

For the UK and US, like France before them, genocide denial is a means to an end

On 28 April 2020, the Permanent Representative of Rwanda to the United Nations, Valentine Rugwabiza, [wrote to the UN Secretary-General](#) in response to the US and the UK's position on the tragic events that unfolded in Rwanda in 1994 that the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) had ruled to be a "genocide against the Tutsi ethnic group ... beyond any dispute and requiring no proof." Despite this judicial notice, upon which the subsequent UN Resolution to that effect, the US and the UK insist that the terminology "1994 genocide against the Tutsi" is a political decision of the government of Rwanda that "paints an incomplete picture of the dark part of history" and that it fails to honor "other victims." Clearly, this is a stance that serves no purpose beyond an attempt to exert political control over an African government.

As highlighted by Ambassador Rugwabiza in the aforementioned letter, "Rwanda devotes 13 April to the remembrance of politicians and others who, although not part of the targeted group, were killed for having opposed the extermination of the Tutsi." No one can reasonably presume that the US and the UK governments are not aware of this fact as advanced by the Ambassador. But if they know and insist on including "other victims" then what they are after is not the truth. It is something else. In fact, their behaviour is reminiscent of France's attitude towards Rwanda over the past 27 years that aimed to reclaim what it considered its sphere of influence before the defeat of their allies – the genocidal government.

France's strategy to discredit the RPF government revolved around two main fabrications. One, that RPF was behind the downing of the plane that was carrying the then President of

Rwanda, Juvenal Habyarimana and was, therefore, to blame for “provoking” the genocide against the Tutsi. Two, that the RPF had carried out another genocide against the Hutu.

These two fabrications were meant to achieve a number of objectives. First, to divert the world’s attention away from France’s continued support for the genocidal government before, during and after the genocide. Second, to render insignificant the decades-long anti-Tutsi pogroms that preceded the genocide and, particularly, the hateful Hutu Power ideology that informed them, by arguing that the assassination of President Habyarimana was the “cause” of the genocide against the Tutsi. Third, to create a moral equivalence between the genocidal forces that had retreated to former Zaire and the RPF. With the moral ground at par, it would set the stage for the possibility of letting these criminals – France’s allies – back into Rwanda’s political space through negotiations, as legitimate actors since neither party would be better than the other.

In this bid, as recalled by a colleague on this platform, [the genocidal “government in exile” was advised by their powerful friends in the international community, themselves accessories to genocide, to establish a new political organization representing the refugees](#). It would be led by “new figures, untarnished, credible in the eyes of partners.” Accordingly, Rally for the Return of Refugees and Democracy in Rwanda (RDR) was created in April 1995 in Mugunga refugee camp in Zaire, with Victoire Ingabire at its helm three years later in August 1998.

France’s self-serving strategy sought to reclaim its lost sphere of influence, even if this meant reintegrating – at the minimum through negotiations – those responsible for the slaughter of more than a million Tutsi into Rwanda’s political life. Pushing their racist conception of Rwanda as a veiled justification for their open hostility to the new political order and to counter the rising awareness on the global stage

of their complicity in the genocide, French decision-makers buried their head in the sand; they insisted that the RPF was a Tutsi-dominated movement that cannot maintain political control of Rwanda and bring peace and stability to a majority Hutu country.

Hubert Vedrine, the former Secretary-General of the French presidency during Mitterrand's tenure, went as far as proposing the [dividing of Rwanda into two countries, one for the Hutu and another for the Tutsi](#). Undoubtedly, these officials were always ready to do anything, no matter how inhumane, for France to maintain or regain its sphere of influence – even if it were to be a new state run by genocidaires.

For years, these French politicians waged a military and judicial war against Rwanda. Thanks to testimonies from [French military officers](#) and the [work of investigative journalists](#), it was revealed that France had kept re-arming genocidal forces controlling the refugee camps in Zaire. These actions of destabilization, which the UN Security Council failed to stop despite [repeated warnings](#) from the Rwandan government, led to Rwanda's military intervention in that country in 1996.

