

The Performance of International Diplomacy at Kigali Memorial Centre, Rwanda

John Giblin¹

ABSTRACT

Every year in Rwanda, a week of national mourning commemorates the Genocide of Tutsi, a brutal episode that began on April the 7th 1994 and resulted in the murder of up to one million people in 100 days. The genocide was returned to the global stage in 2014 when world leaders joined Rwandans in marking the twentieth anniversary of this event. In Kigali, the capital city, two decades of political elites witnessed highly emotive and politically charged performances of the causes and events of the genocide that placed responsibility for this tragedy at the feet of the international community. By positioning themselves within the frame of this nationally and globally televised event, many world leaders acknowledged both a great human tragedy and the failure of their respective nations and organisations to recognise and stop the genocide. This collective international act of apology was the culmination of a decade of individual actual or implicit 'apologies' by political leaders such as Tony Blair, Nicholas Sarkozy, George Bush Jnr, and Ban Ki Moon. This paper explores the performative use of the Kigali Genocide Memorial by national and political actors engaged in diplomatic acts that aim to generate national post-conflict development and international cultural capital.

KEYWORDS: *Genocide, memorialisation, Rwanda, heritage, performance, international diplomacy.*

Introduction

This paper describes the performance of international diplomacy at Rwanda's most prominent genocide memorial, the Kigali Memorial Centre (KMC). It argues that the KMC, as the centre of national genocide memorialisation in Rwanda, has been used by international political figures as a theatre for the performance of reflection and remembrance in order to further diplomatic relations between the countries or organisations they represent and Rwanda. Furthermore, this performance, it is argued, has been undertaken as an explicit or implicit requirement of their hosts, the Rwandan government, as a precursor to other diplomatic conversations. In so doing, this paper brings together two critical issues in Rwanda that have remained central to post-genocide governance, international diplomacy and memorialisation.

Since the genocide, the Rwandan government has engaged intensively in international diplomacy to legitimise the current political regime, to generate post-conflict development through investment, and to obtain the repatriation for trial of alleged *génocidaires* (a term used for all those who committed the genocide) and fled the country. In addition, many of the world's governments have in turn sought to invest in, and associate themselves with Rwanda's much celebrated post-genocide

¹ ✉ Africa Section, The British Museum JGiblin@britishmuseum.org

recovery. This association has been deemed necessary in a climate where the international community have been found culpable in the genocide through failure to act effectively to prevent the genocide or to stop it once it had begun (Uvin 2001; Bergamaschi et al. 2014). Concurrently, since the end of the genocide, the Rwandan government has created an annual week of national mourning and a network of memorials across the country (Brandstetter 2010; Meirheinrich 2013; Frederich and Johnston 2013). The aim is to memorialise the genocide, provide repositories for those murdered, be places of mourning, remembrance and reflection for the survivors, places of education for visitors, and, it is frequently alleged, to promote the government's legitimacy to rule by silencing political dissent through the control of public memory (Cook 2006; Caplan 2007; Guyer 2009; Brandsetter 2010; Eltringham 2014, 2015).

Over the past decade, Rwanda's genocide memorials and memorialisation events have received increasing academic attention (Cook 2006; Caplan 2007; Guyer 2009; Robb 2009; Brandsetter 2010; Ibreck 2010, 2013; King 2010; Tadjjo 2010; Sodaro 2011; Bolin 2012; McKinney 2012; Jessee 2012, 2017a, 2017b; Giblin 2013a, Forthcoming; Meirheinrich 2013; Eltringham 2014, 2015; Jinks 2014; Major 2015). However, the linked performance of memorialisation and international diplomacy at the KMC has not been explored academically, despite clear examples of international diplomacy taking place at the KMC (see McKinney 2012). Indeed, the relationship between international diplomacy and memorialisation was recently put under the media spotlight during the 20th anniversary of the genocide in 2014 when world leaders joined Rwandans at the KMC and other locations in the city to return the genocide to the global stage. At these events, political elites from the past two decades of international politics witnessed highly emotive and politically charged speeches and performances of the causes and events of the genocide, which, in part, placed responsibility for this tragedy at the feet of the international community. For example, President Paul Kagame, in a speech before the main commemorations, cited Belgian colonial rule and French activities during the genocide as direct causes of the violence (Cowell 2014). By positioning themselves within the frame of this nationally and globally televised event, world leaders explicitly acknowledged a great human tragedy and implicitly apologised for the failure of the international community to recognise and stop the genocide. Indeed, some went further and made more explicit apologies, such as, then Secretary General to the United Nations, Ban Ki Moon, who stated, 'We could have done much more. We should have done much more' (Clover 2014).

However, as discussed in this paper, this collective international act of apology was not a spontaneous and new acknowledgement of guilt through memorial attendance but was the culmination of a decade of individual actual or implicit apologies by political leaders such as Tony Blair, Nicholas Sarkozy, George Bush Jnr, Kofi Anan and Ban Ki Moon. In the absence of the media appeal of a 20th anniversary, these leaders visited the KMC individually to acknowledge the events of the genocide and apologise for the international failure to intervene. Indeed, since its opening in 2004 to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the genocide, the KMC has been a key media focal point for all major diplomatic visits.

Background and Limitations

The observations presented here are based on three months of research in Rwanda during 2011 at the national genocide memorial centres and an online review of diplomatic visits to the memorials since the genocide. The memorial research was undertaken as part of a larger project that considered the role of heritage in post-conflict development in western Great Lakes Africa, specifically Rwanda and Uganda. In Rwanda, the research was carried out with the permission of the Institute of National Museums of Rwanda (INMR) and the National Commission for the Fight Against Genocide (CNLG), government organisations that have historically managed the memorials in collaboration with survivor groups (Giblin 2013a; Ibreck 2010, 2013). To understand the post-conflict heritage effects of the memorials, the research employed participant observation, interviews with visitors and staff, and photographic recording and analysis of all available visitor books, amassing records of thousands of entries made over the past decade (Giblin 2013a). This methodology was employed at all of the national genocide memorial centres, including the KMC, Murambi, Nyarubuye, Ntarama, Bisesero, Nyanza, and Nyamata, with a focus on KMC and Murambi because these are the most developed and visited. However, although information regarding the political use of memorials was collected, international diplomacy was not the research focus. Thus, this paper has been enhanced by a review of newspaper and other online reports that detail the visits of the people identified in the visitor books. Consequently, in acknowledging the secondary nature of the source material, without further research and access to the politicians involved, despite identifying a performance pattern, the diplomatic scenarios presented and the intentionality behind them remain speculative and conjectural based as they are on anecdotal associations.

