CEJISS

Demos and Ethnos: Dangerous Democratisation in Pre-Genocide Rwanda

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Growing interest in civil wars has called for a reassessment of traditional conceptions of violent conflict.[2] With most of these wars occurring in the developing world, these reassessments have often led to a focus on the particular predicaments of developing nations. In the early 1980s, Crawford Young identified class and ethnicity as the major patterns of social conflict in the developing world.[3] Young has now become one in a large group of academics insistent on the importance of ethnicity, or communal identities, as a root cause of conflict. Much of the literature on post-colonial Africa, for example, has tended to concentrate on the importance of 'ethnic politics' on the continent, particularly in cases of violent conflicts. For many, African politics continue to be severely disrupted and divided by ethnic conflict.[4] For Howard Handelman, "no cleavage has more sharply, and oftentimes violently, divided countries during the

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2 For a study of new patterns of war and their implications for traditional 'Clausewitzian' conceptions of interstate conflict, see Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1999). In terms of trends, while much of the violence experienced in the twentieth century resulted of interstate conflicts, civil strife at the century's dawn eclipsed interstate wars in terms of violence. Close to half of the conflicts recorded in those hundred years were fought within state boundaries. David Welsh, "Domestic Politics and Ethnic Conflict," *Survival* 35 (1993): 63. In turn, the growing number of civil wars has radically changed the face of violent conflict. While early in the twentieth century approximately fifteen percent of casualties were civilians, at its close this number was thought to have reached close to ninety percent. Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, *Preventing Deadly Conflict* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1997), 11.

3 Crawford Young, "Patterns of Social Conflict: State, Class and Ethnicity," *Daedalus* 111 (1982): 72.

4 Harvey Glickman, "Ethnicity, Elections, and Constitutional Democracy in Africa," in Timothy D. Sisk and Andrew Reynolds, eds. *Elections and Conflict Management in Africa* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), 37.

past century than has ethnicity."[5] For many developing states ethnic or communal politics are effectively an additional source of unrest at a time when they are struggling to achieve stability.

A parallel trend purportedly favouring stability in recent decades has been democratisation.[6] A wave of liberalisation and democratisation, often referred to as the 'Third Wave' in reference to Samuel Huntington's seminal *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, swept the developing world in the late nineteen-eighties and early nineteen-nineties.[7] Particularly, Sub-Saharan Africa saw a growing number of authoritarian regimes move towards liberalisation and democratisation.[8] Many looked optimistically to this wave as the beginning of an era of growing stability for developing states. Fifteen years later, many developing nations are still wrought with problems of political instability. Democratisation has not proved a solution to the problems facing many developing states. In certain instances, the process of democratisation has even reversed or accentuated internal divisions, leading, in some cases, to the outbreak of violence. While both important topics of inquiry in political science and comparative politics, democratisation and communal identities have rarely been studied in relation to one another.[9]

The present analysis addresses the link between ethnicity (as a form of communal identity) and democratisation.[10] The argument centres on assessing the role

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[5] Howard Handelman, *The Challenge of Third World Development* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1996), 48.

[6] Liberalisation is understood as an opening of the system to civic liberties, while democratisation is more specifically tied to liberalisation of the political realm, of political competition. For Linz and Stepan, for example, "democratization requires open contestation over the right to win control of the government, and this in turn requires free competitive elections, the results of which determine who governs." Juan J. Linz and Alfred C. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America and post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore, Md.: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 3.

[7] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

[8] See for example Bruce Baker, "The Class of 1990: How Have Autocratic Leaders of Sub-Saharan Africa Fared under Democratisation," *Third World Quarterly* 19 (1998): 115-127.

[9] Zeric Kay Smith, "The Impact of Political Liberalisation and Democratisation on Ethnic Conflict in Africa: An Empirical Test of Common Assumptions," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 38 (2000): 22, 26. A notable exception is Bruce Berman, Dickson Eyoh and Will Kymlicka, eds. *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa* (Oxford: James Currey, 2004).

[10] While widely used, the term 'ethnicity' is a contentious one. James Fearon and David Laitin described ethnicity as "defined mainly by descent rules of group membership and content typically composed of cultural attributes, such as religion, language, customs and shared historical myths." James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity," *International Organization* 54 (2000): 848. In his definition, Anthony Smith insisted on solidarity that exists between members of a particular ethnic identity that serves to unite them in what he calls the 'ethnie.' Anthony D. Smith, "The Ethnic Sources of Nationalism," *Survival* 35 (1993): 49. This solidarity is fundamental to the constitution ethnic ties: it is the common acknowledgement that specific shared cultural attributes are the basis for a common identity for one's group, as well the material on which to build distinctions from other groups:

played by governing elites in times of democratic transitions. It contends that in certain instances the process of democratisation can mean dangerous times at which political entrepreneurs 'play the ethnic, religious or communal card' in order to hold, or gain access, to power and resources. Finally, this article reviews how the democratisation process affected the outbreak of violence in Rwanda in the early 1990s. This analysis is not intended as an exercise to uncover absolute and direct causal links between democratisation and communal violence. The result of complex interactions between a number of historical, sociological, economic and political factors, civil strife is rarely the result of a single factor or trend, though a unique factor may prove to be the catalyst of prior factors. Nor does democratisation necessarily lead to ethnic or communal conflict. Not all instances of democratic transition have translated into bloodshed. Some have proven to be success stories.[11] The processes that might apply in one state might have radically different outcomes in another. In the postcolonial world, states are necessarily different, particularly across regions. The purpose of the present analysis is to highlight broad patterns and processes, but not establish iron laws, of the dynamics between democratisation and communal relations.

