

## ***The missing pillars: a look at the failure of peace in Burundi through the lens of Arend Lijphart's theory of consociational democracy***

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### ABSTRACT

The failure of a power-sharing attempt at peace in Burundi in 1993 led to the killing of hundreds of thousands of Burundians and played a significant role in feeding tensions leading up to the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, in which another 800,000 people lost their lives. A look at the specifics of this power-sharing arrangement in the framework of Arend Lijphart's theory of consociational democracy leads to some interesting conclusions and insights into why the effort at peace failed and how future efforts could be improved. The paper looks at the arrangement in terms of Lijphart's four main pillars for successful consociationalism in deeply divided states: a grand coalition, segmental autonomy, minority overrepresentation or parity, and a minority veto. The extent to which Lijphart's recommendations were implemented is assessed along with the impact of their presence or absence. The analysis leads to some important lessons and further questions which are of particular importance as Burundi heads into its latest attempt at a stable and peaceful society.

### INTRODUCTION

On the night of 20 October 1993, a coup began which would lead to the assassination of the new Hutu President Melchior Ndadaye of Burundi and the entire line of succession (Commission Internationale 1994; des Forges 1994: 202; Prunier 1994). By the next day news of the assassinations sparked Hutu killings of Tutsi in the countryside. Army units setting out initially to protect Tutsi citizens soon turned to lashing out indiscriminately at Hutu. This began a cycle of ethnic violence that would result in

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The author would like to thank Alan J. Kuperman and three anonymous referees for their constructive comments and suggestions on an earlier draft of the paper.

the deaths of some 50,000 Burundians in the next few months, and as many as 300,000 to date. The final significance of this would be magnified in neighbouring Rwanda. Just as rising racial tensions in Rwanda in the early 1990s had added to tensions in Burundi, the violence in Burundi in 1993 would help lead to the Rwandan genocide in 1994, in which from 500,000 to 800,000 people, mostly Tutsi, were killed (see des Forges 1999: 15; Evans 1997: 9; Melvern 2004; Prunier 2002).

Although the coup attempt in Burundi would break down in just two days in the face of intense international pressure, the damage had been done. In addition to sparking a particularly violent ethnic conflict, this coup attempt was the death toll for a remarkable political turn-around. The peaceful transfer of power from former Tutsi President Buyoya to moderate Hutu President Ndadaye which preceded the coup attempt in 1993 was an inspiring shift from decades of militant government rule by the Tutsi minority to a democratic government led by a freely elected Hutu. It included representation of both ethnic groups at the highest levels of government, cooperation of elites on both sides, and arrangements to compensate the Tutsi majority which had for decades controlled the government. Why then did this attempt fail? What were the factors which led to the attempted coup that sparked such widespread violence?

One characteristic which stands out from this attempt at democracy is its inclusion of consociational forms of democracy, as explained by Arend Lijphart, as opposed to those of traditional majoritarian democracy. Among these were inclusion of both ethnic groups in the highest levels of government, and arrangements to accommodate Tutsi as a minority. Looking at consociational democracy as applied to Burundi in 1993 helps both to better define the nature of Burundi's 1993 attempt at democracy, and to identify the main reasons for its failure.

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Burundi lies in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa, located just east of the Republic of the Congo and bordering Rwanda and Tanzania. It has a population of over 6 million in a country just smaller than the state of Maryland, giving it the second highest population density in mainland Africa (Reyntjens 2000: 5). The ethnic make-up of Burundi is 85% Hutu, 14% Tutsi, and 1% Twa.<sup>1</sup> It gained independence on 1 July 1962, after years of German then Belgian colonial rule. In the years prior to independence, the colonisers favoured the Tutsi, providing them with better education and higher governmental and salaried positions (des Forges 1994: 203). Largely as a result of this, from the time Burundi gained

independence, the Tutsi, though a minority, have held political control while the Hutu have been marginalised politically and economically. Later, Tutsi power would be further ensured through a monopoly on military power at the highest levels. Burundi has been ravaged by a history of violent outbreaks, often consisting of Hutu rebel attacks followed by brutal reaction of the Tutsi military forces (1965, 1972, 1988, 1993). The largest such outbreak took place in the 1972 genocide, an important and powerful reference point for Burundians in which between 2,000 and 3,000 Tutsi and between 100,000 and 200,000 Hutu were killed, while another 300,000 Hutu fled the country (Lemarchand 1994a: xii; Reyntjens 2000: 7).