Performance

As articulated by Smith (2006), heritage may be considered an intangible subjective act that people do, rather than a material thing with inherent objective heritage values. The identification of heritage as something that is consciously undertaken by people has led to its framing as a form of performance. Heritage performances may be considered representational acts because they often follow pre-formed rules understood by the performer and the audience. This is comparable to a Butlerian (1993, 1997) understanding of identity and performance in which gendered identities are performed according to pre-existing notions of what it is to be one gender or another. However, following more recent thinking in critical heritage studies, and elsewhere in cultural studies, heritage performances may also be non-representational and pre-cognitive (Waterton and Watson 2014). This is because not all aspects of heritage performances are based on pre-existing and widely shared rules but instead may be specific to individuals, relating to their personal past and present experiences, and therefore might be entirely surprising reactions for both the performer and audience. Consequently, many heritage performances will involve both representational aspects as well as those that are more personal, non-representational and pre-cognitive (Haldrup and Boerenholdt 2016).

As described by Haldrup and Boerenholdt (2016: 55), the relationship between heritage and performance has been understood in three main ways: the

performance of heritage as historical re-enactments or traditional celebrations, the performance of visitors and other consumers of heritage, and finally extraordinary reactions to heritage (see also, Edensor 1998; Kershaw 2002; Bagnall 2003; Bruner 2005; Crouch 2010; Staiff et al. 2012; Winter 2013). In terms of re-enactments and traditional performances, these are overtly representational because they are based on rules and are rehearsed. However, the nuances of performance and the emotions felt by the performers may be personal to each individual and thus have non-representational and pre-cognitive aspects as well. Similarly, audiences undertake heritage performances themselves, both to expected norms, for example at a genocide memorial this may include a performance of solemnity, and to ones that are deeply personal and surprising, such as unexpected emotional responses to particular parts of a memorial.

These ideas are returned to in the discussion at the end of this paper but to develop this framework further they can be usefully compared to the events at the 20th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, which involved heritage re-enactments, audience consumption, and extreme emotional performances. For example, at the Amohoro Stadium, the main stage for the public activities, performers re-enacted the events of the genocide in a way that conformed to the official historical narrative promoted by the current government of Rwanda, rules which would have been known by the performers. Furthermore, international diplomats, such as Ban Ki Moon, performed explicit or implicit apologies that conformed to the rules of genocide representation. However, both the dramatic and diplomatic performances may have been felt and expressed in subtly different ways by each performer that was non-representational. In addition, those performances were consumed live by Rwandan audiences at the stadium and by those that watched on television. These audiences, whether they agreed with the rules of the performance or not, would have been familiar with the narrative performed and thus understood the official rules of genocide representation. However, many also reacted to the enactments in what were apparently unexpected ways, with some experiencing extreme emotional trauma which led to some in the audience being carried from the stadium in various states of distress. If allegations of staged trauma performances are ruled out, then this can be considered an example of a pre-cognitive aspect of the heritage performance on display (Associated Press, 7 April 2014).

International Diplomacy

Bjola and Kornprobst (2013: 4) define international diplomacy as, 'the institutionalised communication among internationally recognised representatives of internationally recognised entities through which these representatives produce, manage and distribute public goods.' Importantly for the subject of this paper, in their exploration of this definition, they go beyond Watson's (1982) assertion that diplomacy is solely about peaceful dialogue between states to include a more holistic and potentially less innocent understanding of the motivations and means of communication (Bjola and Kornprobst 2013: 4). Furthermore, their focus on international diplomacy as something that takes place among internationally recognised entities, allows for the existence of international diplomacy beyond states and collections of states, such as the United Nations (UN), to include the UN Secretariat, for example, or International Non-Governmental Organisations (iNGOs), such as Greenpeace or Amnesty International (Bjola and Kornprobst 2013: 4). In

terms of generating and controlling public goods, amongst these they include security, economic welfare, development, environmental protection, health and safety, and migration control (Bjola and Kornprobst 2013: 5).

This paper argues that the activities of diplomats at the KMC, including prime ministers and presidents, the leaders of multi-state organisations, such as the UN, and those that also act on their behalf, can be understood as a form of international diplomacy. Through their largely representational memorial performances, these diplomatic actors publicly communicate for the benefit of their respective institutions, and the benefit of the Rwandan government, implicit or explicit statements of acknowledgement, apology, and apparent authorisation of the official historical narrative. In terms of public goods, in very general terms, these acts help to facilitate post-genocide development for Rwanda by growing bonds between these different institutions. However, it is argued, there are also less innocent aims for these diplomatic performances, including contributing toward the maintenance of legitimacy for the current government through acknowledgement of the official narrative of the genocide, which is traded for the generation of political, ethical, moral-capital on the part of the international leaders that take part.

Memorialisation in Rwanda

To understand the importance of the KMC it is necessary to locate it within Rwanda's extensive memorial landscape, which includes an informal memory-scape that stretches over every hill and through every valley in Rwanda, alongside a more formal landscape of local, regional and national memorials constructed, sponsored and controlled by the Rwandan government, amongst other agencies (Meierhenrich 2011). In terms of the informal memory-scape, this refers to the way in which the genocide and related violence was not confined to individual locales but took place across the country and thus may be associated with almost every road, river, and hill. However, the informal memory-scape does not typically feature in official diplomatic memorial visits. By contrast, the KMC sits at the top of what may be considered a four-tiered Rwandan hierarchy of formal memorial sites, comprising those with local, regional, national, and international prominence, in terms of visitors including diplomatic ones.

