

Brexit's Imperial Nostalgia

Anis Chowdhury and Jomo Kwame Sundaram confront the notion that British rule helped “develop” the empire.

By [Jomo Kwame Sundaram](#) in Kuala Lumpur
and [Anis Chowdhury](#) in Sydney

[Inter Press Service](#)



As the possible implications of Britain's self-imposed “no-deal” exit from the European Union loom larger, a new round of imperial nostalgia has come alive.

After turning its back on the Commonwealth since the Thatcherite 1980s, some British Conservative Party leaders are seeking to revive colonial connections in increasingly desperate efforts to avoid self-inflicted marginalization following divorce from its European Union neighbors across the Channel.

Part of the new Brexit induced neo-imperial mythology is that its colonies did not provide any significant economic benefit to Britain itself. Instead, it is suggested that colonial administrations were run at great cost to Britain itself.

The empire, it is even claimed, was long maintained due to a benevolent imperial sense of responsibility. To revive patron-client relations neglected with the turn to Europe in the 1980s, the new mantra is that British rule helped

'develop' the empire.

As the sun never set on Britain's far flung empire, acquired by diverse means for different reasons at various points in time, few generalizations are appropriate. Nevertheless, there is already significant research indicating otherwise for many colonies, but India, of course, was the jewel in the crown.

Empire Strikes Back

Former Indian foreign minister Shashi Tharoor has debunked many imperial apologetic claims, including those made by former Oxford and Harvard historian Niall Ferguson. Probably the most prominent, Ferguson famously insisted decades ago that countries progressed thanks to imperialism in an influential TV series and coffee table book sponsored by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), "Empire."

Malaysian Sultan Nazrin Shah's Oxford University Press book has underscored the crucial contribution of colonial Malayan commodity exports in the first four decades of the 20th century, while other scholarship has shown that post-war British recovery depended crucially on the export earnings' contribution of its Southeast Asian colony.

Less well known is Utsa Patnaik's painstaking work on nearly two centuries of tax and trade data. She estimates that Britain drained nearly \$45 trillion from the Indian subcontinent between 1765 and 1938, equivalent to 17 times the United Kingdom's current gross domestic product.

Colonial Surplus

After the English East India Company gained control of and

monopolized Indian external trade, EIC traders “bought” Indian goods with tax revenue collected from them. After the British crown displaced the EIC in 1847, its monopoly broke down, and traders had to pay London in gold to get rupees to pay Indian producers.

Under imperial monetary arrangements, the colonies’ export earnings were considered British, and hence booked as a deficit in their own “national” accounts despite their often large trade surpluses with the rest of the world until the Great Depression.

Thus, the empire has been depicted by imperial apologists as liabilities to Britain, with India having to borrow from Britain to finance its own imports. Thus, India remained in debt to and thus “bonded” by debt to Britain.

Not surprisingly, two centuries of British rule did not raise Indian per capita income significantly. In fact, income fell by half in the last half of the 19th century while average life expectancy dropped by a fifth between 1870 and 1920! Infamously, tens of millions died due to avoidable famines induced by colonial policy decisions, including the two Bengal famines.

Slavery Too

Britain used such fraudulent gains for many purposes, including further colonial expansion, first in Asia and later in Africa. Taxpayers in the colonies thus paid not only for the administration of their own exploitation, but also for imperial expansion elsewhere, including Britain’s wars.

Early accumulation for Britain's Industrial Revolution depended significantly on such colonial arrangements. Imperial tribute financed the expansion of colonialism and investments abroad, including the European settler colonies.

Not unlike Eduardo Galeano's magnum opus, "Open Veins of Latin America," Walter Rodney's 1972 classic, "How Europe Underdeveloped Africa" showed how slavery and other imperial economic policies transformed, exploited and brutalized Africa.

In "[The Empire Pays Back](#)," Robert Beckford estimated that Britain should pay a whopping £7.5 trillion in reparations for its role in the transatlantic slave trade, breaking it down as follows: £4 trillion in unpaid wages, £2.5 trillion for unjust enrichment and £1 trillion for pain and suffering.

Britain has made no apology for slavery or colonialism, as it has done for the Irish potato famine. There has been no public acknowledgement of how wealth extracted through imperialism made possible the finance, investment, manufacturing, trade and prosperity of modern Britain.

With Brexit imminent, a renewed narrative and discourse of imperial nostalgia has emerged, articulated, *inter alia*, in terms of a return to the Commonwealth, long abandoned by Maggie Thatcher. Hence, well over half of those surveyed in U.K. actually believe that British imperialism was beneficial to the colonies.

This belief is not only clearly self-deluding, but also obscures Britain's neo-colonial scramble for energy and mineral resources, enhanced role as tax haven for

opportunistic finance, as well as its continued global imperial leadership, albeit only in a fading, supporting role to the U.S. as part of its “special relationship.”

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Jomo Kwame Sundaram, a former economics professor, was United Nations assistant secretary-general for economic development, and received the Wassily Leontief Prize for Advancing the Frontiers of Economic Thought in 2007.

Billions of Swedish Krona Supported Anti-Apartheid Struggle

Birgitta Karlström Dorph was on a secret mission in South Africa between 1982 and 1988, writes Ida Karlsson.

By **Ida Karlsson** in Stockholm

Inter Press Service



Between 1982 and 1988 Birgitta Karlström Dorph was on a secret mission in South Africa. “Why didn’t they stop us? Probably they were not aware of the scope of the operation. The money was transferred through so many different channels. We were clever,” Karlström Dorph says.

The work was initiated by the Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme and the Swedish government, the details of which were

not discussed in public.

Altogether, Sweden's financial support for the black resistance against apartheid in South Africa between 1972 and 1994 amounted to more than SEK 4 billion (\$443 million) in today's value and that is an underestimation, according to figures reported by SIDA, the [Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency](#).

"On my first morning in South Africa I went to Burgers Park, in the center of Pretoria. A black worker was cleaning a path in the park. Suddenly I came across a bench and on it was written: 'Whites only'. And I looked at it. I was appalled. I gathered up my courage and spat on the bench," Karlström Dorph recalls.

From 1982, a Swedish humanitarian committee, headed by the general director of SIDA, handled a huge aid effort whose secret elements the government perhaps was not fully aware of. Karlström Dorph's work in South Africa was twofold comprising her official diplomatic posting and her secret mission.

"My family didn't know what I was doing."

She followed what was going on in the resistance movement to see if she could find people and organizations who could receive Swedish aid.

"The documents that show what we did to support the underground resistance are still classified," she explains.

Money from Sweden was transferred to leaders within the black resistance in South Africa. Sweden paid for Nelson Mandela's lawyer, including while he was incarcerated on

Robben Island. Sweden also provided the priest and anti-apartheid activist Beyers Naudé with funds when he was subjected to a banning order.

The South African government looked at Naudé as an enemy as he played a crucial role in supporting the underground resistance movement.

“I wanted to understand what was going on in the country. Naudé was my key to the whole opposition. He provided me with contacts,” Karlström Dorph explains.

Channeling the Money

Funds were channeled from SIDA to organizations and small groups in Sweden and then into accounts of community organizations in South Africa.

“I provided Swedish organizations with bank account numbers and contact information to organizations in South Africa, for example in Soweto,” she adds.

Karlström Dorph says she drove around and met people every day.

One of the most important objectives was to build a civil society that eventually could negotiate with the government; individuals and organizations that eventually could take over.

“We established a program for scholarships. The Swedish Ecumenical Council, an umbrella organization of churches of all denominations, administered about 500 scholarships. People got money transferred into their accounts directly from Sweden. We tried to find relevant organizations

throughout the black community," she says.

People organized themselves and formed a more united opposition in South Africa. UDF, the United Democratic Front, was an umbrella organization for about 600 member organizations against apartheid. Many of the UDF leaders received money through the scholarships.

"We gave money to those who were arrested and were tortured and interrogated. They needed legal help. A lot of money went to competent lawyers. I also met with wives of those who were imprisoned," Karlström Dorph explains.

According to Horst Kleinschmidt, a former political activist, Sweden contributed between 60 and 65 percent of the budget of the International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, or IDAF, an anti-apartheid organization. Between 1964 and 1991 the organization brought 100 million British Pounds into South Africa for the defense of thousands of political activists and to provide aid for their families while they were in prison.

The defense of political prisoners meant that when the prosecutor demanded capital punishment, the sentence was reduced to life in prison. Between 1960 and 1990 this effort saved tens of thousands of lives, according to the Swedish author Per Wästberg, who was involved in IDAF's work.

Karlström Dorph got in touch with Winnie Mandela and visited her while Nelson Mandela was imprisoned.

"We sat down and talked a lot about her husband and the struggle, and various contacts," Karlström Dorph says.

Before they left, she mentioned that she had a book about

Nelson Mandela in the car ?a book that was banned. Winnie Mandela immediately asked for it.

“I said: ‘If I give you the book, I am committing a crime,’” Karlström Dorph recalls.

But Winnie Mandela insisted and Karlström Dorph finally went to the car to get it.

“If our activities had been exposed, many of those who were involved in our work would have found themselves in a serious predicament,” Karlström Dorph says.

The apartheid regime killed affiliates of the ANC, the African National Congress, within the country and also in Zimbabwe, Botswana and Mozambique. Oftentimes during the national State of Emergency, the police and army were stationed or brought into the segregated, black urban living areas to rule with their guns. People, some of whom were unarmed, were beaten and shot for protesting against apartheid. Police even tore down the housing areas where black people lived.