Another outbreak of violence in 1988, fuelled largely by rumours of a 'new 1972', led to the killing of several hundred Tutsi by Hutu rebels, and in response the killing of as many as 20,000 Hutu by the Tutsi military. This violence brought great international pressure to bear on Burundi's President Pierre Buyoya, who had just risen to power in a bloodless coup. Buyoya responded with extensive reforms, which culminated in the holding of legislative and presidential elections in 1993, for which 97.3% of registered voters turned out. Despite projections by the national and international press of a 60–70% victory for Buyoya and his UPRONA (Union pour le Progrès National) party (probably due to the exaggerated polls projected by the state-run, pro-UPRONA media), the election resulted in a resounding victory for the moderate Hutu party FRODEBU (Front pour la Démocratie au Burundi) and its presidential candidate Melchior Ndadaye. Ndadaye received 64.75% of the vote, while Buyoya received 32.39%, and a third candidate, Pierre-Claver Sendegeya, 2.86%. The FRODEBU victory in Parliament was even greater, with the mostly Hutu party taking 80% of the seats while the Tutsi-dominated UPRONA party took only 20%. In ethnic terms this translated to a Parliament made up of 85% Hutu and 15% Tutsi representatives, closely paralleling the supposed ethnic make-up of the country (Reyntjens 2000: 7).

Buyoya accepted these results peacefully and the initial transition went smoothly, despite student protests and two little-supported failed coup attempts shortly before the election by extremists in the Tutsi-dominated military. Ndadaye took office, setting up a consociational democracy in which Tutsi and UPRONA were represented in high posts including the position of prime minister. He began implementing reforms, including plans to address economic inequality and to return Hutu refugees to Burundi. Several Tutsi farmers were evicted from lands they had taken when the refugees had left (Lund *et al.* 1998: 62). There was a widespread feeling among Tutsi that these reforms were coming too quickly, added to by the fear of losing civil service appointments to newly incoming Hutu

who had been well educated abroad. But the greatest fear and uncertainty came from plans to reform the Tutsi-dominated armed forces, which many Tutsi saw as their only protection against violent domination by the Hutu majority. These fears helped spark the coup attempt in October 1993 which resulted in the assassination of President Ndadaye, and led to extensive violence and the ultimate failure of this attempt at peace. By 1996, three years and two power-sharing conventions later, a 'creeping coup' had shifted power back into the hands of Buyoya and the military (Reyntjens 2000: 14). Today another power-sharing attempt is being made, based on the Arusha Accords of 2000. In all, since the assassination of Ndadaye in October 1993, as many as 300,000 people have been killed in Burundi, over 500,000 Burundian refugees have fled the country, while another 800,000 (12% of the population) have been displaced internally.<sup>2</sup>

#### AREND LIJPHART'S THEORY OF CONSOCIATIONAL DEMOCRACY

Though the attempt at conflict management in Burundi in 1993 does not easily fit into any one general theory, in many ways it reflected Arend Lijphart's theory of consociational democracy and its recommendations for bringing stability to a deeply divided society. The most essential requirement of a consociational democracy, a *grand coalition* or an 'over-arching cooperation at the elite level in a culturally fragmented system' (Lijphart 1971: 10) was clearly present, as were indications of his other main requirements. Determining whether these requirements actually functioned and their relationship with each other requires a more in-depth exploration. First, it is necessary to lay out Lijphart's theory as it applies to deeply divided societies.

The basic form of this theory is a three-step process, as illustrated in Figure 1. First is the idea that cooperation amongst the elites of different segments in a divided society will lead to consociational democracy. Lijphart defines consociational democracy in a divided society through four main requirements or pillars: a grand coalition, autonomy for the segments of society, minority overrepresentation or parity, and a minority veto. The second step is consociational democracy leading to a higher level of elite cooperation strengthened by political security for smaller segments of society. The third step is this higher level of elite cooperation leading to peace.

It is important to note that Lijphart never states this form of his theory explicitly; it is, rather, adapted from his frequent references to elite cooperation, and from specific suggestions that he makes for applying consociational theory to deeply divided societies such as Burundi. Lijphart's original theory is based on his analysis of divided countries with stable

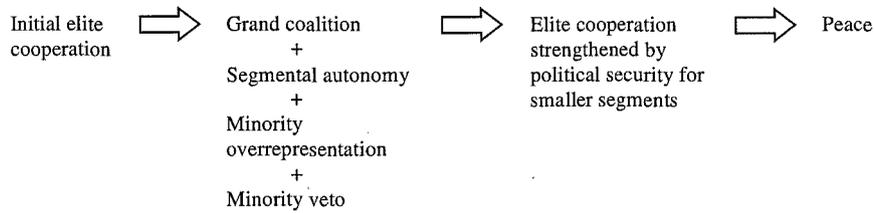


FIGURE I

Lijphart's theory of consociational democracy, as applied to deeply divided societies.

democracies like the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland and Lebanon, and takes the form of his four main requirements (with proportionality being used rather than minority representation or parity) leading to peace. Lijphart in later writings suggested how consociationalism could be applied to any divided society, and proposed consociational democracy as 'the best kind of democracy that can realistically be expected' in societies with segmental cleavages (Lijphart 1977: 48).

