

Politique africaine

CALL FOR PAPERS

Rwanda: the trajectory of the state after the genocide

Special issue coordinated by **Benjamin Chemouni** (University of Cambridge)

Deadline for the submission of proposals: **25 October 2019**

Context and objective

This special issue aims to provide a better understanding of the trajectory of the Rwandan state since the genocide. It will fill a gap in the francophone literature that has focused mainly on the genocide and its judicial, memorial and diplomatic consequences (Audoin-Rouzeau, Chrétien, and Dumas 2011; Dumas 2014; Piton 2018). Few studies have indeed addressed the question of the dynamics of the post-genocide state reconstruction (a notable exception is Kimonyo 2017), a topic much more prevalent in anglophone research. By favouring empirical approaches, the objective is to reflect on the multiplicity of social and political forces at work in the transformation of the state since 1994.

In order to understand the processes that, since 1994, have made the Rwandan state what it is today, it seems particularly fruitful to apply Berman and Lonsdale's distinction between *state building* and *state formation*. State-building is a deliberate effort, through public policies and ideology, to create an apparatus of domination, while state formation is "a historical process whose outcome is a largely unconscious and contradictory process of conflicts, negotiations and compromises between diverse groups, whose self-serving actions and trade-offs constitute the 'vulgarisation of power'" (Berman and Lonsdale 1992, 5; in Bayart 1994, 137). In the Rwandan case, this analytical distinction, by drawing attention both to the voluntarist and to the unintentional factors of the state trajectory, is particularly promising in several respects.

First, this distinction is an opportunity to reaffirm the central role played by the will of the actors to forge a new state machinery after 1994. This is a resolute goal of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) anchored in an ideological project articulated well before the genocide (Chemouni and Mugiraneza 2019) and made necessary after the 1994 cataclysm. The

observer of the current Rwandan state can hardly imagine what the state was only twenty-five years ago. The new RPF political elite takes power in a country that most of its leaders, having grown up abroad, know relatively little about. Many educated Hutus from the administration, involved in the genocide of Tutsis and the murder of moderate Hutus, or simply out of fear of the RPF, fled, leading to a sudden and profound sociological renewal of the civil service. Many new public servants come from the diaspora; among them, Anglophones who cannot read official documents written in French. This new sociology of the civil service produces mistrust not only between Hutus and Tutsis, but also between survivors and the different groups of returnees from the diaspora. The work of civil servants must also deal with derisory material resources since the genocidal government fled with the country's monetary reserves. Civil servants were first paid in kind and then, from 1995, with symbolic salaries. Consequently, after the genocide, many state officials had to discover how the state worked, in a context of extraordinary material and human destruction (Plumier 1997). Twenty-five years later, there is every reason to take the role of the voluntarism of actors in the trajectory of the state seriously. The current state is largely the result of a Rwandan-style "high modernism", led by a technocratic elite that sees itself as an enlightened vanguard, confident of its developmental mission and the means to achieve it (Hasselskog 2015). At the local level, the state has also been profoundly transformed by the RPF. The government has reconfigured the administrative map of Rwanda and changed the names of the country's regions and main towns. It has also initiated a process of decentralization that has been accompanied by a "social re-engineering" project through a top-down green revolution (Ansoms 2009) and an authoritarian villagization program (Newbury 2011).

But the state that has emerged has also followed the donors' model of a "projected state" in Africa (Darbon 2003). The voluntarism of the new political elite was quickly confronted with a set of new standards promoted by international actors. Compliance with these standards has proved essential to access development assistance and to legitimize the new regime in the eyes of the international community. The implementation of these standards has notably taken the form of quantified performance indicators. The commitment of government officials to these often narrow statistical indicators has led to reforms that have not always been fully controlled, dominated by the pursuit of quantified objectives that led to contradictions in public policies (e.g. Chemouni and Dye, forthcoming). At the same time, the commitment to international donors' standards has enabled governance practices to take root and to be quickly adapted by the government. It has generalized the use of mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating civil servants clearly inspired by the new public management, which it has legitimized through the use of neo-tradition: for example the *imihigo* performance contracts of civil servants, omnipresent since 2006, take their name from the pre-colonial practice of pledging to achieve military objectives (Klingebiel et al. 2019). This encounter between a state-building project and the "language" of donors, which is often that of numbers and statistics, has also provided an opportunity for the RPF to use such a language as an instrument of extraversion in order to mobilize more international funds and support (Hayman 2009). This has resulted, for example, in an often spectacular ranking of the country in terms of international criteria of good governance.