Local and Regional

At the lowest tier are hundreds of local memorials found across the country, often at rural administration centres, consisting of standardised sunken mass-graves with concrete covers. The second tier includes a smaller number of regional memorials, which have larger covered mass graves in the same style and occasional surface storage for displaying human remains (Brandstetter 2010; Meierhenrich 2011). Both the local and regional tiers typically only receive Rwandan visitors.

National

More prominently, at the third tier, are the better-known six national memorial centres located where some of the worst genocide massacres occurred. These include three churches, Ntarama, Nyamata, and Nyarubuye, where it has been reported approximately 5000, 2500, and 1500 people were killed respectively; Nyamata School where approximately 2000 people were reportedly killed; Bisesero

hillside where approximately 30,000 were reportedly killed; and Murambi Technical College where approximately 40,000 people were killed (KMC website, <http://www.kigaligenocidememorial.org/>, Accessed 27 July 2015). The emphasis on 'reportedly' and 'approximately' here is in recognition of the difficulty of assessing which, and how many, people were killed and subsequently buried or hidden during the genocide and is not a suggestion of doubt regarding the location and relative size of the massacres (Lemarchand 2013). The national memorials typically contain mass graves, alongside displays of human remains and victims' clothes, memorial walls, and reflection areas. However, although some of these sites are on the tourist trail, they receive relatively few non-Rwandan visitors, typically no more than a few people per week, as our research at the sites, including surveys of the visitor books, revealed.

International

Finally, at the top of the hierarchy sits the KMC, the focus of this paper, which today includes a garden, an education and documentation centre, café, gift shop and an indoor exhibition, where the official narrative of the genocide is displayed alongside select victim and perpetrator testimonies, human remains and weapons (KMC 2004). The KMC is designated international here, and thus separated from the other national memorials, because it stands apart from the rest of the formal memorial landscape. For example, in terms of its construction, the KMC's location was not a site of massacre but was chosen to house the remains of over 200,000 Rwandans who were killed during the genocide and whose remains were found in the Kigali area. Furthermore, with regards to its internationality, unlike the other national sites it receives a relatively high number of international visitors (c. 40,000 in 2012), including international diplomats, and was established in collaboration with the Aegis Trust, a UK based holocaust memorialisation organisation (Gahongayire and Nyiracumi 2014).

By emphasising the international aspects of the KMC, the intention is not to deny its importance for Rwandan grieving and other memorialisation processes, which remain a central and dominant aspect of its use. Instead, it emphasises the difference between the KMC's apparent international visibility and visit-ability compared to that of the other memorials, which it is suggested, has contributed toward its role in international diplomacy and its ability to communicate, and latterly, symbolise political legitimacy through association. Indeed, alongside the mass graves, a focus of memorialisation at the KMC is the interpretation centre, which powerfully communicates an official blame-narrative for visitors. In summary, the blame-narrative presents the events of the genocide committed by Hutu *génocidaires* within a wider context of international culpability, including historical contributions to the creation of a genocide ideology through the colonial ethno-racialisation of Rwandan society, foreign support of the *génocidaires* prior to and during the genocide, and the general failure of the international community to prevent the genocide (KMC 2004; for a comparable version of the official narrative see NURC 2006). For example, the blame-narrative clearly identifies: the victims (i.e. Tutsi that were murdered); the heroes (i.e. the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and its supporters who stopped the genocide); the survivors (i.e. Tutsi who survived the genocide either within Rwanda or as part of the diaspora); and the perpetrators (i.e. Hutu *génocidaires* who committed the genocide, European colonials who divided society by ethnicising

Rwanda, the French government who allegedly armed the right wing Hutu government before the genocide began, and protected them during the genocide, and the remaining international community who failed to intervene militarily to stop the genocide) (Giblin 2013b; Jessee 2017b). Thus, the memorial not only communicates a blame-narrative for and about Rwandans, but also a blame narrative for and about international agencies. In so doing, this narrative reinforces that the RPF, as the heroes of the conflict, are the only legitimate rulers of Rwanda, which, it is argued here, is a key aspect of this international diplomacy memorial performance.

Rwanda Genocide Memorial Research

Within heritage, museum, and memory studies research, the genocide memorials have received increasing academic attention for the past decade. Whilst some have approached the wider landscape of memorialisation in Rwanda (Brandstetter 2010; Meirheinrich 2011), more typically the national genocide memorial centres have been the focus because of the mass display of human remains at these sites. Early interest centred on the supposedly macabre and political presentation of the content of the national memorials, including the mass-display of human remains, and the control of an official narrative through strict interpretation as at the KMC and Murambi, or its control through the absence of any interpretation at the others. These published accounts are typically anecdotal and recount author experiences of visiting the memorials and their reflections on the politics of the pasts encountered (Vidal 2001; Cook 2006; Caplan 2007; Guyer 2009; Tadjó 2010). These considerations include whether the memorials serve their ostensible aims, to provide emotional healing for victims and to enable other visitors to get closer to and learn about the causes, affects, and effects of genocide, or whether they are voyeuristic, and serve government aims to preserve their legitimacy and prevent critical debate about the causes of and events during and since the genocide. Most of these accounts conclude the latter and not the former.

