

**Political Violence in Post-Conflict Societies in Africa:  
The Limits of Peace-Building and Stabilization in Burundi**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This article examines the persistence of political violence in post-conflict societies with reference to the Central African state of Burundi. It links the perpetuation of violence to the liberal peace frameworks that have been pushed by the international community, and questions the relevance of the policy response of stabilization. Using feminist approaches to violence, the article examines the manifestations of political violence in the context of endemic militarism for which the international community shares culpability with the political elite. The specificities of persistence political violence and their impact on society are discussed in reference to state authoritarianism and human rights violations by the state security sector, sexual and gender-based violence, and economic impoverishment. The article concludes by advocating alternative conceptualizations of peace that critique the prevailing political economy and give emphasis to localised practices that are emancipatory.*

**KEYWORDS**

Liberal Peace, Stabilization, Militarism, Africa

**INTRODUCTION**

Globally, there is clear evidence that political violence has persisted in post-conflict societies in the Global South, despite increased interventions by international peace-builders in affected countries (Rangelov and Kaldor 2012; World Bank 2011). Termed low intensity violence, such forms of violence have made the peace dividend impossible to achieve and have resulted in proposals for greater and more sustained western military interventions, as policy-makers shift from liberal peace-building to stabilization (Bachmann & Gelot 2012). Rangelov and Kaldor (2012: 198),

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noting 'persistent conflict as a key challenge for scholars and policy-makers', argue that understanding its causes require the combination of 'a critical reassessment of our concepts with rigorous empirical investigation of the multiplicity of actors and factors that sustain contemporary forms of conflict and violence'.

This article seeks to understand the reasons for the persistence of political violence in Burundi, a central African country that has been undergoing post-conflict reconstruction since 2002. Semantically, the use of the term post 'conflict' to describe the political situation in Burundi suggests an end to combat, but fails to convey the persistence of low intensity political violence. Locating and accounting for the prevalence of political violence in the post-conflict era, it is argued that such forms of violence are the direct result of the pre-occupation of the liberal peace framework with state-building coupled with its failure to halt the militarization of Burundi society, which intensified during the war and persists after. Political violence is shown to be the manifestation of continued power struggles between competing ethnic elites, despite the imposition of power sharing and multi-party democracy. The meaning of political violence is widened to incorporate sexual and gender based violence (SGBV), which is on the increase in Burundi, and which feminist security scholars have linked to militarism, economic stagnation, and impoverishment aggravated by war; thus challenging the popular discourse that sees SGBV essentially as 'a weapon of war' in the region (Riley et al 2008; Sjoberg & Via 2010; Daley 2008; Ericksson-Baaz & Stern 2010). Persistent political violence in Burundi is presented as the outcome of the continued existence of a militarised state largely supported by international aid. Ending the violence, the article concludes, requires an ontological shift in how African people are perceived by western policy-makers and donors and the local political elite – from the 'wretched of the earth' to equal members of humanity. This would lead to forms of politics that go beyond the continued production of a militarist state that meet the vested interests of the West.

The article begins with a brief review of the literature that promotes the liberal peace and stabilization. It then discusses ways in which key concepts relating to peace - violence, gender, hegemonic masculinity, and militarism - are understood as being interconnected, before turning to the nature of peace-building and stabilization in post-war Burundi, especially focusing on how popular understandings of Burundi society as an ethnicized society led to limited recognition of those differences in the society that have manifested in specific forms of violence in the post-conflict state, including extra-judicial executions and SGBV. This is followed by a detailed discussion of the specificities of post-conflict violence in Burundi, drawing on empirical evidence gathered from a wide range of sources. Next, the structural factors that may account for the violence are examined, in particular the growing militarism, economic impoverishment and high levels of aid dependency. The concluding section discusses the shifts in thinking and policy that are required for a more emancipatory society.

## **1. THE LIBERAL PEACE, VIOLENCE, GENDER, AND MILITARISM**

Burundi, like other post-conflict African states, has been subjected to the liberal peace – a conceptualization of peace based on western liberal democratic principles that prioritises sovereignty and the security of the national territory, political representation through a power sharing formula linked to multi-party elections, and neo-liberal economic reforms, as the basis for political stability. Critics of the liberal peace have challenged its de-contextualised and de-historicised application to all war-affected societies, and its pre-occupation with state building and continued militarization, and, thus, its failure to deliver an end to political violence and an emancipatory form of politics that would repair social relationships devastated by prolonged warfare (Richmond 2006& 2010; Daley 2006). Some have argued that these limitations are embedded in the *realpolitik* frameworks that have shaped the conceptualisation of peace and violence in modern western states, where peace is seen as an end to war and the full exercise of territorial sovereignty.

