

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

George Simmel,<sup>1</sup> perhaps the first modern sociologist to write about conflict and its attendant effects,

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<sup>1</sup> George Simmel, a renowned American sociologist, published his seminal study of the fight in 1908. The work was the first to transcend the confines of evolutionist thinking about violence which had viewed intergroup conflict mainly as an instrument of selection. From the evolutionist point of view, Sim

saw conflict as a basic and natural process of social interaction. In his view, people are naturally

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aggressive, conflictual creatures. Archaeological and historical records from the earliest times show people engaged in struggles with one another. Thus, conflict exists within each of us: it is present in the dealings of any two persons whose interests or relations are interdependent or opposed. Conflict is inherent in the life of every group and every organisation, formal or informal. This widespread fear engenders emotional and pseudo-rational reactions, which culminate in a collective strategy calling for denial, control and possible elimination.<sup>2</sup>

At the beginning of the last century, the definition of conflict was usually derived from the biological concept of competition. Competition occurs when two or more individuals, populations or species simultaneously use a resource that is actually or potentially limited. Conflict results from competition, but is neither automatic nor inevitable. When conflicts have already descended into violence, they are much more often settled by preventative or compensatory strategies than by confrontation. In a groundbreaking book in 1957, Mark and Snyder asserted that:

conflict arises from a scarcity of positions and resources. It involves at least two parties. The parties are engaged in interaction composed of opposing actions and counteractions. Their behaviour is intended to threaten, injure, annihilate, or otherwise control the opposition, thus enabling the contending parties to gain at each other's expense. It also involves the acquisition or exercise of power or the attempt at acquisition or exercise.<sup>3</sup>

Taking Raymond and Snyder's definition of conflict into account, we realise that peace within or among countries refers, not to the absence of conflict, but to the process of handling conflict so that it does not escalate into large-scale violence.<sup>4</sup> As the twentieth century progressed, people began to search for more plausible ways by which to define a conflict situation. Many schools of thought emerged, and from the many that put forward their arguments, three main approaches can be distinguished:

- The operational approach, focussing on the ethics of antagonism, in particular on the

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<sup>2</sup> I.W. Schroder and B.E Schmidt,(eds), *Anthropology of Violence and Conflict*, Routledge, London, 2001, p. 21

<sup>3</sup> M. Raymond and R.C. Snyder, 'The Analyses of Social Conflict: Towards an Overview and Synthesis', in *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 1 No .23, 1957, p. 219

<sup>4</sup> J.S. Himes, *Conflict and Conflict Management*, University of Georgia Press, Athens, 1980, p. 2

measurable material and political causes of the conflict.

- The cognitive approach, focussing on the dynamics of the cultural construction of war in a given society.
- The experimental approach that looks at violence as not necessarily confined to situations of inter-group conflict but as something related to individual subjectivity, something that structures people's everyday lives, even in the absence of an actual state of war.<sup>5</sup>

Many African countries are made up of smaller nations (an aggregation of people of common origin and language). When intrastate conflict pits nations against one another, there is a high probability that a systematic effort by one nation to annihilate the enemy nation could be contemplated. This was usually referred to as genocide in the last part of the twentieth century. Until recently, there is hardly any conflict that does not demonstrate one or probably all of the above mentioned parameters.

This argument suggests that since time immemorial there have been instances in which people of the same race have, with catastrophic consequences, taken up arms against one another. In different places and at different times in history, this phenomenon has been given various names. In Russia, after the Bolshevik revolution, the systematic killings of the Slavs were called pogroms; the extermination of Jews during the Second World War was commonly referred to as the holocaust, and the killings in the Great Lakes of Africa during the last part of the twentieth century was known as genocide. In the Great Lakes, the magnitude of the conflict, its course and its ramifications, suggest a more co-ordinated and sustained effort by one group to exterminate the other. The conflict in the Great Lakes of Africa is in line with what LA Coser has defined as:

A struggle over values or claims to status, power and scarce resources in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values but also to neutralise, injure or eliminate their rivals.<sup>6</sup>

The consequences of such a sustained effort have been the retardation of civilisation and the death of more than four million people in the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Schroder and Schmidt, *Anthropology of Violence and Conflict*, p. 3

<sup>6</sup> L.A. Coser, 'Conflict: Social Aspects', in David Sills (ed), *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, Macmillian, New York, 1968, p. 232

<sup>7</sup> R, Lemarchand, *Ethnicity as Myth: The view from Central Africa*, Occasional paper, presented at the Centre of African Studies, University of Copenhagen, 4<sup>th</sup> May 1999, p. 12

Burundi, a small central African country, witnessed an unprecedented conflict that pitted the *Hutu* ethnic group against the *Tutsi*, after the assassination of the first democratically elected president in 1993. It should be recalled that since independence in 1962, the only general election that has been conducted in this country was in 1993. The conflict that continued after the election and which is still very prevalent, has its roots in pre-colonial times, and was reinforced during the colonial period with the adoption and implementation of policies inapplicable to, and undesirable for, existing African realities. Prior to colonialism, conflict situations in Africa were quarrels between centralised polities and their peripheral overlords, and princely claimants to the throne, slave raids on another polity, or fights over cattle and grazing land. During colonialism, these squabbles amongst African societies were further heightened by the colonial policies of assimilation and indirect rule. Such colonial policies pitted ethnic groups against one another and contributed greatly to the animosity between the *Hutu* and the *Tutsi* in Burundi today.<sup>8</sup>

In the post-colonial period, the *Mwami* (king) and successive military regimes have neglected potential areas of conflict within Burundian society. Major strides were never undertaken to initiate confidence-building amongst Burundians. Colonial policies of segregation were sustained and given even more credence. The inability of post-colonial regimes to address segregation policies, and the apparent lack of interest in the plight of the Burundian people, has greatly exacerbated the unwillingness to embrace peaceful initiatives.

Declining resources for engagement, including development aid and the apparent intractability and complexity of conflicts in Africa, led to a situation in which it was difficult for policy-makers to prevent or terminate armed conflict in the region. The United States of America, by avoiding a repeat of their misadventure in Mogadishu in 1992, has seriously limited her ability to make credible policy commitments in the Great Lakes region. With armed conflicts ending in Mozambique, South Africa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, of late, in Angola, following the death of Jonas Savimbi, the perception of conflict in Africa and the record of international response to them is grim. This attitude

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<sup>8</sup> G. Prunier, *The Rwandan Crisis, History of a Genocide*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1995, p. 45

can partly be explained in terms of Afro-pessimist theories adopted towards Africa by the West at the end of the Cold War.<sup>9</sup>

The inability of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) - and, more recently, the African Union (AU), as well as the United Nations (UN), to avert the crisis in the Great Lakes, let alone advance concrete resolution strategies, is cause for concern. With the resurgence of new conflicts caused by forces emerging in Liberia, the Horn of Africa and Sierra Leone in the first quarter of the 1990s, the OAU was called upon to act swiftly or be buried in an avalanche of conflicts and coups. Considering this immense pressure, the OAU established the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (MCPMR) at its July 1993 summit in Cairo, Egypt. With limited resources and an ill-equipped secretariat, the MCPMR's statutory Commission on Mediation, Conciliation and Arbitration, which was a watchdog for conflict prevention, management and resolution, never become operational. The Burundian and Rwandan crisis of 1993 and 1994 clearly attested to the inability of these bodies to contain, let alone to manage, Africa's problems. Conflicts in Africa have therefore always tended to be managed by sub-regional organisations.<sup>10</sup>

High expectations have surrounded the role that sub-regional organisations could play in the resolution of armed conflict in Africa, especially since the continent is very vast, with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, therefore seeming more amenable to localised processes. These sub-regional organisations do not, however, really function at grassroots' level, and the interest of the people far supersedes those of the organisation or any individual. Sub-regional organisations that have recently become involved in peace-making efforts are the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in West Africa, and the Southern Africa Development and Co-ordination Council (SADCC) in Southern Africa. Initially, these bodies were not designed for this purpose and the efforts

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<sup>9</sup> A. Taisier and R.O. Mathews, (eds), *Civil Wars in Africa, Roots and Resolutions*, McGill-Queen University Press, Toronto, 1999, p. 32

<sup>10</sup> F.Reyntjens, *l'Afrique des Grand Lacs en Crise. Rwanda, Burundi*, Editions Karthala, Paris, 1994, p. 12

they employ suggest that the capabilities they bring to peace are currently overwhelmed by logistical, political and financial challenges.<sup>11</sup>

With the advent of the popularly acclaimed concept of the African Renaissance, and the challenges adumbrated by its exponents, such as empowering Africans to express and advocate meaningful solutions to their problems, this study will attempt to situate this concept within mainstream research. I will also try to analyse and reconstruct the past of the Burundi region holistically, deciphering major causes of the conflict, its nature, manifestation and management, as well as attempts at finding lasting solutions to it. Moreover, in the epilogue, I will offer some recommendations with a bearing on existing African realities. Aptly, the Burundian crisis can be summed up as a caricature of social degradation within Burundian society, a social malaise that was demonised by the various colonial administrators, and sustained by various African regimes after independence. Post-colonial regimes have perpetuated this myth of colonial culpability, which reached mystical proportions after the assassination of a democratically elected president in October 1993.<sup>12</sup>

## 1.1 Methodology

The methodology used in this research is mainly empirical and based on published sources. It is empirical in its selection of data and the way the sources are arranged to follow a particular sequence. Numerous visits to research institutions and libraries yielded an enormous array of material which was subjected to a detailed appraisal. The selection process was also carried out by taking cognizance of news despatches, political propaganda and political commentaries that often modified the existing interpretations in the literature. In this regard, only the resources that were most relevant to the subject matter were selected and used.

At the Africa Institute Library in Pretoria, the voluminous compilations of source material were mostly

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<sup>11</sup> C.J. Bakwesegha *The Organisation of African Unity, Conflict Resolution in Africa-A New Role for the OAU*, Addis Ababa, OAU Press, October, 1995, p. 82

<sup>12</sup> A. Ould-Abdallah, *Burundi on the Brink 1993-1995*, United States Institute of Peace, Washington DC, 2000, p. 43



news despatches. An analytical survey of the data on the conflict in question was therefore lacking. But, with the useful advice of many resource persons there, a vivid and systematic selection process of relevant data was carried out. Equally, at the University of South Africa Library, the task was to consider all the available sources relating to my area of study. Here also, the presence of news despatches and other source material posed a selection problem. As at the Africa Institute, only the relevant material was selected.

At many other libraries, a variety of news media covered the Burundian conflict, but not in its entirety. Emphasis was on the target readership, and the writers tended to capture only information that was relevant to their particular constituency: for this reason, the authenticity of this information has frequently to be questioned. At the Burundian embassy in Pretoria, data was sketchy, and *Tutsi* and *Hutu* presented different opinions about the conflict. Therefore, the material collected had to be corroborated by other source material. The main problems faced during this period of research were those of analysing the information and source material that was gathered, which mainly entailed an attempt to distinguish between facts and opinions. Owing to the fact that there was a lot of data available on the conflict in the Great Lakes, it was incumbent on me to analyse and use only the data that was relevant to my study.

A trip to the region and possibly some archival research (although this would be difficult precisely because of the political conflict) would have greatly enhanced my analysis but, due to a lack of funding, I could not make the trip to the Great Lakes region. During my research, however, I have realised that South Africa has been involved in the region for a very long time, and thus a fairly substantial body of literature is available in South African libraries. Although I did receive a small grant from the University of South Africa, this was simply to cover the fees and did not include enough for extensive travel, or even for photocopying and editorial services.

## **1.2 Hypothesis**

The causes of the Burundian ethnic conflict that erupted after the assassination of the first democratically elected president in October 1993 are yet to be explored in anything like an authoritative way.

Meanwhile, half-truths abound about the causes of the ethnic violence, and inappropriate solutions are being proposed for an incorrectly diagnosed structural social malaise. This study is obviously limited by the same constraints, but tries to examine the causes of the ethnic violence by emphasising the impact of colonialism, institutional failure, and the privatisation of key state institutions such as the military, the judiciary and the educational system. It also emphasises the impunity enjoyed by key government officials and how this bred hatred and frustration amongst the population. The violence in Burundi is perpetuated in a vicious cycle of frustration, claims and counter claims.

The study also highlights the plight of the parties involved in the Burundian conflict. This involves assessing the remote and immediate causes of the conflict and their impact on the Burundian people and the Great Lakes region as a whole. The feud that has existed between the Hutu and Tutsi since the second half of the twentieth century will be clearly explicated. The study examines the nature and repercussions of the hostile inter-societal interaction between the rival ethnic groups. My observation is that most studies on the subject have been very general. I believe that this treatment focuses on the complexity of the Burundian political landscape.

The study will also serve as a valuable working document for politicians, economists, peace facilitators, diplomats and others. Hopefully, it provides an insight into the interrelationship between different ethnic groups that many in South Africa will find interesting.

### **1.3 Why the topic?**

As a boy growing up in the Bamenda Grassfield of the North West Province of Cameroon, I was confronted daily by the animosity that existed between the villages. The dynamics of the pre-colonial history of the region had persisted through to the era of independence and largely accounted for these tensions. During the colonial era, colonial administrators charged with demarcating the regional boundaries, tended to rely mostly on the loyalty of the villages in order to lay down what they regarded as impartial rule. However, in reality, such rule was extremely partisan, and this accounted for much of the bloody inter-village conflict in the region and the recurrent disputes over grazing. The Baforchu and Bali Nyonga land conflict, as well as the Bafanji and Bali Kumbat and Chomba and Bali Nyonga disputes, are just some of the conflicts that continue to plague this province. I then became interested

in studying the origin of the conflict. The Baforchu and Bali Nyonga land conflict was the subject of my BA (Hons) dissertation at the University of Buea-Cameroon.

When I enrolled at the university in 1994, the Rwandan genocide was unfolding in the Great Lakes and, in 1995, I was asked to research a seminar paper on the Rwandan Genocide. My findings suggested that the origin of the Great Lakes conflict was similar to the origin of the conflict in my native province in Cameroon. When I arrived in South Africa in 2000, the authorities here were engaged in facilitating the Burundian conflict negotiations, which acted as a great catalyst for my research. Apart from the lack of financial support, the language barrier has been the most daunting task for me. Coming from an area where the English language is probably the fourth language is particularly disabling in writing a sustained piece of research for an advanced degree. Although English has been the main medium of instruction since my university years, I still struggle to formulate complex sentences that adequately express my ideas.

#### **1.4 The relevance of this study to South African history**

This study is an attempt to reconstruct the history of the hostile inter-societal relationship in the Great Lakes, and the feud that existed between the *Hutu* and the *Tutsi* in Burundi. Research has shown that conflicts in one set of relationships through a longer period of time usually lead to the re-establishment of social cohesion. The *Mabahve* and *Manam* in Cameroon and the *Asante* and *Ashanti* of Ghana attests to this fact. Prior to 1994, South Africa also witnessed a kind of racial and ethnic tension akin to the Burundian scenario. Thus, the peaceful resolution of the South African conflict and the experience of its leaders in conflict resolution (some of these leaders also being engaged in resolving the Burundian crisis) highlights the importance of this study. Similar resolution strategies that were initiated and implemented in South Africa have been adopted in Burundi, such as the National Commission to study the question of National Unity (akin to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission), and the integration of the armies. A lasting peace in the Great Lakes, and Burundi in particular, would bring a lot of kudos to the South African government because of the enormous financial, logistical and human resources put at the disposal of the peace facilitators. It should also be recalled that more than seven hundred South African soldiers of the interventionist force are currently in Burundi providing the

necessary physical protection to the *Hutu* people and to the politicians who are taking part in the transitional government. The participation of the South African peace facilitators and peacekeeping should be seen in the context of the world's geopolitics and the 'big brother' role which South Africa has been called upon to play on the African continent by the West. Thus, South African history would be incomplete without mentioning its role in bringing about peace among the warring parties in the Great Lakes.

The former South African president, Nelson Mandela, and the current deputy president, Jacob Zuma, are also personally involved in persuading the various factions to arrive at a cease-fire agreement. South Africa's role as a peace enforcer, strongly supported by the UN Security Council, emphasises the significance of this research from a South African point of view. Judging from the fact that President Thabo Mbeki has enjoined South Africans to espouse the African Renaissance that calls on Africans to advocate solutions to their common problems also provides a great motivation. The exponents of the 'African Renaissance, African Century' discourse and the New Partnerships for African Development, most notably Mbeki, have as their objective the eradication of poverty and conflicts in all the nooks and crannies of the continent. As such, their commitment to see peace in the Great Lakes, and more especially in Burundi, cannot be overemphasised.

### **1.5 Literature review**

Many research papers and books have documented the feud that existed between the minority *Tutsi* and the majority *Hutu* in Burundi. Such data is mostly in the form of news despatches, articles, pamphlets and radio recordings. African and Western researchers have documented the conflict copiously. In fact, much of the research has been carried out by European or American writers. Few have gone beyond inter-societal confrontation to explore the African dimensions that lurk beneath the surface of the conflict, dimensions which, even for African scholars, are very difficult to fathom.

#### **(a) Published sources: books**

Within the realm of the present study, few published books provide an authoritative account of the events in the Great Lakes. Amongst the ones that I consulted, few have gone beyond the commonplace of attributing the calamity of the region to Western imperialist underpinnings. An appraisal of the work of researchers who have a credible background is presented here. A notable concern of literature on the region is the omnipresence of western researchers. This, to a large extent, has clouded any African or Burundian perspectives on the general trend of events. Writing in 1970, René Lemarchand, in his book *Rwanda and Burundi*, offers a biographical account of the various peoples of the region. A geographical and map presentation of the colonial and post-colonial borders is presented. Lemarchand also indicates the differences in ethnic composition of the two countries. The book has been hailed as a pioneering endeavour in identifying the differences between the ethnic groups of the two countries. In what looks like an updated version of his 1970 text, Lemarchand (1994), in *Burundi, Ethnocide as Discourse and Practice*, traces the origin of the inter-ethnic conflict in Burundi and emphasises the nonchalant attitude of the West in relation to averting previous crises in the region. He further elaborates on how ethnic hatred was unconsciously fostered in mainstream Burundian society by colonialists, in *tandem* with their policies of indirect rule and assimilation.

In his later publication, *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide* (1996), Lemarchand describes the present impasse in Burundi among the various military regimes of *Bagaza*, *Micombero* and *Boyuya*. He elaborates on the failure of the state to protect basic human rights, and also discusses the privatisation of state resources by a particular ethnic group from a specific region. The *Tutsi* from the south was empowered economically and occupied the higher echelons in the colonial Burundian civil and military service. In addition, Lemarchand delves into the policy of impunity (the inability of the present incumbent to punish previous perpetrators of genocide) as one of the major causes of ethnic strife in the Great Lakes region. Unlike in his previous book, he does not go beyond proposing effective measures to curb the ethnic strife in the region.

Another prolific writer on the Great Lakes is Gerard Prunier. In his book, *The Rwandese Crisis 1959-1994*, (1995), he deciphers the major causes of ethnic conflict in the Great Lakes and reiterates that ethnic antagonism was actually a colonial creation. He further postulates that the Rwanda and Burundi of old had one king, spoke one language and invested in the same cultural capital. In his view, cracks

became noticeable in Burundian society only after the arrival of colonialists, who stratified the society according to the physical endowment (shape) of its inhabitants. The tall and light-skinned members were called *Tutsi*, and the supposedly superior forms of civilisation, such as kingship, were attributed to them.

His other publications, *The Rwandan Crisis: History of a Genocide* (1995), and *The Rwandan Genocide* (1995), do not go beyond the European perspective of the causes of the problems in the Great Lakes region. Prominent among these Eurocentric perspectives were divide and rule, indirect rule, and later the Belgian policy of assimilation. However, Prunier does make some strides by apportioning some of the ills of the Great Lakes to the policies of the West and its theories of Afro-pessimism, a hypothesis rejected by many African scholars and researchers. In 1995, he also published his widely acclaimed work, *The Rwandan Genocide*. Here, the events of April 1994 in Rwanda are analysed in detail, and Prunier establishes that the dictatorial regime of Juvenal Habryarimana, and Habryarimana's insistence on ethnic superiority to the detriment of statehood, precipitated the crisis. He also contends that the non-repatriation and reintegration of Rwandan refugees in Uganda contributed to the 'return to homeland' sentiments which were fuelled by Museveni's purging of the Ugandan army in the mid 1980s. In *Enchantment of African Burundi* (1973), C. Allan and M. Mathews describe a peaceful and conflict-free Burundi prior to the arrival of the colonialists. At this time, Burundi was inhabited by peasants who engaged in small-scale subsistence farming along the slopes of the hills. This scenario, they aver, only changed with the coming of colonialism and its subsequent impact on the population.

In the same light, T. Melady, in *Burundi: The Tragic Years* (1994), stresses a conflict-free Burundi prior to European penetration and upholds the importance of traditional institutions as cohesive factors. Melady also insinuates that the Burundi of old was a more organised and conflict-free area. Peasants were able to benefit from their isolation by cultivating intrinsically Burundian products. In the concluding chapters, Melady recounts the animosity and hatred between the Tutsi and the Hutu as a purely colonial creation. De Becker, in *Burundi: National Unity, The Gateway to Development* (1990), recognises the need for united action against the principle of impunity, and views the non-recognition of an ethnic problem as a catalyst for the creation of the resistance movement. Recalling Lemarchand's conclusions

mentioned earlier, De Becker concludes that impunity was the main cause of the Burundian conflict. He deplores the fact that previous perpetrators of genocide were not prosecuted, and presents possible scenarios for attaining a return of peace.

*Genocide: An Anthropological Reader* (2002), edited by A. Hinton, chronicles the evolution of the conception of genocide in modern times. The book, which claims to be the first such endeavour from an anthropological viewpoint, investigates the reorientation, by rogue individuals, of national entities into killing machines. The route taken by Germany under Hitler, and Cambodia under Pol Pot, is vividly illustrated. Although no allusion is made to the conflict in the Great Lakes, this work provides a critical view on the concept of mass killings.

Another important source used in this dissertation is the book by Ahmadou Ould-Abdallah called *Burundi on the Brink, 1993-1995*, published in 2000. The author, who was the UN special representative to Burundi during the turbulent years, can be viewed as a very authoritative voice on events after the assassination of Ndadaye in 1993. Ambassador Ahmadou criticised the inconsistency of the international attitude towards the Great Lakes, and voiced very serious concerns about the lack of respect for indigenous opinion in attempts to resolve the Burundian crisis. Because of the ambiguous nature of the negotiation process, Ahmadou resigned as the UN special representative to Burundi in 1997.

In 1999 Taiser M. Ali and Robert O. Mathews published the much-anticipated *Civil Wars in Africa, Roots and Resolution* (1999). They argue that most conflicts on the continent were the result of the ‘machinations of the various global protagonists of the cold war’. They also maintain that African ruling elites tend to ignore potential conflict situations, especially those that pose a challenge to their authority. These elites have a propensity to blame their own failings on imperialist conspiracies and traitors. The book ends by alluding to the fact that signing a peace accord is not the end of the peace process, but merely a way station along the road.

The uni-ethnic dominance theory that has been put forward as the single most important cause of ethnic conflict throughout the world, is given even more credence by J. Adekanye, in his book (1995)

*Rwanda/Burundi: Uni-Ethnic Dominance and the Cycle of Armed Ethnic Formation*. Adekanye argues that the fabrication of ethnic superiority and invincibility, whether knowingly or unknowingly, created a kind of artificial resentment from the otherwise 'inferior' ethnic group. The book also intimates that the policies of ethnic exclusion were meticulously formulated and carried out in the early years of independence in Rwanda and Burundi. Adekanye emphasises that the manifestation of such policies was only possible with the complicity of the colonial administrators. However, the credibility of his argument, as is the case with much of the research material on the region, cannot accurately be corroborated with hard fact.

In trying to exonerate the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) from not taking an appropriate stance on the situation in the Great Lakes, C. Bakwesegha (1995), in *Conflict Resolution: A New Role for the OAU*, argues that the OAU at that time was undergoing an internal restructuring phase, and thus could not have been at the forefront of peace initiatives. Bakwesegha also interrogates the role of civil society in Africa, insinuating that the OAU cannot, as a continental body, act unilaterally in quenching all the fires on the continent. He emphasises that the OAU should build capacity-based structures capable of responding to such exigencies, and argues that the UN should oversee the African capacity to respond to conflict dictation, management and resolution.

Many researchers have failed to provide a profound comparative analysis of the crisis situation in both Rwanda and Burundi. This void has been filled 1999 by A. Howard and S. Astri the editors of *The Path of a Genocide: The Rwandan Crisis from Uganda to Zaire*, where the various authors attempt to trace the origin of the crisis in the Great Lakes to the political alliances that were established in the region by the colonialists. The fact that colonial treaties have largely remained in force has, they argue, worsened the situation. They go on to say that the ethnic crisis in the region is one of identity and belonging. P. Krop (1994), in *Le Genocide Franco-Americain: Faut il Juger Les Mitterand?* expresses similar sentiments, intimating that the French and the Americans neglected the potential crisis scenario. He attacks their policies of Afro-Pessimism, and stresses that, had the appropriate response mechanism been instituted, millions of lives would have been saved.



Taking his cue from Lemarchand and many others, L. Nyankanzi (1998), in *Genocide, Rwanda and Burundi*, presents a compelling account of the similarity between the events that took place in Burundi and those in Rwanda. Unlike Krop and Bakwesegha, he blames the crisis on the people of Burundi and Rwanda and, to a large extent, also on the people of Africa throughout the OAU. Nyankanzi is a member of that group of researchers who believe in the capacity of people to handle otherwise difficult and complex conflictual situations. He is of the opinion that the people of Rwanda and Burundi were, for completely selfless reasons, misled by their leaders. He goes on to posit that, if a major change in mindset is not affected, capacity-building initiatives will be difficult to arrive at.

In trying to understand the cycle of violence in the Great Lakes region, F. Reyntjens, in his book (1995), *Burundi: Breaking the Cycle of Violence*, argues that the crisis in the Great Lakes could possibly be resolved if the protagonists could, for the time being, descend from their high moral pedestal and make credible concessions for the sake of peace. He contends that both camps have surrounded themselves with what they consider to be the inviolate principles of their ultimate survival. Concessions, he believes, could be the only way out of the dilemma. In an earlier publication (1994), entitled *l'Afrique des Grand Lacs en Crise, Rwanda, Burundi*, Reyntjens is of the opinion that a total commitment is needed for there to be an inclusive peace in the region. He postulates that the ethnic composition of the area has, for a long time, drifted on a collision course, in full view of the west. In this publication, however, he does not provide a way forward.

W. Weinstein's (1976), groundbreaking *Political Conflict and Ethnic Strategies: A Case Study of Burundi* deciphers the major political options that were available to extricate Burundi from ethnic conflict. He believes that political machination and a strategically deployed ethnic-based social order underpinned Burundi's woes. He fails, however, to highlight the major stakeholders masterminding the crisis, as is the case with most writers dealing with this region.

Alexis Kagame, perhaps the first modern indigenous Rwandan historian, differs from Lemarchand and many researchers on the origin of the Burundi and Rwandan crisis. In his book *'La Notion de Generation Appliquee a la Genealogie Dynastique at a l'Histoire du Rwanda des X-XI Siecles a nos Jours'* (1959), Kagame argues that pre-colonial Rwanda and Burundi were 'royaume Hamite'

(Hamitic Kingdoms) regulated by codes of laws, juridical norms and all kinds of unwritten rules. He compares these kingdoms to France after the collapse of the feudal system. Kagame therefore reveres the notion that the Tutsi, coming from outside the Great Lakes, were destined to rule.

The reluctance of the international community in coming to the aid of Burundi, Rwanda and Zaire in times of crisis is vividly highlighted by A. Higgins's (1996) text, *Lubuck Avalanche*, published by Associated Press. He agrees that, as far as the plight of the people of the Great Lakes is concerned, these people were sacrificed on the altar of western geo-political repositioning. Whilst there was an international outcry against the Balkan genocide, little, if anything, was mentioned in the international press about what was happening in the Great Lakes.

**(b) Published sources: articles and reports**

I.S. Spears delineates the particularities of African indigenous political systems which overflow into modern political governance. He argues that participatory democracy has increasingly been seen as a way out of otherwise intransigent conflicts in divided, multi-ethnic African societies. He further contends that power sharing is a reasonable alternative to the notion of a high-stakes, winner-takes-all scenario which led to the resumption of war in Angola in 1992.<sup>13</sup>

Valerie Morgan, a contemporary of Spears, argues that there are alternative perspectives to understanding conflict, and approaches to conflict resolution from outside the dominant 'First World' frameworks. Morgan is the first Western researcher to question the rationale behind Western concepts in conflict resolution in Africa. She argues that African perspectives are particularly valuable in light of the current difficulty of unravelling the causes of various forms of violence across the world, and the apparent ineffectiveness of many of our established conflict-resolution strategies.<sup>14</sup>

In 'Governance, Security and Conflict Resolution in Africa', P. A. Nyong'o, an African who has written extensively on conflict in Africa, argues that foreign intervention in African conflicts has failed dismally

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<sup>13</sup> I.S Spears, 'Understanding Inclusive Peace Agreements in Africa: The problems of Sharing Power', in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 21, no. 1, 2000

<sup>14</sup> V. Morgan, 'Understanding Conflict: Escaping the Eurocentric View?', in *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 2002

in the twentieth century. He quotes the example of the disastrous UN intervention in the Congo in 1960. He further argues that Africans themselves, with aid from the international community, should handle African conflicts. He recounts the successful intervention of ECOMOG in Liberia and Sierra Leone. At the end of his article, though, he contradicts this by saying that ‘regional, continental and international bodies should assist Africa in her effort to root conflicts on the continent’.<sup>15</sup>

René Lemarchand’s, occasional paper entitled *Ethnicity as Myth: The View from Central Africa* (1999), is perhaps the most informed about the controversy surrounding the origin of the various ethnic groups in Burundi. As a seasoned researcher in the region, he chronicles the historical evidence pertaining to the probable origin of the Tutsi. He argues that the colonialists, consciously or unconsciously, inflated the Tutsi ego in the later part of the nineteenth century, a process which was conspicuously undermined by subsequent Burundian leaders after independence in 1962. Lemarchand points to the fact that, prior to European colonisation, Burundi was a homogeneous entity devoid of ethnic division. Colonialists, he argues, invented the Tutsi and the Hutu in order to better manage and subjugate the inhabitants. He cites other imagined ethnic groups that were created by the colonialists in Sudan and the Congo.

In March 2002 Lamarchand attended the thirtieth anniversary of the 1972 genocide in Burundi, in Montreal Canada. In some paper addressing exiled Burundians, entitled ‘Le Genocide de 1972 au Burundi: Les Silience de l’Histoire’, he accused the powers that be in Burundi of perpetrating conflict and violence. He questioned the non-punishment of the perpetrators of that genocide as a sign of impropriety on the part of the government. He equally questioned the government’s stance on the return of refugees and displaced persons. In a mark of sheer selflessness, he [Lemarchand] abrogates the right to himself for the return of Burundian exiles, a claim which, many have insinuated, would go a long way to bringing about peace in Burundi.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> P.A. Nyong’o, ‘Governance, Security and Conflict Resolution in Africa’ in *Doigenes*, no. 184 vol. 46/4, 1998, p. 105

<sup>16</sup> R Lamarchand, *Le Genocide de 1972 au Burundi: Les Silience de l’Histoire*, p.2

In 'Rwanda: The Rationality of Genocide' (1995), an unpublished paper, Lemarchand questions the rationale behind the superiority of the Tutsi race. He argues that historical and archaeological findings have not apportioned superiority to any ethnic group in the region, and posits that the will to kill and to commit arson was fomented during colonial times, gaining credence in post-colonial Africa. He cites examples in Uganda, Zaire, Burundi and Rwanda. However, as one of the western writers who have favoured African solutions to African problems, he fails to stress this to the reader. Instead, he recommends that capacity-building structures within the UN should handle problems of this nature. Africa, he cautions, lacks the capacity and capabilities to address issues of this magnitude.

The underlying concept of conflict resolution is, to some extent, discussed by Z. Cervenka's article which was published 1994. He argues that for any meaningful peace initiative to be achieved, Burundians should come together (as they did in the period when Burundi was still ruled by the Mwami) and publicly acknowledge their past shortcomings so that they can pave the way forward. He cautions that only a public cleansing programme can actually heal some of the past inequalities. In this article, he does not advocate punishment for perpetrators of past injustices, a position which, to a large extent, falls short of the popular cry for the long hand of the law to be extended to perpetrators of genocide and crimes against humanity.<sup>17</sup>

Cervenka could probably be taking a similar line of argument to that put forward by V. Du Bois. In Spring 1972 he published an article entitled: 'To Die in Burundi: The Eruption of Inter Tribal Strife'. Du Bois argues that the inter-ethnic conflict in Burundi was the product of colonial injustices and political imbalances. Like many researchers who are part of his school of thought, Du Bois believes that the semi-political independent puppet regimes in post-colonial Africa were caught up in battles aimed at maintaining a grip on political supremacy. Ethnic political affiliations and geographical considerations became the norm rather than an option in terms of the political machinations in Burundi, and Du Bois feels that it was this state of affairs that was the underlying factor behind the 1972 ethnic massacre in Burundi. In his epilogue, though, Du Bois fails to advance a concrete solution for the crisis, although he

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<sup>17</sup> Z. Cervenka, 'Can National Dialogue break the power of Terror in Burundi?', in *Current African Issues*, No 1 Vol. 17, 1994

cautions that the persistence of Cold War sentiments in the region is counter-productive and would further fuel the flames of conflict and alienation.<sup>18</sup>

In trying to re-evaluate France's position on the crisis, H. Girand referred to the Franco-South African Dialogue on Sustainable Security in Africa. He asserts that France, as an imperial and world power, has a moral duty to prevent the occurrence of crisis situations in the world whenever such situations threaten world peace. He further cautions that France would need the help of South Africa in trying to fill this void, a vacuum which, he argued, was created by the demise of the Cold War, after which time South Africa's role was not specifically spelled out, and an apparent French inconsistency in international politics was again exposed.<sup>19</sup>

The role of local communities as catalysts for peace is vividly depicted by T. Lealy in the article, 'Peasants, Local Communities and Central Power in Burundi'. He argues that local communities are the first port of call in crisis situations such as that in Burundi. He points out that this very important aspect of conflict resolution was totally neglected by the international community. In order for any effective peace to be brokered, Lealy believes that the blessing of local community leaders should be sought. He questions the rationale behind the imposition of the UN conflict resolution mechanism. Lealy's article does not, however, propose ways and means as to how such community-based initiatives could be undertaken, a shortcoming that is also very apparent in later publications on the conflict.<sup>20</sup>

In an attempt to save its international reputation that was tarnished by its inaction during the crisis in Burundi and later in Rwanda, the then president of the United States, Bill Clinton, despatched a team to the Great Lakes countries of Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi in August 1994. A report authored by C. Lucas confirms that genocide had, in fact, been committed in Rwanda, Burundi and Eastern Zaire.

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<sup>18</sup> V. du Bois, 'To Die in Burundi: The Eruption of Inter Tribal Strife' in *Journal of Central and Southern African Series*, Vol. XVI, No. 3, 1972

<sup>19</sup> H. Girand, 'Efforts at Conflict Prevention and Resolution: The French Experience', in *Monographs* No. 50. 2002

<sup>20</sup> T. Lealy, 'Peasants, Local Communities and Central Power in Burundi' in *Journal of Modern Africa Studies*, Vol. 4, No. V, 1996

Popular opinion at the time called for trials to be conducted in relation to such crimes. However, in his recommendations, Lucas cautioned that, before criminal charges could be brought against the perpetrators, a thorough investigation should be undertaken as to why such crimes had been committed in the first place. Thanks to the slow pace of the international fact-finding mission, though, before a commission could be constituted and its statutes of operation approved, many of the perpetrators had escaped from custody.

N. Loence undertook to provide an authoritative account of institutional failure as the root cause of the Burundian crisis. In his epic article 'Institutional Failure and Ethnic Conflict in Burundi', published in 1998, he questioned why failed institutions such as the educational system, the judiciary and the armed forces, operating in Burundi at the time of independence, should be allowed to continue serving the people. He believed that such institutions were inappropriate for shouldering the burden they were called upon to undertake. The result, he argued was the establishment of an ethnic-based structural system that did not identify with all the elements of Burundian society. As a Burundian who was an eyewitness to events at the time, his voice was perhaps the most authoritative on the subject. However, as Burundian academics are also divided along ethnic lines, his account needs to be corroborated by independent sources.<sup>21</sup>

South Africa researchers have been very vocal on the prevailing situation in the Great Lakes region. One such researcher is S. Naidoo. He investigated the policy options of the transitional government that was constituted after the Arusha Peace Accord of 28 August 2000. He cautioned that, for the government to succeed, they should revisit the particular Burundian vestiges that could help reposition Burundi in the 'concert of civilised nations'. His arguments lauded the South African effort in sending paratroopers to protect the returnees.<sup>22</sup> As has often been the case, the arrogance of most South African writing and thinking is also manifested here.

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<sup>21</sup> N. Loence, 'Institutional Failure and Ethnic Conflict in Burundi' *Africa Studies Review* Vol. 41, No. 1, 1998

<sup>22</sup> S. Naidoo, 'Challenges for Burundi Transitional Government' in *Conflict Trends*, No. 4 of April 2001

K. Ogunsanya stressed the important role that Burundi women could play in conflict resolution. He argued that, in most African societies, women are the custodians of values and have been the backbone of every successful endeavour on the continent. He felt that, in civil society, women's organisations should form part of the peace negotiation process. Ogunsanya pointed out that women were elevated to prominent positions in the colonial administration but, in the post-colonial era, their roles became negligible. Women commonly found themselves only in the lowest echelons of political decision-making in their various countries. Women, he concluded, are more flexible and tolerant, and could play a significant role in the progress to peace. However, he failed to offer advice as to how these women could be organised in order for them to play a meaningful role in the political processes of their countries.<sup>23</sup>

The UN, as the guarantor of world peace and security, has organised a limited number of symposia on effective modes of preventing conflicts. In areas where dialogue on conflict has actually taken place, ways of curbing disputes have been interrogated. Weapon proliferation has been identified as a major problem in this regard. In a report entitled 'Conventional Weapons Control and its Relationship to Development', featured on the 49<sup>th</sup> agenda of the UN, E. Phillips agreed that amassing weapons usually increases a nation's propensity to go to war. The control of conventional weapons has been identified as a viable way of curbing conflict on the continent, but credible policy formulation in relation to limiting the proliferation of such weapons is lacking. Phillips also disagrees that most of the weapons are manufactured in the west, and that therefore they should take the initiative in preventing such proliferation.<sup>24</sup>

The Centre for Policy Studies (CIPS) at the University of Pretoria, South Africa has, since 2000, published quarterly reports on the situation in Burundi. J. Van Eck, the author of these reports, has been a seasoned conflict resolution practitioner for decades. The fact that he himself has taken part in some of the complex negotiation processes augurs well for his level of insight. Thus, 'The Burundi Report'<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> K. Ogunsanya and K. Mngqibisa, 'Women of Peace,' in *Conflict Trends* No 4. April 2001

<sup>24</sup> E. Phillips, 'Conventional Weapons Control and its Relationship to Development' 49<sup>th</sup> Agenda of UN June 2001

<sup>25</sup> J. van Eck, 'The Burundi Report, Unit for policy Studies University of Pretoria, October 2001

has been a very important reference point for most of my analysis, especially in the closing chapters of this work.

Intelligence reporting became the ultimate source of data capturing in the final quarter of the last century. Many research institutions and governments relied strongly on intelligence gathering before making informed decisions on particular issues. In the case of Burundi, intelligence organizations became much more involved owing to its geographical location. The Economist Intelligence Unit based in London frequently makes classified information available to stakeholders and researchers in the form of reports on various countries. For a number of years, it has published the authoritative *Burundi Report*. The report forms part of the Economist Intelligence Unit's broader intelligence-gathering operations. It contains vital information on the country, and its authenticity is, to a large extent, verifiable.<sup>26</sup>

The International Crisis Group constitutes one of the perennial civil society organizations that has been very vocal on the plight of the people, not only in the Great Lakes region, but also in areas where there is conflict in general. In their 2002 report on Burundi entitled 'Burundi Rebellion and the Ceasefire Negotiations', they castigated the international community for hastily arranging a peace pact without agreeing to the terms of the ceasefire negotiations. The report states that the rebellion was a deliberate fabrication of the leaders of the sub-region in order for them to benefit from the war economy. The armed embargo that was imposed on the region was a failure because of the continuous trade that existed between members of the regional initiative for Burundi and the belligerents in the Burundi conflict. Unfortunately, the report failed to present a viable way forward for sustainable peace in the region.

At the time of the unfolding of the Burundi conflict, many international organizations flocked into the region to offer assistance and compassion to the affected people. Amongst the groups were human rights organizations, one of the most prominent of these being Human Rights Watch, a London-based human rights body. In 1998, after years of observation in the region, Human Rights Watch came out with a book entitled *Proxy Targets: Civilians in the War in Burundi*. Here they point out that the

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<sup>26</sup> *Economist Intelligence Unit: Burundi Country Report*, London, July 2002



greatest sufferers in the war were the civilians, and that these people suffered the greatest violation of their human rights, of which their right to life, food and education were the worst affected. They suggest that before such fundamental rights could be protected, the belligerents should have come together and the terms of a cease-fire agreement should have been negotiated. The report also details aspects of human rights violation in the reassembly camps.<sup>27</sup> Due to security concerns, a large portion of the report could not be independently verified.

**(c) Audio, audiovisual, newspapers and web sources**

The Burundian conflict was widely publicised in the various news media around the world. Both the international and local press allocated considerable airtime and space to covering the Burundi conflict in its entirety. The Roman Catholic Church operated a radio station on the outskirts of Bujumbura. The station broadcast twenty-hour-long liturgies of forgiveness, reconciliation and ethnic harmony. The radio *mille collines* (or thousand hills radio as it is known) has become a favourite for many Burundians. I had the privilege of listening to some of the messages which the radio broadcast and these were very inspirational and informative. Details of how some of the atrocities were committed were actually replayed on the radio. Since I could not make the trip to Burundi, I learned a lot from some of the radio programmes.

