year term for himself and his party, the RPF. Commonwealth election observers noted that, while the voting had been peaceful, there had been “a lack of critical voices” during the campaign (BBC 2010).

In late 2008 a report to the United Nations Security Council by a panel of independent experts revealed evidence of links between senior officials of the DRC and Rwanda governments and the armed groups fighting in North Kivu (the FDLR and the CNDP respectively) (Polgreen 2008). The significance of the report was the way in which the international community reacted to it. World opinion began to turn against Rwanda, as Sweden and the Netherlands stopped their aid to Rwanda and other donors threatened to do the same (notably the United States and the United Kingdom)(Daily Nation, 2009). With the evidence suggesting that Rwanda had gone as far as supplying CNDP leader Laurent Nkunda with child soldiers, Rwanda risked losing the moral high ground it had occupied since the genocide in 1994.

In November 2012 the UK government did withhold aid to Rwanda (amounting to £21m) following a UN report that provided evidence of Rwanda bankrolling the “M23” rebels, who were widely believed to be fighting DRC government troops for control of mineral wealth in North Kivu. “M23” refers to the 23 March 2009 peace agreement, which was supposed to have integrated the CNDP (a precursor to M23) into the DRC’s army. A day after the UK’s announcement that it would be withdrawing Rwandan aid, M23 withdrew from Goma, the capital of the North Kivu province which they had seized in the previous week (McDevitt, 2012). A so-called “state-in-exile” of Rwandan Hutu refugees has existed in the DRC since the genocide in 1994 and continues to do so (Zurich 2010, 197).

Thus the Rwandan genocide in 1994 occurred in the context of a civil war, and the official narrative of that genocide has developed against the backdrop of ongoing domestic and regional conflict.

### **3.2 The Rwandan Government’s Nation-Building Project**

The official narratives of genocide studied in Chapter 2 were each to a greater or lesser extent influenced by government incumbents pursuing policies of nation-building. In the

Rwandan context, the official narrative of modern day political Rwanda represents a country with a strong consensual democracy, committed to power sharing and pluralism. Within this context, the RPF presents itself as a national party, a party of the people that has transcended ethnic divisions and conflicts. Thus in this way, effective nation-building is presented as the terminus of the official-narrative. The final section of the Government narrative, entitled “The Fall of the Genocidal Regime”, states:

“After Kigali fell to RPA (RPF’s armed wing) on 4 July 1994, RPF formed a Government of National Unity headed by President Pasteur Bizimungu, bringing parties that did not participate in the genocide together.” (OWRR 2012).

Writing in 2008, President Kagame asserted that the fact that “the Government of National Unity formed after the genocide involved all political parties except the party that spearheaded the genocide is further proof of the RPF’s moral leadership” (Kagame 2008, xxiii). In a recent interview with *The East African*, President Kagame claimed the following:

“In 2003, after two years of careful study, we had a new constitution...[s]ome key lessons came out of that process; one of them being that consensus was really important; we needed to build consensual democracy. The second lesson was power sharing, because we found the lack of these two things to have been central to tearing our country apart. Third, we had to embrace pluralism” (Kagame 2009c).

Since 1994, the RPF has implemented what it refers to as a policy of “national unity”. This requires that Rwandan citizens consider themselves neither Hutu, Tutsi nor Batwa<sup>1</sup>, but instead simply “Rwandan”. Indications of ethnicity were removed from state identity cards and it became illegal to discriminate on ethnic grounds. Now any use of these terms, or discussion about the relationship between Rwanda’s ethnic groups, is likely to lead to prosecution pursuant to Rwanda’s “Law relating to the punishment of the Crime of Genocide Ideology” (Noorlander 2010).

While many consider the aims of this policy laudable (Hintjens 2008), there are those that argue that this policy of national unity has concealed a policy of domination by some Tutsi within Rwanda. As Filip Reyntjens argues, “in the past, Hutu were a majority in public institutions, this was called ‘ethnic domination’; however, now that Tutsi were a majority, this became ‘meritocracy’” (Reyntjens 2010, 30). To make the point, Reyntjens points to a calculation made in 2000 that showed that approximately 70% of the 169 most important office holders in Rwanda were Tutsi (Reyntjens 2010, 30). The historic patterns of social exclusion of Hutu still feature in modern Rwanda. As Susanne Buckley-Zistel argues, a “rich person for example is occasionally referred to as a Tutsi, regardless of her or his ethnic identity, while ‘I am not your Hutu’ is used to fend off exploitation” (Buckley-Zistel 2008, 135).

This policy of national unity, and its associated legal regime, has also restricted the emergence of opposition parties to the RPF. A report by Freedom House found that there “is no meaningful competition between political parties and thus no real opportunity for

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<sup>1</sup> The Batwa are one of Rwanda’s three ethnic groups. They comprise only 0.4 % of the population whereas the Hutu and Tutsi comprise 85% and 14 % respectively of Rwanda’s total population (UNPO 2008).

rotation of power; since 2003, the RPF has dominated all levels of government” (Burnet 2007). The first Presidential elections that brought Kagame to power in 2003 were marred by allegations of intimidation and corruption, which at the time reportedly prompted Alison Des Forges, then of Human Rights Watch, to say “[i]f this society is not yet ready to participate in a free and open voting exercise, it should not participate. Kagame cannot have it both ways - calling it democratic, yet keeping it under tight control” (Astill 2003).

On August 9, 2010, presidential elections were again held in Rwanda and this time Paul Kagame secured 93% of the vote. Apart from Kagame, there were three other candidates in the election, none of whom could be described as representing opposition parties in any real sense (HRW 2010). The three parties who criticised the RPF, namely *FDU-Inkingi*, the *Democratic Green Party* and *PS Imberakuri*, were unable to compete in the elections, their leaders being variously accused of ‘genocide ideology’, ‘divisionism’ and inciting ethnic divisions (HRW 2010).

It also appears that violence is considered by the government of Rwanda to be a legitimate tool in the process of constructing a ‘new’ Rwandan state. This violence includes atrocities against the Hutu in the aftermath of the genocide and the RPF’s documented crimes in the DRC (OHCHR 2010, McGreal 2010). This state sponsored violence is also reportedly directed at critics within Rwanda. By way of example, in June 2010, a journalist for Rwandan newspaper *Umuwugizi* posted an article for the online version of the newspaper, which alleged the involvement of senior Rwandan officials in the attempted murder of former Rwandan general, Faustin Kayumba Nyamwasa. That same day, the journalist was murdered outside of his home (HRW 2010).

The combination of a focus on state directed transformation of a country with a corrupt past, widespread political quiescence and justification or tolerance of violence has echoes in “millennialism”. Millennialism, or chiliasm, represents the belief that at the end of time, God will judge the living and the resurrected dead. Such a belief in ultimate divine justice provides solace for the suffering of generations of believers: provided the day of redemption is yet to come, millennial hopes offer consolation to the suffering and can inspire patience and political tolerance. One tendency evident in millennial beliefs is a belief based on a hierarchical imperial vision of a coming kingdom that will be seen by a just, if authoritarian ruler. Aspiring leaders used millennial “saviour” imagery to bolster their rule (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2013). There are echoes of such savour imagery in the way that Kagame positions himself in Rwanda.

Relevant to this idea is the relationship between President Kagame and the American evangelical Christian pastor Rick Warren. In 2009, Warren nominated Kagame for Time’s 2009 list of the 100 Most Influential People in the World, stating “Kagame, is the face of emerging African leadership. His reconciliation strategy, management model, empowerment of women in leadership and insistence on self-reliance are transforming a failed state into one with a bright future.” (Warren 2009). It was in Rwanda, where, with the agreement of Kagame, Rick Warren launched his “Purpose Driven” campaign, based on Warren’s book, *Purpose Driven Life*. This provides that “[i]f you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God, You were born *by* his purpose, and *for* his purpose (Warren 2002, 17). During the launch of that campaign in April 2008, Kagame told a crowd of 20,000 that Warren “could not find a better place than Rwanda for

the Purpose Driven campaign, for good and bad reasons. The bad reasons are related to our history - in our past we have lived a life without purpose. The good reasons are related to our future - that we have a chance with the Purpose Driven Life" (Cole 2008).

The RPF's official narrative of the genocide must thus be analysed in the context of the Rwandan Government's nation-building project, spearheaded by its President, Paul Kagame.

University of Cape Town

## **Chapter 4: ANALYSIS OF THE RWANDAN PATRIOTIC FRONT'S OFFICIAL NARRATIVE OF THE RWANDAN GENOCIDE IN 1994**

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the RPF's official narrative of the Rwandan genocide in 1994 and to establish the main themes of this narrative, with a particular focus on the role of victims and perpetrators within that official narrative.

