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Pluralism & Ethnic Conflict in Burundi: Legacies and Prognosis, 1962 - 2015

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Abstract Burundi, a landlocked East Central African nation has been prominent for the most part, for the wrong reasons –ethnicity and ethnic nationalism. Since independence in 1962, the country has moved from one incidence of massacre of its own citizens to another-in 1965, 1969, 1972,1988,1991,1993 up to 2015. Efforts made to ensure inter-ethnic cooperation and harmony-the Arusha Peace Agreement does not seem to work as it appears to be working for its ethnic kin, and regional ally-Rwanda to the north. What are the peculiarities (if any) of the Burundian society that can be identified as being responsible for this state of affairs? In situating the country within the pluralistic political ethos of the New World Order, it may be argued that ethnic conflict appears to have been accentuated by the demands of that order. Using the instrumentalist model in the analysis of ethnic conflict in plural African societies, this paper seeks to determine the legacies left behind by the culture of conflict and its possible prognostic course for the building of a virile and stable society in a globalized 21st century international system.

Key Words: Burundi, Ethnic Conflict, Arusha Peace Agreement, Instrumentalism.

Introduction

The aphorism “culture of conflict” is alien to indigenous African societies. Though conflict was, and is still inevitable at various levels of human relationship in society, in pre-colonial Africa, mechanisms existed for its amelioration, even outright avoidance, such that the tendency for it to become a culture or way of life of the people was effectively arrested.

In Burundi, or what was originally known as Ruanda-Urundi Kingdom the mechanisms for pre-colonial inter-group harmony was predicated more or less on a rigorous application and adherence to societal norms. With the onset of the colonial phase, those rules or norms were either allowed to decay or deliberately destroyed, so as to give way to new, colonially – induced social system that was alien to the people. It was this social system that gave rise to the so-called “culture of conflict” that still prevails to this day or so it seems. To understand the origins and dynamics of the conflict that now define Burundi society in contemporary times, it may be necessary to look at the pre-colonial society for a background.

Pre-Colonial Burundi:

An analysis of pre-colonial political and social structures of Burundi is essentially a focus on traditional Burundi society on the aspects mentioned above. From very ancient days, or at any rate, since the founding of the monarchy at the end of the 17th century⁽¹⁾, Burundi population was made up of four components – “*amoko*”. These included the Ganwa, the Hutu, the Tutsi and the Twa.⁽²⁾ The groups have shared the same language – *Kirundi*, and culture, worshipped the same god-*Imana*, obeyed orders from the same ruler or king –

Mwami; and occupied, and still occupy the same geographic space. It is on these grounds that one wonders whether they can appropriately be described as ethnic groups. The Hutus’ and the ‘Tutsis’⁽³⁾ are the main groups. Being agricultural and pastoral peoples respectively, they lived, and still live together in habitats dispersed on hillsides throughout the country. They maintained very close relationships through barter trade in all types of products. Other links were based on marriages – “*Ubukwe*; distribution of presents – ‘*ingemu*’, beer drinking sessions – ‘*ubutumire*’, and mutual aid -, ‘*Ikibiri*’.⁽⁴⁾

The population was structured around about 220 clans, and dispersed throughout the country and even outside it. They were organized in levels: at the first, there is the house – ‘*inzu*’, composed of members of the nuclear family, the second is the lineage – *Umur’yango*’, composed of descendants of the same ancestor, and third is the clan,⁽⁵⁾ whose members recognize each other by name, but may not know each other because of their geographical dispersal, as we indicated earlier. This dispersal of clans is actually a common feature of African societies of the Great Lakes – a background to the irrenditist feature and characteristics of ethnic conflict in the area; as we shall soon see. Some instances may help to prove the point made. The Bega are found both in Rwanda and Burundi, as well as the Bushi, in Eastern Zaire – Congo DRC. The Bajiji, the Bashambo and the Bacyaba are many in Burundi, Buha and Buhaya in Western Tanzania.

Names of certain clans also give an inkling of their places of origin – the Banyar wanda- Rwanda, the Banyabugfi – Bugufi, the Banyagisaka – Gisaka, the Buyugoma – Buyugoma, the Buha – Buha etc.

Others are directly attached to a famous historical personality. For example, the Bakando, Bavuna and Bavu bikiro identity with Ntare Rushatsi, founder of the Burundi monarchy, whereas E. Mworoha identifies the Bahanza and the Bashubi as exclusively Hutu, the Bategwa are particular to the Tutsi, the Banyoni particular to the Twa, the Barongo and the Banyagisaka common to Hutu and Tutsi, and the Barima found in the three aforementioned categories.⁽⁶⁾ The Ganwa are subdivided into four lineages – Butare, Bezi, Batage and Bamhbatsa, all descendants of the founder of the Burundi monarchy. They are perfectly separated in terms of identity between aristocracy and clan.⁽⁷⁾

As a social institution, the clan appears to have preceded the emergence of great monarchies in the Great Lakes region of Africa. Owing largely to their widespread and spatial distribution within the various kingdoms of Africa of the Great Lakes, the clan institution is still one of the basic elements of social organization in Burundi. It is observed that on occasions Burundians identify themselves not in terms of their 'ethnic' origins, but on the basis of their clan belongings.

On purely political basis, pre-colonial political organization was characterized by the existence of a territorial space over which a king exercised power. The king extended his power through authorities at the head of administrative subdivisions. These authorities comprised of chiefs who were appointed and dismissed at the discretion of the sovereign the '*mwami*' who was at the top of the hierarchy of kingly power.

Under the administrative sub-divisions over which the Chief exercised power, were sub-chieftaincies. These were administered by sub-chiefs who were appointed and dismissed by the chief. The sub-chiefs were comprised of both Tutsi and Hutu ethnicities. The chieftaincies that varied in size, and sometimes located in distinct geographical segments, were often administered by a Chief of royal lineage – Ganwa. At other times, however, such rulers may well come from more humble Hutu or Tutsi families that had distinguished themselves through devotion to the monarchy, and the national cause.