Post-conflict African states have failed to live up to the liberal peace ideal, instead policies framed externally are imposed with the compliance, but not necessarily the desire, of the peace beneficiaries among the political and warring elites. Such policies produce conditions some describe as 'no peace no war' (Richard 2005). Liberal peace advocates fail to take account of violence perpetuated by those who have captured the state through power sharing agreements and/or by those excluded from such agreements. Critics have argued for either a more locally contextualised, participatory and emancipatory peace that draws on traditional practices of resolving differences within the affected societies (Daley 2008) or a hybrid peace that reflects on international, national and local understandings (Richmond 2010). However, rather than being locally-inspired, the restitution of local institutions has tended to be top-down, and donor-driven, resulting in the same outcomes as before. The policy response has been a shift from centralized peace-building to stabilization, in which western development practitioners, humanitarian actors, and military personnel combine to take on the task of stabilizing and transforming conflict-ridden societies (Bachmann & Gelot 2012). Since building societies in the image of western democracies is inevitably slow, stabilization appears to be an unending intervention, and, as Bachmann & Gelot (2012: 137) acknowledge, 'has made the emergence of internationalized and militarized forms of administration possible'. Such forms of interventions are justified on the basis of the responsibility to protect civilians – a policy framework which has gained currency in the last decade, as it has been used by Western states to intervene in non-western societies, such as Libya and Somalia and which has been heavily critiqued by scholars for obscuring underlying motivations, such as the consolidation of western hegemony in contexts where it might be challenged.

Militarised conceptualizations of peace do injustice to affected societies on several counts: i) they fail to address the role of western geo-political and geo-economic interests, especially the 'war on terror' in determining where and how to intervene; ii) they universalise hegemonic western liberal understanding of conflicts and peace,

preventing serious consideration of alternatives analyses that may be more attuned to local needs and liable to produce beneficial outcomes for the people; and iii) they are informed by a discourse about affected societies that is racialized, ethnicized and gendered.

Challenges to the liberal peace emanating from critical scholars, especially feminists, seek to demonstrate the link between the realist conceptualization of peace and security with the persistence of political violence, which is understood here as being inclusive of SGBV. Feminist have explored the gendered nature of violence in wartime and in post-war situations, and have uncovered the close relationship between militarism, hegemonic masculinity, and the hierarchies embedded in the modern state (Enloe 2002; Segal 2008; Sjoberg and Via 2010). Confortini (2006), for example, applies a gender lens to Johan Galtung's (1988) influential triangle of personal (violence to a person), structural (de-personalised violence inherent to a society), and cultural violence (aspects of culture that legitimises violence), and argues that all three are intertwined and implicated by gender.<sup>1</sup> These, she contends, 'cannot be viewed as independent from the social construction of hegemonic identities, be it hegemonic masculinities or hegemonic races' (Confortini 2006: 357). For her, violence, like gender, is a relation of power; both are mutually constituted (Ibid: 341). Gender refers to the socially constructed attributes of masculinity and femininity that are used to differentiate men and women, and which embody relations of domination and subordination. According to Confortini (2006: 342) 'gender as a relation of power shapes, regulates, rationalizes and justifies other social relations of power, which, in turn, are all gendered'. Violence produces hierarchies of domination, and, as Confortini (2006:357) contends, 'is to be found at the basis of our social organization, as it produces and reproduces the gender [and the racial/ethnic] order.

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1. Confortini cited Johan Galtung, 2008. Typologies of Violence, in *Transarmament and the Cold War: Essays in Peace Research Vol. VI* (Copenhagen: Christian Ejlertsen, 1988), pp.271–272.

Hegemonic masculinity is embedded in militarism. Sjoberg and Via (2010:7) understand militarism as 'the extension of war-related, war-preparatory, and war-based meanings and activities outside of "war proper" and into social and political life more generally'. They, along with Enloe (2002), argue that militarism arises out of fear and the silencing of the voices of other members of the society. In extreme militaristic societies, violence is pervasive and permeates all institutions. In post-conflict societies, such as Burundi, which are subjected to the liberal peace, violence is promoted as the basis of acquiring power, and rewards to military personnel may serve to reinforce hierarchical identities in contexts where they have previously led to conflict.

Feminist scholars have also challenged the uncritical association of women with peace that informs international approaches to women in war and in peace-building, as exemplified in UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security (Pratt and Devore 2011), and have shown how essentialising women and children in the Global South as victims, and using them as justification for wars and stabilization, reifies western hegemonic notions of masculinity and femininity, and blocks potential structural or geo-political readings of violence associated with the globalization of western militarism and capitalism (Riley et al 2008; Harrington 2011). Consequently, 'democracy builders', approach political violence, including SGBV, in the Global South as a technical problem that can be ironed out over time with stabilization. Burundi tells a different story.

## **2. PEACE-BUILDING AND STABILIZATION IN BURUNDI**

Successful multi-party elections in 2010 should have cemented the democratic process in Burundi, a country, which, in 2005, held the first democratic elections after years of civil war between its Tutsi minority-dominated government and eight rebel groups, claiming to represent the Hutu majority population. The civil war, which ran from 1993 to 2007 at varying intensity, started after the assassination of Burundi's first democratically-elected Hutu President, Melchior Ndadaye of the FRODEBU (Front for Democracy in Burundi) party, and the return to power of the Tutsi-minority in 1996 headed by President Pierre Buyoya, after a military coup overthrew a fractious coalition government that was struggling to survive violence carried out by militias linked to political parties.

