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Rwanda : The Perils of Peacemaking*

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External mediation in civil conflicts since the end of the Cold War has rested on a standardized conflict resolution mechanism, which differs significantly from the state-centric mechanism prevalent during the Cold War. This accords a broadly equal standing to all parties to the conflict, and seeks to reach a settlement acceptable to them all. This, in turn, calls for a ceasefire, followed by either of two mechanisms designed to create a liberal constitutional order, guaranteed by internationally supervised elections. In the Rwanda conflict of 1990–94, conscientious implementation of this mechanism not only failed to avert genocide, but even helped to create the conditions that made it possible. This failure illustrates important weaknesses in the mechanism itself, notably the way in which mediators become implicit participants in the conflict, and the divorce of a mechanistic approach to conflict resolution from the political prerequisites for a successful settlement.

Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, the international community has taken a much more active role than previously in seeking to resolve civil conflicts around the globe.¹ This endeavour, which may be characterized as ‘peacemaking’, has been accompanied by the articulation of a fairly standardized conflict resolution mechanism, which, in turn, has been applied to a wide variety of conflicts in Asia, Africa, Europe and Central America with varying degrees of success. This article summarizes the main features of this mechanism and, by examining its application to a

case in which it was notably unsuccessful, that of Rwanda during the period leading up to the genocide of mid-1994, seeks to elucidate some of the assumptions which underlie it. As Stedman & Rothchild (1996) comment, ‘many more people died in Angola and Rwanda *after* peace agreements failed than during the years of war that preceded them’, surely the ultimate indictment of a peacemaking process undermined by tragically mistaken assumptions.

The Post-Cold War Conflict Resolution Mechanism

The end of the Cold War presented its victors with a rare opportunity to seek to restructure the international system, in accordance with a set of values which appeared at least to have been vindicated by the collapse both of the Soviet Union and of the ideology which sustained it, and which, while possessing some moral validity in their own

*I wish to acknowledge the financial support of the Economic & Social Research Council of the United Kingdom for the research on which this article is based. The participants in a panel at the African Studies Association of the UK conference at Bristol, September 1996, and two anonymous referees from *JPR*, made helpful comments on earlier drafts, which are gratefully acknowledged

¹ This has already attracted a considerable literature; for a recent overview with case studies, see Mayall (1996).

right, also served to entrench the hegemony of those who promoted them. These victors comprised not only the now dominant Western capitalist and liberal democratic states led by the United States, but equally importantly the civil societies of those states, and the mass of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international institutions which these had established, or over which they could exert a powerful influence. One important item on their agenda was the resolution of conflicts around the world, which had very rarely been caused by the Cold War, but which had often been greatly exacerbated by it. Some of these conflicts could be regarded as 'international' in nature, and resolved by negotiation between states. The Angola–Namibia accords of December 1988, for example, took the form of negotiations between Angola, Cuba and South Africa, brokered by the United States and the then still extant Soviet Union, in which non-state actors (and in particular the Namibian liberation movement SWAPO) had no formal role (Freeman, 1989). In other cases, including those discussed in this article, the conflicts were so evidently domestic that external mediators could only seek to resolve them through direct engagement with the principal combatants, who necessarily included non-state actors.

To this end, I suggest that they devised informal rules that powerfully shaped the process of peacemaking and, in turn, strongly influenced its outcomes. The most basic assumption underlying these rules was that all parties to a conflict had a 'standing', which required that they be recognized as valid participants in any peacemaking process. This assumption ran counter to the rules which had broadly been applied during the Cold War, which ascribed a special status to sovereign states, and hence in turn to their governments. This gave governments a privileged position in any conflict resolution process, relegating opposition

movements to the subordinate position of 'rebels', and taking for granted the maintenance of existing state structures, together with the international conventions of territorial integrity and non-intervention which upheld them. During the Cold War period, movements which challenged the control of states by their governments were normally accorded a recognized standing in international negotiations only when they met criteria for legitimacy that were agreed both by the superpowers and their principal allies, and by the 'non-aligned' states of the Third World. These notably included 'liberation movements' fighting against colonialism or settler rule, as these were defined by key texts such as resolutions 1514 and 1541 of the UN General Assembly. Other movements, such as those fighting on behalf of the Kurds or the Eritreans, were excluded.

