

Deliberating Deep Divisions, Conflict,
and Prospects for Democracy in Africa's Great Lakes

Rwanda and Burundi Compared

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Abstract

Rwanda and Burundi are ideal 'twin' case studies for the basis of comparison of conflict-ridden state-society relations in Africa. The one, Rwanda, having borne a 'genocide' of drastic human proportions, the other, Burundi, having experienced no less a devastating bout of 'ethnic cleansings', are both grappling with solutions on how to eradicate the genocidal question from their politics once and for all.

Since the Belgian transfer of power and the establishment of modern liberal democratic institutions during the Post World War II era, the emphasis on democracy and democratization in Rwanda and Burundi has been both a cause and effect of violent conflict. The threats of conflict posed to these countries are inseparable from the process of democratic nation-building and more generally from the ethos of democracy. This is because, in these countries' deeply-divided societies, ethnic cleavages affect the degree to which inhabitants accept the domain and scope of a territorial unit as an appropriate entity to make legitimate decisions. Such a context creates a crisis of democratic legitimacy which rests on the notion that the more the population of a territory of the state is composed of pluri-national, lingual, religious or cultural societies, the more complex democratic politics becomes; since an agreement on the fundamentals of a democracy will be more difficult. This is the challenge that faces both Rwanda and Burundi.

In the millennium, both countries continue to undergo complex, post-conflict democratic transitions that challenge 'deep divisions' in resourceful ways. Receiving some of Freedom House's worst ratings in Africa, both Rwanda and Burundi stand at the democracy-ethnic pluralism crossroads, a situation that is more particularly underscored by the fact that following deeply rooted violent conflict, both countries seek to use democratic nation-building as a means for peace-building.

In examining ways in which Africa's 'national democratic question' has informed Rwanda and Burundi's quest for political development and democratization since these countries' modern inception, the ensuing article will explore ways in which post-conflict democratic transitions in the two countries have differed, and how policy assumptions chosen by each country fare in providing the achievement of lasting democracy and peace.

INTRODUCTION

Democratic Legitimacy in the Context of Deep Divisions

The threats of conflict posed to Rwanda and Burundi are inseparable from democratic nation-building and more generally from the ethos of democracy. Since the Belgian transfer of power and the establishment of modern liberal democratic institutions, the emphasis on democracy in both countries has been both a cause and effect of intense political conflict. Rwanda, having borne a 'genocide' of drastic human proportions; and Burundi, having experienced no less a devastating bout of 'ethnic cleansings', both countries are currently grappling with the yearnings for solutions on how to eradicate the 'genocidal' question from their politics once and for all.

Consistent thus with the broader thesis advanced by the current academic project (conflict resolution in Africa), the ensuing research inquiry into Rwanda and Burundi's state-society relations asks, how can genocide and ethnic violence be eliminated from the African political processes, despite the continent's structural cultural pluralism and economic underdevelopment? By way of response, this chapter contends that there exists a correlation between this central question and the essay's thesis. In examining Rwanda and Burundi's democratic development, the article contends that in embarking upon the countries' contemporary democratic transitions as vehicles for a total reconfiguration of the political and social structures of these countries, the democratic regime type selected must be conscious of 'reconciling' and 're-empowering' cultural pluralism if they are to achieve the elimination of genocidal violence from political practice.

In this article, I argue that the political violence experienced by both Rwanda and Burundi since the de-colonization era has been caused by the 'crisis of democratic legitimacy in

a deeply-divided society'. In this context, democratic legitimacy rests on the notion that the more the population of a territory of the state is composed of pluri-national, lingual, religious or cultural societies, the more complex politics becomes because an agreement on the fundamentals of a democracy will be more difficult. This is the 'democratic' challenge that faces both Rwanda and Burundi.

The crises of legitimacy is a universal feature of developing world politics, which often suffers from the weight of prematurely 'imported' demands such as the transfer of power of the alien concept and institution of 'democracy' from colonialists to nationalists onto diversely constituted states. For deeply-divided societies, the ability of new reconfiguring Third World weakly constituted states to easily adapt the majoritarian democratic institution has often resulted in a cycle of 'crises' characterized as an unstable period in which gap exists between what people expect from the system and what they actually get. The situation is exacerbated by the existence of crosscutting cultural cleavages that eventually leads to tensions and explosions.¹

In both Rwanda and Burundi, the existence of the 'democracy legitimacy question' began with the establishment of democracy during the early de-colonizing period. In Rwanda for example, the 1956 election first attracted public attention to the numerical superiority of the Hutu (84%). An emerging Hutu nationalist elite knew that the election could easily be exploited if they were to vote for their own group. This revelation led them to believe that they could easily take over the government. In 1959, a third election revealed for the Tutsi that further democratization would totally expel them from power once and for all. Their response was to begin to restrict the pace and the scope of democratization in order to reconsolidate their group's political power. However, the entrenched Tutsi monarchists intransigence in introducing direct elections led the declining lack of confidence among the Hutu for the possibilities of peaceful democratic

¹ James C. Davies, When Men Revolt and Why: A Reader in Political Violence and Revolution, New York: Free Press, 1971.

development; hence, the revolution in 1959.² In Burundi also- though much later in 1965- an election that was won by two-thirds of the Hutu was ignored by the Tutsi King's constitutional monarchy, and the rising political muscle of the Hutu at the polls was similarly suppressed. This fostered a first Hutu-dominated coup attempt, thereby ushering in a Tutsi-led counter coup by Colonel Micombero, whose rule represented for the first time in Burundi absolute, unchecked power for the Tutsi ethnic group.³

Thus, in examining ways in which the combined themes of 'conflict, ethnicity, democracy and nation-building' have informed Rwanda and Burundi's quest for political development, democratization, and peace since these countries' modern inception, utilizing the 'democratic legitimacy' question in the context of 'deeply-divided' societies, the current chapter will explore ways in which democratic development in the two countries have compared and contrasted. The chapter's conclusion is especially interested in determining the peace prospects and assessing the democratic principles and policy assumptions used by each country in their contemporary post-conflict democratic transitions.