Democratisation in the Hands of Cunning Political Entrepreneurs

The last decades of the twentieth century witnessed a worldwide wave of democratisation.[12] In Sub-Saharan Africa alone, twenty-one states had, by 1990, embarked on a process to liberalise their political arena, leading to the ousting of eleven authoritarian leaders.[13] The democratisation process in many of these countries was the result of a combination of internal contention and international pressures.[14] In a number of instances, the process ran parallel to the emergence of a civil society, or at least vocal challengers eager to have the national arena opened up to new democratic practices. The democratisation

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"group consciousness [...] enables them to establish mental boundaries between themselves and 'others'." Howard Handelman, *The Challenge of Third World Development*, 49. However, as Jason Clay argued, "there is considerable confusion about which terms are most appropriate to describe the world's peoples and the subtle distinction between these terms." Jason W. Clay, "Epilogue: The Ethnic Future of Nations," *Third World Quarterly*, 11 (1989): 223. Ethnicity is but one conceptual tool, along with nationality, tribe, race, caste and regional affinities, used by social scientists to represent communal identities, to speak of the ties and attachment individuals feel for a social group. To reflect the plurality of forms of social identities, 'communal identities' is employed instead of the narrower term 'ethnicity'. For a description of the types of communal identities see for example Crawford Young, *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism* (Madison, Wisc.: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), 48-65.

[11] Success stories include, for example, Benin which moved towards democratisation in the early nineties and nowadays is stable and relatively free. Another example is post-apartheid South Africa.

[12] Donald L. Horowitz, "Democracy in Divided Societies," *Journal of Democracy* 4 (1993), 18.

[13] Harvey Glickman, "Ethnicity, Elections and Constitutional Democracy in Africa," 42.

[14] Bruce Baker, "The Class of 1990," 119.

trend also followed external pressures, particularly from international donors' intent on tying processes of economic reform in numerous Southern countries with the need to adopt norms of greater transparency, accountability and democracy by political leaders in debtor states. At the time, many looked to this wide spanning democratisation trend with great optimism.

Looking at the numbers of these decades, this wave of democratisation seems to have translated into liberalisation and more political and civil freedom. Between the 1970s and the first years of the new millennium, the number of authoritarian regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa dropped by half, from 60,5% of Sub-Saharan African states to 29,8%, while free states more than doubled, from 7,9% to 23,4% (See Table 1). The greatest changes occurred in the 1990s with a dramatic drop from 32 autocratic regimes (in 1989/90) to 14 by 2004, and with the number of free rising from 3 in 1989/90 to 11 by 2005.

Table 1. Trends in Political and Civil Freedom in Sub-Saharan Africa

Year	Status			Total Countries
	Not Free	Partly Free	Free	
1973	23 – (60,5)	12 – (31,6)	3 – (7,9)	38 (100%)
1979	26 ↑ (57,8)	15 ↑ (33,3)	4 ↑ (8,9)	45 (100%)
1982/83	26 – (57,8)	16 ↑ (35,6)	3 ↓ (6,7)	45 (100%)
1989/90	32 ↑ (69,6)	11 ↓ (23,9)	3 – (6,5)	46 (100%)
1993	24 ↓ (51,1)	15 ↑ (31,9)	8 ↑ (17,0)	47 (100%)
1999	15 ↓ (31,9)	24 ↑ (51,1)	8 – (17,0)	47 (100%)
2005	14 ↓ (29,8)	22 ↓ (46,8)	11 ↑ (23,4)	47 (100%)

Source: Freedom House, *Freedom in the World Country Ratings 1972-2006* (Washington, D.C., 2006). Available online at: http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/fiw/FIWAllScores.xls.[15]

Despite this trend, not all cases of democratisation were successful. If twenty-one states embarked on the path to liberalisation and democratisation, it resulted in the ousting of half of their authoritarian leaders, and, following these events, only 8 new countries emerged as 'free.' The optimism of the early days of the 'third wave' requires moderation. Almost two decades later, fourteen

[15] It should be noted that Freedom House changed its rating system in 2003. Overall, Freedom House creates its scale by looking at 10 political rights issues–looking at the 'electoral process', 'political pluralism and participation', and the 'functioning of government'–and 15 civil liberties issues–looking at 'freedom of expression and belief', 'associational and organizational rights', 'rule of law', and 'personal autonomy and individual rights.' Before 2003, countries with combined average ratings for Political Rights and for Civil Liberties between 3,0 and 5,5 were classified as 'Partly Free,' and between 5,5 and 7,0 as 'Not Free.' Following the changes, countries with combined average ratings for Political Rights and for Civil Liberties between 3,0 and 5,0 were classified as 'Partly Free,' and between 5,5 and 7,0 as 'Not Free.'

African states are rated not free, while twenty-two were deemed partly free. In many cases, few gains have been made. Incumbent leaders managed to survive the democratisation process because of their access to power and resources, or simply by manipulating the process itself.[16] Others used democratisation rhetoric to satisfy the international community (and international creditors) without actually adhering to the principles of democracy.[17] And even when leaders were ousted, in some cases, those who replaced them simply reverted to autocratic tactics. In many other cases, however, the final outcome is unknown. While the number of strongly authoritarian regimes dropped and the number of free states rose over the course of this period, the number of partly free states also rose.

This rise in the number of partly free countries is tied to the drop in 'not free' states. Extremely repressive regimes, outside of a dramatic coup, should not be expected to embrace complete liberalisation and democratisation on a whim. Such processes often tend to be incremental. Their liberalisation, without necessarily paralleling a consistent democratisation process and the relaxing of authoritarian rule, is represented by this passage to a partly free rating. While an encouraging trend, it should also be a source of concern. While transitions open the door to further positive changes and democratisation, they can be dangerous times during which political hierarchies and the balance of power are shaken. Research indicates that there exists a relationship between the relative openness of a system and contention, including violent opposition.

