

‘GREAT FRIENDS, THEY STAND BY YOU IN DIFFICULT
TIMES’:

A study of Opération Turquoise in light of divisions within the
François Mitterrand and Edouard Balladur cohabitation government
during the Rwandan Genocide, April – August 1994

Candidate Number: **W23342**

Word Count: **10,196 words**

‘Great friends, they stand by you in difficult times’¹: a study of Opération Turquoise in light of the divisions within François Mitterrand and Edouard Balladur’s *cohabitation* government during the Rwandan genocide, April – August 1994

Table of Contents

<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	<u>2</u>
WHAT WAS OPÉRATION TURQUOISE?	5
HISTORY OF FRANCE IN RWANDA	7
WAS OPÉRATION TURQUOISE AN EXCLUSIVELY HUMANITARIAN FORCE?	9
TREATMENT OF SOURCES	11
<u>COHABITATION AND AFRICA</u>	<u>14</u>
UNREST AT BOTH ENDS OF THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM	18
PRIMARY ANALYSIS	21
FIGHTING FOR THE MORAL HIGH GROUND	26
CONCLUSION	28
BIBLIOGRAPHY	32
APPENDICES	35

In 1994, the French government was at a political impasse. Its *Conseil des ministres* had been upended and reconstituted after the 1993 legislative elections. Under the François Mitterrand- Edouard Balladur *cohabitation*, the left and the right had been forced to work together, and the *Rassemblement pour la république* (RPR) and *Union pour la Démocratie française* (UDF) centre-right coalition, that had been so successful in winning seats in 1993, began to unravel. It was a crucial time; presidential elections were looming and the *Parti*

¹ Taken from an issue of Kangura newspaper, with a full page photo of François Mitterrand, Article no.6, December 1990. See Linda Melvern, *A People Betrayed: The role of the West in the Rwandan Genocide* (London, revised 2009), p30

Socialiste had to find a replacement for François Mitterrand, who was ending a relatively successful two-term presidency and had been diagnosed with testicular cancer. The RPR and UDF were battling for control of the political Right in France.

Meanwhile, in a tiny East African country the size of Wales, a genocide was beginning. On April 6th 1994, the light aircraft that had been a gift from the French state,² carrying two Hutu presidents, President Juvénal Habyarimana of Rwanda, and President Cyprien Ntaryamira of Burundi, was shot down over Kigali. In the hundred days that ensued around 800,000 to 850,000 Tutsi and Hutu moderates were killed, approximately 11% of the Rwandan population.³ They were hacked to death with machetes,⁴ beaten with sticks and stones, and shot with internationally traded guns.⁵ Rape became a weapon of war and mutilation was commonplace.

The international community dithered as Rwanda tore itself apart. Belgium withdrew the few remaining troops they had in Rwanda after ten of their United Nations Blue Helmet soldiers were tortured and killed while attempting to protect the moderate Hutu Prime Minister, Agathe Uwilingiyimana. The UN force present in Rwanda at the outbreak of genocide, the UNAMIR, led by General Roméo Dallaire, had its numbers cut from 2,519 soldiers from 23 countries at the outbreak of the genocide,⁶ to a measly 270 troops by the UN General Assembly on the 21st April.⁷

Everyone, the UN and US particularly, was reluctant to use the word ‘genocide’ to describe what was going on in Rwanda. Additionally, much of the world’s media were distracted by the euphoria engendered by South Africa’s first democratic elections on April

² Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (London, 1995), p211

³ *ibid.* p265

⁴ The Chillington company, the largest producer of pangas (agricultural tools) and other agricultural hand tools in East Africa, sold more machetes in February 1994 than in the whole of 1993, see Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, p243

⁵ See Mel McNulty, ‘France’s role in Rwanda and external military intervention: A double discrediting’, *International Peacekeeping*, 4:3 (1997), 24-44.

⁶ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, p234

⁷ Despite France’s later ‘self-righteousness’ when it launched Opération Turquoise, France, along with most other OECD countries, voted in favour of reducing the size of UNAMIR I, see *ibid.* p276

27th.⁸ Misinformation abounded in April and continued into May, well after 80% of the genocide's victims had been killed.⁹ The UN and other foreign observers¹⁰ were confused; there was a call for a ceasefire between the RPF (Rwandan Patriotic Front) and FAR (Forces armées rwandaises). But this was no ordinary war; it was the mass slaughter of one ethnic group and its sympathisers, by another. Gérard Prunier, the authoritative leftist primary specialist on Rwanda,¹¹ calls the Rwandan example a 'mixed type, partly political with the systematic killing of political opponents, and partly the systematic massacre of an allegedly racially alien population.'¹²

The automatic reaction from France, Rwanda's closest European ally, would have been to intervene militarily – as they had done in 1990, when the RPF invaded, marking the start of the three-year civil war. But the political landscape in France in 1994 had shifted: squabbling between the PS, and the RPR and the UDF was rife and came to a head over the Rwandan genocide. The parties managed to agree on a 'humanitarian' intervention in Rwanda, but, crucially, could not agree on the mission's constitution, and thereby, as this essay will argue, delaying *Opération Turquoise's* deployment. The existing divisions in the *cohabitation* government were exacerbated by the formalisation of negotiations over African policy in the *Conseil restreint*. This set the scene for the game of egos that ensued. The Rwandan genocide became an electoral playground for the opposing political parties, with key figures from each party attempting to manipulate the situation to his advantage, particularly in the media. Both sides sought to achieve a delicate balancing act: not wanting to concede the moral victory of being seen to save poor black Africans from themselves, but

⁸ See Richard Dowden, 'Missing the story and the sequel: Burundi and Rwanda', in *Africa: Altered States, Ordinary Miracles* (London, 2009), and Chris McGreal interview, Skype, 12th February 2016

⁹ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, p261: 'Hurricane of death had crushed 80 per cent of its victims in about six weeks between the second week of April and the third week of May'

¹⁰ See Bernard Kouchner, former French Secretary of State for Humanitarian Affairs, declaring with 'a complete lack of understanding' in *Le Monde*, (20th May 1994) that 'Peace and a ceasefire are the most urgent needs', see *ibid.* p267

¹¹ Gérard Prunier often writes for the left-wing *Monde Diplomatique*. <http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2016/02/PRUNIER/54747>, accessed 30th March 2016. Prunier has been accused of being part of the French secret police, and found himself in some interesting places at interesting times.

¹² Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, p239

not wanting to involve their party too heavily, lest the mission failed before the 1995 presidential elections.

This essay will not try to suggest that the divisions within and between the parties of the *cohabitation* government served to affect their ability to lead, nor to attempt to comment on France's decision to intervene in Rwanda (further than highlighting its historical precedence of military intervention in Rwanda), nor will it approach sources from during *Opération Turquoise*. Instead this essay will comment on the divisions within and between the three main political parties involved in the Mitterrand-Balladur government, and outline how these divisions served to affect the constitution and, hence, the timing of the French military *Opération Turquoise* from 22nd June to 21st August. This will be achieved through the chronological analysis of four selected documents, all from June 1994, from the Hollande declassification of parts of the Mitterrand archives in April 2015. I believe a chronological analysis of the primary sources will best give the impression of the entirety, and convey the development of the decision-making process, and thus be the most useful approach in order to conclude that it was in fact the divisions between the factions of the *Rassemblement de la république* party, rather than divisions between the coalition of the right and left in the *cohabitation* government, that served to affect the constitution, and hence, the timing of *Turquoise*.

What was *Opération Turquoise*?

On June 14th 1993, François Mitterrand announced to his cabinet that France would be undertaking humanitarian intervention in Rwanda in a bid to stop the genocide. UNAMIR II had been delayed by three months due to supply issues (member states were not forthcoming with troops nor equipment), so then, on the 19th June, UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali wrote a letter to the UN Security Council, advising that they approve

a French-led multinational force to operate in Rwanda for three months under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. In return, France sent their cargo planes to Goma, in what was eastern Zaire, two days before receiving the necessary UN clearance.¹³ The Security Council Resolution 929 was passed on the 22nd June. The French force was mandated to take out the ‘establishment and maintenance, where feasible, of secure humanitarian areas’,¹⁴ just like UNAMIR. The French force, numbering 2,500, created a *zone humanitaire* in south western Rwanda on 5th July. At the insistence of Prime Minister Edouard Balladur, *Opération Turquoise* was a multinational effort though with only 32 Senegalese troops to its forces. Anxious not to repeat the mistakes of previous unilateral interventions like *Opération Noroît* in 1990-93, France paid Senegal to come on board.¹⁵

But criticism of *Opération Turquoise* came swiftly. It had, said the critics, allowed the perpetrators of the genocide to flee into Zaire. It had ignored atrocities like that at Bisesero, and provided a safe zone through which those responsible could escape into a neighbouring country and even supplied the genocidal militias with more weapons. France’s great ‘humanitarian’ plan has been described as at best ill-advised, and at worst as a cynical intervention designed to maintain Paris’ relations with the erstwhile Hutu leadership at the expense of an entire ethnic group – a theory that specialist Jean-Pierre Chrétien supports.¹⁶ Guillaume Ancel, a former captain in the African artillery regiment, specialising in aerial attack, and deployed in *Turquoise* in the combat company of the second Foreign Legion, told me that he took part in an arms delivery, presumably for the *génocidaires* in exile, near to the refugee camps in Goma: ‘j’ai assisté [pendant la] deuxième quinzaine de juillet à une

¹³ From a letter sent to Mitterrand on the 21st June 1994: ‘Deux éléments précurseurs [...] ont pris position à Goma et Bukavu, à la frontière Zaire-Rwanda. Le reste du déploiement est subordonné à l’adoption de la résolution à New York.’: Bruno Delaye & General Quesnot, ‘Note à l’attention de Monsieur le Président de la République. Objet: Conseil restreint du 22 juin, RWANDA’, 21 juin 1994.

