

CHAPTER II

RWANDA, FRANCE AND ORGANISATION INTERNATIONALE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE

This chapter elaborates the initial relation between Rwanda and France which had been very dynamic for decades. The author describes the role of *Organisation Internationale de La Francophonie* in maintaining their relations, the involvement of France in Rwandan genocide, the diplomatic crisis among both, as well as the restoration of diplomatic cooperation between Rwanda and France.

A. Rwanda-France Initial Relation

The cooperation between France and Rwanda started after getting liberated from Belgium in July 2nd 1962 following the withdrawal of Belgium as well as the emergence of the new regime of Rwanda which had been dominated and replaced by the Hutu people who established a republic instead of monarchy. Referring to Rwanda's historical colonization background, it did not have any obvious reasons to benefit from having cooperation with France (Camus, 2013). Otherwise, in October 1962, President Grégoire Kayibanda of Rwanda and President Charles de Gaulle of France signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation. The treaty agreed on cultural, technology, and economic cooperation. Following the signing of this treaty President Kayibanda declared:

“Like all Africans, Rwandans have the highest respect for the “man of Brazzaville.” Nobody did more for the decolonization in Africa. I knew general de Gaulle’s concern to see countries he led to the independence fully enjoying their new freedom by helping them in developing their national resources. I can say today that this concern also extends beyond and includes countries which were not under the French tutorship.” (Quilès, 1998)

President Kayibanda’s speech at that time indicated the expression of Rwanda’s high appreciation and gratitude to France as France had been supporting Rwanda on the early time towards its independence. France had supported Rwanda for democratization and initiated for its independence at the United Nations (UN) before it finally got its official independence and sponsored Rwandan membership in the United Nations (Quilès, 1998).

Since the first time Rwanda and France started their cooperation, a close relation between both had been gradually evolving (Kuperus, 2016). Later that year, December 4 1962, another more specific treaty was signed. Rwanda was incorporated into *La Francophonie* or *Françafrique*, the association of former French colonies in which France—as the former colonist—tended to have interests in economic cooperation instead of political and military cooperation (Willis, 2014). The establishment of French as the official language of Rwanda was benefitting the position of France as the cultural and linguistic roots were already embedded since the presence of Belgian’s colonization there. It was notable that the role of Belgian

rules had benefitted France in the future and created connection between France and Rwanda. Since then, there had been the presence of France in every aspect of Rwanda. In 1964, France appointed and sent an ambassador to be in charge in French Embassy for Rwanda in Kigali and the permanent cooperation mission settled in 1969 (Willis, 2014). The mission was to encourage and maintain Rwanda's reliance on France in all aspects; technical, language, culture, and economy as well as to make the presence of France in Rwanda stable and permanent (Quilès, 1998).

In early 1970s, without any contestation France unconditionally took over Belgian's influences over Rwanda and barely integrated Rwanda to the *pays du champ* (countries within the French area of influence) with the implementation of the classical two-fold African policy: 1) Ambitious development aid program. 2) Military cooperation to provide security and stability to the country (Quilès, 1998).

On 18 July 1975, a military agreement (*Accord particulier d'assistance militaire*) with a standard procedure between Paris and Kigali was signed. France was in charge of supporting Rwanda in providing military assistance (Mucyo Report, 2008). The operation of French military in Rwanda was under French mandate which included the French military forces uniform. The aim of this agreement was to support the Rwandan provision finances, provide the Rwandan Armed Forces and the gendarmerie with French-model military training as well as the military equipment. However, the 1975 military agreement had been amended twice: in 1983 and in 1992. The amended agreement determined that French militaries

operated under Rwandan mandate, and serving in Rwandan uniform instead of French uniform, with the rank they hold equivalent with the Rwandan Armed Forces. The Rwanda-France military agreement highlighted the supremacy of civilian participation over their country's military cooperation, since the French Ambassador to Rwanda had an ultimate control over French military forces through the chief of the military assistance mission (*Mission d'Assistance Militaire – MAM*). That agreement formerly excluded French military forces from being involved in any preparation or conduct of combat operations and in any law enforcement operations (Camus, 2013).

B. Rwanda and Organisation Internationale de La Francophonie

Rwanda has been the member of *Organisation Internationale de La Francophonie* since the first time this organization established. This organization is a linguistic international organization established in 1970, representing French-speaking countries all over the world that shared the common cultural background (Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, 2013). *La Francophonie* is the product of globalization as it bridges France in maintaining its relations with former colonies and the other French-speaking countries, particularly Rwanda (Refin, 2015).