Anecdotal papers continue to be published today (Eltringham 2014), but these have been joined by a variety of other investigations into different aspects of national memorial processes that have gone beyond moralising about the display of human remains. These include papers on: the contribution of Rwandese survivor groups to memorial management (Ibreck 2010; Jessee 2017b); the influence of non-Rwandan developmental organisations (Ibreck 2013); the politics, affects, and effects of the ongoing exhumation, identification, internment, rearrangement, and cleaning of the human remains at the memorials (Jessee 2012; Major 2015); the role of the memorials in communicating a single authorised narrative (Jessee 2017a); the role of the memorials in peacebuilding, including the contrast between memorial narratives and civilian memories (King 2010); the location of the memorials within an international post-conflict heritage-healing complex (Giblin 2013a); and the investigation of the memorials as a form of dark, difficult, or uncomfortable tourism (Robb 2009; Mckinney 2012; Friedrich and Johnston 2013), including the effect of the memorials on tourists as analysed through online tourist photographs of human remains at the sites (Bolin 2012). In terms of memorial performativity, Bolin's (2012) study is of interest. In that work, she used Edensor's (1998) ideas of tourist spaces as 'stages', on which audience communities follow prescribed rules that shape their activities, to understand the online activities of visitors to the genocide memorials including their posting of photographs. Bolin (2012) framed the pattern of actions she

identified as a performance of morality directed by widely understood rules relating to what it is to be a properly moral person in a 'morally ambiguous setting' (Bolin 2012: 199). In so doing, Bolin (2012) referred to a representational form of heritage performance. Similarly, in the examples presented here, the actors also undertake a representational performance prescribed by widely understood rules as a performance of diplomacy.

Although many publications include the KMC within wider discussions of the politics of genocide memorialisation in Rwanda, relatively few have focused on the KMC in detail. Frederich and Johnston (2013) assessed the KMC as a thanotourism site, interviewing staff, tourists, tourist providers, and other stakeholders to consider issues of authenticity, the success of the KMC in fulfilling its stated aims to provide a place of mourning and education, and the ethics of presenting genocide memorials as a commodity for thanotourism. In addition, to the site as a form of thanotourism, it has received the more typical anecdotal treatment, including Tadjó's (2010) brief account of her visit to the site. However, two publications stand out that provide a more in depth analysis of the KMC of relevance here, both of which concern the internationalisation of the KMC. Sodaro's (2011: 73-74) investigation located the KMC within a growing international landscape of memorialisation, in which nations felt compelled to 'face the past' and found that in contrast to its stated aims of 'fostering tolerance and reconciliation and working to prevent genocide', it is 'often politicized by the current regime to legitimate its anti-democratic policies and advance its political agenda, often at the expense of the victims and survivors.' Similarly, in her analysis of the *International Constructions of National Memories: The Aims and effects of Foreign Donors' Support for genocide Remembrance in Rwanda*, Ibreck (2015) provided a historical account of the events, actors and agencies that led to the construction of the KMC. In addition, through a critique of the exhibition content, she considered the way in which the KMC symbolically reconstructed Rwanda in a post-genocide era, including the nation and its relationship with the international community. In terms of nation, Ibreck (2015: 160-162) found it recounted the official narrative of a once unified kingdom separated into divisive ethno-racial categories, Hutu, Tutsi and Twa, by European colonialism, which caused violence in the 20th century, but today has been unified again by the RPF; a selective remembering that is silent on alleged RPF atrocities and other events that complicate the historical blame-narrative. In terms of the international community, Ibreck (2015: 162-163) found that the exhibition continued the international blame-narrative as it condemned the international response to the genocide and the failure to intervene, but at the same time promotes international humanitarianism to prevent future genocides. In so doing, it is argued here, the KMC provides a symbolically powerful theatre for the performance of international diplomacy, including implicit or explicit apologies on behalf of the international community and the promise of support to prevent genocide happening again, which in turn provides legitimacy for the ruling RPF's official narrative.

Genocide Diplomacy

Although the diplomatic heritage performance at the KMC has not been explored previously, the suggestion that Rwandan memorials have a diplomatic function has been made before in reference to Camp Kigali Memorial, the site where ten Belgian soldiers who were serving as part of the United Nations Assistance

Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) were killed at the start of the genocide (Mckinney 2012). As recounted by Mckinney, at the dedication of the memorial the Belgian prime minister claimed that the soldiers would not die in vain because Belgium would support development in Rwanda, including a donation of 1.5 million US dollars to the 10th anniversary event in 2004 (Mckinney 2012). Following this announcement, the Belgian prime minister visited the KMC to pay his respects to the Rwandans killed and in so doing, Mckinney suggests, highlighted their mutual suffering and thus created a developmental pact between Rwanda and Belgium. However, the Belgian prime minister is not the only leader to have visited the KMC, nor is Belgium alone in committing significant funds to Rwandan memorialisation and development. Furthermore, the other countries and organisations that have entered this memorial space, and have committed developmental funds to Rwanda, do not have such a clear shared loss. To offer an explanation for this anomaly this paper considers four key agencies, the United Nations (UN), and the governments of the United Kingdom (UK), the United States of America (USA), and France, and their relationship with memorial diplomacy at KMC. Through these four examples, this paper tentatively outlines a performance that visiting dignitaries knowingly undertake in exchange for the political capital that it provides, which, it is suggested, is a performance that the Rwandan authorities support to gain internal and international legitimacy. In summary, the basic stages of the performance include, in this order (1) arrival at the memorial soon after entry to the country, (2) laying of wreaths at the mass graves, (3) viewing of the government's official genocide narrative in the museum, and (4) the writing of an entry into the visitor book, which, in contrast to other memorials in Rwanda, is an activity reserved for VIPs. Each stage of the performance may be filmed and photographed by national and international media before diplomats leave to continue less emotive diplomatic duties.

The United Nations

Past UN Secretary Generals' motivations for visiting the KMC may be compared to the Belgians' at Camp Kigali because the Belgian soldiers killed were part of a UN mission (Dallaire 2004). However, the sense of shared suffering may also be combined with the failure to prevent the genocide, as indicated by then Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, in his speech at the 20th anniversary of the genocide (see above). Indeed, the genocide may be one of the UN's greatest failures in recent times because it had a force in Rwanda and the violence was not technologically advanced but was mostly carried out with agricultural tools and thus might have been prevented by better-equipped armed forces. Instead, as reported by the UN's mission commander in Rwanda, General Dallaire, the UN dithered and was obstructed by temporary Hutu representatives on the UN Security Council who were linked to the genocide (Dallaire 2004). Consequently, the UN lost some of its legitimacy in Africa, which it has since sought to gain back by building a strong relationship with the Rwandan post-genocide project, an aspect of which includes the performance of memorial diplomacy as undertaken by both Kofi Annan and Ban Ki Moon. Furthermore, Ban Ki Moon has now undertaken the performance three times, the most recent of which was in 2014 for the 20th anniversary. In addition, this is one aspect of his job that his successor, António Guterres, may have to undertake again as Rwanda is currently the fourth largest supplier of personnel to UN peacekeeping in terms of troops, police, and military experts (6149) (UN website,

<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors.shtml>) and since the end of the genocide they have consistently provided high numbers of peacekeeping personnel to the UN. In terms of Rwanda's gains, it is a powerful statement internationally and internally to have the secretary-general directly apologise for the genocide whilst being photographed in front of the government's narrative, thus implicitly lending support to that version of events (Genocide Archive of Rwanda website, <http://www.genocidearchiverwanda.org.rw/>).

