

# Structural Adjustment, State Power & Genocide: the World Bank & Rwanda

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The Rwandan genocide of 1994 has been partly attributed by some commentators to state weakness or collapse, and the weakness or collapse has in turn been partly attributed to the policies of the World Bank and the IMF. Neither argument is valid, and to advance them is to misunderstand the extent to which state power is a persistent and potent force in Africa and elsewhere, and also the extent to which the World Bank and IMF buttress that power (despite their own rhetoric of 'rolling back' the state). The first section of this article outlines the centrality of state power to an analysis of Rwanda in general and of the preparations for genocide in particular, while the following section demonstrates how the World Bank lent material and discursive support to a repressive and ultimately genocidal state apparatus. The concluding section offers some explanation of why the World Bank adopts such policies.

## **Introduction**

The Rwandan genocide of 1994, like other such tragedies, has been subjected to an enormous amount of banal and reductive commentary. One example comes from Thomas Friedman who states that there was 'an orgy of tribal warfare' (1999:349). This is a typically clichéd and uninteresting comment; but what *is* interesting about Friedman's passage on Rwanda is his partial attribution of the genocide to the absence of state control and regulation. There was/is, he claims,

*no big government in Rwanda ... [T]hey just have brutal competition for scarce land, energy and water, with Tutsi and Hutu tribesmen taking turns downsizing each other to grab more resources for themselves* (Friedman, 1999:350-1).

The weakness of the Rwandan state is also a factor cited by other writers to help 'explain' the Rwandan genocide. Collins (1998) argues that the Rwandan state was a weak and disorganised one. Chossudovsky (1997:115) includes the 'demise of state institutions' in his list of what led to tragedy in Rwanda. For Chossudovsky, whose arguments will be discussed in more detail later in this article, that demise was caused in large part by the policies of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and their imposition of a structural adjustment programme (a package of neoliberal economic reform) on Rwanda in the early 1990s. Adjustment 'destroyed economic activity and people's livelihood, fuelled unemployment and created a

situation of generalised famine and social despair'; specifically, 'The state administrative apparatus was in disarray, state enterprises were pushed into bankruptcy and public services collapsed' (Chossudovsky, 1997:119, 116). This argument is also advanced by Karnik (1998:615), who, on similar grounds, claims the World Bank played a 'critical role ... in producing the conflict in Rwanda'.

We thus have two interlocking arguments: the genocide was partly attributable to state weakness or collapse, and the weakness or collapse was partly attributable to the policies of the World Bank and the IMF. Neither argument holds water, and to advance them is to misunderstand the extent to which state power is a persistent and potent force in Africa and elsewhere (fashionable claims about 'failed states' notwithstanding), and also the extent to which the World Bank and IMF buttress that power (despite their own rhetoric of 'rolling back' the state). The elaboration of these two points – the continued centrality of state power, and the extent to which external agents continue to support that power – constitute the main themes of this article. The next section of this article outlines the centrality of state power to an analysis of Rwanda in general and of the preparations for genocide in particular, while the following section demonstrates how the World Bank lent material and discursive support to a repressive and ultimately genocidal state apparatus. The concluding section offers some explanation of why the Bank did what it did, and a postscript identifies some alarming signs that the same process may be occurring all over again vis-à-vis present day Rwanda.

## **State Power in Rwanda**

### **Background**

Rwanda is a very small, landlocked country in central Africa, about the size of the US state of Maryland. However, its relatively large population size – approximately 7.2 million before the genocide and growing by more than 3 per cent per annum – made it the most densely populated country in Africa (World Bank, 1994:1; Uvin, 1998:180). In the early 1990s, Rwanda was amongst the ten poorest countries in the world in per capita income terms; approximately 95 per cent of its population lived in rural areas, with 90 per cent engaged in agriculture (World Bank, 1994:1).

Prior to 1994, Rwanda's population consisted of two main, indigenous ethnic groups – the Hutu, who accounted for approximately eighty-five per cent of the population, and the Tutsi, who accounted for most of the remaining fifteen per cent (with the Twa group accounting for probably less than one per cent).<sup>1</sup> The origins of the groups is a matter of intense academic and popular debate, with the Tutsi often portrayed as invaders who came from the Horn of Africa and imposed a harsh autocratic régime, with a monarchy at its apex, on the earlier arriving Hutu.<sup>2</sup> More detached assessments indicate that the Tutsi arrived in migratory waves, became partially assimilated into the existing population, and that the undeniably hierarchical nature of pre-colonial Rwandan society did nonetheless allow for some movement between ethnic categories (richer Hutu could, arguably, become 'honorary' Tutsi).

The German colonial administration (which was established at the end of the nineteenth century) and later the Belgian, exploited the hierarchical structure of the society as a mechanism of indirect rule, with a certain stratum of Tutsi deployed as a colonial ruling class. Whatever fluidity had previously existed in the system was greatly restricted as a system of ethnic identity cards was introduced and ethnicity

thus became a strict (patrilinear) inherited characteristic. Tutsi were systematically favoured in employment and education and accorded the status of a superior 'race'.

The run-up to independence (in 1962) saw a reversal of the colonially imposed order, with Hutu seizing control and beginning a series of pogroms against the Tutsi population. More than half of all Tutsi either died or were forced into exile (Uvin, 1998:20). Those Tutsi driven into exile – many of whom grew up in refugee camps in Uganda – became the source of a rebel army, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), which was to attack the régime in 1990, demanding the right to return to the land they and/or their parents were expelled from. Those Tutsi who remained in Rwanda after 1962 were now the subject of discrimination in education, employment and other areas.

The post-colonial régime was initially (during the so-called First Republic) dominated by Hutu from the south of the country, but from 1973 onwards (formally entitled the Second Republic) power became concentrated in the hands of a northern Hutu élite under the leadership of President Habyarimana. The role played by the northern élite – the so-called *akazu* – is a central focus of this article.