To some commentators, the 2005 election victory of the Hutu-dominated party and former rebel group, National Council for Defence and Democracy – Forces for Defence and Democracy (CNDD/FDD), was a triumph of natural justice and the principles of majoritarian democracy, and of liberal peace-building. At that time, some western scholars and policy-makers argued that this marked the end of ethnic conflict - of Hutu/Tutsi rivalry. However, the one-dimensional ethnic reading of Burundi society ignored other lines of cleavages and the intense politico-economic competition between elites - intra-Tutsi, inter and intra-regional, and intra-Hutu. It was the ethnic reading of Burundi society that informed the peace negotiations and culminated in the peace agreement in Arusha, Tanzania, in 2000. The peace accord, which included power sharing, neo-liberal economic reforms supervised by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and security sector reform, constituted the blueprint for the post-conflict state. In 2002, a power sharing interim government was put in place, which presided over the referendum for a new constitution and, in 2005, handed over to the elected government dominated by CNDD/FDD and President Pierre Nkurunziza. Peace-building was carried out by regional and international peace-keeping forces; first an African Union mission (2003), which was taken over by the United Nations Operations in Burundi (ONUB) from May 2004 to October 2006. These were supported by a number of international humanitarian organizations, as well as private military contractors.

### **3. POST-CONFLICT POLITICAL VIOLENCE**

To what extent has just over 10 years of the 'liberal peace' resulted in the cessation of political violence in Burundi? Political violence normally refers to violence perpetrated by the state or members of the political elite to settle disputes or silence opposition. Here, I will examine the specificities of such forms of violence in Burundi focusing on ethnic violence; intra-party struggles; violence perpetrated by state security apparatus – normatively known as political violence, and domestic and sexual violence, which are normatively understood as personal rather than structural.

Political violence in Burundi's post-colonial history has long taken the form of repression of the Hutu majority by the Tutsi minority regimes that controlled the state and the military. In 1972 and 1988 this took the form of

genocidal violence and in 1993, both groups allegedly carried out genocide against the other. Ethnicity constitutes a major fault line in Burundi society, but is not the cause of political violence.

The origins and objectivity of the characteristics of ethnic identities in Burundi are highly contested. Suffice to say that scholars recognise the significance of the role of the colonial state in fixing ethnic boundaries and thus raising ethnic consciousness (Mamdani 2002; Daley 2008). The relative population size of Hutus and Tutsis is questionable and many authors repeat statistical information produced during the colonial period, even though then and now they may be widely inaccurate. High levels of intermarriage between the groups have led some observers to speculate that the mixed population probably forms the majority, especially in rural areas (Watt 2008). Of importance for the awareness of ethnic consciousness is the instrumental use of ethnicity by Hutu and Tutsi political elites in their rent-seeking competition for the post-colonial state.

Power sharing was viewed as the mechanism through which this ethnic rivalry could be resolved. The Arusha peace accords stipulated a 60/40 Hutu/Tutsi split in legislative and executive bodies of government, and 50/50 split in the military. These splits were affirmed in the election code and the 2005 constitution. The institutionalization of ethnicity in the state and the election of a Hutu President and Hutu-dominated party, some observers argue, has diminished ethnicity as a point of contestation in Burundi politics, since power has shifted from the minority Tutsis to the democratic majority. This view is flawed, since ethnicity continues to shape how key actors view those who have access to resources, such that, in 2006, the CNDD/FDD government criticised the UN peace-keeping force and international organizations for employing too many Tutsis.

However, ethnicity was not significant in the political competition in the 2010 elections. The Arusha Peace agreement and the code governing the composition of political parties ensured that parties had to be multi-ethnic before they could be registered. There were hardly any reports of the use of a discourse of ethnicity during the elections, with the exception of Pasteur Habimana (FNL-Iragirya Gahutu) who, whilst campaigning in Rumonge Commune, Bururi Province, called on Hutus to 'stop Tutsis from ever



returning to power'. He was, reportedly, condemned by the main Hutu-dominated parties.

After three Tutsi-dominated military regimes since independence in 1962, Burundians remain sceptical as to whether the Tutsi elite and its main party, UPRONA (Union for National Progress), and the ex-Presidents who sit on the Senate, have given up fully their quest for political dominance. Many observers look for signs of Tutsi mobilization. Research by Schraml (2010) in Rwanda and Burundi indicates that people's perception of the ethnicity of the state depends on the ethnic affiliation of the leader. Burundians, she claimed, viewed CNDD-FDD as being infiltrated by Tutsi; this reflects the extremist Hutu view that the Tutsi still retains power, despite Hutu dominance in government. There is no indication that Tutsis are targeted for violence; though Tutsi rural dwellers, such as those still in camps for the internally displaced, are probably less likely to benefit from government largesse.

There are two reasons why ethnic violence has halted among the political elite. Firstly, political competition was not confined to Hutu and Tutsi elites, as intra-ethnic competition was rife. Among the Tutsis, differences are marked between high ranking Tutsi and petit-Tutsi (Himas), and regional differences matter, as well as between those from the same province. The military coups that took place in 1966, 1976 and 1987 were carried out by Tutsi-Hima soldiers from the southern province of Bururi. Hutu regional rivalries are as intense and, during the war, were reflected in multiple rebel movements and the factionalization within them. Secondly, as some commentators have observed, in rural communities, Hutus and Tutsis are equally poor and live in wretched conditions (Watt 2008). Government favouritism for one group does not necessarily result in improved conditions, thus giving credence to the view that Burundi's politics might be more class than ethnic-based.