In establishing the content and main themes of the RPF's official narrative, the sources relied upon will be the official website of the Government of Rwanda, President Kagame's personal website, and interviews with, and speeches and articles by, President Kagame. One assumption here is that the government website will be reflective of the RPF's official narrative. Indeed, on the official website the RPF is sometimes referred to in the first person. For example, in explaining the RPF's decision to invade Rwanda from Uganda in 1990, the reader is told: "[t]aking up arms was not an easy decision to make. War has always been the last option in the consideration of the RPF" (OWRR 2008). Furthermore, on the basis that Paul Kagame is the leader of the RPF, his views are taken to be authoritative and representative of the party that he leads and therefore representative of the 'official' narrative.

Academic and media sources will be relied upon to highlight what are considered to be key silences in the RPF's narrative. These academic and media sources will not be relied upon for the purpose of determining the historical plausibility of the RPF's official narrative. Indeed, it is worth clarifying here that questions about what the RPF's official narrative account of the genocide is, and to which genre that account belongs, are of a formal nature. The aim is not to determine the factual truth about the historical events to which the narrative relates, but rather to discover how these events are construed by the RPF's official narrative.

### **4.1 The Official Narrative of the Colonial Era and the Pre-History to the Genocide in 1994**

While the focus of this thesis is on the RPF's official narrative of the genocide in 1994, relevant to this narrative is the related official narrative of Rwanda's colonial era, and this will therefore be briefly considered.

The RPF's official narrative of the colonial era tells the story of a pre-colonial ethnically harmonious Rwanda being transformed into a hierarchical society by German, followed by Belgian, colonisers:

"In 1899 Rwanda became a German colony. After the defeat of the Germans during WW1, subsequently in 1919 Rwanda became a mandate territory of the League of Nations under the administration of Belgium [...]. In 1935 the Belgian colonial administration introduced a discriminatory national identification on the basis of ethnicity. Banyarwanda who possessed ten or more cows were registered as Batutsi whereas those with less were registered as Bahutu. At first, the Belgian authorities, for political and practical reasons, favoured the King and his chiefs, who were mostly a Batutsi ruling elite" (Kagame 2010b).

This official narrative thus claims that the ethnic identities of Hutu and Tutsi were entrenched by the Belgians on the basis of strict economic criteria: cow ownership. This official narrative suggests that the Belgians racialised what had simply been a matter of ownership and wealth (Pottier 2002, 204). Furthermore, European colonial rulers are blamed for upsetting the previous harmonious social balance within Rwanda. Paul Kagame has asserted “[i]n a situation where historically, our people were living alongside one another, outside forces manipulated these communal ties and provoked division, hatred and conflict” (Kagame 2009b). Thus, according to the RPF, Tutsi and Hutu lived in harmony until the arrival of European colonialism.

As will be discussed in Chapter 5, this aspect of the official narrative lays the basis for Kagame’s blaming of the international community for their disruption of the previously harmonious status quo in Rwanda and then for failing to prevent the Rwandan genocide in 1994.

#### **4.2 The RPF’s ‘War of Liberation’**

Under the heading, “The Rwandese Patriotic Front”, Kagame’s website states:

“Against a backdrop of entrenched divisive and genocide ideology, repeated massacres, the persistent problems of refugees in the Diaspora, and the lack of avenues for peaceful political change, the Rwandese Alliance for National Unity (RANU) [subsequently renamed the Rwandese Patriotic Front] was formed in 1979” (Kagame 2010b).

The official website of the Republic of Rwanda states:

“[On] 1 October 1990, the RPF launched an armed liberation struggle that ultimately ousted the dictatorship in 1994 and ended the genocide of more than one million Batutsi and massacres of moderate Bahutu who opposed the genocide.”(OWRR 2012).

The formation of the RPF is thus given a central place in the recent history of Rwanda. Moreover, the narrative suggests that from the outset the RPF is on the right side of the moral equation, having been established in opposition to “entrenched divisive and genocide ideology, repeated massacres”.

Under the heading “The Armed Struggle” the narrative continues as follows:

“Most of the world had never heard of the RPF until 1st October 1990 - the day the war of liberation began against the military dictatorship in Kigali.

It had become apparent that only by taking up arms could anyone wishing to put an end to the dictatorship and the violation of fundamental rights hope to succeed. The regime had amassed a huge coercive state machinery using violence to oppress the people. The taking up of arms against the regime was therefore considered not just a right, but also a patriotic and national obligation.

When the war began, Rwandese peasants, workers, students and intellectuals, men and women from every region and "ethnic" or social group, responded to the call of the RPF to rid Rwanda of dictatorship" (Kagame 2010b).

From this account a number of key points emerge. Interestingly, the account of the RPF's decision to pursue a "war of liberation" does not readily fit into the logic of subsequent genocide-narrative. Indeed, the RPF's narrative of this period has the appearance of a standard anti-colonial narrative of national liberation. Not only the victimised Tutsi but "Rwandese peasants, workers, students and intellectuals, men and women from every region and 'ethnic' or social group, responded to the call of the RPF to rid Rwanda of dictatorship". The RPF is thus represented as a nationalist movement that enjoyed broad based support within Rwanda.

At this stage of the narrative, there is no particular focus on Tutsi 'victims' as the objects of the atrocities. Instead, emphasis is placed upon the RPF's struggle to "put an end to the dictatorship".

However, while Tutsi victimhood is not central to this particular aspect of the narrative, the RPF do offer a moral justification for taking up arms and invading Rwanda in order to fight a "war of liberation". They do so through claims that taking up arms was the only option for them, as a consequence of the behaviour of the "military dictatorship in Kigali". Indeed, in keeping with the form of the national liberation narrative, they claim to consider the taking up of arms "not just a right, but also a patriotic and national obligation" (OWRR 2008). This taking up of arms is presented as the only solution to a political problem in Rwanda. Furthermore, the narrative provides that this was not just a right of those that wished to liberate Rwanda, but also an "obligation".

The official narrative of this period consistently implies that the RPF was committed to general moral and political standards and were constantly searching for peaceful solutions in the face of the Hutu Rwandan President Major General Juvenal Habyarimana's aggression and belligerence. Indeed, the next section of the narrative of this period, under the heading "The Search for Peace", continues as follows:

"As the war for liberation escalated, RPF still attempted to seek peaceful ways of resolving the conflict. On 29th March 1991, in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the RPF and the then Government of Rwanda signed the N'sele Ceasefire Agreement which provided for, among other things, cessation of hostilities, withdrawal of foreign troops, exchange of prisoners of war and finally, serious political negotiations to end the conflict. Immediately after signing the agreement, the Government of Rwanda ridiculed and ignored the said agreement and the war intensified." (Kagame 2010b).

The RPF's official narrative also suggests that the timing of the invasion was dictated solely by the realisation that the taking up of arms was the only way "to put an end to the dictatorship" in Rwanda. Thus even though this aspect of the RPF's narrative is more akin to a liberation narrative, within which, arguably a certain level of belligerence would be considered understandable, the narrative continues to claim the moral high ground in absolute terms. Thus, contrary to the standard liberation narrative, the RPF's official narrative does not attribute central agency to it as a primary protagonist in the liberation

struggle, which might perhaps offend the portrayal of innocence of the Tutsi, as an ethnic group, as part of the subsequent genocide-narrative. Consequently, this aspect of the official narrative focuses instead on the essential victimhood of the Tutsi, who are portrayed as having no choice but to fight. This simplification of events and insistence on the absolute innocence of the (eventual) victims has already been noted as a feature of official genocide narratives, in particular the Shoah narrative.

### 4.3 The Genocide

The RPF's official narrative of the period immediately preceding the genocide, under the heading "The Arusha Peace Agreement" provides as follows:

"As the regime became more desperate, massacres of Batutsi in various parts of the country became widespread in a deliberate effort of ethnic cleansing ... the Arusha Peace Agreement was signed on 4th August 1993...[the] RPF honoured all its commitments when in December 1993 it sent 600 of its troops to Kigali, as well as members of the Executive designated to be members of the transitional government. The regime on the other hand, was focused on the preparation for genocide....Between April and July 1994, over 1 million Rwandese people, mainly Batutsi and some Bahutu opposition were killed by the genocidal regime.

When the genocide began, the United Nations had a peacekeeping force - the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) - in Rwanda of about 2500 troops. The first reaction of the United Nations, and indeed of other nations that had their own nationals in Rwanda, was to withdraw their troops and their nationals respectively. Under the circumstances the RPF had to fight again in order to stop the genocide" (Kagame 2010b).

