The Republic of Burundi

Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in Burundi
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1. Introduction

For the past 20 years or so the picture portrayed by the tourist leaflets dating from colonial times on Burundi’s beautiful weather and landscape as well as the legendary hospitality of its people etc have been shattered by ethnic conflict which some "scientific" media and writings take pleasures in presenting over and over again as the scars of ancestral ethnic rivalry.

However, the whole world agrees that the four communities that make up the people of Burundi namely the Ganwas, the Hutus, the Tutsis and the Twas have lived harmoniously for a very long time sharing the same language, the same culture, worshipping the same Imana (God), paying allegiance since the 17th century to the same mwani (king) and maintaining very close relations with strong bonds of solidarity, inviting each other to share a beer, providing mutual assistance on farms as well as building bonds based on marriage ties etc.

The head of the country was mwami who was regarded as the Father of the Nation, keeper of fertility and prosperity of the kingdom. He was not identified with any "ethnic" group. His authority was transmitted by the chiefs (the ganwa aristocrats, the Hutu and Tutsi elders) who were in charge of the administrative subdivisions.

An important balancing force was in the hands of the keepers of royal secrets, the banyamabanga. These personalities (generally chosen in the Hutu class of Bajiji, Bashubi, Bahanza and Bavumu) held high religious positions and given authority over autonomous administrative districts by the king.

The chiefdom in turn had subchiefdoms governed by the ivyasiho, chosen from both the Hutu and Tutsi on the basis of individual merit within the bashingantahe elders, keepers of traditional values as well as conflict arbiters on hilltops, who were the real regulators of basic social life.

The monarchical system has succeeded since the 17th century through a subtle interplay of alliances with all the "ethnic" groups as well as with some clans thus establishing a genuine Nation-State. Indeed, it chose royal brides and the milkers of the country among the Tutsi clans, the cooks and most of those who held religious authority were selected within the Hutu clans.

This paper is divided into three parts. The first part tries to examine the issue of violence which has led to the break-up of the Burundi communities in the last 30 years.

The second part reviews the main preconditions for a swift return to peace including the re-establishment of the authority of the state and the restoration of public order as well as the development of the rule of law, the peace talks and the role of the international community etc.

The final part reviews the target group, which would play an important post-conflict role such as civil society, women and youth as well as the bashingantahe elders, the managers and regulators of basic social life.
2. Cyclical Violence and Conflict within the Burundi Communities

The Ethnography of the Communities in Burundi

The colonial and missionary historiography classified the communities in Burundi into "races", "tribes" or "castes" carefully distinguishing among them in a very hierarchical manner as the Hamites, the Bantus and the Pygmies.

According to the famous Hamitic mythology on the successive invasions launched by Speke, great explorer in East Africa in 1863, the Tutsi community, (Hamite Pastoralists) was placed on top of the society. Coming either from Ethiopia or Egypt, they built the kingdom of Burundi after suppressing the Hutu community which arrived in the region during the Bantu immigrations. The Twa community, (the real indigens) were compelled to flee to the forests.

The missionaries and the colonialists who later visited Burundi told this story over and over again. The writings of Bishop Julien Gorju were crucial on this matter. While supporting in a 1992 publication, an oral survey of keepers of oral tradition that the Hutus were at the origin of the monarchy, he suddenly changed his opinion in 1938. According to him, this issue should be made clear once and for all. He stated that the dynasty was hamite, that is Tutsi. He was later not to be contradicted by anyone. The theory that the Twas were the first immigrant community followed by the Hutu and the Tutsi as the last to arrive towards the 16th century has been questionable. Several authors such as H. Meyer and E. Simons dismissed the theory of an armed Tusti invasion but rather talked about a peaceful and gradual infiltration. According to J. Kenppens the Hutus and the Tutsi together conquered Northern Uganda and followed the route towards Burundi. R. Bourgeois thought that the Batwa were involved in the major migrations which brought the Bahutu and Batutsi to Rwanda-Urundi and they lived side by side with them in Africa, it seems for thousands of years.

In order to reinforce the differences among the communities namely the Hutu, the Tutsi, and the Twa, the ethnography portrayed by the missionaries and the colonialists reiterated their physical differences. The Tutsi were described as a race of giants with aristocratic appearances and the Hutus as stocky with woolly hair and flat nose etc…while the Twas as "grotesque small creatures" and seen as an old and worn out race and bound to disappear. These stereotypes on the canons of beauty with emphasis on the physical appearance, finesse and elegance of one against another was mentioned and used systematically in later writings and activities.

Beyond the "biological" considerations of the Burundi communities, the ethnography had blanket judgements. The Tutsi were seen as intelligent with leadership qualities but their aloofness hid deceptive tendencies. They were war-like, domineering and without mercy characteristics that could be related to the wars that they embarked upon before settling in the country. The Hutus were shy, happy-going, crafty and lazy according to the words of E. Simons, nevertheless they appeared as pleasant farmers. He noted that the Twa community was capable of displaying strong attachment and devotion, which are more characteristic of the instincts of dogs than gratitude displayed by men.

The missionary and colonial ideology mentioned another inequality which linked the minority "Tutsi lords" to the mass "of Hutu serfs" within a feudal system still existing in Africa.
"Socially and economically, the Tutsi dominated the Hutu". It is with these succinct words that William Louis described the relationship between the Hutus and the Tutsis. Here he was making reference to several literature which wanted the Tutsis cattle keepers to dominate the Hutus who were generally farmers.