#### **4. VIOLENCE AGAINST POLITICAL OPPOSITION**

CNDD-FDD's rule, like those of past Burundian regimes, has been characterised by political violence that varies from in-fighting within the party, intimidation and imprisonment of political opposition, and assassinations and summary executions carried out by the security forces, mainly against rival Hutu parties and critics of the government (ICG 2011).

After the 2005 elections, for months, the decision-making process of government was crippled by in-fighting within CNDD-FDD, which resorted to the political tactics of previous Burundi regimes; imprisoning its opponents and critics, even those within its own party.

Power struggles within CNDD-FDD forced the resignation in late 2006 of the vice-president Alice Nzomukunda, who established her own political party (Alliance démocratique pour le renouveau or “ADR-Imvugakuri”) in 2008. The divisions within the CNDD/FDD widened after the dismissal of Hassan Rajabu as party secretary-general in 2007 – a key strategist in the civil war and a rival to President Nkurunziza. His arrest and imprisonment on charges of treason further split CNDD-FDD, leading to key supporters, such as Pascaline Kampayano, deserting the party and forming a new party (Union for Peace and Development (UPD)-Zigamibanga).

Party infighting was not as intense as those between rival Hutu rebel groups. Once the 2000 peace agreement was signed, CNDD/FDD's main opposition was not the then Tutsi-minority government, but the other major Hutu rebel group Palipehutu/FNL (Front for National Liberation). Their violent rivalry dates back to their competition for recruitment in the refugee camps in Tanzania. In 2003, after CNDD/FDD joined the interim power sharing government, fighting broke out between the rebel groups. Palipehutu/FNL delayed signing a ceasefire agreement and remained out of the power sharing government until April 2009 when it finally agreed to drop the exclusive ethnic reference - 'Palipehutu (all Hutu) - in its name, formed a political party and was given posts in government. FNL's leader, Agathon Rwaswa, sought to gain financially from the peace process by demanding a financial settlement before he would send his troops to cantonments. As the 2010 elections were to be FNL's first test of voter support, it was unclear how the Hutu vote would be split, especially since the Hutu opposition formed a coalition - ADC-Ikibiri (Democratic Alliance for Change in Burundi). Six weeks before the communal elections, CNDD-FDD, fearing that it would lose substantial Hutu votes, also formed a coalition with 10 small parties. Consequently, before and after the 2010 elections, a prevailing climate of impunity existed in the country. Human rights organizations recorded harassment of political opposition and the private media, arbitrary arrests,

and extra-judicial and summary executions,<sup>2</sup> which, according to the opposition parties, were perpetrated by the security forces and militias linked to the ruling party. After the local council elections of 24 May 2010, 13 (mainly Hutu-dominated) political parties withdrew from the elections claiming irregularities, leaving CNDD/FDD to garner the majority of votes. Opposition leaders such as Rwaswa and Kampayano, were said to be forming new rebel groups (ICG 2011). CNDD-FDD and its candidate, the incumbent President, Pierre Nkurunziza, were re-elected virtually unopposed, as the main Hutu contenders were out of the process.

UPRONA, the party associated with the former Tutsi-dominated military regimes, protested with the 12 opposition parties after the communal elections and withdrew its presidential candidate. It, however, rejoined the election process and participated in the legislative elections; thus securing 17 seats in the National Assembly and three ministerial posts, after winning 11 per cent of the votes. UPRONA is divided between critics of its President's, Bonaventure Niyoyankana's, alleged uncritical accommodation of CNDD-FDD's corruption and poor administration. Vandeginste (2011), reviewing the composition of the power sharing government after the 2010 elections, contends that UPRONA supporters of former President, Pierre Buyoya, now have a greater presence in government. In December 2011, fighting at UPRONA headquarters resulted in the death of a night watchman and the arrest and detention of the party chairman, Jean-Baptiste Manwangari, who leads the faction opposed to collaboration with CNDD-FDD.

The newly-elected CNDD/FDD government has sought to form alliances with those members of opposition parties that remain in the country – a strategy used by the Buyoya regime post 1996 – thus denying the political legitimacy of those in exile. This strategy has been legalised in the new law on political parties, promulgated on 10 September 2011, which requires parties to have a minimum of 20 founding members per province (340 nationwide), and banned those with leaders outside the country. ADC-Ikibiri's leaders who fled the country in 2010 remain in exile and would not fulfil the residency requirements.<sup>3</sup> A similar tactic was used by President

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2. In June 2011, Ambassadors from the EU, USA, the Vatican, Switzerland and Norway wrote to the government expressing concern about the extra-judicial killings and alleged torture of political detainees since the 2010 elections.

3. Those who left belong to the coalition ADC-Ikibiri: Pascaline Kampayano (UPD-Zigamibanga); Leonard Nyamgoma (CNDD); Alice Nzomukunda (ADR) & Alexis Sinduhije (MSD).

Buyoya in 1996, when he sought to split the opposition by negotiating with their less militant internal wings.