DEMOCRACY AND DEEP DIVISIONS:

Consociationalism, Majoritarianism and Radical Pluralism

While originally examining classic classifications of developing world 'cultural-pluralism'⁴, Donald Horowitz further developed the concept of 'deep-divisions' to determine the extent of crosscutting cleavages and their imprint on politics within these societies. In severely divided societies, ethnic identity provides clear lines to determine who will be included and who will be excluded in a democratic polity (Horowitz, JOD, 4, October 1993). Ironically, however, a

² Mary Catherine Atterbury, Revolution in Rwanda, University of Wisconsin Dissertation, Spring 1968.

³ David Ress, The Burundi Ethnic Massacres, 1988, Edwin Mellen Press, 1992

⁴ See Furnivall's classic studies on Third World cultural pluralism

starting point for examining the ethnic question in Rwanda and Burundi is to identify the extent to which these societies are 'deeply-divided' in the first place. The debate over the 'invention' of ethnicity in Africa (Terence Ranger) often uses Rwanda and Burundi as case-in-points to illustrate ways in which 'ethnic' identity has been socially constructed and externally imposed on what used to be relatively culturally homogeneous societies. For example, recently the notion that *genocide* occurred in Rwanda is being contested, and the concept has been de-constructed to refer to *ethnocide* and totalitarian *politicide* (Charles Davenport) suggesting that the 'racial' context of Rwandan society is a misnomer, and that ethnic identity markers were not cultural but political.

Since their foundations in around the 16th century, in 'imagining' their nations, the political elites of Rwanda and Burundi contend that before their colonial conquests, both Rwanda and Urundi were homogeneous nations with a shared sense of history, culture, language, and religion within given territories (Kagame, Nnoli). However, the assumption that these countries' pre-colonial social contexts were culturally homogeneous and harmonious 'Ubusingathes' is highly contested. One opposing standpoint suggests that the notion that Rwanda/Burundi were ethnically homogeneous- *even if a class-based hierarchical nation before colonialism*- has been greatly exaggerated. This account argues that to portray these countries' ethnic division as a German-Belgian 'invention' reads too much into the fact that the Hutu and Tutsi speak the same language, have the same religion and share the same geographical space (Johann Pottier). It is argued that hatred toward the Tutsi overlords by the Hutu subordinate groups was well entrenched by 1898 before Germany colonized Rwanda (Grogan and Sharp, 1900:119).

For example, in Rwanda, rigidified social distinctions in ethnic terms and ethnic self-consciousness among groups of Tutsi in central Rwanda did exist. Belgian colonists merely

contributed to the ideology of Tutsi self-consciousness and explanation of ‘physical difference’ (Pottier: 112). In Burundi also, along with Rwanda, as one of the cluster of kingdoms in the Central African lakes area, the pre-colonial state-society relations constituted a mini-state structured on a multi-level ethno-class model; in this sense, the Burundi kingdom existed as a loose confederation of power-sharing between Tutsi and Hutu royalists. Here, the Hutu and Tutsi chiefs (inkebe) were on an equal footing with the Ganwa princes, the ritual chiefs, and the chiefs of the royal estates, all subject to the king - Mwami (Christian Scherrer, page 19).

To the unknowing audience, the debates above certainly beg the question. How then do Africa’s worst cases of ethnic- in many cases described as ‘racial’- violence erupt in countries in the continent that have the least history of pre-colonial cultural pluralism? Indeed, it is accurate to suggest that Belgian colonialists contributed to the ideology of ‘racialism’ – ethnic superiority and hierarchy- in both countries, making all Tutsi superior, all Hutu inferior, and designating the Twa at the bottom of the hierarchy. This system became fixed in the 1930s when the Belgians introduced ID cards, created schools for training Tutsi administrators, and set up ‘native tribunals’ headed by Tutsi. In this respect, Rwanda and Burundi provide an ideal lesson in the political manipulation to which group identities have been subjected since colonial times. Both countries became Africa’s worst victims of European nineteenth century ‘racialist theory’ which came with it a colonial ethnology that introduced ethnicization, racialization, and segregation whose destructive influence on the thinking of the societies involved resulted in the social violence that continues to impact these societies’ contemporary democratic ethos.

Another irony that continues to cloud the ethnic question in Rwanda and Burundi asks, how could destructive colonial policies be applied so successfully that they resulted in such tragic consequences for the postcolonial development of these countries (Scherrer, 2002)? After

all, it is true that before 1959, there was never any outbreak of organized violence between the two social groups in either Rwanda or Burundi. In response to this question, a core element of the ensuing thesis is that the introduction of modern democracy indeed has introduced this violent contestation. In both cases, the colonial experience undermined traditional concepts of authority and especially gave 'subjected' groups the tools with which to agitate for changes in the redistribution of political, social and economic power. This is because, in spite of a colonial policy of 'preference' for elite dominance by one group, the introduction of the principle of modern democracy- introduced by the UN mandate system in 1948- resulted in the rise of the politicization of cultural identity among the Hutu who began their agitation for change in their status and demanded a voice in the political life of the country.

In the post-colonial era, the political development of Rwanda and Burundi resemble the rest of Africa where political development, nation-building and democratization became embodied in the 'national democratic question'. The national democratic question was generally characterized by various newly constituted 'nationalist' regimes' successful or failed attempts to forge nation-states while remaining 'democratic' to the actually-existing structures of ethnic pluralism and the notion of ethnic self-determination. In many African countries 'the national democratic question' became a code name for all the controversies, doubts and experimentation that surround African nations' search for stability, legitimacy and development; and in the millennium continues to be concerned with the fundamental basis of African countries' political existence, power sharing and management of resources in terms of access, control and distribution (Akinleye, Richard).