¹⁴ The United Nations, ‘[Security Council Resolution 929](#)’, 4(a) p3, accessed 25th March 2016

¹⁵ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, p291

¹⁶ Chrétien blames the problems of *Turquoise* on politics. Politicians approached the question of Rwanda from a fundamentally wrong position. He says: ‘leur grille de lecture est simple: le conflit rwandaise oppose frontalement deux ethnies: les Hutu, étant majoritaires, incarnent la démocratie; la minorité tutsi n’est qu’un segment d’une population nilotique venue d’Ouganda.’¹⁶

livraison d'armes vers ces camps de « réfugiés »'.¹⁷ At the end of their three-month mandate, *Turquoise* forces handed over to Ethiopian peacekeepers under the tardy UNAMIR II.

Much writing on France's intervention in Rwanda foregrounds the idea that it intervened with *Opération Turquoise* at a time, and in a hasty manner, in order to protect the *Françafrique* and *la francophonie*¹⁸ from the 'anglophone' RPF.¹⁹ However, it is not surprising that France intervened militarily in Rwanda, having done so numerous times since their military cooperation agreement in 1975. As one American journalist, John Darnton put it: 'it's not when the French government intervenes that he has some explaining to do, it's when it *doesn't*.'²⁰ The crucial question is, rather, why did it take them over two months – from April 6th, the beginning of the genocide, to June 22nd, the arrival of French troops on Rwandan soil - to intervene? Why did France wait for an official UN mandate in order to commit troops to the ground, a landmark moment for Franco-Rwandan relations? Previously, little more excuse was needed for French intervention than a cursory overview of the 'special' relationship France had with Francophone Africa.

History of France in Rwanda

By the 1950s, strands of the Pan Africanist movement had begun to filter through Rwanda, inspiring anti-colonial sentiment and, conversely, Hutu nationalist movements. Movements that eventually succeeded in overthrowing the Tutsi King Mutara III and making Rwanda a republic under the leadership of the Hutu nationalist Grégoire Kayibanda in 1959. Unrest followed, with Tutsis exiled to neighbouring countries – creating the beginnings of the

¹⁷ Personal communication, Guillaume Ancel, email, November 2015 – February 2016

¹⁸ See Philippe Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families* (New York, 2015), or Richard Dowden, 'Missing the story and the sequel: Burundi and Rwanda', in *Africa: Altered States, Ordinary Miracles* (London, 2009).

¹⁹ For a dismissing of this point of view, see Jacques Morel, *La France au coeur du génocide des Tutsis* (Paris, revised 2010), p54 – he argues that it's reductive to say that the defence of French involvement in Rwanda from 1960 is down to the defence of the *francophonie* – 'L'argument relève plus de la propagande que de la réalité', in 1991, 44% of Rwandans were illiterate, and they almost all spoke Kinyarwanda not French, therefore it's gauche to justify French intervention by the defence of francophonie. In reality, only the elite spoke French.

²⁰ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, p102

RPF in Uganda – and violent clashes between Hutus and Tutsis, thousands were killed. Belgium cut their losses, granting Rwanda independence on 1st July 1962. Charles de Gaulle's France was quick to pick up the baton, having lost the final jewel in its Maghreb crown with the granting of Algerian independence in July 1962. De Gaulle issued '*Un accord d'amitié and de coopération*' with Rwanda on the 20th October 1962. This was followed by a series of other accords on 4th December 1962, with agreements relating to economics, culture, technology, and radio networks.²¹

The *Plan raisonnable* in Rwanda took its form in a 1975 military cooperation agreement ratified by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, or 'Giscard the African' as he was known, Mitterrand's predecessor, and Juvénal Habyarimana. Supposedly, this agreement was drawn up as Giscard d'Estaing was on safari with Habyarimana in north-eastern Rwanda.²² It started off as an agreement for France to train its Presidential Guard and supply armaments.²³ Following his election to the Elysée in 1981, socialist president François Mitterrand merely extended what his conservative predecessor had started, despite 'pre-election Socialist Party rhetoric which spoke of neo-colonial spheres of influence',²⁴ invoking the 1975 military cooperation agreement as legitimisation for French intervention at the outbreak of the Rwandan civil war in 1990. *Opération Noroît*, as it was known, saw French troops remain in Rwanda from 4th October 1990 until the end of March 1993, and set the basis for French intervention in Rwanda. Later, in 1992, it was expanded to training and equipping the Hutu-led FAR. As time went on, the French military served as military advisers to the Rwandan government and Ministry of Defence, while training and providing armaments to the FAR.²⁵ France played a key role in negotiating the end of the Rwandan Civil War at Arusha, in 1993,

²¹ 'Un accord d'amitié and de coopération entre la France et le Rwanda', <http://survie.org/IMG/pdf/1-anex2000.pdf>, accessed 7th April 2016, pp. 61-80

²² Mel McNulty, 'France's role in Rwanda and external military intervention: A double discrediting', *International Peacekeeping*, 4:3, pp. 24-44, p29

²³ 'Un accord d'amitié and de coopération entre la France et le Rwanda', <http://survie.org/IMG/pdf/1-anex2000.pdf>, pp. 81-5

²⁴ McNulty, 'France's role in Rwanda', p30

²⁵ Beigbeder, p300

and therefore ensuring French troops were free to leave only to return after the outbreak of genocide, in April 1994, under the guise of *Opération Amaryllis*. *Amaryllis* was justified by the need to evacuate French and other European nationals following the assassination of Habyarimana.²⁶ Hence, *Turquoise* came as the final instalment in a trilogy of French intervention missions in Rwanda in the 1990s.

Was *Opération Turquoise* an exclusively humanitarian force?

It is impossible to say that *Turquoise* was entirely motivated by humanitarian reasons, and to consider it so would be to vastly misunderstand the facts. Prunier has been quick to point out that Paris's need to 'dig up' humanitarian justifications for their armed return to Rwanda in June 1994 can be seen as 'a weakening of French will and a sure sign that Paris felt ill at ease about the whole thing.'²⁷ The dismissal of their humanitarian status can be overlooked for two clear reasons. Firstly, *Turquoise* was over-equipped for a mere humanitarian force. Guillaume Ancel, the former *Turquoise* captain, said the soldiers of *Turquoise* felt strong: 'nous disposions de forces importantes (compagnies de combat, avions de chasse) que nous avions bien l'intention d'utiliser, nous nous sentions forts.'²⁸ Secondly, many of these same companies of *parachutistes* had been deployed in Rwanda throughout the three-year *Opération Noroît*, training and supporting the FAR fighting against the belligerent RPF, creating what Wallis describes as an 'uncomfortable test of loyalties.'²⁹

There has been much written on some of the French army's inability to escape this previous mandate, including, most convincingly, Prunier, who was tasked with advising the French government on *Turquoise*. He talks of overhearing French military commanders

²⁶ RFI, Fourt, Olivier, '1960-2010, 50 ans d'interventions militaires françaises en Afrique', 16 aout 2010, accessed 4th April 2016

²⁷ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, p103

²⁸ Personal communication with the author, Guillaume Ancel, email

²⁹ Andrew Wallis, *The Silent Accomplice: The untold story of France's Role in the Rwandan Genocide* (London, 2006), p131

joking about ‘breaking the back of the RPF’ before the *Turquoise* deployment.³⁰ Captain Ancel spoke to me about his instructions before he was deployed, saying:

Avant d’être déployé, j’ai reçu comme instruction de préparer un raid terrestre sur Kigali, la capitale, sans doute pour s’en emparer alors qu’elle était sur le point d’être prise par le FPR. Cet ordre a été récupéré et sans doute détruit dans les premiers jours suivant notre arrivée, entre le 24 et le 27 juin.³¹

Also noting that his company received, ‘aucun brief de contexte ce qui était inhabituel pour une mission de ce type,’³² and, even going as far as to note the difference between the official instructions given, that were ‘humanitaires et neutres’ and the orders passed down the chain of command: ‘les ordres reçus étaient initialement de se battre contre leur ennemi, le FPR, puis de les laisser passer par la zone humanitaire sûre pour se réfugier au Zaïre, sans chercher à les désarmer.’³³ Clearly, there were misunderstandings at the highest levels of military command and potentially government as well.