## **5. SECURITY FORCES AND YOUTH MILITIAS: AGENTS OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE**

The process of militarisation did not cease during the interim government and after the two multi-party elections. According to international and local human rights organizations the people of Burundi continue to experience low intensity violence perpetrated largely by state security services (ICG 2011). Burundi has implemented Security Sector Reform (SSR) - a pillar of the liberal peace, which is formulated in a policy framework known as Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR). According to the World Bank (2004), which had financial responsibility for the reform in Burundi, DDR is 'to consolidate peace' through the reform of the security sector, with the long term goal of a reduction in armed personnel and, subsequently, in defence expenditure (World Bank, 2004: 7).

Burundi's DDR, termed 'Demobilization, Reinsertion and Reintegration' (DRR), started in December 2004 and continued to 2009. It sought to demobilize an estimated 70,000 ex-combatants from eight rebel groups, plus the military, and to incorporate some into a new national army, FND (*Forces Nationales Défense*), which was to be reduced from 46,000 to an estimated 30,000 soldiers. A new police force with some 20,000 officers was planned. By December 2007, only 20,330 of the estimated 55,000 ex-combatants had been de-mobilized with the government admitting that the programme had failed in its intentions (World Bank, 2004; RoB, 2008). In 2009, the programme was extended to enable the demobilization and re-integration of the FNL and its breakaway group FNL-D. Sterck et al (2010: 3) state that 'out of the 20,000 FNL members, 3,500 were reintegrated in the Burundian army, and 6,500 benefited from the DRR'. Cash payments to demobilized soldiers encouraged many young men to join the rebel movements and the army, during the implementation of the peace agreement, and rebel leaders augmented their numbers (Human Rights Watch 2003). Stercket et al (2010), in a study of the benefits of cash payments to demobilized ex-combatants, found that some gains were made by their families, but this was short-lived as the resources soon ran out.

On most accounts, the reform of the army (FDN-National Defence Force), especially the integration of the various rebel movements, had progressed well; though Hutu representation remains low at the level of senior ranks. One problem for the ruling party is the now heterogeneity of the political allegiances of those in the military. Soldiers have divided loyalties between the state and their former rebel groups. This may affect the willingness of the military to act as protector of the ruling political elite and may explain why it played a minor role in the election campaigns. Reports of military coup plotters prior to the 2010 elections could have been a ruse to root out discontented supporters of opposition parties. In May 2010, General Germain Niyoyankana, Minister of Defence, stated that the army was in a state of crisis and could drag the country into the 'abyss', if left unchecked. In an analysis of the post-election crisis, Peter Uvin argues that it is only the integration of the army that is preventing Burundi from sliding back into civil war (Uvin 2010). This restraint of the military may also be due to the fact that soldiers have seen the material benefits that can be gained from peace-keeping and have opted to participate in UN peace-keeping exercises in other parts of the continent, such as UNISOM (Somalia).

The security services, especially the National Intelligence Service (SNR) and the police force (PBN) that held direct responsibility for the elections, have been implicated in human rights violation. Media and civil society representatives were arrested and imprisoned for reporting human rights abuse.<sup>4</sup> Acts of intimidation were also officiated over by provincial and communal administrators who banned assembly, blocked the opening of party offices, and arrested opposition party members. A number of attacks targeted those who had defected from CNDD-FDD to other parties.

Youth mobilization to prosecute war and political violence has become a feature of wars in sub-Saharan Africa. In Burundi, political parties set up youth wings as part of a patronage network. Youth mobilization seem to have intensified in 2008 and early 2009 in preparation for the elections, but also marked the period when the demobilization and re-integration programmes were coming to an end and with it a marked increase in the

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4. Since most of the peace media is externally-funded and run by Tutsis, they are perceived by the ruling party as anti-government and criticised as 'unprofessional'.

number of unemployed youth. CNDD-FDD's post-2005 youth mobilization took place primarily at football matches at which military training was provided. Other political parties followed suit, by re-invigorating or starting up paramilitary youth wings, which tended to clash with each other. CNDD-FDD's youth militia (Imbonerakure) harassed political opponents, some of whom were assassinated or imprisoned. Between 2009 and 2010, the Hutu-dominated party FRODEBU's youth wing (Intaganzwa) was just as militant as that of CNDD-FDD. The difference was, unlike Imbonerakure, Intaganzwa did not have the support of the SNR and the Police. FNL's youth wing *Jeunesse Patriotique Hutu* consisted mainly of de-mobilised fighters, many of whom would later join their leader in exile.

Numerous reports by human rights organizations document widespread killings and torture by the security forces or the youth wing of CNDD-FDD. Between September and November 2010, APRODH (*Association Burundaise pour la Protection des Droits Humainset des Personnes Détenues*) alleged that 22 FNL members had been killed by the security forces. HRW also report the death of three FNL members arrested by the Police in October 2010 who were later found dead in the Ruzizi River. Amnesty International recorded 12 tortures by SNR between 23 June and July 2010. OAG (*Observatoire de l'action Gouvernementale*), claimed that since May 2011, over 300 people, including de-mobilised FNL combatants, have been killed by the youth wing of CNDD-FDD. Between August and November 2010 and February and March 2011, the UN documented 11 and nine cases respectively of extra-judicial executions.