The political process approach, developed in the 1970s addressed this relationship. Charles Tilly argued that the relationship between contention and the political system follows a curvilinear relationship. As he described it, "… protest occurs when there is a space of toleration by a polity and when claimants are neither sufficiently advantaged to obviate the need to use dramatic means to express their interests nor so completely repressed to prevent them from trying to get what they want."[18] Mildly authoritarian and repressive regimes, characterised by 'cracks in the system', can in fact stimulate contentious action, contrary to extremely oppressive regime where there exists no tolerance of dissent. In a recent study, Monica Duffy Toft examined the relationship between degrees of authoritarianism and the onset of conflict. Her results lent credence to Tilly's argument. States, on average, tend to move towards a decrease in authoritarianism in the year prior to a conflict. At the onset of conflict, states slip slightly back towards authoritarianism. As Duffy Toft explained, "[a]s the war approaches, we do see the level of authoritarianism increasing ever so lightly. Such a dynamic lends credence to the idea that 'liberalization' of the system is precarious as it might put too much stress on the system, leading to more calls

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[16] Bruce Baker, "The Class of 1990," 119.

[17] Patrick Chabal, "The African Crisis: Context and Interpretation," in Richard Werbner and Terence Ranger, eds. *Postcolonial Identities in Africa* (London: Zed Books, 1996), 43.

[18] Quoted in David S. Meyer, "Protest and Political Opportunities," *Annual Review of Sociology* 30 (2004): 128.

for even more liberalization. Should these calls not be met, frustration sets in, repression picks up, and violence ensues."[19]

The road to liberalisation and democratisation is a potentially dangerous one, a fact to be remembered beyond hopes held for the stabilising effects of effective democratisation. In particular, rushing to organise an election and pushing a democratisation process in an unstable and historically divided state might precipitate disaster. While a change in regime entails conflict, many believe the risks of an upsurge of conflict at times of democratisation to be particularly great in ethnically or communally fragmented societies.[20] For Donald Horowitz, "[i]n many countries of Africa … a major reason for the failure of democratization is ethnic conflict."[21] For these divided polities, democratisation proves to be a dangerous time because of the inherent instability that accompanies the liberalisation of the political arena which can be recuperated to entrench dividing lines between communities.

In certain cases of democratisation, this resulted from the manipulation of perceptions of communal identities on the part of elites to win the support of constituents. Manipulation of these perceptions of communal identity can lead to a rapid and profound polarisation of divided societies.[22] The incentive to manipulate communal identities served as a strategy amidst intense competition to fill the power vacuum created by the reshuffling of political positions. Those studying instances of elites, (or political entrepreneurs), 'playing the ethnic, religious or communal card' generally agree that such behaviour can come as a response to perceived changes in available opportunities or environmental, political or economic changes. For many, elite behaviour in situations of threat is motivated by their wish to hold onto power in the short term and to ensure possibilities for their political survival in the long run.[23] Or, on the part of emerging challengers, playing on perceptions of communal attachment constitutes a strategy to win popular support and power and influence.

This is not to say that elites are necessarily calculating egoistic actors. Democratisation, or any type of transition that entails the reconfiguration of relations of power and influence, constitutes a turning point for elites. McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly indicated that, for elites, "these episodic moments of contention, [create] uncertainty [...]; [reveal] fault lines, hence possible realignments

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[19] Monica Duffy Toft, "Peace Through Security: Making Negotiated Settlements Stick," presented at the *Exit Strategies: Iraq, Afghanistan, and Beyond*, Centre for Security and Defence Studies, Ottawa, Canada, 23 March 2007, 22-23.

[20] Marina Ottaway, "Democratization in Collapsed States," in I. William Zartman, ed. *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority* (Boulder, Co.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995), 236.

[21] Donald L. Horowitz, "Democracy in Divided Societies," 18.

[22] David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, "Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict," *International Security* 21 (1996): 54.

[23] V. P. Gagnon, Jr., "Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict: The Case of Serbia," *International Security* 19 (1994/1995): 140.

in the body politic; [threaten] and [encourage] challengers to take further contentious actions; [and force] elites to reconsider their commitments and allegiances."[24] Their rationality or interest-driven behaviour comes, however, as a result of the rules of the political game to which they belong. Political competitions are construed as a struggle in which outcomes are often binary. They are much like a zero-sum game in which gains and losses are relative: to keep one's post or not, to have influence and power or not, to be in the winning party/group or not. Paul Pierson referred to this as the 'lumpy' or 'winner-take-all" quality of some political goals: "politicians seeking re-election, coup plotters, and lobbyists either win or lose; legislation either passes or is rejected [...] Unlike economic markets, in which there usually is room for many firms, in politics finishing second may not count for much."[25] As a result, the parameters of the game suggest instrumental behaviour in order to strategise ways to come out ahead of the competition. Democratisation further adds to the reasons for an intense competition. Fighting to gain control of the democratisation process can become a goal in itself. In a political transition process, many risk more than a political posting. An institutionalised democratic environment can prove to offer little to elites: "power positions are few, tenure is insecure, and the future for an out-of-office politician is bleak – there are no lucrative private sector jobs awaiting those who step out of the political fray."[26] As a result, as F.G. Bailey argued, "leadership [is] an enterprise," and elites often turn into political entrepreneurs in the midst of political competitions. [27]

While elites and political entrepreneurs have a choice of stratagems to compete and manipulate the process of democratisation to their advantage, 'playing the ethnic, religious and communal card' can prove a formidable one. As Cynthia Enloe argued, "ethnicity … is a resource which regimes may well be able to manipulate to their advantage, whether to legitimate their authority, enhance their power, strengthen state security or promote national unity."[28] Ethnicity can serve as a rallying cry allowing elites and political entrepreneurs to mobilise their respective groups for their purposes. The support of their ethnic constituents is an extremely appealing one for communal elites and political entrepreneurs as mobilisation along ethnic lines limits the possibilities of defection to opponents from different ethnic groups.[29] Building on shared collective backgrounds, political entrepreneurs thus have incentives to inten-

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[24] Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 9.