This narrative presents the RPF as operating in good faith at all times in respect of the peace process in Arusha and thus continues to claim a superior moral position. The narrative also reverts from the previous narrative of national liberation to a genocide-narrative with claims of massacres of Tutsi in Rwanda and "ethnic cleansing" by the Hutu (it should however be noted that the official narrative does acknowledge that "some Bahutu opposition" were killed). This is significant, because in this way, the mass killings are not related to the RPF invasion or located in the conflict in which the RPF was involved. Instead, these mass killings are represented as a genocidal project wholly initiated by "the regime". Moreover, the narrative stresses that the genocide was planned, referring to the Hutu regime's "preparation for genocide".

The narrative also stresses the failure of both the UN and the various other nations who had a presence in Rwanda at the time of the genocide, to take any real steps to prevent the start of genocide and once it had began, to take any action to stop it (Prunier 2009, 1). Indeed, in the case of the France, Belgium and the Democratic Republic of Congo, it points out that they "hurriedly dispatched troops to Rwanda to support the dictatorial regime" (OWRR 2008). This international responsibility reinforces the earlier accusations by the Rwandan government that the meddling in Rwandan society by German and then Belgian colonisers had led to "division, hatred and conflict" (Kagame 2009b).

The RPF's official narrative of the genocide itself, under the heading "Genocide" continues as follows:

"Many people were involved in the killings. Those who planned and organised the genocide included the late President, Major General Juvenal Habyarimana, top government officials, including members of the so-called Provisional Government, the Presidential Guard, the National Gendarmerie, the Rwanda Armed Forces (FAR), the MRND-CDR militia (Interahamwe), local officials, and many Bahutu in the general population.

Preparation to carry out genocide by these groups involved the training of the militia, the arming of both the militia and some sections of the population, the establishment and widespread use of a hate radio called Radio television libre de mille collines (RTL), and the distribution of lists of those targeted for elimination" (Kagame 2010b).

A notable feature of this particular account of the genocide is the further stressing of the idea that the genocide was carefully planned in advance. The RPF narrative attributes the genocide primarily to this planning and organisation by the government. Arguably, this focus on the planning of the genocide supports the representation of the genocide as a deliberate and controlled state-sponsored operation, rather than being attributable, at least in part, to an internecine conflict involving rival groups and forces (including the RPF). This representation of agency has important implications for the respective responsibility and accountability of the prior regime and of the RPF.

It was previously noted that events and factors which do not readily fit within the simplifying logic of genocide-narratives tend to be excluded, and this might explain why there is no mention here of, for example, the economic crisis in Rwanda caused by rapid currency devaluation and a drop in coffee prices, considered by some observers to have played a critical role in the growth of extremism in Rwanda (Jefremovas 2000, 301). Jefremovas argues that "[n]one of these factors excuses the choice of a 'final solution', rather they illustrate the framework within which the extremists operated (Jefremovas 2000, 301). Furthermore, there is no mention of the acute scarcity of land in Rwanda or the impact of the huge influx of weapons into Rwanda, something at least partly attributable to the RPF's invasion in 1990 (Olson 1994, C. Newbury 1992). The exclusion of these factors from the official narrative greatly simplifies the context in which the extremist Hutu government is said to have espoused its genocidal ideology.

There are two further silences in the RPF narrative of this period that are significant. Firstly, the assassination of President Habyarimana by the shooting down of his plane on 6 April 1994 which some observers consider to have been the precipitating factor of the genocide that began the following day. Many argue that this event was the tipping point in the escalation of violence, the central factor in the 'security dilemma' experienced by the Hutu in Rwanda (Straus 2006, Lemarchand 2007). Yet this significant event is not mentioned by the RPF as part of the official narrative of the events surrounding the genocide. Given the accusations of RPF involvement in the shooting down of the plane, discussed in Chapter 5 below, such a silence can be understood as necessary to preserve

the binary logic of the genocide narrative, which insists on the absolute innocence of the victims (on whose behalf the RPF purport to speak).

The second silence of significance is in respect to the period that followed the ending of the genocide of the Tutsi. As Alison Des Forges showed, the mass killings of Tutsi stopped with the invasion of Kigali by the RPF, but the mass killing of Hutu did not. Indeed, large numbers of Hutu civilians were purportedly massacred by RPF troops in the aftermath of the genocide. It is claimed that these killings are documented in the so-called 'Gersony' report, named after the UNHCR official who investigated these massacres; but this report was never publicly released or indeed acknowledged (Des Forges 1999, 726-734, Lemarchand 2007, 1). Lemarchand points to a "conspiracy of silence surrounding one of the biggest ethnic cleansing operations that followed in the wake of the genocide" (Lemarchand 2007, 5). Reprisal killings might well have been expected in the context of the genocide that preceded them, but their omission from the RPF's narrative can be understood on the basis that the fact of such killings would not readily fit with the narrative binary logic of Tutsi as victims only and all perpetrators as Hutu.

While the official narrative depicts the victimhood of the Tutsi throughout Rwanda's recent history, some Rwandan observers point to the RPF's own suspicions, or even contempt, for those Tutsi who did not flee Rwanda in 1959 (IPEP 2000, Hilsum 2004). Such Tutsi are considered opportunists, and even collaborators with the Hutu regime. Indeed, there are those that argue that President Habyarimana's accession was welcomed by many of Rwanda's Tutsi. While they were never likely to become "equals" to their Hutu counterparts under a Hutu government, an implicit deal between Habyarimana and the Tutsi that remained in Rwanda was claimed. Essentially, this deal meant that, provided the Tutsi stayed away from politics and the army, they would be free to engage in business, largely unfettered by the government. Thus, "many Tutsi flourished as business people, some becoming very successful and largely dominating international trade" (IPEP 2000). As a consequence, there was resentment towards such Tutsi from those in the Diaspora, who had to endure far harder lives.

There were also suspicions of another class of Tutsi in Rwanda: those who survived the genocide. Again, this suspicion is considered particularly strong amongst Diaspora Tutsi. Lindsay Hilsum recounts the story of a Tutsi girl who survived the genocide but whose entire family were murdered. A Tutsi family who took her in after they returned to Rwanda from Uganda would refer to her as "petit Bagasora" – a reference to one of the main Hutu architects of the massacres. Hilsum writes: "[b]eing alive attracted suspicion, as if the morally correct position was to have died" (Hilsum 2004). Genocide survivors have claimed that they feel marginalised by the RPF and treated as "second-class citizens" (Rafti 2004, 8).

The official government narrative does not refer to the position of such Tutsi survivors. Tutsis as collaborators could conceivably fit within a national liberation narrative, but not within a genocide-narrative, which insists upon the complete moral innocence of the victims – in this case the Tutsi. The suspicion that fell upon those Tutsi that survived the genocide perhaps explains why the RPF's official narrative stresses the fact that the RPF came from outside Rwanda in 1994. It allows the RPF to position themselves in such a way as to take the benefit of the entitlements associated with the victimhood status of those

Tutsi who suffered in Rwanda at the hands of the Hutu, yet as outsiders, they are distanced from the surviving class of Tutsi, who by virtue of the very fact of their survival, are considered by some as opportunists or collaborators.

In terms of the form of the narrative, for the most part, this is a narrative that stresses major violence suffered by Tutsi victims, at the hands of Hutu perpetrators – in 1994 and the preceding decades. Ethnic difference is represented as the cause of the genocide and the ethnic identities of 'Hutu' and 'Tutsi' are assumed and asserted as essential historical and primordial categories created by Rwanda's colonialists.

The account of the RPF's invasion from Uganda has elements in common with a national liberation narrative, with the RPF portrayed as fighting to liberate Rwanda from a despotic (Hutu) leadership. Indeed, to an extent, the genocide-narrative and the national liberation narratives run concurrently, with the RPF's eventual liberation of Rwanda coinciding with the end of the atrocities against the Tutsi.

Yet, despite the presence of two narrative forms, the features associated with genocide narratives are mostly present across both of these narratives. In both, Hutu are consistently portrayed as the perpetrators, and Tutsi as the victims. As a consequence, even when the narrative more closely resembles a national liberation narrative, and the victors are caught up in the same events as the victims, contrary to what one might expect within such narratives, victories, to the extent that they involve violence, are not celebrated; indeed, they are barely even mentioned. Where violence at the hands of Tutsi is mentioned, it is presented as inevitable. On this basis then, the most significant narrative is the genocide narrative, and to the extent the narrative takes the form of a national liberation narrative, it is tailored so as not to offend the moral logic of the genocide narrative.

As victors in the Rwandan civil war from 1990 to 1994, it is clearly impossible for the RPF to still represent themselves as victims of the Hutu in the current dispensation. But, if all Tutsi, as an ethnic group are presented as victims, as they are in the RPF's narrative, then by association, the RPF may take the benefit of the entitlements related to victimhood within the genocide-narrative. Thus the victimhood of the Tutsi in Rwanda becomes a narrative resource.

Together, this genocide narrative and national liberation narrative serve as antecedents to a combination of other narrative forms: a social-revolutionary/transformation discourse and a nation-building discourse.