Rebels and supporters of the opposition parties also perpetrated political violence by attacking police posts, government offices, raiding rural communities, and killing villagers. For some time the National Security Council and the FDN deny any such rebellion, labelling those who carried out attacks as 'armed bandits'. Nevertheless, it was quick to accuse opposition parties, FNL and ADC-Ikibiri, of carrying out the massacre of 40 people in a bar at Gatumba on 18 September 2011. The bar was used regularly by CNDD-FDD's intelligence agents. In November 2011, the bodies of 20 FNL members were found in the Ruzizi River, presumed to be executed extra-judicially by members of the security forces (ICG 2011).

In sum, despite DDR, Burundi remains a militarised state. At the national level, post-war military expenditure in 2008 amounted to 3.7 per cent of Gross Domestic Product - the highest in the economic union of the East African Community (Oluoch 2010). In July 2012, it was announced that Burundi would get drones from the USA through an aid package to help fight Islamists in Somalia (BBC 2011). Another benefit of UN peace-keeping has been the training of the entire military by US-funded private military contractors, Northrop Grumman, under the US government's Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) programme.

The DDR may have worked in terms of demobbing ex-combatants and reducing the size of the security services, but it was unsuccessful in terms of demilitarizing Burundi's society. Former rebel groups retained caches of arms, and many weapons – grenades and Kalashnikovs – are still in the hands of ex-combatants. Small grenades, in particular, have been used in election-oriented violence. Amnesty International (2010: 2) reported 'at least 116 grenade attacks between 1 June and 8 July in 2010'. Prior to the elections, the security forces used guns and the ruling party-backed militias tended to use sticks, stones and machetes, but after the elections small arms were increasingly used by militias. Most of the rebel attacks seem to have been carried out with the use of machetes and grenades, some acquired through attacks on police posts and taken by deserters.

## 6. SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

A form of political violence that has been on the increase in post-conflict Burundi is sexual and gender-based violence. Feminist scholars have already articulated the link between SGBV and militarism, noting, in particular, the ways in which forms of violence masculinity that is associated with militarism seeps into everyday life (Enloe 2002, Segal 2008). In post-conflict Burundi, the human rights organization, *LigueIteka's* annual recorded cases of rape rose from 983 in 2003 to 1,791 in 2005 and to 2,089 in 2007 (*LigueIteka 2004 and 2007*). Similarly, the NGO, *le Centre Seruka de Médecins sans frontier Belgique* (MSF), recorded 5,466 cases of sexual violence between December 2004 and November 2007 (ACAT/OMCIT 2008). In 2004, *LigueIteka* revealed that 63.2 per cent of rape was committed by people from the neighbourhood and known to the survivors and just below 36 per cent had been committed by state security personnel. The latter is not well-

recorded as women fear reprisals from their husbands and families. Where cases are brought to the attention of the judiciary, the figures are quite alarming. For example, from May 2004 to October 2007 a legal firm in Bujumbura recorded 306 cases of wife battering, 424 cases of domestic violence, 84 cases of sexual violence, 255 cases of divorce and 28 cases of child custody (ACAT/OMCIT 2008). Certainly, the increased attention given to sexual violence and the availability of medical treatment may account for the increased statistics, however, interviews with medical professional in 2006 point to qualitative differences in the characteristic of survivors, especially that of rape of minors, even infants; at that time the UN peace-keeping force reported that 60 per cent of rape concerned minors (ACAT/OMCIT 2008). Statistics on male rape is even more difficult to access. Even though violations of small boys are now being referred to in public documents (*ligueIteka* 2007), there is no reference to the rape of adult men, which is highly stigmatised.

There is little doubt among Burundians that the incidence of rape seems to be on the increase, despite the enactment of prohibiting laws. In 2009, revisions to the penal code, which already prohibited rape, made rape punishable with life imprisonment, and criminalized domestic violence. The incidence of sexual violence is a good indicator of transformation. The gender quota introduced by the Arusha peace agreement may have led to legislative and executives bodies having 30 per cent of women. Ensuring women's greater participation at the level of the state has not altered the character of the state, as women were uncritically incorporated, especially military women such as Pascaline Kampayano – a former CNDD/FDD soldier. There is a tendency among state elites and the international community to attribute failures in the promotion of gender equality to the traditional and cultural practices in Burundi society (UNCEDAW 2008), suggesting a static society and ignoring the impact of years of warfare and militarism.

## **7. STRUCTURAL FACTORS AFFECTING POLITICAL VIOLENCE**

The intensity of political competition in Burundi has been attributed to the endemic weakness of its economy and the presence of a predatory political elite that survives by maintaining practices of exclusion (Ngaruko and Nkurunziza 2000). Access to political office and the ability to dispense the resources of such offices to supporters allow for complex patronage networks.



