CHAPTER IV
ETHNIC CLEANSING IN BURUNDI AND THE PROBLEM OF REFUGEES
In the previous chapter we undertook a detail study of the Rwandan case. It was demonstrated that the Hutu elite became paranoid and in an effort to perpetuate their rule, went to the extent of systematically planning and unleashing genocide against the Tutsis. In this chapter we shall concentrate on studying the ethnic cleansing in Burundi. Though both these countries share many common features yet as will emerge in the following discussion, they are fundamentally different.

In the case of Rwanda it was a small ruling elite of the majority group who in an effort to continue with their autocratic rule created the fear of the tyranny of the Tutsi monarchy and the Tutsi customary chief during the colonial rule. This group wantonly stayed away from the Arusha negotiations. In addition to this, the demands of the local opposition and the attack by the RPF, further made this group 'the akazu', paranoid and perpetuate the genocide.

There was three-fold crisis of development, stagnation and rural impoverishment. Situation became harsher by the imposition of conditionalities of Structural Adjustment Programme. The Tutsis who were debarred from the State sector had turned into a successful business group, and the rural Hutus for survival took up jobs provided by the former. Hence, for the rural poor the spectra for urbureetwa was very real and when the ruling elite gave a call to kill the Tutsis in order to save the gains of the 1959 Revolution, they readily complied.

This task was made easy by the creation of a parallel extra-State network of security committees and militias. These militias were trained in conducting house-to-house search, manning road blocks and killing. Propaganda machinery like Radio Milles Collines and print media were used to instil fear of and hatred for the Tutsis. All that was needed was a spark to ignite the fuse and the killing of the President provided just that, excuse.
However, in Burundi the Tutsis retained the helm of affairs by deliberately not strengthening democracy and democratic institutions. This would have given the Hutu majority an opportunity to participate and eventually capture political power. The Monarchy was able to play an active role due to the internal struggle between the different factions of Tutsi elite.

The Hutus were never given any opportunity to emerge from their deprivation and participate in the governance of the country. Any attempt at achieving power sharing was met with retribution by the Tutsis. After the first attempt in 1965, the army was able to cement the various factions of the Tutsi leadership and has since then maintained it with an iron grip. The refugees, as in the case of Rwanda, became pawns in the power games of contending elites.

MIGRATIONS AND CLAN STRUCTURE IN BURUNDI

The first migration into Burundi was in the latter part of the first millennium AD. These communities soon began to develop into societies and incorporated the inhabitants living in Burundi. The Hamitic\(^1\) theory of Kagawe and the White Fathers that maintained that the region was formerly occupied by some of Bantu organisations. A cohesive group of pastoralist, ‘Hamitic Tutsi’ came into this region from the north. This group introduced pastrolism, iron making, concept of kinship, a caste society and a number of new crops. Under their leader Guihanga, they established a number of Tutsi dynasties. Through a system of vassalage the conquered were assimilated into the State.

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It is however argued that the Bantu organised their society into different lineages and clans. These were like an extended family, with the heads of the family constituting the highest authority. As more immigrants arrived, the clan structure evolved to include others who were not necessarily the descents from other lineage.

Consequently, the clan structure was thus able to evolve and transform itself from kinship-based system into a political organisation with territorial boundaries. “The chief of the clan was also the chief of the land and the area was named after the dominating family.”

By the fifteenth century, many of the Bantu had organised themselves into small States. Mwami was both chief as well as a ritual leader in-charge of rainmaking.

In Burundi, the custody of the drum and the religion devolving on a clan reflected ancient ruling power. All these clan principalities were gradually absorbed between fifteenth and the seventeenth centuries or later by the new emergent dynasties. Scholars also identify a fourth group, the Ganwa feudal princes who were of mixed blood. The Ganwas considered themselves as neither Hutu nor Tutsi but above both the groups. Inter-marriage among all the groups, except for the Twa, were common, resulting in a sizeable population of mixed ancestry.

Burundi prior to colonisation was a quasi-feudal monarchy headed by the Mwami, who was chosen from among the Ganwas. Traditionally Burundi was also a highly decentralised kingdom, with most power usually residing with the Ganwas, who often fought among themselves. The Ganwas were drawn from both the Hutus and the Tutsis. Thus there was mobility in the social structure that allowed some Hutus to attain higher status than the Tutsis. It was even possible for a Hutu to

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2 Webster, ibid., p. 509
become a Tutsi and for a Ganwa to be demoted to a Tutsi. Hence, unlike Rwanda, the Burundi society was not rigid, but was fluid and defused.

However, for the most part of Burundi’s history other divisions, particularly intra-group cleavages, have been more important than tensions between the Hutus and the Tutsis. In the early years of independence, divisions, between the Bezi and Batare clans of the Ganwa constituted the dominant division in the country. The Hutus were also divided regionally and both the Hutu and Tutsi society was marked by cleavages along patrilineage lines.

ESTABLISHMENT OF TUTSI CONTROL OVER STATE

A series of natural calamities like drought and famine changed the power structure in the region. These natural and subsistence crises were more detrimental to the farmers. The herders mitigated these hardships through transhumance. Hence needy farmers sought the help of the herders to survive.

These changes between seventeenth and nineteenth century brought about a change in the Tutsi-Hutu relationship. It was transformed into a more comprehensive hierarchical relationship. Its flexibility now depended on the strength of State or the context involved.

The State in Burundi was decentralised and defused. The political order of the region was however extensively transformed due to the interplay of two different

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3 A close analysis of oral tradition reveals a vast number of droughts and famines during the first half of the seventeenth century in Rwanda, Kyanutwara and Burundi and in the second half of the eighteenth century in Burundi, Rwanda, Kiziba and Karawe. Webster, ibid., pp. 822-23

The change in power structure in favour of the immigrants took place when a great famine followed by a cattle disease occurred all over the empire. Dissatisfaction was spread, giving Kagore the military commander an opportunity to stage a coup and depose Wamera. The Bachwezi were massacred and their bodies thrown into the river. The entire Bachwazi aristocracy was annihilated or as tradition puts it ‘disappeared’. ibid p.
trends. The first was the growing cohesion and accumulation of power,\(^4\) while the second comprised the decisive expansion of the power of four States at the expense of others; Buganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Bungoro became powerful at the expense of many smaller States.

These changes brought about longer reign of rulers as against the very short of reigns of the preceding centuries.\(^5\) Time or reigns gave the rulers an opportunity to construct stronger and more durable networks of authority and more secure administrations. Legitimacy and authority are constructed over time "through the section-by-section erection of lattices of social relations."\(^6\) These elements could only be built over time.

There were about two hundred other domains, with political institutions similar to those of the larger kingdoms. Some of these smaller States went through transformation in the nineteenth century, enhancing power within their own immediate area. Others lost control of the centrifugal forces within and became dependencies of larger States.