The Switzerland-based Hironnelle News Agency could be considered as having some of the most active researchers and news people on the spot in Burundi. Hironnelle also runs a radio station which broadcasts in Kirundi, the local dialect. Its primary objective is to convince the ‘rebels’ to hand in their weapons in return for money and a piece of land to settle and farm. In the first year of broadcast, this news agency could boast that it had helped settle more than ten thousand previously armed combatants. The Burundi Broadcasting Corporation also runs radio stations in the country dedicated to the resolution of the conflict. Most of the field operation and action are first reported through these means. These reports have proved to be a valuable source of data for many researchers doing work on the region.

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<sup>27</sup> *Proxy Targets; Civilians in the War in Burundi*, Human Rights Watch, London August 1998

International print media have also allocated considerable time and space to the Burundi conflict. In August 2000, the *International Herald Tribune* ([www.ihf.com](http://www.ihf.com)) ran a daily column on Burundi. *The Washington Post* ([www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)) did the same. *The New York Times* ([www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)) had reporters posted to the region and, in South Africa, *The Mail and Guardian* ([www.mg.co.za](http://www.mg.co.za)), *Pretoria News* ([www.pretorianews.co.za](http://www.pretorianews.co.za)), *The Star* ([www.thestar.co.za](http://www.thestar.co.za)) and *The Sowetan* ([www.sowetan.co.za](http://www.sowetan.co.za)) covered epoch-making events of the Burundi conflict.

Equally, audiovisual networks like Cable News Network (CNN) ([www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com)), Sky News Network ([www.skynews.com](http://www.skynews.com)), the British Broadcasting Corporation ([www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com)) and the South African Broadcasting Corporation ([www.sabc.com](http://www.sabc.com)) gave the crisis considerable airtime, with researchers and reporters being sent into the field to cover the crisis. Vital information on the situation could be read on the various news agencies' web pages. Web pages that I consulted included the United States Institute of Peace ([www.usip.org](http://www.usip.org)), which has a digital copy of the 28 August 2000 'Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Accord', and the International Crisis Group at ([www.crisisweb.org](http://www.crisisweb.org)). Many of these sites have considerable material on the crisis.

**(d) Dictionaries, maps, dissertations and conference papers**

In the *Historical Dictionary of Burundi*, E. Eggers (1997), chronicles the socio-political path taken by Burundi since the early fourteenth century. It contains the genealogical tree of the Mwamis and details of the major time and space each Mwami occupied. It provided a major point of departure for most of my analysis on the origin and importance of the institution of kingship in Burundi. One of its notable flaws is the fact that it does not specify from which ethnic group the Mwamis were usually chosen, a point which G. Macdonal, et al (1969), in *Area Hand Book for Burundi* try to illustrate. The atlas details the geographical and topographical entities of Burundi. I usually referred to it for information on the temperature and climatic conditions of the region. For the most part, its contents corroborated the State Department in the United States' fact file on Burundi. Equally, the State Department provided informed web information relating to the major seismic and intelligence listings of the country.

Certain definitional remarks of a contested ideological sphere were coined from my Honours dissertation which addresses the aspect of land conflict in the North West Province of Cameroon. The dissertation argues that armed conflict as a means of settling land and ethnic differences is not just a

phenomenal distortion of Africa's socialist understanding, but rather an imposition upon it, a view which many researchers on the conflict have echoed.

On 17 September 2002, A. Grant, the United Kingdom's High Commissioner to South Africa, insinuated that the United Kingdom was fully behind the South African mission in the Great Lakes. She argued that, through the NEPAD initiatives, her country would be making a substantial contribution to the mission. Grant was speaking at the University of Pretoria at a Conference organised by the Centre for International Policy Studies (CIPS). She also reaffirmed Britain's commitment to root out the incidence of future armed conflict in the region. H. E. J. Wapakabulo, Uganda's Minister of Foreign Affairs, in the paper 'Uganda's Role in the Search for Peace and Stability in the Great Lakes', pointed out that the wars in the region resulted from a shift in the balance of power in Uganda's favour. He argued that Zaire under Mobutu Sese Seko plundered the resources of the region, which the present government in Kampala would want to be preserved for sustainable use. The paper assists me better to appraise the role of Uganda in bringing about peace to the region.

It would be an exaggeration to say that the source list has been exhausted, but I must emphasise that a lot of the material which abounds on this region has been consulted in this study. In the various chapters, I have attempted to give a detailed, if not exhaustive, analysis of the literature on the subject and, since the conflict is still an ongoing issue, I have to accept that comprehensiveness is impossible. Thus, every chapter is located within specific historiographies that inform my specific analysis in each.

## **1.6 Interviews**

In trying to undertake research of this magnitude, eyewitness accounts are of paramount importance. Having failed to secure any funding for the project, I turned my attention to Burundians and other role-players in the peace process. My first port of call was the Burundi Embassy in Pretoria. Failing on numerous occasions to secure an interview with the ambassador, I then focused my attention on other embassy staff. Having realised that my interview was basically for scholastic purposes, which I had reiterated earlier, the ambassador then changed her previous stance and finally accepted to grant an interview. However, the ambassador, H.E Sylvie Agathe, later did a volte-face which subsequently betrayed her responses to my questions. On the whole, though, one could understand the precarious

diplomatic environment in which she is operating. That aside, I benefited from the co-operation of the Burundian community in Pretoria, who were very willing to tell their stories. Most of these have been analysed and form part of the argument of this dissertation. I also had a telephone conversation with members of the Nelson Mandela Foundation, the chief facilitator of the Burundi peace process. Further interviews were conducted with the Department of Foreign Affairs in Pretoria, where I had discussions with Selly Ramokgopa and Thomas Modau, Director and Deputy Director respectively of the East African Community (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda) in the Department. They both form part of South African Deputy President Jacob Zuma's facilitation team working on the Burundi conflict. I also spoke on the telephone with René Lemarchand, Professor Emeritus from the African Studies Centre, University of Florida, United States and a seasoned researcher on ethnicity and conflict in the Great Lakes region.<sup>28</sup>

### **1.7 Chapter outline**

Chapter One of the dissertation situates Burundi in the wider geography of Africa, and illustrates the various components of Burundian society. The myths about their migratory history and the various hypotheses surrounding their origin are also presented in this chapter. Chapter Two focuses on the causes of the Burundian crisis, ranging from ethnicity and policies of impunity to the collapse of the monarchy and the assassination of President *Melchior Ndadaye* on 21 October 1993.

Chapter Three deals with the course of the conflict, from the assassination of *Ndadaye* to the signing of the *Arusha* Peace and Reconciliation Accord for Burundi. It also highlights the various upheavals experienced during the period of crisis and suggests to what extent the people of Burundi and the international community have succeeded in managing the conflict. In Chapter Four, the work of the various peace facilitators – especially Jimmy Carter, Julius Nyerere and Nelson Mandela – is examined. Detailed appraisals of their involvement are presented. In Chapter Five, I examine the *Arusha* Peace Agreement as an instrument of peace. This chapter also emphasises to what extent the *Arusha* Accord accounts for the relative peace that we experience today in Burundi. Chapter Six presents some proposal for the solution of the crisis. Chapter Seven takes the form of an epilogue rather than a

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<sup>28</sup> Telephonic discussion with prof. René Lemarchand, Emeritus Professor of Political Science and an expert on ethnicity and genocide, at the University of Florida, United States of America, 16 August 2002

conclusion, because I have ended each of the preceding chapters with some concluding comments. The more open-ended epilogue seems appropriate, because the Burundian conflict has not yet been resolved and has a particular trajectory in the new millennium.

## CHAPTER TWO

### BACKGROUND

Burundi, and its northern neighbour, Rwanda, were mere geographical expressions prior to the Berlin Conference of 1888-1889. After that, they were both annexed by the Germans from the then King Leopold's Congo. Little has been written about them, but one thing is certain that before this period, Burundi and Rwanda were centralised polities ruled by a *Mwami* (king). The origin of the institution of kingship and of the population is shrouded in oral tradition. Such tradition surrounding the people and the various traditional institutions has been grim, primarily due to colonial intrigues and misconceptions. Prominent amongst these was the fact that Africans (Hutu) could not independently have achieved such an advanced stage of civilization without the outside influence of the Tutsi. In addition to this, some members of Burundian society were increasingly identified as migrants from Egypt, Ethiopia, and even from Asia Minor and hence as carriers of superior forms of civilization. Writing in 1926, the white missionary fathers were quoted as saying:

the Batutsi (Tutsi) from all indication are not Africans. With a tall figure and a sense of leadership, they are in all mannerism superior to their African (Hutu) peers. A clear study by Fr. Classe has suggested that they are presumably from Egypt, Ethiopia and even from Asia Minor.<sup>1</sup>

That these people came from Asia Minor or Egypt does not necessarily mean that they were carriers of centralised forms of monarchical structures. Examples abound in Africa of well-organised and centralised forms of human civilisation. The African empires of the Western Sudan and Old Zimbabwe clearly attest to this fact. Pre-literate Burundi, however, had no source of record preservation, but there are early records dating back to about 1650 during the reign of *Mwami Gihanga*. These fragments of Burundi history were derived from the Kingdom of Rwanda since it had a royal genealogist. The source suggests that *Gihanga* had two sons, *Kanyarwanda* and *Kanyarundi*, and that after his death there were succession disputes that split the Kingdom into two. Followers of *Kanyarwanda* formed the Kingdom of Rwanda and those of *Kanyarundi* later formed the kingdom of Burundi. The authenticity of the orature cannot be corroborated, due to insufficient source material and the unreliability of oral

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<sup>1</sup> R. Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*, Pall Mall, London, 1970, p. 23

tradition as a source in the reconstruction of African history. However, it did provide a narrative of the ethno-genesis of the Burundi people.<sup>2</sup>

Prior to European exploration, the area we know today as Burundi was a geographical unit, and its socio-political structure was based on the caste system (social class dependent on the status of a child at birth). The *Kirundi* language that was spoken by all in Burundi conveyed a spirit of cohesiveness and unity in the various sectors of the population of Burundi. The cohesiveness of the whole stemmed from the corporate membership of all parts and components of Burundi society in the monarchical order. The entire Burundi of old shared the same symbolic universe. All its people identified with the emblems of the royal *Kilinga* (drum), the royal tombs and the annual propitiatory rites of a bountiful harvest. In a nutshell, they all participated in the sacredness of the *Mwami* which, in fact, was a great source of social and political unity.<sup>3</sup>

Very little is written about the pre-literate period in Burundi history, but it is fairly clear that, upon the death of *Mwami Ntare* in about 1852, Burundi had expanded into a political entity twice its original size. Since war was a socially accepted norm, the eldest sons of the *Mwami* administered the conquered territories of the kingdom. With the accession of the *Mwami's* eldest son to the throne in 1852, the stage was set for a bitter struggle between the newly enthroned *Mwami* and his brothers who were administering the periphery. The rivalry between the *Mwami* and the peripheral overlords greatly weakened the *Mwami's* grip on power, and further entrenched the peripheral princes within their various areas of influence. These peripheral overlords were supported by the Catholic Church, and later by colonialists, who saw a better chance to challenge the authority of the central government. Thus, Burundi's problems at the dawn of colonialism were those associated with a rivalry between the central power and the peripheral overlord.<sup>4</sup>

In an attempt better to administer the territory, communities were imagined and given specific names

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<sup>2</sup> G. Prunier, *The Rwandese Crisis, 1959-1994*, C. Hurst and Co., London, 1995, p. 12

<sup>3</sup> C. Newbury, 'Ethnicity and the Politics of History in Rwanda', in *Africa Today*, vol. 45, no. 1, 1998, p. 7

<sup>4</sup> E. Sanders, 'The Hamitic Hypothesis: Its Origins and Functions', in *Journal of African History*, vol. 10, no. 4, p. 521

based on a client, servant, master and patron relationship. The *Kirundi*, which was spoken by all in Burundi, had no *Tutsi*, *Hutu* or *Twa* in the vocabulary, thus confirming allegations that the ‘tribes’ of Burundi are a colonial creation and have nothing to do with creating a new order for themselves. Researchers working in refugee camps in Tanzania and eastern Congo have gathered substantial information which could corroborate the above assertion. From the narratives collected by Liisa Malkki in the refugee camps in Tanzania, one gets an idea of the extent to which these ideas took hold of the Hutu survivors of previous acts of genocide in Burundi. One such refugee said:

in the past our proper name was Bantu. Hutu is no tribe, no nothing! The Kihamite is the national language of the Tutsi. Muhutu is a Kihamite word which means servant. Having been given cows as gifts by the Tutsi, the Hutu were used as slaves. It is indeed here that the Hutu were born. We are not Hutu, we are abantu<sup>5</sup>.

Colonial rule shaped the meaning of *Hutu* and *Tutsi*, partly because of the speculative and inaccurate theory that *Tutsi* were ‘sub-Aryan’, and thus racially superior to the *Hutu*. One can be very certain that the European arguments were based purely on sentiment and the existing economic exigencies of the time.<sup>6</sup>

Much the same theme would emerge in connection with the myth surrounding the ‘imagined tribes’ of Burundi. Most of the anti-Tutsi rhetoric emanated from Rwanda, whose Hutu population are very sympathetic to the Hutu plight in Burundi. One such example of anti-Tutsi rhetoric reads:

the Tutsi have created out of whole cloth a tribe which does not exist: the Banyarwanda exists nowhere in Africa; it is only mentioned to create confusion. Public opinion must know that the only language of the Hutu is Kihutu, just as the Nande speak Kinande, the HundeKihunde. Try to rediscover your ethnic roots, for the Tutsi have taught you to ignore them.<sup>7</sup>

Whether propaganda or sheer truth, the media in both Burundi and Rwanda also entered the fray and clouded the already tense political climate between the ‘imagined tribes’ of Burundi. The resultant effect was resistance on the part of the Hutu, and a complete sense of readiness for any eventuality on the part of the Tutsi.

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<sup>5</sup> L. Malkki, *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memo and National Cosmology Among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1995, p. 35

<sup>6</sup> Burundi Country Report, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, London, August 2002, p. 6

<sup>7</sup> J.P. Chretien, *Rwanda: Les Media du Genocide*, Editions Karthala, Paris, 1995, p. 110



The changing economy in pre-literate Burundi, including enforced coffee cultivation, transformed Burundi's social relations. A patron and client relationship previously based on cattle was fundamentally altered once patrons acquired coffee plantations and the client became a wage labourer. To the wage earner, *Tutsi* came to imply 'boss', and *Hutus* were increasingly equated with labourers. Colonial administrations, most importantly the Germans, played a major role in shaping Burundi society. Upon arrival, the Germans knew very little about the people of Burundi. They inferred much of their policy formulation and application to the French and German White fathers whom they considered to be very knowledgeable. They certainly were, because they could read, write and speak *Kirundi*. Therefore, many of the German policies were based on the advice of these Fathers. The Germans, without recourse to specific anthropological considerations, divided the Burundi society into three categories: the tall, light-skinned cattle owners in the society were called the *Tutsi*, the ordinary Burundian folk were labelled *Hutu*, and the less privileged in society were called the *Twa*.<sup>8</sup>

The German colonialists divided and stratified Burundi society in order better to subjugate them and facilitate German penetration of the fabric of Burundi society. A racist vision was imposed on the Burundian populace, and the society was stereotyped according to prejudiced morphological considerations destined to create opposing factions within Burundi society based on superficial physical features and character traits. Issues such as the carrying of special identity documents reinforced these policies, with Burundians having to bear their ethnic affiliation clearly printed on the reverse sides of the documents. This succeeded in enflaming ethnic divisions, to the detriment of a unified and indivisible fatherland.<sup>9</sup>

The region therefore evolved through this centralised socio-political structure until the arrival of the Europeans in the second part of the nineteenth century. After their arrival, the Europeans soon realised that even though the population was linguistically homogeneous, there were some distinct physical features that divided the population into two. The tall and light-skinned members of the society were called the *Tutsi*, and the short, dark-skinned people were called the *Hutu*. The source of this

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<sup>8</sup> Article 1,7 of the August 28<sup>th</sup> 2000 *Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Accord for Burundi*

<sup>9</sup> J. Lonsdale, 'Moral Ethnicity and Political Tribalism', in K Preben and Jan Hultin (eds), *Inventions and Boundaries: Historical and Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism*, International Development Studies, Roskilde University, Roskilde, Denmark, 1995, p. 206

nomenclature is still based in oral literature, and researchers have to come up with an origin for the source (see section 1.2 below for a detailed discussion on the pre-colonial history of Burundi). This element of differentiation eventually formed the cornerstone of colonial policies in Burundi. Since the *Tutsi* were regarded as being similar to whites, they were pushed closer and closer to the centre of political power at the dawning of independence, although they were in the minority.<sup>10</sup> To have a clearer picture of Burundi society, it is necessary to sketch a history of the origin of the various groups in Burundi and their location on the African continent.

## 2.1 Physical setting

Burundi covers an area of about 14,747 square kilometres, bordered in the north by Rwanda, in the east by Tanzania, on the south by Lake Tanganyika and in the west by the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It lies very close to the equator, seven hundred miles inland from the Indian Ocean and about twice that distance from the Atlantic. It is neither a teeming jungle nor composed of arid scrub bush, but rather an area with a temperate and humid climate. The density of human occupation has long since driven off any remnants of African wildlife. The physical terrain is mostly mountainous: the whole country lies above the 1000 metre mark, with over half the country in the 1,500-2,000-metre zone. The population of this small central African country lives mainly in the medium altitude area, a land of breathtakingly beautiful vistas dotted with countless hills. The climate is particularly favourable for human occupation with an average annual temperature of 18°C and 900-1600 mm of rainfall per year.<sup>11</sup>

There are four seasons in the year, quite different from those in Europe, since they are divided, not according to temperature, but according to rainfall levels instead. In many ways, Burundi and its twin, Rwanda, may be called a climatic and ecological island due to their unique physical environment, which has had a strong impact on the nature of human settlement. Agriculture has always been a very prosperous industry, and Burundian farmers are, in fact, large-scale gardeners: apart from the remaining forested area, the whole country looks to some degree like a gigantic garden – meticulously tended and

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<sup>10</sup> A. Howard, and S. Astri, (eds), *The Path of a Genocide, The Rwandan Crisis from Uganda to Zaire*, Transaction, London, 1999, p. 34

<sup>11</sup> A. Carpenter, et al, *Enchantment of Africa Burundi*, Children Press, Chicago, 1973, p. 6

almost manicured – resembling Indonesian or Filipino rice fields more than the loose, extensive agricultural pattern of many African landscapes.<sup>12</sup>

Burundi lies about 3000 metres above sea level and the mountainous nature of its terrain prevented invaders and even colonisers from penetrating the interior of the territory. The natural fortress of the highlands acted as a defence against the tsetse flies and the malarial mosquitoes. The territory was also a bastion against hostile ethnic groups and, in the nineteenth century, against slave raiders from the coast of the Indian Ocean. The first explorers who reached the Burundi highlands after crossing the vast malarial and war-torn expanses of the Tanganyika bush felt they were reaching a beehive of human activity and prosperity. The physical layout of the land, where most of the people lived on the *musozi* (hills), has determined a very precise and peculiar form of human occupation.<sup>13</sup>

Most Burundians live in a *rugo* (singular) or in *ingo* (plural), a family enclosure or compound around which all life evolves. In a polygamous household, each wife has her own *rugo* with her children, and with the father or head of the household's *rugo* standing at the centre of the enclosure. Every hill in Burundi is dotted with dozens of *ingo*. The *Tutsi* and the *Hutu*, the notorious rival twins of Burundi society, live side by side on the same hilly slopes in neighbouring *ingo* for better or for worse, for intermarriage or for massacre.<sup>14</sup>

During the early eighteenth century in Burundian society, where all the basic necessities of life were being produced in plenty, one prominent feature was the development of centralised forms of political hierarchy and a high degree of social control. The vast expanse of the land was under the titular control of the *Mwami* (king). His power was delegated to princes who administered the peripheral, rural areas. There was always a real panic within the power structure as soon as there was even an inkling of a possible loosening in the control of the rural populations. The need to exercise political and social control was not due to any special character trait, but was guided by the fact that the land was small,

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<sup>12</sup> G McDonald, et al, *Area Handbook for Burundi*, Fas, Washington DC, 1969, p. 12

<sup>13</sup> G. Prunier, *The Rwandan Crisis, History of a Genocide*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1996, p. 26

<sup>14</sup> Carpenter and Mathew, *Enchantment of Africa Burundi*, p. 5

the population density high (668 people per square kilometre) and social interactions were constant. This phenomenon could aptly explain the development of kingship institutions whose origin in the Great Lakes has been a puzzle to many researchers and academics.<sup>15</sup>

Grim as it may seem, the genocidal violence of 1993 can partly be attributed to the population density. The decision to kill was, of course, made by politicians, for political reasons. The question of knowing who were to be the victims and who the survivors was not random, but heavily determined by cultural, economic, historical and political factors. But at least part of the reason why it was carried out so thoroughly by the ordinary people and peasants in their *rugo* was that there were too many people on too little land, and that with a reduction in their numbers, there would be more land for the survivors. This theory does, however, require corroboration, as there are instances in history (in the Tigris and Euphrates river valley in the Persian Gulf, for instance) where the population density in the Middle Ages far exceeded that found in Burundi.<sup>16</sup>

## 2.2 Pre-colonial Burundi

Unlike most African states, Burundi and its northern neighbour, Rwanda, were annexed by the Germans from the then King Leopold's Congo, immediately after the Berlin Conference of 1888 to 1889, and were subsequently absorbed into German East Africa in 1899. Prior to this, they had been organised kingdoms for centuries, and were later forced to open their borders to colonialism in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The earliest days of the kingdom of Burundi are recorded only in oral tales. These tales, which are part of oral tradition, suggest that the kingdoms of Burundi and Rwanda had a common ancestor. The tale is told of *Gihanga* who was said to have been a fearsome warrior who conquered much. He had two sons, *Kanyarundi* and *Kanyarwanda*. After the death of *Gihanga*, there was a succession dispute between the two sons. Having failed to reconcile their differences, each son is said to have founded the kingdom that bore the final part of his name.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> R. de Becker, *Burundi: National Unity, The Gateway to Development*, Frisch, Brussels, 1990, p. 54

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 45

<sup>17</sup> G. Prunier, *The Rwandan Crisis, History of a Genocide*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1995, p. 25

Oral tradition also suggests that the people who were generally called the *Hutu* by the Europeans came to Burundi from the Congo-river basin during the fifteenth century. They spoke one of the 'Bantu' languages and were generally farmers who were divided into small domains, each ruled by a king. These kings were believed to have supernatural powers, and it was held that they could make crops grow, cause rain to fall, protect the cattle from diseases and protect crops from insects.<sup>18</sup> It is held that the *Tutsi*, on the other hand, moved into present-day Burundi a century after the *Hutu* had settled there. Some historians such as the colonial clergyman, Fr. A. Pages and the celebrated Tutsi Historian, A. Kagame, even proposed a kind of 'same arrival theory'. It was even considered that they were wandering Nilotic herdsmen and spoke one of the Nilotic languages. Another group that had suffered enormously from *Hutu-Tutsi* rivalry were the *Twa*. The *Twa* are pygmoids and lived as hunter-gatherers in the forested areas. The *Tutsi*, with the help of colonists, established a kind of pseudo-hegemony over the *Hutu* and *Twa* and, in the early part of the nineteenth century, the *Tutsi*, *Hutu*, *Twa* and the *Acholi* people of present-day Western Uganda united and formed the kingdom of Burundi under the leadership of *Mwami Mzewi*.<sup>19</sup> Lemarchand's assertion in this regard could be misleading, since the Acholi people have a more secluded and un-associative Luo-speaking lineage and chiefdom. Right up to the middle of the last century, the Acholi, who were also referred to as the Gangli or the Shuli, had no fixed territorial boundaries and recognised no central authority like the *Tutsi* or the *Hutu*.<sup>20</sup>

Unlike the situation in Burundi, the potential for early ethnic conflict in Rwanda was contained by the existence of the *ganwa*, an intermediate princely class between the *Mwami* (king) and the population. The *ganwa* represented checks and balances on the excesses of the *Mwami*. They also served as a bridge between the *Mwami* and the populace. The *Mwami* and the *ganwa* stood apart from the *Tutsi* masses, thereby minimising tension between the two groups. The *Tutsi*, who were composed mainly

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<sup>18</sup> W. Weinstein, *Historical Dictionary of Burundi*, Scarecrow, Metuchen, 1976, p. 11

<sup>19</sup> R. Lemarchand, *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide*, Cambridge University Press, London 1996 p. 25

<sup>20</sup> E. Root and T. Vlassenroot in Lemarchand, *Ethnicity as Myth: The View from the Central Africa*, Centre of Africa Studies, University of Copenhagen, May 1999, p. 8

of two groups, the *Banyaruguru* from the north and the *Hima* from the south, wielded tremendous power in the ranks of the colonial administration.<sup>21</sup>

The unique and picturesque scenery of Burundi fascinated pioneer European explorers in this region, namely Richard Burton and John Speke. They later discovered that the *Kigira-Mukasenyi* river system flowed into Lake Victoria, which eventually formed the source of the great Nile, dispelling previous assertions that Lake Victoria was the ultimate source of the Nile. Though landlocked and isolated from the rest of the world, the people of Burundi were able to live by themselves and profit from their isolation. Their society was tightly organised into castes (social classes based upon the status of a child at birth). The male components of the society were organised into fighting regiments and frustrated many attempts by early Europeans to subjugate them. This strong fighting regiment prevented any trading missions or emissaries from other kingdoms from establishing contact with the Burundians, and facts could not be substantiated as to whether or not the people of Burundi traded in slaves or precious stones.<sup>22</sup>

The first Europeans who arrived in Burundi were immediately struck by the importance of the institution of kingship. The *Mwami* (king) lived at the centre of a large court and was treated like a divine being. The nature of his power was sacred rather than profane. He physically embodied Burundi. Elaborate rituals carried out by the *abiru* (royal ritualists) surrounded him. The vocabulary relating to his daily life was special, with particular words signifying the 'king's speech' the 'king's bed' and so on. His authority was symbolised by a sacred drum called *kilinga*, which was decorated with the testicles of slain enemies. The *kilinga* would only be drummed during the funeral of a *Mwami*, or when the kingdom was at war or was being attacked by enemies. The countenance of the king was so serene that his words and actions were regarded as the law, and his decisions executed with such precision and authority that no one dared to revolt against him. In a colonial report of 1925, the Belgians described the king as:

the father and patriarch of his people, given to them by the imana (God). He is the providence of Burundi, the messiah and saviour. When he exercises his authority, he is impeccable, his decisions cannot be questioned. The parents of a victim he has

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<sup>21</sup> Prunier, *The Rwandan Crisis*, p. 32

<sup>22</sup> Lemarchand, *Burundi; Ethnic Conflict and Genocide*, p. 28

unjustly struck bring presents so that he does not resent them for having been forced to cause them affliction. They still trust him because he remains Nyagasani, the only lord, superb and magnificent.<sup>23</sup>

Moved by the sophisticated nature of Burundian kingship, several Europeans began to imagine its probable origin. They could not believe that ‘savage Negroes’ could have achieved such a degree of political and religious achievement without outside influence. Sir Harry Johnson, the first administrator of the Ugandan protectorate, put forward a theory of the origin of kingship in the Great Lakes region in a report to the crown in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. In his findings, he conjectured that the institution of kingship in the Great Lakes may have originated from Ethiopia. He also emphasised that it must have been brought to Burundi by pastoral invaders whose memory had been preserved in a set of oral literature.<sup>24</sup>

Sir Johnson’s findings have not been corroborated by any empirical research of kingship in the Great Lakes. Unsubstantiated theories of this kind about pastoral invaders (meaning the Tutsi) bringing the institution of kingship into the Great Lakes had a direct bearing on the future *Hutu/Tutsi* dichotomy. The *Tutsi* were regarded as having skilfully subjugated the inferior *Hutu* masses and imposed their socio-political order upon them. Sir Harry Johnson’s theory was further supported by Pierre Ryckmans, a Belgian administrator, who, in 1920, summed up the *Tutsi* as follows:

The Batutsi (Tutsi) were meant to reign. Their fine presence is in itself enough to give them a great prestige vis-a-vis the inferior races which surround them ... it is not surprising that those good Bahutu (Hutu), less intelligent, more simple, more spontaneous, more trusting, have let themselves be enslaved without ever daring to revolt.<sup>25</sup>

A contemporary of Pierre Ryckmans, Jean Pierre Christian, later contradicted this assertion regarding the *Tutsi*. Supporting the view that the Tutsi were never, in physiological terms, more aesthetically endowed than the *Hutu*, Christian said:

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<sup>23</sup> G Prunier, *The Rwandese Crisis 1959-1994*, C.Hurst and Co, London, 1995, p. 69

<sup>24</sup> A. Kagame, *Le Code des Institutions Politiques du Rwanda Pre-Colonial*, Institut Royal Colonial Belge, Bruxelles, 1959, p 34

<sup>25</sup> Prunier, *The Rwandese Crisis 1959-1994*, p. 72

...in Burundi the Tutsi is not above the Hutu; the first has no authority over the second, unless such authority has been delegated to him. In everyday life they are on an equal footing.<sup>26</sup>

The contested terrain of the origins and social structure of Burundian society continued up until the final quarter of the last century. The fact that colonisers and recently emancipated Burundian researchers are yet to come up with an encompassing Burundian social history is testimony to the intricacies involved in the Burundi conflict.

This aside, the Burundian king was only at the apex of a pyramid of political, cultural and economic relationships. Under the kings, there were basically three types of chief: first, the chief of the land holdings, whose responsibility was that of distributing land and ensuring that crops were profuse. He was also charged to collect agricultural taxation (produce) for the Mwami. Second, there was the chief of men who ruled the people and was in charge of recruiting fighters for the king's armies, and third was the chief of pasture who ruled over the grazing lands. As a result of an inflated *Tutsi* ego, they occupied all the chiefly posts, except that of the chief of land- holding who was a *Hutu*, since agriculture was their domain.<sup>27</sup>

After the Germans annexed the territory in 1889, the chiefs, as in any other part of colonial Africa, were auxiliaries of the colonial administration. The chief was to control and exact from the masses whatever was commanded by the colonialists, and he was also expected to prevent any quarrelling amongst the African masses. As the Germans continued to initiate and implement colonial policies, they instituted a kind of tax called the corvee by which each able-bodied male was to perform particular physical work in the service of the colonial administration for a particular number of days in each month. Each household made arrangements as to how to satisfy these government needs on the roads and building works. Burundians resented this type of taxation and clamoured for the collective tax-paying method as practised in pre-colonial Burundi. This kind of taxation could just as well have meant the introduction of the Western tax system into the traditional fold of an African society. The beneficiaries of such a

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<sup>26</sup> Lemarchand, *Burundi; Ethnic Conflict and Genocide*, p. 34

<sup>27</sup> T. Laely, 'Peasants, Local Communities and Central Power in Burundi,' in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 35, no. 4, 1985, p. 710



system of taxation were those who happened to be closer to the colonial power at this time – namely, the *Tutsi*.<sup>28</sup>

Another important feature of pre-colonial Burundian society was a very strong proclivity to go to war. War was a frequent activity and was usually waged for three purposes: first, to defend the kingdom against enemies or outside invaders; second, to extend the kingdom's frontiers; and lastly to steal cattle from neighbouring communities. Contrary to earlier speculation, the tall and skilful *Tutsi* were not the only ones who fought: all men were part of the *intore* (fighting regiment), and the dwarf *Twa* were greatly appreciated as soldiers. Each fighting regiment had a name, usually a form of pride, and this activity in itself acted as a social coagulant, where the *Tutsi*, *Hutu* and the *Twa* were first and foremost *Banyaburundi*, (Burundian in Kirundi) facing a common enemy.<sup>29</sup>

Religion was also an important aspect of pre-literate Burundian society. The people of this region practised ancestral worship and they believed in life after death, judging from the impressive grave goods excavated from sites in the region. The belief in the *Mwami* as the divine being by all the components of Burundian society was an important mark of their unity and emphasised one faith and one destiny. The *Kubandwa* cult, meaning 'to put pressure or to grab', was a very important socio-religious tradition in pre-literate Burundian society. Though it was predominantly a *Hutu* cult, members were drawn from all categories of Burundian society.<sup>30</sup>

### 2.3 The peopling of pre-colonial Burundi

Scholars have debated the exact meaning of the labels '*Hutu*' '*Tutsi*' and '*Twa*' in pre-colonial Burundi, but they agree that all three groups shared a single language, religious practice and political system, and lived within a territory that they all knew as 'Burundi'. The above nomenclature may have derived in part from the occupational differences, since most *Tutsi* raised cattle, a sign of wealth in

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<sup>28</sup> W. Weinstein, and R. Schrire, *Political Conflict and Ethnic Strategies: A Case Study of Burundi*, MSCPA, New York, 1976, p. 18

<sup>29</sup> T. Melady, *Burundi; The Tragic Years*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, 1974, p. 46

<sup>30</sup> F. Reyntjens, *L' Afrique des Grands Lacs en Crise: Rwanda, Burundi: 1988 - 1994* Editions Karthala, Paris, 1994, p. 38

Burundian society, while most *Hutu* cultivated crops, with the *Twa* living from hunting and gathering. The *Twa*, who constitute only 1% of the population, are not numerous enough to play a significant role in present-day conflicts at the national level. A fourth group, the *Ganwa*, an elite that consists predominantly of the descendants of past rulers, was considered neither *Hutu* nor *Tutsi*, and were also very small in number. Although both *Twa* and *Ganwa* were historically set apart from the other groups, the distinctions between *Hutu* and *Tutsi* were more plausible, and individuals could move from one category to another, depending on their wealth and political prestige.<sup>31</sup>

Colonial rulers, first the Germans and then the Belgians after the First World War, sought to rule through the existing monarchy, but their policies served to eliminate the complexity and flexibility of the pre-colonial social and political systems, and to change *Hutu*, *Tutsi* and *Twa* into rigid ethnic categories. Applying their own racist ideas concerning a hierarchy among peoples, colonial administrators concluded that *Tutsi*, *Hutu* and *Twa* were distinct racial groups. The *Tutsi*, who were stereotypically tall and thin, with lighter skin and narrow features, were considered more closely related to the Europeans, and therefore superior to *Hutu* and *Twa*. Putting their ideas into operation in a system known as 'indirect rule', the colonialists favoured the *Tutsi* and helped them to gain more control over the *Hutu*. They excluded the *Hutu*, not only from administrative posts, but also from higher education, thus creating conditions for *Tutsi* domination far into the future.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, during the colonial period, the colonialists argued that the *Twa*, who were few in numbers, were pygmoids and the original inhabitants of the Congo forest. They were mostly hunter-gatherers and lived in bands of not more than 50 families. They had an average height of between 1m and 1,50m with a broad nose and wide eyes. The Belgian colonial administrators described them in a report in 1925 as having

a number of well defined somatic characteristics: he is small, chunky, muscular and very

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<sup>31</sup> *Proxy Targets, Civilians in the War in Burundi*, Human Rights Watch, London, 1998, p. 86

<sup>32</sup> René Lemarchand, Gerard Prunier, Jean-Pierre Chretien, Catherine Newbury, Alison Des Forges and a hosts of other researchers on the Great Lakes have argued that Hutu and Tutsi as categories were fundamentally colonial constructions. They also contend that Hutu and Tutsi existed as terms describing individuals in Rwanda and Burundi prior to colonial rule, but that the use of these labels to describe categories of people was introduced by colonialism.

hairy: particularly on the chest. With a monkey-like flat face and a huge nose, he is quite similar to the apes whom he chased in the forest.<sup>33</sup>

The colonialists therefore infuriated those who thought the *Twa* had a place in the history of Burundi. It has also been argued that the *Twa* could have been the carriers of superior forms of civilisation in view of their ingenuity and the orderly nature of their socio-political structure. The *Twa*, however, were chased and shot like the ‘apes’ they were thought to be.

On the other hand, the *Hutu*, who made up the vast majority of the population, were peasants who cultivated the soil and also practised hunting and gathering. They had a similar physical appearance to people in neighbouring Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They are Bantu speakers of the Niger-Congo group. Little is written about their origin, but oral evidence suggests that they came from the Congo River basin during the fifteenth century. They were mainly farmers and were divided into small groups like others in this region, and ruled by a king who apparently possessed supernatural powers. It was traditionally held that the *Hutu* king could make plants grow, call rain from heaven, protect cattle from disease and crops from insects.<sup>34</sup> The description of them by the Belgians in a report stated that:

the Bahutu (Hutu) display very typical Bantu features ...they are generally short and thick-set with a big head, a jovial expression, a wide nose and enormous lips. They are extroverts who like to laugh and lead a simple life.<sup>35</sup>

This pseudo-scientific description of the *Hutu* by the colonialists contrasted with the existing reality of this element of Burundi society. It was an image that was portrayed to the outside world and which the colonialists hoped would guide them in better administering the people and formulating policies applicable to the various elements of the society according to their ethnic affinity.

Being jovial, extrovert or having a higher propensity to laugh does not denote inferiority or being on the last rung of the ladder of civilisation. To the European, such qualities apparently suggested a more primitive and backward position on the scale of human development. The physique of an individual or

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<sup>33</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis, History of a Genocide*, p. 68

<sup>34</sup> Weinstein, and Shire, *Political Conflict and Ethnic Strategies*, p. 15

<sup>35</sup> Prunier, *The Rwandan Crisis, History of a Genocide*, p. 72

group plays a great role in determining social status, with little reference to demographic or intricate African realities.<sup>36</sup>

According to Burundi oral tradition, the *Tutsi* are natural rulers.<sup>37</sup> Belgian colonial records also suggest that the *Tutsi* moved into Burundi much at the same time as the *Hutu*. Oral tradition also suggests that they came from the north and spoke one of the northern languages. This is a suggestion that points to the Hamitic theory of the origins of African civilisation, a theory that was being propagated in colonial Africa. The ‘Hamites’ are light-skinned with a straight nose, thin lips, narrow face, soft, often wavy or even straight hair without prognathism. The colonialists suggested that they originated somewhere in Asia Minor, Ethiopia or even from the lost continent of Melanesia. Given the almost obsessive preoccupation with race in late nineteenth-century anthropological thinking, the peculiarity of the Hamites soon led to much theorizing, romanticising and, at times, plain fantasising about their origins. The Belgian colonial administrators described them as follows:

The Matutsi (Tutsi) of good race has nothing of the Negro apart from his color. He is usually very tall, 1,80m at least, often 1,90m or more. He is very thin, a characteristic which tends to be even more noticeable as he gets older. His features are very fine: a high brow, thin nose and fine lips framing beautiful shining teeth. Batutsi women are usually lighter skinned than their husbands, very slender and pretty in their youth, although tend to thicken with age....Gifted with vivacious intelligence, the Tutsi displays a refinement of feelings which is rare among primitive people. He is a natural-born leader, capable of extreme self-control and of calculated goodwill.<sup>38</sup>

The colonial administration was quite impressed by the *Tutsi*, whom they saw as too refined to be ‘Negroes’ and, according to the colonialists, they were not only physically different from the *Hutu*, but also socially superior. In light of this, the colonialists started constructing a variety of hypotheses on their possible origins. John Hanning Speke, the famous Nile explorer, in his book, *History of Wahuma*, elaborated on what he called a ‘theory of conquest of inferior by superior races’. After carrying out

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<sup>36</sup> R. Lemarchand, ‘*Le Genocide de 1972 au Burundi: Les silences de l’Histoire*’, Unpublished paper presented to the Burundi Community in Montreal, Canada on the occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1972 genocide, March, 2002

<sup>37</sup> A typical story is that which is popularly recounted in Burundi by the Tutsi. It goes as follows: to test their dependability, God decided to entrust Hutu, Tutsi and the Twa with a pot of milk to watch over during the night. When dawn came, the Hutu had gone to sleep and spilt his milk, the Twa had drunk the milk, and only the watchful Tutsi had stayed up through the night to keep guard over his milk.

<sup>38</sup> Prunier, *The Rwandan Crisis, History of a Genocide*, p. 78

research around Uganda and the Great Lakes region on the foreign origin of some of the ruling groups in several kingdoms, he deduced from his findings a theory linking the monarchical institutions he had found in the area upon the arrival of the conquering 'superior' race, the carrier of a 'superior civilisation'.<sup>39</sup>

Without a shred of evidence, Speke decided that these representatives of a so-called superior civilisation were the ancestors of the *Tutsi*, and that they were also the Galls of Southern Ethiopia. This opinion was later shared by other nineteenth-century explorers, such as Sir Samuel Baker and Gaetano Casati, as well as missionaries, such as Fr. Van den Burght, Fr. Gorju and John Roscoe. Fr. Pages, on the other hand, thought they were descendants of the ancient Egyptians, while De Lacger saw them as coming from either Melanesia or Asia Minor.<sup>40</sup>

In time, these narratives became absorbed into the sub-conscious minds of all the elements in Burundi society. As such, they provided powerful moral justification for the all-encompassing premise of inequality. As with oral tradition in other parts of the world, the Burundi oral tradition quickly found itself at the very foundation of the history of Burundi. Therefore, such tradition in Burundi remains the central frame of reference for conservative *Tutsi* elites. For the emerging generations of *Hutu*, the *Tutsi* grip on power was a deliberate attempt by a minority to suppress the political and economic aspirations of the majority; hence, the need by the *Hutu* to change everything radically. Lemarchand's findings may have weight, but the fact that people come from outside the Great Lakes, let alone from outside Africa, does not signify that they are more civilised than other inhabitants of the African continent. One should not lose sight of the fact that at the beginning of the tenth century, the African kingdoms of the Western Sudan were flourishing, with universities and iron-melting industries, while in Egypt, this period marked the beginning of the public bath phenomenon, water irrigation and the supply of trenched water to the towns. Europe, on the other hand, was still engulfed in the dark ages, and the barbarians and Saxons had just sacked England.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> R. Lemarchand, *Ethnicity as Myth: the view from Central Africa*, Centre of African Studies, University of Copenhagen, May 1999, p. 11.