Thus the RPF's official narrative of the genocide contains features of various different types of narrative. However what is consistent throughout all of these narrative frames is an emphasis on Tutsi innocence and victimhood, and on Hutu moral culpability.

## **Chapter 5: CONTESTATION: THE RWANDAN GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSES TO CHALLENGES TO ITS OFFICIAL NARRATIVE**

The aim of this chapter is to analyse how the Rwandan government responds to challenges to its official narrative. This chapter will proceed in two sections. The first will consider the ways in which the Rwandan government responds to domestic challenges to its official narrative. The second will consider how the RPF responds to international challenges to its official narrative with a particular focus on the RPF's manipulation of international guilt and shame, political pressure on the international community and its relationship with cultural elites connected to the RPF's official narrative.

### **5.1 Responding to Domestic Challenges**

The analysis of genocide narratives in Chapter 2 revealed that access to, and control of, the state is vital to the perpetuation of official genocide-narratives. This is also the case in respect to the RPF's official narrative of genocide. Once the RPF achieved power, it was able to utilise the organs of government to disseminate its version of the Rwandan genocide narrative and present it as the official narrative, thereby elevating it above, as well as countering other, competing narrative accounts of the same events. As discussed at various points in this thesis, the RPF has been able to use legislation and other tools available to the government to alter the nature of the political terrain to protect and further its official narrative.

Empowered by the 2003 Organic Law, the RPF's control over the formation of political parties has severely restricted the emergence of opposition parties within Rwanda, which in turn has restricted the ability of these opposition groups to form their own competing narratives, or challenge the RPF's official narrative. Hintjens argues that “[i]t is not hard to see such sweeping clauses as giving incumbents means of holding on to power, by harassing and intimidating their political opponents and perceived enemies” (Hintjens 2008, 88). In the 2010 presidential elections in Rwanda all three parties that were critical of the RPF were variously accused of ‘genocide ideology’, ‘divisionism’ and inciting ethnic divisions and were prevented from competing in the elections (HRW 2010).

The RPF's policy of “national unity” means that use of ethnic labels or discussion about the relationship between these two ethnic groups, is likely to lead to prosecution pursuant to Rwanda's “Law relating to the Punishment of the Crime of Genocide Ideology” (Noorlander 2010). Human rights groups within Rwanda that produce critical reports are at risk of contravening the 2003 Organic Law, which has previously been used to threaten Rwanda's major human rights organisation, *Ligue Rwandaise pour la Promotion et la Defense des Droits de l'Homme* with dissolution (Hintjens 2008, 88).

Within Rwanda, media criticism aimed at Kagame, or his government, risks a long prison sentence or a heavy fine, under “Rwanda's vaguely worded laws on libel, insult, contempt of the head of state or publishing falsehoods” (Noorlander 2010, 1). Journalists from the independent newspaper, *Umurabyo*, were recently indicted for publishing articles considered “divisionist in nature, and therefore contrary to Rwanda's laws against sectarianism and genocide ideology” (Noorlander 2010). While the official purpose of these laws is to prevent any future genocide, their oppressive impact on a free press in

Rwanda has been criticised by the UN's human rights committee and Human Rights Watch (Noorlander 2010, Waldorf 2007).

Human Rights Watch documented multiple examples of harassment of the media in Rwanda in the run up to the 2010 Presidential elections. In February 2010, three journalists from the independent newspaper Umeseso were found guilty of defamation and imprisoned. In April the Media High Council suspended two independent newspapers, Umuvugizi and Umuseso for six months. The Media High Council is a nominally independent constitutional body, but it is staffed by government appointees and "supervised" by the Ministry of Information (Noorlander 2010). Subsequently, the editors of each of these newspapers fled Rwanda after receiving death threats. As previously mentioned, it is also reported that threats of this nature have been carried out against journalists in Rwanda: in June 2010 a journalist for Umuvugizi was murdered outside of his home, the same day that he posted an article alleging involvement of senior Rwandan officials in the attempted murder of former Rwandan general, Faustin Kayumba Nyamwasa (HRW 2010).

The RPF's control over the media within Rwanda is thus an important factor in the construction and dissemination of its official narrative. A strong and independent media sector within Rwanda would allow for the possibility of alternative narratives to emerge, thus challenging the dominance of the RPF's official narrative.

The RPF's control over the "Gacaca" court community justice system implemented since 2001 in Rwanda arguably constitutes a major attempt by the RPF to impose its version of the genocide narrative on the Rwandan population. In 2001, more than 250,000 gacaca judges were elected by their communities in 11,000 locations (Clark 2010, 3). Rwanda's community Gacaca courts were established in the aftermath of the genocide to speed up the prosecution of hundreds of thousands of genocide suspects facing trial for their role in 1994 genocide. According to Rwandan officials, at the outset of the gacaca hearings, there were over 800,000 accused (Mukantaganzwa 2007). Such community-based courts finished their work in 2012, after ten years of existence (BBC, 2012).

In a 2005 interview about the Gacaca courts, Des Forges stated that "[i]n this system, there is considerable weight given to the official side. The office of the prosecutor provides considerable assistance to the bench [of judges] in terms of making its determination, so you no longer have a level playing field." (Vasagar 2005, 1). Furthermore, the Gacaca process has been criticised for the ways in which genocide and war crimes committed during the same era in 1994 were differentiated, with the Gacaca courts limited to trying only those accused of genocide (Corey and Joireman, 2004). Distinguishing between perpetrators in this way is particularly significant given that the official narrative of the Rwandan government insists that in Rwanda only Tutsis were victims of genocide, whereas Hutus killed in 1994 were killed for other reasons (Soudan 2009). Consequently, the Gacaca courts were only expected to deal with Hutu perpetrators of genocide, not Tutsi perpetrators of war crimes. Consequently, it is argued that the Gacaca process leads to victors' justice, and perpetuates ethnic division (Corey and Joireman 2004, 89).

## 5.2 Responding to International Challenges

The RPF has disseminated its official narrative on an international scale, and responded to challenges to that narrative, through a combination of manipulating the guilt feelings of the international community on the one hand, and political pressure on the other.

### 5.2.1 Manipulation of International Guilt and Shame

The official narrative of the RPF, as well as its adherents, suggests that the colonial powers in Rwanda must bear some responsibility for instituting practices in Rwanda that ultimately led to the genocide. As discussed in Chapter 4 above, the official narrative holds German and Belgian colonial rulers responsible for upsetting what the official narrative depicts as the previous harmonious social balance within Rwanda. Furthermore, this narrative stresses the failure of the international community to prevent the genocide and then to intervene and stop it. Worse still, the French government in particular are accused of supporting “some of the worst excesses of the Hutu regime beyond the normal limits of political alliance” (Prunier 2009, 1). When faced with challenges to its official narrative by the Rwandan government, a pattern emerges of the RPF stressing the responsibility and the failings of the international community in respect of the genocide in comparison to the RPF’s actions that stopped it.

In 2009, at Rwanda’s annual commemoration of the genocide, Paul Kagame acknowledged that he had been criticised for exploiting the guilt of those who did not do enough to prevent the genocide in Rwanda. First he deliberately conflated the criticism of the RPF with criticism of Tutsi and indeed Rwandans in general, and then rhetorically asked his imaginary interlocutor whether the Rwandan children who performed at the commemoration were exploiting the guilt of anyone (Kagame 2009a). Next he dealt expressly with what he called two forms of international guilt. Firstly “those whose guilt we are said to be exploiting are guilty because they are part of the history and the root causes of 1994 genocide in Rwanda – a history going back many decades. There were those who shaped that history to lead us to what we saw in 1994” (Kagame 2009a). Secondly “apart from being part of the history that gave rise to this situation, the second form of guilt is indeed how the people of Rwanda were abandoned at their time of need by people who were here supposedly to protect them” (Kagame 2009a).

After shaming the international community in this way, Kagame then reminds the world of the RPF’s moral superiority: “[o]f course, we are not like those who said “never again” yet abandoned those they were responsible for. I can only conclude that this is not just guilt, it is also cowardice – the world is full of cowards. But we are not going to shy away, we are not cowards” (Kagame 2009a).

The invocation of the “never again” maxim is significant here for two main reasons. First, it invokes the master narrative of the Shoah, the ultimate genocide-narrative that the world is particularly attuned to. This indirectly facilitates the effective manipulation of international guilt and shame for the failure to intervene in the Rwandan genocide, in respect to which “never again” rang hollow.

Second, it recalls the failure of the international community to contemporaneously label the mass killing in Rwanda during 1994, as “genocide”, as defined in the Genocide

Convention, and intervene to stop it on that basis. In her *Bystanders to Genocide*, which comprises a series of interviews with those within the Clinton Administration responsible for making the decisions in respect to Rwanda in 1994, Samantha Power argues that even in the face of overwhelming evidence, “American officials...shunned the use of what became known as “the g-word.” They felt that using it would have obliged the United States to act, under the terms of the 1948 Genocide Convention” (Power 2001).