Differently, however, from many other post-colonial democratic regimes in the continent whose manifestation of the national question while sorely conflicted was not fundamentally

construed due to other enhancing structural factors that mitigated sustained and destructive violence experienced in the countries under study, Rwanda and Burundi's early experiences with the national question in the 60s 2nd Wave of Democracy and the 90s 3rd Wave of Democracy respectively certainly represented more challenges and inhibitions than sustainable solutions. That is why the countries' current attempts to achieve ethnic self-determination and democratic nation-building in a post-conflict context provides an extremely important subject for national and democratic public policy design for the African continent.

Two general theories to deal with the ethnic question in the context of democratization are the 'consociational' model; and the culturalist liberal democratic majoritarian model. In Africa, due to culturally plural conditions, liberal democracies have often degenerated into ethnic majoritarian tyranny (Southall, 2000) and therefore have experienced difficulty in gaining legitimacy among the continent's multi-national constituencies. Moreover, the continent's pervasive cultural pluralism has fostered a rather extreme form of 'cultural representation' politics (Ali Rattinasi) so that in many African cases while opening up spaces for democratization, democratic transitions also brought with them violent 'identity' politics; Rwanda and Burundi are important case studies of this. Alternatively, the consociationalist model of democracy (aka power-sharing) has been a preferred democratic model for Africa due to the very different conditions from which democracy has emerged in these regions.

For culturally plural Nigeria, Apter described the way in which a consociational democracy provided for all significant cultural groups to be incorporated into government without being frozen out by a crude majoritarianism (Apter 1961: 20-28). Rwanda and Burundi have vacillated between liberal culturalist and consociational models of democratization to address deep-divisions. Acknowledging deep-divisions between Hutu and Tutsi groups, Burundi

has tended to adopt power-sharing models. Nevertheless, the establishment of consociational democratic institutions as early as 1988 did not result in the elimination of ethnic violence in the country. Rwanda, on the other hand, has been less sensitive to ethnic divisions variably adopting ethnic majoritarianism, or as is the case currently, insisting on the country's cultural homogeneity prefers to minimize Hutu-Tutsi identity markers within the context of a liberal majoritarian model of democracy.

The persistence of 'ethnic' politics in Africa and the phenomena's global proliferation in the 90s has fostered an expansion of scholarship on democracy and ethnic self-determination and alternatives to the dualism of consociational/majoritarian models for reconciling ethnic divisions within a democracy. The constructivist analysis of ethnicity, for example, is one such alternative. While linking ethnic politics to democratic politics, the constructivist analyses is careful not to dismiss psychological and cultural dimensions of ethnic politics, which in previous models viewed ethnicity as regrettable false consciousness, to be trivialized, dismissed, disparaged and disappeared. Constructivist scholars in fact privilege 'subjective' factors of ethnicity that examine the process of ethnic identification in social practice as a meaningful place of belonging for its participants⁵ by re-invoking primordial aspects of ethnicity in order to explore the psychological and cultural dimensions necessary to grasp the intensities that surround ethnic conflict. This analysis thereby captures ethnicity's capacity to arouse deep fears, anxieties and insecurities, and its ability to trigger collective aggression inexplicable in terms of simple instrumentalist versions that privilege an ethnic group's material pursuit of interest.

Proposing a constructivist democratic option for South Africa's deeply divided post-Apartheid country instead of classic liberal and consociational conflict resolution mechanisms,

⁵ Arletta Norval, 'Rethinking Ethnicity: Identification, Hybridity and Democracy' in *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Africa: Constructivist Reflections and Contemporary Politics* edited by Paris Yeros St. Martins Press, 1999

ethnicity scholar, Arletta Norval, warned of the need to distinguish between democratic solutions in deeply divided societies that arose from simplistically validating the legitimacy of cultural difference (Burundi's Buyoya's consociationalism) and those resting on coercive unity (Rwanda's Kagame's consensual democracy).⁶ Norval proposed the radical pluralist democratic option whose objective sought to move beyond the mere reification and acknowledgement of multi-nationality as existing models do. Norval's model of democracy and ethnicity alternatively sought to address contradictions that emerge from the social differentiation of the human community including cultural identity differences.⁷ The scholar further argued that a democratic politics that recognized cultural difference would only avoid the problem of coercive unity insofar as identity claims were inserted into a democratic context in which cultural difference is open to continuous challenge, negotiation and renewal. By engaging the 'multi-national' question and by linking ethnic claims to critical dimensions of democratic politics, radical pluralist democratic politics examines ethnicity from the perspective of a moral debate about a culturally contested political community, about cultural rights and obligations and about ethnic citizenship⁸

Understood in the context of constructivism, democratic politics increases the likelihood that the affirmation of differences in cultural identity will find expression in public life fostering a deepening of democratic spaces though avoiding the assimilation tendencies of modern liberalism and consociational mechanisms that tend to reify cultural identities and force them to become exclusionary and self-enclosed. Radical pluralist democratic politics uses liberal democratic mechanisms of ethical discourse and expression to extend pluralism and to turn its

⁶See Arletta Norval 'Rethinking Ethnicity: Identification, Hybridity and Democracy' in *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Africa: Constructivist Reflections and Contemporary Politics* edited by Paris Yeros St. Martins Press, 1999

⁷ Wamba dia Wamba 'Democracy, Multi-partyism and Emancipative Politics in Africa', *CODESRIA*, (Dakar, Senegal, 1994)

⁸ John Lonsdale, 1992

appreciation of established diversity into an active and constructive process that serves to foster mutual learning among diverse groups and help in forging societal priorities and national democratic goals.⁹

CONSTRUCTING ETHNIC MAJORITIES AND MINORITY HEGEMONS:

Democratic Development in Historical Perspective

Rwanda and Burundi's political and democratic development dates back to the emergence of centralized state structures in the Great Lakes region in the 15th century. Both kingdoms were forged by a series of successive waves of nomadic pastoralist domination led by a royal clan (later to be known as Hima, Tutsi) who settled in the region and cultivated the pre-existing 'primary' kingdoms of the area (Lemarchand, 1970). As the nomads settled down, the transition from decentralized communities to kingship nations was achieved by the amalgamation of autonomous chieftaincies into a small nuclear kingdom, under the leadership of these royal settler clans.