They Went in with Bulldozers’

“They went in with bulldozers and people did not have time to collect their belongings but had to flee,” Karlström Dorph recalls.

She never visited ANC offices or attended anti-apartheid conferences.

“The ANC was forbidden. Members of ANC were imprisoned or killed,” she says making a throat-slitting gesture.

“We never talked about ANC during all these years,” she

adds.

Her very close association with Naudé would have made Karlström Dorph a prime target.

“I was never scared. You just had to be careful,” she says.

There was one time when they had a very strange break-in in their house.

“They had turned the house upside down, but they just took one of my dresses and one of my husband’s shirts. They had slept in our beds and left white fingerprints on the hairdryer. My friends said it was typical of the security police. They wanted to show: ‘We know who you are. We keep an eye on you.’”

When they moved to a new apartment, she found a bullet on the floor in the hallway and there was a hole in the window. Someone had shot through it.

“They obviously tried to intimidate us. I took the bullet and threw it in the bin,” she says.

Once they were being followed on the motorway and a car tried to drive them off the road, but they managed to get away.

Many experienced the brutality of the apartheid regime. One of Karlström Dorph’s contacts, a 25-year-old young man in Pretoria, was found dead.

“We transferred some funds to his organization. Someone contacted me and told me that they had thrown him down an old mine shaft in Pretoria,” she says.

'Palme's Secret Agent'

In the Swedish documentary "Palme's secret agent," Popo Molefe, co-founder of UDF, explains Karlström Dorph's role.

"Without the support of a strong and committed personality like Birgitta Karlström Dorph I do not think we would have been able to form the United Democratic Front, a coalition of social forces," he says.

Molefe later became the leader of South Africa's North Western Province.

Between 1972 and 1994 the exiled ANC received about SEK 1.7 billion, or \$188 million, in today's value. At the time the ANC was considered a terrorist organization by the governments in the United Kingdom and the United States. The financial support from Sweden was more or less kept secret until the beginning of the 1990s.

In 1994, South Africans took their first step together into a very new democracy after decades of white supremacist, authoritarian rule in the form of apartheid. Sweden's involvement had been stronger and much more far-reaching than what was ever reported officially.

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Africa's Sovereignty Over Food

Local food and seed systems must be rebuilt for Africans, write Mariam Mayet, Stephen Greenberg and Linzi Lewis.

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Africa is facing dire times. Climate change is having major impacts on the region and on agriculture in particular, with smallholder farmers –many of them women – facing drought, general lack of water, shifting seasons, and floods in some areas.

Smallholder farmers are often women because in the prevailing division of labor, women are generally responsible for food acquisition and diets. Smallholder farmers are facing the loss of agricultural biodiversity, deforestation, declining soil health and fertility, land and water grabs by the powerful, loss of land access, marginalization and loss of indigenous knowledge and generalized lack of essential services and support.

At the same time, economies are weakening and remain heavily dependent on foreign aid, with extractivist interventions from outside. There is a strong authoritarian orientation in governments in the region, with secrecy and lack of transparency and accountability, weak and fragmented civil society organization and top-down development interventions.

There has been corporate capture of key state institutions, decision making processes and functions. Seed and food systems have been appropriated for multinational corporate profit.

Unchecked Corporate Power

At present, corporate power is almost unchecked in agricultural input supply. The dominant narrative of agribusinesses being indispensable for feeding the world holds great sway on the continent, where corporations have captured policy making processes.

Although most seed on the continent is sourced from farmers' own savings, sharing and local markets, this system is not recognized in policies and laws in most countries. Instead, farmer seed practices are marginalized and generally denigrated as poor quality and backward.

The predominant thrust of agricultural and seed policy and programming on the continent is to seek to replace them. Multinational corporate interests, with support from key continental, regional and national state institutions and agencies, are driving two trends. One is large-scale commercial industrialization by a global agribusiness coalition, or through a Green Revolution smallholder strategy to integrate a layer of smallholder farmers into corporate value chains for the export of bulk commodity crops such as maize and soya.

Women play an essential role in the selection, saving, and sharing of seeds, as part of a broader network within farmer-managed seed systems, shaping the agricultural diversity that meets needs of local populations. This applies to both staple crops, as well as other food crops. In many ways, this pool of genetic resources, which women continue to develop and maintain, is the backbone of human society.

The restrictions placed over reproductive materials, i.e.

seed (including all cultivation materials), and the centralized decision-making around reproduction towards uniformity, homogeneity, ownership, creates greater inequality, amplified vulnerability and a reliance on external inputs, which places the future of food production at greater risk.

Increasing restrictions on use, lack of support for these activities and even their criminalization makes production conditions more challenging for all smallholder farmers

Restrictions on seed use, what may and may not be produced and how, translate into limits on food diversity at the household level, which is a key element of nutrition.

Since the majority of seed cultivated on the continent is saved on farms, exchanged and locally traded by farmers, this provides a solid base for alternative seed sovereignty systems to thrive outside the credit and corporate market.

For small-holder farmers in Africa, the importance of farmer seed systems as central to conserving biodiversity, ensuring nutrition diversity and supporting livelihoods has been highlighted in a huge body of work over the past 30 or 40 years.

However, these systems can benefit from external support. A key priority for smallholder farmers in Africa is resilience in the face of harsh weather events. This requires seed variety adaptation and greater agricultural diversity. Women are the primary custodians of our seed diversity, the custodians of reproduction, of life. This highlights the struggles of farmers' rights, of reproductive rights, to self-determination, and to maintain life-supporting systems.

An ecological, food-systems-transition coalition, based on agroecology and food sovereignty, has found some traction in Africa and globally, but remains relatively weak, fragmented and under-resourced.

Farmers, with support from civil society groups, are doing important work on agroecology and sustainable agriculture, but are often unable to break out of their localized practices.

These need to urgently connect with others on the continent into a bigger and more coherent movement for change, especially radical feminist movements on the continent.

Together, we can fight back and contest the hegemony of large-scale commercial farming and corporate agri-business. We must, together, rebuild and strengthen local food and seed systems for all Africans.

The [African Centre for Biodiversity \(ACB\)](#) is a nonprofit organization based in South Africa with staff in Tanzania. It carries out research and analysis, learning and exchange, capacity and movement building, and advocacy to widen awareness, catalyze collective action and influence decision making on issues of biosafety, genetic modification (GM) and new technologies, seed laws, farmer seed systems, agricultural biodiversity, agroecology, corporate expansion in African agriculture, and food sovereignty in Africa.

Return International Women's Day to its

Radical Roots

This is no time for moderate calls for equality and balance, write Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah and Ana Inés Abelenda.

**By Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah in Accra and
Ana Inés Abelenda in Montevideo**

Inter Press Service

The theme for International Women's Day 2019 doesn't resonate with us. #BalanceForBetter brings to mind slow gradual change, and assumes that if you provide women and girls with equal access then the society will automatically be better. We know that's false.

Access to a broken capitalist system that privileges the richest 1 percent over the rest of the world means that the most marginalized communities (including women, girls, trans and gender nonconforming people) exist in unjust, precarious and fragile societies. This coupled with the increasing privatization of what should be common resources for everyone (including the basics of land and water), as well as the corporate takeover of many public services endangers the lives and wellbeing of poor people.

In a recent submission to the United Nations Secretary General, the African Women's Development Network for Communications (FEMNET) and the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) stated: "Neoliberal economic policies promoted around the globe by a growing majority of governments with the support and pressure of international financial institutions (including through conditional loans), have intensified the commodification of life through

privatization of basic public services and natural resources.”

Corporate Takeovers

This corporate takeover of services meant to benefit everyone, of the health and education sectors in particular, primarily affect women and girls. In a [2017 report](#), the United Nations special rapporteur on the right to education, stated: “Women and girls are frequently excluded from education. Families often favor boys when investing in education.”

The rights of girls to quality education, particularly those from the most underprivileged communities, are infringed when public schools are privatized. Research by feminist and women’s rights organizations has demonstrated the ways in which gender biases affect the choices parents make when they need to pay for education, and have to choose which children to send to school.

It’s in this light that one must view with great concern the increasing trend of handing over the education sector to the private sector. Ghana for example, recently announced that it was seeking to privatize the management of some basic schools. [This decision is being disputed](#) by a number of teachers’ unions including the Teachers & Educational Workers Union of Ghana, the Coalition of Concerned Teachers the National Association of Graduate Teachers and the Ghana National Association of Teachers.

The general secretary of the Ghana National Association of Teachers described the move “as subtle and eventual privatization, commercialization and commodification of

public education in Ghana.” This trend of government reaching out to the private sector to manage the education sector has also been witnessed in other parts of West Africa including [Liberia](#).

There is no doubt that significant investments in the education sectors are required. Sadly, governments in the Global South are looking for these resources in the wrong places. The landmark report by the [High Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa](#) (also known as the Mbeki report) indicated that Africa is losing more than \$50 billion per year in [illicit financial flows](#).

As highlighted in a [report by AWID](#), IFFs have a severe impact on the development of the continent. These resources that are lost to the continent should rather be harnessed and invested into the social sector, including education and health.