In any case, the quantification of public policies simultaneously creates ways of conceiving the state, of thinking about society and of acting, as shown by the work of Alain Desrosières (2010, 2013). The omnipresence of "development" as a discourse, practice and statistical

object is indeed deeply linked to the post-genocide state trajectory. On the one hand, the state appears to be a means of development, a tool at the service of the legitimization of the regime and its ambition to become an African developmental state. In terms of international indicators, this country has produced results regarding economic growth - one of the most sustained on the continent - poverty reduction -even if it has slowed down in recent years- and social services. Conversely, development and its quantification can be seen as strengthening the state (Mann and Berry 2016). For example, public development policies, intentionally or unintentionally, make individuals more legible by the regime, to use James Scott's (1998) concept. These policies often aim to change the "mindset" of Rwandans, making them more receptive to the transformative power of the state (Purdeková 2012). Questioning the strong presence of the RPF in the capitalist sector through companies belonging to the party and the army is a fruitful way of grasping this double articulation between state and development. These companies have been analysed as the reinforcement of the state's and RPF's control through the market (Mann and Berry 2016). But they can also be analyzed as a tool for economic growth that facilitates the centralization and reallocation of rents in order to develop the capitalist sector according to a logic of "neopatrimonial developmentalism" (Booth and Golooba-Mutebi 2012; Gökgür 2012).

In apprehending the Rwandan state, it is therefore imperative to move away from excessive *ex-post* rationalisation of a necessarily chaotic trajectory. It is necessary to recognize, through the prism of state formation, the external influences - national or international - that have reworked the project of state building. It is also necessary to discern unanticipated but sometimes welcome effects for the survival of the regime and its goal of producing order and development. It is also required to problematize the RPF's voluntarism in terms of the effects it produces. This voluntarism has justified the use of paternalistic and coercive means in the implementation of public policies, means that may run counter to the RPF's political legitimization project that they are supposed to serve. They could even pave the way for future violence (Ingelaere 2014; Thomson 2013). Finally, recent work underlines, contrary to the vision of an omnipotent Rwandan state, that this voluntarism can produce inconsistencies and contradictions leading to its impotence (e.g. Behuria 2018; Williams 2017).

The objective of the special issue is to question how the voluntarism of the RPF, as embodied in public institutions and policies, has been transformed since 1994 by the practices of all the social actors. It is not only a question of understanding, through the "politics from below" (*la politique par le bas*) (Bayart 1981), how the interface between society and the state reconfigures the latter. It is also an attempt, by moving away from a monolithic vision of the state, to grasp "from the middle" how the divergent interests and social positions of the actors within the state influence and recompose public policies and, more generally, the project of state building.

Taking the political and sociological drivers of public action in Rwanda as a starting point, the papers will adopt a heuristic approach suitable for overcoming the polarization of the literature around the intentions of the RPF ("benevolent" and "developmental" objectives versus objectives of "control" and "subjugation"). Finally, the "vulgarisation of power" will make it possible to think about the dynamics of coercion and production of order in Rwanda after a period of extreme violence and social disintegration. The aim is not only to analyse the post 1994 mechanisms of violence, surveillance and discipline as imposed from above,

according to a linear and unilateral process of confiscation of violence by a militarised Leviathan. It is also to understand how the population has subjected itself to these mechanisms, contributed to them or even recomposed them.

Thematic axes

The topics of the papers for this special issue can revolve around three main axes.