As a consequence, a shamed international community, haunted by their failure to prevent, and in some cases their suggested contribution to, the Rwandan genocide, has made attempts at atonement for its collective behaviour. Part of this atonement has, at least until very recently, comprised largely uncritical support of the RPF and a face value acceptance of its official narrative of the genocide.

More recently, during an interview with the Financial Times, Kagame stated: “I don’t think anybody out there in the media, UN, human rights organisations, has any moral right whatsoever to level any accusations against me or against Rwanda. Because, when it came to the problems facing Rwanda, and the Congo, they were all useless” (Wallis 2011). Of particular note here is the inclusion of the Congo in the realm of things in respect to which Rwanda should not be criticised by the international community, because of their inaction in respect to the genocide. The way in which this official narrative seeks to legitimate violence in the DRC is discussed in Chapter 6, below.

### **5.2.2 Political Pressure on the International Community**

As well as highlighting the guilt and the shame of the international community, the RPF has also relied on coercion and political pressure in the face of international challenges to its official narrative of the genocide.

A recent example of this political pressure by the Rwandan government is the RPF’s response to a report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights that implicated the RPF in genocide in the Democratic Republic of Congo (OHCHR 2010). This report recorded multiple instances of violence and looting in the DRC by various armed entities since 1993. Moreover, this report, known as the “Mapping Exercise”, accused the Rwandan army of “relentless pursuit and mass killing” of tens of thousands of Hutus, including women and children in its pursuit of forces responsible for the Rwandan genocide into the DRC (OHCHR 2010, McGreal 2010). The report concluded that these mass killings “could be classified as crimes of genocide” (OCHCR 2010). The report also confirmed that many of the soldiers that committed these atrocities were under the control of Rwandan army officers, and that their overall commander was Colonel James Kabarebe, the current defence minister of Rwanda (Brody 2010).

Faced with a report that conflicted with the RPF’s self-representation within its official narrative as a moral force for good, the Rwandan government responded to the report in a number of different ways in an attempt to protect the integrity of its official narrative. It attempted to prevent publication of the report, or at least the version of the report that suggested that the RPF might be responsible for genocide in the DRC. It did so by President Paul Kagame threatening to withdraw Rwandan troops from various peacekeeping assignments, including the UN mission in Darfur, which Rwanda leads (Brody 2010). When in August the report was published it was described by Rwanda’s foreign minister as

“flawed and dangerous from start to finish” and as “a moral and intellectual failure as well as an insult to history” (Brody 2010).

This episode reveals the tension between the moral logic of the RPF’s official narrative, with its absolute binary opposites of innocent victims and evil perpetrators on the one hand, and on the other, the realist world of political pressure. The publication of the Mapping Exercise indicates an unwillingness to take the RPF’s official narrative, and the moral role afforded to the RPF within that narrative, at face value. In the face of the failure by the RPF to impose its ‘moral’ vision of these events, it pursued a more ‘realist’ approach. Threatening to withdraw its troops could have serious repercussions for the international community’s peacekeeping efforts. In respect to the U.S. for example, Rwandan troops can act as proxies, undertaking peacekeeping operations that the U.S. military are unable or unwilling to undertake, in strategically important regions such as Somalia (French 2011, minute 17.32 to 17.50).

The alleged role of the Rwandan government in the suppression of the investigation of the downing of President Habyarimana’s plane, referred to in Chapter 4 as a major ‘silence’ in the RPF’s official narrative, is another example of the RPF pressurising the international community in order to maintain the integrity of its official narrative. According to Michael Hourigan, a former UN investigator tasked with investigating the downing of the plane, the investigation was abruptly stopped, against his wishes. It is speculated that the reason for this was that the Rwandan government threatened to withdraw its vital support of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, if the enquiry went ahead (Doyle 2007, 1). Clearly, had the enquiry implicated Kagame and the RPF, as a subsequent investigation by a French judge did (BBC 2006, McGreal 2006), then this would conflict with the RPF’s role within its official narrative.

### 5.2.3 Cultural Elites

The important role of cultural elites in the articulation and dissemination of genocide narratives has already been noted in Chapter 2, most particularly in the case of the Shoah narrative. The review of the relevant literature on Rwanda noted that this is highly politicised, even polemical, with a pattern emerging of some scholars consistently identifying with particular actors. The expected implication was that those who seek to construct an official narrative of the Rwandan genocide are likely to find it expedient to rely on and support those authors who support their narrative, and to marginalise those who do not.

Johan Pottier points to a “relationship of mutual advantage” between international commentators and the Rwandan government, where the “insider offers enlightenment to the outsider; the outsider returns the gift by offering the prospect of international recognition and legitimacy” (Pottier 2002, 207). At the level of popular, non-Rwandan literature, the relationship between Paul Kagame and Philip Gourevitch appears to be one of such “mutual advantage”. Gourevitch’s bestselling *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda* (1998) is a book that is considered to have played a decisive role in the shaping of perceptions of the genocide, particularly amongst English speakers (Lemarchand 2007, 7). Gourevitch’s representation of the genocide and Rwanda’s recent history shares key elements of the official narrative of

the RPF, in that the Tutsi are represented as innocent victims, the Hutu as innately violent perpetrators, and the genocide as an inevitable consequence of the colonialist legacy in Rwanda (Lemarchand 2007, 7). As a consequence, Gourevitch is given access to the Rwandan government, and in particular to President Kagame, in the form of personal interviews, such as for his interview published in *The New Yorker* in 2009 (Gourevitch 2009).

The relationship between Gourevitch and Kagame has come under increasing scrutiny, as indicated by Tristan McConnell's *One Man's Rwanda: Philip Gourevitch softens some hard truths* (McConnell 2011). McConnell quotes David Anderson, a professor of African politics at Oxford University, who describes Gourevitch's writing as "extremely influential in helping Kagame establish a degree of international traction" and who argues that it "gave Kagame a credibility and a profile, portraying him as a force for good" (McConnell 2011, 1). Others go further, arguing that "[i]t is not unreasonable to assume that this highly naïve and uncritical rendering of the genocide has had a powerful hold on official thinking of US policy-makers towards the new Rwandan state." (Lemarchand 2007, 7).

By contrast, Alison Des Forges was initially very supportive of the RPF, but subsequently became more critical over time. In particular, as previously noted, she recorded the violations of human rights that were being carried out by the RPF in the aftermath of the genocide and beyond, in the name of political normalisation. As a consequence, as Gerard Prunier (who followed a similar path of initial support, followed by condemnation of, then criticism by, the RPF) notes, Des Forges was denounced by the RPF as a "genocide sympathiser" and accused of prejudice.. Shortly before her death she had become persona non grata in Kigali." (Prunier 2009, 1).

From our review in this chapter of how the Rwandan government responds to challenges to its official narrative, we may conclude that its multiple efforts in this regard are all aimed at gaining control of political, legal, social and cultural space within Rwanda. Outside Rwanda's boundaries, the official narrative's efforts at extending its control of international perceptions include manipulative shaming, political pressure and support or marginalisation of cultural elites.

## **Chapter 6: HOW THE OFFICIAL NARRATIVE IS BOUND UP WITH THE RPF GOVERNMENT'S AIMS AND OBJECTIVES AND SERVES TO JUSTIFY ITS POLITICAL ACTIONS AND POLICIES**

The aim of this chapter is to consider the relation of the Rwandan government's official narrative to its political aims and objectives, and to consider how this official narrative serves to justify relevant actions and policies.

It has previously been established in Chapter 2 of this thesis that genocide narratives can justify political and moral actions in the present. In particular, narratives that stress victimhood can be used to justify certain political actions, including, in the extreme, state sponsored violence. In the sense that the RPF is a predominantly Tutsi organisation (Clark, 2010), the Rwandan government can be understood as a minority government. Given its 93% share of the vote at the 2010 elections (BBC 2010), the RPF would no doubt challenge this minority government label, particularly since it is based on the very ethnic analysis of Hutu and Tutsi that the RPF rejects. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this thesis the RPF is nevertheless understood as a minority government, on the basis that it is a Tutsi dominated party (especially so following its purge of Hutu moderates after 1995, as discussed above), in a country where the Tutsi constitute 14% of the total population (UNPO 2008).

If understood as a minority government, the RPF's right to rule thus requires justification – this will be considered in the first part of this chapter. The RPF also employs various measures, including state-sponsored violence, aimed at maintaining its hold on political power – this will be considered in the second part of this chapter. Chapter 2 also found that official genocide narratives may have unintended consequences, and these will be considered with regard to the Rwandan official narrative in this chapter.