Privatization of social services and reduced social protection is at the heart of South America’s wave of neoliberal governments promoting austerity policies that deepen structural gender inequalities. Coupled with the rise of the conservative right in South America – including Brazil’s fascist new government – feminist movements from the South understand this is no time for moderate calls for equality and balance.

In Uruguay, the #8M call to action states: [“Ante el fascismo, más feminismo”](#) (In the face of fascism, we need more feminism!). It is a call for international feminist solidarity to resist daily threats that aim to bring us back centuries when it comes to social and gender justice and

rights. It is also a warning that feminist movements are forging new realities not only about equality, but about radical change.

So on this International Women's Day we call for a return to its radical roots centered on workers' rights and justice. This doesn't call for balance. It calls for a radical transformation of society based on the twin principles of equity and justice.

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Agribusiness Is the Problem, Not the Solution

Current policies often favor large farms at the expense of small growers who produce most of the world's food, writes Jomo Kwame Sundaram.

By Jomo Kwame Sundaram

in Kuala Lumpur

Inter Press Service



For two centuries, all too many discussions about hunger and resource scarcity has been haunted by the ghost of Parson Thomas Malthus.

Malthus warned that rising populations would exhaust resources, especially those needed for food production. Exponential population growth would outstrip food output.

Humanity now faces a major challenge as global warming is expected to frustrate the production of enough food as the world population rises to 9.7 billion by 2050. Timothy Wise's new book "[Eating Tomorrow: Agribusiness, Family Farmers, and the Battle for the Future of Food](#)," argues that most solutions currently put forward by government, philanthropic and private sector luminaries are misleading.

Malthus' Ghost Returns

The early 2008 food price crisis has often been wrongly associated with the 2008-2009 global financial crisis. The number of hungry in the world was said to have risen to over a billion, feeding a resurgence of neo-Malthusianism.

Agribusiness advocates fed such fears, insisting that food production must double by 2050, and high-yielding industrial agriculture, under the auspices of agribusiness, is the only solution. In fact, the world is mainly fed by hundreds of millions of small-scale, often called family farmers who produce over two-thirds of developing countries' food.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, neither food scarcity nor poor physical access are the main causes of food insecurity and hunger. Instead, Reuters has observed a "[global grain glut](#)," with surplus cereal stocks piling up.

Meanwhile, poor production, processing and storage facilities cause food losses of an average of about a third of developing countries' output. A similar share is believed

lost in rich countries due to wasteful food storage, marketing and consumption behavior.

Nevertheless, despite grain abundance, the 2018 [“State of Food Security and Nutrition”](#) report – by the Rome-based United Nations food agencies led by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) – reported rising chronic and severe hunger or undernourishment involving more than 800 million.

Political, philanthropic and corporate leaders have promised to help struggling African and other countries grow more food, by offering to improve farming practices. New seed and other technologies would modernize those left behind.

But producing more food, by itself, does not enable the hungry to eat. Thus, agribusiness and its philanthropic promoters are often the problem, not the solution, in feeding the world.

“Eating Tomorrow” addresses related questions such as: Why doesn’t rising global food production feed the hungry? How can we “feed the world” amid rising populations and unsustainable pressure on land, water and other natural resources that farmers need to grow food?

Family Farmers Lack Power

Drawing on five years of extensive fieldwork in Southern Africa, Mexico, India and the U.S. Midwest, Wise concludes that the problem is essentially one of power. He shows how powerful business interests influence government food and agricultural policies to favor large farms.

This is typically at the expense of “family” farmers, who grow most of the world’s food, but also puts consumers and

others at risk, e.g., due to agrochemical use. His many examples not only detail and explain the many problems small-scale farmers, but also their typically constructive responses despite lack of support, if not worse, from most governments:

- In Mexico, trade liberalization following the 1993 North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA) agreement swamped the country with cheap, subsidized U.S. maize and pork, accelerating migration from the countryside. Apparently, this was actively encouraged by transnational pork producers employing “undocumented” and non-unionized Mexican workers willing to accept low wages and poor working conditions.
- In Malawi, large government subsidies encouraged farmers to buy commercial fertilizers and seeds from U.S. agribusinesses such as now Bayer-owned Monsanto, but to little effect, as their productivity and food security stagnated or even deteriorated. Meanwhile, Monsanto took over the government seed company, favoring its own patented seeds at the expense of productive local varieties. A former senior Monsanto official co-authored the national seed policy that threatens to criminalize farmers who save, exchange and sell seeds instead.
- In Zambia, greater use of seeds and fertilizers from agribusiness tripled maize production without reducing the country’s very high rates of poverty and malnutrition. Meanwhile, as the government provides 250,000-acre “farm blocks” to foreign investors, family farmers struggle for title to farm land.
- In Mozambique too, the government gives away vast tracts of farm land to foreign investors. Meanwhile, women-led

cooperatives successfully run their own native maize seed banks.

- Iowa promotes vast monocultures of maize and soybean to feed hogs and produce bioethanol rather than “feed the world.”
- A large Mexican farmer cooperative launched an “agro-ecological revolution,” while the old government kept trying to legalize Monsanto’s controversial genetically modified maize. Farmers have thus far halted the Monsanto plan, arguing that GM corn threatens the rich diversity of native Mexican varieties.

Much of the research for the book was done in 2014-15, when Barack Obama was U.S. president, although the narrative begins with developments and policies following the 2008 food price crisis, during the last year of former President George W. Bush. The book tells a story of U.S. big business’ influence on policies enabling more aggressive transnational expansion.

Yet, Wise remains optimistic, emphasizing that the world can feed the hungry, many of whom are family farmers. Despite the challenges they face, many family farmers are finding innovative and effective ways to grow more and better food. He advocates support for farmers’ efforts to improve their soil, output and wellbeing.

Eating Better

Hungry farmers are nourishing their life-giving soils using more ecologically sound practices to plant a diversity of native crops, instead of using costly chemicals for export-oriented monocultures. According to Wise, they are growing

more and better food, and are capable of feeding the hungry.

Unfortunately, most national governments and international institutions still favor large-scale, high-input, industrial agriculture. This neglects more sustainable solutions offered by family farmers, and the need to improve the wellbeing of poor farmers.

Undoubtedly, many new agricultural techniques offer the prospect of improving the welfare of farmers, not only by increasing productivity and output, but also by limiting costs, using scarce resources more effectively, and reducing the drudgery of farm work.

But the world must recognize that farming may no longer be viable for many who face land, water and other resource constraints, unless they get better access to such resources. Meanwhile, malnutrition of various types affects well over 2 billion people in the world, and industrial agriculture contributes about 30 percent of greenhouse gas emissions.

Going forward, it will be important to ensure affordable, healthy and nutritious food supplies for all, mindful not only of food and water safety, but also of various pollution threats. A related challenge will be to enhance dietary diversity affordably to overcome micronutrient deficiencies and diet-related non-communicable diseases for all.

Jomo Kwame Sundaram, a former economics professor, was United Nations assistant secretary-general for economic development, and received the Wassily Leontief Prize for Advancing the Frontiers of Economic Thought.

Taking Away the Ladder

Industrialized countries advanced by means that have been impermissible to the developing world, write Anis Chowdhury and Jomo Kwame Sundaram.

By [Anis Chowdhury](#) in Sydney and
[Jomo Kwame Sundaram](#) in Kuala Lumpur
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The notion of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and later, South Africa) was concocted by Goldman Sachs' [Jim O'Neill](#). His 2001 acronym was initially seen as a timely, if not belated acknowledgement of the rise of the South.

But if one takes China out of the BRICS, one is left with little more than RIBS. While the RIBS have undoubtedly grown in recent decades, their expansion has been quite uneven and much more modest than China's, while the post-Soviet Russian economy contracted by half during Boris Yeltsin's first three years of "shock therapy" during 1992-1994.

Unsurprisingly, Goldman Sachs quietly shut down its BRICS investment fund in October 2015 after years of losses, marking the ["end of an era,"](#) according to Bloomberg.

Growth spurts in South America's southern cone and sub-Saharan Africa lasted over a decade until the Saudi-induced commodity price collapse from 2014. But the recently

celebrated rise of the South and developing country convergence with the OECD has largely remained an East Asian story.

Preventing Emulation

Increasingly, that has involved China's and South Korea's continued ascendance after Japan's financial "big bang" and ensuing stagnation three decades ago. They have progressed and grown rapidly for extended periods precisely because they have not followed rules set by the advanced economies.

Industrial policy – involving state owned enterprises (SOEs), technology transfer agreements, government procurement, strict terms for foreign direct investment and other developmental interventions – was condemned by the Washington Consensus, promoting liberalization, privatization and deregulation favoring large transnational corporations.

Well-managed SOEs, government procurement practices and effective protection conditional on export promotion accelerated structural transformation. When foreign corporations were allowed to invest, they were typically required to transfer technology to the host economy.

Countries have only progressed by using industrial policy judiciously when sufficient policy space was available, as was the norm in most developed countries.

But such successful development practices have been denied to most developing countries in recent decades. The North now emphasizes the dangers of industrial policy, subsidies, SOEs and technology transfer agreements, to justify

precluding their use by others.

Instead, corporate-led globalization continues to be sold as the way to develop and progress. Major OECD economies appear intent on tightening international rules to further reduce developing countries' policy space under the pretext of reforming the multilateral trading system in order to save it.

President Donald Trump and others who challenge this neoliberal narrative do not offer any better options for the South. Nevertheless, their nationalist and chauvinist rhetoric has undermined the pious claims and very legitimacy of their neoliberal "globalist" rivals on the right.