The king (*Mwami*) sparingly intervened in the running of the chieftaincies, making the chiefs to enjoy great autonomy but for the obligation of paying tribute in kind or in labour, as dictated by custom. To the contrary, the sub-chief who administered the sub-chieftaincies, were more strictly monitored and controlled by the chiefs who appointed them. A major peculiarity of the pre-colonial chieftaincies in Burundi was the unstable nature of their borders. This was due to the sporadic conflicts between and among chiefs in their bid to expand their chieftaincies and sub-chieftaincies. Due largely to this situation, the territorial sub-divisions over which a chief ruled

were not designated as geographical entities, instead, the governing chief was used to indicate the geographical origin of a person. Thus, the hill, the chief and the region were some of the references used by people to determine their administrative identities.

The pre-colonial state in Burundi manifested a characteristic feature of a nation, rather in tune with Benedict Andersons imagined communities thesis⁽⁸⁾. It was composed of human groupings in which individual were united with one another through material and spiritual relations, and being themselves different from individuals of other national groupings.⁽⁹⁾

There was also the *Ubushingantahe* institution. In Burundi tradition, this was open only to persons recognized for their integrity and ability to managing conflict over and beyond all partisan tendencies. Such persons were co-opted by the communities at the grassroots level to represent them at the higher levels, those of the sub-chiefs, chiefs and the King. These authorities had no power to divest them of their prerogatives since they did not appoint them. Only the grassroots of the communities who bestowed power on them had the right to punish them in the event of serious faults or unworthy social or moral conduct. Such were the intricacies of the pre-colonial Burundi society that made for social harmony rather than 'a culture of conflict'. A brief look at the colonial era will reveal both a legacy and a prognosis of conflict.

Colonial Burundi: 1889 – 1962

Much as we do not have space to delve so much into the history of colonial Burundi, nor do we have need for that,⁽¹⁰⁾ it is imperative that we state the outlines to enable us appreciate the movement of social forces that have culminated in the conflict we see today. We need an understanding of the rough outlines of power relations in Burundi in the period leading up to, and culminating in the eclipse of colonial power in 1962.

At the onset of colonial rule by the Germans in 1889, the monarchy had become well established. It had become both a focus of popular loyalty, and a major symbol of social protest. This was because on the eve of colonial rule in Burundi, the struggle for power was between the new *Mwami*, *Mwezi Gisabo* and his newly entrenched elder brothers collectively known as the *Batare* – Sons of *Ntare* (founder of the Burundi monarchy). From around 1860 to 1908, when he died, *Mwezi* attempted to evict his *Batare* brothers and nephews from their domain and replace them with his own sons – the *Bezi* or descendants of *Mwezi*. So during this general period, Burundi was fragmented into four distinct spheres of political influence – (1) the eastern region approximately one third of the country was under the control of *Batare* Princes, (2) the core area of the Kingdom, in and around the

royal capital of Muramvya was under the direct control of *Mwami Mwezi Gisabo*, (3) forming some kind of buffer zone between this core area and the *Batare* – controlled east were the domains of *Mwezi's* sons, the *Bezi* Princes; while (4) an elongated stripe of territory running on a north – south axis along Lake Tanganyika and the Ruziz River were various semi-independent Chiefdoms under Hutu or Tutsi control.⁽¹¹⁾ It is observed that the conflict that accompanied *Mwezi's* reign rarely, if ever, had anything to do with a straight Hutu-Tutsi opposition. The struggle for power was among the *Ganwa*. This marked a major difference between the pre-colonial and indeed colonial histories of Burundi and Rwanda. Whereas in Rwanda, the north-ward expansion of the kingdom at the turn of the century involved a head-on confrontation with pre-existing Hutu kingdoms, in Burundi, by contrast, the competitive struggle among princes required them not only to solicit, but maximize their support among both Hutu and Tutsi. Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, for the coming Hutu-Tutsi conflict, the kingship in Burundi was never identified with Tutsi supremacy.⁽¹²⁾

Things began to change markedly from 1929. In what it conceived as bringing about administrative efficiency, the Belgian authorities brought on a policy that was aimed at bringing together a number of previously independent chiefdoms under the authority of an influential *ganwa*, so as to consolidate smaller holdings into large territorial and administrative entities. In pursuit of this policy, between 1929 and 1933, the number of ‘chefferies’ (chiefdoms) dropped from 133 to 46, and to 35 by 1945.⁽¹³⁾

More significant were the changes that occurred pursuant to these reforms on the ethnic identity of office holders. As Joseph Gahama has indicated, few Hutu incumbents survived the 1929 reforms, as their number dropped from 27 on the eve of the reforms to 3 in 1933, and by 1945 all had disappeared.⁽¹⁴⁾ Though the reforms swept a great amount and number of those offices and officeholders away, but of the 10 that remained by 1945, all were held by Tutsi. See table 1.

Table 1: Ethnic Background of incumbent Chiefs, 1929 – 1945.

Year	Number	Batare	Bezi	Tutsi	Hutu
1929	133	41	35	30	27
1933	46	16	20	7	3
1937	44	15	20	8	1
1945	35	8	17	10	0

Source: Joseph Gahama, *le Burundi sous administration belge* (Paris, Karthala, 1983), 104 in Lemarchand, p. 44.

While we may not explain the outcome of this colonial policy as ostensibly targeted against the Hutu as an ethnic category, as there was general social unrest against aspects of the so-called social reforms of the colonialists, a look at the socio-ideological bent of the Europeans with regard to the ethnography of the Great Lakes peoples may be instructive.