In reality and in the prevailing circumstances, it cannot be affirmed that there was a big economic difference between the two communities. A specialist of the political sociologist of Burundi stated that he had met poor Hutus living as neighbours with rich Tutsis and rich Hutus living side by side with needy Tutsis. Concerning the relationship of the Twa community with the rest of the society it is obvious that it was not strong but it should be stated that these excellent hunters were "simply tolerated parias" with a lack of lucidity.

As indicated earlier, the colonial and missionary ethnography portray the Tutsi according to the Gobineau theory of race of the 19th century as a superior community to the Hutus and Twas. This the Hamitic theory was to prove dangerous as seen in later happenings.

**The Inadequacies of Indirect Belgian Administration**

The first signs of differences between the Burundi communities appeared during the establishment in the 1930s of a Belgian policy of indirect administration. This administration was aimed at maintaining the local institutions and authorities in an "original" form of government.

In practical terms a vast administrative reform was undertaken by Belgium from 1926 to 1933. All the Hutu authorities were dismissed without exception. The first immediate consequence of this policy was a crack within the Burundi communities as the Ganwas and the Tutsis were seen by the colonial power as a ruling group while the Hutus were naturally destined to obey.

The Astrida school which was established in 1929 to train the future "qualified managers of the European Administrations" constituted an important link in crystallizing the inter-community differences. Priority was given to the children of Ganwa and Tutsi dignitaries at the expenses of the Hutus and the Twas. The new elite grew and nourished the idea of the hamitic ideology.

From 1930 the Belgium colonial power made it a requirement that the "ethnic group" should be inserted on national identity cards. From that time according to the different communities were distinguished "racial" considerations.

There was an extraordinary volte-face in turning the colonial speeches with the upsurge of nationalism. The Tutsi community was no longer the reservoir where Belgium could recruit "the good auxiliaries" but was comprised of a "wicked people" (Hamite invaders) who came to colonise the Hutu community. When the nationalist wind blew at the eve of the 1960s, the colonial power changed its strategy. It decided this time to seek support from the "courageous Hutu people" who were victims of "Tutsi feudal" exaction. These "feudal Tutsis" from then on should accept responsibility for all the errors committed by the colonisers.
Cyclical Violence Between the Communities

Despite the colonial manipulation which strongly contributed to the ethnic crystallization, the first incidence of violence between the major Burundi communities took place during the years following independence where some Hutu leaders were assassinated and of houses belonging to Tutsis in Kamenge, north of Bujumbura burnt, in 1962. There were also incidences in Ndora and Kabarore which are localities in the north western part of the country where the government imposed a state of emergency in 1964 and where the coup attempt against the monarchy took place in 1965 led by Hutu officers in the gendarmerie and army. Consequently a large number of Hutu leaders were brought to trial and executed followed by the massacre of innocent Tutsis in the province of Muramvya.

The year 1965 saw the introduction of a cycle of violence in Burundi which expanded in scope. A lot of lessons should be learnt from the bloody events that took place during that time. Firstly it has been clearly shown that some Hutu leaders were attracted by the Rwanda model and were determined to gain power on an ethnic basis. Secondly, some Tutsi politicians in a natural security reflex were determined to control the army gradually and to exclude the Hutus in a subtle manner from the major bodies of the country as well as from the single party Union for National Development and the administration (UPRONA). An atmosphere of mistrust, and indeed hatred was established between the Hutu and Tutsi communities.

The inter-community violence reached its peak at the end of April 1972 in a context of socio-political unrest characterized by ethnicity and regionalism but also regional in nature as a Hutu rebellion which started in Tanzania broke out in the South of Burundi. Tutsi men, women, elderly persons and children were massacred. In as much as the attack was violent, the repression by the government, which was overwhelmed and irresponsible, was harsh and affected mainly the Hutu elite that is the intellectuals, the military and the social elite. The reprisals following the civil war spread to most parts of the country with several victims and the massive flight of Hutu refugees towards the neighbouring countries.

The crisis had severe consequences as it has remained engraved in the collective minds of the two communities. It is the present determinant of the attitude and daily behaviour of each one of them.

The regime of Colonel Jean Baptist Bagaza 1976-1978 earns the merit of not having known any inter-community conflicts but it is to be noted that the police harassment, human rights violation, the conflict between the church and the state, the feeling by some Hutus of being subjects of exclusions, the unequal distribution of resources were the vectors of violence if he had stayed for too long in power. As proof, Major Pierre Buyoya had hardly come to power when similar events to that of 1972 broke out in two communes in the north eastern part of Ntega and Marangara in August 1988. Bands of Hutu youth massacred the Tutsi community damaging and cutting off bridges and trees to obstruct roads. The army succeeded swiftly in cordonning off the troubled zones and prevented the extension of violence. The army did not allow the blind reparation which took place in 1972 to continue but they were incidence of extraction and looting which were punished. A swift and good management made several refugees who had gone to Rwanda to return home during the ensuing three months.

In November-December 1991, the Party for the Liberation of the Hutu people (PALIPEHUTU) attacked Bujumbra and the north western provinces of Burundi. The unrest
broke out after a long period of tension marked by civil disobedience and by persistent rumours indicating that total war was imminent.

The most serious constitutional crisis in the history of contemporary Burundi took place on 24 October 1993 when a group of military officers assassinated Melchior Ndadaye who was a newly and democratically elected president in June of the same year, together with his close collaborators. This stupid act took place three months after power had been monopolized by the Front for democracy in Burundi (FRODEBU) and tension erupted. There was in effect a spoil system in the American fashion in the government and the social relationship was marked by intolerance that was hardly known before. The resettlement of returnees provoked several land disputes. The assassination of President Ndadaye was followed on the one hand by the genocide of a Tutsi community and the Hutus in the opposition in several provinces of the country and on the other hand by a massive flight of Hutus fearing for their lives following the acts they had just committed and reprisals from the army.