Extraction\(^7\) raids conducted by the State faced resistance from the producers. Due to the growing demand of the ruling regime. The control of supplies of food

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4 The State in the pre-colonial era, was the aggregation of productive forces, materials skills, labour and access to, or control over the nodes of regional trade circuits. As trade was growing with outside areas, the control of these was very crucial to the survival and sustainability of these States. The external trade was growing through the Bukarbe Trading systems. This was Wahili and Arab traders began to come. At first merchandise came but soon it was followed by the traders. The traders plunged into the markets and States of the lake plateau region, moving along the same deeply cut routes, west of Lake Victoria that were initially used by salt traders. Perhaps more important than the merchandise, they introduced was the market for slaves and ivory in exchange for fire-arms. Eventually Islamic and Christian preachers, European explorers, adventurers and agents followed the same footpath as the traders, creating new forces of changes in the wider lake plateau region. D.W Cohan, "People and States of The Great Lakes", in The General History of Africa, vol. VI (Paris: UNESCO, 1985) p. 273

5 In Burundi, there were only two rulers in the nineteenth century. Natare II Ruganbe ruled from the last years of the eighteenth century till Mwezi II Gisabo began his reign from mid nineteenth century. Gisabo ruled till his death in 1908. Cohan, ibid., p. 274

6 Cohan, ibid., p. 276

7 The smaller domains of the Lakes Plateau came more and more to resemble 'gardens' to be cultivated for servants, slaves, and tribute by the larger kingdoms, or simply as tramping grounds for the mobile forces from within and without the region. Sources on the nineteenth century indicate that the extractive programmes of the major kingdoms in the region were actively resisted in the areas of production. Cohan, ibid., p. 280
moved to the centre of relations among States and in relations between the State and producers. The occupying expeditionary force consumed most of the extracted tribute and only the remainder was taken to the courts. The stay of the army was too brief to stimulate or force a permanent expansion in the production but was long enough to disrupt it. It took several years before the region was able to recover from the messy scenario.

Besides, the producers did not have any motivation to produce a surplus. This was primarily because, surplus could not be stored in large quantities or sold in the market. Secondly, the presence of a large quantity of surplus attracted marauders. Hence production never crossed subsistence levels.

Before the extension of State control over land, in most areas it was held by corporate patrilineages. An individual from another kinship group could receive land. Several administrative tools or clientship relations like ubureetwa were used by the to incorporate the Hutus. Ubureetwa meant providing free labour, rather than indirect extraction through the maintenance of cattle heads. The abacancuro, the poorest of the poor and the nutritionally most vulnerable families, were tied to their patron and to their locality.

The scarcity of land made the land-tenure system to develop into an individualised and an extractive social institution. The system over a period of time became a means of exploitation and a symbol of oppression.

**COLONIAL RULE IN BURUNDI**

Burundi escaped the initial thrust of scramble due to its remoteness and inaccessibility. The scramble had engulfed most of Africa before exploration of the area commenced. Subsequently efforts at penetration proceeded slowly.8

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Burundi’s colonial experience was relatively brief, but its impact was overwhelming on the country. The first White Fathers who reached Burundi were killed at Rumonge in 1881.9 When the Germans arrived in Burundi the situation was chaotic. Internecine struggle between the ageing Mwami and rebellious chiefs resulted in power being divided among a host of princely fractions. The Mwami’s promise of co-operation was a façade to avoid direct confrontation with Germans and to concentrate his energies against his domestic foes. The dilemma facing the Germans was to reconcile the conflicting claims of the Mwami and that of the chiefs. By supporting the chiefs against the Mwami they risked the possibility of causing irreparable harm and damage to the prestige of the crown and by supporting the king, they risked antagonising the chiefs. In either case a trial of strength was inevitable. The lack of co-ordination between the Governor-General in Dar-as-Salem and the Residency in Bujumbura further aggravated and complicated the situation.

The earliest formulation of German policy is found in the report submitted by Von Grawet, the Resident of Burundi, It stated:

Unqualified recognition of the Sultans by us, will link their interests with ours. The ideal will probably be realised more easily in Rwanda, which is more tightly organised, than in Burundi where we must re-established the old authority of the Sultan, which has weakened by wars with European and other circumstances.10

Thus, in Burundi German policy from the very beginning was a mixture of expediency and improvisation.

Pierre Ryckmans commented that on the eve of the First World War the German administration was in a state of avowed bankruptcy because it had worked

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9 This opportunity came when in Burundi. The encounter of Captain von Goetzen with Mwami Mewezi Kisabo of Burundi took place in 1899, but the pacification of the country by the Germans took several years and numerous military expeditions. The newly established military station in Bujumbura was nothing more than a precarious outpost. A full decade passed before the Germans had effective control over the area. Rene Lemarchand, ibid., p. 49
10 Rene Lemarchand, ibid., p. 50
towards the disintegration of a kingdom whose tradition, mores and religion were unknown or ignored.

**LEAGUE OF NATIONS MANDATED TERRITORIES**

After the defeat of Germany in the First World War Rwanda and Burundi became League of Nations' mandated territory. A decree of 1925 provided for its administrative integration with the Belgian Congo for the purposes of currency, security and colonial bureaucracy. However, colonial legislation was applicable only if it was specifically extended to Rwanda and Burundi. These colonies also retained separate budgets.

Belgium also attempted to administer Burundi through what it considered to be the country’s traditional political structure. Operating under the mistaken assumption that in Burundi the Tutsi domination of the political system was as strong as in Rwanda, Belgium gave greater power and educational opportunities to the *Ganwas* and the Tutsis. Yet the Tutsis never became as powerful as their counterparts in Rwanda, and nor was the Burundian society as rigid. Belgian attempts to rationalise the traditional administrative system further contributed to the consolidation of Tutsi dominance. Efforts after 1950s by colonial authorities to democratise the administration under the Trusteeship Agreement with the United Nations did little to alter Tutsi and *Ganwa* political domination, yet there was some space available for the Hutus to move up.

Under colonial influence Christianity largely replaced the traditional indigenous religion. Coffee growing and mining was introduced into the economy.

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11 The reform of Molegenius jurisdiction in 1933 completed the task of re-organising customary stratas, and incorporating them as auxiliaries of colonial order. Despite a proclaimed adherence to the doctrine of indirect rule, the territorial administration was preparatory and interventionist on the ground. M. Crawford Young. "Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi", in *The Cambridge History of Africa*, vol. VII, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) p. 700
The client system which traditionally served as an important source of income for the Tutsis, was abolished and replaced with State salaries for those working in the administration. Missionary activities in the region supplemented educational opportunities for the Hutus. The missionaries spread the Western concepts of equality and democracy that had previously been alien to Burundi. This further weakened the hold of the Tutsis.

Burundi lay on the margins of the 'War effort' and escaped most of its rigours. During the early post-War years initiative and control remained in the hands of the colonisers. However, with the anticipation of independence there was a spread of political consciousness and mobilisation. This process received further impetus once the Christian Democrat-Liberal coalition came to power after the 1958 elections in Belgium. The new government was anxious to break away from old colonial policy. The result was an intensification of ethnic identification and the creation of separate elites. Two of them, the Gamwas and Tutsis, dominated the political and economic structures. The third the Hutus were numerically smaller, significantly under-represented in positions of power and was thus increasingly resentful of the dominance of the other two groups. However, there was hope as well as space available to the Hutu elite, to get their share of powers. Hence no sharp cleavages developed between the Hutus and the Tutsis.