The first and 'most important element' or pillar of consociational democracy for Lijphart is the formation of 'a grand coalition of the political leaders of all significant segments of the plural society' (*ibid.*: 25). This grand coalition can take various forms. Lijphart argues that the ideal form would be participation of leaders of all segments in a grand coalition cabinet within a parliamentary system based on proportionality. However, a grand coalition is also possible through a grand council with an advisory function, or in a presidential system in which the presidency and other high offices are split (as was attempted in Burundi). The exact form of the grand coalition is not what is most important; rather, 'the essential characteristic of the grand coalition is not so much any particular institutional arrangement as the participation by the leaders of all significant segments in governing a plural society' (*ibid.*: 31). The cooperation of elites in forming a grand coalition stems, Lijphart argues, from their realisation of the dangers of violence in a continually fragmented society which leads them to 'consciously and rationally take remedial actions' (*ibid.*: 14). The essential implication of the grand coalition idea is that the ultimate success of a consociational system depends on elites of different sectors working together.

The second of these pillars, closely related to a grand coalition, is segmental autonomy. This is the idea of giving as much power as possible to the different sectors in society over their own affairs, without infringing on

the ability for overarching compromise at the elite level. Segmental autonomy can come in the form of giving certain segments, whether ethnically, religiously, or culturally based, control over their own schooling systems or cultural institutions. Autonomy can also come in the form of federalism in which segments of a split society are represented in geographically concentrated regions. This recommendation is not possible, however, in geographically intermixed countries such as Burundi. In such situations, Lijphart (*ibid.*: 43) suggests the use of cultural federalism through the 'personality principle' developed by Otto Bauer (1907) and Karl Renner (1918) for nationality problems in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This idea consists in giving citizens freedom of ethnic identity, and allowing them to voluntarily join independent cultural or ethnic organisations which may have important advisory functions on the national government level.

The ultimate goal of such segmental autonomy is to provide political security, especially to small segments, thus allaying fears and allowing for greater cooperation at the elite level. Behind this is also the idea that 'good social fences may make good political neighbours' (Lijphart 1971: 11). The more separate differing segments are in society, the less likely there is to be conflict. Lijphart argues that segmental cleavages should be recognised and segments allowed to autonomously contribute towards stable democracy (Lijphart 1977: 42). Thus Lijphart draws a distinction between the elite and the populace, in which stability is more likely if interactions at lower levels are discouraged, or at least not forced, while those at the elite level are encouraged as hopeful.

A third necessary characteristic of consociational democracy is proportionality. This is the idea that political security and thus elite cooperation can be increased by the delegation of political and civil service representation, and the allocation of government resources according to the relative proportion of the overall population comprised by each segment of a divided society. As mentioned earlier, this idea is replaced by the alternatives of minority overrepresentation or parity in deeply divided societies. In such societies, where there is distrust of a majority group and fears of it using its advantage to completely overrun the small group or groups, strict proportionality will not provide significant political security. Both minority overrepresentation and parity are 'devices for providing added protection and security to small segments', and Lijphart (*ibid.*: 41) suggests that parity is particularly helpful in societies which are split between two segments of unequal size.

Proportionality and the adaptation of minority overrepresentation or parity perform two main functions. First, by providing a fixed means of

allocating government subsidies and civil service positions, this principle allows the consociational government to avoid making many tough decisions which could threaten its stability. Second, proportionality and its alternatives help to ensure participation of all segments in the government (*ibid.*: 38–9). In the case of proportionality all sectors are provided with roughly proportional influence, while in the case of minority overrepresentation, each sector is provided with enough influence for an acceptable balance of political security. A further purpose of proportionality or its alternatives is to concentrate decision-making in the hands of the elite coalition. This again points to the great importance that Lijphart places on elite cooperation for successful consociational democracy.

The fourth pillar of successful consociational democracy is the minority veto. Lijphart describes this as ‘the ultimate weapon that minorities need to protect their vital interests’ (Lijphart 1990: 495). The minority veto does this by preventing decisions by the grand coalition that would be so unacceptable to the minority group as to cause them to leave the government. Lijphart (1977: 37) admits the danger of a minority veto being used too often and thus destroying an attempted consociational democracy, but argues that the very security which the existence of the minority veto provides, will remove the strongest reasons for its being used. The minority veto does not have to be formally recognised in a constitution, but can rather also be ‘an informal and unwritten understanding’ (*ibid.*: 38). The important thing is the political security which is derived from the minority veto.

The four necessary conditions for consociational democracy, helped by but not necessarily including nine favourable conditions,<sup>3</sup> are the basic and most explicit blocks of Lijphart’s theory of consociational democracy. However, along with these and contained within the explanations of the necessary conditions, come frequent references to two other important factors in the process of moving from a deeply divided society to peace through consociational democracy. These two factors are political security and elite cooperation. Political security is understood fairly straightforwardly as being a result of the four necessary conditions of consociational democracy, which allays fears of smaller segments, allowing them to be more likely to cooperate towards peace. Lijphart describes each of the four necessary conditions as leading towards greater political security, whether describing them as ‘devices for providing added protection and security’, as giving ‘a feeling of security’, ‘a powerful stimulus’, or outright ‘an important guarantee of political security’ (*ibid.*: 30–1, 37, 41).