In addition to physical violence, the election campaigns of 1965 and 1993 was marked by heated verbal exchange. The media started to disseminate lessons with ethnic hatred since 1994.

Economically were destroyed the educational, water and electrical infrastructures so much so that Burundi experienced a disastrous situation compared to the beginning of the crisis. Socially, the conflicts "produced" citizens of second zone who were known in generic terms as handicapped. They comprised mainly of women and children who were mostly traumatized and suffered from depression.

The Burundi conflict indicates several dimensions that are interwoven.

In the first place, there is the political dimension with a very preponderant ethnic character. Politicians seek ethnic solidarity to gain power and to remain in power. We have seen earlier how the colonial and missionary ideology demonstrated that Burundi was inhabited by different and especially superior "races" and in practical terms, an administrative reform from the period 1926 to 1933 dissolved all the authorities within the Hutu community.

Carrying an identity card indicating the ethnic group as well as the policies of some parties to recruit members on ethnic basis also contributed to the crystallization of the inter-community tension.

The Burundi elite after independence also fell into the trappings of ethnicity and plunged the country into violence with the background of an ideology of genocide, exclusion and ethnic hatred.

Secondly, the conflicts in Burundi have an institutional dimension. It should be noted that since independence in 1962 no political regime has succeeded in maintaining sustainable peace among the communities in the country. All constitutions were violated by the authoritarian regimes with the head of State concentrating all the powers in his hands and surrounded by small groups of supporters. Freedom of speech and worship were denied; arbitrary arrest and practices of exclusion based on ethnicity, region, and clan were commonplace.
Thirdly, the conflict in Burundi had an economic dimension. After independence, the differences which were initially seen as politico-ethnic were transformed with economic stakes in the background. This concerned mainly the positions held by the representatives of the different communities in the government's economy which is of primary importance up to now as well as the posts held by the different communities in the political and administrative structures.

The state was the principal provider of employment and considered by the elite as the "milking cow" that was good to be exploited. The satisfaction of all the needs of power and economic survival went through a stiff competition to gain access to the management of power and public affairs.

This competition is characterized by rivalry and breeds tendencies towards exclusion and cronyism. The policy of political exclusion is consequently material and built as a form of government. The objective criteria for the appointment to positions of responsibility were unclear and based on personal contacts or party affiliations.

Fourthly, at the heart of the Burundi conflict there is a psychological factor created through manipulation, fear, passion, emotion and defence mechanisms. By reading the writings which indicate that the Hutus and Tutsis are completely different communities, this fact has become internalized by Burundese. The policy of exclusion which was started at the advent of colonization and pursued after independence as a result made each community separate from each other. This has generated a negative image of either party leading to diabolization and mutual fears. This was justified because of the blood dispute between the two communities which was born from the collective memory of cyclical violence which sadly marred the country since 1965. Each community is convinced that it has the monopoly of suffering and sees itself as being threatened by the other group for its physical survival and/ or its political development.

If Burundi went through violent conflicts it is because the socio-cultural foundations of the Burundi nation had declined. The moral values of social harmony, respect for life, respect for property and the right of others, tolerance, respect for justice and the truth gave way to negative values which dangerously undermined the society. There is a crisis of authority either parental, educational, administrative or even religious as well as a crisis of authority which results in the disappearance of the historic conscience of belonging to one people and the break up of the confidence between the communities.

Finally, the conflict in Burundi has taken up a sub-regional dimension. "The Rwanda Revolution" in 1959 which was supported by the colonial administration and the Catholic Church which compelled a large number of the Tutsi community to go into exile after the abolition of the monarchy and the establishment of a republic has a huge impact on the sub-region particularly.

While some leaders in the Hutu community were attracted by the Rwanda model which would give them an easy opportunity to seize power after having massacred the Tutsis, other politicians noted the conditions the Rwandese "blood brothers" were living in the refugee camps and feared for the political and/ or physical survival and developed a security instinct based on a policy of exclusion of the Hutu elite as we had mentioned earlier.
Returning to the issue of mutual fears and mistrust which developed between the two communities, the Tutsis throughout the sub-regions always feared the ideology of genocide which had solidly taken roots for the past thirty years. They were frequently briefed that the Hutus had a machiavellian plan to constitute a "hima" empire bringing together Burundi, Rwanda the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda in order to dominate the Bantu peoples inhabiting that sub-region.

The issue of refugees is a very thorny one for the sub-region as it is not only a huge burden for host countries but also because some political leaders despite the mechanism established for collective security such as the Economic Community of the Great Lakes region (CEPGEL) or the East African Community (EAC) used these refugees as a dangerous arm to destabilize their countries of origin.

3. The Preconditions For a Swift Return to Peace

Re-establishing authority of the state

Considering the situation prevailing at the moment in the country, the first emergency will be the restoration of the authority of the state. The different structures of the state should start functioning again to ensure that its traditional prerogatives to protect the citizens and their properties are maintained.

In practice the local administration should be reactivated and authority given to them to seek cohesion and solidarity among the communities which have a high sense of conciliation and management of social peace and public order.

At the same time an effort should be made to rehabilitate the judicial authority be it modern or traditional as it has been manipulated through the crisis. Impunity, "barbaric justice", abuse of authority, banditism, looting of national wealth, anarchy, arbitrary rule, the confusion between might and right are the evils that should be fought with all the necessary strength.