In Rwanda, nation-state development began under the reign of a Tutsi king named Ruanzu Bwimba in the 15th C, while in Burundi the nascent nation began to emerge in the 17th Century under the guidance of a Hima king from the same region. Over the subsequent centuries, both kingdoms were gradually expanded into a territorial unit. With Rwanda, early nation-formation was achieved by a series of invasions launched against independent non-Rwandese communities. By the 19th C, Rwanda's Mwami Rwabugiri sought to strengthen the military power of the nation and began to rest the central institutions on the Hutu production. Subsequently, Mwami Rwoyera, with the help of the German and Belgian authorities, annexed the small Hutu kingdoms in the northeast thereby completing the foundation of the Rwandan

⁹ Amartya Sen in 'Democracy as a Universal Value' in Larry Diamond and Marc Plattner eds., *The Global Resurgence of Democracy* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001)

nation in the 1920s. Burundi's conquest was similar and successfully completed under the reign of Ntare Rugaamba who expanded the original boundaries of his kingdom by conquering large parts of present-day Rwanda and Tanzania.

Consequentially, this manner of state formation and expansion resulted in differing types of political organization for both Kingdoms, a factor that explains the divergent trajectories for both countries in their democratic transitions today. Rwanda, for instance, always seemed to have a strong degree of centralization supported by a strong measure of royal autocracy. The Rwanda kings appeared to have consolidated their rule quite easily by suppressing the autonomy of the local hereditary chiefs and replacing them with loyal Tutsi retainers (Lemarchard, 1970). Differently, in Burundi, the state structure was weaker due to the contest between the monarchy and descent groups, which provided for greater decentralization.

Also, both kingdoms exhibited differing degrees of social cohesion. In Burundi, the Ganwa (descent groups) became identified as a separate ethnic group whose prestige in society ranked above the ordinary Tutsi, especially the Hima who were considered of a lower Tutsi caste. Thus the greater variety of status groups in Burundi allowed for less cleavaged relations between the Tutsi and Hutu as occurred in Rwanda. The competitive relations between the Ganwa chiefs resulted in a greater incentive by the Tutsi monarchs to forge relations with Hutu indigenous groups. In Rwanda by contrast, the absolutist monarchical structures forged rigidity of the caste structure.

Thus, while consisting of apparently similar socio-political historical formations, a closer look at the countries' pre-colonial structures had already begun to differ. Rwanda had a hierarchical structure in which the Mwami and his Tutsi aristocracy was the source and symbol of all authority; Burundi had a more pyramidal structure in which the Mwami was little more

than 'first among equals' in relation to the Tutsi-Ganwa and Hutu chiefs. Indeed, one could describe the one system- Rwanda- as authoritarian where a triple hierarchy of royal Tutsi army chiefs, land chiefs and cattle chiefs ruled the nation under the authority of the King; and the other- Burundi- as democratic where a loose aggregate of semi-autonomous chiefdoms had a tendency to extend political recruitment to different ethnic strata on a wide basis. For example, in Burundi, the *bashigantahe*, an institution that had no correlate in Rwanda, formed the democratic core of Burundi society. The body was structured around the potentiality of becoming a parliament. The institution acted as the monarchy's advisory committee, open to all capable subjects regardless of their social standing.

Burundi's republican political structure influenced political organization in such a way that the monarchy never became as closely associated with caste supremacy as the Rwandese monarchy. That is why Tutsi hegemony never became a critical issue during pre-colonial era because it had not been institutionalized the way it had in Rwanda. Also compared to Rwanda, Burundi's monarchy was free of ideological constraints that would reinforce an exalted position of Tutsi supremacy such as the Tutsi *uwiru*, *ubucurabwenge* and *ibsisgo* myths in Rwanda (Lemarchand, 1970).

In both countries, colonial rule- first by the Germans who after WWI lost their colonies to the Belgians- reified the existing political structures by 'racializing' the Rwandi-Burundi nations, though more so in the Rwandan case and no less so in the case of Burundi. European colonialism did this by reinforcing ethnic ranking, social differentiation, and regional differences. As well, the external political system rendered ethnic inequality as inflexible political identity markers, which became leading icons for future conflict in both countries. For example, in 1919, Belgian colonialism used the system of indirect rule to ossify the power

structures of the Rwandi-Urundi kingdoms and chiefdoms by introducing ethnic identity cards and reserving special privileges for the Tutsi.

In Rwanda, Belgian colonial policy continued to rely on Tutsi authorities because it believed that the Tutsi were naturally gifted rulers with ‘outstanding qualities, undeniable intellectual superiority and talent for command’.¹⁰ In Burundi, the colonial policymakers did more to transform the Burundian political system into a highly centralized and efficient bureaucratic order and thereby eroded much of the ethos. In both Kingdoms, colonial modernization contributed to significantly weakened traditional sources of legitimacy, sacred values and ritual associated with monarchy, fostering new forms of social mobilization especially giving subordinate groups- the Hutu- new tools with which to agitate for changes in the distribution of political, social and economic power.