Infrastructure Finance

The 2018 "[Trade and Development Report](#)," by the U.N.'s Conference on Trade and Development, emphasizes the link between infrastructure and industrialization. It argues that successful industrialization since 19th century England has crucially depended on public infrastructure investment for economic growth and structural transformation.

The ascendance of the neoliberal Washington Consensus agenda has not only undermined public interventions generally, but also state revenue and spending in particular, especially in the developing world. But even the World Bank now admits that it had wrongly discouraged infrastructure financing, which it now advocates.

Most Western-controlled international financial institutions have recently advocated public-private partnerships to finance, manage and implement infrastructure projects. The

presumption is that only the private sector has the expertise and capacity to be efficient and profitable. In practice, states borrowed and bore most of the risk, e.g., of contingent liabilities, while private partners reaped much profit, often with state guaranteed revenues.

Unexpected Policy Space

Infrastructure, including both its construction and financing, has been central, not only to China's own progress, but also to its international development cooperation. China's financial redeployment of its massive current account surplus has created an alternative to traditional sources of investment finance, both private and public.

The availability of Chinese infrastructure finance on preferential or concessionary terms has been enthusiastically taken up, not least by countries long starved of investible resources. Not surprisingly, this has resulted in over-investments in some infrastructure, resulting in underutilization and poor returns to investment.

The resulting debt burdens and related problems have been well publicized, if not exaggerated by critics with different motivations. Now threatened by China's rise, Western governments and Japan have suddenly found additional resources to offer similar concessionary financing for their own infrastructure firms.

Thus, not unlike the U.S.-Soviet Cold War, the perceived new threat from China has created a new bipolar rivalry. That has inadvertently created policy space and concessions

reminiscent of the post-Second World War “Golden Age” for Keynesian and development economics.

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Jomo Kwame Sundaram, a former economics professor, was United Nations assistant secretary-general for economic development, and received the Wassily Leontief Prize for Advancing the Frontiers of Economic Thought in 2007.

Bases, Bases, Everywhere ... Except in the Pentagon's Report

These installations exist somewhere between light and shadow, writes Nick Turse. While acknowledged as foreign military outposts, they are excluded from the official inventory.

By Nick Turse

TomDispatch



Within hours of President Trump's announcement of a withdrawal of U.S. forces from Syria, equipment at that base was already being inventoried for removal. And just like that, arguably the most important American garrison in Syria was (maybe) being struck from the Pentagon's books – except, as it happens, al-Tanf was never actually on the Pentagon's books. Opened in 2015 and, until recently, home to hundreds of U.S.

troops, it was one of the many military bases that exist somewhere between light and shadow, an acknowledged foreign outpost that somehow never actually made it onto the Pentagon's official inventory of bases.

Officially, the Department of Defense maintains 4,775 "sites," spread across all 50 states, eight U.S. territories, and 45 foreign countries. A total of 514 of these outposts are located overseas, according to the Pentagon's [worldwide property portfolio](#). Just to start down a long list, these include bases on the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia, in Djibouti on the Horn of Africa, as well as in Peru and Portugal, the United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom. But the most recent version of that portfolio, issued in early 2018 and known as the Base Structure Report (BSR), doesn't include any mention of al-Tanf. Or, for that matter, any other base in Syria. Or Iraq. Or Afghanistan. Or Niger. Or Tunisia. Or Cameroon. Or Somalia. Or any number of locales where such military outposts are known to exist and even, unlike in Syria, [to be expanding](#).

According to David Vine, author of ["Base Nation: How U.S. Military Bases Abroad Harm America and the World,"](#) there could be hundreds of similar off-the-books bases around the world. "The missing sites are a reflection of the lack of transparency involved in the system of what I still estimate to be around 800 U.S. bases outside the 50 states and Washington, D.C., that have been encircling the globe since World War II," says Vine, who is also a founding member of the recently established [Overseas Base Realignment and Closure Coalition](#), a group of military analysts from across

the ideological spectrum who advocate shrinking the U.S. military's global "footprint."

Such off-the-books bases are off the books for a reason. The Pentagon doesn't want to talk about them. "I spoke to the press officer who is responsible for the Base Structure Report and she has nothing to add and no one available to discuss further at this time," Pentagon spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Michelle Baldanza told *TomDispatch* when asked about the Defense Department's many mystery bases.

"Undocumented bases are immune to oversight by the public and often even Congress," Vine explains. "Bases are a physical manifestation of U.S. foreign and military policy, so off-the-books bases mean the military and executive branch are deciding such policy without public debate, frequently spending hundreds of millions or billions of dollars and potentially getting the U.S. involved in wars and conflicts about which most of the country knows nothing."

Where Are They?

The Overseas Base Realignment and Closure Coalition notes that the United States possesses up to 95 percent of the world's foreign military bases, while countries like France, Russia, and the United Kingdom have perhaps 10-20 foreign outposts each. China has just one.

The Department of Defense even boasts that its "locations" include 164 countries. Put another way, it has a military presence of some sort in approximately 84 percent of the nations on this planet – or at least the DoD briefly claimed this. After *TomDispatch* inquired about the number on a new

webpage designed to tell the Pentagon's "story" to the general public, it was quickly changed. "We appreciate your diligence in getting to the bottom of this," said Lieutenant Colonel Baldanza. "Thanks to your observations, we have updated defense.gov to say 'more than 160.'"

What the Pentagon still doesn't say is how it defines a "location." The number 164 does roughly track with the Department of Defense's current manpower statistics, which show personnel deployments of varying sizes in 166 "overseas" locales – including some nations with token numbers of U.S. military personnel and others, like Iraq and Syria, where the size of the force was obviously far larger, even if unlisted at the time of the assessment. (The Pentagon recently claimed that there were 5,200 troops in Iraq and at least 2,000 troops in Syria although that number should now markedly shrink.) The Defense Department's "overseas" tally, however, also lists troops in U.S. territories like American Samoa, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Wake Island. Dozens of soldiers, according to the Pentagon, are also deployed to the country of "Akrotiri" (which is actually a village on the island of Santorini in Greece) and thousands more are based in "unknown" locations.

In the latest report, the number of those "unknown" troops exceeds 44,000.

The annual cost of deploying U.S. military personnel overseas, as well as maintaining and running those foreign bases, tops out at an estimated \$150 billion annually, according to the Overseas Bases Realignment and Closure Coalition. The price tag for the outposts alone adds up to

about one-third of that total. “U.S. bases abroad cost upwards of \$50 billion per year to build and maintain, which is money that could be used to address pressing needs at home in education, health care, housing, and infrastructure,” Vine points out.

Perhaps you won't be surprised to learn that the Pentagon is also somewhat fuzzy about just where its troops are stationed. The new Defense Department website, for instance, offered a count of “[4,800+ defense sites](#)” around the world. After *TomDispatch* inquired about this total and how it related to the official count of 4,775 sites listed in the BSR, the website was changed to read “approximately 4,800 Defense Sites.”

“Thank you for pointing out the discrepancy. As we transition to the new site, we are working on updating information,” wrote Lieutenant Colonel Baldanza. “Please refer to the Base Structure Report which has the latest numbers.”

In the most literal sense, the Base Structure Report does indeed have the latest numbers – but their accuracy is another matter. “The number of bases listed in the BSR has long born little relation to the actual number of U.S. bases outside the United States,” says Vine. “Many, many well-known and secretive bases have long been left off the list.”

One prime example is the [constellation of outposts](#) that the U.S. has built across Africa. The official BSR inventory lists only a handful of sites there – on Ascension Island as well as in Djibouti, Egypt, and Kenya. In reality, though, there are many more outposts in many more African countries.

A recent investigation by the *Intercept*, based on documents obtained from U.S. Africa Command via the Freedom of Information Act, revealed a network of 34 bases heavily clustered in the north and west of that continent as well as in the Horn of Africa. AFRICOM's "strategic posture" consists of larger "enduring" outposts, including two forward operating sites (FOSes), 12 cooperative security locations (CSLs), and 20 more austere sites known as contingency locations (CLs).

The Pentagon's official inventory does include the two FOSes: Ascension Island and the crown jewel of Washington's African bases, Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti, which expanded from 88 acres in the early 2000s to nearly 600 acres today. The Base Structure Report is, however, missing a CSL in that same country, Chabelley Airfield, a lower-profile outpost located about 10 kilometers away that has served as a drone hub for operations in Africa and the Middle East.

The official Pentagon tally also mentions a site that goes by the confusing moniker of "NSA Bahrain-Kenya." AFRICOM had previously described it as a collection of warehouses built in the 1980s at the airport and seaport of Mombasa, Kenya, but it now appears on that command's 2018 list as a CSL. Missing, however, is another Kenyan base, Camp Simba, mentioned in a 2013 internal Pentagon study of secret drone operations in Somalia and Yemen. At least two manned surveillance aircraft were based there at the time. Simba, a longtime Navy-run facility, is currently operated by the Air Force's 475th Expeditionary Air Base Squadron, part of the

435th Air Expeditionary Wing.

Personnel from that same air wing can be found at yet another outpost that doesn't appear in the Base Structure Report, this one on the opposite side of the continent. The BSR states that it doesn't list specific information on "non-U.S. locations" not at least 10 acres in size or worth at least \$10 million. However, the base in question – [Air Base 201](#) in Agadez, Niger – already has a [\\$100 million](#) construction price tag, a sum soon to be eclipsed by the cost of operating the facility: about \$30 million a year. By 2024, when the present 10-year agreement for use of the base ends, its construction and operating costs will have reached about \$280 million.