UK

Regarding the UK, Tony Blair was one of the first major national leaders to visit the memorial in 2006, when he too engaged in the standard memorial performance and since that visit he has made much of his developmental relationship with Rwanda, a relationship that he has continued to strengthen since leaving his post as UK prime-minister (Kennedy 2015). In addition, David Cameron, the previous UK prime-minister, has also visited the memorial, albeit shortly before he took office (BBC 2007). Indeed, as recorded in the visitor books, successive Labour and Conservative delegations have sought out Rwanda for their developmental programs and in so doing have undertaken the same memorial performance. Once again, the most recent of these visits occurred during the twentieth anniversary of the genocide when Tony Blair and the then Conservative foreign secretary, William Hague, were guests of honour. Incidentally, like Blair, this was Hague's second memorial performance having also visited in 2013 with Angelina Jolie in her role as a Special Envoy for UNHCR (UK Government 2013). However, by contrast with the UN's and Belgium's performances, there is no directly shared loss because the UK did not have troops in Rwanda during the genocide. Thus, it is necessary to question what the UK and Rwanda gain by maintaining such a close memorial relationship. In response, it is suggested, that these visits, which were highly promoted throughout the media, served as an implicit apology for the international failure to intervene in the genocide and an acceptance of the Rwandan government's version of events by a key aid partner (UK Government 2013). In addition, successive UK governments have attempted to gain political capital by being associated with Rwanda's post-genocide recovery and by generating economic opportunities in the region for UK development and trade sectors (UK Government website, <https://www.gov.uk/government/world/rwanda>). Furthermore, the strong relationship between the UK and Rwanda, has contributed to Rwanda joining the Commonwealth in 2009, only the second country to do so, following Mozambique, which has never had a constitutional link to the UK or another Commonwealth member (Banjeri 2010).

USA

A similar pattern of diplomatic performance regarding the KMC has also been repeated by sitting and ex-American presidents. For example, in 2005, Bill Clinton, whose foundation helped fund the KMC, was the first major ex-presidential figure to visit the memorial, when he offered a direct apology for not doing more to stop the genocide when he was president:

I express regret for my personal failure. (LA Times 2005)

Furthermore, USA presidential performances continued at the KMC in 2008 when George Bush Jnr, who was not in power during the genocide and thus was not directly responsible, also visited the memorial and undertook the standard memorial performance including laying a wreath, visiting the museum, and writing in the visitor book (CNN 2008). By contrast, it is notable that recent president, Barak Obama, did not visit the memorial, or Rwanda, and that only a relatively low-level delegation, headed by the American ambassador to Rwanda, was sent to the 20th anniversary of the genocide (Raghaven 2014). Thus, it is pertinent to question why, in contrast to the UN and the UK, the USA have not persisted with the same level of memorial performance in recent years. In response, it is suggested that the very different personal and political contexts, related in part to the potential to gain political capital, affected these different decisions. For example, Clinton's performance appears to have been based on a personal and political relationship because he was president during the genocide and because his foundation contributed toward the construction of the KMC, whilst Bush's performance came at a time when Rwanda was one of the world's 'donor darlings', and thus there was moral and political capital to be gained at both times (Reyntjens 2011). However, in recent years the USA has been outspoken in its criticism of Rwanda's alleged military involvement in eastern DRC and thus it may have been less attractive for Obama to enter the memorial performance or to send a high-level delegation from his administration (Raghaven 2014). Consequently, it may be suggested, Rwanda gained much internally and externally by having two USA presidents explicitly and implicitly apologise at the KMC for the genocide and in so doing implicitly support the Rwandan government's version of events through their memorial performance. This is, however, a performance that Obama and his recent administration were unwilling to enter because of changing political perceptions despite maintaining previous levels of aid support (USAID 2017).

France

By contrast France is a special case in this story of memorial diplomacy because the RPF have accused the French government of providing material support for the *génocidaires* before the genocide and protection for the *génocidaires* during and after the genocide, accusations that are repeated in the narrative at the KMC (KMC 2004). Indeed, over the past ten years the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, has made numerous calls for the French to apologise for the genocide, whilst the French have indicted Kagame for his alleged part in the genocide, an accusation that led Kagame to ban all French activity in Rwanda in 2006 (Flanz 2014). Thus, it is perhaps unsurprising that French presidents were slow to visit the memorial. It was highly significant, therefore, when in 2010 the then President of France, Nicholas Sarkozy, agreed to visit Rwanda and to undertake the diplomatic memorial performance, that is, to lay a wreath, to be photographed in front of the government's narrative, and then to write in the visitor book. Indeed, although Sarkozy did not offer an explicit apology, the tone of his entry in the visitor book suggests that he was aware of the apologetic implication of his visit for Rwandans:

On behalf of the French people I bow before the victims of the genocide of the Tutsis. Humanity will never forget the memory of the innocent and their martyrdom (KMC Visitor Book, signed Nicholas Sarkozy, 25 February 2010, translated from French by author).