[25] Paul Pierson, "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics," *American Political Science Review* 94 (2000), 258.

[26] Marina Ottaway, "Democratization in Collapsed States," 243.

[27] F. G. Bailey, *Stratagems and Spoils: A Social Anthropology of Politics* (Toronto: Copp Clark Publishing Company, 1969), 36.

[28] Quoted in David Brown, "Ethnic Revival: Perspectives on State and Society," *Third World Quarterly* 11 (1989): 6, 10.

[29] Larry Diamond, "Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict," 124.

sify their ethnic appeals during democratisation to maximise the turnout for the vote among their constituents.[30] This tactic can prove dangerous, however, because in intensifying their appeals to their constituents, elites deepen divisions in fragmented societies. In politicising communal ties and intensifying their communal appeals, their tactics can serve to vilify their opponents and their respective communal groups. For groups, the situation might come to be framed not simply as one of political competition, but as one of intense conflict between antagonistic groups. In certain cases, such strategies can potentially escalate the situation to a flare up of violence. One of the most violent examples of a democratisation process falling prey to elite manipulation is the Rwandese case.

Arrested Democratisation in Rwanda: The Violent Consequences of the Manipulation of Communal Identities

Sources of Conflict

Anthropologists and historians disagree on the origins of the different Rwandese populations. Recent accounts of Rwandese history tend to point to the changing nature of communal identities. Distinction between Hutu, Tutsi and Twa originally served as a form of socio-economic division of society, with the Hutu as agriculturalists, the Tutsi as cattle herders and the Twa as potters. Over time, with the centralisation of the country around a Tutsi monarchy, these labels began to take on a class connotation. Another change in the nature of communal identities came with the arrival of colonisers. Under two successive colonial administrations, German and Belgian, these socio-economic divisions were recast as racial categories.

The Germans took control of Rwanda in 1885. From the onset, to establish indirect rule in the region, German colonisers engaged in racial theorising to determine which community was best suited to take administrative 'control' of Rwanda. In line with the thinking of the first German explorers, European colonisers generally perceived the Tutsi population as the 'superior' group. Hanning Speke's early descriptions of the Hutu, Tutsi and Twa played a fundamental role in shaping German perceptions of Rwanda's communal groups. Speke described "the Tutsi people as descendants of Ethiopians, and more 'European' and 'superior' to the Hutu and Twa."[31] The thesis of an Ethiopian descent of the Tutsi population was based on physical characteristics attributed to the Tutsis. They were judged slender and with finer facial traits than other Rwandese communities. For many Europeans, it seemed inconceivable that a population with physical traits akin to European physical characteristics

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[30] Ibid.

[31] Christine L. Kellow and H. Leslie Steeves, "The Role of Radio in the Rwandan Genocide," *Journal of Communication* 48 (1998): 113.

could have emerged from such a deeply African region; they could only be from regions closer to Europe. Such physical superiority was also thought to translate into superior 'mental' capacities. For Europeans, "the Tutsi were more intelligent, reliable, hardworking – in short, more like themselves – than the Hutu."[32] A final characteristic attributed to Tutsis was greater leadership skills. Europeans colonisers were fascinated by the large Tutsi kingdom to the South of the country. For indirect rule, a large Tutsi kingdom seemed better suited than a series of smaller Hutu kingdom.[33] The Germans, (and the Belgians following their victory over the Germans), consolidated Tutsi dominance in the region by helping the Tutsi monarchy assume control of other kingdoms in the region. The ensuing decade saw a hardening of racially discriminatory policies in the country. More and more, Hutu were granted limited access to schooling as well as limited opportunities for upward mobility.

In the 1950s the situation changed. Hutu populations began to openly express resentment towards the Tutsi regime. Such sentiment corresponded with important changes in the Belgian administration. A younger generation of colonial administrators now sided with the Hutu. By 1959, with support of the Belgian administration, the Hutu staged a coup to take control of the country. The coup came to be known as the 1959 Social Revolution. While instituting a new regime, the new Hutu government, under the MDR-Parmehutu, did not rescind ingrained practices of communal division, however. The Revolution was presented as a victory against foreign – Ethiopian – feudalists, the Tutsi. The new ideology became that "Rwanda belongs to the Hutus, its original inhabitants, who had been brutally subjugated for centuries by the foreign masters, the Tutsi ... the Hutu had wrestled power away from their former masters and installed a true democracy, representing the vast majority of the people."[34] A hierarchical system similar to the previous Tutsi dominated regime was established. Tutsi were offered very limited access to services and employment opportunities through the institution of a quota system. Nevertheless, despite this inherently inequitable system, and despite violent upsurges against Tutsis in 1963-1967 and 1972, the groups managed to co-habit relatively peacefully. As Gérard Prunier argued, "[a]ll in all, life was difficult for the Tutsi who were victims of institutional discrimination, but in everyday life it was quite tolerable."[35] While the politics of difference was clearly upheld by successive Hutu regimes, it rarely translated into large scale violence.

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[32] Peter Uvin, "Prejudice, Crisis, and Genocide in Rwanda," *African Studies Review* 40 (1997): 95.

[33] Dominique Franche, *Rwanda: Généalogie d'un Génocide* (Paris: Éditions Les Milles et Une Nuits, 1997), 39.

[34] Peter Uvin, "Prejudice, Crisis, and Genocide in Rwanda," 98. The reference to a representative democracy served to underline the fact the Hutu account for the majority of the Rwandese population, while the Tutsi account for between 10 to 15 per cent of the population.

[35] Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (London: Hurst and Company, 1995), 76.