Burundi has been declared the most corrupt nation in the East African Community (Ligami 2012). Political violence linked to allegations of corruption has increased. From 2009 to 2012, leaders of civil society monitoring groups have faced death, imprisonment or intimidation, when reporting cases of senior officials who they allege to have embezzled public funds.<sup>5</sup> In response to donor pressure, the state enacted, in 2006, anti-corruption legislation, establishing an Anti-Corruption Brigade and an Anti-Corruption Court. So far both have lacked effectiveness, due to limited resources and the inability to pursue senior government officials, except those who are out of favour with the party. In March 2011, CNDD-FDD expelled from the party Colonel Manasse Nzobonimpa, the executive secretary of the 'council of wise men' and member of the East African legislative Council, after he had accused senior party members of engaging in corruption and sabotaging the economy.<sup>6</sup>

Corruption is occurring in a context where the material conditions of life for the ordinary Burundians have not changed much since the war ended. Ninety percent of the population live in rural communities where farm sizes are below 0.5 hectares. Sixty-seven per cent live below the poverty line of \$1.25 dollar per day. The rate of economic growth decreased from 3.9 in 2010 to 3.33 per cent in 2012 (IMF & World Bank 2012), whilst high food and fuel prices have kept inflation at 20 percent since November 2011, doubling the rate of the previous year (World Bank 2012). Added to this are reports of food shortages and famine where the rains have been inadequate. Food insecurity affects some 80 per cent of the population.

External budgetary and project grant support amounts to about 23 per cent of Gross Domestic Product. In March 2009, Burundi reached the IMF's HIPC (Heavily Indebted Poor Countries) completion point and obtained debt relief from the Paris Club creditors, cancelling US \$134m of its debt.

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5. Ernest Manirumva, Vice-President of OLUCOME (Anti-Corruption Economic Malpractice Observatory) was stabbed to death on 9 April 2009, after accusing members of the government of embezzlement. Jackson Ndikuruyo, a former police officer was shot dead in Musigati on 16 August 2010, after denouncing police corruption. Journalist Thierry Ndayishimiye was arrested for criticising corruption at REGIDESO—the state's energy company.

6. He accused Clotilde Nizigama (finance minister), Jérémie Ngendakumana (CNDD-FDD party president), Saidi Kibeya (transport minister) and Mohamed Rukara (ombudsman) of stealing US\$13m that the Uganda government made to the Burundi government.

Yet, the country is still classified as being of risk of high debt distress (IMF & World Bank 2012). Burundi restarted pre-war economic reforms with its first Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy Paper (PRSP-I) in 2004, and has been receiving reform supporting grants and concessional loans from the World Bank and IMF. PRSP-I gave emphasis to privatization of state concerns in the coffee and sugar sectors.

Privatization led to the capturing of state resources by Hutu political elites and foreign investors. Up to 2005, Tutsis, who dominated Burundi politics for 35 years, held high-ranking positions in state concerns and developed close links to western businessmen; only a few Hutus were able to use their access to power to acquire wealth. The threat of losing income and lucrative opportunities was a factor in the assassination of the Hutu President in 1993 and subsequent violent protest by the Tutsis. The implementation of neo-liberal reforms has done little to transform the dependency of the elites on state resources; in effect, it has widened access to the Hutu elite.

In 2010, the conditionalities of the reform supporting grants shifted the emphasis away from economic recovery and rehabilitation to reforms in public sector finance management and private sector development. PRSP-II, adopted in January 2012 and expected to run from August 2012 to 2016, is linked closely to peace-building, as it incorporates the UN's Strategic Framework for Peace-Building in Burundi, which means financial resources for peace-building will be channelled through the state. PRSP-II proposed basis of economic growth is the modernizing and diversifying of agriculture away from the traditional export crops of sugar and coffee. Agricultural improvement plans will be implemented as part of the National Agricultural Investment Policy (NAIP) which was adopted in 2011. Attention will focus on the development of family-oriented commercial agriculture, targeting those individuals with over 1 hectare and, who according to PRSP-II, 'possess the technical qualifications necessary to realize the agricultural sector's mission' (para.295). There is a danger here that the most marginalised of communities, those with less than one hectare who constitute the majority of farmers, the displaced, and female-headed households in which those qualifications are absent, will be excluded from this process.

From a political stability perspective, the scale of youth unemployment, at 80 per cent, provides considerable scope for patronage from political elite, most

of whom are also businessmen. Opportunities for self-improvement through education declined during the war years with the near collapse of the public sector. Many external observers have lauded the fact that President Nkurunziza's popularity came about from instituting free primary schooling and pre-natal maternal health care soon after being elected in 2005. They ignore the fact that these changes in policy owed their origins to outcry over the inhumane practices of detaining women in hospitals for non-payment of fees. After the fees were removed, the hospitals still lacked resources and have had difficulty coping with the extra demand. Free primary schooling was an election strategy used by other political parties in the region, and which donors now sanction without providing the support the state needs for effective implementation.

The burden on welfare and economic resources has been aggravated by the return of some 660,000 Burundians from neighbouring countries, after a decade or more in exile. The predominantly agricultural returnees face considerable difficulty accessing their former land. Many landless returnees were placed in transit centres or 'peace villages', now Integrated Rural Villages, as they are brought within the government's villagization programme. Many returnee villagers live in desperate situations with no access to land and livelihood activities, apart from casual agricultural labour (IRIN 2010).