To give justice once again its irreplaceable role as the pillar of public order seems to be the second urgent measure to be carried out if the authority of the state is to be really re-established.

The third best practice that should be planned is the dismantling of ghettos which were built along ethnic considerations since the beginning of the crisis in 1993. In order to achieve this objective political voluntarism should be initiated with open mindness for social groups that are ready to mutually accept each other. Meetings of all kinds (sporting events, cultural evening) should be organized so that the young people will grow up together in a climate of natural confidence and spontaneity.

Restoring Public Order

As long as there is war and violence raging in the country, the process of reconstruction and reconciliation would be difficult to achieve. All the Burundi communities should work together for a collective rejection of violence. Clearly this signifies that all the protagonists should speak the same language and condemn all violence with the same force no matter the pretext and the authors.
As the issue of law enforcement as well as defence and security officers continue to divide Burundi political leaders, it should be given the required attention to avoid the continuation of violence.

It is hoped that the recruitment into the corp of officers will be as transparent as possible, with decentralization based on willingness and executed by a neutral commission. In order to make the issue of the army less taboo and to ensure the maximum contact among young people of both sexes in fraternity and in the vicissitude of the army as a profession, compulsory national service should be encouraged. It would be necessary to integrate former rebels within the army who have now joined the peace process to attain their social rehabilitation.

**Reconstruction of a Burundi Nation**

We have observed earlier on that Burundi was a nation-state since the seventeenth century. Unfortunately the violence and the civil wars of the last 30 years have brought about a crisis of identity which has been reflected by the weakening of the historic conscience of belonging to the same people and the break-up of confidence between the Hutu and Tutsi communities. Burundese at least at the political level have preached and given privilege to ethnicity at the detriment of the Burundi citizenship.

Despite all this Burundese share the same culture. Developing this culture could be one of the strategies to build reconstruction and social cohesion.

Secondly, both the Hutu and Tutsi communities should re-invent the common will of a shared future that is to be convinced that they are bound to live together peacefully. In order to attain this goal, it is important to establish a mechanism for the prevention of genocide.

**4. Promotion of the Rule of Law**

**An institutional tool.**

The government of the Republic of Burundi in a bid to make human rights an issue of major concern, established in the beginning of the 1990s a ministry whose function included human rights.

It has three objectives:

- Promoting the rights of people by educating them on the culture of human rights, and the coordination and development of their structures.
- Protecting and defending the rights of individuals by monitoring their situation in the country and ensuring the respect and implementation of the International Convention on Human Rights.
- The eradication and prevention of genocide.

In order to achieve these objectives, it uses the media (radio and television) posters and other teaching materials to inform the communities about human rights. In order to reach local communities it has constituted ministerial teams in all regions of the country.

Periodically officials visit areas of potential violation of human rights (prisons, refugee camps etc.).
For some time now, it has organized seminars conferences and working groups on genocide. It plans to spearhead the adoption of a law on genocide and to create a national symbolism aimed at banning genocide.

The human rights leagues.

In February 1991 the following leagues were simultaneously registered: ITEKA league and SONERA league. They were established in a climate of political liberalization in Burundi since the coming to power of major Pierre Buyoya. In the protection of human rights they act on their own or in collaboration with other persons or institutions working against injustice: illegality, arbitrariness, impunity, intolerance, all forms of discrimination and any abuse of the fundamental notion of liberty and equality among human beings.

These leagues act as pressure groups. They sent their opinion and views to government on cases involving violation on human rights and propose solution to remedy the situation. They collect information or receive complaints concerning human rights violation.

Unfortunately, in public opinion the ITEKA league is seen as very close to the Hutu community while the SONERA league is the Tutsi community. The ITEKA league is very active in the search for the improvement of justice while the SONERA league focuses on genocide as its principal area of concern.

The promotion of the rights of very vulnerable groups.

Women and children are marginalized and should therefore be given the required attention in the reconstruction and reconciliation of the communities.

Legally, there is no practical discrimination based on sex. However, the principle of equality on matters of succession is a problem, as a woman cannot inherit from her father.

Moreover, women are the first victims of war. They live in extreme conditions of distress without shelter and access to health care. Concrete and urgent actions should be taken for women to enable them continue to play a pillar role in the family and communities. Some NGOs and the ministry for women's advancement and social affairs have assisted women in establishing income generating activities such as the association for the economic development for women (APEF) and the Caisse d'épargne et de crédits mutuels (CECM) albeit insufficient.

Children are the second category of people whose rights should be promoted. The civil war in Burundi since 1993 has denied a majority of them their right to health care, education as well as an acceptable standard of living. Three targeted groups should be focused if the reconstruction and reconciliation of the communities should be really achieved. These are children without parents, street children and child soldiers.
5. Peace Talks

Soon after Major Pierre Buyoya came back to power on 25 July 1996, he proposed peace talks for the reconstruction and reconciliation of the Hutu and Tutsi communities. His proposal had a two-pronged approach:

1. Internal negotiations involving the representatives of all socio-professional and economic groups to search for ways and means to resolve the crisis.
2. External negotiations open to all parties including the armed bands. As a result, a delegation from the Burundi government met members of the National Council for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD) in San Egidio, the two parties signed an agreement in March 1997. The negotiations continued in Arusha, Tanzania since July 1998 and the talks are still continuing.

The Ministry Responsible for the Peace Process

Conscious of the importance of reconstruction and reconciliation of the communities, the Burundi Government created a ministry responsible for the peace process in July 1997. Its mandate was to explore ways to establish a sustainable basis for reconciliation and peaceful coexistence between all sectors of the nation, to consolidate the internal political dialogue, to achieve a consensus on fundamental national political issues, and to improve the conditions for the establishment of rallying point for peace. In order to achieve these objectives frequent working groups were held with members of the government as well as parliamentarians, community development associations and officials of civil society.