If anything, due to Paris’s warm relationship with Kigali spanning back over thirty years, it would have been virtually impossible for France to be ‘impartial’, and purely humanitarian (as the UN mandate required) when intervening between the FAR and the RPF, even without the contemporary history of French military intervention in Rwanda. The announcement of *Turquoise* was even met with cheers and jubilation by the genocide-inciting Hutu RTLM radio,³⁴ who urged the Hutu people to ‘apportez-les [the French troops] un accueil chaleureux. Un accueil qui leur permettra de penser qu’ils sont les bienvenus.’³⁵ It was common knowledge how far France supported the Hutu power elite. France considered Rwanda democratic because the Hutu demographic majority ruled.³⁶ So those who

³⁰ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, p285

³¹ Personal communication with the author, Guillaume Ancel, email

³² *ibid.*

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ Rwanda File, *RTLM transcript 0300*, accessed 25th March 2016

³⁵ *ibid.* p17

³⁶ See Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, p30

committed the acts of genocide naturally assumed they would have the support of their closest European allies throughout.

Treatment of sources:

I approached this essay wanting to focus on the weeks leading up to France's decision to enter Rwanda with *Opération Turquoise* in a bid to discover how far Mitterrand's personal interests played a role in his decision to intervene in the 1994 Rwandan genocide. I had, perhaps optimistically, imagined that the declassification of the primary sources in April 2015 by the Hollande government would reveal the then French leader's rationale for *Opération Turquoise* – it didn't. And so, slowly, this brief changed. I obtained King's College London Ethical Approval³⁷ and conducted short interviews with a mixture of eyewitnesses, Rwanda specialists, and historians. I interviewed Guillaume Ancel, former *Opération Turquoise* soldier; Chris McGreal, Guardian journalist and eyewitness; Linda Melvern, investigative journalist and author; and Andrew Wallis, historian and Great Lakes-region specialist. Guillaume Ancel's words will feature in this essay, while Andrew Wallis and Linda Melvern served to help direct my argument and steer me towards some useful primary and secondary sources. Linda Melvern very kindly shared some of the sources that she will be using in her upcoming book with me, primarily a transcript from a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum conference held in The Hague in June 2014,³⁸ with testimony from two key players in the French government at the time, Hubert Védrine, the *Sécretaire-générale de l'Élysée*, and, Jean-Marc de la Sablière, the *Directeur des Affaires africaines*.

Luckily, after difficulties gaining access to the declassified Mitterrand archives (see Appendix A), I located the declassified sources leaked online to

³⁷ KCL Ethics Reference Number: LRU-15/16-2284

³⁸ 'International Decision Making in the Age of Genocide: Rwanda 1990–94, The Hague June 2014'. My copy is Linda Melvern's copy, with some of her and the editors' notes. This is a summary of what was learnt at the conference. <https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20150403-rwanda-rapporteur-report.pdf>, accessed 4th April 2016

FranceRwandaGenocide.org,³⁹ a website run by various key figures in the historical interpretation and reporting of Rwanda.⁴⁰ FranceRwandaGenocide.org is a whistle-blowing website set up by a series of left-wing critics of French foreign policy in Africa, and more specifically, its policies in the Rwandan genocide.⁴¹ The most prominent of these figures are Jacques Morel and Michel Sitbon. Jacques Morel is most well-known for writing a tome on France's involvement in Rwanda, *La France au coeur du génocide des Tutsi*, published in its most recent edition in 2010 by *L'Esprit Frappeur*.⁴² Morel is also a member of the well-known NGO, *Survie – Ensemble contre la Françafrique*, formerly led by François-Xavier Verschave, another well-published outspoken critic of French involvement in Rwanda.⁴³ Michel Sitbon is the director of the leftist publishing house, *L'Esprit Frappeur*, and former treasurer of *Le Réseau Voltaire* until 2005 - the international now-dissolved non-profit organisation whose aims included the promotion of freedom and secularism through freedom of information and speech campaigns.⁴⁴ Sitbon also published a book about François Mitterrand, in 2011, accusing him of being involved with a fascist group, *les Cagoullards*,⁴⁵ during the interwar period. Not only were the declassified sources found on FranceRwandaGenocide, but some were also on the *Survie* website, although in an edited form, under the headline 'Génocide des Tutsi au Rwanda: 20 documents pour comprendre le rôle de l'Etat français'.⁴⁶ There is much to say about the reliability of *Survie*, and although it has striven, and continues to strive, for transparency and open communication vis-à-vis France's unique relationship with certain African countries, it remains a source whose choice of documents displayed could be unreliable, as illustrated by its choice of headline,

³⁹ FranceRwandaGenocide, <http://www.francerwandagenocide.org/documents/declassification.html>, accessed 22nd March 2016

⁴⁰ Other sources have been accessed from Rwandafile.com, a site set up by a Harvard student, Jake Freyer, in 2004.

⁴¹ FranceRwandaGenocide, <http://www.francerwandagenocide.org/spip.php?article2>, accessed 22nd March 2016

⁴² Jacques Morel, *La France au coeur du génocide des Tutsi*, (Paris, revised 2010)

⁴³ See for example, François-Xavier Verschave, *Complicité de genocide?: La politique de la France au Rwanda*, (Paris, 1994).

⁴⁴ Wikipedia, https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/R%C3%A9seau_Voltaire, accessed 22nd March 2016

⁴⁵ Michel Sitbon, *Mitterrand le Cagoullard: Voyages au sources de l'extrême-droite française Tome 1* (Paris, 2011).

⁴⁶ *Survie*, <http://survie.org/genocide/genocide-et-complicite/20-documents-pour-comprendre-le/>, accessed 4th April 2016

‘Génocide des Tutsi’.⁴⁷ Many Hutu moderates were also killed in the 100 days of ethno-political genocide, a fact that *Survie* chooses to overlook.

The links between *Survie*, FranceRwandaGenocide.org, Michel Sitbon, and others are important to note when approaching the leaked documents declassified in April 2015 that will feature in this essay. It is obvious from the list of members of FranceRwandaGenocide, and their publications, that their main - and possibly only - concern is the denunciation of French foreign policy in Rwanda, calling to account France’s failure to prevent or stop the Rwandan genocide. This overlooks, rather than dismisses, the fact that the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) did not acknowledge France as having played a major part in the international failures that occurred, pointing instead to Uganda, the United States of America, Belgium and Canada. In light of this, in order to first confirm the authenticity of the leaked sources, I sent the webpage to a head of department⁴⁸ at the *Archives nationales*. In their personal opinion, these sources were identical to the ones held in the Mitterrand archives and they were able to confirm their authenticity in their online form, but, ironically, not allow me to view the sources themselves directly.

When I was able to consult the declassified files online, what I found was a token act of conciliation on behalf of France. Nearly all of the sources were already known in part or in full – according to Jacques Morel, 60% of the 83 sources were known from a leak in 2005,⁴⁹ and still the government are not releasing the crucial documents that are in the *Archives militaires* and *Ministère des Affaires étrangères*. The declassification on 7th April 2015 completely neglected the sources around the downing of President Habyarimana’s plane on 6th April 1994, the *coup d’état* that followed, and the formation of the government *génocidaire* (in which, according to Morel, the French ambassador at the time, Jean-Michel

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁸ Personal communication with the author, email, 17th November 2015

⁴⁹ Commission d’Enquete Citoyenne, <http://cec.rwanda.free.fr/documents/doc/Morel/declassificationRwanda.pdf>, accessed 4th March 2016

Marlaud, played a central role in)⁵⁰ among other key events, such as the massacre at Bisesero. There is an inescapable sense that France is trying to cover up a not so savoury past when it comes to their dealings in Rwanda. As Yves Beigbeder, international lawyer, has written: ‘official France found itself in a process of denial, denial that it had anything to do with the genocide, which has placed it in a defensive and internationally embarrassing position’.⁵¹

This essay will form part of a wider research project into France’s role in the Rwandan genocide that will be the basis of my further MSc studies. Ultimately, however, this FSLE will bring something new to the highly-saturated Rwanda debate by asking how far divisions within French high politics, particularly between key players such as the President, the Foreign Minister, the Prime Minister, and Minister of Defence, affected the constitution and timing of *Opération Turquoise*. As far as I am aware, this type of analysis has not been done, despite it being a worthwhile area of research. 1995 was an election year for the Mitterrand government, François Mitterrand was suffering from testicular cancer and as is therefore commonly accepted, he was not available day-to-day throughout the majority of 1994, particularly around the time of the Rwandan genocide. Tensions were thus compounded, and Mitterrand was possibly unable to manage what was happening around him.