That elite cooperation is an important element in Lijphart’s theory is also clear in his statement: ‘In fact, the essential characteristic of

consociational democracy is not so much any particular institutional arrangement as overarching co-operation at the elite level in a culturally fragmented system' (Lijphart 1971: 10). However, how and where elite cooperation fits into Lijphart's model is less clear, and is thus the potential cause of some confusion. Lijphart refers to elite cooperation at different times as a precondition to a grand coalition, as an essential part in the definition of a grand coalition, and as the goal of a grand coalition. But the level and make-up of this elite cooperation in each of these cases is not necessarily the same. If it were, Lijphart's theory would fall victim to the charge of being tautological. We would start with elite cooperation leading to consociational democracy which is defined in part as elite cooperation which then leads to elite cooperation, bringing us full circle and no closer to an explanation for how consociational democracy can bring peace. Lijphart (1977: 30-1) answers this charge by writing:

It is true – in fact, almost tautological – that a moderate attitude and a willingness to compromise are prerequisites for the formation of a grand coalition. On the other hand, the prospect of participating in the government is a powerful stimulus to moderation and compromise, because it minimizes the risk of being deceived by the other parties or by one's own undue optimism concerning *their* willingness to be accommodating. By being in the government together, parties that do not quite trust each other have an important guarantee of political security.<sup>4</sup>

This says that elite cooperation is both a necessary preceding factor for a grand coalition to form and the ultimate result of a grand coalition. In other words, cooperation at the elite level must exist for a grand coalition to form, but without a grand coalition this cooperation cannot continue to the point of providing enough political security to guarantee peace. Thus a distinction between elite cooperation before the formation of a grand coalition and afterwards needs to be made. The first phase is one that allows the proposition and setting up of a grand coalition. The second phase is an increasing cooperation fed by this grand coalition which leads to peace. Elite cooperation must be catalysed by consociational arrangements and further strengthened by the political security for small segments which these consociational arrangements provide. These two phases are indicated in Figure 1 as *initial elite cooperation* and *elite cooperation strengthened by political security*.

#### PREDICTIONS

The general prediction of the theory is that since Burundi-1993 was a failed case of consociational democracy, at least one of the necessary

conditions – grand coalition, segmental autonomy, proportionality or its alternatives, a minority veto, initial elite cooperation, or elite cooperation strengthened by political security – must have been absent. The first phase of this prediction to be tested is whether the necessary initial elite cooperation was present before the setting up of a grand coalition. Second, if it is found that this initial elite cooperation was present, we can move on to test whether all four of the main pillars of consociational democracy were present. Third, if all four of the necessary pillars were present, then the theory would predict a lack of elite cooperation fortified by political security which led to Burundi's failed attempt at peace. These predictions will be tested in the next section.

#### TEST OF THE THEORY

##### *Was there initial elite cooperation?*

An initial look shows that elite cooperation was clearly present in Burundi leading up to the 1993 elections. Well before the elections, President Buyoya had used elite cooperation to set up a grand coalition of his own along consociational lines. Starting in 1988, in the wake of violence in the northern communes of Ntega and Marangara (see Chrétien *et al.* 1989), Buyoya answered international pressure with reforms. These reforms gave the Hutu elite a voice they had not had in decades, and opened an atmosphere of cooperation. Buyoya assigned 12 Hutu and 12 Tutsi to the 'National Commission to Study the Question of National Unity' which published the Charter of National Unity. He further created parity in government ministries by assigning many Hutu to high positions in his government, including the appointment of a Hutu prime minister. By the end of 1990, many more representatives on the regional and local level, and the secretary-general of Buyoya's mostly Tutsi UPRONA party, were Hutu. The atmosphere of inclusion, and further of free expression, led to the drafting and acceptance of the new constitution in 1992. These efforts to include the Hutu elite led to an increasing willingness of Hutu and Tutsi to cooperate. As Burundi expert Filip Reyntjens (1993: 579–80) noted, 'the policy of "national reconciliation" made Hutu and Tutsi work together and, albeit often reluctantly, accept each other as inevitable partners'.

Further attesting to the existence of elite cooperation was the smooth running of elections in 1993 (cited by one of the observer missions as having been 'organized in an atmosphere of calm and transparency'), and peaceful acceptance of the election results by Buyoya despite losing.<sup>5</sup> This cooperation was continued by Ndadaye, who described the election as 'a victory of the whole Burundian people and of all political forces adhering

to democratic principles', and followed this by appointing several Tutsi to cabinet positions including a well-respected Tutsi economist as prime minister (*ibid.*: 576). While opposition amongst segments of the Hutu and Tutsi populations remained leading up to the 1993 elections, it was overshadowed by elite cooperation. As René Lemarchand (1994b: 597), one of the most cited Burundi experts, writes, 'through elite co-operation, the threats posed by extremists at both ends of the spectrum, though serious enough, were never allowed to develop to the point where they could endanger the transition'. Elite cooperation, at least at the initial stages, was clearly present.

*Was there a grand coalition?*

The next question is whether or not that initial elite cooperation translated into a grand coalition. A positive answer is strongly supported by the existence of a grand coalition both on paper and in practice. The idea of a grand coalition was codified in the Constitution of 1992 in several places, including Article 84 which stated that 'the government [shall] be composed in a spirit of national unity, taking into account the diverse component parts of the Burundian population' (Reyntjens 2000: 10). This idea closely parallels Lijphart's (1977: 25) main requirement for a grand coalition, the 'participation by the leaders of all significant segments in governing a plural society'.