A special effort was made to rally the contribution of local communities to the peace process and to sensitize them about the values of tolerance and mutual respect. It was aimed at gradually shattering distrust and fear among the communities by bringing the people to exchange ideas on the issues relating to the crisis particularly on coexistence. A programme designed to teach positive values was designed.

Moreover this ministry spearheads the Burundi peace talks in Arusha, and assesses the results as the sessions progress.

6. Misunderstanding on Several Fundamental Issues

Unfortunately the Burundi political class remains confronted with misunderstanding on four fundamental issues namely democracy, security, impunity and the ideology of genocide.

Democracy and its institutional basis.

The issue of democracy and the means of achieving it is always discussed during political meetings and it divides the Burundi communities.

In the first place the term "kirundi" to render account of the concept of democracy is not shared by all. While UPRONA which has a large number of supporters belonging to the Tutsi community talks about "d'intwaro rusangi" (power sharing) its rival movements FRODEBU which won the elections in June 1993 with many supporters from the Hutu community insist on "ukwishira n'ukwizana" (individual freedoms). Secondly the two communities clash violently on the issue of the electoral system. Some Hutus defend strongly universal adult
suffrage based on "one man one vote" because this form of voting is the best means to gain power and to remain in power indefinitely in view of their numerical superiority. On the other hand, this system is seen by the Tutsis as the most radical form of removing them once and for all from power. They prefer to propose a democratic system based on the realities of Burundi, democracy through consensus in which greater confidence will be given to the human qualities of the leaders than a system that excludes rather than unites.

In order to achieve the reconstruction and reconciliation of the communities, an adapted and reassuring form of democracy for all will require deep thought and a wide-range debate during which Burundese will face each other not with arms but with arguments.

A reassuring security for all.

The second greatest challenge facing the Hutu and Tutsi community is the crucial issue of security. For the Tutsi minority, the forces of public order, defence and security are considered as the only bulwark against the ideology of genocide which has been echoed all over the subregion for the past 30 years. They see it logically as ensuring their physical survival which has made them jealously maintain power through the army, the gendarmerie and the police which they gradually monopolized.

The Hutu majority community has an aversion towards the forces of public order, defence and security. They view these law enforcement bodies as generally responsible for the death of President Ndadaye and the repressive acts against the Hutu community in the bloody events since the 1960's. These forces could not instil confidence in everybody.

What should be done in such a situation? For some Hutu politicians the solution will be the massive recruitment of Hutus through ethnic proportionality or through provincial and communal quotas. This approach is categorically rejected by the Tutsi leaders who call for a modernization and the restructuring of these forces with a view to providing them with increased technical and professional skills and particularly providing these forces with more intellectual training as well as a greater open mind which is the first remedy against sectarian manipulation. The Tutsis do not completely oppose the idea of representation put forward by some Hutus. They wish that the recruitment should be as transparent as possible based on voluntarism and executed by a neutral commission. They believe that there should be a gradual and realist approach in the search for a solution to the preoccupations over the ethnic composition of the army and security forces. The Arusha agreement which was signed in September 2000 proposed a joint redistribution of 50 per cent.

Impunity.

The catastrophic management of the country during the last 30 years has made some criminals go up arrested and move freely in the country. Impunity has been denounced by all parties but in different manner according to ethnic sensibilities. In as much as the Hutu community condemns the repression that took place in 1965, 1972, 1988 and 1993, the Tutsi community also denounced the amnesty given by Buyoya following the events of Ntega and Maragara in 1988 as well as those who committed acts of genocide with the support of FRODEBU in 1993.

The composition of present magistrate corps is seen by some as mono-ethnic and as a result could not dispense justice fairly. The fact that the majority of magistrates in the higher
Echelons are from the Tutsi community will not be enough to disqualify them. The evil should be seen elsewhere. However, it is obvious that some judges are guilty of corruption and other abuses of office. The reconstruction and reconciliation of the communities require that all accused persons should be arrested and brought to trial. We should avoid promoting peace at the expense of impunity as happened during the last few years.

The ideology of genocide.

Genocide has become a reality in Burundi as in the subregion of the Great Lakes. Some consider its treatment lightly which is intellectual short-sightedness or ill will. To deny it will be useless. It is important rather to examine the mechanisms for its eradication while waiting for the establishment of an international penal tribunal for Burundi which both sides wish to be set up. It is vital that those accused should be brought to trial. It was only in March 1996 after a long delay that the government decided to appoint the members of the tribunal. Subsequently more than 250 people had been condemned to death with six executions carried out.

7. Assistance by the International Community

The UNESCO Mission for a Culture of Peace in Burundi

This mission was established in August 1994 almost a year after the outbreak of the civil war. Its objectives included the institutionalization of education for peace, human rights, and democracy in the secondary level of the Burundi educational system. It aims basically at contributing to:

1. The re-establishment of a dialogue, confidence, harmony, tolerance, mutual acceptance and solidarity between the communities for sustainable peace.
2. The overall training of educated and, uneducated youths and adults in developing attitudes and behavioural patterns for the establishment and strengthening of a peace culture.
3. The awareness among the youth and adults about the importance of their contribution to the development of education for a peace, human rights and democracy.
4. The integration of education for peace, human rights and democracy in the curriculum of the entire formal education and non-formal education and adult literacy programmes.
5. The design and implementation of policies for peace culture integrated in the economic and social development policies of the country.