Cohabitation and Africa

Hubert Védrine’s seminal text on Mitterrand’s years in power, *Les mondes de François Mitterrand*, describes many of Mitterrand’s attitudes towards his own government’s policies on Africa throughout his presidency. Védrine argues that despite having many ‘collaborateurs’⁵² in the *Cellule Africaine* from 1981-1995 such as Guy Penne, Jean-

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ Yves Beigbeder, ‘Chapter 10: The Genocide in Rwanda’ in *Judging War Crimes and Torture: French Justice and International Criminal Tribunals and Commissions (1940-2005)* (Boston/ Leiden, 2006), p300

⁵² Hubert Védrine, *Les mondes de François Mitterrand: À l’Élysée 1981-1995* (Paris, 1996), p694

Christophe Mitterrand, Thierry de Beaucé, and Bruno Delaye, ‘il ne faut pas s’y tromper: particulièrement dans ce domaine, la politique menée a toujours été la sienne.’⁵³ Firstly, the use of the word ‘collaborator’ has inescapable echoes of Mitterrand’s shady double dealings in Vichy France,⁵⁴ and also implies, at least in English if not in French as well, a negative connotation of someone who is up to no good. Secondly, Mitterrand laid out much of his personal approaches to policy on Africa at *La Baule* in 1990. Mitterrand’s infamous *La Baule* speech at the Franco-African summit on 20th June 1990 had seemed to pave the way for a new type of Socialist foreign policy on Africa. Particularly after the fall of the Berlin Wall, one of France’s major interests in Africa - the prevention of the spread of communism - was over, the need to continue the ‘*francophonie*’ perhaps seemed outdated, and the influence of the ‘Fashoda’ syndrome diminished. The French President emphasised the importance of democracy and multiparty governance in exchange for aid, though tempered the idea by asserting that African countries should move at their own pace to achieve this.⁵⁵ In practice, however, when it came to Rwanda, this speech served less as a way of setting the pace for French foreign policy, and more as a ‘get out of jail free card’ for the key power players after the genocide. This was reinforced at the 2014 USHMM conference on the Rwandan genocide, where Patrick Mazimhaka, the former RPF Commissioner for External Relations, negated its relevance when it came to the peace negotiations at Arusha, instead saying it was the RPF who managed to get France to put pressure on Habyarimana after [they] insisted that he should open up the political space.⁵⁶

Despite the assertion that Mitterrand’s Africa policies were all down to him, some historians have argued otherwise. Julius Friend says that changes in foreign policy towards Africa, particularly France’s role in the Arusha negotiations for the end of the Rwandan Civil

⁵³ *ibid.* p694 footnote

⁵⁴ Philip Short, *A Taste for Intrigue: The Multiple Lives of François Mitterrand* (London, 2014)

⁵⁵ Julius W. Friend, *The Long Presidency: France in the Mitterrand Years, 1981-1995* (Oxford, 1998), p235

⁵⁶ International Decision Making in the Age of Genocide: Rwanda 1990–94, The Hague June 2014’: report found here <https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20150403-rwanda-rapporteur-report.pdf>, accessed 4th April 2016

War in 1993 were as a result of the new Balladur government. Balladur appeared to be more interested in Eastern Europe and Asia than Africa, and *Opération Noroît* perhaps did not figure in this new plan, nor in Alain Juppé's, the new Foreign Minister's.⁵⁷ However, Prunier states that *Noroît*, in his opinion, set up 'a routine consensus... between the Socialist government and Gaullist opposition around the intervention issue,'⁵⁸ one of acquiescence and blind commitment to an ailing dictatorship. I am inclined to follow Friend's interpretation, as Védérine does not take into account the fact that ultimately, despite most of French foreign policy coming from Mitterrand himself, he was unwell, and he relied heavily on his advisers, particularly Védérine, his right-hand man. Védérine does not allude to Mitterrand's illness throughout his book due to the shroud of secrecy that surrounded the issue. Since then, however, Mitterrand's former personal doctor, Dr Claude Gubler, and political journalist Michel Gonod published a book called *Le Grand secret*,⁵⁹ exposing Mitterrand's battle with cancer throughout his presidency. Also, after the 1993 legislative elections where Mitterrand's *Parti Socialiste* lost an overwhelming 207 seats,⁶⁰ it is debatable how much influence Mitterrand's personal idea of foreign policy on Africa had, faced with a right-wing government, despite his illness.

The second *cohabitation* of François Mitterrand's presidency began after the 1993 legislative election.⁶¹ The former RPR Finance Minister of the previous Mitterrand-Chirac cohabitation from the 1980s, Edouard Balladur, was promoted to Prime Minister. As well as Mitterrand and Balladur, some of the key figures of the Rwanda debate found themselves on differing political axes, forced to work together. Alain Juppé, the secretary general of the RPR was made Balladur's Foreign Minister, François Léotard was the UDF representative as the Minister of Defence, and Socialist Hubert Védérine was the Presidency's Secretary

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, p106

⁵⁹ Michel Gonod and Claude Gubler, *Le Grand secret*, (Paris, 2005)

⁶⁰ Alain Guyomarch, 'The 1993 Parliamentary Election in France', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 46:4 (1993), 605-626, p607

⁶¹ The first was 1986-88 with Jacques Chirac as Prime Minister.

General. The forced coalition between the left-wing *Parti Socialiste* (PS) and the centre-right union of the *Rassemblement pour la République* (RPR) and the *Union pour la Démocratie française* (UDF) in the *Conseil des ministres* set the perfect battleground for a clash over Africa, and more specifically, Rwanda. Hubert Védrine, at the aforementioned USHMM conference, was quick to reinforce the differences before and after the 1993 elections, precluding his comments on the state of French foreign policy by saying:

What I can contribute is the point of view [on Rwanda] from the Élysée, the President of the Republic, which was a little different before and after “cohabitation”, so I just want you to keep this in mind that what I say refers especially to President Mitterrand.⁶²

One of the major effects of *cohabitation* on the negotiation process for African foreign policy was the transferral of key decision-making from the separate offices of the *Cellule Diplomatique*, and the *Cellule Africaine*, to large ‘sujets diplomatico-militaires’ being treated by the *Conseil restreint*, which took place on Tuesday afternoons ‘chez le Premier Ministre’.⁶³ Védrine compares this to his experience of being a *conseiller diplomatique* under Mitterrand from 1981 to 1986, where there was a ‘séparation nette entre les compétences’ of the two departments.⁶⁴ This formalisation of discussion could have had a large impact on the constitution and timing of *Turquoise*, as Védrine pointed out, ‘les événements qui ont conduit à décider *l’Opération Turquoise* ont été traités dans ce cadre.’⁶⁵ These *Conseils restreints* met in the Prime Minister’s offices straight after the *Conseil des Ministres* met. The process was thus formalised and set the scene for the big personalities from the political left and right to vie for supremacy and the question of what to do and how to do it in Rwanda formed part of

⁶² *International Decision Making in the Age of Genocide: Rwanda 1990–94*, (The Hague: June 2014) <https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20150403-rwanda-rapporteur-report.pdf>

⁶³ ‘Mission d’Information sur le Rwanda: Sommaire des comptes rendus d’auditions du 24 mars 1998 au 5 mai 1998’, *Assemblée Nationale*, <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/11/dossiers/rwanda/telechar/auditi01.pdf>, accessed 3rd April 2016

⁶⁴ *ibid.* p197

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

the turf war. Védrine added that it was during these *Conseils restreints* that the President, Edouard Balladur, and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence met to discuss plans for Rwanda, and it was here that, ‘au départ, leurs avis divergent’.⁶⁶ This essay will therefore use primary source evidence from two key *Conseils restreints*, of 15th and 22nd June 1994, and then briefing notes from Bruno Delaye, a *conseiller pour les affaires africaines*, to Mitterrand himself.

Unrest at both ends of the political spectrum

The uneasy merger created between the RPR, PS and UDF in the *cohabitation* government began to show cracks by mid-1994, and the Rwanda intervention discussions became the focal point for these interparty divisions. On 22nd June 1994, the Financial Times published an article entitled, ‘Elbows out at the starting blocks’, which asserted that the French presidential election had begun early. It suggested that the European council elections on June 14th had the effect of precipitating the start of campaigning, and highlighted the ‘herculean task of keeping a Socialist in the Elysée’ that the left faced, and a ‘possibly divided centre-right.’⁶⁷ Significantly, Wednesday 22nd June 1994 was the same day that the Security Council met to pass Resolution 929, mandating *Turquoise*. Hence, according to the Financial Times, the negotiations that prefaced the deployment of French troops to Rwanda were marred by in-fighting and factionalism. Adding to the political fray were the results of the June 14th Euro-elections, ‘in which mainstream parties of left and right gained only 40% of the vote... helped splinter an already fragile party structure’⁶⁸ for both sides. It was crunch time for the main political parties, tensions were high and the Rwandan negotiations provided a stage for these divisions to play out, as Védrine reflected in 1998: ‘les mécanismes de décision au niveau le plus élevé de l’Etat sont complexes, car les personnes concernées ont à

⁶⁶ Védrine, *Les mondes de François Mitterrand*, p694

⁶⁷ Financial Times, ‘Elbows out at the Starting Blocks’, Wednesday 22nd June 1994 ,p23

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

gérer une multitude de problèmes à la fois.⁶⁹

The *Parti socialiste* had, until June 1994, been led by Michel Rocard, but after a dismal showing for the party at the European elections in mid-June, they replaced him with Henri Emmanuelli.⁷⁰ President Mitterrand was visibly ill and could not stand for election again, so he was seeking a moral high note on which to end his two-*septennat* presidency, while the PS were scrabbling through the factions for a potential candidate to field in April and May of the following year. The PS presented a divided spectrum, not to mention the fact that its sole policy-making representative in negotiations on Rwanda was Mitterrand. They were severely outnumbered and in a constitutionally weak position on every level entering discussion on any topic, let alone on military intervention in Rwanda. There was a lot of ability however, for Mitterrand, to ‘as a shrewd political operator... manipulate both his political opponents and the would-be inheritors of his mantle,’⁷¹ as he did with the *Turquoise* negotiations.