In practice, as hinted in the above section, the inclusion of Tutsi in Ndadaye's new government gives strong support to the existence of Lijphart's most important condition for successful consociational democracy. The new government was described by one observer writing for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees as 'ethnically and politically balanced' (Prunier 1994). More than one-third of Ndadaye's cabinet was Tutsi with only 13 of 23 portfolios being given to the FRODEBU party, despite its resounding victory. The prime minister was a well-respected Tutsi, and the appointed heads of the Ministry of Defence and the State Secretariat for Internal Security were two army officers who though independent were 'considered to be "close" to UPRONA' (Reyntjens 2000: 12). There was indeed a grand coalition in place following the elections of 1993.

*Was there segmental autonomy?*

The second pillar of consociational democracy, segmental autonomy, was not present in Burundi in 1993. Rather than separation of autonomy over schools or cultural organisations, what actually took place in Burundi was

a push for integration of ethnic groups into the same schools and political parties, and a discouragement of ethnic identification in any cultural organisation, and generally the denial of any ethnic census. Hutu who had been largely excluded from schooling, especially higher education, were now brought into formerly Tutsi-dominated schools. Article 57 of the 1992 Constitution forbade 'political parties from identifying themselves in their form, action or any other manner with any *ethnie*, region, religion, sect or gender' (Lemarchand 1994a: 162). Buyoya and then Ndadaye's rhetoric focused on a message of national unity which ignored ethnic realities and discouraged identification along ethnic lines. The reality is that the parties were largely formed and identified on ethnic lines, and that the election results nearly exactly echoed the ethnic population split. As Reyntjens (2000: 13) observed, 'starting at the end of 1992, the salience of ethnicity as a major electoral element emerged with increasing clarity'. The message of Buyoya and Ndadaye, while well intentioned, served ultimately to ignore the very real ethnic divide, to the detriment of segmental autonomy.

But in looking at the idea of segmental autonomy the question arises as to the feasibility and desirability of such measures in Burundi. Burundi, with its homogeneity of religion, language and culture, is unique amongst deeply divided societies. Extensive intermarriages have blurred the lines between Hutu and Tutsi, dissolving traditional distinguishing physical characteristics and creating ethnically mixed family identities. Implementation of cultural federalism through the creation of separate Hutu and Tutsi schools, sports clubs, or cooperatives throughout Burundi, while reducing the possibility of negative interactions, would also tear at the seams of very positive familial, religious, and cultural interactions. Such measures may accomplish the secondary goal of reducing interactions, but they would simultaneously thwart the primary goal of reducing tensions. The main idea of segmental autonomy, it must be remembered, is that the more separate differing segments are in society, the less likely there is to be conflict. But when the segments are as closely intertwined as Hutu and Tutsi in Burundi, such that the only divider is the idea of ethnicity, cultural federalism ends up making conflict even more likely. Much like apartheid based purely on race, separate schools and cultural institutions would be solely based on ethnicity, thus reinforcing the very divide which consociational democracy would be seeking to transcend, while at the same time inviting all the explosive tensions that come with it. Just as a geographical mix makes federalism infeasible for deeply divided societies, the unique homogeneity of culture, religion, and language make segmental autonomy neither feasible nor desirable for Burundi. The lack of segmental autonomy thus should not be seen as a detriment to the 1993 peace

attempt in Burundi, and the reasons for the failure should be sought in the other pillars. The implications of this will be further discussed in the conclusion.

*Was there minority overrepresentation or parity?*

A close look shows that while minority overrepresentation approaching parity was indeed the case at higher levels, it clearly was not at lower levels. As one went down from positions at the upper levels there was a corresponding increase in what has been called 'Frodebisation', in which greater numbers of Hutu were favoured for positions (Reyntjens 2000: 13). As Reyntjens (*ibid.*: 13) points out, 'there was, undeniably, some handing out of spoils to the winning camp'. Exacerbating the problem of increased 'Frodebisation' at lower levels was the fact that due to historical reasons of unequal educational opportunities and the targeting of Hutu elites, Hutu replacements for Tutsi civil service positions were 'not always the best candidates' (*ibid.*: 13) or, as another more blunt observer noted, 'tragically incompetent' (Prunier 1994). Reyntjens further points out how this resulted in failure to comply fully with recruitment rules at the Military Academy (ISCAM – Institut des Cadres Militaires), the National Police School (ENAPO – Ecole Nationale de Police), and the Centre for Postal Training.

The province-based quota system set up for recruitment to ENAPO caused particular concern for Tutsi, in that it was seen as a precedent for how recruitment would be carried out for army troops scheduled for November 1993. Many Tutsi viewed the army as the only thing preventing the wiping out of the Tutsi by the Hutu majority. As one Tutsi journalist explained to a foreign commentator in Burundi, 'don't think of it as a typical army; think of it as the Tutsi-extirmination deterrent force' (Evans 1997: 27). The Tutsi fear was that if control of the army were given to the Hutu, or even if a move were made in that direction, it would result in the 'Rwanda syndrome', referring to the targeting and marginalisation of Tutsi by Hutu in Rwanda after they gained power in 1959.