It is well – established in the literature⁽¹⁵⁾ that missionary and colonial historiography or what may be more appropriately referred to as colonial anthropology classified the Burundi population into ‘races’ and ‘castes’. It made a clear-cut distinction between what it called Hamites, Bantus and Pyamies. The Tutsi were placed at the top of society, regarded as Hamite pastoralists, who came from the north to ‘civilize’ the Hutu, an agricultural population, seen to be related to Bantu speaking peoples. The ‘pygmoid’ *Twa*, whatever that meant, were relegated to the last rung of the social ladder, as the “true indigenous people of the territory”.

As much has already been said regarding the rather discredited Hamitic nonsense, as we indicated earlier, we do not intend to spend much intellectual capital on it here. Suffice it however to indicate that it would appear to have played a significant part in ensuring Tutsi gains in the political reforms of the colonial Belgian administration of the 1930s and 40’s, as we saw earlier. This was in conformity with what came to be seen as Belgian Indirect Rule system in Burundi. After accepting the mandate over Burundi from the United Nations, the Belgians found themselves in some dilemma between two policies. While some Colonialists were disposed to eliminating the ruling aristocracy for the majority Hutu, others tended to a cultivation of the *Ganwa* and Tutsi, whose leadership qualities had long been extolled, courtesy of the discredited ‘Hamitic’ Hypothesis. The controversy was however resolved in 1932 by the Resident Governor, *Ryckmans*. Writing in that year, he declared:

The Batutsi were born to rule. Their mere appearance already gives them considerable prestige over the inferior races that surround them. Their qualities and even their flaws dignify them even more.⁽¹⁶⁾

Based more or less on the above declaration, which turned into a policy, local collaborators were to be recruited from among the Tutsi Chiefs. We must note however that Hutu/Tutsi problem in Burundi is neither a social nor an economic problem. As noted by Rutake and Gahama, it is, and has remained essentially a political problem of how one or the other ethnic group comes to, and remains in power.⁽¹⁷⁾ But the contest was not a straight forward affair between Hutu and Tutsi in Burundi,

as it was in Rwanda, at the initial stages. This would become clearer perhaps when we look a bit closely at the post war years in Burundi politics.

Parties & Factions In Post War Rwanda

The post war years in Burundi were a period of intense social change and rising aspirations. Following the heightened nationalism that began to sweep through colonial Africa in the immediate aftermath of the war, Belgium could not commit itself to political reforms until 10 November 1959. This came by way of a two-fold programme – first there was to be a fundamental revamping of local administration. The cheffeeries became provinces, while the ‘sous-cheffeeries’ became communes. The communes were headed by a bourgomaster, who was assisted by a popularly elected Communal Council. The communal council was to serve as an electoral college to elect members of the ‘conseil du pays’, upon which legislative powers were to be gradually devolved. The Mwami was to act as a constitutional monarch.

Long before this declaration could be issued in November, as we noted above, several political parties had come into existence. Most notable of these were the Uprona-parti de l’Union et du Progress National, and the PDC – Parti Democrate Chretien; which identified with the Bezi and Batware families, respectively. The struggle between the Uprona and the PDC was no longer a competition for the control of chieftaincies, but for the capture of the state.

The decisive role played by the Belgian administration in lending its support to the PDC against the Uprona is attested to by the last Vice-Governor General of Rwanda and Burundi, Jean-Paul Harroy. Totally reminiscent of the role of Col Logiest in Rwanda. Harroy admitted “an undeniable connivance if not a complicity between the PDC and the tutelle”.⁽¹⁸⁾ Justifying his blatant favouritism, Harroy charged the Uprona with a litany of ‘sins’ – “a radical, anti – Belgian, pro-Lumumba, and dangerously pro-communist organization”. The brand of politics of the leader of the Uprona party, Prince Louis Rwagasore, the eldest son of Mwami Mwambutsa, was described as basically “stupid”, and his persons, equally stupid, conceited, spend-thrift and party-going.⁽¹⁹⁾ His father, Mwami Mwambatsa did not fare any better in Harroy’s judgement. His “dissipated life and dubious frequentations”, were cited as irrefutable proof of his incapacity to govern.

But by harriving Rwagasore and making him an advertant or inadvertent victim of Belgian colonialism, Harroy immeasurably added to his nationalist aura - a precise opposite of what was intended. Despite this situation rather than in spite of it, Rwagasore was uniquely suited to the political realities of his time and circumstance. As Lemarchand succinctly captured it: as the Mwami’s

eldest son, he was in an ideal position to claim a share of the legitimacy conferred by the crown; as a Western educated intellectual, he was appropriately sensitive to the expectations of the newly emergent urbanized elite, as founder and president of the cooperative des commercants du Burundi, he had a wide range of strategic contact in both urban and rural areas, and above all, his image had a special appeal to the Hutu masses, since his physical look was much closer to the standard Hutu stereotype than that of either Biroli or Ntundereza who paraded the distinctly aristocratic traits of their father, Baranyanka. Perhaps, much more importantly, the presumption that he took a Hutu girl for a wife dissipated all suspicion of ethnic prejudice around his person.⁽²⁰⁾ Rwagasore appeared destined to be the man chosen by providence to lead Burundi back to inter group harmony of the pre-colonial days in the period following the exit of the Colonialists. But fate decided otherwise!

Having been put under House Arrest, Rwagasore’s political fortunes plummeted in the communal elections of November 1960. The PDC garnered 942 seats out of 2876 total, and the Uprona got only 545. When however, Rwagasore was released in time for the legislative elections of September 1961, the Uprona received approximately 80 percent of the votes cast, with a total of 58 seats out of 64 available. With the Belgians all but sidelined, his PDC rivals defeated, Rwagasore as Prime Minister designate was now set to devote his energies to the task of governance, free from major opposition to his policies. But on October 13, 1961, as he was having dinner at a lakeside restaurant, Rwagasore was shot by a Greek Gunman, to be implicated in a PDC plot.