After Jacques Chirac’s defeat at the hands of Mitterrand for the second time in 1988, the UDF and the RPR had decided to field a single centre-right candidate in the 1995 elections, in the hope that a united front would appeal to a broader demographic. The legislative elections of 1993 had yielded a new Balladur right-leaning cabinet. And there was also the realisation that an ailing François Mitterrand would not be running again. These considerations led to the decision to unite. But, opinions changed and by June 1994 the UDF and RPR had slowly drifted apart, realising that maybe their policy of ‘stronger together’ would not necessarily be the best move. Balladur had been quick to flatter the UDF when he became Prime Minister, announcing that there would be ‘no fewer than 16 UDF ministers

⁶⁹ ‘Mission d’Information sur le Rwanda’, <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/11/dossiers/rwanda/telechar/auditi01.pdf>, accessed 3rd April 2016

⁷⁰ Financial Times, ‘Elbows out at the Starting Blocks’, p23

⁷¹ African Rights, *Rwanda: death, despair, and defiance* (London, revised 1995), p1139

and only 13 RPR ministers,⁷² after the 1993 legislative elections in his government. Whether he intended this move to ensure complete UDF support for his presidential bid, we cannot be sure, however, parts of the UDF did discreetly back him.⁷³ This further divided the *Conseil des ministres* at a critical moment for negotiations on Rwanda.

The UDF Minister of Defence, François Léotard, had also put himself forward as a potential candidate for the presidency, as a reaction to the divisive former President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's ambitions to re-enter the Elysée. Léotard, a crucial part of the negotiations on intervention in Rwanda as Minister of Defence, was seen as the 'honorary president' of the republican element of the UDF (the RP). It was reported, on the 15th June, that twenty-seven members of the RP faction of the UDF were seceding from the 'UDF parliamentary group, in order to prevent being corralled into endorsing a UDF presidential candidacy for fear, possibly founded, that Mr Giscard d'Estaing might have another go at the Elysee.⁷⁴ Hence, it is reasonable to assume that Léotard was distracted by his own personal ambition (or was at least spread thin) on 15th June, a key date in *Turquoise* negotiations. Léotard had just announced his possible candidacy, and, as one of the senior figures of the UDF, thereby faced a split in his party.

From the outset with the Rwandan genocide, the centre-right RPR were united in their opposition to French intervention in the Rwandan situation. They were perhaps unwilling to deal with the negative fallout as had followed the end of *Opération Noroît* four months earlier. In a note from Bruno Delaye, on April 7th 1994, Balladur and Juppé's unified position was laid out: 'Matignon [the Prime Minister's office] et le Quai d'Orsay [the Foreign Minister's office] souhaitent, dans cette nouvelle crise rwandaise qui risque d'être très

⁷² Financial Times, 'Elbows out at the Starting Blocks', Wednesday 22nd June 1994, p23

⁷³ *ibid.*

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

meurtrière, que la France ne soit pas en première ligne et limiter notre action à des interventions à l'ONU.⁷⁵ This clearly presented the centre-right RPR's position on French intervention at the beginning of the genocide – supporting UN actions only.

However, by June 1994, Alain Juppé and Edouard Balladur were firmly in opposing camps within the RPR. The party's consensus on Rwanda had abruptly come to an end. Balladur, having promised his old friend, former Prime Minister and President of the party, Jacques Chirac, that he would not be running for President, slowly began to move away from the old “fidels” of the Chirac movement, setting up his own bid for the Presidential office, the Elysée. His popularity had soared above other politicians of the right during his tenure of the Matignon, remaining ‘obstinately fifteen points, or more, higher than Chirac’s popularity throughout 1994,’⁷⁶ making this an opportunity too good to pass up.⁷⁷ Alain Juppé, on the other hand, remained a stalwart supporter of Chirac, and hence the ‘in-fighting’⁷⁸ began. It was cemented over the question of humanitarian intervention in Rwanda and, according to Friend, the RPR divisions ‘dominated the government’s attention.’⁷⁹

Primary Analysis

The *Conseil restreint* met on June 15th, one day after François Mitterrand had announced to his cabinet that he would like to send a humanitarian force into Rwanda to halt the genocide. This meeting saw the start of *Turquoise* negotiations, and its transcript⁸⁰ is one of the key documents that clearly shows how the divisions within and between the three main political parties had an enormous impact on the formation of *Turquoise*. On the whole, both

⁷⁵ Bruno Delaye, ‘Note à l’attention de Monsieur le Président de la République, Objet: Attentat contre les Président du Rwanda et du Burundi. Le 7 avril 1994’, *Le Conseiller à la Présidence*, <http://www.francerwandagenocide.org/documents/Delaye7avril1994.pdf>, accessed 3rd April 2016

⁷⁶ Friend, *The Long Presidency*, p146

⁷⁷ ‘48% of those questioned in a CSA institute opinion poll this week, would have confidence in him [Balladur] as president, Mr Chirac had 37%’ – Financial Times, 22nd June 1994, p23

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

⁷⁹ Friend, *The Long Presidency*, p146

⁸⁰ ‘Conseil Restreint: Situation au Rwanda, Mercredi 15 Juin 1994’, <http://www.francerwandagenocide.org/documents/ConseilRestreint15juin1994.pdf>, accessed 5th April 2016

right and left agreed intervention was necessary; the problem was they could not agree how to do it. A fact that is supported by Védrine's testimony to the Quilès commission in 1998:

Il a ensuite déclaré que, pendant la période de cohabitation, il n'y avait pas eu de désaccord sur l'analyse de la situation et de notre rôle. La nécessité d'une action de la France, épaulée par d'autres pays, et avec l'accord du Conseil de Sécurité, avait recueilli un consensus.⁸¹

The right, however, was prone to change. The UDF's Léotard was fearful of direct intervention in Rwanda, seeking a resolution through the 1975 military co-operation accord, with 'des deux parties et un soutien international.' Yet, he was not confident: 'je ne vois mal comment nous pourrions obtenir l'accord du FPR et le soutien international.' And he even suggested an alternative, Burundi, 'où nous pourrions mettre a priori quelques moyens qui nous permettraient éventuellement de faire quelque chose de plus important.'⁸² Juppé expressed his 'réticences à l'égard d'une intervention au Burundi,'⁸³ highlighting the differences in opinion that characterised the right in the *Turquoise* negotiations. Juppé suggested three options for the President and the Prime Minister to consider: to 'accélérer notre contribution à l'équipement des contingents africains', 'utiliser les 13 000 hommes de l'ONUSOM qui ne sont pas très occupés', or finally, 'faut-il aller plus loin et envisager une intervention pour exfiltrer les populations?'⁸⁴ All of these ideas were rejected, or rather tacitly dismissed by his RPR colleague, Balladur, and the President. Juppé also called for 'une intervention plus musclée.'⁸⁵ Balladur was also keen to take risks 'dans des cas aussi affreux', but emphasised the importance of 'une intervention humanitaire', 'pour des raisons morales

⁸¹ 'Mission d'Information sur le Rwanda', <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/11/dossiers/rwanda/telechar/auditi01.pdf>, accessed 3rd April 2016

⁸² 'Conseil Restreint: Situation au Rwanda, Mercredi 15 Juin 1994', <http://www.francierwandagenocide.org/documents/ConseilRestreint15juin1994.pdf>, accessed 5th April 2016

⁸³ *ibid.*

⁸⁴ *ibid.*

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

et non pas médiatiques,’ seemingly dismissing the Foreign Minister’s suggestion of a hard line military intervention. Balladur insisted that *Turquoise* should not be a unilateral operation, asking, ‘mais avec qui irons-nous? Il n’est pas question d’y aller seuls’ – to which Mitterrand was resolute, ‘nous avons les Africains.’⁸⁶ Balladur’s insistence that the operation should be multilateral, avoiding what he considered to be ‘une opération de type colonial,’⁸⁷ was a key sticking point between him, Juppé and Mitterrand. Secondly, Balladur called for a United Nations-mandated operation, ‘afin d’enlever tout prétexte à l’inaction et à l’indifférence.’ Balladur’s insistence that *Turquoise* be humanitarian in nature, as legitimate as possible with other international players involved, and that France remain as distant from the operation as possible, all point to the suggestion that he was keeping a firm eye on his bid for the Elysée. He did not want any negative consequences from Rwanda to hinder that.