In his last annual address as Governor General Ryckman declared, that finally “the days of colonialism are over. The time was at hand to engineer the first controlled participation of the African populace in local political organs. The awakening aspiration of the masses for more satisfying existence were to find their fulfilment in redoubled programme of economic development joining a panoply of social welfare measures”. A working group was send in the spring of 1959. Its report in November 1959 was basis to introduce electoral principle at the Burgomaster to replace the appointed chiefs. The Councillors would serve as the electoral collage for the kingdom Councils with the Mwami becoming a constitutional figurehead outside politics and party. There was virtually no support in Rwanda and Burundi for the maintenance of a common framework. Young, ibid., p. 702
ETHNICITY AND IDENTITY AGGREGATION

The categorisation\textsuperscript{13} of Burundi inhabitants into Tutsis and Hutus underwent a series of changes over time and consists of many overlapping meanings that are almost impossible to disentangle.

Though the conflict could only partly be ascribed to ethnic assertion, but ethnicity did play a very crucial role in the aggregation of discontent and the sense of deprivation in people. The conflict was primarily fuelled by the anger against the exploitation and alienation from power.

The formation of ethnic groups is a social construction. In the East and Central Africa there are few linguistic, phenotypical or social differences between the Hutus and Tutsis. Also there have been substantial inter-marriages. Nevertheless, as recent events illustrate, these socially constructed differences between Hutus and Tutsis were a legitimate and potent reason for killing.

Amongst countries with similar demographic profile only Burundi and Rwanda have had such ethnic killing.\textsuperscript{14} Therefore, the unit of analysis of these conflicts should go beyond this dichotomy. Hence, ethnicity, cannot be held as the sole cause of the civil strife in Rwanda and Burundi. At the most it was an essential facilitator.

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\textsuperscript{13} Ethnic identity patterns have fluctuated more over time than is accounted for in the "hard" view of rigid unchanging groups, a view based on a biological model of social classifications. David Newbury, "Crisis in Central Africa Irredentist Rwanda: Ethnic and Territorial Frontiers in Central Africa", \textit{Africa Today}, vol. 44(2), 1997. p.213.

\textsuperscript{14} The assumption of ethnic identity as fixed since colonial days and not a changing social construction is not valid. Second, all Hutu-Tutsi relations are examined within the context of the modern nation State, despite the fact that Hutu and Tutsi are social categories which have never been contiguous with any political boundary. Being 'Tutsi' presumably means something different to those on the ground in Benaco than it does in the western press, to Tanzanians, or even to Rwandans who present accounts of the civil strife to outsiders. The concept/ assumption of a 'fixed' identity appears to ignore the fact that there are similar ethnic divisions in neighbouring countries, particularly Tanzania, where the same social category has not necessarily led to 'ethnocide as Lemarchand's description of Burundi's political history would imply. Indeed, the half million or so Hutus from Burundi and Rwanda who fled during 1993-4 into the Kagera Region of Tanzania must have known that this was locally considered to be an area with significant numbers of high status Tutsi. Tony Waters, "Tutsi Social Identity in Contemporary Africa", \textit{Journal of Modern African Studies}, vol. 33(2), 1995, pp. 343-344.
However, unlike Rwanda, the social milieu in Burundi was different. The land-tenure system and the office of the local chief were not too well entrenched. This provided space to the Hutus, to operate with relative autonomy. As social mobility was possible, the sense of deprivation and alienation from power was not too strong at the time of independence so as to warrant the formation of separate groups or parties. Due to the above factors, the Hutus were neither compelled to organise nor use ethnicity as a tool for mobilisation.

Both the ethnic identities continued to be malleable and reconstructed according to the context despite a similarity of labels across spatial and temporal contexts. As a consequence, a paranoid elite could manipulate these identities and use it as a tool for their own survival.

POST-COLONIAL PERIOD IN BURUNDI

After Burundi gained independence in 1962, initially, political divisions continued to fall primarily along intra-Gamwa lines, rather than between the Hutus and the Tutsis. In fact, the ethnic composition of the country’s main political party, the Union Pour le Progress (UPRONA), and the first few governments after independence showed a fair degree of balance between the Tutsis and the Hutus, with several Hutu even serving as Prime Minister.

The Hutu Revolution in Rwanda, began in 1959 and resulted in the consolidation of the Hutu control over Rwanda by 1964. This had a profound impact on the politics, ethnic divisions and the future of Burundi. The Revolution in Rwanda strengthened the Hutu ethnic identification in Burundi and emboldened elements of the Hutu elite, many of whom were inspired and got committed to a similar struggle in Burundi. The Rwandan revolt also induced anxieties among the Burundi Tutsis,
who feared they would meet with the same fate as their Rwandan brethren, i.e. being reduced to refugees, living in camp...

After a brief period of cohabitation the Tutsi elite began to undermine the democratic institutions and entrench themselves politically. Much of Burundi’s post-independence history has been marked by efforts on the part of Tutsi factions to strengthen their control over the State and armed forces and to transform them into effective agents for the perpetuation and expansion of Tutsi hegemony. There have been repeated attempts by Hutu factions, usually in the form of abortive coups or disorganized uprisings, to combat the Tutsi designs and hegemony and the attendant repression of the Hutu masses. After every such attempt more purges of Hutu elite took place. The increasingly insecure Tutsis used even the slightest pretext to eliminate the entire Hutu elite. These disturbing events and factors made the people look up to the institution of monarchy to lead and provide a semblance of order and stability. For the next few months the Mwami was deeply involved in the administration of the country: Democratic institutions like the parliament were increasingly made redundant. At another level, with the Monarchy playing an increasingly active role in governance, there was a growing restless among the Hutu majority. Unlike their Rwandan counterparts they saw their chances of coming to power or even playing a meaningful role, receding with the declining democratic values. This led the Hutus to adopt the use of force to change the ruling regime. But all their attempts only resulted in brutal reprisals by the Tutsi controlled army.
DEMISE OF THE MONARCHY AND THE RESTLESSNESS AMONG THE HUTUS

The first round of violence in Burundi occurred between 1965-66, when an attempted coup by the Hutu military officers was met with violent suppression by the Tutsi forces. The subsequent purging included numerous Hutu army officers and of thousands of Hutus, including virtually every significant Hutu in Burundi. The International Commission of Jurists reported that all the Hutu elected officers of both houses of the Burundi Parliament, and the principal leaders were among the eighty-six people executed after the abortive mutiny in Burundi in October in 1965.

Following the coup a Royal decree was issued in which the Mwami transformed the ministries into Royal Commissionerates with a Royal Commissioner appointed by the Mwami enjoying powers equal to that of a Minister.

During the period between 1966 and 1972 the division within the Royal family provided the outsiders with an opportunity to intervene. The elite faction used this division to play one section of the Royal family against the other. This culminated in the abdication by Mwami Mwambutsa in favour of his son, with the support of the Army. However, this arrangement did not last long as the new Mwami was soon deposed by the Army and a Republic was proclaimed under the leadership of the President Micombo. This effectively ended the role of Monarchy in the governance of Burundi.