<sup>40</sup> Prunier, *The Rwandan Crisis, History of a Genocide*, p. 79

<sup>41</sup> B. Davidson, *Old Africa Rediscovered*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1959, p. 56

Some of the ‘scientific’ theories about the Hamitic origins of the *Tutsi* started becoming more and more bizarre as the most respected anthropologists of the time, Ratzel, Paulschke and Meinhof, competed with each other in giving them wide publicity. Some claimed that the *Tutsi* came from India or the Garden of Eden, as the Dominican, Fr. Etienne Brosse suggested. The Belgian Colonial Administrator, Renand de Briey, speculated that they could have been the last descendants of the lost continent of Atlantis.<sup>42</sup> For the early Christian missionaries, the *Tutsi* represented the finest example of the Hamitic race. Seligman described them as:

Pastoral Europeans arriving wave after wave, better armed as well as quicker witted than the agricultural Negroes. They clearly belonged to a higher order of humanity than the *Hutu*, and for this reason they were ideally equipped to act as privileged intermediaries between the European colonizer and the dark agricultural masses.<sup>43</sup>

The divergence of opinion about the possible ethno-genesis of the *Tutsi* was very important for several reasons. First, it conditioned the views and attitudes of Europeans in respect of the Burundian social groups with which they were dealing. Second, it became a kind of ‘scientific canon’ that actually governed the decisions of the German and Belgian colonial authorities. Third, it had a massive impact on the natives themselves, more particularly the *Hutu*, who gradually saw their social status in the socio-political and economic structure of Burundian society eroded in favour of one class of people. The result was the inflating of the *Tutsi* cultural ego and the crushing of *Hutu* feelings until they exhibited an aggressively resentful inferiority complex. The dissemination of such theories relating to the origin of the *Tutsi* resulted in a potentially explosive construction of identity during the ‘peaceful years of white presence in Burundi’.<sup>44</sup>

There have been many hypotheses about the origin of the *Tutsi* in Burundi, but one thing is clear, that they came from outside the Great Lakes region, met the *Hutu* and the *Twa*, and intermingled, intermarried and, from the sixteenth century, formed one great community. The *Tutsi*, of course, did not come from Tibet, India, or from ancient Egypt, but their distinct features probably point to a Cushitic

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<sup>42</sup> Prunier, *The Rwandan Crisis: History of a Genocide*, p. 80

<sup>43</sup> C.G. Seligman, *Races of Africa*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988, p. 141

<sup>44</sup> Laely, ‘Peasants, Local Communities and Central Power in Burundi’, p. 708

origin, somewhere near the horn of Africa, probably Southern Ethiopia, where the *Oromo* have long proved to be adventurous and mobile. It is also clear that coming from elsewhere does not imply any form of superiority or having more ability than the original inhabitants of the region. The *Oromo* people, who are believed to be the ancestors of the *Tutsi*, although this hypothesis is not authoritative, were and still are acephalous pastoral people who are believed to have developed monarchical institutions only in the nineteenth century, as they became culturally part of the Abyssinian world.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, there is insufficient evidence that the *Oromo* were in fact the custodians of monarchical institutions in the Great Lakes. Many researchers have come up with the hypothesis that monarchical institutions were locally developed amongst the *Hutu* and the *Twa*, as the *Bugandan* and flourishing kingdoms of eastern Zaire, the present-day Democratic Republic of the Congo, suggest. The inhabitants of these regions, who are very much like the inhabitants of Burundi, have impressive kingship institutions, and the only reason why they do not experience ethnic strife may be because they were partitioned and controlled by different colonial powers with varying policies and different degrees of implementation. It can, however, be summed up that the *Oromo* found nothing better 'than to lie on a bed that had already been made by the local inhabitants'.<sup>46</sup>

As war was a socially and culturally accepted norm in Burundian society, it became more and more problematic as the kingdom expanded. The *Mwamis* had to impose a politico-religious vision of quasi-mystical proportions on its conquered subjects (princes were entrusted with mystical powers and appointed to administer areas conquered by the kingdom). This implied a demoralisation of the social procedures and, beyond that, a form of symbolic geography whereby the land was reorganised according to a strongly enforced world view. It was also realised by the colonialists that the king's powers were not evenly administered over the whole of Burundi. In areas where his authority was lacking, the colonialists appointed local chiefs to govern the people.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> R. Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*, Pall Mall, London, 1970, p. 78

<sup>46</sup> P. Krop, *Le Genocide Franco-Americain: Faut'il juger les Mitterand?*, J.C, Lattes, Paris, 1994, p. 56

<sup>47</sup> Weinstein, and Schire, *Political Conflict and Ethnic Strategies*, p. 13

Burundi society evolved through this very rigid form and, by the end of the nineteenth century, the vast majority of Burundians were forced to sell their labour to the colonial administration, first as a social obligation, and second as a monetarized commodity in the colonial system. This transformation of Burundian society was a complete diversion from the conventional practice in which collective labour was frequently used either to pay for taxes or for government-sanctioned projects. The period also marked the introduction of the Western policy of capitalism that the Burundians greatly abhorred. Even though they resented this socio-economic transformation at first, they later accepted it. To better understand this dramatic transformation of traditional Burundian society, a close look at the impact of colonialism is imperative.

## 2.4 Colonial era

Prior to the Berlin Conference of 1888-89, Germany had no overseas territories and German public opinion was not in favour of the acquisition of overseas lands. Only the whims of their Chancellor, Otto Von Bismarck, after the conference, changed this conservative German attitude towards foreign possessions. After the annexation of Burundi, the German officers did not know how to deal with the local people, unlike the British and the French military who had had considerable experience in other parts of Africa and Asia. The *Mwamis* were placated, manipulated and indoctrinated so that they would follow German colonial rule, which they themselves would then transmit to the masses (indirect rule). There were very few German colonial administrators in Burundi, and by 1914 there were only eighty of them, including missionaries. The areas that the Mwami and Germans could not control were sub-contracted to local *Tutsi* chiefs. These men, after having secured the white man's support, acted as rapacious quasi-warlords.<sup>48</sup>

The German presence in Burundi was crucially important in fomenting ethnic conflict, since it inaugurated a colonial policy of indirect rule and the division of society into *Tutsi*, *Hutu* and *Twa*. The German presence also impacted on the pre-colonial transformation of Burundian society, leading to more

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<sup>48</sup> Lemarchand, *Burundi; Ethnic Conflict and Genocide*, p. 106



centralisation in the process of annexing unconquered municipalities, and also to an increase in *Tutsi* chiefly power. The German presence did not last long (1894-1914) and, given its shallow administrative implantation, the Germans could not really modify Burundian society profoundly. The Belgian administration, effective on the ground after the 1916 military conquest, and made official by the League of Nations mandate in 1919, was to continue the process, and to change the German approach to indirect rule and colonial administration in Burundi.<sup>49</sup>

The Belgians' first years after the granting of the mandate were characterised by a 'wait and see' attitude. They carried out a number of experimental reforms between 1916 and 1925 aimed at providing food and education to the African population. These reforms were preceded by a period of soul-searching, essentially concerned with deciding how to behave towards the whole *Tutsi* chiefly complex and the system of indirect rule bequeathed by the Germans. In their quest for constructive reforms, the Belgians relied heavily on the advice of the Belgian Bishop, Bishop Classe, who wrote in 1927 that:

.... though the *Tutsi* youth was of an incomparable element of progress, one should not forget that the Burundi kings of old elevated to high dignity *Bahutu* and *Batwa* lineages, giving them rank in the landholding class.<sup>50</sup>

Subsequently, fearing that his advice would be followed too closely in the ongoing reform process, he changed his mind, saying that the greatest mistake this government could make would be to suppress the *Matutsi* caste. Lemarchand remarked on the revolution as follows:

Such a revolution would lead the country directly to anarchy and to hateful anti-European communism ....we will have no better, more active, and more intelligent chiefs than the *Batutsi*. They are the ones best suited to understand progress and the ones the population likes best. The government must work with them.<sup>51</sup>

His second piece of advice was to prove far more popular with the administration than the first, and the few fumbling and ineffectual attempts at putting *Hutu* into chiefly positions came to naught. Even worse,

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p. 108

<sup>50</sup> R. Lemarchand, 'Burundi: Ethnicity and the genocidal state', in P. van den Bergh, (ed), *State Violence and Ethnicity* Boulder Press, Colorado 1998, p. 90

<sup>51</sup> R. Lemarchand, 'Managing, Transition anarchies: Rwanda, Burundi and South Africa in comparative perspective' in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 32, no. 4, 1994, p. 581

many *Hutu* chiefs were fired and replaced with *Tutsi* ones. This eventually led to a situation where a chiefly function became a domain preserved for the *Tutsi*.

The period after Belgian occupation was one of tinkering with administrative procedures, and a number of tried and tested reforms were contemplated. One such reform was the concentration of chiefly functions in Burundi in the hands of the *Tutsi*. In 'traditional' Burundian society there were three types of chief on any given hill, one of whom, the chief of the land, was a *Hutu*, since agriculture was their main occupation. The juggernauting Belgian colonial reforms continued and, in 1929, the three positions of chief were fused into one that was given to a *Tutsi* by the Belgians. Another very interesting innovation during this period was the appointment of chiefs, whereas in the Burundi of old, all chiefly positions were hereditary. Thus, the *Hutu* peasant found himself tightly controlled by one chief whose backing by the colonial administration was more efficient than the loose support that the pre-colonial Burundian chiefs used to receive from the royal court.<sup>52</sup>

The economy of Burundi during this period was geared towards cash-crop production, and the Belgians invested much effort and manpower in the cultivation of coffee, bananas and tobacco. Taxes were levied on able-bodied males in Burundi, as opposed to the collective taxation system which prevailed in pre-colonial days. This aspect of individualisation and privatisation, which went along with the penetration of Western capitalism into the collective practices of an ancient society, helped to open a gulf between the *Hutu* and *Tutsi*. The beneficiaries of this Westernised system of economy were the *Tutsi*, who happened to be closest to the axis of political control after 1929.<sup>53</sup>

Another principal arm of the Belgian colonial administration, as in other parts of colonial Africa, was the church. When the Belgians first arrived, they found the missionaries (Francophone fathers and mostly white) to be very knowledgeable about Burundian society. This made them a godsend to the Belgians. The missionaries were the only white people who could speak the local (*Kirundi*) language, and they wrote extensively on native practices and customs. Thus, the colonial administrators relied strongly on

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<sup>52</sup> R. Lemarchand, *Genocide in the Great Lakes: Which Genocide? Whose Genocide?* in *African Studies Review*, Vol. 41, no. 1, 1998, p. 16

<sup>53</sup> A. Kagame, *La notion de generation appliquee a la genealogie dynastique et a l'histoire du Rwanda des X-XI siecles a nos jours*, Academie Royal des Sciences Coloniales, Bruxelles, 1959, p. 12

the advice of these people in their day-to-day interactions with the local people. The missionaries and the church impacted on the African way of life and tended to promote a strong moralistic streak. The various church doctrines and church laws were respected. Polygamy came to be seen as evil, and adultery was a sin. Thrift and hard work were encouraged, and a social display of conventional piety was required of all Christians.<sup>54</sup>

The church also exercised a monopoly on education in colonial Burundi, but attendance was fairly poor since it was paid for and not compulsory. As the *Tutsi* were said to be the natural-born chiefs, they had to be given preference in education so that the church could enhance its control over the future elites of the country. To obtain any kind of post-secondary education, the *Hutu* had no choice but to become theology students and, upon graduating, they experienced difficulty in finding employment. The unemployed *Hutu* therefore became bitter and turned their frustration first on the colonialists and, after their departure, on the *Tutsi*. They targeted the *Tutsi* because they had come to symbolise capitalism and demonstrated no remorse for their occupation of supposedly 'Hutu land'.<sup>55</sup>

The Belgians, having relied so much on the missionaries in their day-to-day administration of the territory, adopted Roman Catholicism as the official religion of colonial Burundi. Catholicism then became more and more associated with the highest echelons of the state. It was a badge of legitimacy, a source of profit, a way of becoming educated, a club, a matrimonial agency and also a religion. But since it was such a privileging agency, it could not bridge the ethnic gap which the Belgian authorities kept widening. Against this background, Burundi achieved independence, but was haunted by the bellicose society that the colonialists had consciously and unconsciously fashioned.<sup>56</sup>

The first Europeans in this area were the White Fathers, a Roman Catholic missionary group who arrived in 1880. The warriors of Mwami Kisabo attacked them in 1881, and many of them were killed. In this hostile environment, the Germans armed subsequent expeditionary missions. Thus, the German's fortified missions arrived in 1892 and subjugated the warriors of *Mwami Mwezi Kisabo* who ascended the throne in circa 1852. To administer the territory, the Germans had to deploy considerable human

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<sup>54</sup> J. Linden, *Church and Revolution in Rwanda*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1977, p. 45

<sup>55</sup> Malkki, *Purity and Exile*, p. 32

<sup>56</sup> J. Lonsdale, 'Moral Ethnicity and Political Tribalism', in K. Preben K. J. Hultin (eds), *Inventions and Boundaries: Historical and Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism*, International Development Studies, Roskilde University, Roskilde, Denmark, 1995 p. 210

and logistical resources, and this was only feasible after they had completed a military post in Usumbura, (Bujumbura) in 1909. Effective German occupation in the area only lasted for six years, as the world was plunged into a global conflagration in 1914. Not long after the establishment of this formal protectorate in 1909, *Mwami Kisabo* died, and was succeeded by his fifteen-year-old son who took the title of *Mutaga II*.<sup>57</sup>

*Mutaga II*'s reign witnessed total division between the German civil servants and German military officers. The German civil servants supported the *Mwami* and the officers sided with the *ganwa*, (princes to the throne) in their struggle for recognition and to wield political power. In the ensuing conflict between the German civil servants and their military officers, *Mwami Mutaga II* was killed. While ensuring that the monarchy survived, the Germans defied all rivalry and odds to make sure that *Mutaga*'s two-year-old son, *Mwambutsa II* succeeded him. *Mwambutsa II*'s enthronement in 1915 coincided with the invasion of Burundi and eventual capitulation of the territory to Belgian troops from King Leopold's Congo, following the outbreak of the First World War in Europe. The period following the invasion saw the total collapse of German colonial institutions and an apparent failure by the Belgians to maintain peace and security.<sup>58</sup>

Due to crop failure and the effects of the war, Burundi witnessed an unprecedented famine after the war, which killed more than 50,000 people and left the League of Nations perplexed about ways and means of handling such situations. Following the urgent need by the League of Nations to regulate and stabilise 'enemy territories', an agreement was passed in 1923 under which Burundi and Rwanda were handed to the Belgians as Mandated Territories. Under this agreement, the Belgians were obliged to maintain peace and order and to provide good administration, modern education and health care, as well as to promote the well-being of the African population and prepare them for self-rule in the future.<sup>59</sup>

Generally, after 1923, the whole system of Belgian colonial rule was centred on what was called '*les reformes Voisin*' (the Voisin's reforms) after the governor, Charles Voisin. Voisin's reforms in Burundi and Rwanda were focused upon organised labour, taxes and land. The corvee, a tax system that was popular in French Africa, was implemented in the territory, much to the chagrin of the locals. The corvee

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<sup>57</sup> A. Carpenter, and M. Mathew, *Enchantment of Africa Burundi*, Children Press, Chicago, 1973, p. 52

<sup>58</sup> Laely, 'Peasants, Local Communities and Central Power in Burundi', in *Modern African Studies*, p. 234

<sup>59</sup> Carpenter and Mathew, *Enchantment of Africa Burundi*, p. 42

entailed that an adult male should work for one week a year on public sanction projects. During that period, there was a generalisation of labour supply, and individual obligations towards such a move were entrenched. Every single male and, at times, women and children when needed, had to perform the corvee.<sup>60</sup>

The Belgians also saw land as an important means of controlling the locals. By 1923, all land in Burundi was owned by the government. In 1925, J. Adriaenssens, a colonist, noted that:

These lands held as undivided usufruct by the lineage groups are not considered by the Belgian legislation in Ruanda-Urundi as belonging to the native collectivities. They are not occupied in the legal sense by the natives and are considered as vacant. The state can dispose of such lands after due compensation.<sup>61</sup>

After World War Two, the territory was again entrusted to the Belgians under the United Nations Trusteeship Council. Under the new dispensation, the Belgians were tasked with the development of the country economically and its preparation for self-government or independence. However, the Belgians were not very keen to accede to Burundian self-rule, and kept on delaying the process. After immense pressure from the United Nations through the Afro-Asiatic bloc, the Belgians finally organised general elections in 1952, but manipulated and rigged the outcome of the result, which meant that the minority *Tutsi* gained control over the council. The Belgians had succeeded in making it look as if the increasing power of the *Tutsi* was not of their making, but instead a direct result of the wishes of the Burundian people.<sup>62</sup>

As a result of the 1952 elections, the territory became more politically aware, and a number of political parties emerged in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Prominent amongst them were the *Union de Progres Nationale* (UPRONA) led by the *ganwa* Rwagasore, the eldest son of the *Mwami*, and the Christian Progressive Party led by Jean Baptiste Ntidenterezza and Joseph Biroli. What the Belgians saw as Rwagasore's nationalistic tendencies and more radical leaning towards socialism resulted in him

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<sup>60</sup> C. Newbury, 'Ubureetwa and Thangata: Catalyst to Peasant Political Consciousness in Rwanda and Malawi', in Centre de Civilisation Burundaise (ed), *Les Civilisation ancienne des peuples des Grands Lacs*, Karthala, Paris, 1981, p. 138

<sup>61</sup> Lemarchand, *Burundi: Ethnicity and Genocidal state*, p. 101

<sup>62</sup> The Legislative Council of 1952 was more or less a Constituent Assembly as it was charged to draw up the Constitution of an autonomous region

being imprisoned before the September 1961 general elections. As expected, his party, the UPRONA performed poorly, and the *Parti de Democrat Chretiens* (PDC) gained the majority of seats in the legislative council. The aftermath of this was a strong condemnation of the political process in Burundi by the United Nations and the international community.<sup>63</sup>

Bowing to this pressure, the Belgians organised a re-run of the September elections in 1962, and the UPRONA convincingly gained more than two-thirds of the seats in the new legislative council. Rwagasore, the president of the UPRONA, was appointed Prime Minister and formed a government in which the *Hutu* and *Tutsi* held the same number of ministerial portfolios. Two weeks after the formation of the government, Rwagasore was assassinated in a *Tutsi* plot to gain political control. It was at the peak of this political disorder and disruption that Burundi became independent on 1 July 1962.<sup>64</sup>

## 2.5 The post-colonial era

German rule in Burundi lasted a little more than twenty years, and the Belgians stepped in following the outcome of the First World War. The war saw the defeat of the Germans in Africa and Europe, and all German territories in Africa were divided amongst the victorious nations. Belgium, as a victorious power, took over the administration of Rwanda and Burundi. The policies of the Belgians did not differ much from those of the Germans. Their main concern was how to deal with the *Tutsi* and the complex system of indirect rule bequeathed by the Germans. They relied heavily on the advice of Bishop Classe, the Catholic Bishop of Burundi. The Bishop had, in his previous consultations with the colonialists, elevated the *Hutu* population to a respectable level in Burundian society. Observing that his opinions and advice were highly respected in colonial circles, the man of God dramatically changed his opinions about the *Hutu* and restored the previously eroded status of the *Tutsi*.<sup>65</sup>

I will argue that relying on the advice of the Bishop was a blunder on the part of the colonial administrators who, like the Bishop, were trained anthropologists who should have understood how to deal with different ethnic groups. Supporting the Bishop's advice, the Belgians allowed only the sons and daughters of *Tutsi* to attend colonial schools and educational institutions. The *Tutsi* were the only

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<sup>63</sup> Laely, 'Peasants, Local Communities and Central Power in Burundi', p. 234

<sup>64</sup> R. Kay, *Burundi Since the Genocide*, Minority Rights Group, London, 1987, p. 4

<sup>65</sup> Prunier, *The Rwandan Crisis: History of a Genocide*, p. 88

group that had access to specific colonial departments and were appointed as advisers to the Belgian administrators and the *Mwami*.<sup>66</sup>

The above policies were intended better to administer the territory, but were implemented at the expense of the majority of the Burundian people. It is certain that such policies were resented by the *Hutu* and that this contributed enormously to the antagonism that besieges the two ethnic groups today. Such divisive policies were enforced with greater severity until independence in 1962. It was only the charisma of Louis Rwagasore that prevented a bloodbath before independence.<sup>67</sup>

It is true that there was some degree of division amongst the various components of pre-colonial Burundi society but, as earlier indicated, these were mainly quarrels over farmlands, grazing land, women, slave trading and, most importantly, princely claims to the throne. Two regional groups were particularly important in this competition for power. First were the *Tutsi* and the *ganwa* of the north, mainly from the regions around *Gitega*, *Muramvya* and *Ngosi*. Second, there were the *Tutsi* from the south, principally from the region of *Bururi* and *Nyanga lac*. The Germans and the Belgians very often sided with some of the claimants. Thus, during the major part of European rule in Burundi, the *Tutsi*, who constituted only a small minority (about 14%), were usually favoured to the detriment of the majority. The obvious outcome of such a policy was intra-ethnic conflict. Such policies also overlooked the potential leadership qualities of the majority and destroyed the mobility of the integrative forces that had been at work in pre-colonial Burundi society.<sup>68</sup>

In the event of such wrangling, the *Mwami*, who, in Burundi society, represented all sections of Burundi society, frequently sided with the *Tutsi*. *Mwami Mwambutsa IV* (1915-1966) was aware of such tensions and knew that it was only by bridging this gap that he would save the monarchy from eventual collapse. But, the *Mwami's* leadership qualities left much to be desired. Owing to discontent amongst the people of Burundi, the *Mwami's* eldest son, Louis Rwagasore, took a *Hutu* maiden as a bride in an attempt to bridge this dangerous gap. His political party, the *Union Du Progres Nationale*, whose political mandate transcended ethnic or 'tribal' borders, was well established in the territory. His main

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<sup>66</sup> J.C. Willame, *Banyarwanda et Banyamulenge: Violences ethniques et gestion de l'identaire au Kivu*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 1997 p. 96

<sup>67</sup> Article 3,6 of the August 28<sup>th</sup> 2000 *Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Accord for Burundi*

<sup>68</sup> V. Du Bois, 'To Die in Burundi: The Eruption of Inter-Tribal Strife, Spring 1972', in *Journal of Central and Southern African series*, vol.XVI, no. 3, 1974, p.2

objective was an attempt to wrest political independence from Belgian control. After much politicking and arguments about the *raison d'être* of political independence for Burundi, by 1962 the stage was set. In the parliamentary election of September 1961, Rwagasore's party won an astonishing two-thirds majority vote and he was appointed Burundi's Prime Minister at independence in 1962. This remarkable achievement by the Burundians was, however, short-lived as the newly appointed Prime Minister was assassinated at a lakeside restaurant on the 13 October 1962.<sup>69</sup>

With the death of Rwagasore, an extraordinarily popular figure disappeared from the political landscape. His posthumous image has now reached mythical proportions in Burundi. Because of Rwagasore's profound commitment to peace, reconciliation and the economic prosperity and social emancipation of Burundi, many believed that if he had been spared he might have saved Burundi from the ethnic and political doldrums in which the small central African state finds itself today. It cannot be independently confirmed that Rwagasore's killers were political opportunists, but whatever the case, the Belgian colonial administration was not pleased with Rwagasore's militant approach. As a result, they did not hesitate to eliminate him from the political stage.<sup>70</sup> (See chapter 2 for the Belgians' actions).

The Belgian colonial administration, known for their unpredictability vis-à-vis colonial sovereignty, played a major role in the crystallisation of ethnicity in Burundi. It cannot therefore be completely denied that this embedded ethnicity contributed significantly to the escalation of the 1993 conflict. The killing of Patrice Lumumba in the Congo also preceded the assassination of Rwagasore. It seems, therefore, to have been a calculated attempt by the Belgians to eliminate militant African leaders at the dawn of political independence, often branding them communists or fascists. With the elimination of the two leaders, the chances of reconciliation in the Great Lakes were eroded, and thenceforth the dichotomy between the Tutsi and Hutu dominated ethnic and political conflict as the events of 1965, 1969, 1972, 1988 and 1991 revealed.<sup>71</sup>

I have, up until now, argued that the ethnic groups in Burundi were invented by colonial imaginations, and bear no resemblance to the ethnic morphology of the Great Lakes region. As in other parts of colonial Africa, the *Tutsi* and *Hutu* were mere expressions to distinguish between a servant and a

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<sup>69</sup> Weinstein, and Schrire, *Political Conflict and Ethnic Strategies*: 1976, p. 68

<sup>70</sup> R. Atkinson, 'The evolution of Ethnicity Among the Acholi of Uganda: The Pre-colonial Phase', in *Ethnohistory*, vol. 36, 1997, no. 1, p. 19

<sup>71</sup> Reyntjens, *Burundi: Breaking the Cycle of Violence*, p. 5



master, between poor and rich and between liked and disliked. The *Tutsi*, according to the colonialists, were an exceptionally gifted and attractive race. They said:

...the Hamites are light-skinned, with a straight nose, thin lips, narrow face, soft, often wavy or even straight hair, without prognathism . . . . Owing to their racial superiority they have gained leading positions and have become the founders of many of the larger states in Africa.<sup>72</sup>

These colonial attitudes were embedded in colonial minds and guided the formulation of policies. To a great extent, the impact of colonialism shaped Burundian society, which went up in flames in 1993 and the effects of colonialism spilled over into ruthless acts of genocide.

The political unrest and instability that followed Burundi's independence repeatedly took an ethnic colouration, and there was a complete breakdown of the political process. The ruling UPRONA fell into factions, and no outstanding political figure was able to form a steady government. The *Mwami*'s role as a regulator of the political process in Burundi became questionable, as he openly sided with the *Tutsi* who wanted to control the political system in Burundi. The *Hutu* grew increasingly frustrated, and an attempt by this group to overthrow the government was ruthlessly crushed by the army led by Captain Michel Micombero, the army commandant. In the ensuing confusion and killings, the *Mwami*, *Mwambutsa II*, abdicated the throne and went into exile in Europe.<sup>73</sup>

Many Burundians saw the abdication of the *Mwami* as a watershed in the crystallisation of ethnic tension in the short history of Burundi. First, was the fact that it ushered in an ethnic-based political dispensation in which the *Tutsi* wielded enormous political power. Second, it also entrenched and consolidated the ethnic distrust that existed between the *Tutsi* and the *Hutu*. In the ensuing turmoil after the abdication of the *Mwami*, the crown prince, Charles Mlizeye, announced that he was succeeding his father as *Mwami* of Burundi. He took the title of *Mwami Ntare V*. The first task of the new *Mwami* was the formation of a new government and the restoration of peace and order. This government included five military officers, with the army commandant, Michel Micombero, as Prime Minister.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> D. Westerman, D, *The African Today*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1931, p. 25

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 5

<sup>74</sup> Weinstein, *Historical Dictionary of Burundi*, p. 15

Tension between the *Mwami* and the Prime Minister on the composition of the new government resulted in an impasse, and the Prime Minister, supported by the army, overthrew the *Mwami* and established a republic. Micombero, now a colonel, was made President and Prime Minister. His regime saw a total breakdown of the democratisation process that had started at independence. Freedom of expression and opposition to the regime were ruthlessly crushed. Bowing to international pressure to defuse the political tension in the country, Micombero initiated political reform in 1972 that culminated in the granting of amnesty to all previous perpetrators of genocide and violence in Burundi. Benefiting from this amnesty, the former *Mwami*, *Ntare V*, who was now living in exile in Uganda, returned to Burundi with the assistance of Idi Amin of Uganda. The former *Mwami*'s attempt to pacify the warring factions in the Burundi conflict was met with fierce resistance from the *Tutsi* and, in a skirmish in the *Muramvya* region, he was killed.<sup>75</sup>

The aftermath of the killing of the former *Mwami* was one of violence, reprisals and counter- reprisals. The *Hutu* accused the *Tutsi* of eliminating the only conciliatory voice in the country and, for their part, the *Tutsi* accused the *Hutu* of having wiped the face of their country with a 'pollutant who did not value the well-being of the *Tutsi* people'.<sup>76</sup> During the preceding six weeks of the killing of the *Mwami*, the country witnessed an unprecedented genocide against the *Hutu* population by the *Tutsi*. The *Tutsi* were supported by 'simba guerillas' - *Tutsi* who fled to Zaire during the 1962 uprising and, to the shock of the world, in June 1972 more than 100,000 people, mainly *Hutu* who were educated beyond primary-school level were killed, and a further 300,000 fled the country to neighbouring territories.<sup>77</sup>

The genocide witnessed a turning point in contemporary Burundi history. It still provides a crucial point of reference for the two main ethnic groups today. For the *Hutu*, it is proof of the existence of an ongoing genocidal plan nurtured by the *Tutsi*, who harbour fears that the majority will exterminate the minority. This is a genuinely felt belief by the *Tutsi*. On the other hand, the *Hutu* believe the *Tutsi* had a genocidal plan to exterminate the majority in Burundi in order to create space for the emerging *Tutsi*

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<sup>75</sup> Melady, *Burundi: The Tragic Years*, 1974, p. 58

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 59

aristocracy.<sup>78</sup>

The political turmoil in Burundi entered a new phase in November 1976 when Cmdt Jean Baptiste Bagaza who, like Micombero, was a *Tutsi* from the south of the country, seized power in a bloodless coup. As justification for this move, Bagaza cited the retardation in the reconciliation process, the undemocratic nature of the political climate and the stifling of the press. His regime did not witness changes in any of these areas, though, and instead was one of the most repressive in post-independence Africa. However, he did initiate some reforms, which culminated in the adoption of a new constitution by referendum in November 1981, and which provided for a national assembly to be elected by universal suffrage. On paper, it was one of the best in Africa, but the practical aspect left much to be desired.<sup>79</sup>

Bagaza was elected president of the ruling UPRONA in 1974 during the party's second national congress, and later that year he was elected president of the country. Bagaza's regime saw a sharp deterioration in the government's human rights record, and press censorship, religious intolerance and imprisonment of people suspected of involvement in *Hutu* opposition groups became the order of the day. This intensification of authoritarian rule led to strained relations with a number of donor countries. These countries sought to bring pressure on the Bagaza regime by withholding substantial amounts of development aid. The outcome was a total collapse of state structures and an inadequate public service. The military, dissatisfied with the functioning of the state machinery, deposed Bagaza in a coup in September 1987. Maj. Pierre Buyoya, the army chief of staff and a close associate of Bagaza, masterminded the coup. Buyoya subsequently formed a Military Committee for National Salvation (CMSN) that was composed of 31 army officers. The 1981 constitution, which had been adopted by referendum, was abolished, and Buyoya was sworn in as president and head of a 20-member government. In a radio address to the nation, Buyoya said:

Our actions should not be misconstrued as a means of personal aggrandisement, but rather as an attempt to liberate the people of Burundi from years of bondage, slavery and poverty. The military will commit itself to freeing political prisoners and to an

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<sup>78</sup> R. Kay, *Burundi Since The Genocide*, Minority Rights Group, London, 1987, p. 5

<sup>79</sup> R. De Becker, *Burundi: National Unity, the Gateway to Development*, Fricsh, Brussels 1990, p. 45

inclusive society for all in Burundi.<sup>80</sup>

Buyoya's regime witnessed a more liberal approach and, in the process, a number of political prisoners were released, press censorship was relaxed and a more open political debate about the ethnic crisis was encouraged. These reforms did not, however, appeal to the majority of the *Tutsi* who saw in Buyoya a traitor and a sell-out. Three attempted coups in the first year of his presidency clearly attest to this fact. Renewed inter-ethnic violence erupted in 1988 and, during an operation to pacify the population in the *Ntega* and *Marangara* municipalities, more than 20,000 Hutu were killed and a further 60,000 fled to neighbouring Rwanda. Discouraged by these developments, and following pressure exerted from abroad, the president initiated a number of reforms aimed at reconciling the warring factions in the Burundi conflict. In October 1988, he decided to set up a National Commission to study the question of National Unity. As a sign of good tidings, the National Commission was made up of 12 *Hutu* and 12 *Tutsi*. Later that month, he appointed a *Hutu*, Adries Sibomana, as Prime Minister, while at the same time creating a cabinet where *Hutu* and *Tutsi* held an equal number of portfolios.<sup>81</sup>

Superficially, the moves looked reconciliatory but, judging from the fact that the *Hutu* constitute more than 80% of the Burundi population, much was required of Buyoya in his efforts at appeasing the *Hutu*. Though the reforms were cosmetic, they signalled the beginning of profound changes in a conflict-ridden country. The outcome of the National Commission on the question of National Unity culminated in the drafting of a charter of National Unity in April 1989. After immense debate, the draft was approved by referendum in February 1991.<sup>82</sup>

The National Commission to study the question of National Unity was set up, many *Hutu* entered the state apparatus, and half the ministers were *Hutu*, with a sizeable number of provincial governors, and even the secretary general of the ruling UPRONA, also being *Hutu*. But one area remained problematic: the armed forces, that during the successive crises since 1965 had become the exclusive preserve of the *Tutsi*, continued to resist change. Coup attempts in February 1989 and March of the

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<sup>80</sup> F. Reyntjens, *Burundi: Breaking The Cycle of Violence*, London. Monority Rights group 1995, p. 9

<sup>81</sup> Reyntjens, *L'Afrique des Grand Lacs en Crise*, p. 45

<sup>82</sup> Krop, *Le Genocide Franco-Americain*; p. 4

same year, showed that Buyoya's message of reconciliation had considerable difficulty penetrating the military establishment. The *Tutsi* wrongly believed that the army was their only lifeline in times of crisis, as they would use it in maintaining or preserving the executive arm of government.<sup>83</sup>

The sweeping winds of democracy that started blowing from Eastern Europe, and which hit Africa in the early years of the 1990s, re-awakened Burundians, who started agitating for political reforms. This trend of events forced the government to draw up a democratic constitution that was approved by referendum in March 1992. The constitution of 1992 was quite remarkable, judging from its insistence on the need for National Unity and reconciliation. Formulated as a principle, in as many as 12 articles, the objectives were made operational by the obligations they carried. Such obligations took into account the diverse components of the Burundian population, with particular reference to the ethnic groups and, to a lesser extent, to the region.<sup>84</sup>

Public service posts that were to be filled took into consideration the ethnic and regional aspects of Burundi society. The equitable and justifiable allocation of posts to the ethnic groups and, to a more minor extent, to the region, also put in place a competitive political atmosphere in which the law-decree on political parties was promulgated in 1992. By the end of 1992, seven political parties were operating legally in the country. It was against this backdrop that, early in 1993, President Pierre Buyoya announced presidential elections for 1 June 1993, which would be followed by parliamentary elections on 29 June. Amid calls from the opposition to postpone the election to a later date to enable them to prepare for it, the president insisted that it was for the benefit of the Burundian people who were struggling after years of ethnic and political unrest to grasp the opportunity to vote as soon as possible.<sup>85</sup>

During the run-up to the elections, it was clear that the contest was between the *Front Democratique du Burundi* (FRODEBU) led by Melchior Ndadaye, a *Hutu*, and the *Union de Progres National* (UPRONA), the ruling party, led by the incumbent president, Pierre Buyoya. FRODEBU emerged as the only challenger to the UPRONA, and a number of reasons accounted for this. Most significant was

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<sup>83</sup> Lemarchand, *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide*, p. 59

<sup>84</sup> Reyntjens, *Burundi: Breaking the Cycle of Violence*, p. 9

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10

its successful nation-wide recruitment campaign, its organisation, the commitment of its members, and the undeniable charisma of its leader, Melchior Ndadaye. In addition, many sympathizers of the outlawed *Parti de Liberations de Peuple Hutu* (PALIPEHUTU) saw FRODEBU as a valid legal alternative to further the *Hutu* cause. In this regard, some outspoken members of the FRODEBU were victims of harassment, arrest and even physical violence on the part of local authorities. The government-owned media was far from impartial, as only the ruling party was given airtime on national television and radio. Apart from that, the electoral campaign was relatively open, with FRODEBU in particular drawing huge crowds to its meetings and rallies.<sup>86</sup>

The campaign period saw three presidential candidates being proposed to the electorate. The incumbent, Pierre Buyoya, was supported by the ruling party, UPRONA, and the *Rassemblement Democratique pour le Developpement Economique et Social* (RADDES), a satellite organisation. The challenger, Ndadaye, was put forward by the FRODEBU party, as well as the *Rassemblement de Peuple Burundais* (RPB), the *Parti du Peuple* (PP) and the *Parti Liberal* (PL). The outsider and royalist, Pierre-Cleber Sendegeya, was proposed by the PRP. The elections took place in calm circumstances and, in a press release, one of the observer missions, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDIIA), stated:

what the people of Burundi already know: the 1<sup>st</sup> June elections have been organized in an atmosphere of calm and transparency, therefore allowing the free expression of the Burundian people in the choice of their new president.<sup>87</sup>

The results of the elections were a blow to the *Tutsi*, as Ndadaye scored a massive 64,75% of the vote. Buyoya acquired 32,39% and Sendegeya 1,44%. The turnout was a massive 97,3% of registered voters, a clear indication of the interest of so many Burundians in their first opportunity to determine who should be head of state by means of a contested election. The parliamentary election of 29 June 1993 further confirmed the popularity of the FRODEBU party. The picture that emerged after the presidential elections was clear. Of the 10 recognised parties, only 6 submitted lists of candidates to the electorate. Overall, 71,40% voted for FRODEBU (up by more than 6%) against 21,42% for UPRONA (down by almost 11%). The people of Burundi had spoken, and their president and its legislators had been

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<sup>86</sup> Lemarchand, *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide*, p. 54

<sup>87</sup> Lemarchand, *Burundi, Ethnocide as Discourse and Practise*, p. 89

elected. Barely three months after this historic achievement, President Melchior Ndadaye was assassinated by *Tutsi* militia on 21 October 1993.<sup>88</sup>

With the murder of Ndadaye, democracy in Burundi and the enormous drive towards reconciliation between the *Hutu* and the *Tutsi* initiated by his government suffered a great blow. Thenceforth, Burundi was witness to genocide, while its leaders engaged in a ‘dialogue of the deaf’, as half-truths were being told about the causes of the crisis, with inappropriate solutions being proposed for an incorrectly diagnosed structural social malaise.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has dealt with the physical layout of Burundi, its people and the history of migration of the people who inhabited the region. It has also outlined the various hypotheses surrounding the ethnogenesis of the *Hutu*, *Tutsi* and *Twa*. I have argued that coming from the Great Lakes does not symbolise any form of superiority on the part of the *Tutsi*. Many researchers have tried to show that the local people in the region invented kingship and that the *Tutsi* simply found a well-prepared bed to lie on.

In this chapter, I have also argued that the terms *Hutu*, *Tutsi* and *Twa* were products of the colonial imagination. There was never a *Hutu*, *Tutsi* or *Twa* ‘tribe’ in Burundi prior to European colonisation. Examples of such ‘imagined’ communities abound on the African continent – for example, the *Bangala* of northern Congo who were first ‘discovered’ by Stanley. He called them ‘unquestionably a very superior tribe’, and they were accorded official anthropological recognition when, in 1907, an entire volume of writing was devoted to them in the first ethnographic survey of the Zaire peoples. Fortunately for the *Bangala*, they were never compared to another ‘tribe’, so their status as a ‘superior tribe’ remained unquestioned. In Burundi, it was not the same, as the *Tutsi* were ‘imagined’ to be ‘unquestionably a very superior tribe’ vis-à-vis their African counterparts. Likewise, the Dinka of Southern Sudan derive their ethnic and also part of their collective identity from a similar misreading of facts by the European explorer who took the name of a local chief to designate a whole congeries of

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<sup>88</sup> Lemarchand, *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide*, p. 54

separate communities. Again, the *Acholi* people of northern Uganda were invented by Arab traders from the Sudan to refer to a variety of Luo-speaking lineages and chiefdoms. As late as the 1930s, the *Acholi* people were still referred to as '*Gangli* or *Shuli*' and they had no fixed boundaries.<sup>89</sup>

To speak of invented tradition does little to illuminate its ideological orientation or normative underpinnings; nor does it bring out the different constructions placed upon it by different categories of social actors at different moments in history. Colonial Burundi did not benefit in any way from these invented ideologies, yet they created an atmosphere of competition, rivalry and antagonism within its erstwhile peaceful social structures.

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<sup>89</sup>Lemarchand, R., *Ethnicity as Myth: Views from the Central Africa*, p. 11



## CHAPTER THREE

### CAUSES OF THE CONFLICT

Following the attainment of political independence by Burundi on 1 July 1962, the 'imagined tribes' of Burundi began to vie for political domination. Since the colonialists had placed the *Tutsi* in the higher echelons of state structures, it became very difficult to convince them to relinquish the privilege they enjoyed. Pitting the *Tutsi*, who were striving to maintain the colonial status quo, against the *Hutu*, who were struggling to achieve majority rule in Burundi, continued to cause conflict for several months after independence. The newly elected Prime Minister, Prince Louis Rwagasore, left no stone unturned to reduce the intensity of these conflicts of interest. All Burundians, especially the *Tutsi*, who accused him of having violated the sacred Tutsi vow by marrying a Hutu girl, did not admire his sterling work at reconciliation. In the ensuing confrontation between the *Tutsi* and the *Hutu*, Rwagasore was assassinated after only a few weeks in office. Waves of violence following his assassination bedeviled Burundi until 1993, when another popularly acclaimed president, Melchior Ndadaye, was also assassinated. It was his death that eventually sparked the present conflict, which is at the centre of the present study. Many researchers on the Great Lakes have asked the question: why was Rwagasore assassinated? And why did the guarantor of Burundi independence, Belgium, turn a blind eye to the developments leading to his death?<sup>1</sup> Many attempts have been made to answer this question, and this chapter is another serious attempt to uncover the mystery.