Following the RPF invasion in 1990, the régime's repression of the local Tutsi population intensified. A power-sharing peace deal signed at Arusha in Tanzania in 1993 was never implemented: instead, between April and June 1994, following the mysterious killing of Habyarimana himself,<sup>3</sup> the army and government-run militias initiated and led the massacre of 800-850,000 people. As Prunier (1995:241-2) has stated, 'the actual organisers of the genocide were a small tight group, belonging to the régime's political, military and economic elite'. Most of the dead were Tutsi, though dissident Hutu were also killed. The RPF succeeded in militarily defeating the government forces in July 1994, and the present government is RPF-led (see the Postscript to this article).

### **The *Akazu*: Corruption, Repression, Mass Impoverishment & Struggles over the State**

*Akazu* is a Kinyarwanda word meaning 'little house'. In the 1980s, it came to be applied to the country's ruling clique – the politico-commercial network centred around the President's family and, to a greater extent, that of his wife (Reyntjens, 1994:189). This mafia-type network (Braeckman, 1994:104) had its geographical origins in the north of the country, especially Gisenyi, where Madame Habyarimana came from (Gasana et al., 1999:159). Gisenyi, heartland of the *akazu*, supplied one-third of the top jobs in government and almost all leaders of the security forces, as well as enjoying a wholly disproportionate share of development projects and higher education places (Human Rights Watch, 1999:47). *Akazu* activities included:

- Profiteering from the disbursal of state-accorded commercial privileges, including market access, and fiscal and customs exemptions (Braeckman, 1994:104; Human Rights Watch, 1999:44; Reyntjens, 1994:190; Sibomana, 1999:26);
- The smuggling of gorillas (and parts thereof), drugs, gold, and diamonds from Zaire (Braeckman, 1994:108; Gordon, 1993);
- Drug smuggling organised through the state-run national tea agency (Braeckman, 1994:104, 105-7);

- Prostitution, arms dealing and illicit currency trading (Braeckman, 1994:109-11; Reyntjens, 1995:284);
- The siphoning off of foreign aid for purposes of personal enrichment (Hanssen, 1989).

The *akazu's* activities continued during the war (after October 1990). The focus then tended to be on diverting resources – including from the state employees' pension fund – towards military ends, such as the usage, in 1992, of money earmarked for food and drug imports for arms purchases (Hintjens, 1999:257; Melvern, 2000:64-8). But the personal profit motive was not entirely abandoned, with Habyarimana himself depositing commission payments from armaments deals in European bank accounts under the names of various associates and of his children (Human Rights Watch, 1999:123).

A tendency for the *akazu* to become involved in massive human rights violations (in addition to corruption and associated repression) was decisively established at around the same time as the RPF invasion of October 1990.

*In October 1990 and again in January and February 1991, local officials incited Hutu to attack their Tutsi neighbours. More than six hundred Tutsi died in these attacks and scores more were wounded and lost all their belongings* (Africa Watch, 1992:2).

A report from Amnesty International in May 1992 documented the involvement of state agents in further acts of mass murder and torture (Amnesty, 1992:1). These findings were confirmed by a later international commission of inquiry on human rights abuses in Rwanda – its report, in March 1993, found that

*The Rwandan government has killed or caused to be killed about two thousand of its citizens ... Authorities at the highest level, including the President of the Republic, have consented to these abuses* (cited in African Rights, 1995:33).

The degree of central control behind the abuses was apparent at least as early as February 1992, when Africa Watch wrote:

*Rwanda is a small, highly centralised state where subordinates typically respond quickly and effectively to directives from above. If subordinate authorities, civilian and military, are violating the rights of others, it is either because they have been ordered to do so or because they expect to elicit support and approval from their superiors for doing so. The failure to bring **any** persons accused of human rights violations to justice supports the conclusion that violators are acting at the direction of or under the protection of some of the most powerful political figures in Rwanda* (Africa Watch, 1992:29, emphasis in original).

As this last quote indicates, and it is a point that is central to this article, what above all else facilitated the practice of illegal and repressive activities on the part of the *akazu* was control of the state. But state control was vital for not only the practice of repression. Without state control – direct and indirect – over the economy and society, the *akazu* could not function, economically or politically (Cart, 1995:476). Economic gain rested upon access to political power (Willame, 1995:150). Habyarimana, for example, 'could call on the heads of private enterprises to contribute materially and politically to his cause, knowing they needed his approval for the state concessions that made their businesses profitable' (Human Rights Watch, 1999:43); and foreign aid could not be siphoned off without control over the levers of state power (Prunier, 1995:84). The question of who would retain or assume 'ownership' of this apparatus

of (corrupt and repressive) control was the key stake of political struggle in Rwanda in the early 1990s.

*Some Rwandans were indeed getting rich: those who worked for the state directly, those employed by its offshoots, parastatal enterprises, and those who ran economic development projects controlled by state officials. State employees and the military also used access to preferential treatment to build profitable private businesses. But the prosperity was both fragile and superficial. The mass of the people stayed poor and faced the prospect of getting only poorer. More than 90 per cent lived from cultivation and while the population grew, the amount of land did not. The land available to ordinary cultivators actually diminished in some regions as local officials appropriated fields for development projects and as members of the urban elite bought out the poor, establishing themselves as absentee landlords (Human Rights Watch, 1999:45).*

While the *akazu* thrived, the great mass of Rwandans became progressively poorer during the 1980s. And, as the above quote illustrates, part of the reason why they became poorer was precisely *because* the *akazu* and its wider circle of associates was thriving, an increasing concentration of land ownership being the most obvious manifestation of how that symmetrical process of enrichment and impoverishment was occurring (Braeckman, 1996:106; Erny, 1994:80; Maton, 1994; André and Platteau, 1998). The agricultural sector, on which most people depended, was already structurally crisis-ridden by a chronic shortage of land and rapid population growth, problems compounded by occasional bouts in the 1980s of drought, excessive rain and plant disease (Mullen, 1995; Pottier, 1993:5; Uvin, 1998:57, 112-3). On top of this came calamitous falls in world coffee prices, coffee being by far Rwanda's main foreign exchange earner (Woodward, 1996:19, 21), and, after October 1990, the enormous costs of war – direct financial costs (an estimated \$100 million per annum), but also those arising from the displacement of some 15 per cent of the population (Waller, 1993:12; Marysse et al., 1994:83).