It is obvious from this document, that Mitterrand, still smarting from the European election results, as the PS representative and the President of the Republic, was balancing his ideal vision of intervention: ‘une intervention rapide et ciblée mais pas une action généralisée,’ with his belief that, ‘c’est l’honneur de la France qui est en cause,’ and that the ultimate responsibility to take action lay with him: ‘c’est une décision dont je prends la responsabilité’.⁸⁸ Mitterrand’s unshakeable confidence and doggedness on the topic of intervention in Rwanda reinforces the fact that France’s policies on Africa at that time came from him. From the 15th June *Conseil restreint*, we see Mitterrand’s steadfastness on Rwanda, he was resolute while he allowed his advisers and ministers to undertake the detail of it: ‘Vous êtes maître des méthodes, Amiral [Lanxade, Chef d’état-major des Armées].’⁸⁹

Certainly, the 15th June transcript of the *Conseil restreint* lays out the positions that the

⁸⁶ *ibid.*

⁸⁷ ‘Mission d’Information sur le Rwanda’, <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/11/dossiers/rwanda/telechar/auditi01.pdf>, accessed 3rd April 2016

⁸⁸ ‘Conseil Restreint: Situation au Rwanda, Mercredi 15 Juin 1994’, <http://www.francerwandagenocide.org/documents/ConseilRestreint15juin1994.pdf>, accessed 5th April 2016

⁸⁹ *ibid.*

opposing factions of the RPR, the UDF and the PS took when it came to the formation of *Opération Turquoise*.

On the 16th June, Bruno Delaye sent the President a note, reporting what had been discussed at ‘une reunion interministérielle’ that morning at the Quai d’Orsay.⁹⁰ The mission’s aim was ‘étudier les aspects diplomatiques et militaires d’une intervention au Rwanda’, and further outlined the relevant ministers’ opinions of the operation’s formation. This note, though brief, sets out the two sides that are formed: Alain Juppé and President Mitterrand on one side, and then Edouard Balladur and François Léotard on the other. This is supported by Védrine’s testimony in 1998: ‘en Conseil restreint, le Président Mitterrand et M. Alain Juppé partageaient une même conception alors que MM. Edouard Balladur et François Léotard avaient une approche différente, ce qui a conduit naturellement à une décision de synthèse.’⁹¹ Balladur ‘met comme condition à cette opération la participation à nos côtés d’au moins un pays européen,’⁹² a condition that Juppé did not deem necessary. This disagreement, primarily on the need to secure external, even European, backing for the operation, between the two RPR ministers was to become the major hindrance to the consensus on *Turquoise*, and set up the background for Védrine’s handwritten comments on a 17th June note from Bruno Delaye to the President, (see Appendix C) highlighting ‘désaccords au sein du gouvernement (Quai d’Orsay contre Matignon, Défense, Coopération).’⁹³

The 22nd June *Conseil restreint* meeting consisted of a more practical approach to the mission itself - the ministers and representatives of the army had already mainly decided

⁹⁰ Bruno Delaye, ‘Note à l’attention de Monsieur le Président de la République. Objet : Intervention au Rwanda, le 16 juin 1994’, <http://www.francerwandagenocide.org/documents/QuesnotDelaye16juin1994.pdf>, accessed 7th April 2016

⁹¹ ‘Mission d’Information sur le Rwanda’, <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/11/dossiers/rwanda/telechar/audit01.pdf>, accessed 3rd April 2016

⁹² ‘Note à l’attention de Monsieur le Président de la République. Objet : Intervention au Rwanda, le 16 juin 1994’, <http://www.francerwandagenocide.org/documents/QuesnotDelaye16juin1994.pdf>, accessed 7th April 2016

⁹³ Bruno Delaye, Général Quesnot, ‘Note à l’attention de Monsieur le Président de la République. Objet : Intervention au Rwanda, le 17 juin 1994’, <http://www.francerwandagenocide.org/documents/QuesnotDelaye17juin1994.pdf>, accessed 7th April 2016

what the mission would consist of, and its soon-to-be granted UN mandate under Chapter VII would also dictate a lot of the detail. The synthesis between Mitterrand and Balladur's opinions on intervention, that Védrine highlighted, came clear throughout this *Conseil restreint*. Mitterrand created a united front between himself and the rest of his ministers: 'Le Premier ministre et moi-même ainsi que l'ensemble des ministres partageons la même analyse : une intervention, oui mais brève, de style "coup de poing". Elle doit être à la fois symbolique et réelle.'⁹⁴ The main points of contention in this *Conseil* were the potential reaction of the FPR, what to do with the internally displaced Tutsis, then the Tutsi refugees fleeing to Zaire, and the potential new humanitarian zone the French were looking to create. The creation of the *zone humanitaire* was much to the chagrin of the Minister of Defence, Léotard, who was firmly against such an idea, saying that, 'je souhaite que nous n'occupions pas durablement une partie du territoire rwandais.'⁹⁵ This would prove to be the next point of contention for the *cohabitation* government, dividing them significantly over the course of the discussions from this point onwards. Léotard also outlined the formation of the mission, already twenty-four hours in, 'l'opération a débuté depuis 24 heures' - premature to the granting of the UN mandate. He talked about the deployment of troops, their numbers and where they would be positioned: 'le volume des forces doit atteindre progressivement 2.500 hommes... Environ 1.500 viendront des forces prépositionnées et 1.000 de métropole', and 'nos forces seront réparties sur trois sites, au Zaïre, dont Bukavu et surtout Goma près de la frontière rwandaise.'⁹⁶

Even at this late stage, the main actors were unsure where the mission would begin, citing Cyangugu as an option, something Prunier has highlighted as being one of the principal

⁹⁴ 'Conseil Restreint: Situation au Rwanda, Mercredi 22 Juin 1994', <http://www.francerwandagenocide.org/documents/ConseilRestreint22juin1994.pdf>, accessed 7th April 2016

⁹⁵ *ibid.*

⁹⁶ *ibid.*

reasons for the insecurity of the whole French mission.⁹⁷ Prunier had been asked from the 17th June to form part of the crisis cell on negotiating the operation. By way of reasoning, he believes that he was asked in order to fulfil some kind of role as the ‘academic heretic’ so that he in turn could negotiate a ‘political minefield’ on behalf of Léotard.⁹⁸ Ultimately, this transcript from the 22nd June *Conseil restreint* gives an idea of how little, in actual fact, had been decided with regards to Rwanda from 15th June until 22nd June. The divisions within the government, and within the political parties that the government was composed of, ensured the slow progression of discussions, and the government’s reliance on “wait and see” when on the ground⁹⁹ ensured the inevitable failures that characterised *Turquoise*.

Fighting for the moral high ground

Much has been written on whether France’s involvement in Rwanda was a political game, designed by each opposing political party to win the moral high ground in the media before the upcoming 1995 presidential elections. The opportunity to capitalise on images of strong French soldiers saving African orphans seemed to be too attractive to give up on, and hence a media frenzy began. In light of the fact that so many of the key players in the negotiations over *Opération Turquoise* were either running for the coveted spot at the Elysée, or heavily supporting someone who was - as in Juppé’s case - I do not think this argument can be ignored. Prunier approaches this point cynically, stressing the French government’s reliance on the moral high ground and the influence of media pressure that characterised their involvement in Rwanda. By the 15th June, Alain Juppé was on air speaking about French humanitarian involvement in Rwanda, and by the 16th, he was writing about it in *Libération*.¹⁰⁰ According to a civil servant that Prunier interviewed, President Mitterrand had

⁹⁷ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, p284

⁹⁸ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, p283

⁹⁹ ‘Il faudra voir sur place’, in the ‘Conseil Restreint: Situation au Rwanda, Mercredi 22 Juin 1994’, <http://www.francerwandagenocide.org/documents/ConseilRestreint22juin1994.pdf>, accessed 7th April 2016

¹⁰⁰ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, p280

‘asked them to keep the decision secret for a few days to avoid a media blitz,’¹⁰¹ and Juppé clearly disregarded that in an attempt to rattle the Socialist ‘monopole du coeur’, something which ‘always vastly irritated Conservative politicians.’¹⁰² In May, Bernard Kouchner, former Socialist Minister of Health before the 1993 legislative elections, was filmed in Kigali ‘braving the shellfire, along with his attendant camera crews.’¹⁰³ African Rights highlight this moment as when the ‘emerging competition to claim the moral high ground between leading French politicians’¹⁰⁴ began.

African Rights, in their landmark report, *Rwanda: death, despair, and defiance*¹⁰⁵ from 1994 were dismissive of *Turquoise* for many reasons, primary among them was this element of seizing the moral high ground as rationale for their intervention. It was the first NGO report to be published on the Rwandan genocide, and consequently became one of the key sources when approaching the question of what happened in Rwanda, international failures and all. The revised copy of 1995 remained as dismissive of *Turquoise*, saying ‘the French military made a mockery of the UN principles’.¹⁰⁶ The authors Rakiya Omaar and Alex de Waal called the French operation ‘a prime example of gesture politics,’ and suggest two main audiences ‘were in the minds of those who planned it: French public opinion, especially the ill-defined “humanitarian lobby” [a collection of French NGOs] and, Francophone African leaders.’ For them, the operation ‘had little, if anything, to do with the reality in Rwanda’.¹⁰⁷ They emphasised the divisions that were caused by the election year, saying that the impending elections assured that ‘the humanitarian credentials of the leading contenders had to be proven,’ and they all ‘were forced to scramble to claim the credit for

¹⁰¹ *ibid.* p282

¹⁰² *ibid.*

¹⁰³ African Rights, *Rwanda: death, despair, and defiance*

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.* p1139

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.* p1138

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

having thought of it,¹⁰⁸ hence Juppé's jumping of the gun. The combination of inter-party political divisions in particular, and to a lesser extent the importance of gaining the moral high ground that the divisions caused, ensured that *Turquoise* took place when it did. Had it been earlier, the impending presidential elections and the failure of the main political parties at the European elections would have been of less importance. It was so delayed due to these divisions impacting on the efficacy of their negotiations, particularly over the constitution of the mission. Yet one could argue, intervention only came to be discussed as a viable option in June 1994, due to the media's eye turning onto, primarily, the burgeoning refugee crisis the genocide had caused.