Through the cooperation in *La Francophonie*, France and Rwanda could tighten their relations and mutually benefit each other. In their cooperation, Rwanda received aid and assistance provided by France. In return,

France could have business investment in Rwanda. France was able to initiate the *Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Occidentale* (CFAO). However, this kind of relation is viewed as a neocolonialist relation as it would only get Rwanda more contingent with French influences (Verschave, 2000). According to Alice Karekezi, a researcher from the University of Rwanda's Center for Conflict Management (CCM), Rwanda as one of the small states in the globe could escalate its influences through the cooperation in *Organisation Internationale de La Francophonie* as its membership in that organization would allow Rwanda to increase its role in an international community.

It cannot be denied that the mutual benefits gained by France and Rwanda through this organization have been maintaining a good relation among both. In diplomatic cooperation, *La Francophonie* has been providing Rwanda a platform to build any other cooperation with the other *La Francophonie* member states all over the globe in five different continents. As a French-speaking country, the use of French as the official language has been benefitting Rwanda to be the vehicle in improving a multilingual society as French has been one of the official languages in the United Nations. Besides, it encouraged Rwanda to play a strategic role in the United Nations (Mbonyinshuti, 2018).

C. Rwanda-France Diplomatic Crisis

In conducting their diplomatic cooperation, President Habyarimana of Rwanda and President Mitterrand of France had built such a close personal

relation as Rwanda had always been considering the presence of France in every aspect of its political, economic and military matters. Despite Rwanda and France had been close allies since the Hutu government of Rwanda had taken the office, their relation was strained in the early 1990s. It was started with the return of Tutsi people from exile with the intention to overthrow the Hutu government and take over the regime. It culminated in the assassination of Hutu-Rwandan President, Habyarimana, which triggered the occurrence of genocide tragedy in 1994 that had killed approximately 800.000 Tutsi lives (Lal, 2007).

Unlike the Hutu, Tutsi people who had been fleeing into exile—to Rwanda's neighboring countries such as Uganda and Tanzania—were contrary and not in line with France's previous determination as it had been with the Hutu government. Since Uganda and Tanzania were the former colonies of British Empire, it required the Tutsi refugees to adapt with language, values, and customs of the Anglophone people in those countries. This kind of situation had shaped the behaviors of these Tutsi refugees to have such a tendency and inclination on British influences and leave the French influences instead.

Before the Rwandan genocide occurred in 1994, President Habyarimana had been aware of the strategy of Tutsi refugees to invade his regime. Habyarimana decide to have a meeting with President Francois Mitterrand and Ambassador George Martres in Paris in 1990 to discuss about Rwanda's concern on the possible upcoming invasion from the Tutsi's Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) based in Uganda. Habyarimana delivered their worries on

the possibility of Tutsi domination and asked for an intensive military assistance from France (Siad, 2014). It made France aware and immediately took an action to back Rwanda as the return of those Tutsis who were English-speaking people might endanger and decimate the French influence and turn Rwanda to the British influences (Prunier, 2017).

The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) was a rebel group made up with Tutsi refugees who had been trained in the joining Uganda's National Resistance Army (NRA). After getting themselves well-trained, they left the NRA, took the weaponry along with them and started the mission to invade the Rwandan Hutu government. The Tutsi RPF mission was started on 1st October 1990 crossing the border of Uganda and Rwanda. It made the Rwandan elite panicked, that Habyarimana invoked an intensive military aid from France as Rwanda viewed France as its international ally who had become its military defense and shield against the RPF (Melvern, 2006). President Mitterrand carried on supporting the Rwanda by maintaining French troops in Rwanda, increasing its military assistance and exporting weapons to the regime (Quilès, 1998). In 1992, the military assistance agreement between France and Rwanda was modified in order to extend the cooperation from gendarmerie to the Rwandan Armed Forces. Also, the modification determined the French personnel to be directly responsible through arming and training of Rwandan army (McNulty, 2000).

However, it turned out that the French intervention in Rwanda had become a great failure for Rwanda's modern history as the existing Hutu regime

finally overthrown following the assassination of President Habyarimana in a shot down airplane by the RPF on April 6th 1994. The death of Habyarimana was culminating the conflict into genocide and had made Rwanda vacuum of power until July 4th 1994 when the RPF leaders; Pasteur Bizimungu and Paul Kagame became the President and Vice President of Rwanda.