Rwagasore’s death not only constituted an irreparable loss of leadership, but it also destroyed whatever measure of ethnic cohesion he had built into Burundi politics and society. As the legitimacy of his nationalist role and credentials owed little to constitutional niceties, but to personal qualities, including that of being the *Mwami*’s eldest son, his death provided a critical background to the Hutu-Tutsi problem in post-colonial Burundi.

The Culture Of Conflict In Post-Colonial Burundi, 1962 – 1993

Rwagasore’s death would appear to be the first in a series of crises leading inexorably to a sharp polarization of ethnic feelings. Other aspects of the crises can be gleaned from what came to be perceived as a crisis of confidence in the ability of Hutu and Tutsi elite to resist the contagion effect of the Rwanda Revolution of the late 1950’s and early 1960’s.⁽²¹⁾ There was also the aspect that manifested itself as a crises of authority within the ruling party, causing a better struggle for leadership of the Uprona between Tutsi and Hutu elements. The last, and perhaps, the most important aspect, was a crisis of legitimacy which culminated in the

abolition of the monarchy in 1966, following a Tutsi-led coup within the Army. These crises fed upon one another, until the focus of conflict shifted away from princely – Ganwa factionalism; and came to centre almost exclusively on Tutsi-Hutu rivalries.

The so called ‘culture of conflict’ could be said to have set in in Burundi politics and society following these rivalries. It will be recalled that political power had for a long while remained in the hands of the royal family. Following the assassination of Prince Rwagasore, both Hutu and Tutsi intellectuals began to covete that power.

Burundi’s traditional monarch, the Mwami (king) had remained historically popular among Hutu and Tutsi. Having acceded to independence on 1 July 1962, alongside its northern ally and ethnic kin, Rwanda, democratic institutions were still in their inchoate stages in Burundi. The Mwami, Mwambuts IV Bangiricene established a constitutional monarchy, comprising equal numbers of Hutu and Tutsi elements.

The king called for legislative elections in May 1965. A Hutu Premier appointed by the king (Mwamit), Pierre Ngendandaumwe, was assassinated 3 days into his office. The fact that the assassin turned out to a Rwandan Tutsi refugee employed by the United States Embassy in Bujumbura, had the effect of nourishing Hutu-Tutsi hatred and extremism in Burundi. As if that was not enough outrage to the Hutu, the King proceeded to exasperate them the more by appointing a famous Ganwa of Bezi origins, and a long time protégé of the Court – Leopold Biha, as Prime Minister to replace the assassinated Hutu. This was in spite of the fact that the Hutu emerged with a solid majority of 23 out of a 33 seat National Assembly in the legislative elections of 1965 referred to earlier.

As if this once again was not enough to enrage the Hutu, the Court decided to reduce the number of communes from 18 to 78, and transform the elected burgomasters, the vast majority of whom were Hutu, to mere functionaries appointed by and responsible to the Mwami. As Lemarchand has indicated, “by making a parody of the constitution, and concentrating even more power around the throne, the Mwami thoroughly exasperated the Hutu elite.”⁽²²⁾

This was the setting of the attempted coup of 19 October 1965. In the early morning hours of that day, a group of Hutu army and gendarmerie officers drove to the Prime Ministers house, summoned him outside and greeted him with a volley of bullets, fired at point –blank range. As they tried to force their way into the palace, they met with unexpected resistance from the *Mwami*’s personal guard. The coups had failed!

Apart from the physical elimination of the Hutu of any standing, ranging from the army, gendarmerie, politicians, even students; another immediate consequence of the aborted coup to the Hutu ethnic community in Burundi was their total loss of political control. As indicated by a commentator, as a direct consequence of the attempted coup, “power became the exclusive monopoly of Tutsi elements”. Aside the physical elimination of the entire first generation of Hutu leaders, one other most significant consequence of the abortive coup was the near collapse of the government machine built around the court. It will be recalled that in the midst of the chaos occasioned by the attempted coup, the *Mwami* had fled from the palace to seek refuge across the border in Uvira, Zaire (now Congo DRC). With the *Mwami* and his courtiers outside the country, the Kingdom was literally without a government. This was largely the situation until 24 March 1966, when the *Mwami* issued a royal decree from Geneva, entrusting to his heir apparent, Prince Charles Ndizeye, “special powers to coordinate and control the activities of the government and the secretariat of the state”.⁽²³⁾

On July 8, 1966, Ndizeye formally acceded to the throne under the dynastic name of Ntare III. Following the accession, another round of manouevering between the crown and the government ensued. Ntare proceeded to reign with the active support of the army. Capt-Michel Micombero, the representative of the army in the court, and who had led the royal guards that resisted the coupists of 1965, combined the functions of Prime Minister and Minister of Defence.

As the tug of war between the court and the government intensified, while attending the first anniversary of the coup that brought Mobutu Sese Seko to power in Kinshasha on November 28, 1966, Ntare III learnt over the Radio that he has been deposed by the army. The shortest reign in the history of the Burundi Kingdom: 8 July to 28 November 1966 – ran its course. Capt Michel Micombero, who stepped in, proclaimed the First Republic and abolished the Monarchy. He proceeded to appoint a predominantly Tutsi Government amid protest across the country. These developments, including the inexplicable return of Ntare III to Burundi six years later, to meet his death in the hands of Hima-the Tutsi subgroup located in Southern Burundi – officers, who saw the return of Ntare a potential rallying point for the Hutu majority, led inexorably to the 1972 genocide.