For the great mass of ordinary people, the benefits accruing from the fact that they were ruled by Hutu rather than Tutsi were wearing thin, with the result that a rupture between rulers and ruled was deepening (Voyame et al., 1996:141). A symbolic demonstration of this rupture was the action of southern farmers in tearing up anti-erosion devices which they had been forced to dig under the government's compulsory communal labour programme (Mukankusi, 1998:40). From the middle of the 1980s there were widespread protests against, and non-compliance with, this *umuganda* system of compulsory communal labour (Kimonyo, 2000:70; Uvin, 1998: 125), in part because at least sometimes it had to be performed on lands privately owned by the régime's cronies (Prunier, 1995:87). Even more dramatically, the end of the 1980s saw the uprooting of up to 300,000 coffee trees, cultivation of which was also meant to be compulsory (Kimonyo, 2000: 50; Smith, 1998:242). The advent of multi-party democracy provided a channel through which popular discontent could be expressed and raised the very real prospect of the *akazu* losing its grip on the organs of state power – organs which, as discussed above, were vital to *akazu* wealth accumulation.

Habyarimana was forced by international pressure to legalise opposition political parties in 1991, and a large number of such parties quickly became active (Prunier, 1995:126). He later signed the Arusha peace deal with the RPF, which envisaged the formation of a broad-based government involving all political parties, that is, the ending of the *akazu*'s monopoly of power. Electoral competition, together with forced concessions to the rebel RPF, 'threatened to deprive the Habyarimana regime and its

cronies of their control of the state' (Uvin, 1998:63; see also Andersen, 2000:445 and Percival and Homer-Dixon, 1995).

A variety of strategies was put in place by the *akazu* to deal with these challenges – ranging from electoral manipulation (Human Rights Watch, 1999:52-3), to propaganda that attempted to blame the economic crisis on the Tutsi minority (Storey, 2000), to violence against régime opponents (Vassal-Adams, 1994:23; Longman, 1995), and ultimately to genocide. But the focus of this present article now switches to external actors and how the actions and words of one important external actor – the World Bank – lent support to the repressive state apparatus of the early 1990s and to the élite that desperately sought to retain control of that apparatus.

## **The World Bank & State Power**

### **The Pre-1990 Period**

The World Bank's attitude towards Rwanda prior to the 1990s (detailed in Uvin, 1998: 42-6) reflected wider attitudes within the aid 'community', and these attitudes were, to a remarkable extent, very positive.<sup>4</sup> Uvin (1998:40) describes 'the very positive, generally accepted image of Rwanda as a model developing country, in which government and citizens were actively, wisely, and successfully committed to development'.

Within World Bank discourse in particular, the usual problems of underdevelopment were itemised but these were located within the 'natural' rather than 'political' sphere – the ones most commonly cited were land shortage, landlocked status, population growth, etc. At the same time, the state was seen to be making valiant efforts to overcome these problems. Uvin (1998:44) documents the recurrent emphasis in Bank reports on 'the country's political stability ... the government's concern for the rural population, its effective administration, and its prudent, sound, realistic management'.

The Bank, as mentioned, was by no means alone in this approach, though Uvin (1998: 46) states that 'the World Bank seemed to be the.. [multilateral donor] with the strongest love affair with Rwanda'. Rwanda generally had a very positive reputation among aid donors, in part because its very well ordered structure allowed for the easy administration of, and reporting on, projects (Gourevitch, 1998:76). Hanssen (1989: 10) notes that Rwanda hosted more development workers per hectare than anywhere else in the world (see also Schürings, 1995:496). During the 1980s, 'Rwanda was considered the jewel in the crown of countries receiving Canadian aid ... Rwanda was perceived by Canadian CIDA [state aid] officials as incredibly stable with virtually no corruption ... relatively small military force ... perceived commitment to the rule of law' (Adelman, 1999:188), an impression which led to Rwanda becoming the largest single recipient of Canadian aid in per capita terms and which persisted amongst Canadian development experts into the 1990s (Adelman, 1999:189). At the end of the 1980s, Rwanda was also the largest single recipient of aid from both Belgium and Switzerland (Uvin, 1998:42). Foreign observers referred to the régime, favourably, as a 'development dictatorship' (Prunier, 1995:77).

### **Structural Adjustment, 1990-94**

As the above discussion indicates, Rwanda had long been a recipient of substantial development aid, including from the World Bank. However, it was later than most

other African countries in adopting policies of structural adjustment (Braeckman, 1994:86); the economic crisis of the 1980s finally changed this and an agreement with the Bank and the IMF was signed in September 1990. The Board of the Bank approved a Structural Adjustment Credit (SAC) in June 1991. Typically, the Bank recommended 'the retrenchment of the state from omnipresence to more limited functions' (World Bank, 1993:viii). The adjustment package contained the usual policy suspects, including (Storey, 1999:47-8):

- Devaluation of the Rwandan franc – by 40 per cent in November 1990 and a further 15 per cent in June 1992;
- Controls on recruitment and salaries in the state sector;
- An increase in user fees for health, education and other services;
- Reduced subsidies to coffee producers;
- The phased removal of protectionist trade restrictions;
- Privatisation of some state enterprises;
- Increased taxes in some sectors to help reduce the budget deficit;
- And a social 'safety net' programme to cushion the impact of adjustment on the poorest.