A report by several NGOs on the violence of October–November 1993 points to the unequal appointments at lower levels as resulting from high Hutu expectations driving demand for positions (Commission Internationale 1994: 11; Prunier 1994). Adding to this pressure was the decrease in the world price of coffee, the main source of Burundi's foreign exchange. Many peasants in Burundi depended on the trade of coffee for their livelihood, and thus many Hutu saw placement of a relative in a job in the new state structure as their only hope (Lund 1998: 62). The NGO report points to this pressure for 'Frodebisation' as the most important factor in causing the attempted coup that led to the death of Ndadaye

(Prunier 1994). This conclusion is shared by Reyntjens, in that the result of these pressures was a fear of this 'Frodebisation' being carried over to the armed forces. As he writes, 'above all, the real or imaginary prospect of an imminent reform of the armed forces increasingly upset the groups privileged under the former regimes, who, although they were a small minority, did have the monopoly of armed force. This discontent was the origin of the coup of 21 October 1993' (Reyntjens 2000: 14).

A further factor leading to the coup was a radical change in the redistribution of national resources which had formerly favoured the Tutsi elite. Among Ndadaye's '46 proposals for the construction of a new Burundi' was a vow that at least 50% of national resources would be invested in the primary sector (compared to 20% under previous regimes), and that there would be a focus on helping those living in rural areas (90% of the population) (Reyntjens 1993: 579). This was a huge shift from the previous urban bias that had existed, and though fair in terms of historical inequality, it was a major concern of the urban-based Tutsi elite, leading to a lack of political security vital for successful consociational democracy.

One of Lijphart's two key functions of proportionality and its alternatives is to provide a fixed way of allocating government subsidies and civil service positions, to allow the consociational government to avoid making many tough decisions which could threaten its stability. The uneven minority overrepresentation in place in Burundi in 1993 failed to meet this goal. The result was fears and uncertainty at both the mass and elite level for Tutsi. Thus in the lack of adequate minority overrepresentation we find significant sources for the failure of successful consociational democracy.

#### *Was there a minority veto?*

Just the opposite of the principle of minority overrepresentation, an initial glance suggests that there was no minority veto, but a closer look shows that one was in place, though in a peculiar form. A customary political minority veto would only have been in place if the minority party was able to gather 20% of the National Assembly, since a 4/5ths vote was necessary to make any changes to the constitution. However, as a result of the 1993 elections the Tutsi fell just short of this number, both in terms of party representation through the mostly Tutsi UPRONA, and along ethnic lines including the few Tutsi in FRODEBU. Thus the Tutsi had no way of blocking any amendments they might see as threatening their vital interests. Although FRODEBU with its interethnic leadership was unlikely to push any such amendments, the threat was there.

and importance of the missing pillars indicated earlier, and in more clearly pointing to the specific factors responsible for the breakdown of peace.

To be sure, some form of elite cooperation did continue after the election of 1993, and carried the fragile situation through two earlier attempted military coups. Buyoya's graceful acceptance of his defeat at the polls and Ndadaye's 'obvious good will' (Prunier 1994), coupled with a declaration of loyalty by the chief of staff of the Tutsi-dominated military, helped quell initial protests against the election. The fragility of the new government, but also the loyalty of the military, were confirmed when five high-ranking officers, including Buyoya's cabinet head, were arrested after failing to find more than minimal support in a coup attempt just after the presidential election. The example of Buyoya and Ndadaye's cooperation was strong enough to give Burundians hope and to supply many outside observers with a reason for putting forth positive predictions for Burundi's future.

Still, experts like Reyntjens and Lemarchand qualified their optimism in clear awareness of the fragility of the situation. Reyntjens (1993: 578) wrote prophetically just before the attempted coup and Ndadaye's assassination, 'given that Burundi has a history of political assassinations, it is hardly necessary to point out that any serious attempt against Ndadaye's life would result in massive violence throughout the country'. From small signs like the refusal of UPRONA members to have drinks with Ndadaye after the opening of Parliament (Watson 1994: 31), to larger ones like the deputy secretary of the National Assembly calling for the resignation of the chair of the Constitutional Court after it sided against FRODEBU in not electing any UPRONA members to leadership positions, it was clear that elite cooperation had its limits (Reyntjens 2000: 13).<sup>6</sup>

The failure of elite cooperation to reach a high enough level was due essentially to the lack of political security that the four pillars of consociational democracy were supposed to provide. This lack of political security manifested itself on the elite level in the form of perceived threats to power and position. The most obvious threat was that to the Tutsi monopoly on military power seen as vital to many Tutsi elites. 'Frodebisation' at lower levels and amongst the police force led to uncertainty leading up to the proposed reintegration of the military in November of 1993. A lack of political security also showed itself in the form of fears arising from Ndadaye's vow to radically change distribution of government resources along lines which did not reflect minority over-representation.