For both countries, like much of Africa, the de-colonizing era ushered in a ‘transition to democracy’, when in 1948, the first U.N. Visiting Mission to the Great Lakes region stipulated that evolution towards self-government in the Rwanda-Urundi Belgian-administered territory would have to be accompanied by changes in the distribution of political power. The mission urged the Belgian administration to,

Democratize the whole political structure as far as possible and as speedily as circumstances permit. The masses must by degrees be led to take part in the choice of their leaders and in sanctioning important decision, the final aim being to achieve an increasingly widespread electoral system. (UN Trusteeship Council, Report of the Visiting Mission T//217 (1948)

The introduction of elections acted as one of the most important determinants in re-configuring power relations between Tutsi and Hutu in both countries. In Rwanda, in an effort to

¹⁰ Ministère des Colonies, Rapport sur l’administration du Ruanda-Urundi, 1938

protect centuries of privilege and ascendancy over the nation, the Tutsi sought to deny the existence of ethnic labels as a process of political mobilization. In 1958, the Mwami issued an edict striking the terms Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa from official documents. The pronouncement stressed the need for unity in the country and called for cooperation between the 'races'. However, cleaved reactions to elections and de-colonization were already to be observed as the Hutu, in their nationalistic fervor, began to mobilize against 'double colonialism' referring to an end not only to Belgian colonial rule, but also to Tutsi domination. Thus to ensure their own supremacy in elections, they contrarily argued against the elimination of the legal distinctions between Twa, Hutu and Tutsi. Aiming at the abolition of 'caste' privileges and drawing its inspiration from egalitarian-democratic ideals, the 1957-58 Hutu Manifesto and associative 'democratic revolution' was a plea for democracy in which Hutu peasants rose against the Tutsi monarchy.

The effect of elections crystallized the success of the revolution for the Hutu. In the June-July elections just before the violent outbreaks, Parmehutu, the ethno-chauvinist party that had organized the revolution- with APRONA another Hutu party- won a share of 83 percent of the seats. UNAR, the pro-Tutsi monarchy party won only 2%. Later in 1961, legislative elections consolidated Hutu power further when Parmehutu won an overwhelming victory with 35 out of 45 of the legislative assembly seats. In a referendum held concurrently with these elections, 80 percent of the voters rejected the continuation of the Mwamiship, an act that formalized the end of the Tutsi monarchy. The revolution was completed by the coup of 1961 destroying the old monarchical regime; these events led to Rwanda's republican form of government.

Rwanda's de-colonizing democratic transition had a traumatic impact on the de-colonization of Burundi since the Tutsi king of Burundi feared that Hutu in Burundi might

choose to follow a similar revolutionary strategy. Therefore, he opted for a tactic that permitted the Hutu here to gain real power while at the same time making concessions to them in terms of government, and administrative appointments, the allocation of education scholarships and apprenticeship positions abroad. The monarchy tried to co-opt the emergent Hutu elite by buying off their leaders and allowing them to share in the distribution of status and prestige; however, actual political power was reserved for the Tutsi royal court. For the Burundi Tutsi elite, the perceived political stakes during de-colonization were Tutsi ethnic survival both as a social force and as a physical entity. While the PDC (Parti Democrat Chretien can be compared to Rwanda's pro-monarchy UNR party, it was the the Parti de l'Union et du Progres National (Uprona) that signaled the birth of a new era in Burundi differing significantly from any correlate in Rwanda and certainly distinguishable from the Hutu chauvinism of the Parmehutu.

Uprona was described as radical, anti-Belgian, pro-Lumumba (Congo) and pro-Communist (Harroy, 1987). The party's flag bearer, nationalist and prince Louis Rwagasore, gave unique meaning to Uprona because he was able to mediate among Tutsi, Ganwa and Hutu ideologies. With UN intervention urging the Belgian administration to release Uprona political prisoners- including Rwagasore- and to organize freer and fairer elections, during the poll, Uprona emerged with a total of 58 out of 64 seats in the legislative assembly. However, unlike Rwanda's ethnic majoritarian dominant party, which had ousted the Tutsi and the monarchical state at independence, Burundi ushered in independence differently.

Unlike Rwanda where independence on 1 July 1962 transferred political control to a republic ruled by a Hutu mass party succeeding in dislodging the Tutsi and establishing a Hutu ethnocracy, the Burundi Tutsi ethnocracy took a little longer in the post-colonial period to crystallize. On the eve of independence as Burundi was set to mirror Belgium's constitutional

monarchy with the more centrist Uprona, balancing power between ethnic groups and the monarchy. However, Rwagasore's untimely death by assassination by princely rivals in the Tutsi dominated PDC precipitated the series of political crises and violence that continued to date in Burundi's post-colonial politics.

A constitutional monarchy with the Mwami Crown very much dominating the national assembly politics, afraid of loss of Tutsi control, the Burundi Tutsi monarchy constantly sought to restrict the political space of the nascent nationalist democracy. Thus despite 1964 elections giving Hutu parties an even greater majority in the national assembly and despite their calls for representation through the naming of a Hutu Prime Minister, the Mwami declined instead appointing a loyal Ganwa king. This act sparked a reaction by the Hutu who organized an unsuccessful coup. Though the coup led to the ousting of the Mwami, the Tutsi aristocracy and Ganwa chiefs retaliated against the Hutu coup plotters, executing many and setting off a wave of violence against Hutus amidst the chaos.

The loss of Rwagasore's mediating leadership led to this bitter struggle for the leadership of the Uprona which had ensued between Hutu and Tutsi political elites, and eventually, a crisis of legitimacy culminated in the overthrow of the monarchy by a military counter coup led by a Tutsi army officer, Michel Micembero. Believing that the concessions made to the emergent Hutu elite had permitted that group to gain sufficient power to challenge Tutsi authority and domination, the new Tutsi ruling elite embarked upon a series of ethnic killings of Hutu's in a bid to consolidate autocratic Tutsi ethnic minority supremacy.