The Hutu Rising & The 1972 Genocide

One would have thought that Capt. Micombero would have been swept away alongside the monarchy, since he was a principal actor in Ntare’s reign, as indicated. But that was not to be. What happened instead was that the new dispensation came to be referred to as “Micomberist

Revolution". The Micromberist First Republic' actually made strenuous effort to project a revolutionary image for itself. But the revolutionary rhetoric was dwarfed by the reality of a state that had few bonds of co-existence between Hutu and Tutsi, instead increasingly projecting an arena for a seemingly endless factional struggle among their politicians, and army men for political dominance.

This contest took a sinister tone in 1969, when an unverified public disclosure of a plan of a Hutu – instigated coup, resulted to the execution of some twenty government and army personalities of Hutu extraction, and the imprisonment and execution of other scores of Hutu soldiers. These events, coupled with the one of 1965 convinced the Hutu elite that armed rebellion was about the only alternative to Tutsi hegemony in Burundi. It was this conviction that set the stage for the Hutu rising, and attendant genocide of 1972.

The Hutu rising was a spontaneous outburst of violent hysteria unleashed by the Hutu on their Tutsi neighbours on 29 April 1972. A US Deputy Chief of Mission in Bujumbura captured the events thus:

Bands of Mulelist Hutus entered Burundi during last week from Tanzania and started slaughter in Nyanza-Lac and particularly Rumonge, April 29. Troubles spread to Bururi where many soldiers at military training camps killed. Numerous reports suggest many officials in Bururi province also killed and that fighting was continuing throughout the province. We have reliable report Burundi armed forces machine gunning groups of insurgent from air.⁽²⁴⁾

In what was dubbed a selective genocide, the army and Tutsi Militia killed an estimated 100,000 people, targeting particularly teachers, students, the clergy and other Hutu intellectual as well as Hutu soldiers.⁽²⁵⁾ As the dust of the genocide settled, the government, the army and the civil service became virtually totally purged of Hutu elements. The prospects for an unbridled Tutsi hegemony appeared not just brightened, but prevalent.

But that was how it seemed. The reality was indeed the opposite. The legitimacy of the seemingly "impregnable" Tutsi hegemony could not transcend the limitations inherent in the logic of minority rule. As noted by a commentator, the ruling class

was now caught in a gigantic trap. As many of its elite got imbued with egalitarian, even revolutionary ideas; coups and counter coup became the order of the day in a post-Micromberist Burundi.

Lt Col. Jean-Baptist Bagaza replaced Micrombero as president in a coup in 1976, but he continued the policy of discrimination against the Hutu. Stressing national unity and ethnic inclusiveness, rather reminiscent of post-genocide Rwanda, he banned all references to ethnicity, as incitement to racial hatred. But this was a ruse, as it turned out to be an instrument of gagging the Hutu, and preventing from complaining against the discrimination they faced on daily basis.

Following his other dictatorial tendencies against other segments of society, including the church – about 80% of whose Missionaries were expelled, Bagaza was overthrown in a 1987 coup that brought in Major Pierre Buyoya.

Buyoya came with a reconciliation initiative, appointing a Multiethnic Commission to study the ethnic question. He also proceeded to restore normal relations between church and state whereupon many of the Missionaries expelled by Bagaza returned. Past violence in Burundi and Rwanda, involving the two ethnic communities in both countries – Hutu and Tutsi, complicated efforts at reconciliation, and made the commission largely ineffectual. But it marked the first attempt at state-sponsored reconciliation of the ethnicities in Burundi. Others followed, and culminated in the Arusha Peace Agreement of 2004, that ended the genocide and civil war 1993 – 2005.

How can we explain the apparent failure of these initiatives, especially against the background of the seeming effectiveness of the Arusha Accords in neighbouring Rwanda. We shall briefly look at the initiatives themselves, including the political setting upon which they were to operate.

Major Buyoya, as we have seen, made the first move at national reconciliation. Unlike Micrombero, with his "blissful indifference" to Hutu demands, Buyoya began to show some willingness to recognize the legitimacy of such demands. From this moment, Burundi entered a new phase in its history, one marked by a passage, if not yet to pluralist democracy, but at least some form of liberalization. For the first time in 23 years, the country had a government consisting of an equal number of Hutu and Tutsi, and headed by a Hutu Prime Minister. A Charter of National Unity was proclaimed to herald the advent of a new era dedicated to the construction of a society free from prejudice and discrimination. A new constitution overwhelmingly approved in a referendum, set specific limitations on the powers of the executive, stipulated the conditions of a multiparty democracy and enshrined the sanctity of basic human rights.

Further democratic credentials of the Buyoya regime could be gauged from the report of the National Commission to Study the Question of National Unity (1989), and the report on the Democratization of Institutions and Political Life (1991).⁽²⁶⁾ While the first was an impressive Hutu – Tutsi effort to chart a new course towards unity, the second was a lengthy exploration of the meaning of democracy and how to democratize existing institutions. As events began to unfold, few knowledgeable observers, both within and outside Burundi would claim that international pressures were not decisive factors behind the reforms. This, in itself, became a major weakness of the reforms, as the politically conscious Hutu saw the reforms as virtually being forced on the government by the weight of international public opinion.

In spite of this, the Buyoya regime went ahead to institute more reforms. In addition to the somewhat consociational (power-sharing model), he went ahead to endorse, some measures articulated by the above mentioned National Charter on the Evolution, and Registration of Political Parties, Art 57 of the new constitution notably “forbids political parties from identifying themselves, in form, action or any other manner, with any ethnicity, region, religion, sect or gender”. It thus prevented a party like Palipehutu – (Hutu political party) from contesting elections, much less gaining power. Similar restrictions were to apply in the organization of political parties:

In order to be registered, political parties are obligated to endorse the charter of National Unity and... to proscribe interance, ethnicism, regionalism, xenophobia and recourse to violence in any form.⁽²⁷⁾