Dangerous Democratisation

The process behind the construction of collective identities in Rwanda also made them into powerful tools for communal mobilisation. They were put to the test by governmental authorities and a clique of extremist elites in the 1990s, in light of the quickly fading legitimacy of the government and pressures for democratisation, both internal and international.

Demands for a democratic transition began in the late 1980s as the country experienced deep economic problems. Coupled with droughts and a famine, economic problems discredited the government. Rwandese civil society, in the process of organising itself, began making strong demands for a liberalisation of the political arena. In the midst of a wave of democratisation on the African continent, the international community was also eager to see the Rwandese regime of the time, under President Juvénal Habyarimana, follow suit, though Kigali had long been reluctant to open the country to democratic political competition. Rwanda finally reached a turning point in June 1990 during a France-Africa summit in La Baule, France. There, Habyarimana was pressed by one of his most prominent allies, President François Mitterrand, to begin democratising the country.

1990 dealt another blow to the Habyarimana regime. The government's legitimacy was further eroded following attacks by the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF), a group composed of Rwandese, mostly Tutsi, refugees in Uganda. The conflict with the Rwandese Patriotic Front offered the government an opportunity to reconsolidate its shaken hold on the country. Because of the RPF's mostly Tutsi membership, the conflict in the North could be framed as a general insurgency by Tutsis against the Hutu population. This scapegoating was used to legitimise the Hutu government as the only one capable of defending and entitled to defend the Hutu population. As Peter Uvin argued, following the RPF attack, "a variety of dynamics were created that sought to radicalize racist prejudice [...] The first was the extension of the FPR threat to all Tutsi, whether linked to the FPR or not."[36] This served to generate a sense of psychosis against the Tutsi, the 'enemy within.'[37] Rapidly, a vast majority of the Hutu population gave their support to the regime in its fight against a common enemy.[38] From the early 1990s, the regime, with the help of a group of extremists, proceeded with the promotion of rhetoric aimed at framing Tutsis as the enemy.

The radio and newspapers were great tools to disseminate anti-Tutsi propaganda. The newly liberalised political arena proved to be a great playing field as well. The new multi-party system borne of the democratisation process paved the way for a sweeping mobilisation enterprise that allowed the regime

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[36] The FPR is the French acronym for the Rwandese Patriotic Front. Peter Uvin, "Prejudice, Crisis, and Genocide in Rwanda," 109.

[37] Ibid., 110.

[38] Filip Reyntjens, *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en Crise: Rwanda, Burundi 1988-1994* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 1994), 93.

and its acolytes to reach even remote rural populations. According to Jean-Paul Kimonyo and corroborated by interviews conducted in Rwanda, "everywhere, most people will identify the emergence of political parties as the moment at which there is the resurgence of an ethnocentric and ideological antagonism against the Tutsi."[39] Initially, however, none of the new parties necessarily claimed Hutu and Tutsi affiliation and the Rwandese held hopes that a more democratic system would bring about positive changes in the country.

On 10 June 1991 the regime in Kigali presented the population with a new constitution permitting new opposition parties. Political groups quickly organised and the 'Mouvement révolutionnaire national pour le développement' (MRND), the incumbent party, planned its survival strategy in this new political game. As if to confirm its intention of playing fair, the MRND renamed itself the 'Mouvement révolutionnaire national pour le développement *et la démocratie*,' or MRND(D).[40] New parties began to emerge, the first to be instituted being the Mouvement démocratique républicain (MDR). Though taking the name of the party originally behind the 1959 Social Revolution, the MDR-Parmehutu, the new party claimed that, though true to the legacy of the Revolution it sought reconciliation and peace, unlike its 1959 predecessor.[41] Other parties soon followed, including the Parti social démocrate (PSD), the Party libéral (PL) and the Parti démocrate chrétien (PDC). There was, in parallel, a flurry of smaller parties with various platforms from environmental interests to the promotion of the Muslim Rwandese. As of July 1991, most new political parties had been formed. The difficult process of including these parties within Rwandese political institutions could begin.

Having been developed and instituted mainly by members of the old state party, the new multi-party system remained inherently biased.[42] The system became an arena of intense political competition between strong personalities. These conflicts between political elites and parties increasingly turned towards sectarianism. The MRND, the better organised and more experienced, fed the divisions and then blamed the new parties as the source of problems and division in the country. The regime and extremists in Rwanda had, in effect, gained a new public platform to express their views.

Ironically, it is by playing by the rules of the new system that they developed the ultimate tool to promote their divisive views: by creating a new party expressly for that purpose. The creation of the 'Coalition pour la défense de la République' (CDR) in March 1992 was a strategic move of the part of the MRND to resist the forces of democratisation by agitating the threat of war and dissension in the country. It was "an openly racist party [...], a limited

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39 Ibid.

40 Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 126.

41 Jean-Paul Kimonyo, *La participation populaire au Rwanda: de la révolution au génocide (1959-1994)* (Université du Québec à Montréal, Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 2002), 156.

42 Interviewee no. 8, Kigali, Rwanda, 16 March 2004.

political organisation but extremely violent. The CDR wanted the creation of a common Hutu front that would fight by all means necessary all Tutsi as well as Hutu collaborating with the Tutsi."[43] In an interview conducted by this author, one Rwandese recalled campaigns by the CDR during which individuals aboard a motorised vehicle shouted in megaphones: "I swear on my mother's head, the CDR is the best party and there is only one enemy: it is the Tutsi."[44] To maintain a semblance of legitimacy and international credibility, the MRND chose to refrain from adopting such overtly hateful rhetoric. Many saw this as a scheme on the part of a clique of extremists behind the Habyarimana regime to give themselves an alternate medium for their message. The arrival of the CDR on the political scene dramatically changed the language tolerated within the new political system.