THIRD WAVE DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS

Unleashing Ethnic Identity Politics in the 90s

In the Mid-70s, with the democratic transitions embarked upon in Spain and Portugal, the developing world underwent what Samuel Huntington has classically termed a ‘Third Wave of Democracy’. Citing its reasons as the illegitimacy of authoritarian regimes, the expansion of civil societies and urban classes, and the international diffusion of democratic and human rights ideas by the late 80s, the third wave of democracy refers to a significant regime change in developing and transitional countries, moving from authoritarian to increasingly liberalized and democratic regimes. Rwanda and Burundi entered the Third Wave under comparatively different conditions, which culminated in divergent performance implications for the country’s contemporary democratic politics. Significantly, however, both countries concluded their initial re-democratization phases with failure and breakdown, which had drastic violent consequences. Burundi’s 1989 transition, while leading to a landslide electoral victory for the ethnic Hutu party, FRODEBU, after the violent and vicious public ousting of three Hutu Prime Ministers, the Third Republic, on the verge of collapse, was aborted by a second military coup by Major Pierre Buyoya in 1998. Similarly, Rwanda’s 1990 democratic transition unleashed ‘ethnic identity’ mobilization between Hutu and Tutsi, leading to one of the 20th centuries worst genocides by 1994.

So what went wrong? In Burundi, ruled for twenty years by a military Tutsi ethnocracy, including, the autocratic totalitarian one party socialism of Lt. Colonel Jean-Baptiste Bagaza, referred to at its best euphemism as a ‘controlled democracy’, authoritarian delegitimization and a twenty year period of horrendous ethnocidal killings between Hutu resistors and the Tutsi-controlled state fostered conditions for a military vanguardist intervention under the guise of Pierre Buyoya’s liberalizing coup in 1988. Buyoya’s military regime immediately began a transition to democracy by establishing the Report on the National Commission to Study the

Question of National Unity (1989) and the Report on the Democratization of Institutions and Political Life (1989). Both reports led to a new political regime for the country whose cornerstone features included implementing a power sharing government, a national unity charter, a new Constitution, and the formal establishment of the Third Republic.

Both documents marked impressive new trajectories in Burundi's political development. On the ethnic question, the documents charged the need for a joint Hutu-Tutsi effort to chart a new course toward unity. The reports also provided the foundation for a reflection on the meaning of democracy in Burundi, and devised a plan on how to democratize Burundi's institutions. However, both Frodebu (moderate Hutu party) and Palipehetu (radical Hutu party)¹¹ transition rejected the Charter's 'mutual blame' theory explaining the country's ethnocide and violence. Indeed, as leader of Frodebu, Melchoir Ndadaye warned that because Hutu and Tutsi did not interpret their histories in the same manner, there needed to be a grassroots democratic conference- as opposed to top down state led conference- to give a fair hearing to different political sensibilities (Lemarchand).

Nevertheless, despite the Charter's mantra that, "one's identity as a Burundi must hold primacy over ethnic, regional or clan labels", it was ethnic parity in the form of a Hutu-Tutsi power sharing government that informed the cornerstone of the principles of the democratic transition. The Third Republic emerged as a limited form of consociational participation based on recognition of the importance of ethnic identity as a means of an overarching cooperation at the elite level in consideration of Burundi's deeply fragmented society. In the 'unity government'- still led by Uprona- in 1992, significant restructuring of the ministries, the Uprona party, and the provincial governments occurred for the first time giving Hutus 50% representation in every institution.

¹¹ Movements reorganized as parties in ready for the 1989 election.

As part of the transition, elections scheduled for 1993 included Uprona as the ‘ruling party’ (promoting itself as a ‘national’ party), Frodebu, the former Hutu exile workers party, the PRP, a Tutsi pro-monarchist party, and Palipehutu, an extremist Hutu party. To his surprise, however, leading the Uprona ticket, Buyoya was soundly defeated by Frodebu, which won 64% of the presidential votes and sixty five of the eight one seats in the national assembly. Similar to the 1961 elections, democratic majoritarianism had unseated the Tutsi ethnocracy! No wonder that democracy was under siege less than three months later when a bloody military coup killed the country’s first democratically elected Hutu President Ndadaye and the Hutu assembly leader. Ndadaye’s assassination was followed by more ethnocidal killings between both groups with an estimated 50,000 killed causing Ndadaye’s wife to appeal in a passionate plea to President Mitterrand, whom she called, ‘the father of democracy’, for international help to protect Burundi, a child of Le Baule democracy’!

Politically, exasperated that even a democratic political process could not bring them justice and inclusion, the Hutu’s main political party, Frodebu, split into a radical wing, the Counsel National Pour La Defense de la Democratic (CNDD), which became a militant organization that went underground. Nevertheless due to the commitment to the political process by various political actors, the unsuccessful coup did not end the democratic transition. Within two months, the National Assembly had elected another President from Frodebu, a Hutu, Cyprien Ntaryamara, in compliance with a slight amendment to the 1993 Constitution. Yet, tragedy disrupted the democratic process again when on April 6, 1994, President Cyprien Ntaryamira was assassinated in the same plane downing that killed the Rwandan Hutu president. Following the Rwandan genocide, with fears that ‘Burundi is next’, and ethnic tensions rising

again suggesting, ‘you can’t trust a Tutsi’, the democratic transition was again on the verge of collapse.

However, again with the commitment by Burundian political actors of both the Hutu and Tutsi ethnicities and the help of the regional and international community, the Third Republic survived the second violent death of a Hutu President- and the Rwandan genocide- thus merely entering a third phase of the democratic transition. A new Convention of Government was signed, which followed the transition principles established under Buyoya’s 1988 process. The convention ensured that Frodebu would keep its electoral mandate, which was to last until 1998. Sylvestre Ntibantunganya was sworn in as Burundi’s third Hutu and Frodebu president, and significantly a National Security Council was created to regulate the country’s political system through the deliberation of a council of elders. Notwithstanding these grand efforts to preserve the Third Republic and consolidate the democracy, the ethnic question manifested by the Rwandan genocide and the Tutsi victory in the RPF as well as the agitations of extremist ideologies on both sides within Burundi- Uprona/Tutsi monarchists and CNDD Hutu radicals- conditions worsened when, four months later, in October, a third Hutu President Sylvestre Ntibantunganya was ousted in a Tutsi-led military coup that returned Tutsi President, Pierre Buyoya to power and aborted the Third Republic once and for all.