Much as these constitutional provisions embodying the reforms of the Charter of National Unity were welcomed by a wide spectrum of the population, even outsiders, they did not appear to have satisfied all concerned. Much of the ‘give-and-take’, and bargaining implicit in the concept of power sharing was heavily mortgaged by the legacy of violence inherited by the Buyoya regime. A sense of martyrdom remained prevalently felt by those who suffered the most in the recurrent orgy of violence - the Hutu. The responsibility for the agonies they had endured since 1972, if not 1965, had always fallen squarely on the Tutsi, especially the Tutsi – Hima of Bururi. The Hutu felt that collective guilt needed to be publicly acknowledged, and some form of reparation made, even in the form of a symbolic gesture. But the Buyoya regime would have none of that. Consequently, while the mainstream Hutu population could not get themselves to be inspired by the gestures of

accommodation and the pluralistic political programmes of the Third Republic, even as they played along, the hard line core of the Uprona political party (Mainly Tutsi party) considered Buyoya a sell-out, if not indeed, a “fift columnist”. This was the setting for the multiparty elections of 1993 that ushered Burundi to the tragedy of that year.

How and why did the tragedy unfold? A prognosis shall be attempted presently. This will also throw more light into other aspects of the Buyoya reforms. It will be recalled that discussion on the draft charter for national unity had been organized at all leading levels of society, before it was subjected to a referendum. The referendum demonstrated the desire to ensure the participation of all citizens in a political option that was to guarantee democratic and progressive future for the country.

When it was finally organized on 5 February 1991, the referendum resulted in 89. 21 percent votes for its adoption.⁽²⁸⁾ This massive vote for the adoption of the charter demonstrated the determined will of the people, despite their reservations, to contribute to the struggle for the triumph of human rights, and the building of a peaceful society. Most significant was the fact that the referendum took the form of “greatest transparency”.⁽²⁹⁾ without the least manipulation, intimidation or interference by the authorities whatsoever.

Details of the charter, as it concerns the rights of the citizens can be gleaned from Rutake and Gahama, cited, but its major provisions may be itemized here to guide informed judgement. These provisions include the duty to respect the exigencies of human dignity and the respect of other persons, the right of all citizens to participate in the running of the affairs of the state, in conformity with the law and for the promotion of national interest. The charter further provided that every citizen has the right to take part in political competition and to loyally accept that the best should win.

Another significant aspect of the National Charter was the setting up of the constitutional commission, composed of men and women of all political sensitivities, religious beliefs and social categories. The institutions of the commission entrenched democratic ethos, gave legitimacy to the rights of the Burundi people to choose their own leaders, to control them during their terms of office and to ensure the application of the principle of alternation. The result of the commission was embodied in a report which was subjected to national debate and to the opinion of the people before the text of the new constitution embodying it was put to popular vote.

The constitution, which once again, consecrated political pluralism, and respect of the legitimate right of the citizenry, was put to a referendum on 9

March 1992. It was once again adopted by an unprecedented 97.2 percent of votes cast. The new constitution thus generated a pluralist democracy that allowed each citizen actual participation in public life. It was this constitution with such auspicious provisions, that the June 1993 presidential elections took place in Burundi.

Organized and conducted in a most transparent manner, Melchior Ndadaye, a Hutu of the PRODEBU political party won with 65 percent of the popular vote. His opponent, incumbent Pierre Buyoya, came a distant second with 33 percent of the votes. To the delight and elation of almost the entire country, President Buyoya, a Tutsi Hima “did not hesitate a minute to admit his defeat and recognize the verdict of the ballot box”⁽³⁰⁾ Ndadaye not only became the first Hutu president, but won the first ever free and fair multiparty election in the history of Burundi.

But no sooner had the results of the election been made public than thousands of Tutsi students and hardcore circles of the UPRONA political persuasion took to the streets to protest against what some referred to as an “ethnic census”. As if that was not enough outrage, some forty Tutsi troops of the Second Command Battalion, with a handful other officers staged an abortive coup d’etat on 2 July, attempting to seize power from Ndadaye. Ignoring the distraction, Ndadaye went ahead to form his government, which comprised of 7 Tutsi and 15 Hutu, with Sylvie Kinigi, a Tutsi as Prime Minister. On 10 July 1993 Ndadaye was formally inaugurated as the President of the Republic, bringing to an end a transition that began some four years earlier and equally bringing to a close (or so it seemed), nearly three decades of Tutsi hegemony. However, 3 months later, on 21 October 1993, History came full circle – Ndadaye was assassinated by the Tutsi-dominated Burundi army.

Genocide & Civil War, 1993 – 2005

The assassination of President Ndadaye resulted to what is sometimes referred to as the genocide and civil war 1993 – 2005. This was a decade of civil war that followed the assassination, as about 300,000 people were killed in clashes and reprisals against the local population. It was in the midst of the civil war that an internal peace process started in June 1998. This was to prepare the ground for the signing of the Arusha Peace Agreement in August 2000. This agreement, a major political breakthrough, one would say, involved nineteen political organizations and movements.⁽³¹⁾ They included; (1) The government of the Republic of Burundi (2) The National Assembly (3) The Alliance Burundo-Africaine pour le Salut (ABASA) (4) The Alliance National pour le Droit et le Developpement (ANADDE) (5) The Alliance des Vaillants (AV-INTWARI) (6) The Conseil National pour la Defense De la Democratie (CNDD) (7) The Front pour la Democratie au

Burundi (FRODEBU) (8) The Front pour la Liberation Nationale (FROLINA) (9) The Parti Socialiste et Panafricainste (INKN20), (10) The Parti pour le Redressement National (PARENA) (11) The Parti Independent des Travailleurs (PIT) (12) The Parti Liberal (PL) (13) The Parti Du Peuple (PP) (14) The Parti pour la Reconciliation du Peuple (PRP) (15) The Parti Social-Democratie (PSD) (16) The Rellieement pour la Democratie et le Developpment Economique et Social (RADDES) (17) The Rassemblement du Peuple Burundais (RPB) (18) The Parti pour la Liberation du Peuple Hutu (PALIPEHUTU) and (19) The Union pour le Progres National (UPRONA).