The extent to which adjustment was actually implemented is a matter of some debate. A later Bank report (1997:12) stated that 'The authorities implemented, in 1991-92, most of the agreed reform measures, except the coffee sector reforms', whereas Uvin (1998:58) claims that 'only a small part of the SAP... was implemented'. The ongoing debate about the depth of these reforms and the impact generated (see also Andersen, 2000; Chossudovsky, 1997; Storey, 1999; and UNDP, n.d.) will be returned to later in this article. The most notable and unambiguous short-term impact was a massive increase in development aid – from the Bank itself and from other donors – to help the Rwandan government implement the reform measures (Uvin, 1998:87-8, 91). The Bank itself proffered a structural adjustment credit of \$90 million, the first tranche of

**Table 1: Support for the Structural Adjustment Program in Rwanda (US\$ million)**

Country/Organisation	Pledges	Disbursals
World Bank	90.0	55.0
United States	20.0	25.0
European Development Fund	18.8	21.2
Belgium	18.8	18.3
France	13.2	13.2
Canada	10.3	10.3
Germany	16.0	10.0
African Development Bank	15.6	7.8
Switzerland	7.5	7.5
Austria	6.2	6.2
Others		17.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>216.4</b>	<b>192.2</b>

Source: World Bank (1995: Table 8.b.2)

which (\$55 million) was disbursed up to September 1993, with the balance of \$35 million ultimately cancelled as the reform programme broke down (World Bank, 1995). However, additional finance to support the adjustment programme was provided by other donors and disbursements of this (non-World Bank) finance ended up being even higher than original commitments, as Table 1 (which excludes IMF support) makes clear. Some at least of this donor assistance probably substituted for assistance that would in any event have been extended, but, overall, adjustment seems to have facilitated a significant increase in the resources available to the Rwandan state, a topic that is returned to towards the end of this article.

Apart from this financial support, the Bank also lent discursive support and legitimacy to the Rwandan state through a benign interpretation of state actions throughout the adjustment period. To illustrate this last point, I focus on two main Bank reports: *Rwanda: Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Growth*, published in 1994, and *Implementation Completion Report: Rwandese Republic: Structural Adjustment Credit*, published in 1995. The reason for this focus is that the former report represents the most considered Bank attempt to deal comprehensively with issues of poverty and its causation – clearly a burning issue in early 1990s Rwanda (see above) – while the latter represents the principal Bank attempt to review (from a post-genocide perspective) the early 1990s record of Bank-sponsored economic reform. Both provide important insights into the way in which the World Bank viewed the Rwandan state at this time.

### **The World Bank on the Rwandan State**

The Bank viewed the Rwandan state as an essentially neutral, if overextended, actor in Rwandan society. The 1994 report on poverty tended to see the Rwandan state as a benevolent, albeit often misguided, institution.<sup>5</sup> Its policy ‘failings’ were itemised, but the political reasons for them were, for the most part, under-analysed, and forces within the state itself were not identified as actively creating and maintaining some of the very problems highlighted in the report. Thus,

*the major obstacles to private sector development are the presence of the state as a privileged competitor and a disabling environment characterised by an inadequate incentive system and pervasive government interference in virtually all aspects of economic life* (1).

But the reasons for this pervasive presence – including the accumulative strategies of a state-based élite (see above), and the need on the part of that élite to internally legitimise its rule by discriminating against the Tutsi minority – were not analysed. Instead, reasons offered by the state for its policies were accepted at face value. For example, restrictions (which the Bank wished to see abolished; see also World Bank, 1993:vii) on private sector recruitment practices due to Ministry of Labour regulations were described as existing ‘in order to avoid ethnic discrimination’ (21), whereas their real purpose was precisely to *enforce* ethnic discrimination. Similarly, restrictions (again ones the Bank wished to see abolished) on rural-urban migration were generously attributed to a desire to avoid the ‘urban bias’ characteristic of other developing countries; understanding was expressed about the fact that spontaneous (and illegal) urban settlements were ‘alarming policy makers’, who would like to limit ‘a threat of destabilising disorder in urban life’ (33). The fact that migration restrictions functioned as a mechanism of dictatorial social control was not mentioned.<sup>6</sup>



In relation to trade policy,

*Rwanda's regulatory and incentive framework have [sic] worked to the disadvantage of Rwanda's poor by restricting their opportunities to improve their condition. They have also allowed the non-poor who are better connected to earn rents. The proposals for regulatory reform in the adjustment program would have tended to work in favour of the poor had they been fully implemented ... Trade restrictions allow a favored few to enjoy 'rents' and these tend to be the better-off (20).*

But there was no acknowledgement that those earning the rents in question were intimately linked to the state itself – either as its agents, or as recipients of its patronage.

Regarding exchange rate policy, 'The overvalued exchange rate also hurt the poor by providing opportunities for the better-off and better-connected to earn "scarcity rents"' (15). And this was followed by a rare attempt (albeit in a footnote) to probe the reasons for such a policy:

*The beneficiaries of maintaining an overvalued exchange rate and related policy distortions usually are the urban rich. The political economy of distortion favoring the urban elite, the most influential interest group, without doubt explains why such policies prevailed for so long without being challenged, even in the face of obvious economic decline (15).*

But who were the 'urban rich' in question, and what was the nature of their influence over state policy? The Bank remained wedded to a conception of the state as an independent arbiter between competing interest groups (one of which was seen as unfortunately influential), rather than seeing the state itself (or, at least, a nucleus of agents therein) as a powerful interest group in its own right. In Rwanda's case, the state, specifically the *akazu*, was the single 'most influential interest group'. Similar attitudes towards the state were regularly expressed elsewhere: for example,

*National policy must counter-balance the lobby of the richer urban residents who are understandably unwilling to allow increased immigration of the poor into their towns ... Present policies favoring the wealthy (in particular zoning and investment policies) should be re-examined and perhaps eliminated. Examples of such policies are development of large lots for villas (50, 51).*

It was, apparently, beyond the Bank's (recorded) capacity to reflect upon who was actually living in the villas in question, and what their link might be to the state.<sup>7</sup> Instead, the problem was reduced to one of the state being dependent on a small number of taxpayers, who could use their consequent leverage to disproportionately influence state policy. Analysis of the extent to which the agents of the state were themselves heavily implicated in the processes of élite enrichment described was, again, noteworthy by its absence.