Also missing from the BSR are outposts in nearby Cameroon, including a longtime base in [Douala](#), a drone airfield in the remote town of [Garoua](#), and a facility known as Salak. That site, according to a [2017 investigation](#) by the *Intercept*, the research firm [Forensic Architecture](#), and [Amnesty International](#), has been used by U.S. personnel and private contractors for drone surveillance and training missions and by allied Cameroonian forces for illegal imprisonment and torture.

According to Vine, keeping America's African bases secret is advantageous to Washington. It protects allies on that continent from possible domestic opposition to the presence of American troops, he points out, while helping to ensure that there will be no domestic debate in the U.S. over such spending and the military commitments involved. "It's important for U.S. citizens to know where their troops are based in Africa and elsewhere around the world," he

told *TomDispatch*, “because that troop presence costs the U.S. billions of dollars every year and because the U.S. is involved, or potentially involved, in wars and conflicts that could spiral out of control.”

Those Missing Bases

Africa is hardly the only place where the Pentagon’s official list doesn’t match up well with reality. For close to two decades, the Base Structure Report has ignored bases of all sorts in America’s active war zones. At the height of the American occupation of Iraq, for instance, the United States had 505 bases there, ranging from small outposts to mega-sized facilities. None appeared on the Pentagon’s official rolls.

In Afghanistan, the numbers were even higher. As *TomDispatch* reported in 2012, the U.S.-led International Security Assistance Force had about 550 bases in that country. If you had added ISAF checkpoints – small baselets used to secure roads and villages – to the count of mega-bases, forward operating bases, combat outposts, and patrol bases, the number reached an astounding 750. And counting all foreign military installations of every type – including logistical, administrative, and support facilities – hiked ISAF Joint Command’s official count to 1,500 sites. America’s significant share of them was, however, also mysteriously absent from the Defense Department’s official tally.

There are now far fewer such facilities in Afghanistan – and the numbers may drop further in the months ahead as troop

levels decrease. But the existence of Camp Morehead, Forward Operating Base Fenty, Tarin Kowt Airfield, Camp Dahlke West, and Bost Airfield, as well as Camp Shorab, a small installation occupying what was once the site of much larger twin bases known as Camp Leatherneck and Camp Bastion, is indisputable. Yet none of them has ever appeared in the Base Structure Report.

Similarly, while there are no longer 500-plus U.S. bases in Iraq, in recent years, as American troops returned to that country, some garrisons have either been reconstituted or built from scratch. These include the Besmaya Range Complex, Firebase Sakheem, Firebase Um Jorais, and Al Asad Air Base, as well as Qayyarah Airfield West—a base 40 miles south of Mosul that's better known as "Q-West." Again, you won't find any of them listed in the Pentagon's official count.

These days, it's even difficult to obtain accurate manpower numbers for the military personnel in America's war zones, let alone the number of bases in each of them. As Vine explains, "The military keeps the figures secret to some extent to hide the base presence from its adversaries. Because it is probably not hard to spot these bases in places like Syria and Iraq, however, the secrecy is mostly to prevent domestic debate about the money, danger, and death involved, as well as to avoid diplomatic tensions and international inquiries."

If stifling domestic debate through information control is the Pentagon's aim, it's been doing a fine job for years of deflecting questions about its global posture, or what the late *TomDispatch* regular Chalmers Johnson called America's

“empire of bases.”

In mid-October, *TomDispatch* asked Heather Babb, another Pentagon spokesperson, for details about the outposts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria that were absent from the Base Structure Report, as well as about those missing African bases. Among the other questions put to Babb: Could the Pentagon offer a simple count – if not a list – of all its outposts? Did it have a true count of overseas facilities, even if it hadn’t been released to the public – a list, that is, which actually did what the Base Structure Report only purports to do? October and November passed without answers.

In December, in response to follow-up requests for information, Babb responded in a fashion firmly in line with the Pentagon’s well-worn policy of keeping American taxpayers in the dark about the bases they pay for – no matter the theoretical difficulty of denying the existence of outposts that stretch from Agadez in Niger to Mosul in Iraq. “I have nothing to add,” she explained, “to the information and criteria that is included in the report.”

President Trump’s decision to withdraw American troops from Syria means that the 2019 Base Structure Report will likely be the most accurate in years. For the first time since 2015, the Pentagon’s inventory of outposts will no longer be missing the al-Tanf garrison (or then again, maybe it will). But that still potentially leaves hundreds of off-the-books bases absent from the official rolls. Consider it one outpost down and who knows how many to go.

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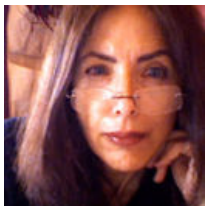
contributing writer for the *Intercept*. His latest book is “Next Time They’ll Come to Count the Dead: War and Survival in South Sudan.” His website is NickTurse.com.

Liberté, Égalité, Impérialisme! Vive la France in Black Africa!

“Hotel Rwanda” is a touchstone of interventionist ideology, writes Ann Garrison. Debunking that script helps show why the closure of the assassination case against Rwanda’s President Paul Kagame serves Western interests.

By Ann Garrison

Black Agenda Report



Most Westerners believe that the Rwandan Genocide was the simple story of good and evil told in the hugely successful film “Hotel Rwanda,” but there is barely a moment of “Hotel Rwanda” that is not carefully constructed propaganda. The film was produced to convince the world that demon Hutus murdered a million innocent Tutsis in 100 days in 1994, that the U.S. and its NATO allies failed to intervene, and that their failure obligates them to intervene “to stop genocide” anywhere in the world from hereon.

Obama’s foreign policy team—most prominently Secretary of State Hillary Clinton; U.N. Ambassador Susan Rice and Samantha Power, a national security advisor—invoked the Rwandan genocide over and over, as did the press, to justify destroying Libya and beginning the aerial bombing war that continues in Syria today. The propaganda has also been used

to justify Rwandan President Paul Kagame's invasions, occupation and resource plunder in the fabulously resource rich Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Western press and governments have portrayed him as Rwanda's savior and characterized his invasions of DRC as the defense of Rwanda against "Hutu genocidaires" who fled into the DRC as he and his army advanced and seized power.

The late Edward S. Herman and his co-author David Petersen deconstructed these lies in "[Enduring Lies: the Rwandan Genocide in the Propaganda System, 20 Years Later.](#)" So did Robin Philpot in "[Rwanda and the New Scramble for Africa, from Tragedy to Useful Imperial Fiction;](#)" Marie-Beatrice Umutesi in "[Surviving the Slaughter, the Ordeal of a Rwandan Refugee in Zaire;](#)" Peter Erlinder in his compendium of primary source documents "[The Accidental Genocide;](#)" and most recently Judi Rever in "[In Praise of Blood: Crimes of the Rwandan Patriotic Front.](#)" But none of these books made bestseller lists, and none could come close to the influence of "Hotel Rwanda."

Essential elements left out of the "Hotel Rwanda" construction include the 1990-1994 Rwandan War and massacres that concluded in the infamous hundred days. The tragedy happened over four years' time, not 100 days, and both Hutus and Tutsis were massacred, Hutus by Kagame's army.

Unsolved Crime

Another missing element is the unsolved crime that triggered the final bloodletting of the final 100 days: the assassination of Rwanda and Burundi's Hutu presidents, when a surface-to-air missile downed their plane as it was

approaching the airport in Rwanda's capital Kigali on April 6, 1994. No one has ever been convicted of the crime, and there is enormous Western pressure to make sure that no one ever is. Overwhelming evidence implicates Kagame, but he is a key U.S. ally and "military partner" in Africa, and the "Hotel Rwanda" story is a key touchstone of Western interventionist ideology.

Kagame has nevertheless been accused and his inner circle indicted in both French and Spanish courts, where French and Spanish citizens claim jurisdiction because their family members died in the plane shoot-down or the ensuing massacres, but both of those cases have been shut down.

Last month, geopolitics trumped international justice again—just in time for Christmas. On Dec. 21, a French court closed the long-running case against Kagame and his inner circle for assassinating Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana and Burundian President Cyprien Ntaryamira, both of whom were Hutus.

Nearly 25 years later, there are still no convictions for the assassinations that turned first Rwanda, then DRC, into a vast killing ground. Not in the International Criminal Tribunal on Rwanda, where two investigations of Kagame were shut down, and where a judge told defense attorney Tiphaine Dickson, "We don't investigate plane crashes [or Tutsis, only Hutus]." And not in the French or Spanish courts.

The Subtext: Imperial Competition

The subtext of the Rwandan War and the ensuing Congo Wars was competition between the U.S./U.K. and France. France, which was then the dominant power in the region, had been

the patron of Habyarimana's Hutu government; the U.S. and U.K. backed Kagame's invading Tutsi army, which emerged victorious in 1994, declared that English would from thereon be Rwanda's international business language, then invaded and occupied French-speaking Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo) two years later.

France and Rwanda have engaged in a bitter argument off and on for all these years about who was responsible for the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Their embassies have often been closed in one another's capitals, and France pulled out of the 20th anniversary commemoration in Kigali after Kagame once again accused France of participating in the killing.