Thus, whilst an implicit apology from the French government is clearly an important moment for the Rwandan government, it is pertinent to question why Sarkozy agreed to undertake such a performance. Although it may be a coincidence, it is of interest that Sarkozy's visit occurred shortly after Rwanda had rejected the French language in favour of English in 2008 and had joined the Commonwealth in 2009 (Banjeri 2010). Furthermore, at that time, French involvement elsewhere in Africa was also receiving criticism (Melly and Darracq 2013). Thus, it may be speculated that Sarkozy had political capital to be gained by reopening relations with Rwanda and stepping back from allegations regarding genocide crimes, a process that implicitly required, or at least was made more effective by, a memorial performance, and in turn allegations of French complicity by the Rwandan authorities reduced in voracity (Flanz 2014). However, the diplomatic progress made as a result of Sarkozy's visit was undone before the 20th anniversary of the genocide when France was banned from entering the memorial space and was thus prevented from diplomatically benefitting from participation in the memorial performance. In this scenario, French officials were initially invited by Rwanda to attend the 20th anniversary of the genocide, but instead of sending a president or prime minister as other countries had done, the French government proposed sending the French Justice Minister. Apparently insulted by this refusal to perform sufficiently high-level memorial diplomacy, Kagame again publicly accused France of genocide complicity. In response, France withdrew their Justice Minister and sent the ambassador in his place, a move which led Rwanda to exclude France from the memorial events entirely (Flanz 2014). In this example, it may be speculated that, a new French leadership did not consider sufficient political capital would be gained by sending the president to undertake the memorial performance and to trade in high-level implicit apologies and legitimizations. Consequently, the diplomatic trade offered may not have been of sufficient benefit to the Rwandan authorities, who in response rearticulated their accusations against the French, resulting in a further lowering of French involvement and political capital, and finally the banning of the French.

Discussion

Four brief examples presented here have outlined the diplomatic memorial performance undertaken by the respective prime ministers, presidents, and secretary generals of the UK, USA, France and the United Nations, and their hosts, the Rwandan government. The performance includes: a visit to the KMC shortly after arriving in the country, the laying of a wreath on the mass graves in front of the memorial wall, the touring of the exhibition inside the memorial-museum, the signing of the guest book, a speech in which an explicit or implicit apology is made for the failure to stop the genocide, and photographing by the media throughout the visit, especially the laying of the wreath and the viewing of the memorial exhibition. This performance is not the same as that of other visitors but instead is only undertaken by VIPs. Non-VIPs will see the mass graves and the exhibition. However, they will rarely lay a wreath, be photographed by the media, be asked to make a speech or to sign the visitor book. Indeed, in contrast to the other national genocide memorial centres where all visitors are encouraged to write in the visitor books as part of their heritage performance, at the KMC only VIPs are asked to do so. Furthermore, the memorial performance is distinct in terms of it being almost compulsory for every diplomatic visit of this level. Would the UN Secretary General, for example, be

expected to attend Auschwitz on every visit to Poland, Robben Island on every visit to South Africa, or the World Trade Centre site in New York on every visit to the USA?

Although this paper takes the position that all high-level visits to memorial sites such as these have political purpose, in the case of the KMC the requirement to undertake the diplomatic performance is pronounced and thus deserves attention. The paper argues that the high-level memorial performance at the KMC, whilst based on a performance of morality comparable to that discussed by Bolin (2012) for online memorial activities, goes beyond normal memorial activities and enters the realms of international diplomacy. Taking first the issue of heritage and performance, this paper has highlighted the visits as representational heritage performances because they adhere to a format that is understood by all actors and audiences in Rwanda. This includes both the highly public parts of the performance in terms of the symbolically important photographs in front of the memorial wall and the exhibition, implicitly lending the government support for their official account of the events of the genocide, and the more private events, including the writing in the visitor book, the content of which is not made public. As with all heritage performances, there will likely have been idiosyncratic elements to each of these visits that were pre-cognitive, but these were not reported and are not the focus of this discussion.

In terms of Bjola and Kornprobst's (2013: 4) definition of international diplomacy, these representational heritage performances are 'institutionalised communications' undertaken by 'representatives of internationally recognised entities' through which public goods are produced, managed and distributed, as well as less innocent aims are achieved. The public goods that are produced, managed and distributed include security and development for Rwanda and the other institutions. For example, by demonstrating support for the Rwandan government's official narrative, political stability and thus security is enhanced, which is of benefit for each country's development agencies. In addition, this diplomatic heritage performance permits an ongoing flow of development goods and services into the country, which is again of benefit for Rwanda and the development sector of the donor countries. In terms of less innocent aims, by undertaking all this 'good work' with a 'donor darling' such as Rwanda, including the diplomatic public heritage performance at the KMC, there was political capital to be gained by both Rwandan and non-Rwandan diplomatic actors. However, as speculated in the USA and French examples, this is a negotiated performance that both sides must agree upon based on perceived levels of benefits. For example, France's reluctance to send a significant delegation to the 20th anniversary of the genocide, and to thus acknowledge guilt and, implicitly or explicitly, apologise on the biggest memorial stage, may have led to the observed tit-for-tat de-escalation of involvement for both sides until France was eventually banned. In addition, Obama's decision not to undertake the KMC heritage performance or to send a high-level delegation to the 20th anniversary of the genocide may be related to that administration's vocal concern about alleged human rights by the Rwandan government. In these latter examples, the absences are part of the heritage performance of diplomacy. Both the former and latter are examples of a breakdown in diplomatic relations, but the latter may also be a diplomatic strategy to influence the Rwandan government's actions in the region and thus, following Bjola and Kornprobst's (2013: 4) definition of international diplomacy, has an aim to produce, manage, and distribute a public good, i.e. security.

Conclusion

This paper argues that over the past decade a distinct heritage performance has taken place at the KMC that operates as a form of international diplomacy, in which visiting world leaders have taken part with representatives of the government of Rwanda. The paper has offered an overarching international context for this performance and has also speculated on national motivations. With a couple of minor exceptions, the paper does not explore personal motivations but instead focuses on the repetitive structure of these visits and the apparent compulsory nature for all visiting world leaders. In addition, where the memorial performance has broken down in recent years, including France and the USA, the paper has speculated on the reasons behind this as ongoing negotiations of political capital between each institution and the Rwandan government.