The new regime even after being one year in power did not allow open airing of opposition. In an effort to contain opposition six former ministers and MPs were arrested and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment in Bujumbura for writing and

15 In mid-October of 1965, a group Hutu section of the Army and Gendarme staged a coup, which was put down. A mutiny of predominantly Hutu elements of the Army and Gendarme was put down by Royalist troops. Simultaneously attacks were launched in the resident of Mwami Mwambutsa IV and on the house of the Foreign Minister M. Leopold Biha. The Mwami escaped unhurt but several of his guards were killed. The Premier was critically injured, by three bullets. The Standard 20/10/1965
distributing an open letter against the President.¹⁶ Democratic space was effectively curbed, and with this also ended the prospects of Hutu participation.

However, this did not quell the opposition, nor did it quieten the restlessness among Hutus. The closing of democratic space only heightened the Hutu opposition and uneasiness. Towards the end of 1969 at least 20 people were arrested in Bujumbura following the discovery of a plot against the State. Once again in 1969, the Tutsi regime, using another attempted Hutu coup as a pretext, executed Hutu leaders in the army and government.

The violence that broke out in 1972 represented a dramatic escalation of the conflict and assertion by the Hutus. In the wake of the deepening intra-Tutsi tensions and increasing anti-Hutu feelings and provocation by local Tutsi officials, Hutu uprisings broke out in the capital and parts of the countryside. These uprisings, which were assisted by the Zairian refugees and the Hutu refugees based in Tanzania, were quickly crushed by the armed forces, which had been thoroughly purged of Hutus.

The insecure regime in Bujumbura, however, used the opportunity to embark on a wide spread killing of not only of the rebels, but also of the entire Hutu and rival Tutsi elites, including virtually every educated Hutu in Burundi, right down to the school students. Aided by Tutsi civilians and youth militias, the Army is estimated to have massacred up to 250,000 Hutus and driven roughly 150,000 out of the country.

**THE GENOCIDE OF 1972**

The former Mwami was arrested by the Government after trying to invade Burundi with the support of White mercenaries on 31 March, 1972. Radio Bujumbura

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¹⁶ Three other arrested in the same case last May were imprisoned for terms ranging from 3 to 7 years. The former President of the Legislative Assembly M. Thadde Sirywyumusi was jailed for 10 years. *Daily National* 27/12/1968
announced on 7 May, 1972 that an unspecified number of people had been executed for their part in the coup. After due consideration the military tribunals sentenced to death a number of Burundian national. It went on to suggest that the reactionary agents within the ruling Tusti elite had carried out the coup attempt.

However, a coup d'etat aimed at restoring ex-King Ntare V to power and a rebellion by Hutus, aimed at overthrowing the Tutsis took place simultaneously. These disorders were of an exceptionally serious nature and troubles ensued throughout the country and violence erupted in rural areas. The Burundian government in order to regain control of the situation took harsh and repressive measures, killing a large number people.\(^1^7\)

On 4 June, 1972 President Micombero asserted that peace had finally been restored in Burundi. Addressing army officers at a reception on 18 June, 1972 the Army Chief Lt. Col. Dabemeye announced the end of military operations against the rebels. More importantly he said Burundi's Armed Forces have proved once more that they constitute the foundation on which a prosperous and free Burundian society can be harmoniously consolidated. It is this foundation that has ensured that no Hutu elite can emerge as a challenger in Burundi.

Initially the Government denied that any genocide had taken place. However, when persistent reports of foreigners pointed to the evidence of large-scale killing having taken place, the Government then promptly blamed the killings to have been carried at by the Hutu rebels, suggesting thereby that all the 50,000 to 100,000 estimated dead were Tutsi victims of Hutu violence.

\(^1^7\) A Belgian television reporter M. Walter Geerts returning from Burundi confirmed the accusation of genocide perpetrated by those in power in Bujumbura, against the more numerous Hutus. He speculated that 50,000 to 100,000 Hutus were killed by the time he left the country, and added that repression was still in full swing in Bujumbura and in the provinces of Lake Tanganyika La Monde 28/5/1972
The United Nations Secretary-General Dr. Waldeim on 28 July, 1972 described the recent 'human tragedy' in Burundi as of frightening dimensions and pointed out to the Government's admittance that 80,000 people had perished and another half million were in need of aid.

The Tutsi reaction and objective had systematically been aimed at eliminating the Hutu elite and thus render the Hutus\(^\text{18}\) forever disadvantaged. This violence also ensured that Hutu harbour lasting animosities, which repeatedly erupted into more violence in the following years.

The events of 1972 cemented Tutsi political, social and economic hegemony in Burundi and left the Hutu community traumatised and leaderless, dispersed and defused. Violence also caused large number of Hutu to flee for refuge in the neighbouring countries. The ethnic conflict consequently remained subdued until 1988 when a new generation of Hutu children grew up.\(^\text{19}\)

**VIOLENCE OF 1988 AND REFORM**

Till about 1988, the Hutu-Tutsi conflict was contained as a result of the decimation of the Hutu elite, though structural violence continued to be perpetrated on Hutus. In the intervening period the Hutus had been effectively fragmented, traumatised and

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\(^\text{18}\) Abrams says 'increasing anti-Hutu provocation by local Tutsi officials led to Hutu uprisings. It broke out in the capital and parts of the countryside. The insecure Tutsi regime used the opportunity to slaughter not only the rebels but also the entire Hutu and rival Tutsi elite including every educated Hutu in Burundi. Aided by Tutsi civilian and youth militias, the Army is estimated to have slaughtered up to 250000 Hutu and driven out 150000 of the them from the country. Jason S. Abrams, "Burundi: Anatomy of an Ethnic Conflict", *Survival*, vol. 37(1), Spring 1995, p. *

\(^\text{19}\) In mid 1988 violence again reached such extent that Mr. Code Cisse, UNHCR representative in Rwanda said after touring the area on 20th and 21st of August 1988 'we cannot talk about a civil war because only one side was armed. It has become a massacre by the Burundi Army. *Financial Times* 23/8/1988

The trouble started according to one account when a Tutsi soldier shot dead 2 Hutus. This led to rioting in which around 1000 Tutsi were killed. This led the almost exclusive Tutsi Army bombing and burning Hutu villages. Another version says that massacres started after months of army manoeuvres aimed at checking Hutu smuggling of coffee. The Hutu revolted around 6th August 1988 killing perhaps as many as 2000 Tutsi. *AFP* 20/8/1988

The government blamed unspecified outside agitators for inflaming the Hutu. The military government had declared nation wide curfew and imposed travel restrictions. The Foreign Minister told diplomats in Bujumbura 'for these trouble making extremists, the solution of the problems of Burundi can only be achieved by the extermination of part of the population. *Burundi News Agency* 18/8/1988
leaderless. The prospect of their consolidation was bleak and not possible, as the entire potential leadership down to school children had been exterminated. It took almost sixteen years, after the killings of 1972, for any semblance of consolidation to emerge.