One of the recurring points of contention is Opération Turquoise, France's emergency relief response, which began on June 23, 1994, several weeks before Kagame, then a general, seized power in Kigali. Some French officials who were in office at the time, most notably former French Foreign Minister Alain Juppé, have maintained that Opération Turquoise created a humanitarian corridor for Rwandan Hutus fleeing into Zaire, for fear of being massacred by General Kagame's advancing Tutsi army. Kagame's government has claimed that France instead provided an escape route for Hutus guilty of genocide, although the vast majority flooding into Zaire were civilians, including women, children, and the elderly. According to the 2010 UN Mapping Report on Human Rights Abuse in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1993-2003, Kagame's troops followed the refugees into Zaire and massacred as many as 250,000.

In "Dying to Live: A Rwandan Family's Five-Year Flight Across the Congo," Pierre-Claver Ndayayisenga describes how

he and his family and 300,000 more Rwandan Hutus fled Kagame's advancing army all the way through the Congolese jungle, from east to west, as many more died of hardship or were massacred by Kagame's troops along the way.

The authors of the UN Mapping Report said that the massacres in Congo would most likely be ruled a genocide if a case were brought to court, but none has been and none ever will be without a major geopolitical shift in power. In 2013, in one of his many cynical moments, former President Bill Clinton told BBC journalist Komla Dumor that he would not condemn his friend Paul Kagame for murdering the refugees because "it hasn't been adjudicated." (And because it happened on his watch, with his support, as did the 1998 Rwandan and Ugandan invasions of DRC, during which Kagame and Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni became what another UN report called "the godfathers of the illegal exploitation of natural resources and the continuation of the conflict in the DRC.")

France Wants Its Share

France of course wants its share, and French officials now in power have decided to close the case against Kagame in order to secure access to Congo's riches, which he significantly controls. The court's ruling came shortly after Rwandan Foreign Minister Louise **Mushikiwabo** became secretary-general of La Francophonie, an international organization similar to the British Commonwealth, in what was widely perceived to be another concession to smooth French-Rwandan relations and ease France's imperial access in DRC.

Kayumba Nyamwasa, a former Rwandan general, chief of army staff, and chief of military intelligence, was also named as a defendant in the French indictment. Speaking to Jane Corbin in the BBC video "[Rwanda's Untold Story](#)," he said that Kagame most definitely ordered his troops to shoot down the plane carrying the Rwandan and Burundian presidents:

Jane Corbin: *Who do you believe was behind the shooting down of the plane?*

Kayumba Nyamwasa: *Paul Kagame undoubtedly.*

JC: *Paul Kagame?*

KN: *Oh yes, oh yes.*

JC: *You know that?*

KN: *One hundred percent.*

JC: *Were you at meetings where it was discussed?*

KN: *Well, I know. I was in a position to know, and he knows I was in a position to know. And he knows that.*

BBC interjection: *General Nyamwasa has offered to cut a deal with the French judge to testify.*

JC: *If you discuss these matters with the judge and it implicates you yourself, are you willing to do that?*

KN: *Obviously. If it implicated me? Why not? Because I think that truth is what matters.*

The French court said they were closing the case for lack of

“credible” and “significant” evidence despite abundant such evidence. That does not mean, however, that they acquitted Kagame, Nyamwasa, or anyone else who was in Kagame’s inner circle at the time Habyarimana and Ntaryamira were assassinated. As Rwandan American legal scholar Charles Kambanda said, “This is a political decision which could well be superseded by another political decision to reopen the file when there is additional ‘credible’ and ‘significant’ evidence.” In other words, France has mollified Kagame for now, but it’s kept a knife behind its back.

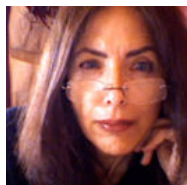
Ann Garrison is an independent journalist based in the San Francisco Bay Area. In 2014, she received the Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza Democracy and Peace Prize for her reporting on conflict in the African Great Lakes Region. She can be reached at ann@anngarrison.com.

Et Tu, RT? Amplifying Western Disinformation on Rwanda

The great lie about the Rwandan bloodbath opened the door to a far larger genocide in Congo and helped justify U.S. military interventions in Libya and Syria, argues Ann Garrison.

By Ann Garrison

Black Agenda Report



During a recent campaign event, Florida Senator [Bill Nelson](#) said, “That story of Rwanda is very instructive to us because when a place gets so tribal that the two tribes won’t have anything to do with each other, and that jealousy turns into hate—we saw what happened to the Hutus and the Tutsis in Rwanda, it turned into a genocide. A million people hacked to death within a few months. And we have got to watch what’s happening here.”

That got a lot of headlines even though U.S. ethnicity is binary only if seen as white vs. everybody else. Whatever Sen. Nelson meant, those who do see it that way have certainly gained prominence since Trump took the White House.

That was a newly minted reference to the Rwandan genocide in U.S. discourse, however. Rwanda is most often remembered in urgent calls for “humanitarian intervention,” a.k.a. war, to stop another genocide. We’re told that the U.S. failed to stop Rwanda’s 1994 genocide, so we’re now obliged to “intervene” anytime and anywhere another genocide is underway. That’s why, we’re [falsely](#) told, the U.S. and its NATO allies had to bomb Libya into ongoing chaos in 2011. That’s why Lockheed Martin had to step up production of cruise missiles to drop on Syria. That’s why [Sens. Cory Booker and Elizabeth Warren](#), both 2020 Democratic presidential hopefuls, became initial co-sponsors of an Orwellian bill to “enhance” our government’s ability to “prevent genocide and mass atrocities” with military force: [Senate Bill 1158, the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act of 2018.](#)

More soberly, given the lies we've all been told in order to start wars, doesn't it seem likely that this story—that the U.S. failed to stop the Rwandan genocide—is one more? Not that the genocide didn't happen and not that it wasn't a terrible tragedy, but the story we were all told and Bill Clinton's crocodile tears about his "worst mistake" are a lie. In fact, the U.S. and United Kingdom backed Gen. Paul Kagame's invasion of Rwanda from Uganda on Oct. 1, 1990, and prevented a United Nations intervention until he and his army had massacred their way to Rwanda's capital, Kigali, to seize power on July 4, 1994.

Just over three weeks later, on July 28, *The New York Times* reported that the "[U.S. Is Considering a Base in Rwanda for Relief Teams.](#)" Kagame has been a key U.S. ally and "military partner" ever since. He not only collaborated with the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) but also [invaded](#) the Democratic Republic of the Congo, left millions dead, and thus created new opportunities for U.S. mining corporations.

Professor Edward S. Herman and researcher and author David Peterson deconstructed the propaganda about Rwanda in "[The Politics of Genocide](#)" and "[Enduring Lies: The Rwandan Genocide 20 Years On.](#)" In "Enduring Lies," they wrote:

"The institutionalization of the 'Rwandan genocide' has been the remarkable achievement of a propaganda system sustained by both public and private power, with the crucial assistance of a related cadre of intellectual enforcers. The favorite weapons of these enforcers are reciting the institutionalized untruths as gospel while portraying critics of the standard model as 'genocide

deniers,' dark figures who lurk at the same moral level as child molesters, to be condemned and even outlawed."

Ed Herman and I had many conversations about this before his death in November 2017, including one on [KPFA Radio's "Project Censored Show"](#) on New Year's Day 2016. The transcript was published by the [San Francisco Bay View](#), [Black Agenda Report](#) and [Global Research](#).

More recently, former *Agence France Presse* and *Radio France International* journalist Judi Rever broke down the simple story of Tutsi victims, Hutu perpetrators in her book ["In Praise of Blood: Crimes of the Rwandan Patriotic Front."](#) Here's some of what she told the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation after the book's publication:

Judi Rever: He [Kagame] did not stop the genocide because at the same time that ethnic Tutsis were being killed in Hutu-controlled zones, his Tutsi troops were killing with equal zeal and organization. And in every zone that the Rwandan Patriotic Front and its army entered, they killed massively and in an organized way.

CBC: Killed Hutus?

Judi Rever: Killed Hutus. They also fueled the genocide against the Tutsis. They infiltrated the Hutu militias very successfully, and they baited the violence. They egged on the violence, but they also—some of their commandos—participated in the slaughter of Tutsis at roadblocks.

Kagame knowingly ordered and encouraged Tutsi massacres to build a storyline that would justify his Tutsi minority

dictatorship after he'd seized power and control of the country's electoral apparatus. Had he proceeded to real elections, as mandated by the Arusha Accords signed to end the war, the Hutu majority would have elected a Hutu president. Former Rwandan Foreign Minister Jean-Marie Ndagijimana tells the same story from a different standpoint in "[How Paul Kagame Deliberately Sacrificed the Tutsi.](#)" Most of these victims were poor Tutsis who had been left behind when the wealthy and aristocratic Tutsis fled to Uganda during the Hutu Peasant Revolution of 1959-1961.

Rever's conclusions are based on years of research and interviews, many of them with RPF troops who were tormented by memories of what they had done and felt compelled to confess. Her book also includes accounts of how she, her husband, and even her children were threatened while she was researching it, and how Belgian security operatives accompanied her everywhere during a research trip to Brussels to interview political exiles and refugees.