### **6.1 The RPF's Right to Rule**

One of the main implications of the moral logic of the RPF's official narrative is that the RPF has a moral and political entitlement to rule Rwanda. The RPF's genocide-narrative, with its binary construction of (Tutsi) victims and (Hutu) perpetrators, generates a set of moral and political entitlements in post-genocide Rwanda, which benefits the RPF, while excluding and marginalising others, especially political opponents.

With the genocide at its heart, the official narrative of the RPF operates to generate moral entitlements for victims and other parties associated with those victims, in this case, the RPF. The leaders and members of RPF were not themselves victims of the genocide, and the official narrative of the RPF does not claim this to be the case. Instead, it defines the victims as the Tutsi people as a whole. Thus the RPF's ethnic association with the Tutsi as the essential victims of the genocide implies a moral entitlement for the RPF, as the political representatives of those Tutsi victims, to rule Rwanda. Indeed, the official narrative depicts the RPF as being created for this very purpose.

By contrast, the RPF's official narrative effectively portrays representatives of the Hutus as the perpetrators of the genocide, the implication of which is that they should therefore be disqualified from political rule in Rwanda. This further implies that it is justifiable to exclude Hutus from public and political life in Rwanda; they are effectively treated as

having forfeited such rights as a consequence of their role in the genocide. Hutus who criticise the RPF are considered 'negationists', 'genocide deniers', or worse, labelled 'genocidaires', labels that place such Hutus firmly within the category of "perpetrators" within the binary framework of the RPF's official genocide narrative. The pre-history to the genocide in 1994, as represented in the RPF's official narrative, further discredits prior Hutu political rulers of Rwanda, depicting this period of Rwanda's history as characterised by "entrenched divisive and genocide ideology [and] repeated massacres" (Kagame 2010b). The implication here is that Hutu political power in Rwanda inevitably results in Tutsi orientated violence.

By casting the Tutsi as innocent victims of a genocidal project, planned well in advance by the previous Hutu regime, the RPF's official narrative reinforces the idea that Tutsis were killed by Hutus, not for what they had done in the past, or out of fear for what they might do after their ascent to power during the civil war in 1990-1994, but because of who they were. Thus a political contest, with a zero-sum history, becomes an official narrative of Hutu prejudice and hatred. An alternative, more nuanced representation to this binary opposition of Tutsi victims and Hutu perpetrators in the official narrative would have different political implications in that it would qualify and undercut the RPF's assertion of its right to rule Rwanda.

The official policy on genocide remembrance in Rwanda reveals the contradiction between the RPF's insistence that former ethnic labels have been transcended in modern day Rwanda, while insisting on the significance of these distinctions in the past. The genocide in 1994 was recently officially renamed the "Genocide of Rwanda's Tutsi's". Asked why, President Kagame explained "[i]n Rwanda, the targeted group was the Tutsi, exclusively. The Hutus who were killed in 1994 were not the victims of a deliberate genocide but were killed for other reasons" (Soudan 2009). Here then, even though the killing of Hutu in 1994 is acknowledged, this is attributed to "other reasons" than genocide, and by implication therefore, these Hutu victims are not afforded the same victim status as that of victims of the genocide Tutsi. In this way, the official history represented in Rwanda's annual commemoration ceremonies provides ideological legitimacy to the concentration of Tutsi power (Lemarchand 2008, 70). "Never again" requires that the RPF, on behalf of the Tutsi, must ensure they maintain political power, to prevent another genocide in Rwanda. Further ideological legitimation in these binary ethnic terms is provided through exaggerations of the number of Hutus that participated in the genocide (Lemarchand 2008, 70).

The RPF's official genocide-narrative functions to justify the right of the RPF to rule Rwanda in preference not only to Hutus, but also in preference to other Tutsis. The significance of the emphasis in the official narrative on the fact that the RPF were outsiders, is that the RPF are not tainted by any moral compromise, in comparison to those Tutsi that remained in Rwanda after 1959, under the rule of the Hutu regimes that preceded the RPF's reign. As discussed in Chapter 4, the moral complicity of those Tutsis that remained in Rwanda is assumed to be betrayed either by the economic success of such Tutsi during this time, or even by the fact of their survival of the genocide. A further implication of the official narrative's emphasis on the role that the RPF played in ending the genocide, is that by implication, these same Tutsi owe their lives to the RPF. Furthermore, the official narrative of the genocide refers to a "national obligation" to

participate in the armed struggle to overthrow the Hutu regime in 1994. By implication, those Tutsi that did not meet this obligation have forfeited their right to rule. This implication supports the RPF's nation-building project. Like the Zionist Israelis, the RPF's state transformation project is aimed at creating a new muscular "type" of Tutsi, who will never again suffer the same fate as the Tutsis in 1994.

In asserting the right to speak on behalf of the victims of the genocide (who cannot speak for themselves) the RPF do so largely on the basis of claims to shared ethnicity, since they are Tutsi, and according to the official narrative, the victims were Tutsi. The official narrative places the genocide at its heart, and offers a simplified representation of Tutsi victims, and Hutu perpetrators. One significant implication of this is that the RPF's official narrative operates to ensure that, to the extent that people are permitted to speak, it is within the structure of the RPF's official narrative. Thus to the extent that Hutus are accorded a voice, they must speak as perpetrators, according to the moral logic of the RPF's narrative. Even those who are not part of a particular 'discredited' group find that their criticisms are polarised into the extremes of these binary positions, and as a consequence, find their purported view to be shared by Hutu extremists and are accordingly dismissed as agents of genocide deniers or themselves accused as genocide deniers and therefore guilty of 'divisionism'.

On this basis the official narrative implies that the RPF has a moral entitlement to rule Rwanda after the genocide. In this view the period of Hutu rule before the genocide was characterised by violence and repression of Tutsis. When in 1994 this Tutsi-orientated violence culminated in the genocide it was the RPF who stopped it. The Hutu regime carried it out through the execution of a prepared plan. The international community paved the way for the genocide and then did nothing to stop it. Those Tutsis that remained in Rwanda during the two Hutu republics are morally compromised – particularly those that prospered economically, or did not meet their "national obligation" to fight the Hutu regime. All others except the RPF have thus forfeited legitimacy: legitimacy to compete for power in the case of Hutu and also of Tutsis that remained during the two Hutu Republics. They also lack all legitimacy to criticise the RPF government (including in particular the international community).

An unintended consequence of the RPF's official genocide-narrative, and its associated assertion of the RPF's right to rule in Rwanda, is that many of those Tutsi genocide survivors within Rwanda that felt marginalised by the RPF have fled the country (Rafti 2004, 8). In exile, Hutu and Tutsi political groups have united to some extent, even forming an alliance in 2002 (Rafti 2004, 24). This raises the prospect of the RPF being faced with the return to Rwanda of an ethnically mixed opposition, demanding free and fair elections. To this extent, marginalisation of Hutus and of a certain class of Tutsi in Rwanda could unintentionally lead to those groups joining forces to push for genuine democracy in Rwanda. Unable to label these fleeing Tutsis as genocidaires, Kagame instead depicts these exiled Tutsi as having left Rwanda for a more comfortable European lifestyle (Reyntjens 2004, p. 194).

## **6.2 Justification of the RPF's Nation-building Policies**

The RPF's official genocide-narrative also functions to justify the RPF's policies in Rwanda and beyond.

It has already been argued in Chapter 4 that the official narrative postulates ethnic difference as the main source of conflict in Rwandan history, and in particular, of the genocide. In this way, the official narrative implies that the RPF's nation-building policies aimed at removing ethnic difference in Rwanda are necessary to safeguard against the sort of ethnic discrimination and incitement that previously led to genocide. Hence, the 2003 Organic Law, which governs political organisations and politicians in Rwanda, purportedly to ensure that political parties "reflect the unity of the Rwandan people" and the 2008 'Law relating to the Punishment of the Crime of Genocide Ideology' which is purportedly intended to eliminate ethnic discrimination, in line with the RPF's policy of 'national unity'. The way that these laws are used by the RPF to limit the conditions in which alternative narratives can emerge, and restrict analysis of the genocide, has been discussed in Chapter 5. The official narrative of the RPF operates to justify these laws, which are relied on by the RPF to stifle debate and criticism about the current political system, or of the behaviour of Paul Kagame and the RPF (Hintjens 2008, 88-89).

The official narrative also functions to justify RPF violence, or at the very least, functions to restrict criticism of the RPF in respect of that violence. Nationally, the collective moral culpability attributed to Hutus through the official narrative serves to absolve the RPF of moral or legal responsibility for war crimes committed against Hutus in the aftermath of the genocide. Responding to such accusations of reprisal killings, President Kagame has stated that: "[w]hile some rogue RPF elements committed crimes against civilians...during the anti-genocidal campaign...[t]o try to construct a case of moral equivalency between genocide crimes and isolated crimes committed by rogue RPF members is morally bankrupt and an insult to all Rwandans, especially survivors of the genocide" (Kagame 2008, xxiii). Thus to the extent that RPF killings are admitted at all, they are portrayed as the work of 'rogue RPF elements' and the moral logic of the genocide-narrative is invoked by conflating criticism of the RPF with criticism of the 'survivors' of the genocide.