In 1988 two relatively minor anti-Hutu incidents in northern Burundi resulted in the massacre of hundreds of Tutsis. The Army's brutal response to this violence left an estimated 15,000-20,000 Hutus dead and drove tens of thousands into neighbouring Rwanda as refugees. This new violence erupted in August 1988, less than a year after President Buyoya came to power. During an operation aimed at

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20 The President of Burundi, Colonel Jean-Baptiste Bagaza, was overthrown on September 3rd by the country's military leadership while attending a summit of French-speaking leaders in Canada. A communiqué broadcast on official radio from the Burundi capital, Bujumbura, said the President was relieved of his duties as head of State, head of the ruling party and chief of the armed forces. President Bagaza, a member of the minority Tutsi people, had been credited with some success in healing the deep national wounds in Burundi which resulted from one of the worst outbreaks of tribal violence Africa had ever seen. Under colonel Micombero, Hutu were purged from the army, police, and key government offices, and Tutsi domination, enshrined in generations of overlordship, was strengthened. The bloodless 1976 overthrow of Colonel Micombero, who went into exile, signalled the start of the long process of grafting a sense of national identity on a deeply divided nation. "Our military regime is diametrically opposed to the one it took over from. There are soldiers at every level of power in Burundi, but there are also civilians at every level". "We believe that the tragic events of 1972 will not be wiped out by simple appeals for national reconciliation. We have to introduce concrete acts to create social justice." However, religious repression and a tightening of the minority Tutsi tribe's grip on Burundi's institutions have marked his 11-years, with arrests and expulsions of dozens of priests and missionaries, restrictions on religious practices and harassment of Christian communities. "We could, almost word for word trace them in the declaration which 11-years ago justified the fall of the first republic." Major Buyoya said on September 5th in a Radio Burundi address. Major Buyoya said the freedom of worship would be guaranteed, that the people would be consulted. The new leader followed words with action on September 7th when he announced the release of several hundred political prisoners held by deposed President Bagaza. Catholic church authorities in Burundi have sent a message of support to the new military junta, diplomatic sources. Major Buyoya has also set about restoring good relations with the Vatican after the years of anti-clerical repression and has promised to restore civilian rule with "more social justice and real democracy."

In an interview on September 17th with AFP and La Monde, two weeks after seizing power, Major Buyoya said the army "will not stay in power." He said that in Bujumbura, "the soldiers have already returned to their barracks." Major Buyoya, for whom it was the first contact with the Press since has takeover, said the deterioration of relations with the roman Catholic church was one of the main reasons for the September 3rd coup. Marches Tropicaux also considers it a "palace revolution" - the new president belongs to the same group as his predecessor, that of the Tutsi and, even more precisely, to the Beachima from the Bururi region in the south of the country. He is the same generation, from the "same hill". "In reality, both in the first and in the second republic the struggle for power has often been reduced to a battle between small Tutsi groups to which certain Hutu elements have rallied." La Monde also considered that the "heavy-handedness" with regard to the church ended up by "tarnishing the country's image abroad.

Le Soleil asks why and, like other commentators, focuses on the power of the church and the confrontation between it and the State, saying, "no power could ignore such a force." There are differing versions as to what started the killings but it is generally believed that it was sparked off by a local dispute. In one account, a Tutsi soldier shot dead two Hutu civilians which led to a riot in which 800 to 1,000 Tutsis were killed. This led to the almost-exclusively Tutsi army bombing and burning Hutu villages. In another account, the massacres started after months of army maneuvers aimed at checking Hutu smuggling of coffee, Burundi's Principal cash crop and the source of 80% of its income, across the border to
‘restoring order’, the armed forces randomly killed thousands of unarmed Hutu civilians in several northern municipalities, Ntega and Marangara in particular. Apart from the death toll of around 20,000, another 60,000 fled to neighbouring Rwanda.

To end the cycle of ethnic violence, the President Buyoya, initiated a programme of reform. In October 1988 a ‘National Commission to Study the Question of National Unity’, comprising equal number of Hutus and Tutsis was formed. He also appointed a Hutu, Adrien Sibomana, as Prime Minister, and formed a Cabinet, where Hutus and Tutsis held an equal number of portfolios. Although these measures were seen as cosmetic to a large extent, they were the beginning of profound dynamics of change.

A public debate was initiated before the drafting of a ‘Charter of National Unity’. For this purpose many ‘symposia on unity’ were organised both in towns and in the countryside. Freedom of expression was allowed and a certain retreat by the powerful State Security Bureau contributed to the emergence of a climate favourable to debate and reflection. The Charter was published as a draft in April 1990 and, after a new round of consultations, was approved by referendum in February 1991.

The progress made between late 1988 and early 1991 was obvious. At the political level, many Hutus entered the State apparatus. Towards the end of 1990, almost half the number of ministers, a sizeable number of provincial governors and

richer Rwanda. The Hutu revolted around August 6th, killing perhaps as many as 2,000 Tutsi and dumping them in the rivers.

*Burundi New Agency*. It claimed that men, women and children from the Tutsi tribe were being massacred and their houses burned down by "extremists intent on starting tribal war." "Everything indicates that the number of dead is very high and is still rising," it said. Tutsi refugees who fled to Rwanda were followed by a much larger flood of Hutu who said the army, dominated by the tutsi, had moved in on August 17th and launched a reprisal slaughter of the Hutu.

Mr. Code Cisse, representative in Rwanda of the U.N. high Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), toured the border area on August 20th-21st and said: "We cannot talk about a civil war because only one side is armed. It has become a massacre by the Burundian army."

*The Observer* (UK) said that it would be easy to characterise the Hutu revolt as mindless savagery. But it was essentially a political protest at the suffocating control exercised by the Tutsi-dominated UPRONA party, which hogs power, official jobs, secondary school and university places and the 25,000-strong army.
mayors, and even the Secretary-General of the single party *Union Pour le Progrès National* (UPRONA) were Hutus. Furthermore, they were equally represented with Tutsis, in all major State bodies, of political nature. A marked improvement likewise occurred in two of the three key areas where discrimination against the Hutus had been highly visible in the past. The first of these was education. The second related to the civil service, where higher echelons in particular was the monopoly of Tutsis. The Government took a number of quite voluntary measures aimed at recruiting Hutus into responsible position, sometime even at the expense of incumbent Tutsi. The third and the most sensitive area remained problematic. This was the armed forces and the security services, which during the successive crises since 1965 had become almost exclusively Tutsi dominated, and resisted any change. This was the bedrock of Tutsi domination and thus it was opposed to any change. The November 1991 disturbances in particular, showed that President Buyoya’s message of reconciliation had considerable difficulty in penetrating the military establishment. In the past Burundi had returned to constitutional government after an interregnum of military rule (1974 and 1981). Though these changes had happened in a tightly controlled way; the UPRONA acting together with the army, as the guarantee of Tutsi hegemony. The basic logic of democratisation was that Hutus would inevitably come to power. This made the Tutsi hardliners paranoid. They feared that their fate would become similar to that of Rwandan Tutsis. They were willing to tolerate reforms as long as it was kept in tight leash and was not allowed it to go out of control.

**TUSSLE OVER REFORMS**

As the following events illustrate the Army had the final say. Despite efforts at reforms, the process was scuttled.
The constitutional commission started its work in April 1991, right after the approval of the Charter of National Unity. As a consequence, a report was published in August 1991 and *La Constitution burundaise* was approved by referendum in March 1992.