In summary regarding the 1994 report, the state was seen as implementing policies that were regarded as unwise, and perhaps being excessively influenced by unrepresentative 'interest groups'. But this was as far as it went – those within the state itself were not accorded the status of active agents, a particularly glaring omission in the Rwandan context where the state was so crucial and so powerful.

This theme of state neutrality was continued in the Bank's 1995 report, surveying the aftermath of its early 1990s adjustment programme.<sup>8</sup>

*The President of Rwanda travelled to Washington in October 1990 to assure the Bretton Woods institutions of his personal commitment and his government's intention to implement the SAP [structural adjustment programme] ... Despite the war, the Government demonstrated its commitment to reform by starting to implement the SAP, thanks to a relatively competent administration (i).*

Habyarimana's commitment to economic reform was 'confirmed personally ... during a visit to Washington in October 1990' (1).

The tendency was to see the Rwandan state as a committed implementor (and 'owner') of rational economic policies. According to the 1995 report, what partly underpinned failure to fully implement adjustment was:

*The authorities' failure to associate the people with the program, [their failure to make] the population aware of the need for and objectives of the adjustment program (iv);*

*The Government's main lapse in implementing the SAP was failure to mobilise political and popular support for reform (11);*

*The SAP was not sufficiently understood by all the agents responsible for implementing it. The authorities underestimated the pressure of social, economic, and political interest groups of workers, entrepreneurs, and especially in the National Assembly (11-12);<sup>9</sup>*

*The results of the program could have been better if the Government had made the necessary efforts to build broader political and popular support for reform. This would have made it possible to reduce opposition to the reforms and to gain the support of socio-economic groups essential for implementation of the program (13).*

Several aspects of these last quotes are noteworthy. There is, for example, the assumption that adjustment represented the only appropriate way of responding to economic crisis, and that critics must have been acting out of ignorance or misinformation.<sup>10</sup> Presumably, if workers had been properly informed about the issues, they would have cheerfully accepted a proposed 'national solidarity tax' on wages instead of demanding 100 per cent wage increases and opposing staff cut-backs in the public sector (11). More seriously, the identification of interest groups – workers, entrepreneurs, parliamentarians – carefully excluded the state itself, which was seen as arbitrating (sometimes unsuccessfully or perhaps even unwisely) between these different groups. It was external pressures alone which were held responsible for 'the Government's ambiguous attitude about pursuing economic reform' (12). The extent to which the state itself represented an interest group – and one deeply intertwined with, for example, entrepreneurial interests – was not acknowledged. Occasional exasperation was expressed at aspects of state policy itself:

*[Increased military spending was a problem] probably exacerbated by lack of transparency and abuse (10);*

*The reorganisation of the customs administration to reduce fraud was slow to materialise (10);*

*Government officials in charge of reform were not motivated (10);*

*[And tax fraud persisted due to] the tax administration's technical and physical problems (13).*

In summary, the problems were technical, the pressures external. The state itself was a neutral agent committed to the wisdom of economic reform and stymied only by technical problems and constraints imposed by forces beyond its direction or control. However, on one occasion in its 1995 report, political issues were explicitly addressed; understanding was expressed about the Rwandan state's maintenance of coffee price supports which the Bank wished to see abolished:

*The rationale was Rwanda's precarious social and political situation. Full liberalisation of producer prices for coffee would have led to a 35-45% decline ... a risk the authorities were not prepared to take in rural areas vulnerable to a rebel takeover ... [It was] an untenable proposition on political and security grounds (4, 9).*

This frank assessment of the state's political problems vis-à-vis the RPF<sup>11</sup> – which, probably critically, impinged on the sustainability of the SAP itself – stands in sharp contrast to the absence of any political analysis of the state's relationship with Rwandan economy and society more generally.

### **Impact of Adjustment on State Power**

As mentioned in the introduction to this article, there is an argument that the structural adjustment policies imposed by the Bank and IMF led to mass immiserisation and thus contributed to insecurity, desperation and violence (Chossudovsky, 1997:111-22). There is *some* substance in this line of argument. Adjustment, as discussed above, was not popular (UNDP, n.d.:28). The 1990 and 1992 devaluations did contribute to increases in inflation – from 1 per cent in 1989 to 19 per cent in 1991, and 10 per cent for each of 1992 and 1993 (Woodward, 1996: 20; André, 1997: 63, 65).<sup>12</sup> And the benefits of the devaluation, in terms of boosting the prices received by coffee farmers in particular, were cancelled out by the simultaneous insistence on reducing state subsidies to those producers (Marysse et al., 1994:37). The cap on further recruitment in the public service may have contributed to the insecurity of some employees, who feared that they would have to make way for the appointments of the new political masters anticipated under a broad-based multi-party government (Kumar et al., 1996:24; Sellstrom and Wohlgemuth, 1996:39). While Chossudovsky is incorrect to argue that adjustment led to the introduction of user fees for health and education services (these were already in place), it did promote the *increase* of those fees, and Newbury (1995:14) states that this 'contributed significantly to social tensions and fears'. This last point is also made by Sellstrom and Wohlgemuth (1996:20) who claim that there is 'ample evidence that the introduction of higher fees for health and education, among other things, added to the already heavy burdens on Rwanda's poor'.

However, to take the example of education, adjustment can hardly be held responsible for an already existing and profoundly inequitable system of charges and subsidies that disadvantaged the primary sector (the sector of most concern to the poor) well before 1990 – the Bank (World Bank, 1993:x; World Bank, 1994:7) actually argued for the correction of these imbalances. Nor can the Bank be held responsible for the imposition of desperation-inducing austerity measures, such as cut-backs in health and education services – the Bank (e.g., 1994:43) consistently argued for the protection of social sector spending, and a 1993 Bank report explicitly called for substantial *rises* in current expenditure on health and education (World Bank, 1993:ix).<sup>13</sup>

More broadly, it is difficult to make any direct linkage – as Chossudovsky (1997:116) attempts to do – between adjustment and the bankruptcy of state enterprises, the collapse of public services, increasing child malnutrition, or the absence of drugs in health centres. This, after all, was an economy in profound crisis regardless of whether it did or did not adopt policies of structural adjustment. Factors such as falling commodity prices and war mean that

*There is a strong case for saying that economic factors were important in creating the environment in which the genocide could occur ... However, these circumstances were by no means wholly attributable to the adjustment programme (Woodward, 1996:25).*

But the most serious problem with the argument of Chossudovsky (1997) is that it understates the principal impact of adjustment. The potentially most grave aspect of Bank policy towards Rwanda during this period was the increase in state resources it helped facilitate and, relatedly, the boost it offered to state legitimacy. As Table 2 (see also Table 1) makes clear, with the exception of two donors – the Netherlands and Finland – the trend during this period was towards an increase in donor support to Rwanda. Most of this additional aid came in the form of balance of payments support in the context of the structural adjustment programme (Uvin, 1998:87).<sup>14</sup> Thus, the Bank's attitude towards Rwanda facilitated the extension of increased support to, and through, the state.