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THE GLOBAL INTELLIGENCE FILES

On Monday February 27th, 2012, WikiLeaks began publishing *The Global Intelligence Files*, over five million e-mails from the Texas headquartered "global intelligence" company Stratfor. The e-mails date between July 2004 and late December 2011. They reveal the inner workings of a company that fronts as an intelligence publisher, but provides confidential intelligence services to large corporations, such as Bhopal's Dow Chemical Co., Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon and government agencies, including the US Department of Homeland Security, the US Marines and the US Defence Intelligence Agency. The emails show Stratfor's web of informers, pay-off structure, payment laundering techniques and psychological methods.

**Re: DISCUSSION - RWANDA/SOUTH AFRICA -
Rwandans are cold ass mofos**

Released on 2013-02-20 00:00 GMT

In an email released by WikiLeaks, a Stratfor intelligence analyst said that "[Rwandans are cold ass mofos](#)"

and detailed Rwandan operatives' transnational assassinations and assassination attempts. Their targets are

almost always high-profile figures who, like Rever, challenge the story of Tutsi victims and Hutu perpetrators that is so essential to Kagame's survival and international stature.

I myself haven't feared for my life at the hands of Rwandan operatives, but I did file an [assault complaint](#) after a dustup with Kagame's contingent at Sacramento State University's 2011 [Third International Genocide Conference](#).

Et Tu, RT?

Despite all this, the propaganda has been so effective that the standard story of Tutsi victims, Hutu perpetrators, and Bill Clinton's failure remains all but unassailable in mainstream media. It's in the Wikipedia, where a host of "edit alerts" assure that any attempt to change it starts a tireless "editing war" that Wikipedia moderators will finally shut down with no changes made. It's at the heart of former U.N. Ambassador Samantha Power's interventionist bible, "[A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide](#)." It's in Obama's 2011 [Presidential Study Directive on Mass Atrocities](#) and "[Mass Atrocities Response Operations: A Military Handbook](#)," which was produced by the Pentagon and Harvard's Carr Center for Human Rights with help from Pierre Omidyar's Humanity United Foundation. And it's in the template of every Reuters and AP newswire that ever touches on the subject.

I was nevertheless surprised when RT repeated the standard propaganda as well. Mightn't one expect RT to dig a little deeper into a narrative used to justify the U.S. war in Syria among others? RT asked me to comment on a news story

about the recent appeal of a French court's ruling that French soldiers were not criminally complicit for failing to protect Tutsis massacred at Bisisero, Rwanda, in 1994. I agreed, so they called me on Skype, but the host and I proceeded to frustrate one another, and most of what I said was left on the cutting room floor. CIUT 89.5 FM-Toronto host and former ICTR investigator Phil Taylor sent me a consolation note saying, "I felt for you, Ann. I saw the item in real time and slapped my forehead. The cutting was done with shears."

Basic journalistic ethnics and not wanting to be misrepresented compelled me to write about why this interview turned into such a hot mess after beginning with the usual false recitation:

"The genocide in Rwanda lasted just over three months and left nearly a million people dead. . . . The genocide was committed mainly by the Hutu government and its backers against the ethnic minority Tutsi tribe. Allegations of the French government's support for the Hutus, who carried out most of the slaughter in the genocide, have been rough on the French government's relations with the Rwandan government for years. But the French, although they admit that they've made mistakes, they say they have no complicity in the genocide that took place there."

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ero massacre was a four-year war that began on Oct. 1, 1990, when a detachment of the Ugandan Army led by then General, now President, Paul Kagame invaded Rwanda from Uganda. I said that those Ugandan troops were Rwandan Tutsis or the children of Rwandan Tutsis who had fled to Uganda between 1959 and 1961, when the Hutu majority finally liberated themselves from centuries-long domination by the Tutsi minority.

I said that focusing on this single tragic incident, the Tutsi massacres at Bisesero, imposed the propaganda narrative about the Rwandan genocide on their story.

I said that France's Operation Turquoise had created a humanitarian corridor for civilians fleeing to Congo in terror of Kagame's advancing army, so it was a distortion to discredit the French troops over this one incident in which they were accused of failing to act even though it wasn't clear they had a mandate. (UN Security Council [Resolution 929](#) (1994) gave the operation the aim of "contributing, in an impartial way, to the security and protection of displaced persons, refugees, and civilians at risk in

Rwanda.”)

I considered quoting Ed Herman, David Peterson, and Judi Rever, but ran out of time. That was more complexity than RT appeared to want added to [their news story](#). They had already built it on the widely received account of what happened in Rwanda before calling me. Having produced radio news, I know the show must go on at the scheduled hour even if it could be improved. Had they nevertheless considered that there might be something wrong with their premises? I'm only encouraging them to review this Western narrative as they do so many others.

This [article](#) was originally published on Black Agenda Report.

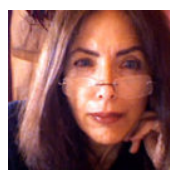
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Congo in the Abyss

The aggression of Western governments has inflicted multiple holocausts on the Congolese people, Congolese historian Bénédicte Kumbi Ndjoko tells Ann Garrison.

By Ann Garrison

Black Agenda Report



This week I spoke to Swiss Congolese historian and activist Bénédicte Kumbi Ndjoko about recent developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who said, *“In Congo, globalized capitalism creates permanent chaos.”*

Ann Garrison: On February 12, 2018, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees reported that there were 4.49 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and 630,500 refugees in neighboring countries. The IDP population had nearly doubled in the previous year alone, mainly as a result of clashes and armed attacks. It sounds like conditions on the ground in Congo are getting worse, much worse.

Bénédicte Kumbi Ndjoko: Congo is indeed in a critical situation. We know how much its people have suffered since the genocides in Rwanda and all the displacement they caused, then by the wars that Rwanda and Uganda waged against Congo from 1996 to 1997 and then from 1998 to 2003, with the support of the US, UK, and their allies. Today some observers speak of Congo as a post-conflict country, but it's still in a low-intensity conflict, off and on, hot and cold. A conflict that drags on like this can become even deadlier than declared war, as it has in the North and South Kivu Provinces bordering Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi. More than a million of the 4.49 million internally displaced people are in North Kivu Province.

In the past two years the situation has also deteriorated in the Kasai region, where people are being exterminated or displaced to Angola. There has also been an increase in attacks against the populations of the former Katanga Province, which was split into the Tanganyika, Haut-Lomami, Lualaba and Haut-Katanga Provinces in 2015. Congo and its people are not on the brink of the abyss, they have long since fallen into it.

“People are being exterminated in the Kasai region or displaced to Angola.”

AG: It's hard to know what to say about so much suffering. What would you most like to say about it here?

BKN: Suffering should inspire compassion, but compassion should inspire reflection. Is the person who looks at a suffering human being able to ask himself if he is not involved in one way or another in the suffering of the individual in front of him? Can he or she grasp the causes of the crimes perpetrated against that human being and the political implications that arise from these acts? If we stop at the suffering of the Congolese people, we won't be able to address its particularities and causes. It will be no different than the depressing and fatalistic images that have shaped the image of Africa in people's minds. We must examine Western governments' imperial aggression against Congo and Africa as a whole.

AG: Dr. Denis Mukwege, the Congolese gynecologist who became known as “the man who heals women” for treating the victims of brutal rape in eastern Congo, finally won the Nobel Peace Prize this year. Does that give you any hope?

BKN: I had the opportunity to meet Dr. Mukwege in person. I saw this man with women from all over the world who had all been raped during conflicts. They came from Congo, Rwanda, Sudan, Syria, and Iraq. I could see how this man spoke to these women, the concern he had for them and his way of telling them that their word counted. He has all my admiration.

That said, it seems to me that there is also something cynical about presenting him with the Nobel Peace Prize. It's an organized, staged reality that obliterates the imperial aggression in Congo and encourages a global consensus to stop the rapes but continue the war. It makes the Western Nobel Peace Prize audience feel good about themselves and their compassionate response to the victims of African savagery. This was reinforced by Nadia Murad, the Iraqi rape survivor who shared this year's Peace Prize with Dr. Mukwege. She said that she would continue as a global advocate for victims of rape and torture, and for persecuted minorities, like the Kurdish Yazidi minority she belongs to.

"The Nobel Peace Prize encourages a global consensus to stop the rapes but continue the war."

The deeply political discourse imposed by the Nobel Committee is intended to bolster, not disturb, the dominant order. It is part of the Western will to write official history, where the important thing is constructing a discourse on the woman, on the brutalities she has to suffer. It's a discourse wholly accepted in Western societies because of the feminist struggles. In this discourse, Dr. Mukwege is the man of an inter-world, a Black man who is meant to become white. He is like the white man who knows how to defend the rights of women against the barbarism of uncivilized men—Black in this case—who are essentially defined by their savagery.

AG: Male rape is also a weapon of war in Congo and elsewhere. It's rarely reported, though it was given some attention in "The Nobel committee shines a spotlight on rape in conflict," an October 11 "Economist" report that said it's hard to estimate its frequency because so many men fear to report it because they're so humiliated and may fear being accused of the crime of homosexuality. Uganda's Refugee Law Project explained this profoundly in their film Gender Against Men, which I recommend to anyone reading this. The rape of both men and women as a weapon to destroy community makes it more clear that there is an ongoing genocide against the Congolese people, not just "femicide." Could you talk about how the singular focus on violence against women hides that?