The paradox of the democratisation process in Rwanda is that it opened a public space for opinions to be expressed after decades of governmental control. Aware of this, new parties seized the opportunity to express their views in the public realm. All of them created, for example, supporting newspapers.[45] In the few months and years after the beginning of the democratisation process, the population was bombarded with party propaganda and overwhelmed by constant campaigning and rallies. People were given shirts and hats bearing the colours of new political movements. Personal political opinions became prominent topics of conversation in social gatherings, restaurants and cabarets. Opened to a range of political ideas, the political arena expanded to include racist and divisive opinions. With this newly acquired right of freedom of speech, corrosive ideas were expressed as well. And, with the emergence of the CDR, campaigns began radicalising, leaving citizens to feel that "things really started heating up."[46]

Competition for posts and party standing within the democratising political arena became fiercer. The president of the PSD, Félicien Gatabazi, described the growing tensions and violence of the period in these words: "[e]ach time there are some difficulties (in the democratic process) there is a flare-up of tribal violence instigated by the regime, and threats of civil war are used to justify the *status quo*."[47] For the population, the new multi-party system was becoming a source of renewed ethnic divisions instead of initiating a new democratic era. Some comments by people interviewed by African Rights are telling. One stated that: "[m]ultipartyism brought confusion and violence."[48] Another explained that: "[t]here was no real peace after 1992, because of the activities of political parties inciting hatred and general concern about the RPF

[43] Jean-Paul Kimonyo, *La participation populaire au Rwanda*, 161.
[44] Interviewee no. 20, Kigali, Rwanda, 29 March 2004.
[45] Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 131.
[46] Interviewee no. 26, Kigali, Rwanda, 5 April 2004.
[47] Quoted in Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 144.
[48] Quoted in *Tribute to Courage* (London: African Rights, 2002), 243.

advance."[49] A female interviewee stated that: "[t]hese troubles were caused by the political parties that had just been formed. All they did was incite ethnic violence between Hutus and Tutsis."[50] Finally, a woman from the sector of Ngoma explained that: [t]hese political parties created a lot of tension in Mbogo in 1992. They claimed that the Tutsi RPF had killed all the Hutus in Byumba and so the Hutu should take revenge."[51] Not all parties upheld such trenchant views, but ethnocentric divisions did enter onto the political scene.

In parallel to growing anti-Tutsi rhetoric in national politics, other authorities supported the anti-Tutsi agenda. Certainly one of the most infamous examples of this trend is the incendiary speech given on 22 November 1992 by Léon Mugesera, a renowned linguist affiliated with the MRND. Rehashing the old myth of the Tutsi's Ethiopian origin, he invited the Hutu to send the Tutsi back to their homeland, Ethiopia, via a shortcut, the Nyabarongo River which flows northwards.[52] At the local level too, authorities joined in the effort, as grassroots administrations they remained close to the presidential party's structure as they had been in previous decades. These local administrations organised rallies and demonstrations, incited anti-Tutsi violence, playing the role of intermediaries to the masses for messages emanating from the capitol.

1992-1993 saw the true radicalisation of Rwandese society. According to Jean-Paul Kimonyo, towards the end of 1992 plans for the genocide and numerous additional schemes to heighten tensions were developed.[53] Particularly effective to intensify animosity were the militias: the infamous *Interahamwe* and *Impuzamugambi*. The *Interahamwe* were created in April 1992 by the MRND, a strategy quickly followed by the CDR with its formation of the *Impuzamugambi*.[54] At the start, the *Interahamwe* were formed from the youth wings of the MRND. These youth wings were composed of devoted young men who served as an activist force within the presidential party. In light of recurrent hostilities with the RPF and of the insufficient number of troops in the Forces armées rwandaises, the regime claimed it needed to compensate by organising these youths as militias.[55] With the help of French troops, the Rwandese regime provided the militias with training, weapons and colourful uniforms.[56] Once trained, the militias were dispatched to communities where they actively worked to sensitise the population to the 'Tutsi threat,' not al-

[49] Ibid., 245.

[50] Ibid., 244.

[51] Ibid., 231.

[52] Samantha Power, *"A Problem from Hell": America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002), 339-340.

[53] Jean-Paul Kimonyo, *La participation populaire au Rwanda*, 164.

[54] Organisation of African Unity, *Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide*, Report of the International Panel of Eminent Personalities, July 2000, 56.

[55] Interviewee no. 22, Kigali, Rwanda, 1 April 2004, Interviewee no. 24, Kigali, Rwanda, 2 April 2004.

[56] On the French involvement, see Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 165.

ways pacifically, and at times directly "inciting the Hutu to violence" or terrorising the inhabitants of these communities.[57]

This radicalisation also paralleled the beginning of peace talks, known as the Arusha Peace Process, to resolve the war with the RPF. The talks began on 10 July 1992 and resulted in a cease-fire between the belligerents, supervised by a small Neutral Military Observer Group (NMOG) from the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). As soon as the talks began, however, the Rwandese political elites split into two camps: the pro and anti-Arusha factions, with the latter intent on framing the negotiations as dealings with Tutsi invaders, the RPF, a betrayal of the Revolution and its legacy.[58] As Gérard Prunier argued:

> [t]he announcement of the cease-fire [...] caused consternation among the supporters of the extremist Hutu state. Within days the MRND(D) ministers were boycotting cabinet meetings and demonstrations hostile to Prime Minister Dismas Nsengiyaremye [the head of the Rwandese negotiation team] had erupted in the strongly conservative *préfectures* of Gisenyi and Ruhengeri.[59]

Despite growing tensions, negotiations progressed relatively smoothly and on 18 August 1992 the first protocol of the agreement was signed. This first protocol on the Rule of Law consisted of a jointly approved assessment of the conflict and drew up plans for restoring peace in Rwanda through national unity, reconciliation, democracy, pluralism and the respect for human rights.[60]