Rwanda’s third wave transition occurred very differently. Francophone Africa’s ‘sovereign national conference style civilian coups’, a Pope’s visit calling for democracy, the increasing delegitimation of the Habrayarimana one party regime by a domestic democratic opposition and an external Tutsi militarized refugee movement all provided the conditions for the democratic transition that was hastily begun in 1990. President Habrayarimana who had in 1973 seized power as a moderate Hutu leader from the north, in contrast to Kiyabanda’s extreme

Hutu nationalism, began the democratization process with a series of liberalization measures. The most far-reaching liberalization mechanism was the December 28th National Commission of Synthesis. This institution established the need for a constitutional conference composed of political, religious, and intellectual leaders charged with designing a new constitution, adopting the post of a prime minister, guaranteeing personal liberties and ending Habrayarimana's one party monopoly on power. However, the difficulty for the transition to democracy for Rwanda came largely as a result of the conjuncture of three forces: the obdurate resistance of the power structure to any type of genuine democracy, the selfish greed of a larger part of the opposition and the exiled Tutsi militant democratic platform (Lemarchand).

The strongest force in this constellation of power struggles, the intransigent state, was represented by Habrayimana's one party regime, which in readiness to compete in the new multi-party system, reconstituted itself as the MRND(D) - the added D signifying 'democracy'. The democratic opposition constituted an array of political parties ranging from the older reconstituted Kayibanda Hutu nationalist organization, Pareme hutu, now called the Movement for a Democratic Republic (MDR), the Coalition for the Defense of the Republic (CDR) - an extremist Hutu ethnic party- to a smaller liberal party (PL), the PDC, and the PRR a coalition of several parties. Moreover, looming on the horizons in exile was the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), whose 'Diaspora' movement organized as a political platform agitating for a self-determining democracy for the Rwandan Tutsi. In essence, between 1990 and 1992, the Rwandan democratic transition was marked by political opposition expressed in a number of successful 'demands' from the civil society, public pro-democracy demonstrations and by violent militant incursions by the RPF invasion.

By March 14, 1992, a historic compromise agreement between the MNRD regime and the opposition took place with President Habrayimana agreeing to a genuine coalition cabinet led by a premiership going to the MDR. Simultaneously, peace negotiations by way of the Arusha process ratified an agreement between the MNRD (D) and the RPF. The 'government of transition', Habrayimana's name for the coalition government consisted of Ditmas Nsengiyaremye of the MDR as Premier with cabinet posts split between supporters of MNRD (D) and members of the opposition. However, while the institutional configuration of the power-sharing governance structure fostered much of the instability that would lead to the impending genocide, like Burundi, it was the extremist forces unleashed in the CDR, and the conflict between a divided government and the RPF that ultimately led to the collapse of the transition in 1994 with the plane crash that killed President Habrayimana and his Burundian counterpart President Ntarayimana. The collapse of the democratic transition ushered in the conditions for the subsequent genocide.

POST-CONFLICT INTERNATIONALIZED DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS:

Reconstructing Divergent Democratic Ethos'

Both Rwanda and Burundi's Third Wave democratic transitions culminated in violence and collapse forcing both countries to embark upon interim governments that would begin fresh attempts to restore democracy. Nevertheless, given the past failures and consequential violence associated with previous attempts to democratize, subsequent efforts at democratization by these countries were to be carefully scrutinized by a concerned international community. Notwithstanding the normative international democratic post-conflict model which sought to use universal liberal democratic mechanisms as a means to cultivate peace in post-conflict-ridden societies, both interim regimes- Paul Kagame and Pierre Buyoya- while attempting to minimize

international influences in conflict resolution and democratic transitioning, also chose widely different democratic ethos' as the basis for reconstructing their polities a second time. Buyoya- with the help of regional and international pressure- continued the Hutu-Tutsi power-sharing mechanism based on proportional representation as a means for fostering ethnic self-determination. Kagame- with much less support from the international community- established a non-ethnic democracy in which majoritarian rule, based on a nationwide consensus and civil identity, was presented as the best route to democratization and peace.

In 2005 with a successful referendum for new elections and a new constitution, Burundi is undergoing phase two of its post-conflict democratic transition. In 2003, Domitien Ndayizeye, the 4th and longest-serving Hutu leader, assumed the Burundi presidency in an ethnic 'rotational presidency' power sharing agreement established as part of the 2000 Arusha peace and democratic transition accords. After the Tutsi minority regime's ousting of Ntibatunganya, Pierre Buyoya's regime had begun to face international condemnation and pressure to restore democracy. The US refused to recognize the Buyoya government; the EU suspended aid, and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) imposed sanctions on the country. As a result of these international pressures, Buyoya re-opened the legislature, allowed political parties to resume operation and announced his desire to resuscitate Burundi's peace process and democratic transition (Halperin and Lomasney). The internationally-supervised process, mediated by the late Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, eventually began to run parallel to an internal peace dialogue re-launched by Buyoya's regime. The dual process resulted in the signing of a transitional constitution on June 6, 1998, described by the Tutsi-led government, the national parliament and the Hutu opposition as Burundi's 'new partnership'.