After the promulgation of the decree on political parties, in April 1992 multipartyism started to take shape. The recognition of parties was subject to stringent condition. Despite this seven opposition parties were operating legally by the end of the year.

Two basic issues become clear. First, that the contest was going to be a two-party contest. The *Front democratique du Burundi* (FRODEBU) emerged as the only significant challenger to the entrenched rule of UPRONA. This was because of its successful nation-wide recruitment campaign, solid organisation, commitment of its members and the quality and diversity of its leadership. Secondly, from the end of 1992 onwards, the salience of ethnicity as a major electoral element emerged. After losing considerable ground to the new party, UPRONA embarked on a campaign to discredit FRODEBU. It was accused of being an ethnic organisation of Hutus and even the ‘legal arm’ of the outlawed PALIPEHUTU. Besides, these Tutsis who had joined FRODEBU were physically intimidated by UPRONA supporters so as to compel such ‘traitors’ to quit the party.

There were finally three candidates in the contest. The incumbent Berre Buyoya supported by his own party UPRONA, and by the *Rassemblement democratique pour le developpment economique et social* (RADDES). The main challenger, Melchior Ndayaye, was supported by his own party FRODEBU, as a well as by the *Rassemblement du peuple burundais* (R.P.B.), the *Parti du peuple* (P.P.),
and the *Parti liberal* (P.L.). Lastly, there was Pierre-Claver Sendegeya, proposed by the ‘royalist’ P.R.P.

Finally, on 1 June, 1993 elections took place in considerable calm and order under the watchful eyes of about 1,000 national observers. The honest running of the elections was reflected in the result. Ndadaye (64.75 per cent of the vote) decisively beat Buyoya (32.39 per cent). Sendegeya (1.44 per cent) was never in the contest and the remaining ballot papers were unmarked or void. The turnout was a massive 97.3 per cent of registered voters. It reflected the interest of Burundians in their first opportunity ever to determine their Head of State by a competitive election. The outgoing President was rejected emphatically in a number of localities where the army had been violent and repressive during the events of August 1988 and November 1991.

In the elections to the Legislative Assembly, of the ten recognised parties, only six, eventually submitted the list of candidates to the electorate. Overall, 71.40 per cent voted for FRODEBU (up by more than 6 per cent on Ndadaye’s score) as against 21.43 per cent for UPRONA (down by almost 11 per cent of Buyoya’s score). The four other participating parties – the P.R.P., RADDES, the P.P., and the R.P.B. – managed negligible results; none of them reaching 2 per cent or even getting close to a seat.

Burundi had adopted a system of proportional representation. The distribution of seats in the *Assemblee Nationale* was determined by the percentage of votes cast in favour of each political party. The composition of the *Assemblee Nationale* in July 1993 was as following: out of the total 81 seats, UPRONA held 16 and FRODEBU 65, or 80.2 per cent. In ethnic terms, the break-up of the membership of the new

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Assemblee Nationale was as following: 69 were Hutus (about 85 per cent), and 12 were Tutsis (about 15 per cent). Of the latter, eight were from FRODEBU and four from UPRONA, which means that about 12 per cent of FRODEBU’s members were Tutsis, compared to 25 per cent of UPRONA’s.

IMPLICATIONS OF REFORMS

The June 1993 elections resulted in a virtual political coup. After having ruled Burundi since 1965, without any challenge, UPRONA was significantly weakened, if not destroyed by losing the Presidency. It held on to a politically ineffective minority of under 20 per cent in the Assemblee Nationale. The former single party that had survived three coups and several massive killings and upheavals (like the 1972 genocide), was blown away by the first democratic exercise undertaken since 1965. This confirmed the worst fears of the Tutsi elite. It also attested to the fact that UPRONA had little or no popular support as a national party. It was rather an instrument to legitimise the monopolisation of power in the hands of Tutsi elite. While UPRONA was the facade of this legitimacy, the army was its physical base. The voters had broken this charade of unanimity. For Buyoya, the past eventually turned out to be a major liability. The association of Buyoya with the symbols of past injustice, violence, and oppression undoubtedly turned away many voters who might otherwise have recognised his qualities as a statesman. Despite this, large number of Hutus voted for him. However, he was unable to mobilise voters to ignore the potential of ethnicity and the accumulated sense of deprivation and anger among the Hutus.

UPRONA was primarily a party of and for Tutsi minority, and it was only during the last few years that Hutus were co-opted into its leadership structure.
FRODEBU, on the other hand, was created as a clandestine party in 1986, mainly in response to the authoritarian rule and human rights abuses under the Bagaza regime. In its early stage the leaders of FRODEBU were Hutus, some of whom had been active in the political organisation of refugees.

For many members of the Tutsi elite the spectre of the country’s demographic majority being turned into a political majority became a reality, all the more so since the ethnic composition of the Assemblee Nationale fitted the 85-15 per cent break-up exactly.

It is no coincidence that the areas where ethnic violence took place in November 1991 and April 1992 were those, most active in ending the status quo. These had been administered badly and with difficulty. Additional elements which contributed to it were, the 'protest behaviour' and the closeness of the Zairean and Rwandan borders, which are highly porous both to illegal activities such as smuggling and to contacts with radical Hutu refugee communities in neighbouring countries.

FRODEBU’s communique of 3 June, 1993, in which the winning party thanked the outgoing President and the armed forces, did little to alleviate these fears despite its reference to 'a victory of the whole Burundian people and of all political forces adhering to democratic principles'.

Reflecting the worries of Tutsis, soon street protests began in response. Protests by the Tutsi elite began when these concerns were openly expressed by Tutsi students demonstrating in Bujumbura on 4 June, 1993. They claimed that the elections had in reality become an 'ethnic inventory of Burundi', and demanded the cancellation of the forthcoming elections for the Assemblee Nationale. These protests by students, was later joined by school children and civil servants. It continued for
several days and led to violence which resulted in some casualties, as well as seriously disturbance of the scheduled examinations. They insisted that the 'tribalisation' of political life, and the ushering pseudo-democracy has resulted in the exclusion of the ethnic minority.

Some conservative Tutsis within the UPRONA accused Hutu members of the party of having played a double game in order to promote Ndadaye's victory. President Buyoya accepted the popular verdict and insisted that everyone else should do so. In a similar vein, the Chief of Staff of the Army expressed the military's loyalty to the President elect. After a joint appeal by Buyoya and Ndadaye and the ending of unauthorised demonstrations, the protest movement died down, and the elections to the Assemblee Nationale took place as announced.

Out of a total of 23 portfolios, FRODEBU only held thirteen, while UPRONA had six and the P.P. and the R.P.B. (the parities that supported Ndadaye's) one each. In addition, two army officers (classified as independent) held the portfolios of the Ministry of Defence and the State Secretariat for Internal Security.

Similar efforts in cohabitation were attempted with a Tutsi Sylvic Kinigi as the Prime Minister, (UPRONA). A technocrat with an excellent reputation, she was in charge of Burundi's structural adjustment programme. By her appointment Ndadaye had kept his promise that the President and the Prime Minister would not belong to the same ethnic group.