The Bank did join in concerted donor efforts to push the regime towards agreeing to the Arusha peace deal (Human Rights Watch, 1999:124), but there was no suspension of funding support until the end of 1993, and even then the cut-off was partial (Uvin, 1998:91-2).<sup>15</sup> Bank officials reportedly raised concerns about the issue of militarisation with Habyarimana, and the Bank president wrote to Habyarimana on the matter in April 1992, yet little action ensued (Melvern, 2000:67). The Bank, like other donors, may have been influenced by the apparent (albeit sporadic) progress being made at the Arusha peace talks, and may not have wished, as it saw it, to endanger that progress by imposing overly harsh conditions on the government regarding access to aid (Barré et al., 1999:10-11).<sup>16</sup> Indeed, the Bank has explicitly stated that part of the

**Table 2: Trends in Aid to Rwanda, 1988/90 to 1991/93 (US\$ million)**

Country	1988/90 average	1991/93 average
United States	13	20
Germany	28	41
Belgium	33	46
France	25	32
Netherlands	8	6
Canada	11	15
Switzerland	11	17
UK	1	1
Japan	13	13
Norway	0	1
Austria	4	8
Italy	1	2
Sweden	0	2
Finland	1	0
Denmark	1	1
Luxembourg	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>206</b>

*Source:* Barré et al. (1999): 48

reason for proceeding with the structural adjustment programme was to show support for the peace negotiations and the process of political liberalisation (World Bank, 1995:1). According to Melvern (2000:68), the Bank was instrumental in ensuring a resumption of aid to Rwanda at a donor meeting in June 1993:

*It would appear that a plea was made in favour of the regime by a World Bank official who reminded the other delegates that in Rwanda at least the government was in control of the country.*

The Bank still seems proud of its achievement, noting that the decision to persist with the adjustment programme was based on 'a thorough evaluation of the risks involved in supporting the national reconciliation effort', and that the decision 'was vindicated by the country's ability to absorb the substantial financial support which donors were prepared to extend on highly concessional terms' (World Bank, 1995:10, iv). This latter comment is remarkable, given that much of that support was 'absorbed' into a structure of élite enrichment and militarisation (Melvern, 2000:68).<sup>17</sup> Despite this, Woodward (1996:23) is of the view that the Bank and the Fund were right to supply increased finance as they did: 'The provision of general balance of payments support in support of adjustment is essential to allowing macroeconomic adjustment to occur at a realistic pace, and thereby limiting the social impact. To have tightened the fiscal targets, or to have reduced financial support, would in practice have increased the pressure on civilian spending while doing little to restrain military expansion'. This may perhaps be the case, but it must be weighed against the fact that at least some of the assistance supplied did find its way into corrupt or militaristic uses (Uvin, 1998:90), and that the continuation of funding to the Rwandan state enhanced its legitimacy and may well have encouraged it to believe it could get away with still further abuses. Andersen (2000:451) argues that stronger human rights conditionality in 1992 might have proved effective, and a brief period of concerted donor pressure on human rights issues seems to have led to some improvements in 1993 (Uvin, 1998:96).<sup>18</sup>

## **Towards Explanation**

Why did the World Bank lend such support to state power in Rwanda? Prunier (1995:88) hints at occasional expatriate corruption, with some World Bank officials colluding with *akazu* agents, though there is no evidence that corruption of this sort was widespread. Hanssen (1989:24) believes that World Bank 'experts' simply knew too little about the realities of the local Rwandan situation: commenting on the period before 1989, he claims that Bank report writers rarely spent more than 15 days in Rwanda at a time and often spoke only English (see also Uvin, 1998:156). Commentators on the Bank at a more general level have pointed to its staff's poor knowledge of non-economic issues, even insofar as these impinge on the performance of the economy (Stremlau and Sagasti, 1998:97).

Other writers claim that such 'ignorance' is part of a wider malaise: the development aid 'community', of which the Bank is a leading member, has an overwhelming need to airbrush reality in order to be able to claim 'success' (reality being notorious for its tendency to reflect lack of aid success). If success cannot be claimed, further projects and programmes cannot be legitimised (Quarles van Offord, 1993). According to this line of argument, it is for this reason of (perhaps unconscious) institutional self-interest that international aid agencies – including the World Bank – portray states as apolitical, technocratic implementers of policy, with social divisions within a country downplayed or ignored. To put it slightly differently, states have not been explicitly analysed as representing certain sectional interests – instead, they have been seen as representing (or, at least, trying to represent) society as whole.

James Ferguson (1990:225) describes how such an analysis worked to the government's advantage in Lesotho: the governmental bureaucracy, heavily supported by the Bank, was portrayed as a 'machine for delivering services' rather than as 'a device through which certain classes and interests control the behaviour and choices of others.' As a result, the Lesotho régime – representing the interest of a particular élite

– was able to use World Bank projects to reinforce its bureaucratic state power over rural areas while the World Bank, in turn, was better able to justify the maintenance and extension of its own interventions (on the grounds that they were merely promoting overall societal welfare). In reality, the state served quite a different role, as we have already seen in the example of Rwanda – it was ‘the most important instrument of accumulation of wealth and reproduction of a ruling class’ (Reyntjens, 1996:242). But having allowed the ruling class to accumulate wealth and reproduce itself over time would hardly constitute the sorts of outcomes the Bank could use to claim ‘success’ vis-à-vis its interventions.