This lack of political security not only motivated the small part of the military elite which initiated the coup, but may also be seen as responsible

for the lack of significant resistance by higher military officials. One study noted that 'though senior army officers claimed that they faced pressure from junior officers, they most likely acquiesced in or supported their actions' (Lund *et al.* 1998: 62). As a reporter wrote, 'not a single soldier had died protecting Ndadaye. Not a single unit had rushed to reinforce his guard' (Watson 1994: 29). Major Isaie Nibizi, who was made the head of presidential security after having foiled the earlier attempted coup in July, 'took minimal precautions' this time (Prunier 1994); though the presidential guards obeyed his orders to take defensive positions, they did so 'dragging their feet' (*ibid.*). Further, the manner in which Ndadaye was turned over to rebels by his own security remains unclear but suspicious. Whether under great pressure by inferior officers or not, by noon the next day the senior officers were 'sufficiently cooperative' to make up a Committee of National Salvation (des Forges 1994: 206). It was only after a huge international outcry, bolstered by significant threats of aid withdrawal, that a military leader denounced the coup and it was given up (*ibid.*).

The lack of political security at the elite level that fed such acquiescence was reinforced by fears and uncertainty at the mass level. These fears and uncertainties stemmed from rumours and policies concerning refugees, the civil service, and the military. The threat of the promised guarantee of return to some 200,000 Hutu refugees 'rang a danger bell for the Tutsi minority' (Prunier 1994). As stated earlier, Tutsi landowners lost land while others feared losing jobs to the well-educated refugees or worse to 'tragically incompetent' Hutu in Burundi, because of hiring practices that favoured the long held down ethnic majority. The real and perceived inequality of these policies fed Tutsi mistrust in the government, and the rapidity with which they were carried out made the government appear dangerously unpredictable in the eyes of many Tutsi, particularly those in the military. The sum of these tensions at the mass level, through both the atmosphere they created and the example they provided, undoubtedly added to the deterioration of political security at the elite level. By both motivating the putschists and creating an atmosphere of acquiescence in the rest of the Tutsi elite, the fears arising out of a lack of political security served to undermine elite cooperation sufficiently to permit the 21 October coup.



The application of Lijphart's theory of consociational democracy to Burundi's attempt at power-sharing in 1993 leads to some surprising

conclusions. The main prediction that at least one of the main requirements of consociational democracy was missing in Burundi is seen to be true, as two of Lijphart's four main pillars as well as elite cooperation strengthened by political security were missing or lacking. First, the lack of the pillar of minority overrepresentation increased tensions and undermined elite level cooperation. 'Frodebisation' and other Hutu preferential policies led to fears that have been cited as the most influential causes of the action of the putschists and for the acquiescence of their military superiors. A set system for distributing government resources, civil service positions, and army reintegration, with overrepresentation of the Tutsi, would have contributed significantly to calming such fears of the Tutsi minority.

In contrast, the second missing pillar, segmental autonomy, when analysed does not show a link to increased tensions breaking down elite level cooperation. Rather, the implications of applying segmental autonomy suggest that it would actually be detrimental to successful consociational democracy. In a society such as Burundi's, with its ethnicities sharing a common language, religion, culture, and space, further mixed by complex familial ties, cultural autonomy would ultimately have to be based on ethnicity. Though such a practice may reduce some potentially negative interactions, it would at the same time tear at more positive, existing cultural and familial inter-ethnic relationships. This does not mean that this pillar of consociational theory should be removed, but rather that it should be adjusted to the realities of Burundian society, much in the way that Lijphart replaces geographically based federalism with 'cultural federalism' in deeply divided and geographically interspersed societies.

For example, Lijphart's reduced interaction may apply to the avoidance of politically based activities where tensions are likely to rise (for example, the holding of town hall meetings in which people air their grievances), but not to non-political interactions in schools, churches, and community clubs – activities which could go a long way towards reducing tensions. Rather than reinforcing ethnic identity through the formation of separate institutions, the aim should be to reduce anxieties by avoiding interactions which produce political and ethnic minefields, while at the same time quietly encouraging other more potentially positive areas of interaction.

The most interesting finding, in its implications both for Burundi specifically and for Lijphart's theory in general, comes not from the pillars which were missing but rather from one which was in place, the minority veto. The dilemma, as was seen in Burundi, is that the minority veto provides vital political security to the smaller segment in a divided society,

but at the same time its use stands as one of the greatest threats to peace. The problem is that the success of the minority veto, much like the threatened use of nuclear weapons during the Cold War, depends on its remaining a threat that is not actually used. This form of brinkmanship can lead to stability and peace, but with the threat of a lethal breakdown always looming over it. When actors able to use the veto come to see the benefits of its use as outweighing its cost, as occurred in Burundi, peace (the very goal the veto is meant to build towards) breaks down.