Periodically, the mission for a peace culture holds training seminars on education for peace, human rights and democracy, peaceful resolutions of conflicts… targeting a very wide group so that the ideals of a peace culture would have a major impact on the Burundi communities.

The mission also conducted sensitization campaigns and information activities. On this point it should be recalled that a festival for children was organized in September 1996 at the end of which they launched an appeal to adults with emphasis on the responsibility of parents, teachers and politicians as well as on their own contribution to the re-establishment of a long lasting peace in the country.
The Role of the Special Representative to the Secretaries-General of OAU and UN

From the beginning of the civil war in 1993 UN and OAU were seriously involved in solving the Burundi crisis. A majority of leaders of the Hutu community urged OAU to send a protection force and a mission to re-establish confidence in Burundi (MIPROBU). This idea was rejected by the military and the Tutsi community who were opposed to any intervention by "a foreign force" based on article 174 of the Constitution. In the end MIPROBU was transformed into an international protection and observation mission for the re-establishment of confidence with MIOB comprising 47 officers instead of the 200 personnel that was requested earlier.

As peace gradually seemed to return, UN and OAU established in Bujumbura Offices headed by the representatives of the respective Secretaries-General.

OAU at the moment is running projects to put an end to the enlistment of child soldiers within the framework of the reconstruction and reconciliation of the communities in order to socially rehabilitate the children who were victims of the conflict and to enhance the psycho-sociological welfare of the children.

The Office of the special representative of the UN Secretary-General has played an important role in the search of peace and reconciliation of the community. Through the efforts of the Mauritanian Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, a "Government Convention" was signed in 1994, although this political system had its own shortcomings and contradictions which led to its abolition in 1996.

Conscious of the fact that Burundi should not continue to sink into misery, the UN Bureau for Burundi has just adopted a huge assistance programme for the communities.

This assistance aimed at: increasing income levels and food security, increasing access to basic services and developing their utilization, building new houses, rehabilitating members of the communities who were recently resettled and supporting the initiatives for the re-establishment of peace and reconciliation.

8. The effect of the embargo and the cessation of development assistance

Following the return to power of Pierre Buyoya in July 1996, the heads of states of the subregion spearheaded by Julius Nyerere imposed a total embargo on Burundi. This was a decision which aimed at bringing the regime to its knees as it was seen to be totally controlled by the army and the Tutsi community. The embargo did not attain its expected result as it particularly hit the poorest sectors of the population.

The economic sanctions hit Burundi hard. The UN, human development index for the country fell from 3.4 per cent to 3 per cent in four years reflecting the accumulated effect in the rapid deterioration of indicators such as immunization which fell from 83 per cent in 1993 to 54 per cent in 1996, with primary school enrolment falling from 70 percent to 50 per cent as well as the rise in infant mortality from 110 to 113 death per 1000 live birth.

This embargo discouraged the forces of reconciliation and strengthened the forces of hatred and violence. In fact in as much as some extremist in the Hutu community were supporting the embargo, some extremist in the Tutsi community were calling it unjust. Since 23 January,
1999 the sanctions against Burundi were lifted by the neighbouring countries for three reasons. In the first place, the governments were divided and did not have the same approach about the war in the Congo. Secondly the government and the national assembly agreed and established an internal political partnership. Thirdly Burundi was the only country in the subregion which has accepted to enter into a dialogue with the rebels. The sanctions were lifted later.

Following the violence and the civil war, development aid under its multilateral form (European Union, World Bank, UN system) or bilateral aid (Belgium, France, Germany, China) had been suspended since 1993. This suspension of technical and financial assistance had a catastrophic impact on the humanitarian and macro-economic development plans particularly hitting poor communities as well as the reduction in national production by 5 per cent and the sharp rise in basic food prices and medicines.

In order to achieve rapid reconstruction and reconciliation, it is obvious that cooperation should be resumed which is one of the first pre-condition for peace to return. In the short term, this assistance could support the priority sectors such as agriculture, health and education.

9. The Weaknesses and the Challenges of Reconstruction and Reconciliation

Strengthening of Civil Society

A survey carried out by Africare/Burundi in June 1999 shows that there are presently more than 300 non profit-making associations with a large number dating back to the beginning of the 1990s. This number has been on the increase from 32 in 1962, it rose to 95 in 1980 and to 162 in 1992. From this date onwards the first law on these associations was passed at a time also when associations were freely established. It rose to 395. The religious associations are older and better established in rural areas. Before independence 27 out of the 32 associations in existence were of a religious nature. They have recently given way to local development associations following the emergence of a new liberal outlook which ended the state-providence and the development of a policy of decentralization established at the end of the 1980s.

The policy of democratization of the institutions also led to the emergence of corporate, professional and cultural associations which resulted from the freedom of association. They focused on freedom of expression, defence of professional rights as well as human rights and democracy.

With about 20,000 members Burundi’s civil society is still trying to search for an identity as well as its place and role in particular. However, it suffers from positive prejudices within the local communities as the associations are in regular contact with them and as a result they are more efficient in the resolution of the problems of the community.

Although they have strong advantages, the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and NPMA face serious challenges: lack of a well planned and proper organization, difficult national context marked by ethnic stratification, training and information constraints, with
some members operating these associations as their private property etc. Worse still, several NPMA are born in the gutters where international assistance is godsend.

The problem of more concern is the in-existence of a legal frame work for NPMA and cooperative associations in Burundi. Whereas the NPMA are under the ministry of the interior according to a law passed in 1992, the cooperative associations are governed by a law passed in 1996 under the Ministry of Community Development. The foreign NGOs are under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Civil Society is also dependent on the political structures and politicians as the leaders of these associations are identified to occupy positions of responsibility (within the parties, government and the administration). Finally the political /inter-community struggle is extended into civil society in one way or the other.