Hutu moderates are not remembered in the annual genocide commemorations. If recognition were given to the idea that "Hutu and Tutsi were victims of a calamity, for which responsibility is shared by both elements of community" (Lemarchand 2008, 70), then that would by implication conflict with the exclusive claim on victimhood that the RPF assert on behalf of the Tutsi victims of the genocide. That would also undercut the RPF's entitlement to legitimately use violence in "the name" of such Tutsi victims.

There is a military imperative to RPF rule of the Rwandan state. Finding itself in a position of military insecurity, with the Hutu rebels still ever present on its western border with the DRC, the official narrative serves to articulate and legitimate this imperative. As in the case of Israel, citizenship and nationhood is by necessity defined in martial terms: a new, muscular Tutsi is required to safeguard against a return to the pre-RPF status quo that culminated in the genocide of the Tutsis in 1994. The official narrative articulates this transformation imperative. Regionally, it functions to justify the RPF's (violent) intervention into the DRC, which would otherwise be an unacceptable breach of another country's sovereignty. The structure of the official genocide-narrative, with its binary opposites of victims and perpetrator genocidaires, offers a justification for intervention

into another country, on the basis of 'never again': the genocidal Hutus lurking on the border cannot be allowed to return to Rwanda and finish what they started in 1994. The pursuit of this aim cannot be restricted by national borders. In this way, the genocide-narrative implies that the RPF is justified in exercising not only national, but regional control over its opponents.

An unintended consequence of the RPF's genocide narrative, and of its use to justify its (often violent) policies, could well be a further cycle of violence within Rwanda. Throughout Rwanda's history, claims to an exclusive right to rule by both Hutus and Tutsis have perpetuated a vengeful cycle of zero-sum politics. If the current RPF government continues to pursue policies that exclude Hutus from public and political life then, despite the official narrative's stated objectives of achieving a 'national unity' transcending historic ethnic divisions, there is a genuine risk that this might lead to a further cycle of violence. In particular, as Kenneth Roth has argued, by restricting political opposition and an independent press, Rwandans are likely to have little to identify with but their historic ethnic affiliations (Roth 2009, 1). Yet, if ethnicity is outlawed, in an attempt to force non-ethnic 'national unity' in Rwanda, there is the risk that such ethnic identifications are driven underground. In this instance, the risk is that moderate Hutus are actually pushed into the arms of the Hutu extremists that still lurk on Rwanda's borders – in particular in the DRC. In this way, labelling of moderate Hutu as 'extremists' risks becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy (Roth 2009, 1).

To conclude, the RPF's political problem and security problem are related and interlinked. Loss of political power would almost certainly tip the balance of military power against the RPF, since it would hasten the prospect of the return of the exiled Hutu Power elements, residing in the DRC and beyond. This risks the prospect of a further cycle of violence against Rwanda's Tutsi minority. The RPF is not prepared to share power with Hutus in Rwanda since the Tutsis they represent were the victims of the genocide and Hutu were the perpetrators. This formulation is at the heart of the RPF's official narrative and its justification of minority rule, which explains why the RPF are so ruthless about controlling this representation of events, this narrative. Victimhood entitles the survivors, and in this case, the RPF who purport to speak on their behalf. Here then, is a paradox of power: political and military vulnerability, combined with an exclusive entitlement to rule.

## **Chapter 7: CONCLUSION**

This thesis addressed the question: *How, and To What Political Ends, has the Rwandan Government constructed a Narrative of the Rwandan Genocide?*

Through an analysis of (a) official narratives of genocide in a general sense and (b) three of the more prominent cases of official genocide-narratives, an analytical framework of official genocide narratives was constructed. It consisted of: the context of the construction of the narrative; the content of the narrative; implementation and contestation; and the justification of political ends. The Rwandan Government's official narrative of the Rwandan genocide in 1994 was analysed along these lines.

### **7.1 The Context of the Construction of the Genocide Narrative**

The RPF's official genocide narrative has been developed in the context of a minority government that is seeking to hold onto political power and which is surrounded by enemies inside and outside of Rwanda. The RPF's nationbuilding project, which also provides context to the construction of the genocide narrative, is considered in the conclusion on the content of the genocide narrative.

#### ***Minority Government***

Initially, after the genocide in 1994, there was a political emphasis on power-sharing and political pluralism within Rwanda. Then in 1996, a second period is discernable, during which the RPF purged leading Hutu members of the then coalition government so as to tighten their political control and consolidate their power. This hardening of policy emerges simultaneously with a period of successful economic development in Rwanda, during which the RPF becomes the 'donor darling' of many in the world.

Thus the RPF is a minority government, and the political imperative of that government is to acquire a narrative that justifies such a minority government. Politics is therefore the single most important determining factor in needing a narrative of the genocide.

#### ***Enemies and ongoing conflict***

The post 1994 Rwandan government is not only a minority government, it is also surrounded by real internal and external enemies. The civil war in 1994 ends with the defeat of the Rwandan military and the Hutu Interahamwe militia by the RPF. The defeated Hutu combatants, together with the political and military advocates of 'Hutu Power', are forced to flee to neighbouring territories, and in particular the DRC. There follows a period of relative quietude in Rwanda, before a period of activism in 1996 when Rwanda invaded the DRC to attack the FDLR, and to support the overthrow of the DRC's then leader, the pro-FDLR Mobutu Sese Seko and the instalment of the then pro-RPF regime in the DRC. In 1998, Rwanda is again engaged in conflict in the DRC, this time against Laurent-Désiré Kabila, the man the RPF helped install into power in 1996. The FDLR are again attacked, but not defeated, and the war continues, as does the exiled existence of 'Hutu Power'

## 7.2 The Content of the Rwandan Governments' Official Narrative of the Genocide

The political imperative of a narrative that justifies the RPF's minority government has been established. Such a narrative is a genocide narrative of the events in 1994 that presents the RPF in such a way that supports its political power and its nation building project, as well as the policies that underpin that project.

### *The Good/Victims*

The description of the genocide (as the RPF tells it) is crucial: the perpetrators of the (pre-planned) genocide were an ethnic group, the Hutu, and their actions cannot be understood as anything but acts of pure evil. The RPF's version of the genocide suggests that almost all Hutu benefited, or stood to benefit in some way from it.

The Tutsi victims are presented as completely innocent. They did not also engage in mass killing. They did not have anything to do with the downing of the aircraft that killed the Hutu President of what was at that time regarded, in Rwandan context, as a relatively moderate regime.

The Tutsi are presented as the only true victims. The killing of moderate Hutu are denied or marginalised. The members of the RPF are the morally superior people within Rwanda - represented by the official narrative as the antidote to a morally and politically corrupt Rwanda. Indeed, the alleviation of this state of affairs provides the RPF's very *raison d'être*, since, as the official narrative posits, it was "established in opposition to genocide ideology and repeated massacres". The narrative thus positions the RPF at a central point in Rwanda's history, and at a turning, or transformational point for the Rwandan nation.

As regards the relationship between the RPF and the Tutsi victims on whose behalf they purport to speak, the RPF do not appear to consider themselves as ordinary Tutsi. The RPF is contemptuous of those Tutsi who did meet their "patriotic and national obligation" to participate in the armed struggle, and who thereby forfeited their right to power. In Rwanda, it appears that not all Tutsi are equal. The superiority of the RPF rests on their willingness to fight, to risk or sacrifice their lives, for a new Rwanda. In this respect the RPF is presented as having a higher understanding of Rwanda than even other Tutsi. Members of the RPF have greater virtue, have suffered more than any other and have earned it by sacrifice of exile, followed by four years of armed struggle. The Tutsi in Rwanda who did not fight between 1990 and 1994 are weak, inferior and perhaps morally complicit. In Rwanda, it seems the RPF has more virtue than ordinary Tutsi.

Rwandan history contains numerous wars with genocides and mass killings. Yet, where Tutsi violence is referred to, it is represented as inevitable (in the case of the decision to take up arms in 1994) or not mentioned at all (in the case of the reprisal killings of Hutu following the genocide). The imperative throughout is the centrality of the victimhood of the Tutsi and the corresponding guilt of the Hutu perpetrators. This is prioritised above all else.

### *Nation-building Project*

The minority RPF Government claims it is dedicated to eliminate the conditions that led to the genocide, such as an emphasis on ethnicity, and calls this a Nation-building Project.