#### 3.1 Previous perpetrators go unpunished

Numerous cases of gross human rights violations and massacres of scores of civilians have been documented in the history of Burundi since the 1960s. A perennial feature of this history was the failure of the government to punish those concerned. This failure to identify the criminals has created two equally regrettable attitudes in the country. First, individuals and families who were affected by ethnic violence were forced to accept their misery as a matter of destiny. They had no possibility of inquiring

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<sup>1</sup> R. Lemarchand, 'Genocide in the Great Lakes: Which Genocide?' in *African Studies Review*, Vol. 41, no 1, 1998, p3.

into the cause of the death, disappearance and torture of their loved ones or family members. With a partisan police force and justice system, it was difficult, and even dangerous, for the afflicted families to seek prosecution of the criminals.<sup>2</sup>

The Burundi state structure has created a situation in which one ethnic group or particular section of the country is above the law. Even when criminals are known (as they often are), they are rarely prosecuted. This contributes to general frustration and distrust by the public towards the government, the security forces and the judiciary. These very institutions have failed to protect the interests of the people they were created to protect. Some ethnic groups in Burundi have therefore succumbed to the notion of some people being the ‘untouchables’ in society. As such, their acts of genocide are rarely reported for fear of reprisals by the state and the security forces.<sup>3</sup> The following paragraphs will attempt to examine aspects of this impunity enjoyed by a particular community in Burundi, and how it led to the murder of Melchior Ndadaye and the creeping genocide of 1993.

To understand the question of impunity in Burundi, a close look at the social dynamics of the political impact of the Second World War is imperative. After this war, Burundi witnessed an intense social and political metamorphosis, as was the case in many other parts of colonial Africa. Many territories were agitating for political independence, and many, especially in British Africa, had their work cut out for them with the putting in place of a timetable for the attainment of independence. In Belgian Africa it was a different story, as the crown wanted to keep its African territories as crown provinces. It was only in 1959 that the Belgian government committed itself to a twofold programme of political reform. First, there was to be a fundamental revamping of the local organs of government, with the *chefferies* (chiefdoms) becoming provinces and the *sous-chefferies* (clans) turned into communes. Second, the communal councils would serve as the Electoral College when the time came to elect the members of the *conseil du pays* (State Council) upon which legislative powers were gradually bestowed. The

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<sup>2</sup> L. Ndikumana, ‘Institutional Failure and Ethnic Conflict in Burundi’, in *African Studies Review*, Vol. 41, no. 1, 1998 p. 44.

<sup>3</sup> J. Gasana, J, ‘La Guerre, La paix et la démocratie au Rwanda’, in André Guichaoua (ed), *Les Crises Politiques au Burundi et au Rwanda*, Karthala Université de Lille, 1994, p. 435

*Mwami* (king) (with his elaborate court and officials) acted as a constitutional monarch, with all his powers curtailed by the constitution and the government that was headed by a Prime Minister.<sup>4</sup>

Before these sweeping political reforms, the people of Burundi were becoming increasingly politically conscious. The people formed political parties and pressure groups to air their notions or political visions for an independent Burundi. Before the 1959 political reforms, several political parties had come into existence, notably the *Parti de L'Union et du Progres Nationale* (UPRONA) and the *Parti Democrate Chretien* (PDC). The aspirations and actions of these two parties were championed by two princes (cousins), admittedly struggling, not for the control of the monarchy, but to wrest political power from the Belgians after independence. Prince Louis Rwagasore, the eldest son of the reigning monarch, Mwambutsa, was elected president of the UPRONA, and his cousin, Jean Ntitendereza, was president of the PDC.<sup>5</sup>

With the liberalisation of the political atmosphere after the November 1959 laws, both parties engaged in an all-important campaign to capture the Burundian electorate. The Belgian colonial administration openly sided with the PDC, claiming that the UPRONA and its president were communist-orientated and, as such, independent Burundi was not safe in their hands. The Belgian allegations were taken very seriously by the Afro-Asiatic bloc at the United Nations that was afraid of the expansion of communism into South East Asia and Africa.<sup>6</sup>

The political gymnastics in Burundi after branding Rwagasore a communist resulted in the calling of elections in November 1960. Rwagasore was placed under house arrest and the UPRONA party gained only 545 seats of a total 2,876 against the PDC's 942. The interim government that followed the 1960 elections was composed mainly of Belgians, and two ministerial portfolios were given to the PDC. The UPRONA contested the outcome of the elections and accused the Belgian colonial administrators of blocking the democratic process in Burundi by detaining politicians and restricting

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<sup>4</sup> R Lemarchand, *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1994, p. 51

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56

<sup>6</sup> T. Gurr and Barbara Harf (eds), 'Early Warning of Communal Conflicts and Humanitarian Crises', in *The Journal of Ethno-Development*, special edition, Vol. 4, no. 1, 1994, p. 89

UPRONA sympathisers from exercising their civil rights. UPRONA accusations fell on receptive ears at the United Nations Trusteeship Council, which authorised the Belgians, through Resolutions no. 1579 and 1603, to dismiss the interim government, to organise new elections and to free political prisoners.<sup>7</sup>

The United Nations resolutions signaled a great setback for Belgian aspirations in Burundi. In the following legislative elections of September 1961, the UPRONA party won 58 seats out of 64. The victory enabled the UPRONA to form a government free of Belgian interference. The government of Rwagasore was one of national unity, and was clearly a reflection of the democratic and regional reality of Burundi. However, his government did not last long, as a gunman, Jean Kageorgis (a Greek mercenary working for the Belgian secret service), assassinated him after only three months in office. The circumstances surrounding the blatant reversal of the democratic process are still unclear, although the communist tag was conspicuously displayed as the motive. On the evidence supplied in the pre-trial investigation, however, it is possible to discern the hand of the Belgian colonial administrators in the murder of Rwagasore. In an autobiographical account of his final years in office as the vice governor-general of Rwanda and Burundi, Jean-Paul Harroy writes: 'Rwagasore is a radical, anti-Belgian, pro-Lumumba and dangerously pro-communist Organisation. He is stupid, conceited, spendthrift and party going'.<sup>8</sup>

Exactly what the role of the Belgian Resident in Bujumbura, Regnier, was in this tragedy remains unclear. The Belgian functionaries might have sanctioned the PDC plot to kill Rwagasore. Regnier was quoted as saying: 'Rwagasore must be killed; nothing is lost if one gets rid of Rwagasore in time...once the deed is accomplished, the lake is not too far away'.<sup>9</sup>

The Belgian colonial administrators seemed not to bother about either the fate of the politicians, or that of the country they were called upon to administer on behalf of the United Nations. Harroy, a senior member of the Belgian administration in Burundi at the time of the murder of Rwagasore, made no

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<sup>7</sup> Lemarchand, *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide*, p. 40

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 52

<sup>9</sup> G. Stanton, 'Could The Rwandan Genocide Have Been Prevented?', paper presented on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2002 in London at a conference 'Generations of Genocide' p. 18

mention in his *apologia pro vita sua*, of the role played by Regnier. In his opening statement in court he said:

I have fought with a clear conscience Rwagasore and his unjustified nationalism because I saw a clear possibility of entrusting an independent Burundi to better and more expert hands than those of the UPRONA. I therefore have no regret to have combatted Rwagasore prior to September 18, 1961, but things being what they are, I am very sorry that he was assassinated on October 13.<sup>10</sup>

In the annals of Burundian history, Harroy is the incarnation of the devil, and has played a great role in the escalation of Burundi's ethnic conflict. Since the murder of Rwagasore, Burundi's internal conflicts have always pointed to an ethnic divide and to the impunity enjoyed by the killers of Rwagasore. With the death of Rwagasore, Burundi was deprived of a strong and able statesman who could easily break through the ethnic divide in Burundi. His political insight transcended political and ethnic considerations, and his aims for Burundi outlined in his party's manifesto were to unite all Burundians in a united, progressive and prosperous post-colonial society.<sup>11</sup>

The most poignant and painful aspect of the murder was the failure of the newly independent Burundian state to convict and prosecute the assassins of Rwagasore. Though Prince Jean Ntindereza, the president of the PDC, was accused and later hanged as an accomplice of the murderer, evidence provided in court showed that the Belgians had engineered Rwagasore's death, and that Ntindereza was made to pay the price for being Rwagasore's political opponent.<sup>12</sup>

The inability of the international community to come to the aid of Burundi, or even to criticise or condemn the death of Rwagasore, was alarming. The international media that had flocked into Africa to observe the continent's newly independent state maintained a silence. The inaction exhibited vis-à-vis the crisis by the United Nations, particularly the Afro-Asiatic bloc, and the inability of his father, *Mwami Mwambutsa*, to rally the country behind him in the face of the tragedy, is still the subject of great debate. Allegations that Rwagasore was a socialist who supported the communist bloc was

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<sup>10</sup> Lemarchand, *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide*, p. 40

<sup>11</sup> K. Cervenka and I. Colin, 'Can National Dialogue Break the Power of Terror in Burundi', in *Journal of Current Africa issues* no. 17, NAI, 1994, p. 90

<sup>12</sup> R. Melson, *Revolution and Genocide*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992, p. 279

unsubstantiated, and could not be the only grounds for his assassination. It is common knowledge that the communist tag was conspicuously attached to African leaders who advocated complete freedom for the African masses. Rwagasore was no exception. His death, however, constituted an irreparable loss of leadership, and also destroyed whatever measure of ethnic cohesion he had achieved during his meteoric rise to power.<sup>13</sup>

The conflict that marked the false start on Burundi's road to political and economic independence with the assassination of its first Prime Minister continued until 1965 when, according to article 4.9 section 5 of the Burundian constitution, the *Mwami*, as the de facto Head of State of Burundi, called for a general election and the formation of a new government. As in the past, the elections were contested between the *Hutu*-dominated UPRONA and the *Tutsi*-dominated PDC. The elections saw the UPRONA winning 23 out of a total of 33 seats. Pierre Ngendendumwe, a *Hutu* and president of UPRONA, was appointed Prime Minister. Ethnic extremism was again evident after the elections and, in the ensuing crisis, Ngendendumwe was assassinated. The *Mwami* refused to appoint another UPRONA member as Prime Minister. In desperation, a group of *Hutu* army and gendarmerie who lamented their loss of political and social mobility as a result of these events, revolted against their *Tutsi* officers and tried unsuccessfully to take over the royal palace.<sup>14</sup>

The reprisals against the *Hutu* uprisings, which killed about 500 *Tutsi*, were bloody and brutal. The 1965 conflict virtually eliminated all *Hutu* political representation on the political scene, and many researchers have referred to this period as the beginning of *Tutsi* political domination of Burundi. The consequences of the uprising were far-reaching, including the collapse of the monarchy and the establishment of a dictatorship under General Michel Micombero. Micombero, a trusted confidante of the *Mwami*, who was appointed army chief of staff after the *Hutu* uprising of 1965, deposed the *Mwami* after he could not satisfactorily resolve *Hutu* grievances.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> J.C. William, 'La Belgique et le 'Muyaga' des Grand Lacs', in André Guicahaou (ed), *Les Crises politiques au Burundi et au Rwanda (1993-1994)*, Université de Lille, Lille, 1995, p. 447

<sup>14</sup> Cervenka and Colin, 'Can National Dialogue Break the Power', p. 99

<sup>15</sup> G.Prunier, *The Rwandan Crisis: History of a Genocide*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1995, p. 95

The government of Micombero was very repressive and many *Hutu* uprisings were met with the most brutal force by the *Tutsi*-dominated army. One such uprising was organised in 1972, when an estimated 150,000 *Hutu* civilians were killed and a further 200,000 sought refuge in neighbouring countries such as Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda. Prior to the 1994 Rwandan genocide, this was the bloodiest episode in the history of modern Africa. The international community was accused of not coming to the aid of the *Hutu* in Burundi. Furthermore, unrest in 1988 and 1991 was met with the most outrageous force ever imagined, and the inertia of the international community and regional organisations aroused fierce debate.<sup>16</sup>

Bagaza overthrew Micombero in a coup d'état in 1973. Bagaza was a *Tutsi* from the south of the Country. His regime witnessed a high level of oppression against the *Hutu*, and numerous uprisings by this group were crushed. Between 1973 and 1987, Bagaza's regime was one of the most repressive regimes in the world. In 1987, supported by regional powers such as Uganda, Major Pierre Buyoya managed to oust Bagaza in a bloodless coup. In 1993, Buyoya succumbed to the democratic winds of change that were blowing through Africa. In the presidential and parliamentary elections that followed in June 1993, the *Front Democratique Burundiase* (FRODEBU), headed by Melchior Ndadaye, gained the majority of votes and more than a third of the parliamentary seats. Ndadaye was installed as president but, within three months of his inauguration, he was assassinated, following an attack carried out by a unit of paratroopers. Complete mayhem then engulfed many parts of Burundi, and about 50,000 people are believed to have died. For the first time in the history of the country, the numbers of *Tutsi* killed in the violence was believed to have equalled, if not exceeded, the number of *Hutu* slaughtered in the reprisals.<sup>17</sup>

One important aspect that has characterised all these events was the inculcation of a spirit of impunity amongst the perpetrators of these acts of violence. The exact number of people killed in the conflicts during the past thirty years will never be known, as none of the military governments, which ruled Burundi from 1965 to 1973, ever attempted to find out. The arm of the law was never extended to these perpetrators. One of the main issues which usually emerged during attempts at reconciliation, was

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<sup>16</sup> Cervenka and Colin, 'Can National Dialogue Break the Power,' p. 90

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 95

the aspect of impunity enjoyed by perpetrators of genocidal acts and, as stated earlier, impunity has been the main cause of continuing political and social instability in Burundi. Participants at the National Conference in 1994 claimed that the consequences of the impunity enjoyed by the criminals of various groups were alarming and, in their recommendations, warned that if something was not done to bring these people to justice, the various reconciliation drives initiated by the government would come to naught.<sup>18</sup> As one of the articles of the recommendations read:

A perennial feature of this history is the failure of the government to implement an objective and systematic investigation into these massacres. The failure to identify the criminals has created two equally regrettable attitudes in the country. First, individuals and families who are affected by ethnic violence are forced to accept their misery as a matter of destiny. They have no possibility of inquiring into the causes of the death, disappearance and torture of their family members.<sup>19</sup>

The perpetrators of crimes in Burundi occupy high public office and continue to behave as if exempt from Burundian laws. A glaring example of impunity enjoyed by certain people in Burundi was the return to Burundi in 1993 of Jean-Baptiste Bagaza, whose reign was one of the bloodiest in post-independence Africa. During his regime, access to power, higher education, the civil service, army and the judiciary continued to be the exclusive preserve of the *Tutsi* and the few select *Hutu* willing to serve the *Tutsi* regime. Soon after his return in 1993, he formed a political party and declared himself a candidate for the presidency. Bagaza's action was an insult to international law, to the Burundian people, to human rights and to democracy, and greatly facilitated and nourished the abuses of human rights in Burundi.<sup>20</sup>

It is evident that Burundi should acknowledge its past history, and those who have committed crimes against humanity should be identified and tried in terms of international law. If this is not done, any genuine reconciliation in Burundi will be impossible. William Zartman, one of the most vocal proponents of empirical conflict resolution in Africa asserts that, for any meaningful peace to emerge from any conflict scenario, the following conditions must exist:

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<sup>18</sup> L. Ndikumana, 'Institutional Failure and Ethnic Conflicts in Burundi', in *African Studies Review*, Vol. 41.no. 1, 1994, p. 11

<sup>19</sup> See the Recommendation of the National Conference of the April 1994 edition of the *Burundi government Gazette*.

<sup>20</sup> L. Santoro, 'Congo Leader urges Nazi-style tactics against Tutsi', in *Christian Science Monitor*, September 2, 1998 p. 9



- A situation perceived by actors as a deadlock
- Unilateral solutions are blocked and joint solutions become conceivable
- The party that previously had the upper hand in the conflict has slipped and the underdog has gained in strength
- Both sides perceive that the conflict is a hurling stalemate.<sup>21</sup>

The question of impunity in Burundi is closely linked to the question of an independent and strong judiciary which, as the national dialogue established after the 1993 coup affirmed, ‘should become a guarantee for the protection of human rights and civil rights of each individual’. Reference was also made to setting up a Truth and Reconciliation Commission based on the South African model, which the delegates unanimously accepted. South Africans came to terms with their past on the moral basis that ‘truth must be told and perpetrators acknowledged before any genuine reconciliation terms could be arrived at’.<sup>22</sup>

With the revelation of the bitter truth of the partisan Burundian judiciary system, it became evident that no *Tutsi* could be convicted in a court of law in Burundi, because most prosecutors, attorneys and magistrates were predominantly *Tutsi*. The FRODEBU government that was formed after the murder of Ndadaye in 1993 was more concerned about the security forces commanded by the *Tutsi* than with any efforts to drastically overhaul the judiciary. These security forces continually circumvented court decisions to convict or imprison *Tutsi* charged with murder and other crimes against humanity. The FRODEBU government would also not order the trial of its own officials found guilty of inciting violence or of directing the people who participated in the killing of the *Tutsis*. This was a problem which required that both parties come to the negotiating table and resolve the impunity question once and for all. Measures on how to achieve peace by punishing those responsible for crimes in Burundi has long been debated. The onus now lies with the *Hutu* and the *Tutsi* to try and bring their partners to the negotiating table so that a compromise may be reached in order to save innocent people.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> M. Spear and J. Keller, ‘Conflict Resolution in Africa: Insights from UN Representatives and US Government officials’, in *Africa Today*, April-June 1996 edition, Vol. 46, Issue 2, p. 121

<sup>22</sup> J. Van Eck, *Burundi Report*, Unit for Policy Studies, CIPS, University of Pretoria, no.2001/2, October 2002, p.6.

<sup>23</sup> D. Newbury, ‘Irredentist Rwanda: Ethnic and Territorial Frontiers in Central Africa’, in *Africa Today*, Vol. 44, no. 2, 1998, p. 211

### 3.2 Politicisation of the ethnic groups

As elaborated earlier, *Tutsi* domination was extended from the indigenous hierarchy to modern colonial and post-colonial administrations, thus polarizing politics and the economy along ethnic lines.<sup>24</sup> Most post-colonial regimes in Africa inherited polarisation of this kind and continued the colonial policies of ethnic exclusion, discrimination, nepotism and regionalism. Burundi has experienced recurring massacres that are to a large extent a result of institutionalised ethnicity over a very long period. In an effort to diffuse the ethnic problem, the first Buyoya government (1987-1993) sponsored intensive propaganda, both in the media and within academia, that the notion of ethnicity was a colonial creation aimed at destroying the country, reiterating that the government was bent on reconciling all segments of Burundian society. In line with the above, the government has allowed debates on ethnic division in Burundi and, judging from the massive response of the citizens to these efforts, it is obvious that the debate was long overdue.<sup>25</sup>

In one such debate during the National Conference in 1994, Professor Venant Bamboneyeho queried the quality of majority rule in Burundi. He said:

What about the majority which does not speak French, does not consume imported foreign food, does not live in houses with running water and electricity, and does not have a radio, not to mention a TV? By virtue of its poverty, the majority of Burundians have become a 'minority' in the political sense because they are excluded from any participation in negotiations of members of the upper class in Bujumbura, despite the fact that its outcome affects their lives. Thus we have a numerical majority of the Hutu population which, because of its social conditions, has become a 'political minority', and we have a Tutsi minority which has become a political majority in terms of power, but both ethnic groups are equally concerned about their security.<sup>26</sup>

The debate on the question of ethnicity in Burundi that was opened in the last quarter of the 1980s was primarily due to the ethnic problems of 1961, 1965, 1972 and 1988. The ethnic interpretation of these events has shown that the truth about the problem of ethnicity can no longer be questioned. Succumbing

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<sup>24</sup> R. Lemarchand, 'Le Genocide de 1972 au Burundi, Les Silences de l'Histoire', paper presented to the Burundi community in Montreal, Canada on the occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1972 genocide, April 2002, p. 6

<sup>25</sup> Ndikumana, 'Institutional Failure and Ethnic Conflicts in Burundi', p. 32

<sup>26</sup> Cervenka, 'Can National Dialogue Break the Power', p. 91

to international and domestic pressure, Buyoya initiated a national dialogue on ethnic problems in 1988. The work of the dialogue was enshrined in the Constitutional Act of the National Commission to study the question of National Unity. The National Commission comprised members of civil society and the church, including 12 *Tutsi* and 12 *Hutu* to reflect a balance of ethnic interests.<sup>27</sup>

The primary objective of the commission was to engage in thorough discussion about the root causes of the ethnic conflict, and to propose concrete solutions to allow the country to recover its lost social cohesion and political stability. The commission acknowledged *Hutu-Tutsi* animosity for the first time, and advanced possible measures for eradicating such conflict. One shortcoming of the report was that it failed to identify the major areas of conflict between the two groups, simply repeating the old claim that ethnic differences were created by the colonial administration, and thus could only be resolved by the European powers. Significantly, the commission also neglected to acknowledge that post-colonial regimes perpetuated, and even exacerbated, ethnic discrimination by using the structures inherited from their colonial masters.<sup>28</sup>

Regimes were therefore exonerated from their role in ethnic massacres, political instability and the social inequalities institutionalised long after independence. The political implications of such a situation are that the political minds of the various ethnic groups have evolved in parallel directions, devoid of any political assimilation or compromise. The *Hutu* constantly regarded the ruling party as a *Tutsi* party, doing everything to alienate themselves from its doctrines and propaganda.<sup>29</sup>

### 3.3 The Rwandan impasse

The history of Rwanda cannot generally be separated from that of Burundi. It was colonized by the Germans and administered by Belgium after the First World War, until political independence in 1962. One common denominator of these two countries was their ethnic composition and their fervent

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<sup>27</sup> F. Reyntjens, *Burundi: Breaking the cycle of violence*, Minority Rights Group, London, 1995, p. 14

<sup>28</sup> Telephonic discussion with prof. René Lemarchand, 16 August 2002

<sup>29</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis 1959-1994, History of a Genocide*, p. 169

attachment to monarchical institutions. Another peculiar feature of the two nations was the fact that the *Tutsi* is in the minority, while the *Hutu* make up about two-thirds of the population.<sup>30</sup>

With the advent of political independence in Rwanda, a serious crisis erupted between the *Tutsi* and *Hutu*. The Belgians, whilst preparing the country for independence, gradually shifted political power from the minority *Tutsi* to the majority *Hutu* in order to balance the ethnic composition of the two countries. The colonizers did not want to install a *Tutsi*-dominated government in both Rwanda and Burundi; thus, the *Hutu* in Rwanda was given the opportunity to form a government in Rwanda. This shift in policy was greatly resented by the *Tutsi* and the monarchy, a situation which resulted in widespread unrest and destruction. In the course of these tragic events, more than 10,000 *Tutsis* lost their lives, and a further 80,000 fled to neighbouring Burundi. At this time, the government in Burundi was very sympathetic to the *Tutsi*, and was prepared to help its compatriots in Rwanda to avenge themselves against the *Hutu*.<sup>31</sup>

The ethnic crisis in Rwanda inadvertently contributed to the crystallisation of the ethnic division in Burundi, increasing the resistance against power-sharing amongst the *Tutsi* elite. Having accomplished a paradigm shift in Rwanda, the *Tutsi* in Burundi intensified their grip on power and resisted any policy change on the part of the Belgians. As in Burundi, the Belgian colonial administration in Rwanda instituted a system of rigid ethnic stratification, and strengthened *Tutsi* political hegemony. This sudden change of Belgian policy in favour of *Hutu* power has often been used in Burundi by the *Tutsi* regime to cultivate a nightmarish vision of *Hutu* power in the minds of the *Tutsi* population.<sup>32</sup>

The constant fear by the *Tutsi* in Burundi of a similar shift in policy by the Belgians resulted in the constant oppression of the *Hutu* elite and populace during ethnic conflicts and political unrest in Burundi. Subsequent ethnic quarrels in Rwanda were generally monitored, and the reaction of either of the ethnic groups involved was almost spontaneous. This kind of social contamination has been used to argue that the catalyst for the tension that usually existed between the *Hutu* and *Tutsi* in Burundi was the result of a crisis situation in Rwanda. The impasse that besieged these two countries continued for

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<sup>30</sup> V. Du Bois, 'To die in Burundi: The eruption of intertribal Strife', in *Journal of Central and Southern African Series*, Vol. XVI, no. 3, 1972, p. 60

<sup>31</sup> A. Kuperman, *The limits of Humanitarian Intervention. Genocide in Rwanda*, The Brookings Institution Press, Washington DC, 2001, p. 85

<sup>32</sup> A. Des Forges, *Leave None to tell the Story, Genocide in Rwanda*, Human Rights Watch & FIDH, New York, 1999, p. 154

a long time and, through the various ethnic crises that Burundi has witnessed since independence, it was realised that, in one way or another, this impasse originated from Rwanda.<sup>33</sup>

In the early 1990s, rising tensions in Rwanda and news of the *Tutsi* preparing for an assault on Rwanda from Uganda, sent shock waves into Burundi. Under Buyoya, the *Tutsi* government in Burundi intensified its grip on power and increased its oppressive activities against the *Hutu*. The *Hutu* in Burundi saw their political ambitions of wresting power from the *Tutsi* through the ballot-box diminishing, considering that if the RPF (Rwandese Patriotic Front), which was supported by Uganda, succeeded in its campaign to oust the government in Kagali, the two countries would be ruled by the minority *Tutsi*, something which would greatly exacerbate the plight of the *Hutu* in the entire region.<sup>34</sup>

Finding themselves in this situation, the *Hutu* pressed for, and advocated, democratic and constitutional reforms. If this failed, the only way open for the *Hutu* was to take the law into their own hands which would result in far-reaching consequences, not only in both countries, but in the region as a whole. The assassination of President Melchior Ndadaye of Burundi on October 21, 1993 by the *Tutsi*-dominated military provided an additional motive to the Rwandan regime to resist power-sharing with the *Tutsi*. The deterioration of an already explosive political environment eventually set the stage for an unprecedented massacre of the *Tutsi* in Rwanda in 1994. The *Tutsi* always referred to the genocide to justify their grip on power in the name of strengthening security for the ethnic minority.<sup>35</sup>

The history of these countries, therefore, shows that ethnic confrontation arises from ethnic discrimination. To demonstrate this point, events in each of these countries have greatly influenced those in the other, and a genuine and flourishing democracy in one could also conceivably pave the way for the achievement of the same in the other country. So all that we can infer from this judgement is that there can never be lasting peace in Burundi if Rwanda is still experiencing ethnic discrimination and political unrest. A concerted effort by the inhabitants of both countries, as well as by sub-regional organisations and the international community in bringing peace to the region is of paramount

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<sup>33</sup> B. Ndiaye, 'Report by the Special Rapporteur on his mission to Rwanda from 8-17 April 1993', Commission on Human Rights, U.N. Economic and Social Council document E/CN.4/1994/7/Add.1, 11 August 1993, p.23

<sup>34</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis 1959-1994, History of a Genocide*, p. 169

<sup>35</sup> G. Caplan, *Rwanda. The Preventable Genocide*, The Report of the International Panel of Eminent Personalities to Investigate the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda and the Surrounding Events, Organisation of African Unity, 1998, p 89

importance, particularly because the establishment of peace in one country will automatically go a long way towards restoring stability in the other.<sup>36</sup>

### 3.4 Regionalism and politicised military

Burundi's social history is a complex set of regional and ethnic interactions. Ethnicity, regionalism and a politicised military are the main contributors to ethnic rivalry and antagonism. These factors determine a person's position in the socio-political and economic hierarchy of the country. While the *Hutu* make up the majority of the population, they have little political or economic power. On the other hand, the minority *Tutsi* controlled the military, judiciary, the education system and the economy. The *Twa* has always lived at the margins of the society and is integrated only at the lowest levels.<sup>37</sup>

The geopolitics in Burundi revolved around three regions: the South (Bururi and Makamba Province) Muramvya (the former headquarters of the monarchy) and the rest of the country. The South controls the military and the government. Muramvya comprises a large proportion of the national intelligentsia who are mostly middle-class people. The South, which is made up of the *Tutsi*, has dominated the political scene of Burundi since independence, and has always considered Muramvya as a source of political opposition. In practice, ethnic violence always takes precedence over regional differences when *Hutu-Tutsi* rivalry threatens *Tutsi* supremacy.<sup>38</sup>

In Burundi, the region of origin and ethnic affiliation greatly determines social status and the chances of social mobility within the Burundi socio-political hierarchy. The Southerners have always considered themselves as being in control of the political, social and judicial institutions of Burundi. Economic success is also largely influenced by ethnic affiliation. One's region of origin, and whether one is a civilian or a member of the army, accounts for the fact that only the *Tutsi* occupies influential positions. The chances of social mobility or status are predetermined at birth. Families who migrate from Muramvya to Gitega are associated with Muramvya without the length of stay being taken into consideration. Thus, the only factor that influences social status is civilian or military status.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to tell the Story*, p. 159

<sup>37</sup> H. Adelman, and S. Astri (eds), *The path of Genocide. The Rwandan Crisis from Uganda to Zaire*, Transaction Publishers, London 1999, p. 9

<sup>38</sup> Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis 1959-1994, History of a Genocide*, p. 37

<sup>39</sup> R. Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*, Pall Mall, London, 1970, p. 49

Social mobility in Burundi in the immediate independence era was restricted for the *Twa* and the *Hutu*, and was determined by the *Tutsi* who were not from the South. This constituted one of the greatest problems that have continued to plague modern Burundi, creating a self-enforcing mechanism of control of power by the *Tutsi* from the South. Social mobility has permitted a process of privatisation of the state, in which national resources and institutions are used for the accumulation of wealth and the advancement of the interests of individual ethnic groups and regional entities.<sup>40</sup>

To sum it up, the power of ethnicity, region of origin and military status in determining the social, political and economic power of an individual can be illustrated as follows: belonging to the *Tutsi* ethnic group, being from the South and having a position in the military are factors which invest one with the highest potential for social mobility. Belonging to the *Hutu*, being born in the rest of the country and being a civilian is frequently associated with a significantly reduced potential for social mobility. Belonging to the *Twa* ethnic group, being born in the rest of the country and being a civilian means that one has the lowest potential for social mobility in Burundi.<sup>41</sup>

As is the case with ethnicity, regional status is determined at birth, but military and civilian status result from individual choice, with varying degrees of flexibility being predicated on two factors – region of origin and ethnicity. As such, the geo-ethnic politics of the country resulted from an interaction of multifarious factors that ordinary citizens of Burundi could not pre-empt or willingly change as they pleased. Admittedly, the *Hutu* and the *Twa* have also resorted to violence and guerrilla attacks in order to change or be accorded a certain degree of social mobility.<sup>42</sup>

The Burundi system therefore created frustration and a sense of alienation for the citizens, who found themselves totally excluded from competition in the political and economic markets of their country of birth. The social climate also contributed to the maintenance of a system of nepotism and patronage in the control of state resources. An important instrument used to maintain this supremacy was discrimination in the admission process at all levels of schooling in Burundi. The education authority used a secret identification system to control the numbers of *Hutu* entering high school and college. This was done to maintain *Tutsi* predominance at the highest level of the educational system. The fact that high schools were concentrated in the South and in the capital city, areas that were almost exclusively

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<sup>40</sup> Des Forges, *Leave None to tell the Story*, p. 158

<sup>41</sup> R. Lemarchand, *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide*, p. 45

<sup>42</sup> Ndikumana, 'Institutional Failure and Ethnic Conflicts in Burundi', p. 38

inhabited by the *Tutsi*, disadvantaged the other ethnic groups who found it difficult, if not impossible, to change their location. For the *Tutsi* who inhabited these areas, the situation generated a belief that they were destined to rule and suppress the other classes in society. This partly explains why the military and the civilian *Tutsi* elite from the South always opposed institutional reforms aimed at achieving better power-sharing in Burundi.<sup>43</sup>

In many countries in the world, the army is not a political tool, but designed to serve under whoever is elected to power. The Burundi scenario is different, as the military has assassinated a president who did not serve its cause. The UPRONA Party that was dominated by the *Tutsi* was also taken over by the military. Any president who did not align with the UPRONA would simply be killed. The army was predominantly *Tutsi* and openly identified with the UPRONA and the *Tutsi* political hierarchy. This behaviour of the army makes it difficult for any other political party that does not identify with the *Tutsi* cause freely to exercise its mandate.<sup>44</sup>

The intimidation and widespread coercion by the military in canvassing support for the ruling party was clearly visible. The various election processes in Burundi bore testimony to these allegations. The politicisation of the *Tutsi* military has met with great resentment from the *Hutu* and the *Twa*, who, in turn, have vented their anger by means of guerrilla warfare and violence at any inkling of a loosening in the geo-ethnic political structure of the society. An indication of this sort of situation is vividly apparent from the aftermath of the 1993 coup, when the *Hutu* went on the rampage in Bujumbura and other parts of the country.

### 3.5 Arms proliferation

The advent of the Cold War saw the production and transfer of conventional weapons in Africa, as the United States and the Soviet Union engaged in a series of proxy wars. The influx of small arms and light weapons into areas like Central Africa was a result of these countries trying to impose their ideologies on this part of the world. The end of the Cold War also saw a large arsenal of these weapons being within the reach of most people in this region. Many believe that the ready availability of arms in this region will lead to a high propensity to go to war or to wage guerrilla warfare. Judging that most victims

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<sup>43</sup> R. Lemarchand, 'Genocide in the Great lakes: Which Genocide? Whose Genocide?' In *African Review*, Vol. 41, no. 1, 1998, p. 16

<sup>44</sup> Lemarchand, *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide*, p. 48



of civil wars in Africa are not the combatants, but civilians, required a more rigorous control of arms proliferation by the United Nations which, in 1996, estimated that 35 million people in 23 countries worldwide were at risk of facing civil strife, either owing to ongoing civil wars, or as a result of a slow recovery from past strife.<sup>45</sup>

In the case of the Great Lakes and Burundi in particular, many Western nations and South Africa have been engaged in selling arms, either to the government in power, or to the belligerents. Prior to 1993, the arms flow to the Great Lakes region totalled about 1,2 billion United States dollars, with the Soviet Union selling up to 600 million dollars worth of weapons, the United States 246 million dollars worth, and France, 200 million dollars worth. The availability of such large numbers of arms further fuelled the recurrence of conflict and war in the sub-region. An inability to halt these conflicts or the proliferation of such arms, further undermined the security and stability of Africa and, more importantly, that of the sub-region.<sup>46</sup>

With the cessation of armed conflict in countries such as Mozambique and Angola, large caches of weapons have found their way onto the streets of Maputo and Luanda. It was very easy to buy an AK 47 in Mozambique and Angola. In an effort to end the long civil war in Angola, civilians turned over 600 AKM military weapons, 11 anti-tank and anti-personnel land mines, 12 grenades, 3 chests of TNT, 593 rifles of different calibres and 88 loaders to the government and the United Nations. These large arsenals are believed to be only a fraction of the thousands and thousands of tons of arms in the region which have been sold to belligerents in the Burundi conflicts.<sup>47</sup>

According to the Red Cross, between 1990 and 1994, almost two million people were killed in conflicts in Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda, and many of these were civilians. In the Burundi conflict, arms continue to flow freely, despite trade and arms embargoes imposed on the country by its neighbours. The January 8<sup>th</sup>, 1998 Human Rights Watch Report on Burundi argued that arms from countries such as China, France, North Korea and the United States have directly found themselves in the hands of dictators and military leaders in the Great Lakes region. Arms also flow into Burundi through porous

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<sup>45</sup> E. Phillips, 'Conventional Weapons Control and its relationship to Development', in *Model United Nations far west*, 49<sup>th</sup> session issues, p. 6

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 7

<sup>47</sup> A. Ould-Abdallah. *Burundi on the Brink 1993-1995*, United States Institute of Peace, Washington D.C, 2000, p. 93

borders across Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda, and by means of direct flights from South Africa and Europe.<sup>48</sup>

It is true that without weapons, the opportunities to commit crime would be minimal but, with the proliferation of arms in a particular region such as the Great Lakes, the inclination to wage war, commit atrocities and many other acts of banditry are likely to increase. Although the former South African president, Nelson Mandela, was the peace facilitator in the Burundian conflict, South African arms manufacturers were engaged in the illegal sale of arms to the belligerents. In a court interdict filed in the Pretoria High Court on 24 July 1997, the arms manufacturer, Denel, barred the *Weekly Mail & Guardian* from publishing the name of the Burundian client involved in a 7 billion rand arms deal with Denel.<sup>49</sup>

The court interdict by Denel, which is a South African government-owned arms manufacturing company, is in direct contradiction of governmental policy. This stresses the full disclosure of arms deals, a policy endorsed by Professor Kader Asmal, chair of parliament's National Convention Arms Control Committee (NCACC), the South African government's arms proliferation watchdog. The double standards, which typify the South African government's role in the Great Lakes, were thus exposed. On the one hand, this government was preaching peace, and on the other it was selling arms to the combatants, a typical twentieth-century geo-political attitude.<sup>50</sup>

Denel's move to sell arms to the belligerents in the Great Lakes is also contrary to the 1997 United Nations Resolution on Burundi in relation to arms sales. It should be noted that South Africa was a co-sponsor of the Resolution, and of the statutory act on arms proliferation in conflict-ridden areas, as well as of the OAU's stand relating to the arms embargo on Burundi after the 1996 Buyoya coup. The Reverend Njongonkulu Ndungane, the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, also criticised Denel's trade with countries engaged in armed conflict in the Great Lakes. In a letter dated 24 July 1997, he denounced Denel's actions, insisting that these were barbaric, contrary to the South African spirit of *Ubuntu*, and that they also flouted the country's allegiance to international organisations. He further

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<sup>48</sup> Up date no.814 for the Great Lakes of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Integrated Regional Information Network for Central and Eastern Africa, Thursday 2 December 1999

<sup>49</sup> One World News Service [www.oneworld.net](http://www.oneworld.net), quoting a Media Institute of South Africa (MISA) source, 1997, access date 18 August 2002

<sup>50</sup> Phillips, 'Conventional Weapons Control and its relationship to Development', p. 6

argued that South Africa had ‘far healthier commodities it ha[d] harvested and [could] trade with its fellow African brothers that [could] benefit the entire community of states in Africa’.<sup>51</sup>

Despite the uproar against the sale, the deal eventually went through. In the Great Lakes, there is no binding, comprehensive international law to control the import of conventional arms. In addition to lobbying at the international level for a global agreement on preventing the export of weapons to the Great Lakes, where they are likely to be used in violation of international human rights and law, the facilitators of the Burundi peace will have to work with regional bodies and national governments to strengthen existing controls over arms transfers, reduce the availability of weapons, and better protect citizens against armed violence.