As part of this agreement, Buyoya remained in power as an interim head until 2003 when he handed over power to the incumbent Hutu president and leader of FRODEBU, Domitien Ndayizeye, while the main Hutu rebel faction, FDD, was co-opted into the government with the appointment of Pierre Nkunjiza as Minister of Good Governance. The transitional government has planned to hold elections in 2005, and importantly has vowed to eventually eliminate ethnic political groups and replace them with a Burundi version of Rwanda's 'non-ethnic' democracy.¹²

Rwanda's post-conflict democratic transition began with a significantly different character. The RPF victory during the civil war ended the genocide and led to the establishment of a Government of National Unity (GNU), which consisted of a transitional government of persons named by the RPF and other political parties signatory to the Arusha Accords. This interim regime, dominated by the RPF and by President Kagame, ruled the country until the presidential elections that took place in 2003- occurred, producing Paul Kagame and the RPF as the country's first post cold war democratically elected president with an electoral victory of 95% of the votes cast. Working towards a 'new Rwanda', Rwanda's post-genocide democratic experiment required much more 'reconstruction' than Burundi's whose process was a continuation from the 1992 re-constitutive process. For Rwanda, on the other hand, the RPF regime embarked upon a process of total reconstruction. Democracy, including the codification of a new constitution and the establishment of 'new rules of competition' was to be the end-product of social, political, and institutional reconstruction¹³

The RPF's reconstruction plan recommended the normative liberal mechanisms- elite consensus and institutional development- for addressing the ethnic conflict and peace building

¹² 'Burundi: Parties Agree to Scrap Ethnic Political Groups' *UN Integrated Regional Information Networks*, March 31, 2004

¹³ Murigande, Charles, 'Response to Gatera: Has RPF Failed to Build Democratic?' <http://www.pellnet.ch/abiwacu/dossiernovero1.html>.

such as the establishment of a new constitution, granting of local autonomy, creation of inter-ethnic linkages, an increased premium placed on tolerance, reciprocity and linkages and the reconstruction of political institutions and economic infrastructure. Nevertheless, in reconstructing the notion of a homogenous Rwandan nation, the RPF regime's transition is facing both domestic and international criticism. Especially criticized is the restrictive arena in which the RPF allows for majoritarian liberal democracy. In restricting political parties on ethnic lines, despite President Kagame's commitment to a 'Rwandan path to democracy', the Tutsi leader's penchant to constitutionally engineer a model of 'consensual majoritarian democracy' has contributed to growing criticism from the international community especially. The Rwandan democracy has been characterized as an 'ethnocracy' favoring a Tutsi minority (Human Rights Watch, 2003).¹⁴

CONCLUSION:

Achieving 'Ubushingantahe' By Way of Different Democratic Means

In 2005, Rwanda and Burundi stand at the democracy-ethnic pluralism crossroads, a situation that is more particularly underscored by the fact that following deeply rooted violent conflict, both countries seek to use democratic nation-building as a means for peace-building. International democracy rating bodies describe Burundi's democratic transition in more successful terms, giving the country a (5,5) Partially Free rating. The country's efforts at including the Hutu into political power are especially commended for advancing democracy. Rwanda's democratic status, however, remains at a (6,5) Not Free rating due to the perception of

¹⁴ Human Rights Watch has argued that post-genocide Tutsi Rwandan leaders have manipulated ethnic and political divisions in a desperate bid to hold onto power, using the need for unity to attempt to justify tight control over political life and thus denying the political rights and civil liberties of most of the country's citizens ('Preparing for Elections: Tightening Control in the Name of Unity' *Human Rights Watch Paper*, May 2003).

the RPF remaining a Tutsi-dominated party that restricts Hutu political participation and opposition.¹⁵

The Freedom House performance assessments differ because both countries have chosen very different ‘democracy policy’ assumptions in their continuous quest for political development and democratization. Burundi relies on a method sanctioned by Crawford Young, who notes that the haunting question remains whether ethnocide as a mode of politics can ever be supplanted by any political order, which does not include power-sharing buttressed by a liberalized politics.¹⁶ For the Burundi, this model of inter-ethnic accommodation hopes to use democracy as a means to cultivate and manage ethnic divisions. Its institutions seek to foster compromise, inclusion and cooperation across ethnic cleavages.¹⁷

Ironically, while Young’s scholarly advice was suggested for post-genocidal Rwanda, that country has chosen what President Kagame refers to as ‘his own route to democracy’. The RPF views on Rwanda’s democratization are based on the notion that ethnic discrimination was the legitimizing tool of the first two Republics and thus the regime determined to establish ‘true democracy’ based on a genuine program uniting all Rwandans. Defined as a ‘consensual democracy’, the RPF’s program holds the idea of reaching a consensus to culminate in the ‘majority’s’ good ideas’. Rwanda’s program is intended to recreate a sense of community and

¹⁵ ‘2005 Country Ratings: Burundi and Rwanda’ <Freedomhouse.org>

¹⁶ Crawford Young, ‘Democracy and the Ethnic Question in Africa’ *Africa Insight* 27 (19917)

¹⁷ Richard Sandbrook, *Closing the Circle: Democratization and Development in Africa* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2000)

belonging among Rwandans, proving they can transcend their regional, religious or ethnic divisions.

Despite divergent present outcomes, in charting a future path that is both democratic and peaceful, both countries would do well to heed the advice of the third model of democracy posited in the thematic section of the current essay. Common languages, cultures, and races notwithstanding, deep-divisions between Hutus and Tutsi's have been reified as a result of a sordid recent history. Thus, it is important for both countries to view the current democratic mechanisms, institutions, and ideas as mere nascent building blocs through which to insert ethnic grievances that have emerged from deep-divisions into a democratic context which is open to continuous challenge, negotiation and renewal through dialogue and deliberation.

A radical democratic politics of this sort will ensure that ethnic identity grievances will find expression in public life. It is hoped that both countries employ the ethical discourse and expression associated with this model of democracy to extend cultural pluralism in a non-violent, healthy way. A democratic process that values pluralism of this kind will eventually turn established diversity into an active and constructive process that serves to foster mutual learning among diverse groups and help in forging societal priorities and national democratic goals. Indeed, the stated 'democratic' goals of both Rwanda and Burundi conforms with this model, which is to return to a pre-colonial status of a democratic nation-hood, characterized by one scholar as 'Ubishingantahe', a democratic polity where there existed coexistence between various political and cultural identities without discrimination by ethnic labeling, quotas and genocidal violence (Nnoli).

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