BKN: I have always been disturbed by the speech of Margaret Wallström, the former UN Special Envoy for violence against women and children in conflict. In 2010, after a stay in Congo, she claimed that this country was the rape capital of the world, and urged the Security Council to act to stop it. This statement

associated the crime of rape with a specific nation, Congo, and with all the male individuals within. The word "capital" typically refers to the most central location, the brain and heart of a nation, the carrier of the cultural values. So one of Congo's cultural values would be rape?

This perception of a pathological Congolese society filled with male rapists is also shared by a lot of Western women who campaign for Congolese women, like Eve Ensler. They even go so far as to call what is happening in Congo a femicide, a war against women. This portrays the Congolese male as an atavistic rapist.

"The perception of a pathological Congolese society filled with male rapists is also shared by a lot of Western women who campaign for Congolese women."

The extreme focus on Congolese women's bodies is not intended to defend them but is part of a broader discourse on the savagery of Congolese men and Black African male populations in general. Congo is the world capital of rape. Congo is the capital of a savage nation in the heart of Black Africa where Congolese men rape women to destroy them. Who could regret seeing such a deviant society cleared off the face of the earth?

UN envoy Margaret Wallström didn't call for an end to the imperialist war waged against Congo and Africa in general. She said nothing about the imperial powers who commissioned the war crimes, including rape, against the Congolese people. She did not call on the Security Council to establish a tribunal to prosecute the crimes that were evidenced in the 2010 UN Mapping Report on Human Rights Abuse in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1993-2003, which revealed most significantly the crimes of longstanding US ally Rwanda. Instead, she called Congo the rape capital of the world and called on the Security Council to intervene against savage Congolese men.

AG: Some people have proposed that Dr. Mukwege, the most internationally recognized moral authority in Congo, should head a transitional government there. They include our mutual friends Patrick Mbecko and Jean-Claude Maswana, both of whom are highly respected Congolese scholars and activists. What do you think of that idea, and how do you imagine "transitional government" in Congo?

BKN: The fact is that I often wonder what people mean when they say that they want a transitional government. I'm sure that our friends Patrick Mbeko and Jean-Claude Maswana have very specific ideas on what it means, but when I read many other Congolese on "transition," it seems that this is a kind of magic bag that would help us get rid of President Joseph Kabila, his troops, and the Rwandan occupiers. It does not in any way address, for example, the problem of neocolonialism or the case of the so-called Congolese opposition. The latter are, in my opinion, people who must be removed from the political sphere in

Congo. They have flagrantly participated in sustaining Kabila's tyrannical reign, even when the so-called constitution didn't allow him to stay in power anymore. In addition, they never had the courage to explain to the population what role Rwanda and Uganda were playing in Congo's tragedy. Are we going to include them in that transitional government? The transition presented this way has no appeal to me, even if it is led by Dr. Mukwege.

"Only a deep and radical rupture would give us the possibility of rebuilding the Congo state."

I instead subscribe to the thought of another of my friends, Father Jean-Pierre Mbelu. For him, we cannot speak of transitional government in Congo, because it presupposes that there has been a form of democracy that should be restored after a period of crisis. The problem of Congo, however, cannot be summed up by a political crisis. The country is rather subjected to a permanent coup d'état, and only a deep and radical rupture would give us the possibility of rebuilding the Congo state. Calling for transitions has been the solution that the international community has wanted to systematize in several African countries, including Congo, but its results leave much to be desired. The transition away from Kabila puts, in my opinion, too much weight on Kabila. It does not insist enough on revealing who created Kabila and does not inform us on the type of government and society we want to build after Kabila.

AG: Liberal Democrats and even leftists in the US are now so horrified by Donald Trump that our politics have been largely reduced to pro- and anti-Trump politics. You have the same problem regarding Kabila in Congo, don't you?

BKN: Yes, and it is an eminently dangerous position because it means in fact no choice. It is an enclosure in a dichotomous circle that does not allow any escape or possibility to imagine other systems than the ones that exist. In this case, we are in the middle of a democratic illusion. Democracy according to this meaning is the right to be for or against. It is the right to change between two sides of the same coin while the ideology that creates the coin remains unchanged. This refers to the fundamental problem posed by capitalism. It is indeed a system that organizes a non-choice, that creates the illusion of choice for the benefit of the oligarchies that rule us. The tragedy of countries like ours is that they run after what they believe to be democracy, a binary system where it is only possible to be pro- or anti-X. It is even sadder because we've forgotten that this binary system never existed on the African continent prior to colonization but forms of real democracy did, especially in the Kongo Kingdom.

AG: Kabila should go, as Trump should, but what other forms of organizing are needed to alleviate the suffering and put Congolese on a path to claim their

country's enormous wealth and potential?

BKN: If we think about change, we need to understand that we all live within the context of globalized capitalism. We need also to understand that capitalism appears in different shapes and forms according to the space it is targeting. In Congo, it creates permanent chaos so as to maintain people in that chaos, with no boundaries to the violence because the state exists only as the most minimal simulacra of Western institutions. These are the prerequisites for plundering the country, draining it of its minerals and other natural resources, some of which have been declared strategic for US security. It not only kills and displaces Congolese but also dismantles their communities and so disorients them that they are unable to understand the global capitalist world and the role that Congo is relegated to within it. It all but eliminates their capacity to defend themselves. One must understand and broaden the understanding of this to fight back effectively and bring about change.

The individual alone, even if he or she understands what is at stake, cannot change anything, but Congo is hammered again and again with the idea that only an individual can change the course of events, so people are waiting for that particular individual. It is therefore not surprising to see the extreme focus on who will be the next president. That focus is fundamentally disorientating. It is a key element of the collaboration between the national comprador class and the imperialists, which summarizes the political history of the Congo since its independence.

“Political sovereignty can be regained only at a democratic community level, where pro-poor and rights based policies can be elaborated and ultimately shape the future of Congo.”

So we need to reverse things in a way that distributes power from the base to the top. It is therefore important not for the individual but for the communities to gain a level of control over different aspects of their daily lives. This means that we need strong base-building organizations that will be able to generate power and undertake collective actions to challenge the existing order. Such commitment requires that Congolese come to understand that power as it exists is a social construct put in place by the colonizers 500 years ago. Political sovereignty can be regained only at a democratic community level, where pro-poor and rights based policies can be elaborated and ultimately shape the future of Congo. And again, Congo has in its past known those forms of community-based organizations, so they have to be recovered and adapted to defeat the realities of neoliberalism as differentiated from formal colonialism and neocolonialism.

It will also be necessary to organize self-defense forces because we must not be

fooled. Those who exploit us have weapons, and they are not ready to let go of Congo. This must be a war of liberation.

AG: Lastly, could you break down the latest developments in Rwanda's ongoing occupation of Congo? Rwandan political prisoners Victoire Ingabire and Kizito Mihigo were released earlier this month. Then, last week, Rwandan Foreign Minister Louise Mushikiwabo won her bid to head the International Organization of La Francophonie . Also last week, a French prosecutor asked a French judge to dismiss charges against Rwandan Patriotic Army officers for assassinating Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana and Burundian President Cyprien Ntaryamira in 1994.

BKN: These last two years, Kabila, who is the proconsul of Kigali in the Congo, has worked to strengthen the Rwandan occupation of the country by appointing senior Tutsi officers in the national army and appointing men like Azarias Ruberwa at the head of the Ministry for Decentralization, which Congolese call the ministry for balkanization. This shows that Rwandan President Paul Kagame and those surrounding him have no intention of withdrawing from the Congo, a country whose wealth allows them to build big shiny buildings in Rwanda's capital, then point to them and as proof of Rwanda's economic growth even though most Rwandans are still very poor and the country still relies on foreign aid for 40% of its annual budget.

Rwanda's shiny surface and the widespread fable about Rwandan economic growth also give Kagame credibility among Africans, and this is why the appointment of Mushikiwabo has been rather well received in Africa. Most Africans are, like the rest of the world, ill-informed about Rwandan realities. They have interpreted Mushikiwabo's appointment as the victory of an African leader against Europe, France in particular. They forget that France plays the leading role in La Francophonie and France chose Mushikiwabo. [See "The ugly facts about the Francophonie." When France says that they want a particular person to lead the organization, they more often than not get their way.

"Rwandan President Paul Kagame and those surrounding him have no intention of withdrawing from the Congo."

Having Mushikiwabo as president is a way for France to regain the influence in Central Africa that it lost to the United States after Bill Clinton's arrival in the White House. In this French/Rwandan bargain—because that is what it is—Kagame must have demanded that the long-running French investigation of his attack on Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana's plane be permanently closed because it was an aggravating refutation of the panegyric that he is Rwanda's savior. Some call this a victory for Rwandan diplomacy, but it's more like a small hit man in the middle of an international mafia using blackmail to achieve

his ends. On the French side of the bargain, it helps them reestablish France's access to the immensely rich Congolese subsoil.

It is also important for France not to appear to be associated with a brutal regime that imprisons female opponents. Thus Kagame was forced to release political prisoners Victoire Ingabire Umuhiza and Diane Rwigara to polish his image. In a country that boasts of having worked so hard on the advancement of women, these high-profile female political prisoners, both of whom attempted to challenge Kagame for the presidency, hugely stained his image. But the good news is that these two women refused to keep silent about what was happening in Rwanda after their release. They presage a much more difficult future for Kagame and the deadly system he put in place. It is therefore a great joy to see these women free again and more determined than ever. They are among the leaders and organizers that this long suffering region has hoped for.

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