## 2.6 The refugee question

The inter-ethnic conflict in Burundi since independence has resulted in millions of people, mostly civilians, being uprooted and displaced, either internally as Internal Displaced Persons (IDP), or internationally as refugees. It is estimated that, prior to 1993, there were about one million Burundian refugees around the Great Lakes countries, and a further 500,000 displaced internally. Subsequent governments in Burundi have failed to set up proper mechanisms for the re-absorption and integration of these refugees into the mainstream Burundi economy. The non-applicability of a refugee-friendly policy, and the adoption of coercive and suspicious attitudes towards the refugees, have resulted in a situation of hatred and resentment of the government. This has forced many of the refugees to join the uprising as the only means of furthering their cause.<sup>52</sup>

Burundi’s majority ethnic *Hutu* and minority *Tutsi* population have violently competed for power since independence in 1962. A relatively small number of the *Tutsi* élité, namely from the south province of Bururi, have dominated the country’s political scene. Military crackdowns and reprisals by *Tutsi* led to the slaughter of thousands of *Hutu* during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. During this period, more than one million fled to neighbouring countries, especially eastern Zaire, Tanzania, Rwanda, Zimbabwe and Zambia.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> One World News Service [www.oneworld.net](http://www.oneworld.net), access date 31 August 2002

<sup>52</sup> Up date no.814 for the Great Lakes of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

<sup>53</sup> United States Committee of Refugees, *Country Information, Burundi*, 1998, p. 24

The *Tutsi* uprising in Rwanda after independence in 1962 acted as a catalyst for this, as more than 200,000 *Hutu* refugees have entered the country since then from Rwanda. In 1995, the figures reflecting the number of Burundi refugees in neighbouring countries were as follows:

1	Inside Burundi	234 000
2	Rwanda	6 000
3	Tanzania	589 000
4	Uganda	4 000
5	Zaire Bukavu	347 000
	Uvira	59 000
	Goma	743 000
	Total:	1 991 000

Table 1: Burundi refugees in neighbouring countries

Source:

United Nations High Commission for Refugees, *Special Unit for Rwanda and Burundi*, March 1995, p. 9

The above merely represents refugee figures in 1995, but heavy fighting has been taking place since then which indicates that the numbers might have risen quite sharply by 2003. The bone of contention here is the lack of a proper infrastructure to accommodate these refugees and to facilitate their gradual integration into society. Their host countries have rejected most of the refugees and their only means of survival has been to join the rebellion, thus making the work of the peacemakers very complicated. Most of the refugees have been fighting ever since they were ten years old and, by the age of twenty, they have become hardened fighters whom it is very difficult to convince to lay down their arms.<sup>54</sup>

The study also notes that most of the attacks carried out on the *Tutsi* military installations in Burundi were orchestrated by these refugees from eastern Zaire, known as the *Mulelists*.<sup>55</sup> If the government

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<sup>54</sup> Ndikumana, 'Institutional Failure and Ethnic Conflicts in Burundi', p. 39

<sup>55</sup> Followers of Pierre Mulele, Minister of Education in Patrice Lumumba's government who joined the separatist regime of Antoine Gizanga in Kisangani. He succeeded in organizing the rural youths in his native province of Kwilu into rebel bands. He was lured back into Congo in 1968 under the guise of an amnesty. Upon arrival he was arrested and executed. Some of his followers fled into the forest regions of Congo where they have eluded capture by the Congolese.

of Burundi could not initiate meaningful dialogue with the refugees and put in place proper structures of repatriation and integration, the refugee camps would still continue to be reservoirs of rebels.<sup>56</sup>

### 3.7 Other multi-dimensional causes

The causes of the Burundi crisis are multi-faceted and multi-dimensional. The Burundi situation is so complex that a quarrel at school or in a park between a *Hutu* and a *Tutsi* could degenerate into widespread destruction and killings. Thus, my aim in this dissertation has been to expose the fundamental causes and to emphasise how these contributed to the crisis. Prominent amongst some of the more minor reasons for the Burundi impasse was the stance adopted by the Catholic Church. In colonial Burundi, the church was regarded as an ally in the struggle to subjugate the African population. As mentioned in chapter one, the church constantly sided with the *Tutsi* whom they regarded as the leaders, the carriers of a superior civilisation and, more importantly, as the descendants of the lost continent of Atlantis.<sup>57</sup>

From an early stage, the church's policy in Burundi was to educate the *Tutsis* who were the only ones admitted to mission schools and seminaries. The church encouraged an ecclesiastical monopoly of *Tutsi* priests over the majority Hutu worshippers. In post-colonial Burundi, the church was dominated by *Tutsi* priests and bishops, who collaborated with the various *Tutsi* regimes after independence, and who also reported to the militia civilian *Hutu* who usually sought refuge in the church in times of crisis. One such exposure by a *Tutsi* priest of *Hutu* refugees who found refuge in his church following heavy fighting in the refugee camps in Eastern Zaire, took place on 22 October 1996 in Cibitoke. According to Alexander Higgins, an Associated Press journalist, the militia were led to the refugees by the priest, with the result that 298 refugees were killed, and 70 wounded.<sup>58</sup>

In what also appeared to be the calculated murder of the *Hutu*, 30 worshippers were killed in a Catholic Church in September 1999, when their church was attacked during Mass. The ease with which the military gained access to the church premises, and the fact that only *Hutus* were killed, suggests a planned act on the part of the church officials. This kind of killing prompted what many researchers on

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<sup>56</sup> Up date no.814 for the Great Lakes of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Integrated Regional Information Network for Central and Eastern Africa, Thursday 2 December 1999

<sup>57</sup> Du Bois, V. D, To Die in Burundi: The Eruption of Intertribal Strife, Spring 1972, An AUFS *Central and Southern Africa Series*, Vol. xvi, no.3, p. 7

<sup>58</sup> A. Higgins, *Lubbock-Avalanche Journal*, Associated Press, March 1996, p. 2

the Great Lakes call 'selective genocide'. The apogee of the role of the church in the conflict in Burundi occurred when the Bishop of Bujumbura, Mgr. Joachim Ruhana, was murdered, apparently as a reprisal for exposing *Hutu* refugees to extremist *Tutsi*. His successor, Mgr. Simon Ntamwana, immediately observed, with concern, the complicated position of the church in the Burundi conflict, and called for dialogue between the ethnic groups and an end to violence. The Burundian church contributed enormously to the perpetuation of the conflict in Burundi, and a lasting peace in the Great Lakes cannot be attained without the support of the church.<sup>59</sup>

One other factor that has contributed to the crisis in Burundi is the enormous population pressure on the limited natural resources. The manufacturing sector is still in its infancy, and there are hardly any service industries. The population relies on its agricultural products. With a population of more than six million on 27,830 square kilometres of land, and a population density of more than 450 people per square kilometre, Burundi is one of the most densely populated countries in Africa.<sup>60</sup>

The population exerts a lot of pressure on the limited natural and agricultural resources of the country. In this respect, the incidence of killing, especially on one particular hill where the people have been living for years, can easily be attributed to one group trying to benefit from the agricultural yields of the other households. The poor agricultural harvest of the 1980s and 1990s, when famine was very prevalent and the harvest very poor, again compounded this situation. The propensity to kill was therefore very high, probably in order to take advantage of the deceased person's land for grazing, or to settle an African extended family. However, critics have long argued against this, saying that the population density in Burundi is not even up to that in Nigeria, or along the Tigris and Euphrates River Valley during the period of early civilisation, yet in these regions there was neither mass killing nor hatred. This suggests that the problem in Burundi is the problem of a failed state, and that inappropriate solutions have been recommended.<sup>61</sup>

The International Community and the Bretton Woods Institutions have also contributed enormously to the endemic conflict in Burundi. The successive military regimes have relied significantly on aid and loans from these institutions to strengthen their grip on power. Funds from the International Community keep flowing into the country, even, when there is sufficient evidence that state institutions are being used as

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<sup>59</sup> *Catholic World News Brief*, Vol. 1, no.9, 29 September 1999, p. 2

<sup>60</sup> Lemarchand *Burundi: Ethnocide as Discourse and Practice*, p. 34

<sup>61</sup> Ndikumana, 'Institutional Failure and Ethnic Conflicts in Burundi', p. 39

machines of oppression and repression against the population. The massacres of scores of civilians by the government in the past have not caused donors to reconsider their lending strategies and guarantees.<sup>62</sup>

During the first military regime of Micombero (1965-1976), the country accumulated a total of 831 million US dollars, which represents an average of 74 million dollars per year. The Bagaza regime accumulated 12,1 million dollars per year, as opposed to Buyoya, who garnered a total of 166 million dollars, almost 27,7 million dollars per year. These figures portray the laxity the international community exhibited *vis-à-vis* Burundi in terms of money lending. It is true that the international community usually attached stringent conditions of good governance, democracy and respect for human rights as conditions for the allocation of loans and grants. However, it is yet to be determined if these regimes abided by the conditions, and if the desired projects for which the money was destined were actually carried out.<sup>63</sup>

In fact, it actually appears that, on the contrary, this money was used to purchase arms to fight political and ethnic opponents, and to feed the civil service. In so doing, the state in Burundi has failed to preserve the basic rights of the citizens, including their right to access state institutions based on merit. Basic state institutions in Burundi have either turned into sectional entities, or been completely privatised by people of a particular region. The executive, judicial and legislative aspects of the country can hardly be separated from the *Tutsi* ethnic group and the southern region, with the rest of the country having been sidelined in terms of the economic and political processes of the nation.<sup>64</sup>

The effectiveness of institutions in ensuring equity therefore depends on the relative distribution of power, as well as on the degree of competition amongst alternate state institutions in Burundi. The power to impose the rules of the game is unequally distributed and heavily skewed in favour of the military and the *Tutsi* elite from the South. The unitary system in Burundi has completely precluded political competition for decades, thereby generating inefficiency in the provision of state services. State institutions were maintained and used for the primary purpose of accumulating wealth by those individual

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<sup>62</sup> Phillips, 'Conventional Weapons Control and its relationship to Development' p. 5

<sup>63</sup> Ndikumana, 'Institutional Failure and Ethnic Conflicts in Burundi', p. 39

<sup>64</sup> Up date no.814 for the Great Lakes of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Integrated Regional Information Network for Central and Eastern Africa, Thursday 2 December 1999

and political entities that have the greatest bargaining power to maintain their regimes and further their own ambitions.<sup>65</sup>

Prior to 1993, the Westernised *Hutu* politicians played a major role in the escalation of the ethnic conflicts in 1993, in their quest for political equality with the *Tutsi*. The social structures that emerged in Burundi during the initial state-building process were consolidated during and after the struggle for independence. The upper caste of the *Hutu* elite expanded its powers within the existing social system. The *Hutu*-orientated political parties that were formed after the political reforms of 1959 and 1960 were, with few exceptions, abandoned by these elites once it was certain that the *ganwa* and the *Tutsi*-dominated UPRONA would wrest political power after the 1961 legislative elections. Members of this *Hutu* elite increasingly identified themselves with the *Tutsi* at the expense of the majority of *Hutu* peasants. Few of these *Hutu* bourgeoisies evinced interest in the worsening economic conditions of the *Hutu* peasantry, and it was only after their bid for power in the 1962 and 1965 elections had failed that they solicited the support of the masses.<sup>66</sup>

Although the *Hutu* masses failed to give the Westernised *Hutu* the support they needed, the latter nevertheless gained a majority in both houses during the 1965 elections. A Prime Minister was chosen from amongst their ranks, although he was later killed by extremist *Tutsi*. Following a widespread revolt and killings after the slaying of Pierre Ngendendumwe, the westernised *Hutu* elite increasingly incited the *Hutu* masses to support their ethnic political claims and strategies. Only in Murumvya a real *Hutu* revolt occurred, and they ended up fighting, not all their class enemies, but enemies of ‘some of their enemies’ ) that is, *Tutsi* enemies of the emergent *Hutu* elite. The *Hutu* peasants therefore attacked a system over which the *Hutu* elite wanted to gain control and, after the masses were defeated, these peasants were neither one with the masses nor with the *Tutsi*. The failure of the elites to identify themselves with a particular community in Burundi has created a kind of identity crisis. But, since the elite could easily identify with the *Hutu*, they never hesitated to solicit their support when taking decisions or carrying out a project of national interest. When President Ndadaye was killed in 1993, the westernised elite were the first to call for a *Hutu* uprising which has led to the killing of more than three hundred thousand people in the last decade.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> W. Weinstein and R. Schire, *Political Conflict and Ethnic Strategies: A case study of Burundi*, MSCPA, Syracuse University, New York, 1976, p. 37

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 38



## 2.8 Immediate causes of the conflict

After successive military coups in 1966, 1976 and 1987, Burundi embarked on a more cautious political platform after 1987. The first Buyoya regime initiated enormous institutional reforms, such as the national commission to study the question of National Unity (1988), and the 'democratic' constitution of 1992. These reforms aimed at uniting a country that had been totally denuded by political and ethnic strife. In October 1988, Buyoya set up a National Commission to study the question of national unity, consisting of twelve *Hutus* and twelve *Tutsis*, and later that month he appointed a *Hutu*, Adrien Sibomana, as Prime Minister. At the same time, he created a cabinet where *Tutsi* and *Hutu* held an equal number of portfolios. The work of this commission was presented as the Charter of National Unity that emphasised the need for an ethnically balanced Burundi society. Many symposia on the essence of unity in Burundian political structures were organized throughout the country. The Charter of National Unity was published as a draft in 1990 and, after a new round of consultations, was approved by a referendum in February 1991.<sup>68</sup>

Between 1988 and 1991, considerable efforts were made to integrate the *Hutu* into the mainstream economy. Bowing to internal and external pressure, mainly from the United Nations and the European Union, President Buyoya initiated a pluralistic system of government in 1992. After the promulgation of the decree on political parties in April 1992, the multi-party system began to take shape, with the legalisation of many political parties. Although the recognition of parties was subject to stringent conditions, such as the presentation of an affidavit with 50,000 signatures, seven opposition parties were operating legally by the end of 1992. Despite calls for the president to postpone the presidential and legislative elections due in early 1993 as a result of the unpreparedness of these parties, the elections eventually took place on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of June 1993.<sup>69</sup>

During the run-up to the elections, the *Front Democratique de Burundi* (FRODEBU) emerged as the only challenger to the ruling UPRONA party. Three presidential candidates were proposed to the electorate. The incumbent, Pierre Buyoya, was supported by his party, UPRONA. The FRODEBU party put Mr. Melchoir Ndayaye forward, and Pierre-Claver Sendegeya was proposed by his royalist party, the *Parti de Republician du Peuple* (PRP). The results of the election showed Ndayaye gaining

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<sup>68</sup> Reyntjens, *Burundi: Breaking the cycle of Violence*, p. 6

<sup>69</sup> S. Naidoo, 'Challenges for Burundi's Transitional Government', in *Conflict Trends*, an Accord Publication, no.4/2001, p. 20

64.75% of the votes, against Buyoya's 32.39%. These results were further confirmed by the parliamentary election result later that month. FRODEBU garnered 71,40% against UPRONA's 21,43% of the votes. For the first time in the history of Burundi, a democratically elected president and parliament were sworn in on the same day. At this point, Burundi seemed to have forgotten about the past and the future looked promising. In fact, it was the first time in the history of Burundi that a *Hutu* had been elected president, despite the fact that Hutus made up 85% of the population. For the *Hutu*, it was a victory for the oppressed, the downtrodden, the voiceless and the landless and, above all, a victory of reason over passion, emotions and sentiment.<sup>70</sup>

Unfortunately, this milestone achieved by Burundi did not last long. On 21 October 1993, extremist *Tutsi* militia staged a coup in which President Melchoir Ndayaye was assassinated.<sup>71</sup> Following this, the country was plunged into anarchy, as the *Hutu* rose to defend their hard-won victory. The *Hutu* uprising was met with heavy reprisals from the *Tutsi* army and militiamen. The result was one of the most prolonged civil wars ever witnessed in contemporary Africa.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that the causes of the Burundi conflict of 1993 were many and varied. I have also established that no single incident or problem could be promoted as the sole cause, but that the conflict was caused by a combination of circumstances. The historical explanation of the conflict points to a colonial time bomb that was unconsciously manufactured, and ready to explode at any given time, and the killing of Ndayaye could have been that given time. Prior to 1993, all Burundian state institutions had failed to deliver basic necessities to the population. The few services that were available were either privately owned, or the exclusive preserve of the army which, since independence, had been the sole domain of the *Tutsi*.<sup>72</sup>

The chapter also argued that the impunity enjoyed by a majority of the previous perpetrators of genocide was alarming, and had contributed greatly to inciting hatred and violence. The question of

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<sup>70</sup> S. Power, *A Problem from Hell. America and the age of Genocide*, Basic Books, New York, 2002, p. 108

<sup>71</sup> See Chapter One for details

<sup>72</sup> W. Austin, An Eye witness Testimony to the Shooting down of the Rwandan President Plane, a Warriordoc field report quoting an AFP Report, 1994, [www.warriordoc.com](http://www.warriordoc.com), access date 6 November 2003

impunity was also compounded by the politicisation of the ethnic groups. The various ethnic groups in Burundi have been orientated to thinking *en bloc*: thus, most political consultation has been geared towards satisfying particular ethnic groups, to the detriment of national interest. The collapse of the monarch was also seen as one of the most important single factors that caused the violence in Burundi. In colonial and post-colonial Burundi, the king was regarded as the embodiment of the country. The failure of post-colonial regimes to protect the king against selfish military officers could also have been a major cause of the Burundian conflict. Again, the wars in the sub-region have accounted for the infiltration and proliferation of arms in Burundi. These arms have found their way into the hands of rebels and other belligerents in the conflict, and the presence of arms has obviously heightened the probability of war. The immediate cause of the conflict could also be attributed to the murder of President Ndadaye in October 1993, when the *Hutu* attacked the *Tutsi* army and its political structures.<sup>73</sup>

The chapter also stressed that prominent *Tutsi* Rwandans who came to Burundi in the 1960s as refugees were always favoured in the filling of top government positions. This policy of 'Rwandalisation' of the public service angered many *Hutus*, who felt that these positions should have been filled by Hutu. The Hutu elite, on the other hand, did not help to alleviate the plight of the Hutu people. The chapter emphasised that their educated leaders abandoned the Hutu masses and bore a heavy grudge against them. It was also noted that the missionaries, by favouring the *Tutsi* ethnic group, inflated the political egos of the *Tutsi*. To advise them to relinquish power at the dawn of independence was counter-productive.

From the foregoing analysis, the Burundian crisis that started in 1993 appears to have been the culmination of a dangerous and inadequate political system perpetrated by colonialists, and further entrenched by successive *Tutsi* regimes after independence. When Burundi openly accepted the principle of a multi-party democracy in 1992, the stage was set for the crystallization of political intrigues and conflict along ethnic lines. In this regard, the infamous rivalry between the *Tutsi* and the *Hutu* became apparent, and the next chapter examines the efforts employed by the Burundian people and the international community in trying to contain the crisis.

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<sup>73</sup>Reyntjens, *Burundi: Breaking the cycle of Violence*, p. 9

## CHAPTER FOUR

### COURSE OF THE CONFLICT

The civil war in Burundi represents one of the most prolonged periods of uninterrupted violent conflict in an African country. Periodic explosions of deadly inter-ethnic strife have marked Burundi's recent history. The conflict, like others before in Burundi and in adjacent Rwanda, represents a struggle between two ethnic groups, the *Hutu* and the *Tutsi*, as elucidated in the preceding chapters. The ethnic nature of the conflict further embitters what is also fundamentally a battle over political and economic power, much like similar struggles elsewhere in the world. Earlier crises in 1962, 1966, 1972, 1988 and 1991 have shown that a concrete and lasting solution to the conflict will need far more logistical and human resources than have previously been expended in many such conflicts on the African continent. The fact is that half-truths are being told about the causes of the crisis, and inappropriate solutions are being proposed for an incorrectly diagnosed ethnic and structural malaise.<sup>1</sup> Having examined the root causes of the conflict, this chapter will deal with the immediate causes and the course the conflict has taken so far.

#### 4.1 Ndayaye's murder; the shock and its exploitation

The euphoria that surrounded Burundi after the successful transition to democracy was unprecedented, but it was very short-lived. The scenario was particularly different in the *Tutsi* camp, as the military saw the victory of Ndayaye as a threat to their survival. To eliminate the threat, Ndayaye was murdered. Armies, mainly from the 1<sup>st</sup> parachute and 11<sup>th</sup> armoured battalions in Bujumbura, attacked the presidential residence in the city centre on the 21<sup>st</sup> of October 1993, and occupied strategic positions all over the town. While the palace was under siege, the military started hunting for the FRODEBU leadership. Two cabinet ministers, the director of state security, the speaker and the deputy-speaker of the National Assembly were killed. Many others, including the Prime Minister, took refuge in the French Embassy<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Proxy Targets: Civilians in the war in Burundi, *A Human Rights Watch Country Report*, Washington DC, 1998, p. 10

<sup>2</sup> F. Reyntjens, *Burundi: Breaking the cycle of Violence*, Minority Rights Group, London, 1995, p. 6

The President and his family were taken from the presidential palace without any intervention by the presidential guards. They were driven to the *Muha* barracks, which housed the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion in the southern suburb of *Musaga*. The camp was stormed by paratroopers, and yet again the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion, whose main function was the security of the president, offered no resistance. After an attempt to negotiate with the insurgents failed, the chief of army staff, Colonel Andrien Bikomagu, handed the president over to the insurgent forces. The president's wife and children were allowed to take refuge in the French Embassy. President Ndayaye was taken to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> battalion headquarters where he was killed by non-commissioned officers. The situation in the field was chaotic. There was actually no outright leader of the coup but, as the day unfolded, Lt. Jean-Paul Kamana was seen directing and positioning troops in central Bujumbura. Interrogated later, Lt. Kamana said that he was acting on Colonel Cyprien Ningaba's advice.<sup>3</sup>

The killing of Ndayaye was widely condemned by both moderate *Tutsi* and *Hutu* alike. The international community also threw its weight behind peace-loving Burundians and condemned the coup. The reaction in the field was outright anarchy and, in the weeks that followed, almost 50 000 people, both *Hutu* and *Tutsi*, were killed. The UPRONA, the former ruling party of Buyoya, tried to distance itself from the violence. The communiqué issued by Buyoya read: 'No causal link should therefore be established between the killing of Ndayaye perpetrated by a group of plotting military and the attacks by Hutu against Tutsi peasants and the opposition'.<sup>4</sup>

Trying to hide behind such allegations allowed the UPRONA cadres and the *Tutsi*-dominated army to embark on a reprisal campaign all over the country. This campaign also saw, for the first time in the history of Burundi, the number of *Tutsis* killed equalling the number of dead *Hutus*. With the unanimous condemnation of the coup and the large-scale killings, the newly formed National Committee for Public Salvation (CPSN), headed by Frans Ngeze, collapsed. Sylvie Kinigi, the Prime Minister in the Ndayaye regime, lobbied both international and national stakeholders to campaign for peace in Burundi. In a matter of weeks, order was restored and the civilian government resumed control of the country.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 14

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.15

Ngeze and ten other coup leaders were placed under arrest, although about forty other insurgent leaders fled to Zaire.<sup>5</sup>

As the coup was unfolding in Bujumbura, violence erupted in the provinces. Several provincial governors were warned by telephone that the military had occupied Bujumbura. Conversely, the governors later informed the local authorities and the *chefferies* (chiefdoms) of recent developments in and around the country. With virtually no radio signals in Burundi, Radio Rwanda kept civilians in Burundi updated about the evolution of the coup. Interviewed over Radio Rwanda, the Information Minister of Burundi, Nkururazi Ngendahayo, urged the Burundian people to support the democratically elected government of Burundi and to denounce the coup plotters and instigators.<sup>6</sup> In one such interview, the minister stated:

....the democratic institutions that have been tempered within our Country by the army should as a matter of urgency be re-instituted. The Hutu people of Burundi would defend the Burundi democracy and would resist any move by the army to return Burundi to the years of bloodshed and intimidation.<sup>7</sup>

Admittedly, resistance to the army coup was spontaneous and, in some areas, reprisals were directed by local authorities against *Tutsi* and *Hutu* belonging to the opposition UPRONA party that many believed was behind the coup. In the countryside, bridges and roads were blocked to prevent the army from moving into the remote areas, because people believed that the restoration of order by the Burundian army would be costly in terms of civilian casualties and loss of property.<sup>8</sup>

With the fate of the president still unknown, the Hutu population, often under the command of FRODEBU local authorities, started arresting *Tutsi* and members of UPRONA. While some were immediately killed, others were initially kept hostage, and yet more were executed once Ndadaye's death became known. Conversely, the army and local *Tutsi* embarked on a killing spree, attacking *Hutu* and FRODEBU members without provocation. As early as mid-November 1993, the Prime

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<sup>5</sup> S. Naidoo, 'Challenges for Burundi's Transitional Government', In *Conflict Trends*, an Accord Publication, no. 4/2001, p. 20

<sup>6</sup> *New Africa Year Book, 2001* (13th edition) I.C. Publication, London, 2001, p. 291

<sup>7</sup> Catholic World News, News Brief, 29 September 1999, p. 5

<sup>8</sup> F. Reyntjens, *Burundi: Breaking the cycle of Violence*, Minority Rights Group, London, 1995, p. 8

Minister, Sylvie Kinigi, who had taken refuge in the French Embassy during the coup, convened a meeting of the surviving government ministers in an attempt to address the crisis arising from the massacre and displacement of thousands of people. The Supreme Court officially recognised the presidential vacancy resulting from the death of both Ndadaye and his constitutional successor, Giles Bimazubute. The speaker of the National Assembly directed that presidential powers be passed on to the Council of Ministers, acting in a collegiate capacity pending fresh presidential elections.<sup>9</sup>

With Ndadaye's murder, the political atmosphere rapidly developed into unpalatable political mayhem. Attempts by members of the FRODEBU Party to form a new government were met with strong opposition from the *Tutsi*-dominated UPRONA. By the end of 1993, Burundi was heading for another political quagmire. How was the situation handled?

#### 4.2 Attempts at political reconstruction

The 21 October 1993 coup, which was followed by the assassination of Ndadaye and the elimination of his constitutional successor, saw executive powers being transferred to the Council of Ministers. This political arrangement greatly affected decision-making, as consensus was difficult to arrive at. In early January 1994, the FRODEBU deputies in the National Assembly approved a draft amendment to the constitution, whereby the National Assembly, in case of a presidential vacancy, could elect a president. UPRONA deputies, who had boycotted the vote, challenged the constitutionality of the amendment and expressed concern that such a procedure represented indirect suffrage and that it was a contradiction of the terms of the constitution.<sup>10</sup>

The continued boycott of the National Assembly by UPRONA deputies forced the postponement of the elections of a new president. On 10 January 1994, a political truce with the opposition parties yielded a partial breakthrough. Cyprien Ntaryamira, the Agriculture Minister under the Ndadaye regime

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<sup>9</sup> R. Lemarchand, 'Genocide in the Great Lakes: Which Genocide? Whose Genocide?' in *African Studies Review*, Vol. 41, no. 1, 1998, p. 16.

<sup>10</sup> Proxy Targets: Civilians in the war in Burundi, *A Human Rights Watch Country Report*, Washington DC, 1998, p. 32

and a Hutu from FRODEBU, was elected President on 5 February 1994, and Sylvestre Ntibantunganya was elected president of the National Assembly.<sup>11</sup>

Although the representatives of the main opposition parties demonstrated some degree of commitment to the establishment of political stability, the level of impunity enjoyed by those responsible for the failed coup further exacerbated the volatile security situation. During February 1994, ethnic tension mounted, as extremist factions of both *Hutu* and *Tutsi* groups established territorial strongholds within the country. Attempts by the armed forces to disable *Hutu* strongholds in and around the capital resulted in the imposition of a *de facto* curfew in Bujumbura in late March 1994. These attempts to restore order further exaggerated the existing division between FRODEBU's moderate faction, led by Ntaryamira, and Nyangoma's hardline faction which opposed further military action against the Hutu militia.<sup>12</sup> However, Ntaryamira's insistence that several senior army personnel and the chief of the national gendarmerie should be replaced, for having failed to address the security crisis in the country, provoked sections of the forces to embark on a campaign of destruction and death. Ntaryamira's stance against the armed forces was viewed as an attempt to chastise the army and to apportion blame for the ills of Burundi to the army. The army suspiciously distanced itself from the executive. Since the military was predominantly *Tutsi*, the security of the executive and the political stability of the country were permanently at stake. The failure of the army to protect the executive has been cited by many researchers as the stumbling block in the conflict in Burundi. The army in Burundi is seen as a different section or domain, which is inaccessible to any citizen of Burundi except if they happen to be a *Tutsi*.<sup>13</sup> It has, as many pundits would put it, become a 'permanent' monopoly of the Tutsi.

The tense political atmosphere of Burundi was further heightened on 6 April 1994. President Cyprien Ntaryamira was killed, together with president Juvenal Habyarimana of Rwanda, when extremist *Tutsi* militia in Rwanda brought down their plane over Kigali Airport. The two Presidents were attending a regional summit in Dar es Salaam, on ways and means of restoring peace in the sub-region. Ian Spears points out that since the two presidents were Hutu, many have put forward the argument that their

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<sup>11</sup> *New Africa Year Book*, p. 291

<sup>12</sup> J.P. Chretien, *Rwanda: Les Media du Genocide*, Editions Karthala, Paris, 1995, p. 45.

<sup>13</sup> Lemarchand, 'Genocide in the Great Lakes:' p. 16.



deaths were clearly part of a *Tutsi* strategy to take advantage of the chaos and restore some semblance of a *Tutsi* empire in the Great Lakes. Subsequent events would prove Spears right, as the *Tutsi* RPF overran Kigali from Uganda, and Buyoya staged a political comeback in 1996.<sup>14</sup>

Once more, the people of Burundi were left without a president, but fortunately there was a constitutional successor. Contrary to the violent political and ethnic chaos which erupted in Rwanda in the aftermath of the death of Habyarimana, Burundians responded positively to appeals for calm issued by Sylvestre Ntibantunganya, the speaker of the National Assembly who, on 8 April 1994, was confirmed (in accordance with the constitution) as interim president for a three-month period, which would be followed by a presidential election.<sup>15</sup>

Having discounted the possibility of organising a general election, owing to security concerns, major political parties engaged in lengthy negotiations to establish procedures for the restoration of an elected president. In the meantime, the constitutional court extended the term of the interim president for another three months. With a political consensus difficult to arrive at by the new government, it was decided that the new president would be elected by a broadly representative commission, the composition of which was yet to be decided. The Convention of Government, as the New Commission was known, detailed the terms of the government for a four-year transitional period, including the allocation of 45% of cabinet posts to the opposition UPRONA party.<sup>16</sup>

The contents of the convention of government were incorporated into the new constitution of Burundi, which was adopted in September 1994. The new constitution was drawn up to cater for the new socio-political dispensation after the death of Ntariyama. The Convention of Government also provided for the creation of a National Security Council (NSC) to address the national security crisis. The

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<sup>14</sup> I. Spear, 'Understanding Inclusive Peace Agreement in Africa: The Problems of Sharing Power', in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 2000 p.118,

<sup>15</sup> W. Ken, *The Burundi Conflict*, news writer for Newafrica ( [www.newafrica.com](http://www.newafrica.com) ) access date 6 November 2003

<sup>16</sup> A. Ould-Abdallah, *Burundi on the Brink 1993-1995*, United States Institute of Peace, Washington DC, 2000, p. 45

commission, which was also mandated to elect the president of the country, appointed Sylvestre Ntibantunganya, president of the National Assembly, to this post. He was one of six candidates. His election was quickly endorsed by the National Assembly, and Ntibantunganya was formally inaugurated on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1994. The preceding week saw the formation of a coalition government reflecting the political, regional and ethnic composition of Burundi.<sup>17</sup>

Jean Minani, a prominent FRODEBU member, was elected as speaker of the National Assembly to replace Ntibantunganya. His election prompted the UPRONA legislators and cabinet members to withdraw from the government of national unity. They accused Minani of having incited *Hutu* attacks on the *Tutsi* in the aftermath of the October 1993 attempted coup. A serious political crisis was averted when an agreement was reached on a compromise FRODEBU candidate, Leonce Ngendakumana. UPRONA then declared its willingness to rejoin the government.<sup>18</sup>

The political concession accorded to the UPRONA by the FRODEBU was regarded in many circles as reconciliatory, and should have appeased the *Tutsi* parties to a large extent. Despite these concessions, though, ethnic tension persisted in the greater part of the second quarter of 1994. These conflicts were seriously exacerbated by the scale and proximity of the violence in Rwanda, and the presence in Burundi of an estimated 200,000 Rwandan *Hutu* refugees who had fled the advancing RPF in Rwanda. Nationwide civil confrontation was largely contained in Burundi, but ethnically motivated atrocities became a daily occurrence in remote parts of the countryside, resulting in the imposition of a partial curfew in the capital. Renewed violence, politically and ethnically motivated, suggested that the security crisis would precipitate a large-scale ethnic massacre similar to that witnessed in neighbouring Rwanda. In light of the above, government-sponsored military initiatives were carried out in *Hutu*-dominated suburbs of Bujumbura and the northeast of the country, where an aggressive campaign was waged against the alleged insurgent activities of PALIPEHUTU militia.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Lemarchand, R, *Genocide in the Great Lakes: Which Genocide? Whose Genocide?* p. 3

<sup>18</sup> Proxy Targets: *Civilians in the war in Burundi*, p. 32

<sup>19</sup> J.C. Willame, *Banyarwanda et Banyamulenge: Violences Ethniques et gestion de L'identaire au Kivu*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 1997, p. 56

Notwithstanding enormous security initiatives taken by the government of Ntibantunganya, a large number of UPRONA members continued to mastermind the very foundation of the government by supporting insurgent *Tutsi* activities. By early 1996, reports of atrocities perpetrated against both *Hutu* and *Tutsi* civilians by rogue elements of the *Tutsi*-led armed forces and extremist *Hutu* rebel groups had become common in the rural areas. Reporting in mid-1996, the Human Rights Watch observed that the capital had been effectively purged of any significant *Hutu* presence. Despite an understanding by president Ntibantunganya in late April 1996, and the establishment of a Human Rights Commission and security reforms, violence continued on a daily basis, prompting the suspension of French military aid at the end of 1996. The resultant effect of such withdrawal was the inability of the government to carry out the envisaged security reforms. In early July, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) suspended all activities in Burundi following the murder of three ICRC employees in the northwest of the country.<sup>20</sup>

The fragile security situation prompted the Economic Community of the Great Lakes countries to meet in Cairo in November 1996 at the request of the then UN Secretary General, Boutros Boutros Ghali. The Presidents of Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Zaire and Tanzania attended the meeting, which also saw the announcement of a sub-regional Initiative for Peace in Burundi. This initiative was to be headed by the former Tanzanian president, Julius Nyerere. Nyerere's role as principal mediator in the conflict was endorsed at a meeting between representatives of more than 20 African and European States and UN diplomats in Addis Ababa at the end of 1996.<sup>21</sup>

Julius Nyerere started his Initiative for Peace in Burundi with representatives of some 13 political parties in April 1996, long before he was announced as mediator in the Burundi conflict. In line with this initiative, a second and third round of talks were scheduled for Mwanza, Nyerere's hometown, but were subsequently postponed due to political infighting about the eligibility of participants from the ranks of the insurgents. Owing to this political impasse, Yoweri Museveni, the President of Uganda, convened a meeting of regional leaders in Arusha, Tanzania, in late June 1996 to review the security and

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<sup>20</sup> Proxy Targets: *Civilians in the war in Burundi*, A Human Rights Watch Country Report, p. 32

<sup>21</sup> Lemarchand, *Genocide in the Great Lakes*: p. 3

humanitarian needs of Burundi. During that meeting, the President and Prime Minister of Burundi requested foreign intervention to protect politicians, civil servants and important installations.<sup>22</sup>

A Regional Technical Commission to examine the request for security assistance had been convened for the Arusha meeting and, with the support of the United Nations, had reached preliminary agreement for the deployment of an intervention force. The force was to be composed of armies from Uganda and Tanzania, and police officers from Kenya. The countries to contribute armies for such an intervention were the subject of great debate, as many regional leaders were suspicious of each others' intentions in Burundi.<sup>23</sup>

Meanwhile, in Burundi, political debate had also emerged about the necessity and suitability of such a force. Many opposition politicians, including Jean Mukasi, leader of the UPRONA party, openly rejected foreign intervention, and suggested that it was an attempt by the President to question the country's military ability and capability to maintain peace and order. The views of Mukasi were actually irrelevant, as the Burundian army had, on many occasions, shown that it could not maintain peace, let alone restore order in Burundi. Despite the mass campaign to protest against intervention, an OAU heads of state meeting in Yaounde, in the Cameroon in July 1996 fully endorsed the Arusha proposal for intervention. Burundi's former dictator, Jean Baptiste Bagaza, who had returned to the country after the 1993 amnesty laws, intensified calls for Burundians to protest against foreign intervention, rejecting the OAU resolution. The former dictator, a *Tutsi*, also supported the student revolts for better living conditions and the resignation of the President.<sup>24</sup>

Having been politically undermined, and having lost most of his supporters in conflict or to exile, President Ntibantunganya eventually became isolated in the capital, with the *Tutsi*-dominated military baying for his blood. After tendering his resignation, Ntibantunganya went into hiding in the US embassy

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<sup>22</sup> P. Chabal and J.P. Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*, James Currey, Oxford, 1999, p. 45

<sup>23</sup> Ould-Abdallah, *Burundi on the Brink 1993-1995*, p. 89

<sup>24</sup> *New Africa Year Book*, p. 291

compound in Bujumbura on 23 July 1996. Many members of his cabinet fled the country, including the FRODEBU chairman, Jean Minani. On 25 July 1996, members of the armed forces were extensively deployed in the capital. On the heels of this development, the Minister of National Defence, Lieutenant Colonel Firmin Sinzoyiheba, criticised the failure of the administration to safeguard national security, and announced the suspension of the National Assembly, the constitution, and all political activities. There were a nationwide curfew and the closure of the national borders, as well as the airport in Bujumbura. This was followed by euphoria in the *Tutsi*-dominated army, which called for the reinstatement of the former military ruler, Pierre Buyoya, who, up until then, had been living in Belgium. The wishes of the military were granted, and Buyoya was declared Interim President of a Transitional Republic.<sup>25</sup>

### 4.3 Buyoya's return

By early 1996, the civilian government under President Ntibantunganya had lost effective control of the country. A growing number of political assassinations strengthened the hand of the military. Civilian governors were assassinated in the northern provinces of Cibitoke, Gitega, Karuzi, Kayana and Ngolo. In March 1996, the military governors of Kanmi initiated the first regroupment programmes (the cantonment of civilians into refugee camps guarded by the army), using extensive violence to drive more than one hundred thousand *Hutu* from his province into camps in early 1996.

The regroupment programme would, however, be the subject of intense debate regarding its ability to curb ethnic tension in Burundi. On the heels of the bloodless coup by Buyoya and the subsequent imposition of a curfew, intense ethnic confrontation flared in the countryside and, in an address to the Burundi people, Buyoya defined his immediate aims:

....we will try to restore calm, open the political atmosphere, liberalise the informal sector and will encourage the return of refugees who had fled the country. Former

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<sup>25</sup> Naidoo, 'Challenges for Burundi's Transitional Government', p. 22

members of governments are also invited to return and together we can build a prosperous nation.<sup>26</sup>

Buyoya's restoration of peace and national security, and the reassurance to former ministers and government officials that their safety would be guaranteed by the new regime, was regarded in many FRODEBU circles as superficial and lacking in credible guarantees. Buyoya's speech to the nation was contradicted by Ntibantunganya's refusal on Radio Rwanda to relinquish the office of the president. Ntibantunganya's Prime Minister, Nduwayo, afraid for his safety, immediately resigned and went into exile in neighbouring Uganda.<sup>27</sup>

Ntibantunganya's government finally collapsed, and Pierre Buyoya formed a broad-based government with Pascal-Firmin Ndimita, a *Hutu* member of the *Tutsi*-dominated UPRONA, as Prime Minister. Buyoya's government also saw a halt in the forced repatriation of Rwandan *Hutu* refugees who were fleeing persecution from the *Tutsi* government in Rwanda. Buyoya's second presidency was condemned by major African and Western nations, who called for the reinstatement of Ntibantunganya and a gradual return to constitutional legality. At a regional summit of the East African States held at Arusha on 31 July 1996, member states declared their intention to impose severe economic sanctions on the new regime.<sup>28</sup>

In order to win foreign support, Buyoya engaged in immense political reforms that saw the appointment of a multi-ethnic cabinet, expansion of the transitional national assembly, and the constitution of the Consultative Council of Elders, established to oversee a period of broad political debate. Following renewed ethnic violence and the inability of the armed forces to curb it, as well as the publication, in mid-August 1996, of the UN Report on the events leading to the October 1993 coup, the Buyoya government was on the brink of collapse. The UN report directly implicated the army in the events leading to the killing of Mechior Ndadaye and the subsequent violence, stating that:

....the army as an element to protect the institutions and the republican nature of

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<sup>26</sup> T Laely, 'Peasants, Local Communities and Central Power in Burundi', in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 4, no. V, 1996, p. 67

<sup>27</sup> Ould-Abdallah, *Burundi on the Brink 1993-1995*, p. 89

<sup>28</sup> C. Newbury, 'Ethnicity and the Politics of History in Rwanda', in *African Today*, Vol. 45, no. 1, 1998 p. 22

Burundi failed to perform such functions. The protection of individuals and properties was not properly handled by the army. It is with no doubt that the killing of the president could aptly be ascribed to the attitude of the army.<sup>29</sup>

Buyoya's reaction to the report was the summary dismissal of the commander of the army, Col. Jean Bikonnagu, as well as the commander of the gendarmerie, Col. Pascal Simbanduko, both of whom were found by the UN to have plotted the 1993 coup. In an attempt at pacification and restoration of security in the countryside, Buyoya convened a meeting with the Burundi peace facilitator, Nyerere, and the various political structures of Burundi in August 1996 in Arusha, Tanzania. During the meeting, Buyoya tried unsuccessfully to have the sanctions imposed on his regime following the July 1996 coup relaxed. The Regional Sanctions Co-ordinating Committee (RSCC) held its first meeting to review the effectiveness of the sanctions. At that meeting, it was agreed to ease restrictions on the importation of emergency relief supplies. The Committee further emphasised that economic sanctions would remain in force until the national assembly was restored. In the meantime, political parties were legalized, and unconditional negotiations were opened with the *Hutu* militias, including the *Force de la Defence de Democratie* (FDD), the main *Hutu* militia group.<sup>30</sup>

Following intense pressure from the international community, mainly the United Nations and the European Union, Buyoya announced on 12 September 1996 that political parties that had made a positive contribution to national life would be permitted to operate without interference from the state, and that they would have access to the national media. The powers of the National Assembly were restored and the Regional Sanctions Co-ordinating Committee (RSCC) convened a meeting of the warring factions. On the heels of the RSCC meeting, Nyerere unsuccessfully sought to bring the government, FRODEBU, the CNDD and UPRONA to the negotiating table. The government had earlier questioned the neutrality of Nyerere in the conflict, arguing that most of the rebel attacks on Burundian soil had been carried out from Tanzania. Without having much success in assembling the warring factions in Burundi, Nyerere convened a meeting of the regional heads of state in Arusha to

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<sup>29</sup> G. Evans, 'Get Moving now to Prevent Genocide in Burundi', in *International Herald Tribune* of 22 August 2001, p. 8

<sup>30</sup> Ould-Abdallah, *Burundi on the Brink 1993-1995*, p. 45

review the Burundi conflict and to adopt strategies aimed at curbing it.<sup>31</sup>

During that meeting in October 1996, it was decided by the regional heads of state that economic and arms sanctions should be retained in order to force the government and the warring factions to come to a common understanding on representation at the negotiations. By February 1997, the sanctions were actually digging deep into the very fibre of the Burundian economy. Buyoya was forced to negotiate with the rebels at Arusha. His willingness was greeted by the RSCC easing sanctions. Before this milestone was achieved, most commodities were widely available in Burundi from illicit suppliers in Tanzania and Rwanda. Thus, the economic and arms embargo imposed on Burundi had been a failure. The failure of the sanctions was the result of many regional heads of state not complying with them, and the fact that some of the factions in Burundi were actually armed by some neighbouring countries.<sup>32</sup>

Following the failure of economic sanctions due to the non co-operation of some African countries, Nyerere convened another meeting of the regional heads of state in mid April 1997 in Arusha. On this occasion, Buyoya was invited to attend as president rather than as a faction leader, thereby recognising the effective collapse of sanctions and the legitimacy of Buyoya's government in Bujumbura. Such recognition was seen by many observers as a failure on the part of the mediator to restore constitutional legality in Burundi and to bring the warring factions to the negotiating table. Nyerere, however, argued that the recognition of the *de facto* government of Buyoya was a platform from which a central figure could represent the Burundi public and the Burundi institutions at the negotiations.<sup>33</sup>

Against the backdrop of intense work by Julius Nyerere in bringing the warring factions together, a meeting of regional foreign Ministers was held in Kampala, Uganda on 15 August 1997. During that meeting, it was decided to reintroduce the trade embargo on Burundi, despite vigorous appeals from

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<sup>31</sup> R. Lemarchand, 'Ethnicity as Myth: The View from the Central Africa', occasional paper presented at the Centre of African Studies, University of Copenhagen, 4 May 1999, p. 10

<sup>32</sup> R. Lemarchand, '*Le Genocide de 1972 au Burundi: Les silences de l'Histoire*', Unpublished paper presented to the Burundi Community in Montreal, Canada on the occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1972 genocide, March, 2002, p. 4

<sup>33</sup> Ould-Abdallah, *Burundi on the Brink 1993-1995*, p. 60



the Burundian government for the sanctions to be lifted. In effect, the Burundian government accused Tanzania of influencing other countries to continue the embargo, and subsequently withdrew from the all-party talks organized by Nyerere. The withdrawal from the talks took place in Arusha in late August 1997.<sup>34</sup>

After large-scale insurrection and party infighting, which prompted Buyoya to initiate a series of administrative reforms, the security situation was greatly improved. And, after serious persuasion by the mediation team, the government could attend the all-party talks in Arusha, under the chairmanship of Nyerere, in late 1997. At that meeting, all the participating delegations agreed to hold further talks before the end of 1997, and to suspend hostilities on or before that date. However, the government and the (FDD), the main armed opposition, immediately distanced themselves from the agreement, thus undermining its effectiveness. The second round of talks in July 1998 also made little progress, being dominated by procedural debates and lengthy presentations from each of the delegations. Further talks were held in Arusha in October 1998 and, during these discussions, three commissions were constituted to examine the nature of the Burundi conflict, democracy, good governance, peace and security. The remaining commissions were to examine the rehabilitation of refugees, economic development, transitional institutions and the guarantees for the implementation of the eventual peace agreement.<sup>35</sup>

A fourth round of talks was held in Arusha in January 1999, with the CNDD-FDD again officially excluded, despite speculation that a way might be found to include them formally. Nyerere had earlier warned that only those parties which had renounced violence would be welcome in Arusha. Since the CNDD-FDD was still armed, their exclusion, Nyerere argued, was based on that premise. The decision to exclude the CNDD-FDD was to prove crucial, as it was the only faction that did not recognise the Arusha framework, therefore being unwilling to abide by any ceasefire agreement. The Arusha discussions were formally reinforced by a meeting of regional heads of states from 21-23 January 1999, which resulted in the suspension of the economic embargo and the acceptance of Buyoya as the government representative of Burundi. Burundi and the international community welcomed the decision,

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<sup>34</sup> Burundi Country Report, at [www.newafrica.com](http://www.newafrica.com), access date 6 November 2003

<sup>35</sup> Ould-Abdallah, *Burundi on the Brink 1993-1995*, p. 62

although the CNDD dismissed it as premature and refused to adhere to any peace framework.<sup>36</sup>

Meanwhile, the various Arusha Commissions continued their work, but, by mid-March 1999, progress was hindered following criticism from the Burundian government and the FRODEBU over the cumbersome nature of the proceedings. Following alleged ethnocentrism and ill discipline, the Secretary General of FRODEBU, Augustin Nzolibwami, suspended former President Ntibantunganya from the executive committee, along with other senior members. These events weakened the FRODEBU and, in the forthcoming talks in Arusha, they could not arrive at a consensus on vital issues of representation, such as who should lead the FRODEBU delegation and the policy to follow.<sup>37</sup>

In-depth negotiations by the Burundian peace facilitator resulted in an all-Burundi meeting in Moshi, Tanzania, in mid 1999. The meeting, which was attended by seven predominantly Hutu parties, including the CNDD, which had pledged to disband their armed wing and the external wing of the FRODEBU, was aimed at negotiating a common platform prior to the gathering of the various commissions in mid-May 1999. The Moshi meeting was considered as the most representative of all the Arusha meetings thus far, following the invitation extended to PALIPEHUTU-FNL and the CNDD-FDD. In the light of a pressing refugee problem, a fourth commission to examine the rehabilitation of refugees, as well as economic development, was constituted.<sup>38</sup>

The Moshi group was constantly being attacked and sidelined by other *Tutsi* extremist parties who were opposed to the Arusha Process. These *Tutsi* parties grouped themselves to form a negotiating bloc in order to protect and preserve *Tutsi* interests in the negotiating process. Delegates representing UPRONA, the ruling party, the government and the National Assembly remained outside the two blocs, being the predominant *Hutu* factions that met at Moshi, and the main *Tutsi* parties who were opposed to the Moshi meeting and the Arusha framework.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Naidoo, 'Challenges for Burundi's Transitional Government', p. 11

<sup>37</sup> *New Africa Year Book 2001*, p. 68

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70

<sup>39</sup> Burundi Country Report, at [www.newafrica.com](http://www.newafrica.com), access date 6 November 2003

The fifth and final round of the Arusha Process was expected to be concluded by the end of 1999 but, following the ill health of the facilitator and his subsequent death, the process was temporarily halted, pending the designation of another facilitator. The death of Julius Nyerere negatively affected the Arusha Peace Process, as any new facilitator would have to begin a new mission to create trust among the factional leaders. The subsequent appointment of Nelson Mandela by the OAU, and the immediate endorsement by the UNO of his role as facilitator, put the peace process back on track.<sup>40</sup>

The stature and astuteness of the former South African president played a great role in facilitating the peace process. The fact that a greater majority of antagonists in the Burundi crisis openly acknowledged his neutrality, augured well for the speedy conclusion of a peace deal. It was not without surprise that within eight months of his appointment, the Burundi Peace and Reconciliation Accord was signed on the 28 August 2000, in Arusha, Tanzania. Although initially signed by only about a third of the political parties in Burundi, it actually witnessed a significant milestone on the difficult road to peace. The signing ceremony was witnessed by ten African heads of state, as well as the outgoing American President, Bill Clinton. The transitional government stipulated in the Accord was installed on 1 November 2001, with the incumbent, Pierre Buyoya as President, and the Secretary General of the FRODEBU, Domitien Ndayizeye as vice-president. They would change portfolios after an eighteen-month period. Despite this achievement, there were still skirmishes here and there in the Burundian countryside. Some of the stumbling blocks to peace in Burundi were the lack of a ceasefire agreement, and the unresolved refugee problem. What has the present government done to alleviate the refugee question?