The main parties to the talks that eventually produced the Peace Agreement were UPRONA, PRODEBU, the CNDD and PALIPEHUTU. It must be indicated that the political wing of the CNDD, as led by Leonard Nyangoma signed the Arusha agreement, the FDD refused to do so, declining the CNDD political leadership as illegitimate.⁽³²⁾ It will be recalled that following Ndadaye’s assassination, his political party FRODEBU had splintered into the CNDD, and its armed wing, the FDD.⁽³³⁾ The split eventually led to the formation of a more radical *CNDD – FDD. Under the leadership of Jean Bosco Ndayikengu - *rukiye, the CNDD FDD initially refused to participate in the Arusha Peace Agreement, alongside its equally radical rebel soul-mate – the FNL. The CNDD-FDD however finally signed the Peace Agreement in 2003, and joined the transitional government, the FNL continued its rebellion until 2006 when it signed a cease fire agreement.

The Arusha Peace Agreement.

Typifying the situation in Burundi as political conflict with important ethnic dimensions, the Arusha Agreement had, among other things the aim of developing a system of democratic governance for the country that would ensure the security of ethnic minorities. The consociatolist agreement was to ensure power-sharing at the political level by dividing executive powers between a president and two vice-presidents from different political parties and ethnic backgrounds. It further required a high majority to pass legislation and amend the constitution.⁽³⁴⁾ This provision was not only aimed at preventing legislative dominance by a single ethnic group, but also to promote dialogue and consensus across political divides.

To promote power-sharing in the security sector, the agreement made provision for the various armed groups to be integrated into the existing army, and for the army not to comprise more than 50 percent of a single ethnic group. This was to ensure ethnic balance that would in turn ensure stability in the armed forces, prevent ethnic violence and reduce the possibility of a coup d’etat.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Consequent upon this provision, the army

received an infusion of Hutu soldiers, thereby removing the previous dominance of the Tutsi elite.

These changes have been captured in more graphic details. The Arusha Agreement established the principle of a 50-50 ethnic quota system for the new National Defense Force (NDF), in contrast to the old Armed Forces of Burundi (FAB), which was hitherto, almost exclusively Tutsi, despite the Hutu making up about 85 percent of the population. Besides, positions in the top ranks of the integrated military were split 60-40 between those from the old FAB Officer corps and their opposite numbers in command of the CNDD – FDD. This perhaps may account for the failure of the recent attempted coup d'état that followed President *Nkurunziza's* bid for a third term in office in 2015.

In preparing the way for a new constitution and detailing the new transitional political arrangement, the Arusha agreement stipulated that the first post-transitional president would be elected by the National Assembly. It was under this framework that Pierre *Nkurunziza* of the CNDD – FDD was elected Burundi's President in 2005, even when his party was not yet signatory to the Arusha agreement.

Instrumentalism, Multipartyism And Consociationalism

As a theoretical model of analyzing conflict in plural African societies, the instrumentalist theorem remains relevant in understanding the conflict in Burundi, and other areas of the African Great Lakes. According to Bonny Ibhawoh, instrumentalism remains one of the three dominant typologies into which theories of ethnicity in Africa fall.⁽⁴⁵⁾ The instrumentalist model is seen as a tool in the hands of both the colonial state and the post-colonial elite in furthering their interests, especially politically.

A cursory look at our analysis so far reveals that both the colonial Belgian authorities and their local nationalist counterparts in Burundi made use of the ethnic factor in mobilizing and galvanizing the local populace to support and participate in their various strategies to retain political power. Despite the zeal and ferocity with which these strategies have been pursued, the question remains, how have they helped in assuring the greatest good to the greatest number? Ethnicity may have helped the colonialists to manipulate and ensure the exploitation of both material and human resources in Burundi, in supporting one group, or the other as it suits their interests and persuasion, it may have helped the post-colonial local elite in sustaining social hatred in order to maintain social privileges, but how has all these helped the society to make progress?

Multipartyism is both a hand-maid, and a counter to instrumentalism. Unlike its ethnic kin and ally to the south-Rwanda, Burundi acceded to independence in 1962, as a multiparty state. It will

be recalled that following WW II Ruanda - Urundi had become a United Nations Trust Territory under Belgium administrative authority. By 10 November 1959, Belgium, having committed, itself to political reform, legalized the emergence of competing political parties. Consequent upon this, two political parties emerged - the Union for National Progress (UPRONA), a multi ethnic party, led by Tutsi Prince Louis Rwagasore, and the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) supported by Belgium. Following the assassination of Prince Rwagasore, and the subsequent descent to ethnic conflict, as we have seen; a multiplicity of political parties emerged, to the end that on the heels of the inauguration of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation agreement, about 20 political organizations existed in Burundi.

Conventional Wisdom dictates that in a situation where there are two dominant contending ethnicities for political power, this multiplicity of political platforms would have worked to avert inter-ethnic conflict and subsequent violence, or at least reduce it to manageable limits. This is more so when we see statecraft deliberately engineered to discourage ethnic based political parties from emerging, as Buyoya's National Commission sought to entrench. In spite of these, conflict and violence seemed to escalate rather than reduce. What can be responsible for this state of affairs?

This brings us to the consociational model of power sharing. Since multipartyism and political engineering to discourage ethnic partisan political platforms could discourage ethnic violence, it was felt that only a deliberate power – sharing formula of the consociational model could guarantee inter-ethnic harmony, and induce progress in the political economy of Burundi. The Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement was thus inaugurated to achieve that objective. But has the objective been achieved?