Despite these handicaps, civil society has been very enterprising in 1993. The Action Group for Peace and Assistance (GAPS) comprising of eminent personalities in Burundi were appointed facilitators in the peace talks to bridge the institutional gap that existed then. Several women and youth associations as well as human rights leagues and various religious associations and foreign NGOs are presently working for the reconstruction and reconciliation of the Hutu and Tutsi communities.

10. The Mobilization of Women in the Peace and Reconciliation Process

It is generally acknowledged that in ancient Burundi women played an important role in the prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Women are considered as the pillar in the family because they take care not only of the education of children and preparing the future of the entire community but they are also at the heart of the solidarity activities and mutual assistance with the neighbourhood.

Women in Burundi through marriage were a real link between two families, two clans and even two ethnic groups. Society generally recognized several qualities in women that made them accomplish their mission namely qualities of compassion, patience, reserve, tenderness, modesty etc.

Socially, women played an important part in naming ceremonies as well as in moments of joy and hardship. Women prepared presents, food and drinks during festivities and entertained guests with their songs and dances.

In the prevention and resolution of conflicts, the traditional Burundi woman contributed through the teaching of positive values of peace and coexistence that she imparted to her children and wise advices provided to her husband on the one hand and a role as a moderator and conciliator when dispute arose between neighbours and relatives on the other.

When the crisis erupted in 1993, some women leaders who had taken part in the socio-political life of the country in the years 1970-1990, (former ministers, parliamentarians etc.) observing the violence between the Hutu and Tutsi communities spreading dangerously went to the residential areas and schools in Bujumbura preaching messages of peace. They preached the values that were associated with the traditional Burundi women.
Burundi women are currently making their voices heard in several international conferences in conflict resolution such as the meeting in 1) Cape Town South Africa in 1998. The Burundi delegation was led by Mme Sophie Buyoya, wife of President Buyoya and received by Mme Graca Machel; 2) Kampala, Uganda 1998 where they participated in a peace conference under the auspices of Wandira Kazibwe; and 3) Arusha, Tanzania on 22 October 1998 where women belonging to the Hutu and Tutsi communities made the following declarations:

"The Arusha Declaration.

The delegation of Burundi women, representing different ethnic groups, backgrounds and political parties, made the following declaration on their common position at the meeting in Arusha:

*In view of the important role we women in Burundi play in air society; we:

*Are convinced of the importance of women's contribution to the restoration of lasting peace in Burundi;

*Note that the bitterness of the social and political crisis that has prevailed since the country achieved independence has resulted in massive violations of even the most elementary of human rights;

*Are convinced that the negotiations in Arusha represent a favourable context for establishing frank and sincere dialogue between partners in Burundi;

We therefore undertake to:

1. Contribute to the favourable progress of the talks among Burundians;
2. Work for adoption of new attitudes and a change behaviour by Burundians, with the aim of fostering a spirit of tolerance and mutual confidence among all the social elements in the country;
3. Promote greater awareness among the various leaders in Burundian society to remove the obstacles to the peace process, in particular by the immediate cessation of hostilities and the lifting of the embargo;
4. Influence and pressurize those involved in politics in Burundi to ensure that the peace process is brought to a conclusion as rapidly as possible in view of the distressing conditions in which the people of Burundi are living;
5. Strengthen the national Peace Committee so as to break away forever from the country's sombre past'

The women's delegation fervently hopes that the general agreement in the right use of power that will emerge from these negotiations will:

- Foster peace and the social well-being of the Burundian people;
- Lead to reconstruction and rehabilitation;
- Enable the repatriation and resettlement of refugees, displaced persons and those forcibly transferred;
- Help each individual victim of the crisis in Burundi.
The delegation appeals to all those who long for peace to support the efforts being made to restore peace to Burundi."

11. The Role of the Youth in the Peace Process

Highly Solicited Youth

Youths constitute more than 55 per cent of Burundi communities. They were always solicited for recruitment by the traditional chiefs into the army, to perform compulsory work during the colonial period as well as getting evolved in religious or political movements during the past years.

The youths have been seen to be strongly involved in the 1993 election campaign and recently have been involved in the violence that has torn up the country. While the Hutus support the rebellion which has been in operation since 1994, the offenders who were rehabilitated by the Tutsi extremist politicians established militia groups which were responsible for the ethnic cleansing in the residential areas of Bujumbura.

Other than the catholic movements and the organizations associated with political parties, most of the 50 associations of young people that were known to Africare Burundi in 1966 were re-established after the 1993 crisis. Unfortunately, a large number of these associations were often reduced to a handful of people close to the elite and invariably without any contact with the rural areas and operated hardly beyond Burjumbura, the capital.

However, despite limited resources the youth have played and continue to play a crucial role in the reconstruction and reconciliation of the communities.

Peace Education for Young Educated People for National Reconstruction

A notable experiment in the reconstruction and reconciliation among young people has just been initiated by the project on Peace Education for Young School Drop Outs in national reconstruction. The project is financed by UNDP and Japan and managed by a team of UN volunteers. It involves 141,000 young people ranging from 14-25 years. Its principal objective is to bring them closer together.

In order to reconcile the youth who had been very much involved in the enter-communal violence the Office of the mayor of Bujumbura first of all organized informal contacts through associations. Some people were identified in all the residential areas and invited to discuss issues. They exchanged views on the violence that was going on as well as on the means of putting an end to the violence.