The negotiations of the second protocol on power-sharing were more complicated. As Kimonyo explained: [t]he ideological and political climate changed radically the day after the first protocol of the Accord was signed. Following this, every period around the finalisation date for a protocol saw a flare up of political tension and massacres of Tutsi as a strategy by the regime to derail the peace process."[61] The second protocol, in particular, could only be the source of tensions within the country. Already the establishment of a transitional government in Rwanda, composed of the five main parties and under Dismas Nsengiyaremye in April 1992, had been extremely difficult, but the negotiations at Arusha meant that the 'enemy' had to be included as an equal in a Broad Based Transitional Government (BBTG) and in the Transitional National Assembly (TNA), a situation hardly acceptable for more extremist factions. A central issue of contention was that the hardliners from the extremist groups among the MRND and the CDR saw the team in charge of negotiations in Arusha, under

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57 African Rights, *Tribute to Courage*, 59

58 Interviewee no. 21, Kigali, Rwanda, 31 March 2004.

59 Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 160-161. The 'préfecture' was prior to the genocide the largest administrative unit in Rwanda. They have now been renamed 'provinces'.

60 For a transcript of this protocol and of the complete Arusha Peace Agreement, see Emmanuel Nkunzumwami, *La tragédie rwandaise: historique et perspectives* (Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan, 1996), 391-461.

61 Personal translation. Jean-Paul Kimonyo, *La participation populaire au Rwanda*, 160.

Prime Minister Nsengiyaremye of the MDR, as biased in favour of defending the interests of opposition parties. They were further frustrated by the perception that the allocation of future ministerial portfolios lacked transparency. These allocations took place in Arusha without the oversight of elites in Kigali. A final issue of contention was that the negotiators had opted for a chosen Transitional National Assembly over an elected one, a proposition that had been brought to the table by the RPF.[62] Tensions at the political level were starting to have an impact on the ground. In Rwanda, supporters of extremist groups kept clashing with supporters of the opposition during demonstrations, engendering renewed political violence in the country.

Habyarimana's position during the negotiations seemed somewhat more ambiguous. He was increasingly perceived as too soft by the extremists, even within his own party. By agreeing to the Arusha peace process, he alienated himself from the elites within the party. He was also disregarded by the opposition parties who had, from the outset of the democratisation process, built their platforms on opposing the President's authoritarian state party. Caught between these two forces, Habyarimana found himself in a weakened political position and thus saw hindering the peace process as his chance to buy time and strengthen his position. While he continued to give his support to negotiations, he simultaneously worked within Rwanda to undermine them.

The negotiations on the protocol were finally concluded with a first section signed on 30 October 1992 and a second on 9 January 1993. The protocol stipulated that the Presidency would remain in the hands of the MRND, the Prime Minister's post be attributed to the MDR and the Vice-Prime Ministerial position to the RPF. Ministerial portfolios would be split among the parties represented at the negotiations and 59 of the 70 seats in the Transitional National Assembly would also be attributed to them.[63]

Soon after, the MRND and the CDR reacted by organising violent protests in the streets. Between 21 and 25 January, hundreds of Tutsi were massacred in the cities of Gisenyi and Kibuye. This renewed anti-Tutsi violence convinced the RPF to break the cease-fire and launch an attack on 8 February 1993. Their attack brought them within 50 kilometres of Kigali and displaced hundreds of thousands fleeing before their troops.[64] On 20 February, though only a small distance away from the capitol, the RPF proclaimed it would renew its decision to respect the cease-fire. Many attribute this decision to the RPF's realisation of the negative impact their military advance had had on the civilian population.[65]

Negotiations could begin again in Arusha. Despite growing dissension among political elites, a third protocol on the repatriation of refugees and resettlement of displaced persons was signed on 9 June 1993. Negotiations

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[62] Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 163.
[63] Emmanuel Nkunzumwami, *La tragédie rwandaise*, 157-160.
[64] Jean-Paul Kimonyo, *La participation populaire au Rwanda*, 162.
[65] Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 178.

began on a difficult issue, the integration of armed forces. Considered the most contentious issue after power-sharing, it involved determining the composition of the new Rwandese army and the inclusion of troops from each belligerent. Agreement was finally reached and the protocol signed on 3 August 1993, along with an additional protocol on miscellaneous matters and final provisions. The latter included: "the determination of the duration of the transitional period; the timetable for the implementation of the peace agreement; the relationship between the peace agreement and the National Constitution; and procedures for the indictment of the President in case of violations of the peace agreement."[66] The next day, the Arusha Peace Agreement was officially signed by the parties at a ceremony attended by the Heads of State of Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi and the Prime Minister of (then) Zaire.

The Arusha peace process had proved successful. New transitional institutions were to be set in place within 37 days of the finalisation of the Accord and the implementation to be supervised by UN troops. Future success, at least in its implementation, was however, far from guaranteed. The peace process had also reinforced tensions between political factions in Rwanda. Positions had become extremely contentious and ruled out a tranquil transition.

This division, particularly flagrant among the opposition parties and encouraged by cooptation and corruption on the part of the presidential clique, was the extremists' final major achievement before the genocide began. All new parties with the exception of the PSD split into moderate and extremist wings. The new radical front, composed of the extremist wings of the MDR, PL and PDC now posed as an alternative to the 'softer' moderate wings as well as to the old state party. As Prunier argued, this extremist front sought "to give the impression of a broad multi-party movement which would preach 'common sense' by giving a new 'intrinsically democratic' voice to the *Rubanda Nyamwinshi* – the 'majority people', i.e. the Hutu."[67] This new group, going by the name of Hutu Power, quickly became popular among Hutu masses.