#### **4.4 The new refugee-question and the regroupment campaign**

The various Burundi conflicts since the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and, more important, the 1990s, made Burundi one of the countries in Africa with the highest percentage of internally displaced persons. According to the UN report in 2000, as much as a third of the population of Burundi was either internally displaced, or regrouped somewhere in camps, known in Burundi as 'regroupment camps', under the protection of the Burundian armed forces. The *Hutu* population was grouped in these camps

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<sup>40</sup> M. Kimani, 'Burundi: Can the Arusha Accord bring peace in Burundi', in *Africanews*, Issue no. 54, September 2000, p. 7

and protected around the clock, for it was realised that the various *Hutu* militia had turned the refugee camps into major recruitment centres. Burundi had earned the wrath of the international community for initiating such a policy, but Buyoya maintained that it was the only means by which the government could maintain a certain amount of security.<sup>41</sup>

Estimates compiled by the UN in June 2000 suggested that more than 600 000 Burundians, more than half the population of the country, were internally displaced, including at least 275 000 in regroupment camps. Following the partial cessation of hostilities prior to the Arusha Peace Accord of August 2000, the plight of the refugees had not improved. It has been revealed that, recently, armed forces of the DRC, believed to have been assisted by Rwandan and Burundian soldiers, expelled Burundian *Hutu* refugees from Eastern DRC into the bushland of Tanzania. These expelled refugees were *Hutus* and *interhumene* who had regrouped in Eastern Zaire, and who had been organising sporadic attacks on Burundian army positions. In 2001 and at the beginning of 2002, the UNHCR estimated that the number of Burundian refugees totaled 299 400, excluding 200 000 Burundians who had been in Tanzania since the 1970s and who were not assisted by the UNHCR.<sup>42</sup>

The question on every researcher's lips is, what did the Burundian government do to alleviate the plight of these refugees? It should be recalled that instead of initiating enormous reforms to repatriate and reintegrate these people, the government instead embarked on a regroupment campaign. This entailed the internment of people in camps, and was aimed at dissuading them from supporting the rebels. It allowed the military to monitor the civilian population and to restrict their freedom of speech, movement, and association. In Burundi, the suspect population is the *Hutu*, and their concentration in camps was intended to cut the rebels' recruitment reservoir and support base, such as the *Forces Pour La Defence de la Democratie* (FDD).<sup>43</sup>

Recently, the government of Burundi continued to force more than 200 000 *Hutu* civilians, who remain

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 4

<sup>42</sup> The Burundi Rebellion and the Ceasefire Negotiations, *International Crisis Group*, Africa Briefing Paper, 6 August 2002, p. 2

<sup>43</sup> Proxy Targets: Civilians in the war in Burundi, p. 32

in life-threatening conditions, into regroupment camps, contrary to the laws of war and the right to freedom. Civilians in these camps, mostly *Hutu*, are raped on a daily basis, and the execution of defaulters is common. As one of the Red Cross workers stated:

Hutu are officially protected from rebels by the army in those camps, but in reality they are prisoners. They are like concentration camps ... [people] cannot leave them, because if so they are shot, they have no land to work in, no clean clothing, they have nothing. Scabies and hunger are present in every regroupment camp. Furthermore, there is a dysentery epidemic all over the country.<sup>44</sup>

The regroupment camps were reminiscent of concentration camps in Indochina and Algeria. The genesis of the policy of regroupment is still the subject of debate, but it has been argued that the governor of the Karuzi region, Lieutenant Colonel Gabriel Gunungu, ordered the creation of Burundi's first regroupment camp in February 1996. Following the July 1996 coup by Buyoya, the programme was intensified, with the establishment of new camps in the provinces of *Kayanza*, *Muramvya*, *Babanza*, *Cibitoke*, *Bururi* and *Bujumbura-Rural*. The government of Buyoya confirmed the existence of such camps, but reaffirmed that people had gathered in the camps voluntarily.<sup>45</sup> 'Voluntarily' meant that people (*Hutu*) had deliberately handed themselves over to the *Tutsi* army, a situation which not only contradicted the recent history of Burundi, but which was also impossible, owing to the animosity that existed between these two groups.

The conflict in Burundi is an internal armed conflict and is regulated by the laws of war, as defined in Optional Protocol 11 of the Geneva Convention of 1949. Article 17 of Protocol 11 prohibits the forced movement of civilians, unless under very limited circumstances. These limited circumstances include the movement of people to prevent a humanitarian crisis and to protect them from outside aggression, which was not the case in Burundi. Burundi's violation of this important protocol is an indication of its continued policy of coercing people and its systematic extermination of *Hutu* civilians. As such, the regroupment programme has been one of the stumbling blocks at the various Arusha meetings. The failure of the peace facilitator and the international community to convince the Buyoya regime to abandon the programme has fuelled the conflict and lit the flame for future misunderstanding, removing

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p 33

<sup>45</sup> The Burundi Rebellion and the Ceasefire Negotiations, p. 8

any sign of peace in the Great Lakes.<sup>46</sup>

#### 4.5 The genocide: organisers, killers and patterns of killing

According to the United Nations Convention on Genocide, any acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, such as: killing members of the group; causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group could be considered to be genocide.<sup>47</sup>

Hinton believes that genocide has two important phases ) first, the destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed group and the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor. In Burundi and Rwanda, the *Tutsi* had instituted a pattern similar to the above by relegating to the backburner of national history any traces of a *Hutu* nation. The *Tutsi* has developed a kind of pseudo-nationalism, based on *Tutsi* hegemony and conquest. Genocidal conflicts anywhere in the world have been carried out with clinical precision. Prior planning and strategies of execution have been present. The manners in which the Muslims of Albania were killed, and the way in which the *Tutsis* were killed in Rwanda in 1994, attest to this fact. The same applied to the Burundi conflict where, immediately after the assassination of President Ndadaye by members of the parachute battalion in Bujumbura, the entire countryside witnessed what many researchers called 'selective genocide', selective in the sense of the numbers that were killed, and the fact that *Tutsis* were killing *Hutus* and *Hutus* killing *Tutsis*, depending on the availability of arms and weapons. When the Burundi conflict was unfolding, the West, engulfed in its Afro-pessimist approach, completely turned a blind eye to the events. While the US was ready to give 540 million dollars to manage the Rwandan genocide, it was unprepared to give 10 million dollars for the Burundi crisis to be averted.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Naidoo, 'Challenges for Burundi's Transitional Government', p 9

<sup>47</sup> A.L. Hinton, (ed), *Genocide: An Anthropological Reader*, Blackwell publishers, Oxford, 2002, p. 44

<sup>48</sup> Lemarchand, R, *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1996, p. 34

From the onset of the coup and the attack upon the *Tutsi* population by the *Hutu*, resistance to army reprisals against the *Hutu* population was immediately organised. In return, the *Hutu* civilians organised themselves into groups, armed with any weapon which could inflict a wound or kill, and began to attack local *Tutsis*. They also raised barricades, destroyed bridges and communication lines, thus preventing the army, which was predominantly *Tutsi*, from gaining any access to the rural areas. In fact, the *Hutu* surrounded most *Tutsi* households and eliminated their occupants. The system of killing spread rapidly throughout the countryside and, by all indications, some highly placed *FRODEBU* officials facilitated this action by providing the civilians with weapons and information on the whereabouts of their victims. Prominent *FRODEBU* extremists, such as L. Ngoyanmo, could not completely be exempted from such acts.<sup>49</sup>

Calls for calm by the *Tutsi* Prime Minister, Sylvie Kinigi, and moderate *Hutus*, such as Cyprien Ntarryamira and Sylvester Ntibantungana, fell on deaf ears. *Hutu* insurgency activities were highly evident in the southern towns of *Rumonge*, *Gitega*, *Muramryva*, *Nyanza-lac* and *Bujumbura-rural*. As predicted, the army's reprisals were swift and violent. Before calm could be restored, more than 30 000 *Tutsi* had been killed. In the subsequent 'restoration of order' by the armed forces, an equal number of *Hutu* were killed. The army subsequently executed several *Hutu* military officers and the most prominent *Hutu* politicians and ministers, whom they considered had perpetrated the killing of *Tutsis*. It also began a purge of all *Hutu* elements in the ranks of the armed forces.<sup>50</sup>

The pacification process or the 'restoration of order' by the army claimed approximately the same number of *Hutus* as *Tutsis* killed by *Hutu* civilians and the militia. In other provinces, both the army and local *Tutsi* embarked on a killing spree, attacking *Hutu* and *FRODEBU* members without provocation. In places where large numbers of *Tutsis* were killed, some local *FRODEBU* leaders incited and participated in these executions. Likewise, some *Tutsi* civil servants used their status and influence to

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<sup>49</sup> Burundi Country Report at [www.newafrica.com](http://www.newafrica.com), access date 6 November 2003

<sup>50</sup> D. Rothchild, *Managing Ethnic Conflict in Africa: Pressures and Incentives for Cooperation*, The Brookings Institution Press, Washington D.C, 1997, p. 89

facilitate the massacre of *Hutu*.<sup>51</sup>

The pattern that the various groups used in perpetrating massacres was a varied one. The local *Hutu*, for example, quickly betrayed his *Tutsi* neighbours to the *Hutu* militia. Many *Tutsis* were also cornered and killed in the hills, swamps and farms, and even in the roofs of their houses. The majority of the *Tutsi*, especially in the northern part of the country, was killed by the *Hutu* from the DRC (*interhumewe*). The *UPRONA* moderates and certain government ministers immediately established some form of truce, albeit under strong opposition from *FRODEBU* supporters, who clamoured for a return to constitutional legality.<sup>52</sup>

An International Commission of Inquiry constituted after the coup, convincingly showed that the violence was the immediate consequence of the military coup, and was a two-way process affecting both *Hutu* and *Tutsi*. First, the *Hutu*, having seen a *Hutu* president murdered, feared the situation was beyond politics, and thus engaged in acts of what pundits called the 'defence of democracy'. Second, the *Tutsi* were not prepared to relinquish power to the *Hutu*. In a document published on 15 November 1993 by the Human Rights League in Burundi, Sonera, which was very close to the *UPRONA*, the authors tried to separate the military plot from the ensuing violence. Part of the document reads:

...[the] systematic massacre of the *Tutsi* is perpetrated almost all over the country. Up to this day, public opinion has been a causal link between these fundamentally different events. However, the complexity of the situation requires that a different eye be cast on the crisis which the nation is experiencing. Indeed, a thorough analysis shows that a programmed holocaust has taken place.<sup>53</sup>

After the killing of Cyprien Ntaryimira and Juvenal Habryramina, the situation in Rwanda was catastrophic, as the whole country went up in flames, with mass killing being reported in all parts of the country. The formation of militia and private armies by political parties characterised the Burundian security structure. Attacks on government positions were sporadic, and a fragile peace was maintained

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<sup>51</sup> F. Reyntjens, *l' Afrique des Grand Lacs en Crise: Rwanda, Burundi*, Editions Karthala, Paris, 1994, p. 89

<sup>52</sup> R. Lemarchand, 'Burundi: Ethnicity and the Genocidal State', in P.L. Van den Bergh (ed), *State Violence and Ethnicity*, Boulder Press, Colorado, 1998, p. 111

<sup>53</sup> Reyntjens, F, *Burundi: Breaking the Cycle of Violence*, p. 15



until the signing of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Accord for Burundi in August 2000.<sup>54</sup>

#### 4.6 Complexity of the situation

When it became apparent that the international community and Burundian civil society had rejected the 21 October 1993 coup, the army resorted to the tactic of trying to convince the Burundian people that a genocidal plan aimed at exterminating *Tutsi* existed. In essence, they claimed that the military was simply taking pre-emptive measures to avert more bloodshed. As early as 22 October 1993, the United States, France, Germany, Belgium and the European Union suspended co-operation with Burundi. Burundian political parties, civil organisations and the churches, called for a total return to constitutional legality and also condemned the coup. Therefore, a stand-off developed as to whom the *de facto* leader in Burundi was. The killing of the constitutional successor to Ndadaye, the Speaker of the house, further compounded this fact. The overthrown government, operating from the French embassy, issued appeals for calm and resistance to the coup through Radio Rwanda.<sup>55</sup>

However, attempts were made to demonstrate that a project aimed at the extermination of the *Tutsi* existed prior to the coup. This reasoning claimed that there was a 'Code of 1<sup>st</sup> June' which, according to Sonera (the Human Rights Organization) was a document, the contents of which detailed the systematic elimination of *Tutsi* from Burundi. This allegation refers to a text entitled *Communiqué de la Coalition pour la défense des Institutions Démocratiques du 1<sup>er</sup> Juin*, was released on 22 October 1993 by Minister Shadrack Niyonkura of the Parti du Peuple (PP), a regional party that was invited by the late Melchior Ndadaye to join his government of national unity. Part of the document reads:

...all Burundi to fight to the last drop of blood the illegal power put in place by the sanguinary putschists. The people should remain calm and not be carried away by

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<sup>54</sup> Burundi Country Report at [www.newafrica.com](http://www.newafrica.com), access date 6 November 2003

<sup>55</sup> G. Prunier, *The Rwandan Genocide*, Colombia University Press, New York, 1995, p. 78

anger which might lead to vengeance against an ethnic group or political party.<sup>56</sup>

This document urged Burundians to fight the illegal institutions put in place by the army to the last drop of their blood. It could further be inferred that neither anti-*Tutsi* rhetoric, nor any suggestion that *Tutsis* should be killed, was present in the document.<sup>57</sup>

Even though the reaction to the coup was immediate and many *Tutsis* were killed, there was actually a need to know why the appeals made to Burundians by the remaining Ministers through Radio Rwanda were not heeded. It should also be noted that by then the *Hutus*, under Habyarimana, were in power in Rwanda, and would do whatever it took to restore the *Hutu* regime in Burundi. Though none of the communiqués contained anti-*Tutsi* rhetoric, it was clear that these messages were likely to be interpreted negatively. Given the foreseeable reaction of the *Hutu* to the coup and the death of Ndadaye, it was true that the *Hutu* civilians could have misinterpreted resistance for something else. In problematic circumstances such as those in Burundi after the 1993 coup, resistance could mean the use of machetes and guns. While it was reasonable to see the appeal for resistance against the coup as legitimate, they went much further to encourage ethnic and political massacres. The International Commission of Inquiry, established after the coup, said:

....not a single fact proves a code of 1 June, i.e., a plan to exterminate a large part of the Tutsi population has ever existed. The killing of civilians after the coup was spontaneous and could not be attributed to any prior plan.<sup>58</sup>

Many felt that these appeals contained major risks of excess, if not accompanied by an explicit instruction not to kill. Violence, however, was imminent, even in the absence of government appeals, and in many areas violence from both sides started before the first government statement was released.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Reyntjens, *Burundi: Breaking the Cycle of Violence*, p. 36

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19

<sup>59</sup> Lemarchand, R, *Burundi: Ethnicity and the Genocidal State*, p. 89

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined the major incidents of the Burundi crisis of 1993 up until 2000. The chapter also argued that the conflict was not given the attention it deserved. I also mentioned that while the United States was willing to offer 540 million dollars to manage the Rwandan genocide, it was reluctant to lend Burundi 10 million dollars to avert a similar situation. Attempts at political reconstruction of the country were unworkable, as governments after the coup failed to form stable and viable governments. The second regime of Maj. Pierre Buyoya in 1996, the chapter continues, further compounded the political situation. Although he maintained some relative peace until the signing of the Arusha Accord in 2000, his ability to bring about lasting peace was questioned.

The chapter also highlighted that the run-up to the presidential elections in 1993 was plagued by parties aligning their support according to purely ethnic and regional leanings. A defeat by one would be interpreted as a defeat of one ethnic group by another. The chapter argued that the immediate cause of the conflict was the defeat at the polls of the *Tutsi*-dominated party, the UPRONA. Their defeat was interpreted by the *Tutsi* as a defeat by the *Hutu* ethnic group. The chapter also emphasised that the various attempts made by Buyoya during his first regime were purely cosmetic, and were viewed with contempt by the *Tutsi*. The chapter discussed the fact that the murder of Ndadaye was the event that actually ignited the time bomb that Burundians had unconsciously manufactured. The various ethnic groups interpreted Ndadaye's murder differently. To the *Tutsi*, his murder was the fulfilment of a long-cherished dream not to serve under any *Hutu* president. To the *Hutu*, it was clear that the *Tutsi* had a genocidal plan against them, and they insisted that they would do everything possible to restore majority rule in Burundi.

The chapter also argued that the political gymnastics after the murder of Ndadaye was carried out by political novices, with no particular mastery of the Burundi political landscape. Interference by regional powers played a major role in derailing the peace process. The fact that Rwanda, Uganda and the DRC supported the *Tutsi* ethnic group prompted Tanzania and Kenya to come to the aid of the *Hutu*, a situation that led to the collapse of the many peace conferences on the Great Lakes region. One of the major causes of the Burundi crisis was the return to power of Pierre Buyoya. His return eroded any confidence initiatives which the *Hutu* and moderate *Tutsi* were trying to build among the Burundi

people. His comeback was equally interpreted as a strategic attempt by the *Tutsi* permanently to sideline the *Hutu* in the political process of the country. The chapter stressed that another perennial problem which has led to the prolonged conflict was the question of the regroupment campaign and the refugee question. These issues remained unresolved after the coup. Both became a great source of conflict. The pattern surrounding those killed during the prolonged conflict was also highlighted, and the course of the conflict from 1993 to 2000 outlined.

The ambiguity that followed the 21 October 1993 coup clouded the whole Burundi political atmosphere. It also led to apportioning blame to the perpetrators. Thus, as one proverb in Africa says: 'when the elephant fights, it's the grass that suffers'. Equally, the civilian population in Burundi, both *Hutu* and *Tutsi*, have been the worst victims of this prolonged conflict.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ATTEMPTS AT RESOLUTION

Research has shown that most conflicts go through three distinct phases: a period of latent tension, actual confrontation and conflict resolution. In a state of latent tension, people exhibit a strong predisposition towards disagreement, and this often flares up into actual confrontation. Conflict resolution entails attempting to bring the warring factions to a common understanding. The powers that be in the Burundi conflict have generally ignored the symptoms of latent tension, and have only been stirred from their state of inaction when the actual genocidal or confrontational phase has begun. Most conflicts in Africa may be traced back to ineffective colonial administrators who underrated or despised potential conflict situations, concentrating instead on what would yield maximum profits for the metropole. Not all African conflict situations should, however, be attributed to colonialism. Africans themselves should be more prepared to accept culpability for conflictual situations.<sup>1</sup>

In 1999, Marina Ottaway wrote:

...in Africa, a combination of socioeconomic change, missionary language policies, anthropological studies and deliberate attempts by the colonial authorities to establish a workable administrative framework caused Africans to move beyond narrower identification with a lineage or a clan and to see themselves as members of large and newly invented tribes.<sup>2</sup>

For most Africans, political independence did not bring the prosperity that so many had expected. During the last half of the twentieth century, the quality of life for most people on the continent, especially in Burundi, deteriorated dramatically. The period also witnessed a series of crises that caused untold human suffering and the destruction of the social and economic infrastructure, as well as the threat of state collapse. Researchers have tended to emphasise the role of outside forces over domestic conditions as the cause of conflicts in Africa. Thus, most post-colonial states have tended to blame their

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<sup>1</sup> A. Taisier and R.O. Mathews (eds), *Civil Wars in Africa: Roots and Resolution*, McGill Queen University Press, Toronto, 1999, p. 289

<sup>2</sup> M. Ottaway, *State, Conflict and Democracy in Africa*, Lynne Rienner Publications, London, 1999, p. 301

own failures on imperialist conspiracies, plot by subversive elements or the activities of a rogue state.<sup>3</sup>

The Burundi crisis of 1993 should be understood within a wider context of regional conflict. Rwandan refugee camps in Eastern Zaire were in turmoil, and the government of Juvenal Habyarimana of Kigali was struggling to establish itself because of a lack of financial support from the international community and an attack from RPF forces from Uganda. Zaire, on the other hand, was increasingly unstable, with President Mobutu isolated in Gbadolite. Kinshasa was left to the infighting of a corrupt political elite. Already sceptical of the international community's capacity to understand their regional problem, Presidents Museveni of Uganda and Mobutu of Zaire called on former US President Jimmy Carter for assistance. Before Carter could step in, most regional and global organisations strongly condemned the October 1993 coup. Many also called for the return to constitutional legality. In many OAU and UN resolutions, the coup was forcefully denounced and, owing to its subsequent collapse, these world bodies congregated in New York in order to try to find a lasting solution to the impasse.<sup>4</sup>

In line with its commitment to guaranteeing world peace and security as stated in its charter, the United Nations quickly despatched Ambassador Ahmadou Ould Abdallah to Burundi as the Secretary General's special representative. Ahmadou's role was to establish a framework for the return to Burundi of constitutional legality, and also to address the numerous intricacies that surrounded the conflict. He was also charged to bring the various Burundian belligerents to the negotiating table and to gauge to what degree the United Nations could help.<sup>5</sup>

To better manage a conflict and offer solutions, an in-depth analysis of the causes were suggested, entailing a thorough study of the conflict by UN representatives. The Security Council of the UN proposed to send a force of about 1 000 men to be stationed in Burundi's neighbouring state, ready to intervene in case of genocide. This proposal was strongly opposed by all the extremist forces in

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<sup>3</sup> P. Nyot Kok, 'The Ties That Will Not Bind: Conflict and Racial cleavages in Sudan', in P.A.'Nyongo (ed), *Arms and Daggers in the Heart of Africa*, African Academy of Sciences, Nairobi, 1993, p. 253.

<sup>4</sup> A. Ould-Abdallah, *Burundi on the Brink: 1993-1995*, United States Institute of Peace, Washington DC, 2000, p. 102

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94

Burundi, who argued that its implementation would undermine the territorial integrity of the country. To the *Tutsi*, military intervention translated into: ‘we will lose the control over the armed forces that we now enjoy and thus, because we are a minority, we will be wiped out’. For the *Hutu* it meant: ‘we the majority will finally rule this country at will.’ As such, insecurity intensified in Burundi, and these divergent positions stalled any UN effort to restore peace in Burundi. While the militias were arguing on the viability and necessity of such a force, scores of innocent civilians were being killed almost on a daily basis.<sup>6</sup>

Following enormous efforts by Jimmy Carter and many prominent governmental and non-governmental organisations, former Tanzanian President, Julius Nyerere, was formally requested by the United Nations’ Secretary General to act as peace facilitator in the Burundi conflict. Nyerere’s appointment in March 1996 put an end to a period of uncertainty and confusion in an attempt by the regional initiative for Burundi to arrive at consensus in relation to the conflict. Although Nyerere did not receive support from all the parties in the Burundi conflict, his initiative received significant moral and financial support from Western governments and organisations. In the words of the Belgian ambassador to the UN, Marc Faguy:

Our government is very pleased with the designation of president Nyerere as the Burundi peace facilitator. We would support his efforts morally and financially. I should mention that my government has offered an advance contribution of one million dollars towards this very noble effort.<sup>7</sup>

The Burundian conflict would go down in history as one with the highest number of negotiators and facilitators. With the collapse of the regimes of Ndadaye, Ntaryamira and Ntibantungana, the Great Lakes region witnessed an unprecedented number of negotiators. Unfortunately, the plethora of special representatives and envoys that came to the Great Lakes after the outbreak of the Burundian crisis helped to fuel the ethnicism that existed rather than to ameliorate the volatile political climate. This section of my thesis will look at the role played by the UN, Jimmy Carter, the European Union and, more important, Julius Nyerere and Nelson Mandela in facilitating the peace settlement in Burundi.

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<sup>6</sup> E. Doxtader and Y. Mosomothane, ‘Burundi: Permanent deadlock or Tentative Peace’, in E. Doxtader and C. Villa-Vicencio, (eds), *Through Fire with Water: The roots of division and potential for Reconciliation in Africa*, Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, Cape Town, 2003, p. 67

<sup>7</sup> Ould-Abdallah, *Burundi on the Brink: 1993-1995*, p. 100

### 5.1 The role of peace facilitators: the United Nations

The primary objective of the United Nations is the prevention of conflicts in as many regions around the world as possible. This multilateral approach gained momentum in the final quarter of the last century following the evolution of the notion of conflict. While multilateral structures are real forums for preventive diplomacy, they have always considered prevention as a duty. The United Nations has dedicated chapter VI of the UN charter to this issue, which clearly states the notion of duty in article 33:

...the parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, shall first of all seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice<sup>8</sup>

In looking at the role played by the UN as an instrument of peace, attention should be paid to the prevailing political conditions plaguing the UN in New York at that time. First, there was growing suspicion of the Americans and some Western powers who openly backed some of the antagonists in the Burundi conflict. Second, the UN Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, was preparing for his reelection and, because the Americans had indicated quite openly that they would not support his bid for a second term as Secretary-General, Boutros-Ghali was out to frustrate any American attempts at mediating in the Burundi conflict, believing that an African mediation team would be more suitable, and would also boost support for his re-election amongst African states.<sup>9</sup>

It should also be noted that the UN strongly condemned the 1993 coup, and called for the return of constitutional legality in Burundi and the immediate restoration of peace. After Major Pierre Buyoya seized power from a paralysed civilian government in July 1996, the UN swiftly condemned the act and adopted Resolution 1072, supporting the efforts of the regional leaders in imposing economic sanctions on the military junta in Bujumbura. The UN also appointed Ambassador Ahmadou Ould-Abdallah as

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<sup>8</sup> A.R. Groom. 'Paradigms in Conflict' in J. Burton and F. Dukes, (eds), *Conflict reading in Management and Resolution*, Macmillan, London, 1990, p. 85

<sup>9</sup> Ould-Abdallah, *Burundi on the Brink: 1993-1995*, p. 98



its special envoy to Bujumbura. The UN, through its Secretary General, also pressed for the appointment of Julius Nyerere as a facilitator in the conflict.<sup>10</sup>

It would be inaccurate to claim that the UN has been direct and consistent in its policy vis-à-vis Burundi. While some UN officials have condemned certain policies of the Buyoya regime such as regroupment, others have praised Buyoya for returning calm to Burundi. The strongest critique of the Buyoya regime from within the UN has come from the UN Special Rapporteur for human rights, Paulo Sergio Pinheiro. He released a report in February 1997 condemning the intensification of fighting by the current regime, as well as the constant streak of killing, massacres, targeted assassination, arbitrary arrests, disappearances, looting and banditry by both sides in the Burundi conflict. Even though many UN agencies have strongly opposed or criticized the Buyoya regime for its human rights record, they have nonetheless played a role in encouraging negotiations between the warring parties in the conflict in Burundi. In this light, the UN Special Envoy to the Great Lakes, Mohamed Sahnoun, brokered many ceasefire negotiations with both the Buyoya regime and the CNDD in ending factional fighting in Burundi.<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, the United Nations Education and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO), an arm of the United Nations, under the leadership of Federico Mayo, sponsored peace negotiations in Paris between the Buyoya regime, CNDD, FRODEBU, UPRONA and Parena. These negotiations have gone a long way towards instilling confidence and trust amongst the factions in the Burundi conflict. In a nutshell, therefore, UN efforts in bringing about peace to the region cannot be overemphasised.<sup>12</sup>

The United States and the European Union have adopted a more cautious and suspicious stance vis-à-vis the Great Lakes region. Following the murder of Ndadaye and Ntaryramina and Buyoya's subsequent take over in 1996, the United States Government failed to issue a strong condemnation of

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 89

<sup>11</sup> Proxy Targets: Civilians in the war in Burundi, A *Human Rights Watch Country Report*, Washington DC, 1998, p. 38

<sup>12</sup> Amnesty International, *Year 2000 Annual Report for Burundi*, London, 2000, p. 23

Buyoya's unconstitutional seizure of power. Upon taking control, he did indeed claim to be bringing order to the country, but this was hardly difficult, as the capital had been completely purged of any Hutu remnants. Although the international community responded mildly to Buyoya's take-over, their response to specific policies of the Buyoya regime has been quite vocal. The United States has taken a leading role in organising opposition to the policy of regroupment. In practical terms, this has translated into a refusal to support the development of any sort of infrastructure within the camps which might encourage their permanent utilisation.<sup>13</sup>

The American ambassador and the European Union representative in Burundi did not cite any reasons for the non-challenging attitude of their respective countries towards the crisis in Burundi. In 1997, the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Administrator, Brian Atwood, and the European Union Commissioner, Emma Bonino, issued a joint declaration, which stated that:

...the USAID and the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) deplored the policy of regroupment being enforced in Burundi and the continued disruption of rural life in Burundi<sup>14</sup>.

The regroupment policy confined rural communities, especially *Hutu*, within compounds and camps where their activities could be monitored on a daily basis, thereby ensuring that they did not co-operate with the enemy. The USAID and ECHO statement further reiterated that the two agencies 'would not support any effort to regularise life in the regroupment areas'.<sup>15</sup>

The stance of the above agencies vis-à-vis the Burundi policy of regroupment did not hamper attempts to secure a peaceful resolution of the conflict by the United Nations. Following an upsurge of violence and the withdrawal of the Buyoya regime from the United Nations-sponsored peace talks, Howard Wolpe, the Clinton special envoy in the Great Lakes area, visited Burundi to add United States' support to the peace negotiations, and to encourage Buyoya actively to participate in the peace negotiations.

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<sup>13</sup> Proxy Targets: Civilians in the war in Burundi, p. 38

<sup>14</sup> Doxtader and Mosomothane, 'Burundi: Permanent deadlock or Tentative Peace', in E. Doxtader and C. Villa-Vicencio, (eds), *Through Fire with Water*, p. 78

<sup>15</sup> Ould-Abdallah, *Burundi on the Brink: 1993-1995*, p. 98

The European Union's and the United States's role in the peace process was unequivocally supported by the United Nations, which provided the various missions with all the necessary logistical and technical support.<sup>16</sup>

## 5.2 The Organisation of African Unity

The Charter of the Organisation of Africa Unity clearly specifies as its mandate the prevention and management of conflict on the African continent. The history of this organisation has, however, pointed to a different outcome, as it has failed to prevent, let alone manage, the bloodier conflicts on the continent. The Liberian and Nigerian civil wars, the Ethiopian and Eritrea conflict, the independence of Western Sahara and, more important, the 1994 Rwandan genocide attests to this fact. The OAU has on many occasions blamed donor organisations for not funding its activities, thereby undermining its potential for conflict resolution and management.<sup>17</sup> William Zartman has argued that many other paradigms have prevented the OAU from discharging its duties. Writing in 1984, he says:

Thus, in decolonisation power struggles and political consolidation after independence the OAU is called on to take sides by recognising rival national liberation movements pursuing national consolidation enlist the organisation behind their efforts, as in Biafra and left over national liberation movements do the same as in Western Sahara and Chad.<sup>18</sup>

As a continental organisation, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) could in no way abandon any such national liberation movements, even though many of these were toted by the West as communist. In 1992, the OAU created within its Secretariat the division of Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. The establishment of the said mechanism within the OAU had been motivated by the knowledge that, amidst civil strife and famine, there was no way that Africa could improve its socio-economic performance in the years following the end of the Cold War. In article 10 of the declaration,

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<sup>16</sup> Amnesty International, *Year 2000 Annual Report for Burundi*, p 23

<sup>17</sup> Taisier, A. and Mathews R.O,( Eds) *Civil Wars in Africa: Roots and Resolution*, McGill Queen University Press, Toronto, 1999, p. 288

<sup>18</sup> W. Zartman, 'Africa Regional Security and the OAU's role in the next Decades', in N.O. Obaseki (ed), *The International Peace Academy Report*, no. 19, New York 1984, p. 22

the heads of state and government succinctly stated the following:

We are fully aware that in order to facilitate this process of socio-economic transformation and integration, it is necessary to promote the popular participation of our peoples in the processes of government and development. A political environment, which guarantees human rights and the observance of the rule of law, would assure high standards of probity and accountability, particularly on the part of those who hold public office.<sup>19</sup>

This instrument of conflict prevention and management failed to perform its most important function, namely those of conflict prevention and management. The Rwandan genocide of 1994 and the Burundi conflict of 1993 clearly attests to this fact.<sup>20</sup>

However, the OAU, without sufficient funds, assembled all the available means at her disposal, both logistical and human, to heed the Burundian government's call for international assistance. Immediately after the 1993 coup, the OAU announced a plan to send a 1000-strong military mission called the International Mission for the Protection and Restoration of Confidence in Burundi (MIPROBU). This initiative by the OAU was useless, as the Burundian army strongly opposed any foreign interference in Burundi's internal matters. Following numerous petitions by the international community, the government of Burundi gave in. The name of the mission was changed to the International Observer Mission in Burundi (MIOB), and its numbers drastically reduced to a group of about 30 officers. After several months of negotiations, the mission succeeded in signing an agreement with the Burundian Minister of Defence about the terms of reference of the mission's assignment, one of which was to maintain strict neutrality.<sup>21</sup>

Despite setbacks, the OAU still maintained its special envoy to Bujumbura, and special assistance was also accorded to the Burundian government in the form of judicial and monetary reforms. In essence, the OAU though heavily paralysed by its dismal financial status, struggled enormously with all the means

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<sup>19</sup> C.J. Bakwesegha, *Conflict Resolution in Africa, A New Role for the OAU*, Manchester Free Press, London, 1995, p. 85

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 83

<sup>21</sup> Z. Cervenka and L. Collin, 'Can National Dialogue Break the power of Terror in Burundi', in *Journal of Current African Issues*, no.17, NAI, 1994, p. 39

at her disposal to avert a genocidal confrontation in Burundi. It also continued to support the initiatives of both Nyerere, and later Mandela, in bringing about peace to Burundi. Furthermore, it should be noted that the OAU contributed financially, materially and logistically to the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation effort.

### 5.3 Carter's initiative

Another perennial institution that played a great role in containing and managing the conflict in Burundi since 1993 was the Carter Centre in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. Carter was a well-respected figure in Africa for a number of reasons. First, he was an early champion of human rights and a supporter of both the independence of Rhodesia and the introduction of a one-man-one vote system of democracy in South Africa. He was also the first US president officially to visit sub-Saharan Africa in 1978. He championed the eradication of guinea worm in West Africa, and has called for peace in the Sudan, Liberia and the Great Lakes. Recently, his Habitat 2000 projects aimed at providing good housing for all in Africa.<sup>22</sup> Affirming their choice of President Carter, Museveni said:

President Carter's love for the continent is well documented. It should be recalled that he was the first sitting US president to visit sub-Saharan Africa, and he has been engaged in bringing about peace in Sierra Leone and Liberia. I think he will do the same in the Great Lakes.<sup>23</sup>

In accepting the role of peace mediator, Carter convened a meeting in New York in 1995 aimed at looking at ways and means of finding lasting solutions in the Great Lakes region, and Burundi in particular. All the leaders of the Great Lakes, including Mobutu of Zaire and Museveni of Uganda, attended the meeting. Carter was invited as mediator of the conflict and to rally international support for a lasting solution to the region's crisis. Carter convened another meeting in Cairo, Egypt in November 1995. The Presidents of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zaire attended. On the insistence of the Secretary General of the UN, Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa and Jimmy Carter co-chaired the meeting. Considering the significant breakthrough that Carter achieved by assembling all the rebel movements in Burundi during that gathering, he was entrusted by these regional

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<sup>22</sup> G. Evans, 'Get Moving now to Prevent Genocide in Burundi', Crisisweb:the international Crisi Group's on-line system ([www.crisisweb.org/projects/showreport](http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/showreport), access date 21 September 2002)

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

leaders to follow up on the progress made.<sup>24</sup>

Not all international peace institutions seemed to welcome Carter's success as mediator in the Burundian conflict. With the infighting in the United Nations owing to Boutros Boutros-Ghali's bid for re-election as Secretary General and the United States's disapproval of this, the world body poured cold water on Carter's initiatives. Carter could not do much if he did not receive the United Nations' support. Thus, owing to the standoff between the United States and the Secretary General, Carter, as an American, did not receive the backing of the UN. Various appeals were launched at the United Nations, first by Carter to Boutros-Ghali, and later by Ambassador Madeleine Albright, the then US permanent representative to the UN, to allow Carter a free hand in the Great Lakes. Boutros-Ghali refused UN support to the Carter initiative for peace in the Great Lakes. All Carter's efforts eventually crumbled when Julius Nyerere was appointed by the UN to act as peace facilitator in the conflict.<sup>25</sup>

It is of the utmost importance to gain some insight into why the UN vehemently opposed Carter's initiatives in the Great Lakes. Throughout my research, I did not come across instances where there had been any conflict between the UN and the Carter Centre. However, I discovered that the Head of the Department of Political Affairs at the United Nations, Murrack Goulding, had been unhappy with the definition of a mediator. He had wished to make a distinction between a mediator and a facilitator. A mediator, according to Murrack, was somebody who either had an interest in the conflict, or who was partisan in relation to one side in the conflict. The UN saw Carter, rightly or wrongly, as favouring one of the parties in Burundi and therefore decided that he could not effectively and impartially broker a lasting peace in Burundi.<sup>26</sup> In order to galvanise African support for his reelecting, Boutros Boutros-Ghali was, in fact, playing the race card by supporting an African for the role of peace facilitator in the Great lakes.