Conclusion:

Overall, the primary source evidence from the 15th – 22nd June suggests that Balladur, as the Prime Minister, was leading the charge on what *Opération Turquoise* should look like. He demanded it should last no longer than two months, be properly UN-mandated, and be multilateral. Mitterrand was quick to establish its humanitarian constitution, but was overly confident in its support by other countries, and was vague on exactly how it should go, though primarily sided with Balladur. Juppé was intent on receiving much of the moral high ground for his 'parrain' Chirac's election campaign, and was shaky on the details of how *Turquoise* should be formed, minus its humanitarian composition. Léotard seemed to be more insistent on the media repercussions of the mission, and at first was reluctant to intervene outside of the UNAMIR forces. The four of them were under immense political pressure, pulling them in different ways, particularly in light of the impending elections, the results of the European elections, and the media frenzy that surrounded their attempts to gain the moral high ground politically.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.* p1139

Edouard Balladur, however, was quick to point out in 1998 during the Assemblée Nationale Quilès-led ‘Mission d’information sur le Rwanda’, that in fact though they, the main actors, disagreed, it would be excessive to speak about hesitations within their policy development:

Il lui est apparu excessif de parler d’hésitations dans la politique à conduire, bien qu’il soit exact que certains responsables aient envisagé une intervention militaire, notamment à Kigali. Toutefois, un accord est très rapidement intervenu entre le Président de la République et lui pour rejeter cette hypothèse qui aurait pu entraîner la France dans un conflit ou l’exposer à être mise en accusation par des puissances de la région.

In this quote, Balladur rejects the idea that the government hesitated when making policy on Rwanda, which is a redundant point considering France was one of the first international players to discover the true magnitude of the genocide, in April 1994, yet did not act until June 22nd. Though this could be Balladur rehashing the reality of the situation in light of the Quilès enquiry, this quote seems like a concrete example of how in fact, rather than divisions between the *Parti Socialiste*, Mitterrand, on the left, and the UDF-RPR coalition on the right, it was in fact divisions between the RPR and UDF, particularly the RPR factions of ‘Chirac vs. Balladur’, or ‘Juppé vs. Balladur’ in the *Conseil des ministres*, that led to the disagreements on the formation of *Opération Turquoise*, and hence delayed its deployment. Balladur and Mitterrand appeared to be firmly on one side when it came to intervention.

This essay has sought to show how the divisions within the top echelons of the Mitterrand-Balladur *cohabitation* government in an important election year led to the tardiness of the French *Opération Turquoise*. When it did finally get into gear it was plagued by uncertainty and hesitation particularly over who would take part. France was reluctant to

go it alone. These political divisions, I would suggest, also had a direct bearing on the composition of the force and the precise nature of the operation. The implosion of the *Parti Socialiste* after the 1993 legislative elections has much to answer for, Mitterrand's hands were tied on certain issues, he was ill, and the closer to the 1995 presidential elections it became, the more divided the UMP-RPR union became, the factions in the RPR were worsened. It would be neglectful to overlook these inter-party and inter-governmental divisions when discussing the constitution and timing of *Opération Turquoise*, though the evidence that we have reviewed points more to the divisions causing an inability for the main political actors to decide on its constitution, particularly in Balladur's insistence of a multinational force, and thereby delaying its timing.

Turquoise failed, and in large part due to its lateness. Connaughton argues that, and despite his book's many other limitations,¹⁰⁹ I am inclined to agree with him: 'if a *Turquoise* type force with a *Turquoise* mandate had been put in Kigali in the second week of April 1994, could the killings have been controlled? The answer must be yes'.¹¹⁰ On paper, *Turquoise* constituted everything that could have helped limit the death toll in the Rwandan genocide: it was highly organised, well-equipped, and with a Chapter VII mandate, it was able to take risks where UNAMIR I was not. The creation of the safe humanitarian zone, used properly, could have ensured more prosecutions for guilty parties and saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. There is no way to look upon *Turquoise* lightly. As effectively equipped as it was, it was not a humanitarian force. Rather it was on a par with forces despatched to Algeria to protect French colonialism there in the 1950s-60s. It was sent in a bid to protect what the French saw as the real Rwandan democracy, with plain disregard of the influence of Hutu Power, the *akazu*, at the top of Habyarimana's government. The Mitterrand-Balladur

¹⁰⁹ Connaughton's book is under researched and too reliant on first person testimony provided by General Lafourcade, commander of *Opération Turquoise*. Connaughton questions little yet asserts much.

¹¹⁰ R.M. Connaughton, *Military Support and Protection for Humanitarian Assistance Rwanda April-December 1994*, (London, 1996), p56

government sought at all costs to defend France's vision for a democratic francophone Africa as laid out in Mitterrand's *La Baule* speech, conflating Hutu majority with Hutu democracy at every turn. A country with a Hutu majority does not constitute a country with a Hutu-elected democracy, and this was France's crucial mistake.

Democracy in Rwanda to this day remains an interestingly vague concept. Paul Kagame's government was re-elected in 2010 with a 93% share of the vote,¹¹¹ after his main opposition party leader was found nearly decapitated.¹¹² Kagame, however, somehow remained scot-free, and with Britain's Tony Blair's help his Rwanda became the model of African governance. By 2008, however, it seemed the West had fallen out of love somewhat with Kagame's rule. Rwanda issued the damning Mucyo report in 2008. The report, into foreign involvement in the Rwandan genocide, incriminated thirteen French politicians, notably Mitterrand, Balladur, Juppé and twenty French military personnel, including the commander of *Turquoise*, Lafourcade.¹¹³ The Mucyo report crowned the diplomatic 'cold war' that gripped France and Rwanda following the genocide. France opposed the Tutsi-dominated Rwanda under President Kagame, just as much as they were against the Tutsi rebel commander Kagame.

From rebel fighter, *bête noire* to darling of the west, Kagame's rise has been astronomical, and it is only now that questions are beginning to be asked about freedom of speech, the treatment of journalists and opposition politicians in Rwanda. This comes as a breath of fresh air for the old players of the French government who were anti-Kagame from the start.

¹¹¹ BBC News, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-10935892>, accessed April 7th 2016

¹¹² BBC News, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-10694722>, accessed April 7th 2016

¹¹³ Bat, *Le syndrome Foccart*, p597

Bibliography

Primary

Online resources

1. Assemblée Nationale, <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/11/dossiers/rwanda/telechar/auditi01.pdf>
2. BBC News, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news>
3. Commission d'Enquete Citoyenne, <http://cec.rwanda.free.fr/documents/doc/Morel/declassificationRwanda.pdf>
4. The Financial Times (via Gale Newspaper Archive <http://www.gale.cengage.co.uk/>)
5. FranceRwandaGenocide.org, <http://www.francerwandagenocide.org/>
6. The Guardian (via its online archives), www.theguardian.com/uk
7. Monde Diplomatique, <http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/>
8. RFI, <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20100714-1960-2010-50-ans-interventions-militaires-francaises-afrique/>
9. RwandaFile.com, <http://www.rwandafile.com/rtlm/pdf/rtlm0300.pdf>
10. Survie, <http://survie.org/IMG/pdf/1-anex2000.pdf>
11. The United Nations, Security Council Resolution 929 <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N94/244/54/PDF/N9424454.pdf?OpenElement>, 4(a) p3
12. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, <https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20150403-rwanda-rapporteur-report.pdf>
13. Wikipedia, https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/R%C3%A9seau_Voltaire

Interviews

KCL Ethics Reference Number: LRU-15/16-2284

Guillaume Ancel, various email exchanges, 10th November - 16th February 2016

Chris McGreal, Skype, 19th February 2016

Linda Melvern, Islington, 25th February 2016

Andrew Wallis, British Library, 22nd February 2016

Secondary

Books, chapters in books

1. African Rights, *Rwanda: death, despair, and defiance* (London, revised 1995).
2. Bat, Jean-Pierre, *Le syndrome Foccart: La politique française en Afrique, de 1959 à nos jours* (Paris, 2012).
3. Beigbeder, Yves, 'Chapter 10: The Genocide in Rwanda', in *Judging War Crimes and Torture: French Justice and International Criminal Tribunals and Commissions (1940-2005)* (Boston/ Leiden, 2006).
4. Chipman, John, *French Power in Africa* (Oxford, 1989).
5. Connaughton, R. M., *Military Support and Protection for Humanitarian Assistance in Rwanda April-December 1994* (London, 1996).
6. Dallaire, Roméo, *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda* (London, 2005).
7. Des Forges, Alison, *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda* (New York, 1999).
8. Dowden, Richard, 'Missing the story and the sequel: Burundi and Rwanda', in *Africa: Altered States, Ordinary Miracles* (London, 2009).
9. Dupaquier, Jean-François, *Politiques, militaires, et mercenaires français au Rwanda: Chronique d'une désinformation* (Paris, 2014).
10. Friend, Julius W., *The Long Presidency: France in the Mitterrand Years, 1981-1995* (Oxford, 1998).
11. Gourevitch, Philip, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families* (New York, 2015).
12. Gonod, Michel, and Gubler, Claude, *Le Grand secret* (Paris, 2005).
13. Hatzfeld, Jean, *A Time for Machetes: The Rwandan Genocide – The Killers Speak* (London, 2008).
14. Klinghoffer, Arthur Jay, *The international dimension of genocide in Rwanda* (London, 1998).