Sporting activities were held between the residential areas. It was observed that the young people come together and rapidly through the sporting exchange. In the third phase once the reconciliation was carried out activities relating to the reconstruction within the residential areas were initiated with the support of local youth associations.
The province of Ruyigi residents joined the Scouts in the reconstruction of damaged houses. On the work sites they received peace messages launched by the government and various organizations.

Finally, the socio-professional rehabilitation of school drop outs was made possible to carry out this project. They were later requested to indicate what they wanted to study. They were trained in such skills as mechanics, carpentry etc. Some of them secured jobs after a training programme which lasted few months.

All these activities contributed to reinforce the reconstruction and reconciliation of the communities. In Bujumbura the activities contributed to combating crime as many young people who drunk and got involved in drugs were rehabilitated and this was a source of joy for many parents. In the province of Ruyigi it was through activities on reconstruction work sites that the people who had fled to Tanzania or to other provinces were able to return to their homes.

Generally, it appeared that young people expressed a need for change, as they were not recognized any longer in the former structures of the society. Indeed many of them believe that reconstruction and reconciliation of the Hutu and Tutsi communities could only be done by the new generation. In order to achieve this the new generation should in the first place abandon the ideology of exclusion and secondly learn about the experiences of young people in countries from other continents and thirdly start a new beginning.

12. **The Re-establishment of the Traditional Institution of Notables (Bashingantahe) for the Prevention and Resolution of Inter-communal Conflicts**

During colonization the institution of Bashingantahe was side lined by the colonial administration and the missionaries. After independence the successive regimes did nothing to rehabilitate this institution. It was put at the service of the single party UPRONA. The investiture of the Bashingantahe was abandoned under the second republic 1997-1987 because it led to over-consumption at a time when the population had to produce the maximum to ensure food security.

With the re-advent of multi party democracy in 1992 each party wanted to count on its own "Bashingantahe". As one close observer said "for the first time in Burundi an institution which has been used to bring people together was now being used to divide them". Gradually the institution of Bashingantahe was given lesser importance and the conditions that were required to accede to it as well as its long procedure of initiation before investiture were now replaced by wealth, certificates and military career.

Although it was seriously shaken and weakened, it has remained a living reality on the hills as well as in the urban settlements. Intervention of a good number of Bashingantahe, during crucial moments in the successive crises in Burundi saved the situation and as a result for the past 10 years also this institution was requested by the population to intervene each time that it has an opportunity to express its views on the management of the socio-political affairs of the country. The report of a national commission examining the issue of national community 1991 insisted that this institution should be rehabilitated as soon as possible. A year later, the constitutional commission proposed that local democracy should be based on this institution.
as it had served for centuries as the pillar for social peace, justice, harmony and peaceful coexistence in the Hutu and Tutsi communities.

The crisis in Burundi since 1993 is an excellent test to determine the real impact of the Bashingantahe on the society. In the provinces and the communes where they stood up to prevent the massacre, a lot of human life was saved.

On the other hand in the province of Ngozi witnesses testify to the fact that the Bashingantahe did not perform its rule as conciliator. Worse still in some cases they took an active part in the massacre before fleeing to Rwanda.

Comparable to some extent to the Rwandese Gacaca and to the Silatigi the "mage-pretre-peul" compared to the Chamane of South America, to the Swedish Ombudsman and to the French mediator, the institution of the Bashingantahe should be re-updated.

This will respond to a real need. The people in distress resorted to the Bashingatahe to provide assistance for the vulnerable, the orphans, the widows and all the victims of the senseless murder committed by the men. In other words, in the face of the indifference shown by the political class, it is requested to play a regulatory role in basic social life of the people.

How do you go from there in practical terms? Some sensitization work has to be done among all the socio-professional sectors from the top to the bottom.

Management committees should be established within local communities comprising honest people who would be granted powers in the Bashingantahe. Their task will be the following:

1. Prevention and the peaceful resolution of conflicts, through amicable means by avoiding taking differences to the tribunal.
2. Protection of persons and their properties.
3. Safeguarding the positive values of the society and the education of the youth in the peace culture. The present national council of Bashingantahe should be given a leadership which protects the social values which have long been abandoned or marginalized and should be requested to successfully carry out the process of repudiating their institution within a frame work that harmonizes tradition and modernity.

13. Conclusion

Like a certain number of African countries (Rwanda, Liberia Sierra Leone, Sudan etc.), Burundi for the past six years has been going through a crisis characterized by violence of a rare intensity.

This country which was a real nation-state before the colonial period is now being torn apart by a conflict which by opposed Hutu and Tutsi communities for the about 30 years.

We have shown that the origin of this violence lies in the manipulation of the question "ethnic" under colonization as well as in the catastrophic management of the country by the Burundi elite after independence in 1962.
Despite the fact that the subregional environment is in turmoil and despite the violence which has brought about massive destruction and psychic wounds hitting a major proportion of the people, Burundi still has a good number of forces which can contribute to the reconstruction and the reconciliation of its people. There are particularly:

1. The existence of a basic social cohesion.
2. The struggle for peace undertaken for some time now by civil society through the local communities and women's associations.
3. The will of the government to engage in peace talks instead of arms.
4. The admirable quality of the administration at the national as well as the local level which is capable of initiating back a rapid return to reconstruction and economic recovery.

All is not lost and this is why there are hopes for a new beginning. In order to achieve these objectives, plans should be designed to invest in five areas: the pursuance of the democratization process, the strengthening of civil society, the strengthening of young people and women in the democratization process and development and the education for peace, human rights and peaceful resolution of conflicts and regional integration.
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