For a sociology of the Rwandan state

How can a state be rebuilt with some of its personnel having grown up in exile and in a context of a sudden renewal of the public service? How was the state negotiated between the different groups of the diaspora but also with those who had not left the country? These topics could be linked with the debates on the transformation of rebel groups into political parties (Ishiyama 2016; Peclard and Mechoulan 2015; Zeeuw 2008). They raise the question of the extent to which forms of organization and political identity experienced by the RPF during the civil war and within the Ugandan rebellion, as well as the social relations established at that time, have been reused within the state. The papers may also address the issue of the RPF's ability to discipline its members after victory. This is a difficult task for any victorious armed organization, but one that is crucial in a state-building process (Clapham 2012). This can involve, for example, reflecting on the Front's ability to prevent acts of revenge and theft by the military as well as acts of corruption and clientelism by its civilian members. Finally, the special issue will aim to understand the state on a daily basis. Who are the Rwandan "street-level bureaucrats"? How do they negotiate the requirements of an ambitious, and sometimes coercive, modernist project from above in a social environment to which they themselves belong? In other words, what does the "vulgarisation of power" mean in the authoritarian Rwandan context? How is it influenced by the omnipresence of the military, often presented as the linchpin of the state building project (Purdeková, Reyntjens, and Wilén 2018)? How has the process of vulgarising power transformed and been transformed by the issue of ethnicity? While some forms of identity are strengthened after 1994 (diasporic identities, class identities, etc.), has this vulgarisation allowed the erosion of ethnic identities according to the wishes of the RPF, their transformation, or their subdued maintenance (Ingelaere 2010; Thomson 2013)? And conversely, what are the consequences of these dynamics on the formation of the state?

The state in action

The second axis questions the logic of the state "in action" at various administrative levels. How are reforms and public policies constructed and managed politically? This involves understanding how public policies are reworked "from below" or the "middle", an issue that has been little explored in the literature. In particular, specific public policies may be examined as they can constitute a promising window into the sociology of the state (Darbon and Provini 2018). Indeed, the analysis of public action classically focuses on the gaps between the design and the implementation of public policies (Grindle 1980) and their recomposition, or even their diversion, by actors "from below" (Dupuy and Thoenig 1985 ; Hyden 2013 ; Lipsky 1980). In this respect (Darbon 2004), such an approach can be merged

with and enrich socio-anthropological approaches of the functioning of administrations, the experience of actors and the daily negotiation of the state (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 2014; Blundo and Le Meur 2009; Hagmann and Péclard 2010). This axis will also provide an opportunity to examine the modes of domination and legitimization used by the RPF and the way in which the population experience them. To this end, the papers may reflect on the articulation between authoritarian modes of governance and developmental projects. Finally, the papers can examine dynamics of personalization of power in Rwanda. Has the formation of the state resulted in a process of empowerment of the administration vis-à-vis the ruling party or does it remain essentially dependent on the overwhelming personality of Paul Kagame within the RPF?

Historizing the trajectory of the Rwandan state

The third axis favours a historical approach of the state since 1994 but also a diachronic comparison with the pre-genocide period. For example, it can focus on a better understanding of the pivotal period from the end of the genocide in 1994 to the adoption of the constitution in 2003. It is during this period, sometimes referred to as the "emergency period", that the idea of a new state crystallizes. Despite its importance, however, this period largely remains a blind spot in studies on the Rwandan state. Which models were discussed, adopted, adapted, or on the contrary taken as examples not to be followed? How were the central functions of the state restored after the genocide? Articles may also adopt an empirical and historical approach to some key areas of public policy (security, administrative reform, decentralization, agriculture, health, etc.) provided that they can offer a broader window on the trajectory of the state. These specific areas can be addressed from above, focusing the analysis on the heart of the state machinery, or from below. This axis may also take into account the *longue durée* to provide an understanding of the state's current capacity for control. The Rwandan state indeed also stems from a hierarchical and centralized pre-colonial proto-state. The high population density on its territory has historically encouraged the political authorities to invest in population control (Herbst 2000). This approach can thus foster an understanding of the apparent similarities between the pre- and post-genocide state: a state that deeply penetrates Rwandan society and is driven by a developmental ambition (Uvin 1998). Such an approach will make it possible to re-examine the continuities and ruptures in the light of the extraordinary character of the genocide. It can help to distinguish what is novel in the RPF's governance techniques, from what constitutes a continuity with or a re-discovery of the pre-1994 governance, an issue that has been largely neglected so far (Reyntjens 2018).

Timeline:

25 October 2019: Deadline for submission of proposals (One-page summary in French or English) to be sent to Benjamin Chemouni < bc500@cam.ac.uk >.

2 November 2019: notification to the authors of the acceptance or rejection of their proposal

20 March 2020: article deadline (50,000 characters maximum, including spaces and footnotes). Articles can be submitted in French or English.

For more information on the format of the articles to be submitted, see (<https://polaf.hypotheses.org/soumettre-un-article/submit-to-the-journal>).

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