Peter Uvin has already analysed this process at work in Rwanda, when he talks of a ‘development ideology’ that the state promoted and to which international agencies subscribed:

*[This] basically consists of an argument that the state’s sole objective is the pursuit of economic development for the ... masses; as a result ... [everyone] interested in promoting development should work with the state to make that possible. This ideology legitimises the government’s intrusive presence in all aspects of social life, and diverts attention from the very real differences that exist between different classes and social groups. In other words, it diverts attention from all things political, replacing them with a discourse of technicity and collective progress ... [T]his discourse has come to serve as a powerful tool for Third World élites, in their dealings both with their own populations and the international system (Uvin, 1997:99-100).*

As the preceding section demonstrated, World Bank policy towards Rwanda in the early 1990s perpetuated the diversion of attention from ‘the very real differences that exist between different classes and social groups’, thus lending implicit support to the agenda of the Rwandan ruling élite, but also allowing the Bank to better justify business as usual – shifting vast amounts of money, to agents claimed to be committed to the uplift of society as a whole. This strategem ‘situates the World Bank [and the Rwandan state] in a technocratic realm above or outside of politics’ (Uvin, 1998:43), though as Uvin (1998:155) goes on to note ‘this blindness to politics by project planners and managers does not make their political effects disappear; it just renders them unrecognised and undiscussed, to the pleasure of those who stand to benefit’.

However, an obvious query arises here: how could the Bank continue to justify so strongly supporting state structures at a time (the early 1990s) when it itself was committed to ‘rolling back’ state power under the neoliberal economic reforms characteristic of the 1980s and 1990s? The compatibility of the World Bank’s discourse with the interests of governments such as those of Lesotho and Rwanda might have been expected to decline, given the anti-statist thrust of the neoliberal adjustment policies embraced by the Bank. There is certainly a deep distrust of state intervention embedded in the political economy approach currently favoured by the World Bank (Fine, 1999). However, the adoption of the adjustment discourse has not fundamentally altered the extent to which the state is still seen as a neutral force, whose role is to implement policies in a rational, technocratic manner (Hildyard and Wilks, 1998). Bank hostility to state intervention must be reconciled with the ongoing need to work with states: this circle is squared by envisaging a state structure that is committed to its own rolling back, staffed by technocrats who recognise the validity of the Bank’s economic nostrums. Referring to the experience of adjustment in Africa, Gordon notes:

*Ironically, despite their critique of the African state, donor strategies in practice complemented the apolitical rhetoric and hierarchical nature of the existing African regimes: and, in fact, sought to shift from one narrow focus of decision making, i.e., top politicians, to another, i.e., top technocrats* (Gordon, 1996:1529).

The architects and proponents of structural adjustment often see the implementation of their programmes as requiring skilled (in terms of neoliberal economics) ministers and civil servants 'detached' and 'insulated' from those 'interest groups' who would otherwise derail the necessary process of reform (Gibbon, 1995:137; Gordon, 1996:1528). This attitude is clearly apparent in the work of influential (*vis-à-vis* Bank policy) writers such as Robert Bates.<sup>19</sup> Bates (1994) exemplifies the tendency when he speaks of the desirability of creating 'strong economic bureaucracies ... able to resist distributive claims and to minimise economic distortions' (Bates, 1994:25).

While Bates recognises that élite groups do use the resources of the state for private ends, and this is a view occasionally recognised by the Bank also (Williams and Young, 1994:92), he, and other writers within this approach, appear to believe that this tendency can be overcome by insulation of policy-makers from wider societal interests, though how they can be insulated from their *own* interests is never obvious. Sandbrook (1996:8) talks of the desirability of 'technocrats and administrators ... [obtaining] the requisite insulation and competence'; for Sandbrook, the task of government is to 'mediate the many conflicts within society', which is a matter of enhancing 'technical and administrative skills'. There is an implicit assumption that technocrats – once safely ensconced in what Mkandawire (1998:27) describes as 'authoritarian enclaves' such as independent central banks – will neutrally administer the tenets of detached economic wisdom. This process can be enhanced if the technocrats devote time and effort to persuading the rest of society that adjustment policies are both necessary and desirable (see below).

The policies themselves, of course, can only be perceived as neutral 'with respect to those who already accept liberal principles' (Williams and Young, 1994:94). Indeed, the conception of state neutrality is intimately related to the perceived political neutrality (or technical superiority) of the economic advice itself – the role of the state is to neutrally implement 'correct' (in an abstract sense) policies and persuade others of that correctness. Thus, insofar as Bank personnel analyse political issues in the context of adjustment, they tend to do so from the perspective of 'strengthening the domestic constituency for reform', promoting 'country ownership' of reform programmes, and creating the conditions through which governments can 'build consensus' for reform.<sup>20</sup> The actual content of reform is assumed to be beyond argument – the task of politics is simply to persuade people of the merits of implementing reform. This is very much in keeping with the Bank's (1995:iv, 13) criticism of the Rwandan state for not better 'associating' people with the adjustment programme, its failure to build 'broader political and popular support for reform'.

In general, the above constitute the themes that, as we have already seen, constituted the staples of Bank discourse *vis-à-vis* Rwanda in the early 1990s:

- The insistence on the state as a mediative/neutral (albeit not always efficient or effective) actor;
- The underplaying of social divisions within the country;
- The stress on the (technical) 'correctness' of adjustment policies;

- The analysis of politics in terms of abstracted 'interest groups';
- And the need to persuade the population of the merits of reform.

These themes flowed directly from the institutional requirements of the Bank itself – the reconciliation of a commitment to neoliberal economic reform with the ongoing need to work through state structures, a reconciliation that can only be achieved by the discursive construction of a technocratic state which shares the policy priorities of the Bank itself.