FRODEBU attempted to allay the understandable fears shared by many former incumbents and by the Tutsi elite as a whole. Apart from the armed force FRODEBU took over what was in essence an UPRONA State apparatus. This also heralded the emergence of a Hutu leadership, which had assumed power on the basis of a popular mandate, unlike those few Hutus who in the past came to office as a result of co-
optation by Tutsi rulers. This not only altered the balance of ethnic power relations, but also led to the emergence of another form of legitimacy.

**REACTION OF THE TUTSIS AND THE ATTEMPTED COUP OF 1993**

However, the restlessness among the paranoid Tutsi elite resulted in a coup. The discontent in certain Tutsi circles resulted in an attempt coup on the night of 2-3 July, 1993, when a group of soldiers from a Bujumbura barracks attempted to seize the residence of the President elect. After other units failed to support their attempted *coup d'état* the leaders of the insurgents were arrested – including five high-ranking officers – and were condemned both by the outgoing President and by the army command. Significantly, one of the arrested officers was the head of the President Buyoya’s Cabinet, and the attempt in itself reflected the considerable discontent felt by some members of the ousted elite. Given that Burundi had a history of political assassinations, any serious attempt against Ndadaye’s life would have resulted in massive violence throughout the country.

The reconciliation process initiated a culture of debate and dialogue, which had been absent for a quarter of a century. Although ethnic fears and antagonism did not disappear altogether, a way was paved for the acceptance of a political system based on a popular mandate. However, this experiment did not last long.

Tutsi paratroops overthrew President Melchior Ndadaye on 21 October, 1993, ending a short-lived experiment with democracy, which had given the majority Hutu tribe a rare taste of political freedom. President Ndadaye had assumed office in July after winning Burundi’s first multi-party elections in June. In the early hours of 21 October, 1993, armoured cars rolled down onto the building of the radio and television in Bujumbura and the Presidential palace. They were supported by some 100 parachutists of the Bejumbura para-commando camp. Before long news of the insurgent attack had filtered through, and it was learnt that President Ndadaye and
some of his close colleagues, including the President of the National Assembly, the Interior Minister and the Director-General of the Intelligence Services were taken hostage and confined to the military camp of Bujumbura. In the evening, amidst conflicting reports, President Ndadaye and his colleagues were said to have been summarily executed. Para-troops fanned out across the capital in search of congressmen and government ministers.

On the evening of 21 October, 1993 the army announced the formation of a council of “Public Salvation” and put forward Francois Ngeze as its head. Ngeze, a former Interior Minister, was one of the few token Hutus in the UPRONA, before its defeat by FRODEBU at the polls. The Burundian Defence Minister, Lt Col. Charles Ntakije, disowned the coup on 23 October, 1993 and called on all ranks in the national army to dissociate themselves from the plotters and from the group calling itself the National Council of Salvation.

As the coup reports confirming the Presidents killing filtered through, signs emerged of a rallying among the supporters of the dead Head of State and his government, and of confusion among those responsible for his overthrow. Fear of popular anger sent soldiers fleeing from Bujumbura on the 24 October, 1993 as, protestors gathered their strength. Refugees poured into Rwanda, Tanzania and Zaire, escaping from killings in the provinces. The coup-makers appeared to have panicked at the violence their actions had unleashed in the countryside, which they could not

22 As soon as the news of the coup d'état and particularly of Ndadaye’s killing spread large-scale violence erupted in most provinces, particularly in the north, north-east, and centre. In some instances, Tutsi soldiers massively killed Hutus, including FRODEBU officials. In others, Hutu civilians systematically attacked Tutsis. Elsewhere, Tutsi civilian, sometimes assisted by Rwandan Tutsi refugees, attacked Hutus. Two days later on 23 October 1993, the Army Chief of Staff announced the end of the insurrection and ordered the military back to their barracks while seeking an amnesty for the insurgents. A stalemate developed. The remaining Ministers stayed in hiding in the French Embassy where they had regrouped and expressed complete distrust in the army. They refused to leave the building without international protection. The military claimed its innocence and blamed the coup on a few marginal elements, while concurrently a number of army units continued large-scale killing of civilians in the provinces. The collapse of the military takeover was followed by a second, creeping coup, in which the army and some civilian forces (several Tutsi parties and organisation) attempted to undo, both the Constitution and the electoral process of June 1993.
any longer contain. Some army officers seem to have been less than enthusiastic about the coup. The Defence Minister, Lt. Col Charles Ntakije is reported to have fled to avoid being killed or dragged into it. Col. Bikomgu announced over Radio Burundi, denying any involvement in the violence.

Amidst this political turbulence, Ndadye's Civil Service Minister, Mr. Leonard Nyagoma, thundered:

> The criminals who overthrew democratic institutions and killed democratically elected leaders must be brought to justice. They have realised that they cannot manage the country and they are coming to get us to retake power.\(^23\)

Similarly the Information Minister, Jean Maries Ngendahayo, from hiding in a foreign embassy, stated:

> But it's not that simple, and we are refusing. We want 500 foreign troops to come right away to guarantee security, and the United Nations Security Council to send troops on a longer-term basis.\(^24\)

More than 300,000 Burundi refugees had fled into neighbouring Rwanda. Another 12,000 were in Tanzania and an unknown number in Zaire. On 28 October, 1993 the United Nations confirmed that the coup had failed and the surviving members of the government held power. Francois Ngeze, head of the self-styled 'Public Salvation Committee' which claimed to be in control, was said to be under house arrest. Ten other coup leaders were arrested but forty more fled to Zaire.

"Everybody has hands full of blood," stated Daniel Augsburger, the Head of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Burundi. The first four days after the coup it was a blank cheque for killing Tutsis. There were some areas where not a single Tutsi survived. There after emerged the second trend of revenge killing.

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\(^{23}\) *Le Monde*

\(^{24}\) *Le Monde*
In the second wave of revenge, scenes were repeated, villages after villages, where Tutsi farmers were turned out of their homes by Hutus in October 1993, returned under the protection of Tutsi soldiers and attacked the Hutu villagers. This was the first time the Tutsis, who had dominated politics, public services and the economy since the 1960s, suffered heavy losses in ethnic violence but once army reinforcement arrived they took revenge and retribution.

Latest estimates put more than 800,000 Burundian refugees to have been displaced by the ethnic fighting. The World Food Programme (WFP) launched a major relief operation. The United Nations appealed on 23 October, 1993 for funds to help the survival of 250,000 people within Burundi and gave warnings of a new wave of ethnic violence. Radio Tanzania reported on 14 November, 1993 that thousands of Burundians who had crossed the border into Tanzania to escape clashes had begun to return home. It cited immigration officer as saying 20,000 had returned so far.

The main item on the agenda of the meeting presided over by Mrs. Kinigi pertained to the stopping of the bloodbath which followed the death of President Melchior Ndadaye and six of his ministers during the abortive coup. Mrs. Kinigi wanted under the aegis of the United Nations, the United States, France, Germany and Belgium could give technical and financial assistance to an international neutral force which, would not be a substitute for the Burundian army but would aim at restoring a climate of confidence. Such a force would even work within a framework supplied by the Army. However, the Prime Minister once again accused the Army of continuing to carry out reprisals against the population, especially in Gitega province (centre), adding that the situation was still quite critical.