In so doing, the paper attempts to problematize what has otherwise been normalised in the world's press; that presidents, prime ministers, and secretary generals just happen to visit memorials. Instead, this paper has asked what the function of these visits is for the visitor and the visited, beyond the ostensible paying of respects. Although the heritage performance at the KMC is pronounced, this is an approach that could be applied to any visits by world leaders to heritage sites. Heritage sites are frequently used as public stages for the visits of political leaders and thus we should ask, what is the cultural, political, and economic work at play, and what are the intended and unintended consequences of such visits? Often tours of heritage sites, especially memorials, are presented as the natural consequence of a visit by a world leader, a necessary photo opportunity, or moment to pay one's respects. However, these are richly symbolical sites that are especially chosen through a process of negotiation between the host and the hosted, and thus the assumptions underpinning these choices are of interest and will provide a further level of understanding regarding the political role of heritage and the dynamic potency of individual heritage sites. For example, in the coming years, it is questionable whether Rwanda and the KMC will remain potent theatres at which world leaders will continue to want to perform international diplomacy; or whether the passage of time since the genocide and changing perspectives regarding Rwanda's 'donor darling' status, related to allegations of human rights abuses, will reduce its diplomatic value to the point that the heritage performances identified here cease entirely or are reserved for major anniversaries.

References

- Associated Press, 2014, April 7. Rwanda genocide: 20th anniversary brings a nation together to mourn. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/apr/07/rwandan-genocide-20th-anniversary-thousands-mourn-stadium> (Accessed 24 June 2017)
- Bagnall, G. 2003. Performance and performativity at heritage sites. *Museum and Society*, 1(2): 87-103.

Banerji, A. 2010. Rwanda and the Commonwealth. *The Round Table*, 99(410): 485-490.

BBC, 2007, July 23. David Cameron defends Rwanda trip. *BBC*. Retrieved from: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6911216.stm> (Accessed 24 June 2017)

Bergamaschi, I, Dezalay, S. Kühn, F. P. and N. Lemay-Hébert. 2014. Introduction: Rwanda 20 Years after the Genocide: Reflecting on Intervention and Reconciliation. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 8(4): 273-279.

Bjola, C. and M. Kornprobst. 2013. *Understanding international diplomacy: theory, practice and ethics*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Bolin, A. 2012. On the side of light: performing morality at Rwanda's genocide memorials. *Journal of Conflict Archaeology* 7(3): 199-207.

Brandstetter, A. M. 2010. *Contested pasts: the politics of remembrance in post-genocide Rwanda*. Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Available at:

http://www.nias.knaw.nl/Publications/Ortelius_Lecture/Ortelius_06_Brandstetter [Accessed 9th Mar. 2017].

Bruner, E. M. 2005. *Culture on tour: ethnographies of travel*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.

Butler, J. 1993. *Bodies that matter: on the discursive limits of "sex"*, New York, Routledge.

Butler, J. 1997. *Excitable speech: a politics of the performative*, New York, Routledge.

Caplan, P. 2007. 'Never Again': Genocide Memorials in Rwanda. *Anthropology Today*, 23(1): 20-22.

Clover, J. 2014, April 7. Rwandans told 'never again', 20 years after genocide. *Reuters*. Retrieved from: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-rwanda-genocide-idUSBREA361C220140407> (Accessed 24 June 2017)

CNN 2008. Bush tours Rwandan genocide memorial. *CNN*. Retrieved from: http://edition.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/02/19/bush.rwanda/index.html?_s=PM:POLITICS (Accessed 24 June 2017)

Cook, S. E. 2006. The politics of preservation in Rwanda. In: S. E. Cook, (ed.) *Genocide in Cambodia and Rwanda: new perspectives*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, pp.281-99.

Cowell, A. 2014, April 10. Colonialism, Bloodshed and Blame for Rwanda. *New York Times*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/11/world/europe/colonialism-bloodshed-and-blame-for-rwanda.html> (Accessed 24 June 2017)

- Crouch, D. 2010. The perpetual performance and emergence of heritage. In: E. Waterton and S. Watson (eds.) *Culture, Heritage and Representation: perspectives on visibility and the past*, Aldershot: Ashgate. pp. 57-74.
- Dallaire, R. 2004. *Shake hands with the Devil: The failure of humanity in Rwanda*. London: Arrow Books.
- Edensor, T. 1998. *Tourists at the Taj: performance and meaning at a symbolic site*, New York, Routledge.
- Eltringham, N. 2014. Bodies of evidence: remembering the Rwandan genocide at Murambi. In: N. Eltringham and P. Maclean (eds.) *Remembering Genocide*. Routledge: Abingdon, pp. 200-219.
- Eltringham, N. 2015. Display, concealment and 'culture': the disposal of bodies in the 1994 Rwandan genocide. In: J-M, Dreyfus and É, Anstett (eds.) *Human Remains and Mass Violence: Methodological Approaches*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp.161-180.
- Flanz, P. 2014, April 7. Rwanda bans French envoy from genocide memorial. *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/rwanda/10749274/Rwanda-bans-French-envoy-from-genocide-memorial.html> (Accessed 24 June 2017)
- Friedrich, M. and Johnston, T. 2013. Beauty versus tragedy: thanatourism and the memorialisation of the 1994 Rwandan Genocide. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 11(4): 302-320.
- Gahongayire, L. and Nyiracumi, A. M. 2014. Breaking silence: documenting individual experiences based on visitors 'book of Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre, Rwanda. *International Journal of Innovation and Applied Studies*, 7(4): 1444-1457.
- Giblin, J. D. 2013a. Post-conflict heritage: symbolic healing and cultural renewal. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 20 (5): 500-518.
- Giblin, J. D. 2013b. Decolonial challenges and post-genocide archaeological politics in Rwanda. *Public Archaeology*, 11(3): 123-143.
- Giblin, J. D. Forthcoming. Reconstructing Post-Conflict Heritage in Rwanda. In P. Newson and R. Young (eds.) *Post-Conflict Archaeology and Cultural Heritage*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Guyer, S. 2009. Rwanda's bones. *Boundary 2*, 36(2): 155-175.
- Haldrup, M. and O. Boerenholdt, 2016. Heritage as Performance. In: E. Waterton and S. Watson (eds.) *The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Heritage Research*. London: Palgrave. Pp. 52-68.
- Ibreck, R. 2010. The politics of mourning: Survivor contributions to memorials in post-genocide Rwanda. *Memory Studies*, 3(4): 330-343.