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<sup>24</sup> Ould-Abdallah, *Burundi on the Brink: 1993-1995*, p. 98

<sup>25</sup> R. Lemarchand *Ethnicity as Myth: The View from the Central Africa*, Occasional Paper presented at the Centre of African Studies, University of Copenhagen, May 1999, p.9

<sup>26</sup> Ould-Abdallah, *Burundi on the Brink: 1993-1995*, p. 100

Conversely, the UN was looking for a facilitator who would be a neutral individual with integrity and honour. First, from Boutros-Ghali's point of view, the choice of Nyerere by the regional consultative group for the Great Lakes, and the backing Nyerere received from the United Nations, gave Boutros-Ghali African support for his reelecting campaign. Second, this would help to undermine Carter's mission. In a nutshell, therefore, Carter's peace mission to Burundi was dealt a significant blow by the uncooperative nature of the UN Secretary General and the geopolitical climate that prevailed in the world at the time. Carter's exit from the negotiation table meant that Burundians would have to wait for his successor.

#### 5.4 The Nyerere foundation

We cannot talk of peace in Burundi without referring to the Nyerere Foundation and, more particularly, to its President, "Mwalimu" Julius Nyerere, the former President of Tanzania. Nyerere was one of the illustrious sons of Africa, whose stature and demeanour stood out. Well-known by the region's political leaders, many of whom he had helped when they were political refugees or students in Dar Es Salaam when he was President of Tanzania, he was highly respected.<sup>27</sup>

Nyerere commanded considerable power in the Great Lakes and Africa. It was in light of this that a regional summit on Burundi was convened by the United Nations in March 1996 in Tunis, during which the UN Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali formally requested Nyerere to become a facilitator in the Burundian conflict. The heads of state of the sub-region also readily accepted the Secretary General's choice. The appointment was further backed by the OAU. Nyerere's appointment held out the promise of real progress in the Burundian Peace process, and he received significant financial support from Western governments. Such was the enthusiasm that followed Nyerere's appointment, that the Belgian government alone gave up-front support of two-million US dollars to his mission.<sup>28</sup>

Nyerere's initiative was primarily geared at bringing the various factions in the Burundian conflict to the

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<sup>27</sup> Bakwesegha, *Conflict Resolution in Africa, A New Role for the OAU*, p. 83

<sup>28</sup> Ould-Abdallah, *Burundi on the Brink: 1993-1995*, p. 98

negotiating table, and at drawing up a time line for the implementation of the resolutions that were to be adopted. The facilitator started his peace initiatives at his hometown in Mwanza in northern Tanzania. At this stage, the process was known as the “Mwanza Peace Process”, and later as the “Arusha Peace Process,” when it eventually moved to Arusha.<sup>29</sup>

Nyerere’s mission was to expedite rapid peace negotiations. He was also to face a recalcitrant Buyoya regime that had entrenched itself by gradually purging all sectors of Burundian life of ethnic Hutu. All the *Hutus* were by now herded into regroupment camps and cordoned off from the day-to-day reality of Burundi society. Nyerere’s efforts were stalled by the intransigence and complicated nature of the ethnic conflict in Burundi. On 31 July 1996, he convened a major conference in Arusha, the conference coinciding with Buyoya’s second term in power. The conference was also aimed at assessing the situation in the Great Lakes and deciding how to arrive at a consensus on the Burundi ethnic crisis. The communiqué that was issued after the gathering stressed the need to return to constitutional legality in Burundi and to impose economic sanctions in order to bring the Buyoya regime to its knees. To a great extent, the sanctions affected many domains of Burundi society and, following the deterioration of the economic situation and the widespread outbreak of disease as a result of the sanctions, Nyerere convened another meeting in Arusha in April 1997. At this meeting, regional leaders agreed to ease sanctions, allowing for the importation of essential humanitarian aid, medicine and agricultural items from the European Union.<sup>30</sup>

Arusha II was, however, followed by another conference in September. This conference set up a Secretariat to monitor the flow of arms and any other war material which could perpetuate the crisis in Burundi. Nyerere convened many other conferences on Burundi, but could not arrive at a consensus, following major differences relating to the composition of the army, the government of Buyoya and the rebels, notably the FNL and the CNDD. These differences were based on a number of issues, including the position of the armed forces and police, the judicial system, the constitution, and who would head

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 105

<sup>30</sup> Amnesty International, *Year 2000 Annual Report for Burundi*, London, 2000, p. 23



the transitional government in the new dispensation.<sup>31</sup>

Nyerere also made it clear to the rebels that only those who had renounced violence would be invited to attend the meeting, a decision which most of the rebel leaders refused to abide by. Despite all the differences, a fifth round of talks began in May 1999, with Nyerere expressing disappointment on the progress made thus far. The problem was to reconcile the views of different political factions, stretching from *Hutu* extremists connected to violent guerrilla groups, to *Tutsi* parties complaining that the government was not tough enough in dealing with the terrorists. Thus, the Nyerere initiative found itself sandwiched between moderate *Hutu* and *Tutsi* parties trying to reconcile extreme nationalism from both sides. Negotiations at Arusha reached an advanced stage in late 1999, but then the mediator's health gradually deteriorated. The peace process was dealt a heavy blow when the charismatic Nyerere died in London in October 1999. Following his death, peace talks scheduled for October 1999 were postponed while a search went on for a suitable successor.<sup>32</sup>

Julius Nyerere's reign as peace facilitator for Burundi was severely compromised following allegations that he had a stake in the conflict in Burundi. Buyoya, quoting instances when the country had been attacked from Tanzania, the facilitator's home country, and when the mediator had done nothing to bring the militia to the negotiating table. This attitude greatly hindered Nyerere's work. This, in effect, led to Buyoya's non-adherence to major conclusions arrived at during the numerous Arusha peace meetings. During such a meeting, Buyoya retorted:

....we cannot continue to talk peace when we are being attacked every day from Tanzania. Our facilitator is not blaming the enemies of Burundi: neither is he calling on them to participate in these talks. The government of Burundi would only do one thing: defend itself from these terrorists.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ould-Abdallah, *Burundi on the Brink: 1993-1995*, p 100

<sup>32</sup> Amnesty International, *Year 2000 Annual Report for Burundi*, p. 23

<sup>33</sup> President Buyoya was speaking to the SABC Africa after another round of discussion at Arusha in May 1998. It should be recalled that Buyoya's tone and temperament vis-a vis the peace-facilitator quickly adopted a more reconciliatory tone after Mandela was appointed as facilitator. Buyoya is believed to have a special relationship with Mandela. See also J. van Eck, 'Mandela mediation breathes new life into Burundian Peace Process', Burundi Report, <http://ccrweb.ccr.uct.ac.za>, access date 13

It should be recalled that Nyerere was from Tanzania, and that the Government in Bujumbura was not very happy about Nyerere's inability to stop the rebels from Tanzania attacking positions in Burundi. The non-cooperation with the facilitator on the part of the various factions in the Burundi conflict brought the Arusha peace process to a standstill and, following the ill-health and eventual death of Nyerere, most of the work was still to be done. Nyerere had earlier warned that only those rebels who renounced violence would be welcome in Arusha and, since many of them could not stop the fighting, most deliberately stayed away. Nyerere's work was further hampered by the fact that Zaire, Rwanda and Uganda were strong supporters of the *Tutsi*, and were bent on blocking any initiatives that could compromise the position of the *Tutsi* in Burundi. In conclusion, therefore, Nyerere's work as peace facilitator for Burundi was greatly impeded when he did not receive co-operation and support from the various warring factions, a privilege which his successor, Nelson Mandela, greatly enjoyed.<sup>34</sup>

### 5.5 The Mandela initiative

Following the death of Julius Nyerere in October 1999, renewed fighting prompted the United Nations to designate a new facilitator. The various stakeholders, regional organisations and the United Nations engaged in lengthy sessions aimed at appointing a facilitator to complete Nyerere's work. It was with a real sense of urgency that, on 1 December 1999, the Eastern and Southern African States designated former South African president, Nelson Mandela, as facilitator for the Burundian peace process in Arusha. Mandela's appointment was greatly welcomed by the majority of the Burundian people, but greeted with reservation in some quarters. Remarking on Mandela's appointment, Buyoya said:

Mandela can help us in this negotiation process. He is a man of international stature, very experienced in resolution of conflicts and, I think, acceptable to the majority of Burundians. We are glad he has been chosen to lead this process.<sup>35</sup>

Also reacting to Mandela's appointment, Jean Minani, leader of the external wing of the opposition

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August 2002

<sup>34</sup> Evans, 'Get Moving to Prevent Genocide in Burundi', [www.crisisweb.org/projects/showreport](http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/showreport), access date 21 September 2002

<sup>35</sup> University of Pennsylvania, Africa Studies Department @ [www.sas.upenn.edu/africa-studies](http://www.sas.upenn.edu/africa-studies), access date 6 November 2003

*Hutu* party, FRODEBU, said he was very happy to hear that Mandela had been chosen as mediator because he was ‘someone of the highest stature’ who had fought all his life against oppression. United Nations Secretary General, Koffi Annan, also welcomed Mandela’s role, expressing the hope that:

Mandela’s prestige and authority would ‘reinvigorate the process’. His appointment is a timely decision in light of the unstable political and security situation prevailing in Burundi. I will extend maximum co-operation to the new facilitator towards the successful and urgent conclusion of the peace negotiations. I should again reiterate that there is no alternative to a negotiated settlement to the Burundi conflict.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, Mandela moved quickly to assert his authority on the peace process by inviting all the extremist parties that Nyerere had earlier ignored during previous rounds of talks at Arusha. At a special meeting with the United Nations Security Council on 19 January 2000, Mandela said:

‘I want all parties to be represented in further negotiations, with no exceptions. I will do my best to arrive at a speedy conclusion provided I keep a tight rein over the negotiation process’.<sup>37</sup>

Throughout the first quarter of 2000, Mandela and his team of negotiators, including South African Deputy President, Jacob Zuma, harnessed all their efforts to try to conclude a peace deal acceptable to all parties in the conflict. The efforts of Mandela culminated in the signing of the Burundi Peace and Reconciliation Accord on 28 August 2000 in Arusha, Tanzania. The agreement was hailed as a milestone in Burundi’s long walk to peace. Judging from the personalities present (Bill Clinton, Yoweri Museveni, Daniel arap Moi, etc.) at the signing ceremony, its importance in bringing peace to the war-torn area can never be overstated.<sup>38</sup>

Even though many welcomed Mandela’s designation as facilitator of the Burundi Peace Process, some regarded him as somebody who would rather continue with the double standards of South African foreign policy objectives in the Great Lakes. South Africa was, and has long been regarded as, one of the perpetrators of the conflict in the Great Lakes region, following its trade in arms either with the

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> A. Higgins, ‘UN discloses month old massacre of refugees in Burundi church,’ [www.lubbockonline.com](http://www.lubbockonline.com) access date 1 September 2002

<sup>38</sup> J. Van Eck, *Burundi Report*, Unit for Policy Studies, University of Pretoria, October 2001., p. 9

government, or with some of the antagonists in the crisis. It is in line with this fact that the *Union Pour La Liberation Nationale* (ULINA), an umbrella grouping of minor *Hutu* rebel factions, affirmed, through its President Jean Ngadoya, that:

.....we strongly opposed Mandela's nomination and we would not participate in the talks of hypocrites. South Africa has joined Rwanda and Uganda in assisting Buyoya militarily, as well as in ammunition [sic] to conduct killing of innocent *Hutus* in the concentration camps where hundreds of Hutus are being slaughtered daily.<sup>39</sup>

Some other *Hutu* representatives at the peace talks, including the *Conseil Nationale pour la defense de la Democratie* (CNDD), admitted that they would have preferred former Botswana President Ketumile Masire as the peace facilitator, because they did not accept that South Africa was neutral vis-à-vis Burundi or the Great Lakes region.<sup>40</sup>

Despite all these negative sentiments, Mandela's brokered peace was seen as the first of its kind in Africa. This was achieved primarily by virtue of the enormous efforts put into the process by facilitators of the Nyerere Foundation, and also by means of Mandela's undeniable charisma and stature as a peacemaker. With him at the forefront, peace was widely expected at the Arusha meetings, and this spilled over into the entire region. The following pages will elaborate on what Mandela actually did to achieve these results.

## 5.6 Mandela in Arusha

Chosen either for its picturesque landscape, or for the fact that it was home to the former Tanzanian president, Arusha has come to symbolise peace in Africa, and the Great Lakes sub-region in particular. Prior to the 1994 Rwandan genocide, the belligerents in the conflict met and concluded a peace deal in Arusha. With Burundi failing to arrive at a political consensus after the October 1993 crisis, Arusha was again chosen as an ideal place to talk peace by the then Burundi peace facilitator, Julius Nyerere.

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<sup>39</sup> R.C. Hennig, 'The Cross and the genocide, the involvement of Christian societies in the Rwandan genocide', [www.afrol.com](http://www.afrol.com) access date 4 November 2003

<sup>40</sup> Evans, 'Get moving now to Prevent Genocide in Burundi', [www.crisisweb.org/projects/showreport](http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/showreport), access date 21 September 2002

Assuming the role of mediator or facilitator in the Burundian peace process after the death of Julius Nyerere, Mandela decided not to shift the seat of the peace talks, but rather to pursue the talks themselves with more vigour.<sup>41</sup>

Mandela's efforts at bringing peace to the Great Lakes were formally approved and given the necessary impetus by the UN Security Council, in resolution No. 1286 of 19 January 2000. The fact that Mandela is, to a large extent, well respected in the region, put him in a better position to bring peace to Burundi. His application of principles, combined with a steely determination to push matters as fast as possible, made more impact in 2000 on the civil war in Burundi than in any of the wearisome years of genocide and negotiations that had preceded it. The core of Mandela's efforts in Burundi and Arusha was the need to heal old wounds. Thus, he drew heavily from the South African experience of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a means of healing political differences.<sup>42</sup>

In Burundi's political life, many schools of thought prevailed: some acknowledged that old arguments were now sterile, and that *Tutsi* and *Hutu* should and could live together amicably. Unfortunately, the proponents of this theory were in the minority, and it would require enormous persuasive powers on the part of the facilitator to bring all the *Hutu* and *Tutsi* extremist groups to agree on a common future for Burundi. Thus, Mandela's uphill task would be to cut through this ethnic divide in order to arrive at a consensus that was acceptable to all.

Almost all the political parties and militia groups in Burundi, including women's organisations, civil society, the church and the local chiefs, attended the meeting Mandela called in February 2002, including those Nyerere had left out as a result of their intransigence and uncompromising demands. During the deliberations, the facilitators cautioned against exclusion, and begged all the protagonists to work conscientiously and diligently for a better Burundi. The meeting was divided into commissions to work out the various areas that had been identified by Nyerere as those that needed to be overhauled.

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<sup>41</sup> Ould-Abdallah, *Burundi on the Brink: 1993-1995*, p. 99

<sup>42</sup> The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Integrated Regional Information Network for Central and Eastern Africa, *Update 1,193 for the Great Lakes*, 6/6/2001, p. 2

The work of the various committees was later to be presented in the form of protocols that would eventually form the whole peace agreement.<sup>43</sup>

The first committee eventually produced protocol one, which elucidated the nature of the Burundian conflict, the problems of genocide, exclusion and their solution. Protocol one also lamented that the Burundi of old was united, strong and indivisible. Article 1.1 of the protocol states:

During the precolonial period, all the ethnic groups inhabiting Burundi owed allegiance to the same monarch, Umwami, believed in the same god, Imana, had the same culture and the same Kirundi, and lived together in the same territory. Notwithstanding the migratory movements that accompanied the settlement of the various groups in Burundi, everyone recognised themselves as Burundians.<sup>44</sup>

Committee two came up with protocol two, which emphasised the need for democracy and good governance. It also stipulated the objectives and arrangements for the transitional government. Committee three drew up protocol three, which stressed the need for peace and security for all. Committee four came up with protocol four, which dealt with guarantees on implementation of the agreement. To have a clearer view of the text that was worked upon by the facilitators, a look at the various protocols is necessary.<sup>45</sup>

Protocol one of the accord also examined at length the causes of the conflict stretching from pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial epochs. Protocol two stressed the nature of the conflict which, it claimed, was ‘political with extremely important ethnic dimensions’. It also impacted on principles and measures relating to genocide, war crimes and other crimes against humanity. Protocol three of the Arusha Accord worked on the main principles of the constitution in post- transitional Burundian society, dwelling on the fundamental values of human rights, the charter of the fundamental rights of man, political parties, elections, the legislature, the executive, local government, the judiciary, the administration,

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<sup>43</sup> Van Eck, *Burundi Report*, p. 8

<sup>44</sup> Protocol 1 Article 1.1 of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Accord for Burundi attached as Appendix 1. Also refer to Protocol 2 Article 6 of the same accord.

<sup>45</sup> Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Accord for Burundi, Appendix 1

defence and security forces. Article 3.1 of this protocol states:

The rights and duties proclaimed and guaranteed inter alia by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Human Rights, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child shall form an integral part of the constitution of the Republic of Burundi. These fundamental rights shall not be limited or derogated from, except in justifiable circumstances acceptable in international law and set forth in the constitution.<sup>46</sup>

Chapter two of protocol three also dwelt on the objectives of the government of Burundi, the duration of the transition, the role of political parties during the transition and transitional institutions.

Protocol three was also focused on peace and security for all. The principles of peace and security were outlined with particular reference to the causes of the violence and insecurity in Burundi. Protocol three also pinpointed some of the people and organisations responsible for the prevailing conditions of insecurity and violence. This protocol also expanded upon the nature of the insecurity and violence, as well as its manifestation, consequences, victims and the need to protect people's inalienable rights. Chapter two of protocol three elaborated on the principles relating to the defence and security forces – principles of organisation, mission, structure, composition, size, balance within the defence force, recruitment, training, organisational laws, regulatory texts and a disciplinary system. It also emphasised the names of the defence forces and their demobilisation. Chapter three of protocol three talked of a permanent ceasefire and a cessation of all hostilities, a principle that is still to be implemented.

Protocol four addressed the need for reconstruction and development. It entailed the rehabilitation and resettlement of refugees and *sinistres* (destroyed properties). Chapter two of protocol four reiterated the need for physical and political reconstruction, while chapter three outlined economic and social development. Protocol five addressed the need for guarantees on the implementation of the agreement. This committee was to oversee the implementation of the various protocols outlined above. Due to the voluminous nature of the agreement, only protocol one will be attached to this thesis as Appendix 1.

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<sup>46</sup> Protocol 1 Article 3.1 of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Accord for Burundi attached as Appendix 1

With the final conclusion of the work of the various committees, the task now was for the facilitator to convince all the antagonists to put their signatures to the document. After intense consultation and debate, the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Accord for Burundi was signed on 28 August 2000 in Arusha. Thus, Mandela's work as facilitator was partially fulfilled, pending adherence to the agreement by the other parties who were not in Arusha, and the putting in place of the final transitional arrangements

### **5.7 The Arusha Accord**

The Nyerere Foundation had laid a solid base for an eventual peace deal in the Great Lakes, and when Mandela stepped into Nyerere's shoes after his death in November 1999, the scene was set for all the protagonists in the Burundi peace process to arrive at a political consensus. Mandela's arrival also signalled the coming on board of many parties left out of the process by Nyerere. The inclusive nature of Mandela's plan also bears witness to the interest and support of the peace process by the international community and non-governmental organisations. The first meeting that was convened by Mandela in February 2000 had almost all the belligerents in attendance. The meeting was divided into committees headed by eminent persons. The work of the various committees was eventually to form the entire peace accord.<sup>47</sup>

After intense consultation and debate, the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Accord for Burundi was signed on 28 August 2000 in Arusha, Tanzania. Signatories to the peace accord were:

1. For the government of Burundi: Mr. Ambroise Niyonsaba, minister for the peace process.
2. For the national assembly: Honorable Leonce Ngendakumana, speaker of the national assembly
3. For ABASA: Ambassador Terence Nsanze, Chairman.
4. For ANADDE: Professor Patrice Nsababaganwa, Chairman.
5. For AV-INTWARI: Professor Andre Nkundikije, Chairman.
6. For CNDD: Mr. Loenard Nyangoma, Chairman.
7. For FRODEBU: Dr. Jean Minani, Chairman.

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<sup>47</sup> Burundi Rebellion and the Cease-fire Negotiations, *ICG African Briefing* paper, 16 August 2002. p. 6



8. For FROLINA: Mr. Joseph Karumba, Chairman.
9. For INKINZO: Dr. Alphonse Rugambarara, Chairman.
10. For PALIPEHUTU: Dr. Etienne Karatasi, Chairman.
11. For HE: Jean Baptiste Bagaza, Chairman.
12. For PIT: Professor Nicephore Ndimurukundo, Chairman.
13. For P1: Mr. Gaetan Nikobamye, Chairman.
14. For PP: Mr. Shadrack Niyonkuru, Chairman.
15. For PRP: Mr. Mathias Hitimana, Chairman.
16. For PSD: Mr. Godefroy Hakizimana, Chairman.
17. For RADDES: Mr. Joseph Nzeyimana, Chairman.
18. For RPB: Mr. Balthazar Bigirimana, Chairman.
19. For OPRONA: Mr. L. Bararunyeretse, Chairman.

Co-signatories to the peace and reconciliation accord included:

1. H.E. Mr. Nelson R. Mandela, Facilitator.
2. H.E. Yoweri K. Musuveni, President of the Republic of Uganda.
3. H.E. Daniel T. arap Moi, President of the Republic of Kenya.
4. H.E. Benjamin W. Mkapa, President of the Republic of Tanzania.
5. H.E. Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations.
6. H.E. Salim Ahmed Salim, Secretary General of the Organisation of African Unity.
7. Hon. Charles Josselin, Minister of Co-operation of the French Republic, representing the European Union.
8. Mr. Joseph Waryoba Butiku, Executive Director of the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation.<sup>48</sup>

All seventeen parties, as well as the various facilitators and guarantors of the accord, effectively vowed to put an end to the bloodshed and suffering that had cost almost eight million lives in the past twenty years in sub-Saharan Africa. To emphasise the importance that the world attached to this document, the signing ceremony was watched by Bill Clinton, the then President of the United States of America.

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<sup>48</sup> See the Preface of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Accord for Burundi attached as Appendix 1.

So ended another chapter in the ethnic conflict in Burundi. The question many would ask is: will the powers that be maintain and guarantee the peace agreement?

### **5.8 Significance of the peace agreement**

The Arusha Accord was arrived at mainly as a result of the intense negotiations of the sub-regional initiative for Burundi and the astute negotiating skills of the peace facilitator, Nelson Mandela. The biggest advantage of a sub-regional approach to conflict management in Africa is that neighbours are more familiar with each other's problems than outsiders. Neighbours usually have a common social identity, a common history and similar experiences. The disadvantage, however, is that close proximity sometimes generates tension, and reduces the spirit of impartiality between the neighbours, to the extent that they sometimes become part of the problem, rather than part of the solution.<sup>49</sup>

The Arusha Accord had the advantage of being initiated and carried to finality by sub-regional organisations and Africans who understood the Burundian crisis. Arusha represented the beginning of peace for Burundi and the putting in place of structures that could take the country into a new democratic dispensation. The presence in Arusha of Bill Clinton, who added his voice to the negotiation process, reinforced the international dimension of the negotiations. The fact that the international community donated more than two hundred million US dollars for the effective achievement and implementation of a peace deal in Burundi also cannot be overstated.<sup>50</sup>

The signing of the Arusha Accord also provided for the release of funds which donor agencies donated to Burundi during the Paris and Geneva donor conferences that were chaired by Mandela and the then President of Burundi, Pierre Buyoya. The funds would go a long way to providing for food aid and

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<sup>49</sup> C.J. Bakwesegha, *Conflict Resolution in Africa, A New role for the OAU*, Manchester Free Press, Manchester, 1994, p. 88.

<sup>50</sup> *Human Rights Watch* Press Release, New York, August 22, 2000, p. 5

medicines for many in Burundi. In the sub-region, the accord signified the desire of the regional initiative group to broker an effective peace deal for Burundi. The presence of such personalities as the then OAU Secretary General, Salim Ahmed Salim, United Nations Secretary General, Koffi Annan, Charles Josselin of the European Union, and all the presidents of countries that surround Burundi attests to the international and regional significance of peace in Burundi.<sup>51</sup>

The Arusha Accord provided for firm transitional arrangements, which called for proper representation of the political parties within state structures. This signified the co-option of many Hutu politicians into the political process of the country. The accord required the integration of previously disadvantaged Hutu into the civil service. It also witnessed the establishment of a transitional government headed by the incumbent president, Pierre Buyoya. After a successive eighteen-month period, it was the turn of the Secretary General of FRODEBU, Domitien Ndayizeye, to serve as president of Burundi. Fresh democratic elections would then be conducted after his eighteen-month transitional period had elapsed.<sup>52</sup>

The Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Accord for Burundi can be viewed as a blueprint for discussions and negotiations surrounding future conflict in the region. Considering that the accord encompassed all spheres of Burundi society, any peace deal for Burundi would definitely have the Arusha Accord as its starting point. On 2 November 2003, the CNDD, one of the factions in the Burundian conflict, agreed to adhere to the Arusha process at a ceremony in Pretoria. Thus, Arusha provided for an open and flexible approach in arriving at a consensus on peace in Burundi. In due course, even the only faction still functioning outside the Arusha framework, the FNL, would eventually adhere to the principles of the accord.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> J. Wapakabulo, 'Uganda's Role in the Search for Peace and Stability in the Great Lakes Region', Paper presented at the University of Pretoria under the auspices of the Centre for International Policy Study, September 3, 2002 p. 3

<sup>52</sup> Burundi Rebellion and the cease-fire Negotiations, *International Crisis Group African Briefing Paper*, 16 August 2002. p. 4

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5

Potential for the collapse of the process is still very great, not only because the political transition still has to be consolidated on the ground, but because the armed *Hutu* rebels, the FNL, remain outside the process. Without a ceasefire agreement between the *Hutu* and the army, there is still a risk of mass violence and an escalation of a war that has already cost more than 200,000 lives. The FNL, which is still outside the process, has some legitimate grievances that have not been resolved in the Arusha negotiations, including reform of the army and the security services.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, the efforts of the various role players in managing the peace process in the Burundian conflict have been examined. The reactions of the international community, the United Nations, the Organisation of African Unity and the sub-regional initiative on Burundi have been highlighted. From the foregoing analysis, it can be argued that the international community's response to the conflict was grim. The reason for this was the insignificance of Africa on the world geopolitical map, especially after the Cold War. The chapter also suggests that after the outbreak of the Burundian conflict, the international community and inter-governmental organisations could not adopt a co-ordinated effort to arrive at a speedy peace deal. The plethora of special envoys, mediators and peace facilitators (at times two facilitators from the same organization) attests to this fact.<sup>54</sup>

The chapter intimated that, at the outbreak of the Burundian conflict, the international community was divided, and that information flowing out of Burundi was sketchy and disjointed. By the time a team was assembled for Burundi, the conflict had already degenerated into a nationwide crisis. The chapter also argued that, once it had established that the conflict had spread into the countryside, the United Nations started prioritizing ways and means by which to bring the protagonists to the negotiating table. A speedy resolution of the conflict was hampered by the differences between the United Nations Secretary General, Boutros-Ghali, and the United States Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright. The United

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<sup>54</sup> Ould-Abdallah, *Burundi on the Brink: 1993-1995*, p. 98

States had, at the beginning of the year, made known her intention not to support the candidacy of Boutros-Ghali for a second term as United Nations Secretary General, a stance that was very unpopular in the corridors of the United Nations, as well as with the African bloc in New York. Furthermore, the chapter stressed that, because of these differences, the UN thwarted all attempts by the Americans, under the aegis of the UN, to bring peace to the Great Lakes region.

The differences between the UN and the United States meant that the Organisation of African Unity was to be the torchbearer in the race to bring peace to Burundi. Prior to this conflict, the OAU had successfully intervened in the Nigerian and Liberian civil wars and in the Ethiopian and Eritrea border conflict. The OAU's resolve to further peace on the continent was also boosted by the successful intervention of ECOMOG in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The ECOMOG feat was viewed within the UN as an act of bravery, and offered further proof that Africa could finally be engaged in finding solutions for its common problems. The American initiative was therefore discarded. The chapter showed how Jimmy Carter was caught in the battle between the American State Department and the UN so that he could not effectively carry out his mission in the Great Lakes.

In order to bolster his re-election campaign, Boutros-Ghali supported the African bloc favourite, Julius Nyerere's, bid as chief facilitator in the Burundian conflict. Although this did not change the outcome of his re-election result, the stance by Boutros-Ghali was seen by many African statesmen as a courageous one. They eventually threw their support behind Nyerere. Although Nyerere died before a peace accord was signed, his contribution to the road map that was followed by his successor was immense. The chapter highlighted how the Mandela initiative to bring peace to the region was facilitated more by the respect that he enjoyed amongst the majority of the protagonists, and also by the fact that the bulk of the peace process was already at an advanced stage when Nyerere died.

## CHAPTER SIX

### BEYOND ARUSHA

Extremist Hutu militiamen interrupted the general euphoria that accompanied the signing of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Accord, with the commencement of hostilities just a week after the signing ceremony. The lesson learned from this act was the lack of respect for, or commitment to, either the peace facilitators or the guarantors of the agreement. This, however, reflected the fact that international intervention in domestic conflict should be on the basis of strict neutrality. Any action perceived by the conflicting parties as favouring one side over the other is counterproductive. The eruption of hostilities immediately after the accord bore clear testimony to the lack of neutrality on the part of the peace facilitator. Many parties in Burundi recognized the rapprochement that existed between Nelson Mandela (the facilitator) and Pierre Buyoya. By nature, Mandela is a believer in minority rights. His insistence on the inclusion within the agreement of a clause relating to *Tutsi* minority rights was seen by many *Hutu* parties as partially protecting the *Tutsi* from prosecution for the genocidal crimes they had committed. Thus, Mandela's role as facilitator did not receive the total support of the *Hutu*. Paulo Pinheiro, the United Nations special rapporteur sent to Burundi after the 1993 crisis, confirmed that genocide had taken place, and recommended that the perpetrators be tried under international law.<sup>1</sup>

It was not easy for Mandela to maintain strict neutrality in the conflict, taking into account the sensitivities of Burundians vis-à-vis ethnic conflict, as well as the intricate causes of the unrest. The fact that Mandela believed in minority rights was enough to antagonise the majority *Hutu*, and his neutrality was therefore quickly eroded. Nevertheless, neutrality can be achieved if external parties see their role as that of facilitators (thereby making discussions between both conflicting parties easier or more convenient), rather than mediators (interested parties in the dispute). The role of facilitator is to provide opportunities for the different parties to meet in a shared forum, and to keep open the channels of communication between them without taking sides. As such, the only mediator in this situation should come from within the Burundian community itself, and since there was no communication link between

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<sup>1</sup> A. Kimani, 'Burundi: Can the Arusha Accord bring peace in Burundi?', in *Africanews*, no. 54, September 2000, p. 3

the *Tutsi* and *Hutu*, mediation was rather difficult, but not impossible. Peace that the Burundians dreamt about eventually eluded them, despite the Arusha spirit<sup>2</sup>. What then are some of the loopholes in the accord? What is the political scenario in Burundi after the accord? This chapter will be an attempt to answer these questions.

### 6.1 Failure to achieve a ceasefire

One of the greatest setbacks of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Accord was the fact that it was signed without arriving at a permanent ceasefire. How can peace be achieved when the army and the militiamen are still fighting a guerilla war? Since August 2000, the army and the various factions in the Burundian conflict have been engaged in various forms of hostilities, with all the attendant hardships for the population. Neither the government nor the rebels have been able to gain a decisive military advantage. A ceasefire, the missing element in the Arusha framework, has been elusive, despite ongoing activity by the South African facilitation team to initiate joint and separate talks with the rebels. One commandant of the FNL, Jean Rwaghosa, said on Radio Hirondelle that:

.....the government wants a ceasefire, but yet they shell our positions every day. We want the government forces to lay down their arms and we will follow. The government wants us to lay down our arms, but when we did, they attacked us.<sup>3</sup>

From all indications, there is an element of mistrust on both sides, and it will take serious persuasion in order for a compromise to be achieved.

The Burundian peace initiative undertaken by former Tanzanian president, Julius Nyerere, in March 1996, led to the signing of the 2000 Accord which established a transitional power-sharing arrangement between Pierre Buyoya's UPRONA, and FRODEBU, a mainly *Hutu* grouping. A major shortcoming of the process was that the two armed rebel groups, the CNDD/FDD and the Palipehutu/FNL, were excluded from the talks and subsequently from the peace agreement. Mandela, Nyerere's successor, invited all splinter groups in the Burundian conflict to join the Arusha process. First, the CNDD and

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<sup>2</sup> Amnesty International: *Burundi Annual Report for 2000*, London, 2000 [www.web.amnesty.org](http://www.web.amnesty.org), access date 6 November 2003

<sup>3</sup> Burundi Rebellion and the Cease-fire Negotiations, *ICG African Briefing paper*, 16 August 2002, p. 7

FNL declined. They later stated preconditions that entailed an alternative negotiating process, since Arusha never addressed their major concern, namely Burundi's army reforms, or gave them a seat at the political high table from which they could push their broader security-sector agenda.<sup>4</sup>

Since the Arusha Accord, efforts at bringing all rebel groups to one negotiating table have failed. At a regional summit in Nairobi in November 2000, the rebels were threatened with sanctions if they did not lay down their weapons and undertake peace negotiations. Amid these crises, President Omar Bongo of Gabon offered to mediate between the rebels and the government. Following his initiatives, a meeting was convened in Libreville in January 2001, and another in April 2001, to arrive at a consensus on the composition of the army and the transitional government. The meeting brought together the CNDD/FDD and the Burundian government. Palipehutu/FNL was not represented at the Libreville meetings because of its uncompromising stance on the composition of the Burundian army.<sup>5</sup>

Negotiations to bring the remaining rebels on board continued under the auspices of South African Deputy President, Jacob Zuma. At a meeting convened in Pretoria in October 2002, the CNDD/FDD gave renewed commitment to the Libreville exercise, but again Palipehutu/FNL stayed away. Days after the Pretoria meeting, the CNDD/FDD rejected its leader, Colonel Jean Bosco Ndayikengurukiye, and broke away to form a splinter group with Jean Pierre Nkurunziza as Co-ordinator General, calling itself the National Circle of Patriots (FDD/CNP), citing as its reason, the fact that the external wing of the group had ignored the demands and wishes of the *Hutu* people. They again argued that the leaders of CNDD/FDD were much more concerned with their personal well being than the welfare of the *Hutu* people for whom they claimed to be fighting. The formation of splinter groups of this nature has added to the woes of Burundi, judging from the fact that each splinter group has specific demands which the Arusha process could not comfortably accommodate.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> A. Kuperman, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention. Genocide In Rwanda*, The Brookings Institution Press, Washington DC, 2001, p. 8

<sup>5</sup> 'Burundi Rebellion and the Cease-fire Negotiations', *ICG African Briefing paper*, 16 August 2002 p. 6

<sup>6</sup> G. Stanton, *The Eight Stages of Genocide* @ [www.genocidewatch.org](http://www.genocidewatch.org), access date 6 November 2003



Ongoing negotiations championed by the regional initiative for Burundi, under the auspices of Yoweri Museveni, continued. Benjamin Mkapa, President of Tanzania, in pursuing such efforts, convened another meeting in Dar es Salaam in March 2002, to which all the Arusha signatories and other groups that were not represented at Arusha were invited. Splinter organisations, non-governmental organisations and pressure groups were invited to consider a joint position for the ceasefire negotiations. The multiplicity of negotiation teams and countries has, to a great extent, accounted for most of the setbacks which have dogged the Burundian peace negotiations. Instances abound where countries' peace initiatives supersede those sanctioned by the United Nations, thus clouding the very peace they want to achieve. The Dar es Salaam meeting included the three Arusha signatories from the *Hutu* ethnic family (Palipehutu, FROLINA and CNDD), who held ministerial portfolios in the new transitional government, as well as the four armed *Hutu* groups (CNDD/FDD and the two Palipehutu-FNL factions). Radical *Hutu* extremists rejected the Dar es Salaam call and alleged that:

The Dar es Salaam meeting is an attempt to push Arusha down our throat and we the real representatives of the Hutu people have rejected these manoeuvres by Tanzania. Any negotiations that do not take into account the army reforms in Burundi are bound to fail.<sup>7</sup>

The FDD/CNP restated their commitment to a negotiated settlement for Burundi in June 2002, but reemphasised that they would talk only to the Burundian army, which they said did not represent the real power in the country. The Palipehutu-FNL and CNDD-FDD have refused to commit themselves to the peace process and are unready to discuss any ceasefire proposals. Behind all these intricacies, the facilitation team has attempted, with extreme difficulty, to organise direct negotiations between the transitional government and the rebels. With the help of Tanzania, Gabon and the United Nations experts, the team produced a draft ceasefire document that was circulated to both the government and the rebels. The government of Burundi, however, criticised the document for having prematurely answered some of the rebels' demands, a claim the rebels rejected as an attempt by the incumbent president to stay in power.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Burundi Rebellion and the Cease-fire Negotiations, *ICG African Briefing paper*, 16 August 2002, p. 5

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8

Despite all the ambiguity after the Arusha Accord, South African Deputy President, Jacob Zuma, has tried to bring the warring factions to the negotiating table. At the time of writing this study, the FDD-CNP, CNDD-FDD and Palipehutu-FNL were engaged in advanced negotiations with the Burundi government on a ceasefire agreement. The results of these intense negotiations were presented to members of the Regional Initiative on Burundi during the October 2002 round of talks in Arusha. Summarising the discussion, therefore, the ceasefire agreement is likely to be a milestone on the road to peace in Burundi, and the earlier this is achieved, the better, if peace and security are to reign in the sub-region.<sup>9</sup>

A ceasefire agreement in Burundi will be elusive if the guarantors of the Arusha framework fail to view the Burundi crisis from a regional point of view. If there are still disturbances in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Angola, and the refugees in these areas are not properly repatriated and reintegrated in their respective countries of origin, peace will always be an illusion in Burundi. (See section 5.5 for a detailed analysis). This chapter also suggests that one of the major shortcomings of the facilitation team was to push the participating parties to sign the peace deal without first arriving at terms for a ceasefire. History has taught us that without a signed agreement binding factions together, there will always be violations when these factions are provoked.<sup>10</sup>

## 6.2 Reconstruction and internal insecurity

The situation in Burundi has steadily deteriorated since the signing of the Arusha Peace Accord. The accord did not address the fundamental problems of the Burundian people, namely insecurity and *Tutsi* hegemony. This phenomenon has gradually contributed to the disintegration of the country's economic and social fibre, due to the persistence of civil war. Furthermore, the situation has placed the majority in a defensive position, from which it can only make concessions. Because of this defensive situation, important issues such as reconstruction and security still elude the Burundian people. The facilitation

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<sup>9</sup> H. Girand, 'Efforts at Conflict Prevention and Resolution, The French Experience', in *Monograph*, no. 50, Franco-South African Dialogue on Sustainable Security in Africa, August 2002 p. 3

<sup>10</sup> Stanton, *The Eight Stages of Genocide* @ [www.genocidewatch.org](http://www.genocidewatch.org), access date 6 November 2003

team and the government of Burundi have organised conferences to raise money for post-conflict reconstruction. One such conference was organised in Paris in May 2001, and it yielded close to US\$210 million. However, the people of Burundi are still to benefit from this gesture from the international community. It is true that there cannot be any meaningful reconstruction efforts in the country without a corresponding increase in the level of security. Apart from Bujumbura and some major towns, the rebels control the whole of Burundi.<sup>11</sup>

The international community was also very reluctant to give aid to Burundi for reconstruction, owing to the continuous maintenance of the regroupment camps and the non-repatriation of refugees and displaced persons. The camps remain a major diplomatic hurdle for the Buyoya regime, as the dismantling of the camps was highlighted as a primary precondition before aid and humanitarian assistance would be provided. The continuation of a policy that denies liberty to several hundred thousand people, and also encourages other human rights abuses, undermines government efforts to attract international investment and achieve the lifting of sanctions. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), have singled out the elimination of the camps and the improvement of security in the country as conditions for the awarding of aid.<sup>16</sup> With the policy of regroupment still so much a part of the policy framework of the Burundian government, the international community will still withhold the necessary aid destined for Burundi. The losers here are the civilians, *Hutu* and *Tutsi* alike, who, because of the intransigent attitude of their government, are forced to endure hardship and live in perpetual insecurity.<sup>12</sup>

With regard to security issues, the situation remains alarming, as the FNL rebels are still entrenched in the remote areas of Bujumbura, and also in the west of the country, close to Lake Tanganyika. With pockets of resistance here and there, the transitional government has fought successfully to reassure the top military brass of the army of their intentions to suppress the rebels. It is also obvious that the

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<sup>11</sup> J. Wapakabulo, (Hon. Vice Prime Minister of Uganda), 'Uganda's role in the Search for Peace and Stability in the Great Lakes Region', paper presented at the University of Pretoria, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2002, p. 4

<sup>12</sup> Proxy Targets, Civilian in the war in Burundi, *A human Rights Watch Country Report*, Washington DC, 1998, p. 49

transitional government needed to co-opt army support to preserve political power and to maintain some degree of security. Many *Tutsi* extremist parties have rallied behind Bagaza's PARENA to mobilise the army against the transitional government, claiming that the government is bringing the *Hutus* back to power through the Arusha peace process and the ceasefire negotiations.<sup>13</sup>