To save the country and Rwanda's people from the fate that previously befell it, culminating in the genocide in 1994, a new beginning is required that transforms the old Rwanda into another, completely new Rwanda. Thus the most important things in this country/nation must change. It was noted that elements of this build-a-new-nation-ideology are similar to elements of a chiliastic ideology: the idea that through politically directed transformation projects, a utopian state can be reached, complete with a just order and virtuous subjects.

The status quo that the 1994 government inherited was immoral, morally evil and corrupt. This is evidenced by the genocide in 1994 and the ethnic conflict, violence and political exclusion (of Rwanda's Tutsi) that preceded it. To deny the genocide, or even to question any aspect of the story as the RPF tells it, is thus an evil act. Any investigation and inquiry that will establish this, has to be fought. This fight will include the law against "denialism".

A new nation needs to be built in Rwanda. In this new Rwanda, no divisions among Rwandans will be tolerated; "the people" are indivisible. Post 1994, any action that reveals the actor is thinking in ethnic terms is condemned or punished. A corollary of this is that the genocidal acts against the Tutsi in 1994 – which are the essence and consequence of a Rwanda divided into Hutu and Tutsi, should be recorded, condemned and punished. All aspects of this rule of indivisibility should be subject to this rule – and in particular, politics. This indivisibility rule means a weak belief in democracy since if the nation/people are one, there cannot really be an opposition – be they opposing political parties or interest groups.

The indivisibility rule places a positive obligation on the government to oppose any parties that organise on the basis of an ethnic grouping within Rwanda. It goes without saying that the perpetrators of the genocide in 1994 should not be given the opportunity to rule, or even compete for power.

### ***Violence is Justified***

Violence is considered a justified means in the construction of a new Rwanda. The morally virtuous RPF, as represented by the official genocide narrative, and their project of nation-building, are surrounded by enemies – inside and outside of Rwanda. The use of extraordinary measures, including violence, is justified. The objects of this violence include the Hutu dominated regime in Rwanda, the FDLR in the DRC and DRC regimes sympathetic to the Hutu in the DRC. It also - reportedly – includes critics and dissident figures inside and outside of Rwanda.

### **7.3 Contestation: The Rwandan Government's Responses to Challenges to its Official Narrative**

The RPF's responses to challenges to its official narrative include censorship; legislation; intimidation and sponsorship of intellectual and cultural elites. It also includes violence, as already discussed.

Within Rwanda, these responses take a number of different forms. The package of laws ostensibly aimed at ensuring national unity within Rwanda are relied on by the RPF to protect its official narrative and further its political aims. The 2003 Organic Law functions to restrict the emergence of rival political parties, who could be expected to challenge the RPF's official narrative, as well as advance a narrative of their own. The 2003 Organic Law has further been relied on to threaten Rwandan human rights organisations that are critical of the RPF. The Gacaca system of the administration of community justice for crimes committed during the 1994 genocide also functions to protect and reinforce the RPF's official genocide narrative.

Similarly, Rwanda's libel laws and press regulation regime, again ostensibly in place to prevent any future genocide, ensure that media entities that are critical of the RPF risk suspension of their licences, a prison sentence or a heavy fine. This law is akin to Turkey's 1931 Press Law that functioned to restrict information and narratives at odds with the Turkish government's official narrative. In the Rwanda case study, at the most extreme, there are allegations of involvement of senior Rwandan government officials in the murder of journalists (HRW 2010).

Outside of Rwanda, the RPF have consistently reminded the world of the failure of the international community to prevent the genocide and the hollowness of the post Holocaust "never again" maxim. Furthermore the official narrative places a degree of responsibility for the genocide on Rwanda's former German, then Belgian colonial rulers, who created the problems of ethnic difference that the official narratives presents as culminating in the genocide.

Furthermore, the RPF have sought to suppress information that conflicts with the logic of the genocide-narrative, including through pressure on the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda not to investigate President Habyarimana's plane crash and pressure on the UN not to publish its recent Mapping Exercise report on the DRC. In the latter example, the RPF threatened to withdraw its personnel from certain peacekeeping operations in Africa. This demonstrated a willingness by the RPF to adopt a more 'realist' approach to counter challenges to its official narrative.

In respect to cultural elites, those that support the government's official genocide narrative, such as Gourevitch are embraced, whilst those who dispute it, or argue for an alternative narrative, such as Des Forges and Prunier, find themselves discredited by the RPF. In this respect, their experience echoes that of both Arendt and Hilberg in respect to the narrative of the Shoah.

It is out of guilt, not justice or fairness, that the international community accepts, at least at face value, the RPF's official narrative, their nation-building project and the measures employed to counter contestation of the official genocide narrative.

#### **7.4 How the Official Narrative is Bound Up With the RPF Government's Aims and Objectives and Serves to Justify its Political Actions and Policies**

In Rwanda, the political problem is one related to the needs of the incumbents: if seen as a Tutsi-dominated organisation, the Rwandan government is by definition a minority

government. This minority government requires justification. The official narrative of the genocide aims at providing this justification.

The RPF also experiences major military insecurity with the presence of hostile Hutu rebels on its borders.

Free and fair elections would almost certainly result in a Hutu dominated party gaining political power in Rwanda. This has been referred to as a paradox of power: political and military vulnerability, combined with an entitlement to rule. The RPF's official genocide narrative is central to this paradox of power.

### **7.5 Comparative Observations**

The manner in which RPF's official narrative of the genocide is evolving is very similar to the Israeli situation and the narrative of the Shoah, but quite different to the genocide narratives relating to Turkey and Namibia.

The Rwandan government's official narrative is constructed in relation to an ongoing problem: a minority government's political ends, including the need for the justification of violence. Comparisons can be drawn to Samuel Huntington's remarks about transitional justice in so called "third wave countries" transitioning from conflict. In Rwanda, similar to those third wave countries, it is clear that it is the working of politics, and the "distribution of political power during and after the transition" that has most influenced the way the genocide in 1994 is officially remembered and described (Huntington 1991, 65).

The military imperative to the Rwandan state was noted, together with the similarities to Israel in this regard. Both countries in this respect experience hostile adversaries on their national borders. The key difference with the Israeli example is that in Rwanda, the threat is posed not by rival countries and national groups, but by Rwanda's own (Hutu) nationals. A further difference to the Israeli example is that in Rwanda, the government itself is a minority government.

There is no accountability for Tutsi-violence: although expressed in moral terms, the official narrative is an expression of political need.

In the case of Namibia, a minority ethnic group is victimised by colonial rulers. When the majority gains power, the nation-building narrative of that majority marginalises the genocide, and any narratives associated with it. In the case of Turkey, the minority Armenian population are victimised by the majority Turkish regime. When the (Turkish) majority in power is confronted or held to account, it denies its role in the genocide.

In the case of Israel and the narrative of the Shoah, victimhood is used to legitimize certain government behaviour, to deflect criticism and to provide a source for moral and political entitlements; in particular, international support for a Jewish state. National political self-righteousness has turned into military-self righteousness, motivated in part by Israel's tough Middle Eastern 'neighbourhood'. The narrative of the Shoah operates, at least in part, to legitimate this military self-righteousness, in the name of "never again".

While there are obvious similarities between the Israeli narrative of the Shoah and the RPF's genocide narrative, domestically there is a key distinction. The purpose of the Shoah

narrative is not to generate political entitlements vis-à-vis the perpetrators of the atrocities at the heart of that narrative, namely the Germans, with whom the Israelis are not in a competition for political power. By contrast, the perpetrator-subjects of the RPF's official narrative are in a contest for political power with the RPF. Moreover, there is increasing evidence to suggest that the victim-subjects (understood as the genocide survivors) of the RPF's genocide narrative might also compete for political power with the RPF, on the basis of their political marginalisation, and concerns "of elites among the genocide survivors that the issue of genocide is politically instrumentalised, for example when commemorations are used for contemporary goals" (Vorrath 2010, 197).

## **7.6 Implications**

It appears that to a great extent, what actually happened in the Rwandan genocide, or the other genocides that are the subject of the official narratives analysed in this thesis, does not determine their importance: it is later political ends and needs that provide genocides with their significance. In this way then, official narratives of genocide are firmly about the politics of the present, rather than the past, and such narratives can be expected to further evolve in alignment with the political needs of future governments.

As regards the RPF's official genocide narrative in particular, it is clear that it is the political imperatives of the ruling RPF regime that shape the official narrative of the 1994 genocide. The politics of the present are the most important determining factor in needing and defining a narrative account of the past. The significance of the content of the RPF's official narrative, as well as the vigour of its defence of that narrative, is that it underpins the RPF's efforts to maintain political power in Rwanda. When the dynamic of political power in Rwanda shifts once again, so too will the content of the official narrative of the Rwandan genocide.

**Word count: 26, 655**

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