The creation of a common front among all extremist factions played a fundamental role in achieving the mobilisation of the Hutu masses; without an alliance with the new extremist wings of the opposition parties, the presidential party, discredited over the years in certain regions would not have been able to rally the masses across the country. As Kimonyo explained:

> [a]fter three years of multi-party politics, the ex-state party, the MRND, had lost the political control of many regions, which in turned had passed under control of opposition parties, especially the most powerful of them: the MDR. […] In these regions, it is these opposition parties, the MDR

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[66] Ami R. Mpungwe, "Crises and Response in Rwanda: Reflections on the Arusha Peace Process," in *Monograph No. 36: Whither Peacekeeping in Africa?* (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 1999).

[67] Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 183.

in particular, that were the main agents of the popular mobilisation in the genocide.[68]

Without this collaboration among extremists, the genocide might have remained limited to the strongholds of the MRND and the CDR.[69] The new consolidated extremist forces also had the political impact of weakening and overshadowing the more moderate factions, which had lost some of their more popular politicians to the extremists and had now become a constellation of eclectic parties facing a political behemoth, the Hutu Power. There thus remained few actors capable of contesting the latter's hateful and violent agenda.

President Habyarimana, still trying to find a way to regain his standing, chose to resist the implementation of the agreement, desperate to delay as "a kind of survival reflex."[70] Time for his stalling tactics was running out, however, as international pressure to institute the BBTG was mounting. He was ultimately confronted by his peers on the issue on 6 April 1994 when taking part in a regional summit in Dar-es-Salaam. The talks quickly turned to the Rwandese situation and Habyarimana was strongly urged by the Heads of State of the Great Lakes region to comply with the Arusha Peace Agreement.

History would not allow him to announce his intentions, however. That same evening, while returning to Rwanda aboard his private plane, two missiles were launched from the surroundings of the Kigali airport. The plane was shot down, killing all occupants on board. To this day, neither the perpetrators of the assassination, nor the interests behind it, have been officially identified, though rumours abound. The event is now widely regarded as the trigger for one on the most brutal genocides in modern history. Within hours of the plane crash, radio stations blamed the RPF and the Tutsi and called on the Hutu population to 'get to work.' One interviewee remembers that the message was unambiguous: "[t]hey killed our father, now we must also eliminate them."[71] Within hours roadblocks had been set up by the military and militias and the massacre had begun, its first victims turning out to be not only Tutsi but also Hutu moderates opposed to the extremists.[72] The latter represented some of the last that could have publicly stood in the way of genocide. In the following days, as René

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68 Personal translation. Jean-Paul Kimonyo, *La participation populaire au Rwanda*, 28. According to Jean-Paul Kimonyo what played a very important role in this case is that in certain regions old sentiments of affiliation to the original MDR-Parmehutu of the 1950s and 1960s resurfaced. There existed an ideological continuity among the masses between support for the party between 1959-1963 and between 1991-1994. As he explained, "people decided to affiliate with the MDR in the 1990s by fidelity to the MDR-Parmehutu," 563. These were "family groups, keepers of the historical legacy of the Parmehutu [:] generally [...] rural social elites [that] owed their upward social mobility to the Revolution," 569.

69 Jean-Paul Kimonyo, *La participation populaire au Rwanda*, 194.

70 Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis*, 203.

71 Interviewee no. 21, Kigali, Rwanda, 31 March 2004.

72 Catharine Newbury and David Newbury, "A Catholic Mass in Kigali: Contested Views of the Genocide and Ethnicity in Rwanda," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 33 (1999): 295.

Lemarchand describes, "the diffuse anxiety of a return to Tutsi hegemony was replaced by collective psychosis that the media amplified and channelled into paroxysmal violence. Ethnic hatred and fear lead to panic to murder."[73]

Conclusion

The result of complex factors, the violence in Rwanda in the early 1990s can also be related to the country's unfolding democratisation process. Much of the violence was organised from above, using instruments of the state, in order to allow political entrepreneurs, incumbents and a clique of extremists, to maintain their privileged position. Rwanda, though an extreme case, flagged the dangers of democratisation in divided countries.

While the goals of democratisation are commendable, cases like Rwanda raise questions about the form of democratisation processes developing states should adopt. Cases where democratisation has led to violence clearly indicate that democratisation is a difficult task, particularly in fragmented societies. Particularly, certain instances of 'derailed democratisation' have pointed to the danger associated with power vacuums – the shuffling of power relations – created by democratisation, which can be a powerful incentive for political entrepreneurs to 'play the ethnic, religious and communal card.'

Establishing democratic institutions and good governance at the national level is fundamental, but it is not sufficient. In fragmented societies, it is necessary to build a counterweight to malicious political entrepreneurs' strategies. Detaching them from potential supporters is a counter-strategy. It requires building the bases of democracy at the grassroots level. Democratisation should rest on popular support being given to institutions and the process of democratisation, not in the act of supporting a candidate among many. Outside of a parallel bottom-up democratisation involving the strengthening of civil society organisations and of cosmopolitan forms of identity, outside of instituting simultaneous trust in the process from the ground up, the danger of derailment of the process remains. The population may be swayed to 'buy into' the 'ethnic, religious and communal card.'

Rwanda may yet serve us another lesson. In interviews conducted in Rwanda (by the author), Rwandese consistently pointed to the emergence of political parties as a factor in the explosion of violence in April 1994. With such a perception of political parties, trust in the electoral game and democratic institutions is low. In light of this, the next wave of democratisation to sweep over the country should be a difficult one yet again.[74]

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[73] René Lemarchand, quoted in Jean-Paul Kimonyo, *La participation populaire au Rwanda*, 27.

[74] Rwanda is an authoritarian state. It rated 6 in terms of political rights (1 being the freest and 7 the least free) and 5 in terms of civil liberties (1 being the freest and 7 the least free) in the *Freedom in the world 2007* survey. Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2007* (Washington, D.C., 2007). Available online at: http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/press_release/fiw07_charts.pdf.