The Burundian Minister for National Education, Mr. Liboire Ngendahatyo told *Le Monde* during a visit to Paris, that, “If there are fresh elections, the
FRODEBU will win them, therefore the organisers of the coup – only some of whom have been arrested – may well try to strike again at the party leadership. 25

After these events most Hutus felt that the army is a threat to their survival and that it should be disbanded while most Tutsis regarded it as their insurance policy which should be salvaged, as it stands.

REPERCUSSIONS OF VIOLENCE

There were about 700,000 or so refugees in the neighbouring countries. These refugees refused to come back to Burundi. This heightened the possibility of their becoming increasingly radicalised by the armed wing of PALIPEHUTU. This ran the risk of starting a protracted civil war, which would have aimed eventually at the elimination of the Tutsis. In addition, the prolonged absence of peasants from their land because of continued insecurity, was bound to result in famine.

In June 1993, there was hope that Burundi might finally extricate itself from its bloody legacy of ethnic conflict when elections were held. A Hutu president assumed power and a majority Hutu government was formed for the first time. However in less than four months later these hopes were shattered when the elected president and several government officials were killed. Although the attempted coup quickly collapsed amid strident international condemnation, it set off a frenzy of brutal violence between the Hutus and Tutsis throughout the country that took an estimated 200,000 lives and drove away an estimated 1.1 million from their homes. The only chance of some form of cohabitation and power-sharing was shattered.

By February 1994, largely through United Nations mediation, a new Hutu president, Cyprien Ntaryamira, and a new majority Hutu government were installed.

25 Le Monde
and violence began to abate. But fears of renewed widespread violence arose following the downing of a plane carrying President Ntaryamira and the President of Rwanda from a regional summit in Tanzania. The plane crash set-off genocide in Rwanda that stunned the world, swamped Burundi with refugees it was ill-prepared to handle and plunged Burundi into a new political crisis. The humanitarian situation was daunting. In October 1994, over one million people in Burundi needed humanitarian assistance, including 600,000 Burundi and nearly 300,000 Rwandan refugees.

Events in Burundi led to a spiralling syndrome of suspicion, fear and hatred between the two ethnic groups. Each round of violence made the next round all the more inevitable, as mutual suspicion and fear increasingly dominated the mindset of both groups. Earlier, violence attending a coup attempt would have remained limited, now such violence was far more likely to engulf the entire Burundian society and descend into ethnic cleansing campaigns. The successive rounds of violence only created greater hatred and fear than ever before, although there was a majority Hutu government. The country became a powder keg of ethnic tensions.

SALIENCE OF ETHNICITY

In Burundi the discriminatory and repressive policies and actions of the Tutsi dominated State, particularly, has increased the potency of Hutu ethnic identification and animosity towards the Tutsis. Second comes the important role that intellectuals can play in promoting ethnic identities. Burundi's Hutu intellectuals, particularly those educated in Europe, have galvanised Hutu ethnic identification and mobilised that identification towards political ends.
Hutu-Tutsi conflict prior to independence and the early rounds of post-independence violence (1965-66 and 1969) were on limited scale. However, the conflict took the form of ethnic cleansing or genocide in 1972. This marked a tragic transformation and escalation of the conflict. Although as in the earlier cases, it appears to have been initiated by an attempted Hutu coup, violence quickly spread among the masses. Likewise, the 1988 and 1993-94 spate of violence – although not initiated as reaction to Hutu coups – also engulfed ordinary Hutus and Tutsis, as both perpetrators and victims of violence. Given the domination of the armed forces by the Tutsis, an overwhelming majority of victims have been Hutus.

Tutsi attacks were generally conducted by the armed forces and paramilitary groups, and were thus better organised and employed relatively sophisticated weaponry, including machine guns, grenades, armoured vehicles and helicopters. In contrast the Hutu coup attempts and anti-Tutsi attacks, particularly those conducted by peasants, were disorganised and spasmodic. The weapons used by Hutu peasants were traditionally limited to primitive weapons, such as machetes and spears, with firearms used only by Hutu Army factions. However, during the 1993-94 violence the weapons and capabilities of the two sides were more evenly matched- with the fighting on both sides being disorganised. The tactics used were characteristic of the violence since 1972, but these grew even more inhumane. The destruction of homes and farms with torches or grenades became frequent, and there are reports of children and teachers being locked in their schools and burnt to death. As before, the killed of children and babies were common. The line between those who fought and those who watched was obliterated. Virtually the whole of the society had become both perpetrators and victims of violence.
Thus, though the symbol of distinctiveness was available at the time of independence, the hope of opportunity and space led the Hutu leadership to integrate with the Tutsis. However, soon this hope began to fade and this sense of deprivation heightened; even more due to the achievement of Hutu's in Rwanda. Hence over the year Hutus identity began to consolidate and aggregate.

On the other hand the Tutsis though well-organised were always fearful of the Hutus due to their numerical strength and the Rwandan experience. They were willing to unleash phenomenal amount of violence and went to the extent of ethnic cleansing. Due to intense international pressure and the internal achievement of Rwanda, the Tutsis in Burundi had to provide space and power to the Hutus but the Army kept this under tight control. This attempt at legitimisation did not succeed and the Hutu elite began to emerge. To scuttle that a coup took place where the top Hutu leadership was killed.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE IN BURUNDI

The 1972 violence, the first to involve the large-scale slaughter of civilians, met with little international condemnation. With the exception of Belgium, which condemned the violence and halted all military and economic aid, most governments voiced muted criticism.

However, the 1988 violence received greater attention from governments, the international press and human rights organisations. Belgium and Canada reacted strongly to the massacres, while the European Parliament and the World Bank expressed their concern over the violence and human rights conditions in Burundi. The United States House of Representatives held hearings and passed a resolution condemning the atrocities and urging the termination of United States foreign
assistance to Burundi unless the Government took certain explicit measures in response to the violence and the conditions that had provoked it.

There were limits however, to the international community’s willingness to intervene in the conflict, particularly through the United Nations. In the aftermath of the attempted coup, Burundi requested United Nations troops to defend the Government and restore security in the country. The post-Mogadishu international attitudes towards peace-keeping, especially towards missions that are expensive and may lead to heavy causalities was at the best restrictive.

Hutu elements have continued demanding an expanded international military presence in Burundi. Tutsi factions and the Army warn that any United Nations military presence is unacceptable and would be met with resistance.

CONCLUDING POINTS

Thus as is clear from the above discussions Burundi was a less rigid society which provided hope to Hutus. When this hope was belied they became restless and also attempted to take power by force. The Tutsis on the other hand were paranoid due to the success of the Hutus in Rwanda. As a consequence they unleashed phenomenal amounts of violence. However, over the years the Hutus began to consolidate and aggregate using ethnicity and they also challenged the Tutsi domination in a more organised manner.

It is pertinent to note that the quantum of refugees is linked to both the quantum and intensity of the conflict but more so to organisational formulations. So any solution will be linked to the solving of the conflict i.e. solving the issue of power sharing and ethnicity.