Land grabbing by the elite has placed them in direct conflict with the peasantry. Burundi's population of over 8 million is estimated to be growing at 2.4 percent per annum (RoB 2012); this places considerable pressure on a country whose population density is one of the highest in Africa. As a result, competition for land is intense and episodes of violence have been linked to struggles over land. Hutus displaced in the 1972 genocide had their land either re-allocated, squatted or stolen. However, repossession, following repatriation, has not been helped by the complexity of state legislation, with land policy falling under several bodies, and inheritance laws that dispossess widows (Oketch, 2004). The National Commission for Land and other Goods formed, in 2006, as part of the peace agreement, has been relatively ineffective, as many of those repatriated have been unable to repossess their land, without going through lengthy, costly and sometimes haphazard legal procedures that may not result in success. Despite donor assistance and

pressure, the CNDD/FDD government has been slow in revising the land code, in order to take into consideration, among many things, illiteracy, rural poverty and the succession rights of women (RoB, 2008).

In sum, dependence on external aid has aggravated rather than facilitated improvements in the human rights record of the state, as capital is used to consolidate the hegemony of the elite economically and militarily. In a continuation of past policy, official aid has not been affected by the state's repressive actions against political opponents. Consequently, militarism has continued to play a vital role in the processes of extraction for the Burundi elite.

### **CONCLUDING DISCUSSION: STABILIZATION OR EMANCIPATION?**

Despite almost ten years of post-war reconstruction, political violence remains a destabilizing force in Burundi. The political elite continue to pursue divisive politics, and the state persists in its intolerance of political diversity. Post-conflict political violence is not surprising, considering the failure of the peace settlement to grasp the political dynamics of the Burundi state. In its continued universalistic vision of the liberal peace and assumptions about conflict in African societies, the international community has termed the Burundi peace process a success story of power sharing and of democratic transition, and has maintained strong support for Nkurunziza's regime. The regime appeases critics by establishing commissions to investigate violence; yet their reports have not been made public. This has caused some observers, such as Vandeginste (2011: 333), to argue that the international acceptance of the 2010 elections may appear to 'reward the dominant party for increasing authoritarian governance practices.' While seemingly conceding to international pressure on human rights and corruption, the ruling party has consolidated its grip on state institutions in an authoritarian fashion. Recently, the government established technical bodies, such as the National Independent Human Rights Commission, the Office of Ombudsman, and a National Gender Council. However, there have been questions about the political neutrality of the personnel and the lack of sufficient budgets to make them effective.

Burundi's political elite were forced into accepting a peace agreement that few had vested interest in and of which they were not the key architects. Consequently, as Uvin (2010: 169) claims 'Burundi is basically limited to

delaying and perverting the international agenda – but neither the government nor the people have the capacity to move forward on their own agenda'. In the absence of their own material resources to fashion their own version of peace, the political elite became reliant on external actors to monitor their somewhat grudging implementation of the liberal peace. Lack of ownership has meant that they can blame their problems on Arusha, rather than examining closely the nature of the state.

Rangelov and Kaldor (2011: 194) note that 'the central message from policy-makers', such as the World Bank (2010), 'is that breaking the cycles of violence requires sustained efforts to develop legitimate institutions that can provide citizen security, justice and jobs'. Clearly, the ordinary people of Burundi crave peace, political freedom, and improvements in their living conditions. Burundi's democratic maturity should be tied closely to not just ensuring equity (ethnic and gender) but to improvements in the conditions of life for all, such that sustainable livelihoods can become a norm for the majority. Unfortunately, stabilization that equates to militarization will inevitably lead to more violence.

An end to political violence in Burundi requires a new form of politics; one that begins by addressing the nature of its political economy and the role it has played in the production of hierarchical differences in the society. Equally, and at the same time, inclusive debates are needed about the relationship between local communities and the national state, not the top-down decentralization that has characterised neo-liberal political reform, where power remains at the centre. During and after the peace agreement, there was no public debate in Burundi about what people wanted in a new dispensation, especially on the role of the security services in the post-conflict society, and on the nature of gender relations. Paradoxically, while the gender quota in government is lauded as showing the political advancement of women, SGBV has become more prevalent. Presented as a cause of cultural violence, in isolation from other forms of violence, policymakers have adopted technical solutions that tend to reify international and state paternalism and militarism, and thus, in turn, aggravating SGBV. Only by adopting a gendered perspective on peace, as Confortini (2006: 333) argues, 'can prescriptions for a violence-free society be more than temporary solutions to deeply ingrained attitudes to accept

violence as “natural”. Here, Pratt and Devore's (2011) appeal to appreciate the existence of multiple feminisms in post-conflict contexts is vital, since emancipatory politics have, by necessity, to be inclusive of those women outside of the militarised political elite.

A re-imagining of the political community is needed in Burundi, so that instead of focusing on securitizing the state, in effect the political elite, the lens should shift to the poor, women, youth, and the rural. Starting with conceptualizations of peace that are localised, gendered and developmental may provide the capacity to fashion a post-conflict society that gives prominence to the well-being of all citizens, and challenges the dehumanizing conditions that Africans have been socialized into accepting as the norm. Such framing of peace would require an ontological shift in how the West views peace-building and African humanity; a shift that moves scholars and policy-makers away from seeing realist thinking that promotes military solutions as the path to peace, and instead to accept Africans as equal members of humanity who deserves more humane treatment.

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