The discourse, therefore, did not flow from any detailed analysis of the *specificity* of Rwanda – indeed, a central plank of Bank discourse is that it offers *universal, technical* solutions that do not *need* to be tailored to local circumstances. But, as earlier sections showed, in Rwanda, probably more than anywhere else in the world, the Bank's discursive construction missed (deliberately or otherwise) a critical element of what was actually happening – sharply rising inequality, accelerating elite enrichment and corruption (mainly organised through the state), and preparations for massive violence on the part of those who controlled the state. The Bank was not alone in this as most of the development aid 'community' also managed to avert their eyes from the increasingly ominous reality of Rwanda at that time (Uvin, 1998:82-102).

## Postscript

The new, RPF-led government of Rwanda has been involved in wars in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC, formerly Zaire) since 1996. The second major phase of conflict began in August 1998, and has led to considerable criticism of all parties involved (including several other governments in the region) over civilian casualties, human rights abuses, the looting of DRC resources and other matters (Amnesty, 1997; Human Rights Watch, 2000b; Jackson, 2000; Willum, B, 2001; Willum, G, 2001). There are also serious criticisms being made of the state's human rights record within Rwanda itself (Amnesty, 2000; Human Rights Watch, 2000a).

Aid donors to Rwanda today are displaying a greater willingness than before to engage with political issues, rather than simply turning a blind eye to them (Uvin, 2001). Although aid to Rwanda remains high, concern about the behaviour of the current government means that it itself receives less aid than did the previous regime (Uvin, 2001:181). Nonetheless, as far as the World Bank and the IMF are concerned, some old habits die hard:

*In June 1998, the IMF approved structural adjustment aid for Rwanda of nearly US\$100 million over three years. Despite Rwanda's increase in military expenditure above agreed limits, the IMF has continued to provide this aid after the start of the war in the DRC. On 31 March 1999, the World Bank approved a 'Rwanda Economic Recovery Credit' of US\$75 million, of which US\$40 million were released straight away (CCAC/GLAN, 2000:14).*

A World Bank economist was asked whether there was not a danger of these funds being diverted to finance the war in the DRC: he replied that

*the government [of Rwanda] assured us that it is not interested in the continuation of the war. Which is satisfactory for us ... We have no guarantees, but we have their word (cited in Reyntjens, 1999:42).*

Reyntjens (1999:42) comments that 'In the light of all the lies of the Rwandan regime concerning its involvement in the DRC in 1996-1997 and again in 1998, such an



explanation is astonishing'. However, given the patterns described earlier in this article, there is obviously a strong sense of history repeating itself here: the Bank is once again displaying a willingness to lend strong support to Rwandan state power, and the consequences for ordinary people – in Rwanda itself and in the DRC – may once more be bleak.

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## Endnotes

1. The phrase 'indigenous' is used to denote differentiation from the white, mostly European community, who represented an economically and socially important group in the society also (Uvin, 1998:16).
2. For a flavour of these debates, see Mullen (1995) and Pottier (1995); see also Kamukana (1993), Mamdani (1996), Newbury (1988) and Prunier (1995).
3. The most likely explanation of his death is that he was killed by members of the *akazu* itself, concerned at his alleged betrayal of the Hutu extremist cause (Prunier, 1995:213-29).
4. Lugan (1997:450) describes the 'international community' as having a veritable passion (*engouement*) for the country.
5. Unless and until otherwise stated, all page numbers in the text refer to World Bank (1994).
6. For a detailed discussion of this issue, see Verwimp (1999), who relates these control mechanisms to the régime's rhetorical idealisation of peasant life.
7. African Rights (1995:23) describes how leading government and army figures rented out large buildings in Kigali to aid agencies and foreign companies.
8. Until otherwise stated, all page numbers in the text now refer to World Bank (1995).
9. This refers to parliament's voting down of a proposed increase in tobacco taxes (iv).
10. A report from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) dating from the early 1990s at least acknowledges that most adjustment measures were, presumably for reasons other than disinformation, very unpopular (UNDP, n.d.: 28).
11. Concern about the outcome of the state-RPF struggle led to the Bank requesting that RPF representatives be associated with the negotiations on the structural adjustment programme (World Bank, 1995:12-13).
12. The Bank (1994:15) has argued that the social impact of inflation was limited by the fact that food prices rose less sharply than overall prices, and many of the poor were subsistence farmers outside the cash economy. This argument needs to be treated with caution – 25 per cent of the population was landless and many more had to supplement their own production with purchased food and other goods (Mullen, 1995:23).
13. See also Kanimba (1991:23) who documents the explicit commitment of the structural adjustment programme to at least maintaining health and education services at existing levels.
14. Chossudovsky (1997:118) does recognise this impact but, to my mind, does not sufficiently emphasise its importance.

15. Talks, which were due to begin in early 1993, on a new joint Bank/Fund programme of support were postponed until the government had signed a peace accord with the RPF (UNDP, n.d.:30).

16. It is possible that Bank personnel expressed certain matters to state officials on a face-to-face basis that did not feature in the official reports reviewed here. However, even if such behind-the-scenes pressure occurred, to claim that structural adjustment supports 'were made conditional on democratic developments in Rwanda' (Andersen, 2000:448) seems somewhat overstated.

17. Much of the increase in military spending was, in fairness, hidden – such as the diversion to the army of lorries purchased for ostensibly agricultural use, and the usage by militias of hospital vehicles (Melvern, 2000:67). However, Melvern (2000:67) still notes 'It is a mystery why the five missions sent by the World Bank to follow and supervise the SAP between June 1991 and October 1993 apparently failed to notice all this [diversion of funding] activity'.

18. This relates to a much wider debate about whether the genocide might have been prevented by different types of external intervention – see Kuperman (2000).

19. For a cogent critique of the approach, see Leys (1996:80-103).

20. The phrases in quotation marks are taken from a talk by Paul Collier, a senior economist at the World Bank, at a conference on Poverty in Africa – a Dialogue on Causes and Solutions held at the Centre for the Study of African Economies, Oxford, 16 April 1999.

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