Ibreck, R. 2013. International Constructions of National Memories: The Aims and Effects of Foreign Donors' Support for Genocide Remembrance in Rwanda. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 7(2): 149-169.

Jessee, E. 2012. Promoting reconciliation through exhuming and identifying victims of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. *Africa Initiative Discussion Paper Series*, 4: 4-22.

Jessee, E. 2017. *Negotiating Genocide in Rwanda: The Politics of History*. New York: Springer.

Jessee, E. 2017. The danger of a single story: Iconic stories in the aftermath of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. *Memory Studies*, 10(2): 144-163.

Jinks, R. 2014. Thinking comparatively about genocide memorialization. *Journal of Genocide Research* 16, 4: 423-440.

Kennedy, D. 2015. Blair charity 'eclipses Britain in Rwanda'. *The Times*. Retrieved from: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/blair-charity-eclipses-britain-in-rwanda-5b0mcqn35jh> (Accessed 24 June 2017)

Kershaw, B. 2002. Performance, Memory, Heritage, History, Spectacle: The Iron Ship. *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 21: 132-149.

King, E., 2010. Memory controversies in post-genocide Rwanda: Implications for peacebuilding. *Genocide Studies and Prevention*, 5(3), pp.293-309.

KMC, 2004. *Jenocide*. Kigali: Kigali Memorial Centre and Aegis Trust.

KMC, <http://www.kigaligenocidememorial.org/> (accessed 27 July 2015)

LA Times 2005. Clinton Expresses Regret Over 1994 Genocide. *LA Times*. Retrieved from: <http://articles.latimes.com/2005/jul/24/world/fg-briefs24.3> (Accessed 24 June 2017)

Lemarchand, R. 2013. Rwanda: The State of Research. *Online Encyclopaedia of Mass Violence*. Retrieved from: <http://www.massviolence.org/RWANDA-THE-STATE-OF-RESEARCH,742> (Accessed 24 June 2017)

Major, L. 2015. Unearthing, untangling and re-articulating genocide corpses in Rwanda. *Critical African Studies* 7(2): 164-181.

Mckinney, S. L. 2012. Narrating genocide on the streets of Kigali. In: M. Gegner and B. Ziino (eds.) *The Heritage of War*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 160-176.

Meierhenrich, J. 2011. Topographies of remembering and forgetting: the transformation of Lieux de Mémoire in Rwanda. In: S. Strauss and L. Waldorf, (eds.) *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights After Mass Violence*. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, pp. 283-296.

Melly, P. and V. Darracq. 2013. A New Way to Engage? French Policy in Africa from

Sarkozy to Hollande. *Chatham House*. Retrieved from: http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/Africa/0513pp_franceafrica.pdf (Accessed 24 June 2017)

NURC, 2006. *The Rwandan Conflict: Origin, Development, Exit Strategies*. Kigali: The National Unity and Reconciliation Commission.

Raghaven, S. 2014, April 7. Rwandans mark 20th anniversary of genocide amid reminders that justice has yet to be done. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/rwandans-mark-20th-anniversary-of-genocide-amid-reminders-that-justice-has-yet-to-be-done/2014/04/07/ecfbd4c4-be75-11e3-b574-f8748871856a_story.html?utm_term=.b084d439a6e8 (Accessed 24 June 2017)

Reyntjens, F. 2011. Constructing the truth, dealing with dissent, domesticating the world: Governance in post-genocide Rwanda. *African Affairs*, 110(438):1-34.

Robb, E. M. 2009. Violence and recreation: vacationing in the realm of dark tourism. *Anthropology and Humanism* 34, 1: 51-60.

Smith, L. 2006. *Uses of Heritage*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Sodaro, A. 2011. Politics of the past: remembering the Rwandan genocide at the Kigali Memorial Centre. In: E. Lehrer, C. Milton, M. Patterson (eds.), *Curating Difficult Knowledge: Violent Pasts in Public Places*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Pp. 72-89.

Staiff, R., Bushell, R. and Watson, S. 2012. Introduction – place, encounter, engagement: context and themes. In: Staiff, R., Bushell, R. and Watson, S. (eds.) *Heritage and tourism: place, encounter, engagement*. London: Routledge. Pp. 1-24.

Tadjo, V. 2010. Genocide: the changing landscape of memory in Kigali. *African Identities*, 8(4): 379-388.

UK Government, 2013, March 26. William Hague and Angelina Jolie visit Rwanda. *UK Government*. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/world-location-news/william-hague-and-angelina-jolie-visit-rwanda> (Accessed 24 June 2017)

USAID 2017, April 19. History of USAID/Rwanda. *USAID*. Retrieved from <https://www.usaid.gov/history-usaidrwanda> (Accessed 24 June 2017)

Uvin, P. 2001. Difficult choices in the new post-conflict agenda: the international community in Rwanda after the genocide. *Third World Quarterly*, 22 (2): 177-189.

Vidal, C. 2001. Les commémorations du génocide au Rwanda. *Temps modernes*. 613: 1-46.

Waterton, E. and Watson, S. 2014. *The semiotics of heritage tourism*. Bristol: Channel View Publications.

Watson, A. 1982. *Diplomacy: the dialogue between states*. Hove: Psychology Press.

Winter, T. 2013. Auto-exoticism: Cultural display at the Shanghai Expo. *Journal of Material Culture*, 18(1): 69-90.

How to Cite: Giblin J. 2017. The Performance of International Diplomacy at Kigali Memorial Centre, Rwanda. *Journal of African Cultural Heritage Studies*. 1(1), p. 49-66.
DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22599/jachs.13>