15. Krosiak, Daniela, *The Role of France in the Rwandan genocide* (London, 2007).
16. Melvern, Linda, *A People Betrayed: The role of the West in the Rwandan Genocide* (London, revised 2009).
17. Morel, Jacques, *La France au coeur du génocide des Tutsis*, (Paris, revised 2010).
18. Prunier, Gérard, *The Rwanda Crisis: The History of a Genocide* (London, 1995).
19. de Saint-Exupéry, Patrick, *Complices de l'inavouable: La France au Rwanda* (Paris, 2009).
20. Short, Philip, *A Taste for Intrigue: The Multiple Lives of François Mitterrand* (London, 2014).
21. Sitbon, Michel, *Mitterrand le Cagoulard: Voyages au sources de l'extrême-droite française Tome 1* (Paris, 2011).
22. Védrine, Hubert, *Les mondes de François Mitterrand: À l'Élysée 1981-1995* (Paris, 1996).
23. Verschave, François-Xavier, *Complicité de genocide? La politique de la France au Rwanda* (Paris, 1994).
24. Wallis, Andrew, *The Silent Accomplice: The untold story of France's Role in the Rwandan Genocide* (London, 2006).

Articles in journals

1. Chrétien, Jean-Pierre, 'France et Rwanda: le cercle vicieux' in *Politique africaine N-113 - Afrique, la Globalisation par les Suds*, ed. Richard Banégas (Paris, 2009) pp. 121-39.
2. McNulty, Mel, 'France's role in Rwanda and external military intervention: A double discrediting', *International Peacekeeping*, 4:3 (1997), 24-44.
3. Guyomarch, Alain, 'The 1993 Parliamentary Election in France', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 46:4 (1993), 605-626.

Appendices

Appendix A

Accessing the Archives nationales

Getting access to the declassified primary sources, particularly the government papers, proved to be the first hurdle. From October 2015 I was emailing the *Archives nationales* in Paris twice weekly, but it was only finally, with the help of my supervisor, Dr Vincent Hiribarren, that I was able to receive a reply. It was quickly pointed out to me that despite the fact that the archives were declassified, the archives were not readily accessible, and, as with any document in the Mitterrand archive in the *Archives nationales*, ‘il faut obtenir l'autorisation écrite de la mandataire de Mitterrand, Madame Dominique Bertinotti, nommé par lui en 1995... le fonds Mitterrand est régi par un protocole de versement, reconnu par la loi sur les archives, qui prévoit que chaque Président ou son mandataire se réserve le droit d'autoriser ou non les chercheurs à avoir communication des documents qui y sont conservés.’¹¹⁴ It was becoming a bureaucratic quagmire with no guaranteed result. It was made clear that Madame Bertinotti was free to reject my proposal to see the declassified documents in the Mitterrand collection, ‘as she had already done to a French university professor’.¹¹⁵ I duly completed a *dérogation* (request to view the files) and submitted it to the *Archives* in November 2015, well aware that in all likelihood, my request would be rejected or not approved in time for this essay, in April 2016. At the time of writing, I have not yet heard anything. In light of this hiccup, and having located the declassified sources leaked online to FranceRwandaGenocide.org,¹¹⁶ a website run by various key figures in the historical interpretation and reporting of Rwanda, I decided to go ahead with my research.¹¹⁷

Appendix B

History of France in Africa

France has enjoyed a unique status within sub-Saharan Africa among former Western European colonial powers. De Gaulle’s vision of ‘self-determined’ black African ex-colonies, proudly francophone and part of the so-called family, appeared to have been realised from the 1970s onwards. Mel McNulty argues that there was no ‘real decolonisation of sub-Saharan francophone Africa,’ and talks about a ‘limited concession of autonomy to French-fostered élites,’¹¹⁸ of whom Habyarimana was a paradigm. France was successful in institutionalising a patron-client relationship with former African colonies, ‘whereby the patron’s influence hinged on the client’s survival, while the client’s survival often depends on the patron’s protection.’¹¹⁹ In much of French decolonised Africa, concessions were made towards independence, but only to subdivisions of the former French colonial blocs – the states that

¹¹⁴ Personal communication with the author, email, November 2015

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹¹⁶ <http://www.francerwandagenocide.org/documents/declassification.html>, accessed 22nd March 2016

¹¹⁷ Other sources have been accessed from Rwandafile.org, a site set up by a Harvard student, Jake Freyer, in 2004.

¹¹⁸ See Juvénal Habyarimana’s strong links and personal friendships with François Mitterrand. Mel McNulty, ‘France’s role in Rwanda and external military intervention: A double discrediting,’ *International Peacekeeping*, 4:3, 24-44, DOI: 10.1080/13533319708413677, p27

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*

remained were small, artificial and weak, kept in check by the *Plan raisonnable*. France's *Plan raisonnable* ensured the drafting of agreements between themselves and their Franco-African protégés, a landmark bilateral axis that was unique to any comparable north-south military pact. It consisted of defence treaties, ensuring French military power in Africa, and military technical assistance accords, shoring up French creation of, and ongoing support for, the armies of its African allies. *Le syndrome Foccart*, as Jean-Pierre Bat calls it, has influenced French foreign policy in Africa from 1959 until today.¹²⁰

The *Cellule Africaine*, the Africa Unit, based in the French presidential office, took care of these special relationships. The *Cellule* benefits, and benefited, from 'a high degree of independence where decision-making in Africa is concerned',¹²¹ and falls under the direct control of the President himself. Prunier calls its existence, 'an oddity in administrative terms... [and reflective] of the very peculiar status Africa enjoys in the French political landscape.'¹²² French leaders sought, in the Gaullist tradition,¹²³ to extend France's influence to all French-speaking countries, hence Belgium's former colonial territories – Rwanda, Burundi, and Zaire – were incorporated into the Franco-African family in the mid-1970s, on the understanding that their governments would be as compliant as those of Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, and Chad for example. The *Françafrique*¹²⁴ status came with its own benefits: economic agreements, financial subsidies, close official and personal contacts between French and African leaders, and, most importantly, military cooperation agreements. Rwanda was no exception to this rule.

Paris's dealings in Africa often come across as the rich colonial uncle handing out money in order to achieve his goals. For example, Bruno Delaye, Mitterrand's adviser for African affairs, suggested that in order to 'traiter le problème du Rwanda', France should consider paying off Museveni, the Ugandan President, with 'un protocole financier de 40 mil francs' to reason with the RPF.¹²⁵ Or, similarly, under pressure from Balladur to introduce a multinational element to *Turquoise*, paying their former colonial subjects to send troops to support their mission.

Appendix C

An image taken from the front page of the note from 17th June 1994, where Hubert Védrine, the secretary-general of the Elysée had handwritten on the paper, 'désaccords au sein du gouvernement (Quai d'Orsay contre Matignon, Défense, Coopération)' pointing out the divisions in the *cohabitation* government over the question of intervention in Rwanda, *Opération Turquoise*.

¹²⁰ Jean-Pierre Bat, *Le syndrome Foccart: La politique française en Afrique, de 1959 à nos jours* (Paris, 2012)

¹²¹ Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, p100-1 (footnote)

¹²² *ibid.*

¹²³ See De Gaulle's calls for a free Quebec, independent from Anglo-Saxon Canada, on 24th July 1967, in Yves Beigbeder, 'Chapter 10: The Genocide in Rwanda', in *Judging War Crimes and Torture: French Justice and International Criminal Tribunals and Commissions (1940-2005)* (Boston/ Leiden, 2006), p300

¹²⁴ Pejorative term for French neo-colonialist policy in former African colonies and others, adapted by François-Xavier Verschave, and Survie

¹²⁵ Bruno Delaye, 'Note à l'attention de Monsieur le Président de la République. Objet: Rwanda', 28th April 1994, <http://www.francerwandagenocide.org/documents/Delaye28avril94.pdf>, accessed 21st March 2016

PRÉSIDENCE
DE LA
RÉPUBLIQUE

PARIS, le 17 juin 1994

Le Conseiller à la Présidence

NOTE



à l'attention de
Monsieur le Président de la République

S/C de Monsieur le Secrétaire Général

Objet : Intervention au Rwanda

— Retour au terrain après
l'initiative française
— desaccords au sein du
gouvernement (qui d'onty contre
Mitigon, défense, coopération)

I - Situation sur le terrain

hr

Screenshot of:

Bruno Delaye, Général Quesnot, 'Note à l'attention de Monsieur le Président de la République. Objet : Intervention au Rwanda, le 17 juin 1994',

<http://www.francerwandagenocide.org/documents/QuesnotDelaye17juin1994.pdf>, accessed 7th April 2016