Since the signing of the Arusha Accord, the army has continued to suppress rebel uprisings in the south of the country, something which has boosted its morale and weakened the rebels. First, there were successes inside the Congo, mainly in the form of controlling the supply routes of the rebels and second, capturing the Ubwari peninsula in co-operation with Rwandan troops and forces of the Congolese Rally for Democracy. The Tanzanian army also contributed to the capture of this peninsula by disbanding FDD training camps in the Ngara and Kasulu districts. This situation was further improved by the arrest of FDD officers outside these camps in February 2002. The position of the rebels in the Makamba and Rutana regions was greatly affected. In the meantime, rural Bujumbura was effectively combed for any remnants of rebels, and the Mbare, Kirombe and Gasara positions were secured. The swift victories of the government forces were counteracted by heavy offensives by the FDD/CNP who effectively took control of several national highways.<sup>14</sup>

### **6.3 Burundi transitional government**

The Burundi Peace and Reconciliation Accord of August 2000 stipulated the formation of a transitional government within three months of the signing of the agreement. The transitional government was to be in power for three years and was to draw-up a new constitution, set up democratic structures and lay the foundation for free and fair elections after this period. The time-lag between the signing of the accord and the formation of the new government was to be three months but, owing to squabbles among the Arusha signatories relating to the composition of the transitional government, its composition and subsequent installation was delayed. After intense negotiations, a government of national unity was formed on 1 November 2001, with the incumbent, Pierre Buyoya, as President for the first eighteen

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<sup>13</sup> Burundi Rebellion and the Cease-fire Negotiations, ICG *African Briefing paper*, 16 August 2002 p.6

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9

months, and Domitien Ndayizeye, the Secretary General of the *Front Democratique de Burundi* (FRODEBU), as Vice-President. The two were to change positions at the end of the first eighteen months. This new administration was essentially a three-year power-sharing mechanism that was designed to bring peace to Burundi following the eight-year civil war.<sup>15</sup>

The Arusha agreement made provision for cabinet posts to be split between *Hutu* and *Tutsi*, as well as for the establishment of an ethnically balanced defence force and for general elections to be held after the three-year transitional period had elapsed. The transitional government was to comprise twenty-six ministerial portfolios, fourteen of which would be allocated to *Hutu* political parties and the remaining twelve to *Tutsi* parties. Communal and council elections were to be conducted at the end of the first half of the transitional time frame. In due course, senatorial elections were envisaged for the second part of this period and, thereafter, the national assembly and the senate would be expected to convene in order to elect the first president of the post-transitional phase of the government.<sup>16</sup>

As a means of guaranteeing the safety of *Hutu* politicians who returned to the country to take part in the transitional government, the South African government, under the aegis of the United Nations Security Council, deployed a 720-strong army to protect the returnees. However, for this transitional government to succeed, it needs the full support of the Burundian populace across ethnic lines. The government also needs to engage in meaningful reforms within the administrative, judicial and military spheres in order to instil confidence and a sense of purpose in the participating parties. The transitional government will also be failing in its mandate if it does not propose tangible solutions to the Burundian conflict. For them to achieve this, they should solicit the support of the United Nations and, what is more important, the facilitation team led by Mandela, so as to create an International Judicial Commission of Inquiry into genocide, as well as a National Truth and Reconciliation Commission as the Arusha Accord suggested. Former perpetrators of genocide should have to face the law, and victims of genocide need

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<sup>15</sup> *Pretoria News* of 29 November 2001, p. 8

<sup>16</sup> S. Naidoo, 'Challenges for Burundi's Transitional Government, in *Conflict Trends*, an Accord Publication, no. 4 , p. 42

to be rehabilitated. The government will also need to have as a priority the reintegration of returning refugees and internally displaced persons.<sup>17</sup>

With the effective installation of the transitional government, a lot still needs to be done, owing to the fact that several obstacles still stand in the way of peace. Prominent on the agenda of the government should be the signing of a ceasefire agreement with the rebels. It should be recalled that *Hutu* rebels have been fighting the government in Bujumbura since 1993, and have refused to be part of the Arusha framework. Despite this enormous setback, the government's priority should be to protect its citizens and to secure a permanent ceasefire agreement with the rebels. With this security concern in mind, it has been impossible for the government of Burundi to build and maintain peace. It is actually unprecedented in conflict-resolution mechanisms that a peace agreement should be signed and a transitional government installed while the war is still being fought. The South African and Tanzanian governments' efforts at bringing peace to Burundi failed dismally due to their disregard of quarrels and rivalries which they viewed as unimportant. Owing to this setback and to the full militarisation of the Burundian *Tutsi*, to the detriment of the mainly *Hutu* refugees, a confidence-building exercise in this society is difficult to initiate.<sup>18</sup>

Apart from the absence of a ceasefire, the transitional government will also be confronted with a lack of trust, since the Arusha Process did not instil the necessary friendly working relationship. This lack of trust was already present, as both parties, especially the *Hutu* group (G10, the ten *Hutu* parties who took part in the Arusha meetings) and the *Tutsi* group of seven (G7, the *Tutsi* parties who were sympathetic to the Arusha framework), accused each other of not allowing sufficient time to consult their people on what sort of government to follow. There was always growing concern amongst the G10 that President Buyoya would resist relinquishing power after eighteen months, and that the *Hutu* candidate

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 42

<sup>18</sup> Wapakabulo, 'Uganda's role in the Search for Peace' p. 5

who would succeed Buyoya as president (Domitien Ndayizeye) would be assassinated, something many researchers felt could happen.<sup>19</sup>

The transitional government had taken much time trying to implement the Arusha Accord, which entailed integrating leaders from the G7 and G10 into the new transitional institutions. With no ceasefire in sight, the transitional government had yet to deal with the decision taken at Arusha regarding the integration of the rebel forces into the mainstream Burundian Security Forces. Since the Arusha Accord merely stated that the new Burundian Army would have to be composed of fifty per cent *Hutu* and fifty per cent *Tutsi*, the government would negotiate details of such integrations once a ceasefire had been achieved. Not only was the issue of the Burundi Army by far the most sensitive, it is also an issue on which the G7 and G10 components within the government are probably the most deeply divided. It is also the inability of the Burundian belligerents to arrive at a consensus on the composition of a Burundian protection unit that necessitated Nelson Mandela, the facilitator, to solicit such a protection force from the South African government.<sup>20</sup>

Although there had been a kind of unity prevailing within the transitional government, this unity actually concealed a deep hatred between some of the faction leaders. The leadership of both the G10 and G7, as represented within the new transitional institutions, were putting on a brave face and doing their utmost to present a positive picture to the outside world. Again, the perceived unity among cabinet members could also be viewed as a need to obtain the confidence of the international community in ensuring that the largest possible percentage of the funds pledged to Burundi in Geneva in 2001 should be disbursed. This kind of situation was very precarious, owing to the fact that once all the parameters had been put in place, a conflict of interest could once again emerge. Thus, if the second half of the transition was to be implemented successfully and a democratically elected president sworn in, the tasks and responsibilities of the new transitional government were likely to be enormous, requiring huge enthusiasm in order for peace to be achieved.

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<sup>19</sup> J. van Eck, *Burundi Report*, Centre for International Policy Study, University of Pretoria, October 2001, p. 2

<sup>20</sup> Burundi Rebellion and the Cease-fire Negotiations, *ICG African Briefing paper*, 16 August 2002, p. 10

#### 6.4 Division among the rebels

The newly installed transitional government in Burundi is faced with a dilemma. Due to the fact that a peace agreement was signed and a new government installed without a ceasefire agreement, the rebel forces are now at the negotiating table, struggling for leadership with the transitional government. Judging from the fact that rebel leaders have much to gain in terms of concessions from the government, rivalry in the rebel camps is common. The *Force de la Defence de Democratie* (FDD), under pressure from non-commissioned officers, replaced its leader, Jean Bosco Ndayikengurukiye, with Pierre Nkurunziza. Nkurunziza had claimed that his faction would speed up the peace process, while Ndayikengurukiye rejected ceasefire negotiations with the Burundi Government. The FDD/Nkurunziza faction wanted an immediate end to abuses and gross violations of human rights by the Burundian army, a cessation of the activities of the death squad, an assurance of freedom of speech, and the empowerment of the poorest of the population. These demands have been largely supported by the majority of the Burundi people, but the government is now faced with a situation in which it does not know who to talk about peace with, Nkurunziza or Ndayikengurukiye.<sup>21</sup>

In the same vein, Palipehutu-FNL Leader, Cossan Kabara, together with some key political and military supporters, was ousted and replaced by Agathon Rwasa. Kabara refused to recognise Rwasa as a faction leader, and the two have continuously waged a war of words to consolidate their respective positions. The FDD and the FNL were essentially military wings of the National Council for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD) and the Party for the Liberation of the *Hutu* People (Palipehutu) respectively. Relations between the military wing and the political section became strained because of the shortcomings of the Arusha Accord. These military wings demanded integration into the regular army and posts in transitional institutions. The exclusion of the armed wings of these parties is based on the fact that the political wing saw them as rivals at the peace talks.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Naidoo, 'Challenges for Burundi's Transitional Government', p.42

<sup>22</sup> Van Eck, *Burundi Report*, p. 2



The former mediator in the Burundi conflict, Nyerere, excluded the armed wings of these political parties from the peace process, arguing that they should merge with their political counterparts and present one representative at the negotiating table. In later peace talks, this time under the aegis of Mandela, the armed wings were, however, invited to participate as separate entities. Thus, the armed wings pursued policies that in most cases existed in tandem with those of the political wings. The political wing, therefore, could not exert any meaningful pressure on the FDD and the FNL to negotiate with the government. The assassination of Ndadaye in 1993 has been perceived by many *Hutu* political parties as occurring as a result of not having a strong military wing. Consequently, they were unable to guarantee the safety and security of the then government of Burundi. For this reason, current *Hutu* parties felt it necessary to have some kind of military support to prevent things going wrong this time around.<sup>23</sup>

The South African and Tanzanian governments have convened numerous meetings in Dar es Salaam to which all the factions in the Burundian conflict have been invited. Many other rebel leaders who participated in the Arusha Process and who are now members of the transitional government were also invited. Due to the schism that existed between the political and armed wings of the various belligerents, it was impossible to arrive at any meaningful conclusion or timetable for the cessation of hostilities. Thus, the various Dar es Salaam meetings have been nothing but pleasure trips, as no decision on the modalities of achieving a ceasefire has been arrived at.<sup>24</sup>

These inherent problems have seriously impaired any concrete ceasefire negotiations for Burundi. The fact that some ousted leaders of this rebellion still command respect among many Burundians suggests that the differences will be very difficult to reconcile. The transitional government should now focus more attention on the problems these armed movements may be experiencing with regard to internal organisation and decision-making processes, especially those relating to their participation in ceasefire negotiations. By doing so, the government will be strengthening the capacity of parties to be more

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<sup>23</sup> Naidoo, 'Challenges for Burundi's Transitional Government', p. 42

<sup>24</sup> Van Eck, *Burundi Report*, p. 10

confident negotiators, something which could benefit the ceasefire process and the government and, most important, peace-loving Burundians.<sup>25</sup>

### **6.5 Burundi peace: a regional concern**

Conflicts within African states can no longer be regarded as purely internal affairs. Certain so-called external forces do not really regard themselves as external actors. Both Rwanda and Uganda see the conflict in Congo as an extension of their internal problems and as an issue that needs urgent attention. Any government in Kinshasa which antagonises the *Tutsi* population in the Congo will send refugees fleeing into Rwanda. This will obviously destabilise Rwanda. Following the plight of Rwandan *Hutu* refugees in Congo after the genocide, the present Rwandan government looks with suspicion at any regime in Kinshasa which is likely to be partial to these refugees and support their ambitions to wage an armed struggle against the Kigali government. Uganda, having hosted many Rwandan refugees over the last three decades, is also interested in political stability in Rwanda, something which would warrant the return of Rwandan refugees from Uganda.<sup>26</sup>

There can never be a lasting peace in Burundi without peace in the entire Great Lakes subregion. Burundian peace will remain an illusion if there is no peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and other countries sharing Lake Tanganyika as a common border. Regional insecurity will continue to impact negatively on the Burundian peace process in general and, specifically, on the ceasefire process. The failure of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue at Sun City to achieve an inclusive agreement on the transition, and the insecurity which this will create between Kabila's government and the *Mouvement pour la Liberation de Congo*, on the one hand, and the Rwanda-backed RCD Goma led by Adolphe Onusumba on the other, will have serious consequences for Burundi.<sup>27</sup>

Key decisions affecting Burundi are likely to be made in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zimbabwe, and to some extent Angola, due to the alliance between these countries and the Burundian

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p. 12

<sup>26</sup> P.A. Nyong'o, 'Governance, Security and Conflict Resolution in Africa', in *Diognes*, No.184, Vol.46/4, Winter 1998, p. 132

<sup>27</sup> Burundi Country Report, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, London, 2002, p. 11

*Hutu* rebels. Rwanda, on the other hand, will not accept a peace process in Burundi which could ultimately threaten its own security. The peace process in Burundi and that of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, while having specific objectives, are also processes that provide suitable prescriptions for other neighbouring states that are pursuing similar goals. Rwanda's scenario is yet to provide a platform for a peace based on dialogue and negotiations. Just as there is the Lusaka Agreement for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Arusha Accord for Burundi, Rwanda also needs to put in place similar transparent mechanisms that could help to create a more inclusive and durable political system. Thus, as the security and political situation in Burundi become more fragile, Rwanda will always consider more direct involvement in the affairs of Burundi.<sup>28</sup>

Taking into consideration the extreme hostility the Burundian *Hutu* rebel movements felt towards the Rwandan government of Paul Kagame, an increased Rwandan involvement in Burundi would now result in more intense and sustained hatred against the *Tutsi*. The hostilities between the *Hutu* armed movements in the Great Lakes region vis-à-vis *Tutsi*-ruled or *Tutsi*-sympathetic countries such as Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda have to a large extent been encouraged by the Congolese war. This conflict drew most of the *Tutsi*-ruled countries and sympathisers into the Congo, entrenching the already wide gulf that existed between these two groups. As these two factions, at one stage or another, have been forced to migrate, their Burundian conflict has now been transferred to the neighbouring countries. The latter are being forced to take sides.

Other regional countries, notably the DRC, Tanzania and Uganda, all have specific interests in developments in Burundi. The DRC would like to see a *Tutsi* government emerge in Burundi, as this would purge the perpetrators of genocide who continue to cause havoc in the eastern DRC. Tanzania would like to see a *Hutu* majority rule in Burundi. It is true that the majority of the population of Tanzania has affinity with the *Hutu*. While all of them would obviously like to see peace in Burundi, each has its own idea of what the best outcome should be. To expect them, therefore, not to promote their preferred outcome would be naive. However well intentioned their objectives may be their interventions

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<sup>28</sup> Wapakabulo, 'Uganda's role in the Search for Peace', p. 8

may actually run counter to the achievement of a real and durable Burundian solution. Thus, the facilitation team, together with the international community, should create incentives in order to encourage all the warring parties in the Great Lakes region to participate in dialogue aimed at the political settlement of disputes.<sup>29</sup>

The fact that these countries are linked together by ethnic military alliances was actually a great setback for the entire region. Yoweri Museveni and Paul Kagame were the architects of Joseph Kabila's success story in the DRC. Through this process, they committed themselves to protect the *Tutsi*, whom they thought would be annihilated by the majority *Hutu*, given the chance. Museveni is also haunted by the fact that the great majority of his foot soldiers during his years as a rebel in Western Uganda were *Tutsi* refugees. He thus owes it to the *Tutsi* to defend their interests. And, the fact that the situation in the Congo and Rwanda overshadowed events in Burundi has ensured that continued instability in Burundi has the potential to undermine security in the entire region. Because of this, the facilitation team and the international community should look at ways and means of eliminating traces of conflict in the whole area.

## **6.6 Attitude of the international community**

International reaction to the crisis in Burundi and the Great Lakes in general has been ambiguous, to say the least. This ambiguity stemmed from the fact that there had been no clear-cut international policy from the UN, OAU or EU vis-à-vis the region. At one time you could count about seven international special envoys to the region, many of whom were assigned to carry out the same function and to report to the same organisation. The multiplicity of international envoys greatly exacerbated the already tense political atmosphere. Writing in 2000, Ambassador Ahmadou Abdallah, former UN envoy to Burundi, noted:

...the rising tide of violence in Burundi prompted an increase in the number of official and unofficial would-be mediators. These mediators, however, in turn exacerbated the

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<sup>29</sup> Naidoo, 'Challenges for Burundi's Transitional Government', p.42

situation, because their very presence encouraged the various Burundian factions to attract the mediators' attention by shows of strength.<sup>30</sup>

During the Arusha negotiating process, the Burundian belligerents were pressurised by the various facilitators (Nyerere and Mandela) into first signing the Arusha Accord, then accepting the choice of a transitional leadership, and finally implementing the various protocols of the treaty. Due to intense pressure exerted on these parties by the facilitation team and various countries of the sub-region, they reluctantly complied. Despite having arrived at this momentous conclusion, the Burundian people are yet to reap any dividends from the Arusha process. Contrary to their expectations, the war is still very apparent, the embargo imposed during the Arusha process is still strangling the country, and poverty and suffering are glaringly in evidence. Thus, the Arusha process and the transitional government have actually done nothing but add more misery to the ongoing war, death, destruction, corruption and poverty, with no signs of producing anything better for the Burundian people.<sup>31</sup>

If the international community and the powers that be want peace and tranquillity in the Great Lakes, and in Burundi in particular, they should disburse the more than US\$400 million in assistance promised to Burundi during the Paris and Geneva Donors' Conference in December 2000. Having spent close to US\$40 million on the Arusha process, it would amount to wasting a substantial investment if the new transitional government is not provided with the necessary money and resources to produce concrete results. Speaking in Brussels in December 2002, the EU Foreign Affairs Commissioner, Xavier Solana said:

...until there is a durable ceasefire in Burundi between the rebels and the government forces, we would not disburse such a large sum of money only for it to end up in the hands of people who did not have the plight of the Burundian people at heart.<sup>32</sup>

For the international community to shift its stance and refuse to disburse the money until there is a

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<sup>30</sup> A. Ould-Abdallah, *Burundi on the Brink 1993-1995*, United States Institute of Peace, Washington DC, 2000, p. 56

<sup>31</sup> Burundi Country Report, *Economist Intelligence Unit*, London, 2002, p. 4

<sup>32</sup> E. Phillips, 'Coventional weapons control and its relationship to Development', [www.munfw.org](http://www.munfw.org), access date 31 August 2003

durable ceasefire in Burundi is totally self-defeating and destructive. With the prevailing situation in Burundi, with its citizenry being denied this financial lifeline, there is little chance that the new government will succeed.<sup>33</sup> At the height of civil disorder, such as that which Burundi is experiencing, it is impossible to carry out reconstruction of the country without outside support. Foreign currency will definitely boost the economy and reduce the level of poverty within the country. Other countries of the sub-region, especially Rwanda, Uganda and the DRC, should refrain from trying to impose their preferred solutions and agenda on the Burundian people. The ongoing regional practice of taking sides in the conflict, interfering and promoting non-indigenous, as well as “win-lose” solutions, should be resisted at all costs.

The signing of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Accord for Burundi on 28 August 2000 has been hailed as one of the milestones in the attainment of a durable peace in the Great Lakes region of Africa and in Burundi in particular. It was held in high esteem in most quarters as the transitional government and other transitional institutions were put in place within the time frame set out in the Arusha Accord. The transitional government also took into account, to a large degree, the diverse ethnic, regional and socio-political nature of Burundian society. Thus, the first step towards building a durable peace in Burundi had been laid.<sup>34</sup>

With intense negotiations for a ceasefire agreement to be signed before the second phase of the transitional government, there is hope that peace and tranquillity will return to the Great Lakes and Burundi in particular. However, peace cannot come about without the total support of the international community, the regional entities, the Burundian people and the local farmers in upholding this noble goal.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter attempts to analyse the situation in Burundi after the Arusha Accord was signed. It also pinpoints some of the loopholes of the Arusha Accord. The transitional government that was put in place

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<sup>33</sup> Van Eck, *Burundi Report*, p. 10

<sup>34</sup> Naidoo, ‘Challenges for Burundi’s Transitional Government’, p. 42

through the various mechanisms of the Arusha Peace Process has succeeded in maintaining relative peace in Burundi. The chapter also argues that the united front put forward by the G7 and G10 within the government is showing positive signs of better things to come. This unity could also be translated into a promise that the second part of the transitional government, which would see a *Hutu*, Domitien Ndayizeye as president, will also be relatively peaceful.

As a precursor to the many arguments that have been raised by commentators regarding loopholes in the Arusha Process, the chapter suggests that the failure to sign a ceasefire agreement before the signing of the accord was the perennial shortcoming of the negotiating team. The chapter argues that the delay by the Nyerere negotiating team in signing the treaty was partially due to the persistence of insecurity in the country. This insecurity, which was also undermined by divisions among the rebels, further impaired any speedy return of peace to the country. The difference between the political and armed wings of the rebel groups posed serious problems to the negotiators. The chapter averred that these differences led to the emergence of counter opinions that were addressed by the negotiating team.

The failure of the international community to guarantee the safety of the population in the rural areas stalled any attempts by regional and global organizations to carry out reconstruction endeavours in the country. The chapter also maintained that the international community was reluctant to give aid to Burundi for reconstruction owing to the continuous maintenance of the regroupment camps and the rehabilitation of returnees. The chapter also indicated that, despite all these negative factors which hindered the establishment of effective guarantees for human lives, the Arusha Process proceeded and managed to install a transitional government, much to the chagrin of the majority of *Tutsi* and *Hutu* political parties and armed groups. The relative reign of peace during the greater part of the transitional government was testimony to the fragility of the Peace Accord. The chapter also argued that the pseudo-unity portrayed by the transitional government hid a more dangerous omen that the facilitation team ignored, namely the lack of feasibility of a government headed by a *Hutu* when army reforms have not been undertaken. The army, the chapter stressed, is the most sensitive domain in the Burundian drive to peace. With the army still being predominantly comprising of *Tutsi*, a genuine fear by the *Hutu* of future genocide is justified.

The chapter maintained that Burundian peace should be undertaken within a wider peace process in the entire Great Lakes region. Considering the intricate military alliances within the subregion, Burundi could only enjoy peace within a precise peace initiative in the region. Key decisions, the chapter argued, that could affect the *Hutu* and *Tutsi* in Burundi could be made in the DRC, Rwanda, Uganda, etc., thus making it extremely difficult for an isolated Burundi peace process to be successful. The chapter also highlighted the fact that the failure of the international community to adopt a single and uniform policy towards the Great Lakes impedes efforts at achieving a negotiated settlement. The Rwandan genocide and the ousting of the Mobutu regime in the DRC also impaired such efforts in the region. It was felt that the collapse of communism might have played a role in such international inconsistency.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSION

It is difficult to arrive at any definitive conclusions about the causes of conflict in Burundi. It is even harder to imagine how the conflict can be resolved, given the deeply embedded political suspicion, legacy of genocide and unsuccessful diplomatic intervention that continues to cheat its people of peace. Thus, the analysis in this summation simply reflects my judgments and tries to assess my own scholarly contribution to the history of the Great Lakes. It also cautiously suggests strategies that may bear fruit in achieving a settlement, in the belief that historians, no less than other social scientists, can draw on their diagnostic skills to offer solutions. An analysis of the past often unlocks patterns of conflict and stubborn causes of war, thus enabling a measured prognosis, leading ultimately to conflict resolution.

Although prominent researchers of the Great Lakes and Burundi, especially René Lemarchand and Gerard Prunier, have proposed some groundbreaking solutions to the ongoing conflict, they have not always given enough attention to African strategies of power-sharing in ending wars. William Zartman, a contemporary of Lemarchand's, on the other hand, has focused much more on African initiatives around bringing all parties into new systems of governance, thus lessening rivalry and strife. Writing in 1998, he said:

The eventual key to the effectiveness of mediators and negotiators is an outcome that returns the conflict to normal politics. . . . Generally, this involves creating a new political system in which the parties to the conflict feel they have a stake, thus in a very positive sense co-opting all parties – government and rebels – in a new creation....<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> W. Zartman, 'Understanding Inclusive Peace Agreement in Africa: The Problems of sharing Power', in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol 21, No. 1 p. 106

Marina Ottaway, a supporter of Zartmant's hypothesis, succinctly states that a 'power-sharing pact ... may be the only attainable short-term goal compatible with long-term democratisation'.<sup>2</sup> Yet, power-sharing has obvious problems: agreements are difficult to arrive at, and even more difficult to implement, and, when implemented, they rarely stand the test of time. Tried and tested ethnic conflict resolution mechanisms that have been successful in Kosovo have proved virtually unworkable in Burundi and Rwanda, thus reinforcing the claim that strategies in ethnic conflict resolution in Africa seem unique and peculiar.<sup>3</sup> My concluding remarks therefore concentrate on this uniqueness, and I sum up the various arguments raised in the entire work.

The causes of the 1993 Burundi conflict are difficult to identify impartially, and I am sure that others are likely to be found by future researchers in this field. But what I am convinced of is that colonialism cannot single-handedly be held responsible for all Burundi's problems. I have argued that many other causes accounted for the collapse of state institutions immediately after the coup d'état of October 1993. Prominent among these was the institutionalisation of an 'ethnic ego' rather than a national pride. The dissertation has argued that ethnic affinity became the basis of state institutions, and ethnicity also determined whether an individual was eligible to enrol in the army or enter the civil service, and even which political party he or she could join.<sup>4</sup>

In the opening section of my dissertation, I argued that the terms *Tutsi*, *Hutu* or *Twa* are not found in the Kirundi (the language spoken in Burundi) vocabulary, which means that these descriptors are foreign, and have been imported, into Burundian society under the aegis of the colonial powers who had interests in the region -- Germany and Belgium. The nomenclature became institutionalised and the term *Tutsi* was frequently attributed to those who owned cattle and enjoyed other forms of wealth as well. The name *Hutu*, on the contrary, was given to poorer hunter-gatherers of the tropical Burundian forest.

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<sup>2</sup> Ottaway, 'Democratisation in Collapsed States', in I,W,Zartman (ed), *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and the Restoration of Legitimate Authority*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 1995, p. 248

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 249

<sup>4</sup> L. Ndikumana, 'Institutional Failure and Ethnic Conflict in Burundi', in *Journal of Africa Studies Review*, Vol. 41, no. 1, 1998, p. 29.

The *Tutsi*, who originally came from outside the Great Lakes region, could not have been the inventors of the organised monarchical institutions that had developed in the area in the late eighteenth century, but simply inherited them and used them to increase their own power. Speaking to reporters after the signing of the Arusha Accord on 28 August 2000, Nelson Mandela, the chief peace broker at the time, said:

Africa belongs to all those who lived in it, be you white, black, Tutsi, Hutu or Twa. This suggests that we could be Tutsi, Hutu and Twa, living happily in the continent of our birth. The signing of this agreement today demonstrates just that. The rights and privileges of everybody should be respected.<sup>5</sup>

He was in favour of preserving the rights of minorities on the continent. His argument was also informed by the fact that the Acholi people of western Uganda, who are like the *Hutu*, are known to have developed monarchical institutions long before the arrival of the *Tutsi* in the Great Lakes. The myth that later surrounded the origin of the *Tutsi* seems to have inflated the *Tutsi* ego and became one of the most important causes of the Burundian conflict.<sup>6</sup>

Institutional failure was also an important cause of war and genocide. Before 1993, the various state institutions in Burundi had virtually collapsed, or were controlled by a small *Tutsi* minority. The desire of the newly elected president, Melchior Ndadaye, to eradicate the status quo was met with stern resistance, and in the process he was killed. The Burundian problem prior to 1993, as far as the minority *Tutsi* were concerned, was an ineffective institutional system that was being perpetuated at the expense of their rights and interests. In trying to allay fears about the continuation of ethnic-based state institutions, the present Burundi peace facilitator, the South African Deputy President, Jacob Zuma, therefore stated that:

Ethnicity has been recognised as one of the main problems stalking the peace process. But we should understand that there is more to the Burundi situation than meets the eye. We should try to eliminate ethnic-based tendencies from all the structures of the state.

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<sup>5</sup> Pretoria News 29/08/00 p. 3

<sup>6</sup> Telephonic discussion with René Lemarchand, 16 September 2002

That is why the negotiation process is taking so long. Once we have settled that, we should be able to seal the negotiation process.<sup>7</sup>

He therefore recognised the role that ethnicity has played in retarding the peace process, a fact which previous facilitators failed publicly to recognise. The international community allowed the Burundian conflict to degenerate into a crisis by funding various repressive regimes after independence, thereby enabling them to perpetrate atrocities against the *Tutsi*.<sup>8</sup> The culpability of Western powers in this destabilisation of the region has been examined in some detail in my study.

The prolonged nature of the conflict was also exacerbated by international apathy *vis-à-vis* the crisis in the Great Lakes. Such a lack of concern and poor media coverage was, however, ironical considering the enormous profits that foreign powers make from the war economy in the region. Speaking to reporters in Kampala in January 2002, President Yoweri Museveni said: ‘The war in the DRC is good for the economy of Uganda. Without the war, we would not be able to protect ourselves from the Ugandan enemies who are holed up in eastern DRC.’<sup>9</sup>

Museveni actually contravenes many agreements of which he is a signatory. And the Ugandan Foreign Minister admitted that ‘the resources of the region cannot be allowed to be swallowed up by the west. As a neighbour, we are bound to take our share.’<sup>10</sup> While it was important for the United States of America to give US\$500million to normalise the situation in Rwanda after the 1994 genocide, it seems inexplicable that the international community could not lend Burundi US\$10million to prevent the mass killings. This underlines the point that war is good for the economy of some nations and it explains why it has been difficult for solve the Burundian conflict. There has been no concerted effort by the

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<sup>7</sup> The Deputy President was speaking to reporters after a working agreement with CNDD-FDD rebel group was finalized on 12/7/04

<sup>8</sup> J. Van Eck, Burundi Country Report, p. 6

<sup>9</sup> J.Brink, ‘Uganda and the war in the Eastern DRC,’ in *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance* on the web @ [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int) of 4/2/2003

<sup>10</sup> J. Wapakabulo, (Hon Vice prime minister of Uganda) ‘Uganda’s role in the search for Peace and stability in the Great Lakes region’, paper presented at the University of Pretoria, Under the auspices of CIPS, 3/09/02, p. 3

international community to finance the peace process and put pressure on the leadership in the region to seek a settlement.<sup>11</sup>

Colonialism may have accounted for many conflicts in Africa, but their continuation in the post-colonial era shows that African governments are also to blame for social upheavals. Without unduly romanticising the picture, pre-colonial African societies were generally versatile and flexible, but also engaged in various forms of rivalry, and war was often waged on a neighbouring ethnic groups. For instance, Lemarchand argues that:

Pre-literate Burundi was a beehive of activities and the entire whole jointly acknowledged and revered the powers of the Mwami. His authority was more divine than profane. His very presence at a place of dispute, which are often rare, signified an instance of resolution. His elaborate court provides for in-built conflict resolution structures which were unparalleled on the continent. There was no distinction between the social order, and babies were born into the caste system which was a symbol for the universality of the child in Burundi.<sup>12</sup>

He further argues that most of the conflicts in pre-colonial Africa were in the form of battles for the control of grazing land, fertile soil, cattle or iron ore. Others were waged for slaves. Colonial intrigues, he feels, exacerbated the situation through infamous ‘divide and rule’ systems of government. But my emphasis in this thesis, however, has been that most conflicts in Africa were very peculiar, even though the external factor of colonialism often increased the intensity of such upheavals.<sup>13</sup>

I have raised a number of burning questions in the preceding chapters. These have centred on the debates around the causes of the ethnic conflict immediately after independence, the course that the conflict has taken thus far, and the repercussions on the international political scene as well as the sub-region and Burundi itself. I also concentrated on the achievements and failures of the various peace emissaries.

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<sup>11</sup> Ndikumana, ‘Institutional Failure and Ethnic Conflict in Burundi’, p. 29

<sup>12</sup> G. Prunier, *The Rwanda crisis: History of a Genocide*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1995, p 20

<sup>13</sup> M. Crowder, *et al*, *History of West Africa*, Heineman Publication, London, 1983, p .24

In the opening chapter of my dissertation, I argued that the *Tutsi*, *Hutu* and the *Twa*, as the ethnic groups that made up Burundi, were in many ways a colonial construction. That the *Tutsi* were from outside the region did not mean that they were superior, or that, as carriers of the institution of kingship, that they had a natural right to enslave the erstwhile indigenous ethnic groups. ‘Imagined communities’ – to invoke Benedict Anderson’s memorable construction -- became the norm in the colonial imagination in service of European conquest and hegemony. As Bruce Arlinghans has pointed out:

Colonial experience and the advent of the modern nation state invaded the traditional African egalitarianism with European concepts of political, social and economic stratification. New educational, economic, social and cultural opportunities were offered with striking consequences that deepened the new concepts of stratification. Diversities and disparities provided breeding grounds for political factionalism and power struggles.<sup>14</sup>

Colonialism therefore became a profoundly important cause of conflict on the African continent. Invented boundaries and lineage creation fostered an ambivalent and resentful attitude among the subject people, depending on the degree of advantage that was accorded to them. In 1999, Marina Ottaway commented on such intrusion:

In Africa, a combination of socio-economic change, missionary language policies, anthropological studies and deliberate attempts by the colonial authorities to establish a workable administrative framework caused Africans to move beyond narrower identification with lineage or a clan and to see themselves as members of large and newly invested tribes.<sup>15</sup>

She also stressed that ‘the identities that colonial powers helped to crystallize were artificial and of recent origin, not natural and primordial’.<sup>16</sup> The problems that befall Africa today were certainly due to these cultural systems of control and imposed identity under colonialism, but they have not been dismantled in post-colonial Africa; if anything, they have been re-invented, or at least reinforced, to entrench hegemonic forces in ongoing ethnic struggles. Trying to uncover the underpinnings of the Burundian crisis after independence is therefore a complex intellectual task, and many researchers

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<sup>14</sup> B. Arlinghans, (ed), *Africa Security issues: Sovereignty, Stability and Solidarity*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1984, p. 9

<sup>15</sup> Ottaway M, *State, Conflict and Democracy in Africa*, London, Lynne Rienner, 1999, p. 301

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 304

before me have failed to identify the most significant sources of conflict in the region, or have exaggerated some at the expense of others. I have therefore argued that a combination of interwoven issues – political amateurism, neo-colonialism, ethnic superiority, arms proliferation and contingency – acted together. In doing this, I have not tried to play down the historical import of the ‘colonial time-bomb’ that was loaded, ready to explode at any given time, even after the European powers had relinquished power.

The dissertation also proposed that between 1962 and 1993 all Burundian state institutions failed to deliver basic services to the population. The few that were available were either privately owned or for the exclusive use of the *Tutsi*. The policy of impunity enjoyed by perpetrators of genocide was alarming, and has heightened hatred and violence. Such impunity compounded the politicization of ethnic groups, which were mobilised to think and act *en bloc*. Thus, most political consultation has been geared towards satisfying particular ethnic groups, to the detriment of national interest.

The collapse of the monarchy was also seen as a crucially important factor in the conflict. In pre-colonial and colonial Burundi, the monarchy was regarded as the embodiment of Burundi. The failure of the post-colonial regime to protect the Mwami from selfish military officers intensified the war. And the other wars in the region – notably in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda ) accounted for the infiltration and proliferation of arms in Burundi. The presence of arms naturally heightened the propensity to go to war. I have argued that prominent Rwandan *Tutsi* who came to Burundi in the early 1960s played a very important role in masterminding the exclusion of the *Hutu*. Rwandan *Tutsi* were always favoured for recruitment into the Burundian public service and for the awarding of contracts. This policy of “Rwandalisation” angered many *Hutu*, who felt betrayed by their own government. The *Hutu* elites, the dissertation has pointed out, did not alleviate the plight of ordinary *Hutu*.

The educated *Hutu* leaders abandoned the *Hutu* masses who then bore a grudge against them. Thus, the Burundian crisis that started in 1962 was the culmination of a dangerous and inadequate political and socio-cultural system that had been put in place by the colonialists and further entrenched by successive

*Tutsi* regimes after independence. When Burundi openly accepted a multi-party system in 1992, the stage was therefore set for the manifestation of the most intense political pluralistic order ever established on the continent. The run-up to both the 1962 general election and the 1993 presidential elections, was plagued by parties aligning their support purely according to ethnic and regional loyalties. This kind of political atmosphere breeds hatred and resentment. The defeat of one group would naturally be interpreted as the defeat of another, which explains why devastating conflict arose after the respective polls. The various attempts made by Buyoya during his first term were merely cosmetic and viewed with contempt by the *Tutsi*. The murder of Ndadaye was the spark that ignited the Burundian time-bomb.<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, the political gymnastics after the murder of Ndadaye emanated from political novices with no particular mastery of the Burundian political landscape. The interference by regional powers also played a major role in de-railing the peace process. The fact that Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo supported the *Tutsi* prompted Tanzania and Kenya to come to the aid of the *Hutu*, a situation that led to the collapse of the many peace conferences on the Great Lakes. The return to power by Pierre Buyoya in 1996 further eroded any confidence-building initiatives the *Hutu* and moderate *Tutsi* had tried to initiate in Burundi.

Buyoya's comeback was interpreted as a strategic attempt by the *Tutsi* permanently to sideline the *Hutu* in terms of the political process of the country. The unresolved refugee issues and the regroupment campaign also dampened any enthusiasm about bringing the *Hutu*-dominated FNL to the negotiating table. The negotiators argued that Agathon Rwasa, the leader of the FNL, would join the fold once the road map reached its final stage in November 2004. In a recent interview, it appears that Rwasa would be willing to join the peace process only once his options have run out. He controls a small section of Burundi, and with the presence of the South Africa protection troops, he would not be able to mount

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<sup>17</sup> Telephonic communication with Prpf. R Lamarchand, 16/08/2002



a successful claim on Bujumbura.<sup>18</sup>

The difficulty of achieving consensus on the Burundi peace process can equally be attributed to the naivety and inexperience of the South African negotiators. Excluding the FNL from the peace process, as the South African negotiators have done, was a blunder and has seriously delayed the peace process. I have also argued that army reforms, which the leader of the FNL, Agathon Rwasa, argues are the single greatest obstacle to peace, have still not been implemented. November 2004 is supposed to be the final month for the implementation of the Arusha Accord, which has functioned as the default constitution of Burundi for the past three years. The reintegration process is yet to start, and a general demobilization and re-integration of rebels into society are still some of the unresolved issues facing the transitional government.

The dissertation suggests that after the outbreak of the conflict, international public opinion was divided, and information flowing out of Burundi was sketchy and disjointed. The reactions of the United Nations, the Organisation of African Unity, and the sub-regional initiative on Burundi were all rather lukewarm. The reason for this could be the perceived insignificance of Africa on the world geopolitical map after the Cold War. Attempts at a speedy resolution of the conflict were hampered by differences between the United Nations' Secretary General, Boutros-Ghali, and the United States' Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright. Because of these fundamental differences, the UN thwarted all attempts by the Americans, under the aegis of the UN, to bring peace to the region. I have argued that because of institutional differences, the conflict was allowed to degenerate into an uncontrollable crisis for many years.

While the UN was locked in bitter rivalry with the United States, the Organisation of African Unity tried to pick up the baton. Its resolve to fill the vacuum left by the UN was informed by the successful intervention of ECOMOG in Liberia and Sierra Leone. For once, it was acknowledged that Africa

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Mr. Thomas Modau, Director for Central Africa at the South African Department of Foreign Affairs. Mr. Modau is part of the Deputy President Jacob Zuma's negotiating team, Pretoria, 03/09/04

could perhaps find its own solutions to its problems. Thus, the American initiative was relegated. In its place, the OAU initiated the *Mission Internationale d'Observation de Burundi* (MIOB), a military observer-mission with no mandate to enforce peace and with no clear terms of operation. Boutrousgali appointed Julius Nyerere as the facilitator of the conflict, much to the chagrin of the Americans who did not approve his radical political reputation.

The determination of the Nyerere's negotiating team to sign an accord was informed by the endemic insecurity and widespread violence in the country. This insecurity, which was exacerbated by divisions among the rebels, further impeded any speedy return to peace in the country. The negotiation team was also hampered by the differences between the political and armed wings of the rebel groups. These led to the emergence of counter opinions which posed a serious threat to peace. I have also argued that the failure of the international community to guarantee the safety of the population in the rural areas was ultimately counter-productive.

Despite the negative forces that were present, the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Accord for Burundi was signed. The tenuous peace that now reigns is testimony to the essential frailty of the Accord. The pseudo-unity portrayed by the transitional government hides a more dangerous omen that the facilitators have ignored. The unworkability of a government headed by a *Hutu* when army reforms have not been undertaken cannot be overemphasised. The army is the most sensitive issue in the Burundian drive towards peace. It is still predominantly *Tutsi*, which means that there is a genuine fear among the *Hutu* that genocide could result again. I have argued that peace in Burundi should be pursued within a wider peace process in the entire Great Lakes region. Key decisions that affect the *Hutu* and the *Tutsi* in Burundi could be made in the DRC, Rwanda, Uganda, Sudan, Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia and Chad, thus conceiving a much more encompassing peace process and allowing a more sophisticated general approach to Africa's wars. The war economy that is generated by the region is also an important factor which the negotiating team should handle.

On the whole, therefore, the crisis in Burundi has made explicit a number of positions that have remained hidden prior to this conflict. The *Tutsi* have played up ethnicity as part of a hegemonic

strategy to remain in power. The central issue now is the mutual safeguarding of both *Hutu* and *Tutsi*, who each fear that extremists within their ranks, are plotting their extermination along ethnic lines. This conflict has also provoked extreme polarisation in Burundian society, so much so that it has personally affected political actors, even more so than in the previous crisis. But because the political and socio-economic problems have been made visible and there is an urgent need to find solutions, the settlement in Arusha in August 2000 still stands as an important political landmark on the road to a just and equitable peace.

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