They even bullied. Later on, in 2006, a French Judge, Jean-Louis Bruguière, issued arrest warrants against top RPA military leaders in what turned out to be a disaster for the credibility of the French judicial system. Worse still, French soldiers who had been deployed in Rwanda during the genocide gave anonymous testimonies in favour of their genocidaire allies who were facing trial at the ICTR, [as revealed by the investigative journalist Linda Melvern](#). They pushed for the trying of RPF leaders in the same court that was trying genocidaires, and when these efforts failed they re-emerged in the form of [the "mapping report" for the DRC conflict](#). Imagine the absurdity of having people who had fled the crime scene and evacuated their dogs, some of whom provided military and intellectual support to the genocidaires, insisting on trying

RPF leaders! None of these cowards would, for instance, entertain the idea of trying in the Nuremberg court leaders of the western alliance that brought down the Nazi regime.

Today, the two fabrications unrepentant French politicians relied on to wage their war against Rwanda's current political dispensation have completely crumbled under the relentless assaults of associations representing the interests of genocide survivors, as well as those of conscientious journalists and historians both in Rwanda and France. Their noble struggle to preserve the memory and clarity around the events that started in 1959 and culminated in the 1994 tragedy has compelled the [French government to recognize its "overwhelming responsibilities" in the genocide against the Tutsi](#). The Duclert Report, the result of a commission set up by President Macron, has [revealed](#) that French politicians had always known, through their intelligence services, that the genocidaires – whose interim government was formed at the French embassy in Kigali in April 1994 – were behind the downing of the plane that served as a pretext for executing their plan to exterminate Tutsis. The Report, moreover, discredited the myth of double genocide, which the President of the commission termed "an intellectual swindle". Despite these developments, the US and UK governments continue to willingly entertain ambiguity around the genocide – something even the complicitous French have finally come to terms with.

An assault on Rwanda's reconciliation process

France always conceived reconciliation in Rwanda as the accommodation of Hutu Power in the country's politics. Its actions were aimed at undermining Rwanda's capability to chart a new path. On the other hand, the RPF understood that in order to create an environment inhospitable for the recurrence of genocide, it would have to deny space to any political movement whose ideological orientation espoused or accommodated the Hutu Power.

Because such an environment excluded Hutu Power proponents – France’s allies – from the political landscape, reconciliation on RPF terms was seen as an obstacle to France’s ambitions that could only be achieved through the infamous divide and rule logic: the division of Rwandans. With these competing visions for Rwanda’s society, France and the RPF were always headed for a collision.

Moreover, the remembrance of those who were killed for opposing the extermination of the Tutsi during genocide commemorations is a testament to this commitment to craft a new Rwanda in which “Ndi Umunyarwanda,” a call for unity that transcends ethnicity, represents a shield against recurrence. In other words, real reconciliation can only espouse the values of the martyrs and heroes who died in defence of the indivisible Rwandan nation.

Similarly, anyone opposing clarity around historical facts ruled by the ICTR to be “beyond dispute and not requiring proof” suggests that these martyrs – who constituted the internal obstacle (to the genocidal project) that had to be removed – died in vain and that the values they were defending are not worth emulating.

If the UK and U.S were committed to supporting healing and reconciliation in Rwanda, their position would align with that of the martyrs who are remembered on the 13th April rather than lend support to genocide deniers. Indeed, support to healing and reconciliation can only be reflected in the terminology we use to describe what the martyrs opposed: the genocide against the Tutsi.

Consequently, the US and UK governments – whose denialist position is hailed by genocide deniers, such as Victoire Ingabire, the former leader of the RDR movement that was formed in Zaire refugee camps administered by genocidaires – perpetuate France’s decades-long strategy to impose the reintegration of African Neo-Nazis of “new figures,

untarnished, credible in the eyes of partners" into Rwanda's political space as a means to regain its spheres of influence. These pursuits, then and now, are contemptuous of Rwandan lives. They conceive Africans as pawns in western geopolitical games.

On the 7th of April, President Kagame was unequivocal about this attitude in his [address to the nation](#). "It is as though this simple recognition of what the word [the exact terminology around the genocide] should be was a reward bestowed on Rwandans in exchange for good behaviour in their view. We cannot respond to blackmail on such matters of principle," President Kagame said.

The Americans and the British, like the French before them, are involved in blackmail to achieve geostrategic interests. Perhaps Africans were too hopeful to expect the very governments that refused to acknowledge that the tragic event of 1994 in Rwanda was a genocide would suddenly take a principled stance on the threat posed by genocide denial. More often than not, threats that our countries face are leveraged to advance western geopolitical and economic interests, notwithstanding those as serious as the resurgence of the Hutu Power Movement.

In their games, genocide is not off limits.