To be fair, a minority veto is not always as extreme as the military one seen in Burundi, and it is not likely that Lijphart would support such a form of the veto. But the extremeness of the minority veto in Burundi serves to accentuate the essential dangers of even a purely political veto. As Lijphart admits, any minority veto holds the risk of breaking down stability by paralysing the state through overuse. Lijphart answers that the very existence of the veto and the threat of its use, by increasing political security, reduce the chances of its being used. This argument is unsatisfactory because it fails to acknowledge adequately the grave dangers of the veto. Like a nuclear weapon, its presence can assure a tense peace, but its use can equally assure total destruction. The danger and fragility of such a minority veto may very well outweigh and nullify the political security it is meant to provide. Thus the balance between the political security gained and the stability endangered by a minority veto must be carefully measured. Such a tool for peace should not be considered a necessary condition for peace through consociational democracy, but rather a potentially helpful but ultimately dangerous weapon that may not be appropriate for all situations.

The implications of this analysis have grown greater as Burundi progresses deeper into its second great attempt at peace through consociational democracy. The efforts since the Arusha Accords of 2000 suggest that the constructors of this latest attempt have learned some of the lessons of 1993. At the time of this writing, Burundi is in an extension of its second phase of a transitional government originally meant to lead up to democratic elections by the end of October 2004. Elections have been rescheduled to begin on the local level in February 2005 and to culminate in presidential elections on 22 April 2005. The transitional government has included a grand coalition with 14 ministers from majority Hutu parties and 12 ministers from Tutsi majority parties, in addition to an interim presidency, peacefully transferred from Tutsi Frodebu leader Buyoya to Hutu Frodebu leader Domitien Ndayizeye. Minority overrepresentation is ensured with Tutsi-majority parties making up 40% of deputies in the Assembly and 50% of the Senate. A political minority veto is in place in

will fit a model of consociational democracy appropriate to the unique society of Burundi remains to be seen, but those selected to lead this latest attempt would do well to heed the warnings and recommendations brought out by an exploration of consociational democracy in the last great effort at peace in Burundi in 1993.

## NOTES

1. It should be noted that these numbers (85/14/1%), though the ones most often cited, are of questionable validity, as they date from Belgian colonisation and have not been reexamined since. They are used in this paper to give a general idea of the ethnic breakdown. As Filip Reyntjens (1993: 563) noted, 'Contrary to practice in neighbouring Rwanda, no data on ethnic affiliation have been officially collected since independence. Belgian figures in 1956 listed 86.48% Hutu, 12.3% Tutsi, and 1.13% Twa. While these computations have given rise to considerable – and heated – debate, the 85/15 proportion is given here as a mere indication of the relative weight of the two main ethnic groups.' The Twa in Burundi have been largely viewed as inferior, discriminated against, and victimised by both Hutu and Tutsi (see Lemarchand 1994a: 6, 15). Lijphart's (1990: 502–3) recommendation for such small groups is that they may have representatives asked to serve as advisory members of cabinets. Such representatives would have the right to participate in decisions on issues of special importance to their small groups, without necessarily having a formal vote. No such measures were taken in Burundi in regard to the Twa. While the effects of this are profound in terms of acceptable democracy, they are negligible in terms of the success or failure of consociational democracy.

2. These numbers are taken from UN 2000. CIA 2003 cites 800,000 refugees as having fled into Tanzania since 1993, with another 525,000 displaced internally.

3. In addition to the four pillars, Lijphart (1990: 497–8) includes in his theory nine conditions which are seen as conducive to successful consociational democracy. These are the absence of a majority segment in a society, rough socio-economic equality among all segments, roughly equal-sized ethnic groups, small number of groups, small population, external dangers to promote internal unity, overarching loyalties, geographically concentrated ethnic groups, and prior traditions of compromise. While these are helpful in determining the likelihood of consociational democracy being successful, it is important to stress that, unlike the four pillars, they are not necessary conditions. Lijphart uses Malaysia, a country in which many of these favourable conditions, including the two most important, were not present, as an example of how a successful consociational democracy can be formed without them. More pertinent to Burundi, Vandeginste & Huyse (1999) explore the absence of many of these favourable conditions in Rwanda, concluding that despite their absence, 'other options, ranging from a military, Tutsi-dominated minority regime to a British-style, hence Hutu-dominated democratic majority rule, do not offer a viable alternative [to consociational democracy]'.

4. Lijphart (1977: 30-1). Lijphart writes this in response to Brian Barry's charge that his grand coalition is epiphenomenal in that the most important factor in leading to political stability is 'a willingness to compromise' which doesn't necessarily have to be institutionalised in a grand coalition.

5. National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, *Communiqué de presse*, Bujumbura, 2.6.1993.

6. UPRONA members were excluded from any leadership positions in the National Assembly. The speaker, deputy speaker, and secretary were all FRODEBU. This led to an angry walkout by UPRONA deputies and a challenge in the Constitutional Court, a remnant of the Tutsi hegemony. The Court decided in favour of UPRONA, saying that the Rules of the National Assembly from 1982 were not in accordance with the 1992 Constitution. This ruling led to a call by the deputy speaker for the chair of the Court to resign.

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