Conclusion:

This paper is of the opinion that so long as there is a lack of shared national vision of societal reconstruction and progress in Burundi, the undercurrent of ethnic conflict and violence will continue to fan the embers of hatred, distrust and mutual fears of annihilation by the two dominant ethnicities. The negotiations and political compromises upon which national decisions are made must take into consideration the fractured social fibre of the country, rather than focusing on group, individual, even egoistic gains and benefits.

To avoid continued or renewed interethnic violence, people of all ethnic groups must develop a consciousness of the critical role they and groups must play in the peace building and social reconstruction processes. To this end, opportunities need to be afforded the people to share their narratives of war, to facilitate mutual understanding and compassion for one another. This has been the

experience of deeply - divided societies where atrocities have been committed by one against the other. There must be some sort of platform of Truth

and Reconciliation where one can say to the other: we are sorry for what has happened, and both can say to themselves: Never Again!

Notes / References

1. See Paschal Rutake and Joseph Gahama, "Ethnic Conflict in Burundi", In Okwudiba Nnoli, (ed) *Ethnic Conflicts in Africa*, Basford, Nottingham, CODESRIA, 1998, P. 79.
2. For details of these categories as to the divisions and conflicts potentials on ethnic basis of colonial and post-colonial Burundi Society, see Rutake and Gahama, cited, p. 103.
3. We are hesitant at the addition of 's' to pluralize the categories since they are not English words. We think the use of the article 'The' is enough to pluralize or capture the entire people rather than an individual - viz the Tutsi or the Hutu and a Tutsi or a Hutu, respectively.
4. Rutake & Gahama, p. 80.
5. In Burundi, the word 'Umuryango' is used to mean both the clan and lineage. This tends to lead to confusion.
6. See E. Mworoha, *Peoples and Kings of Africa Around the Great Lakes*, Dakar, NEA, 1977, pp 30 – 43.
7. In Burundi, according to Rutake and Gahama, names of Kings follow a cycle of sequence: Ntare gave birth to Batare, Mwezi to Bezi, Mutaga to the Mwambutsa and then another Ntare and another Mwezi, p. 103.
8. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, London, Verso, 1993.
9. Rutake and Gahama, p. 83.
10. So much literature already exist on the subject, Rene Lemarchand, *Burundi, Ethnic Conflict and Genocide*, Cambridge, Woodrow Wilson, 1994, Joseph Gahama, *Le Burundi Sous administration belge*, Paris, Karthala, 1983, etc.
11. Rene Lemarchand, *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide*, Cambridge, Woodrow Wilson, 1994, p.37.
12. See E. Mworoha, p. 115, R. Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*, London, Pall Mall, 1970, p. 29, T. Laely, *Personal Communication*, U.P. July 29, 1992.
13. Lemarchand, p. 43.
14. Joseph Gahama, 1983, p. 104.
15. See E. Everarts, *Agricultural Monography of Ruanda – Urundi*, Brussels, 1947; Sopeke, J. H. & Grant R, *Les Sources du Nic*, Journal duin voyage de deconvertes, 1860 – 1863, New York, Elsevieor, 1971, etc.
16. P. Rykmans, *To Dominate, to Serve*, Brussels, 1933, p. 26.
17. Rutake and Gahama, p. 79.
18. See Jean – Paul, Harroy, *Burundi: 1955 – 1962*, Brussels, Hayez, 1987, p. 399, in Larmarchand, p. 52.
19. Harroya, pp 267 – 68.
20. Lermarchand, pp 52 – 53.
21. This was a series of developments which ultimately resulted to the inauguration of what came to be referred to as the Hutu Republic, the abolition of the Tutsi Monarchy, and the proclamation of the Rwanda as a Republic. See Sylvanus Okoro, *Ethnic Nationalism in Rwanda and the African Great Lakes Region*, Saabruken LAP LAMBERT Academic Publ., 2016, pp. 84-91, also in <http://d-nb.de>.
22. Lamarchand, p. 70.
23. Lemarchand, p. 74.
24. See Michael Hoyt "Messages Concerning the Burundi Massalces to and from American Embassy in Bujumbura". Melville Herskovist Library, North Western University, Evanson III, 1972.
25. See Human Rights Watch, *Proxy Targets: Civilians in the War in Burundi*, New York, Washington, London, Brussels, nd, p. 12.

26. See Lemarchand, p. 131.
27. See article 20, in Lemarchand, p. 163.
28. Paschal Rutake and Joseph Gahama, "Ethnic Conflict in Burundi", in Okwudiba Nnoli (ed), *Ethnic Conflict in Africa*, Dakar, *Codesria*, 1998, p. 97.
29. Rutake and Gahama, *Ibid*.
30. Lemarchand, p. 179.
31. While the Arusha document indicates 19 political organizations as being involved the Peace Agreement, Yolaude Bouka insists that the Arusha Peace Agreement was the result of negotiations "between 20 Burundian groups and political parties", without indicating them. See Yolande Bouka, "Central African Report; Status and dynamics of the political situation in Burundi". Institute for Security Studies, Issue 1 July 2014, p 2.
32. Bouka, p. 2.
33. See Peter Uvin, "Ethnicity and Power in Rwanda, Different Paths to Mass Violence", *Comparative Politics* 31 (3), 1999, p. 262.
34. In the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, signed 28 August 2000 Article 4a stipulates that constitutional amendment requires a four fifth majority in the National Assembly and two thirds majority in the Senate, while organic laws require three fifth majority in the National Assembly and the Senate approval. For much of these provisions, see articles 6.5 and 6.6 Protocol II. Democracy and Governance.
44. See protocol II, Democracy and Governance, articles 11.5.2, and 14.1.9.
45. See Bonny Ibhawoh, Beyond "Instrumentalism and Constructivism: Reconceptualizing Ethnic Identities in Africa", paper present at the 55th Annual Congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria, ABU, Zaria, 25 – 27 Oct., 2010, p. 1.