The RPF people took over the Hutu Rwandan regime and automatically had control over the Rwandan political direction which was to deliberately start turning away from French determinations. Since the Tutsi seized power in Rwanda, its relation with France had been totally changed into an unhealthy strained relation. The Rwandan new regime continued to press France for justice as they believed that France complicit in the genocide by providing the Hutu a clear support on the Tutsi massacres. However, France kept ignoring and rejecting the allegations, even the accusation was never been examined to the court. Instead, France assigned Jean-Louis Bruguière, the appointed French judge to investigate the 1994 genocide tragedy. On November 2006, after an eight-year investigation, Bruguière finally presented his findings (Bruguière, 2006). Bruguiere alleged and accused Rwanda back for the assassination of Habyarimana by issuing an international arrest warrants for Kagame's nine allies who were suspected involving in Habyarimana's aircraft shot down, an initial tragedy that enraged the Hutus and triggered the genocide (USA Today, 2006).

Responding to the French allegation, the Rwandan government outrageously expelled Emmanuel Ndagijimana, Rwandan Ambassador to France in Paris back to Rwanda and deported Dominique Decherf, the

French Ambassador to Rwanda (The New York Times, 2006). Through the ambassador expulsion and deportation, Rwanda had officially cut its diplomatic ties with France in November 25th 2006. In April 2007, Rwanda applied to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the dispute as France had been violating the international law with regard to international immunities in general and diplomatic immunities, as well as violating Rwanda's sovereignty. Thus, Rwanda demanded France to forthwith annul its international arrest warrants (International Court of Justice, 2007).

D. The Restoration of Rwanda-France Diplomatic Relation

The new elected President of France, Nicholas Sarkozy determined to normalize France-Rwanda relations, arguing to his officials that there was no reason that they should be caught up in the controversies of their predecessors (Moncrieff, 2012). However, Sarkozy never really admitted that French had involved in the Rwandan genocide which killed an estimated 800,000 people in 1994 yet did not formally deliver their repentance and apologies nor did he accept the allegations that France had played a prominent role in training and arming the Hutu militias and troops who led the massacres of the Tutsis and moderate Hutus (Uchegara, 2014).

In the early July 2007, the French minister wanted France and Rwanda to renew their relations as soon as possible and announced his arrival in Kigali, before these statements were tempered in the Elysee. The meeting between French Foreign Minister, Bernard Kouchner, and

Rwandan Foreign Minister Charles Murigande in September 2007 in New York was the first after a while since the cut of both diplomatic ties. In the Europe-Africa summit in December 2007 conducted in Lisbon, Nicolas Sarkozy took the opportunity to renew the dialogue with Paul Kagame as he emphasized how France wanted to start a new page with Rwanda and designed a better future relation. The dialogue between the two Head of states was a sign of the beginning of relation normalization and recovery (Willis, 2014).

The recovery progress of both had intensified gradually as in January 2008, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bernard Kouchner went to Kigali, investigating on the role of France in 1994. He recognized that France had committed a political mistake but no military responsibilities. In April 2008, French official elite was sent to Kigali for the commemoration ceremony of the genocide to express French condolence as a relation recovery mission (Ritimo, 2011). Despite both countries were recovering their relations, the genocide complicity investigation was still going on. In August 2008, the Rwandan authorities commissioned the Mucyo Report, a biased document, to gather evidences of French complicity in the 1994 Rwandan genocide. It pointed to the current Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alain Juppé (Mucyo Report, 2008). In August 2009, a Lieutenant Colonel in Rwandan Army, Rose Kabuye, was charged by Marc Trédivic the French judge for involving in the assassination of Juvenal Habyarimana in 1994. Both countries were continuing their own investigation while recovering their relations.

In November 2009, the Elysee officially announced the reestablishment of France's diplomatic

relations with Rwanda. France announced the upcoming establishment of a Center of Magistrates specializing in genocidal and human rights violation cases that would first investigate the fifteen alleged genocide refugees in France. Then on February 2010, President Nicolas Sarkozy went to Kigali as he admitted and acknowledged that France had made fatal mistakes before and during the 1994 genocide. That was the very first visit of French President to Rwanda since the genocide tragedy ever taken place. France initiated to reopen of the Franco-Rwandan Cultural Center and the French School in the first place to start over the new-old relations (Tumwebaze, 2010).

In April 2010, the Secretary of State for Cooperation and Francophonie, Alain Joyandet, attended the 16th genocide commemoration as a sign of French effort and consistency to rebuild a healthy relation with Rwanda. In the Rwandan 16th genocide commemoration, Alain Juppé delivered his speech showing France's supports towards Rwanda and shared their suffering, convinced how France would commit to the duty of justice, of memory, and of truth, which must go hand in hand and promised to be on the side of Rwanda in the future as they had been close allies in the past (Ritimo, 2011).