The special status of states, which served the interests alike of third world governing elites and of superpowers anxious to maintain their own alliance systems, could not, however, survive the end of the Cold War. Demands for democratization, and respect for basic human rights, explicitly challenged the right of states to exercise unfettered 'sovereignty' over their own domestic affairs. Secession from existing states to form new ones, previously excluded under all but the most exceptional circumstances, became a permissible form of conflict resolution with the break-up of the Soviet Union, even though it was still strongly discouraged by a number of regional organizations. The role of external human rights monitoring organizations, led by the long-established Amnesty International, greatly expanded. In contrast to the state-supporting assumptions of Cold War diplomacy, these new rules were inherently state-subverting: the abuses which they sought to publicize and redress were overwhelmingly committed by states, and even where opposition forces (such as insurgent movements) were equally guilty of

human rights abuse, governments provided much readier targets because they were often formal parties to human rights conventions, had an address and set of office-holders to which protests could be sent, and publicly participated in diplomatic activities and international organizations. In this context, civil conflicts, rather than pitting 'rebels' against internationally recognized governments, could often plausibly be regarded instead as the result of inevitable and indeed justifiable resistance to state oppression. The balance of moral advantage shifted to the opposition, and even though governments could not be excluded from the peacemaking process, any opposition group that could muster evident support now had to be admitted to that process on terms of broad equality with existing regimes.

Once this basic shift in the standing of conflicting parties was accepted, the other elements in the new conflict resolution mechanism readily fell into place.² The first of these was that all parties should respect a ceasefire, both in order to halt immediate suffering and to provide conducive conditions under which internationally supervised negotiations could take place to establish the basis for a lasting settlement. Such a ceasefire inevitably 'froze' the existing military situation, and in the process advantaged some groups against others; but any such advantage was expected to be temporary, since it would last only until the implementation of the substantive peace agreement.

Next, the terms of the peace agreement itself were to a considerable degree built into the process of external mediation. This agreement had to meet the moral expectations of those who mediated it, and who would in turn be required to guarantee its implementation. These expectations were in

turn heavily influenced by the values of Western liberal society, and called for the creation of a constitutional framework, encompassing multi-party competition for electoral support combined with a respect for basic human rights. In practice, two alternative mechanisms emerged, through which this outcome would be achieved. Under the first of these, which closely resembled the formula adopted by the United Kingdom for managing the 'transfer of power' at the end of the colonial period, the conflicting parties first negotiated an agreed constitution, which needed to meet the requirements of Western-style multi-party democracy and respect for human rights; appropriate topics for negotiation were therefore somewhat restricted, characteristically extending to the precise form and powers of the executive branch of government, the level of autonomy accorded to ethnic or regional sub-units, and the entrenchment of the rights of minorities. Once this had been agreed, open multi-party elections would be held under international supervision, the results of which would determine the leadership and composition of the successor regime. The settlements negotiated for Angola in 1991–92 and for Mozambique in 1992–94 fell into this pattern.

Alternatively, in cases where a constitutional structure followed by immediate elections could not be agreed, a second variant involved the formation of a broad-based coalition government, with a composition negotiated between the conflicting parties. This was normally expected to be a transitional arrangement, introducing a period of peace accompanied by appropriate confidence-building measures, such as the disarmament of the previously warring factions under international supervision, during which it would be possible to formulate a permanent constitution, leading to eventual multi-party elections and the installation of a new government, as in the first model. The

² Bertram (1995) provides a brief outline of a 'composite model' for conflict resolution, which is however extended here.

numerous attempts to broker solutions to the conflicts in Somalia and Liberia followed this pattern.

Finally, the implementation of the agreement would in almost every case be guaranteed by the presence of an international peace-keeping force, normally but not always under the aegis of the United Nations, which would help (with the aid of external observers) to secure the conditions required for free and fair elections, supervise the installation of the new regime, and remain for a period at least in order to reassure the losers of the elections that their rights would be respected.

This mechanism has achieved varying levels of success in the conflicts to which it has been applied. Cambodia (at least until 1997) and Mozambique may be placed among the more successful examples, while Angola equally clearly belongs among the failures.³ All three of these cases fell into the first variant noted above, in which an election was held at a fairly early stage of the peacemaking process in order to determine the composition of the government. The generally greater success of this variant is not surprising, in that it presupposes a higher level of agreement among the contending parties than the second one, in which the parties insist on a prior recognition of their right to participate in a coalition government that is independent of any demonstrated popular support. The coalition variant also requires parties which have been locked in bitter conflict up to the peace settlement to collaborate in running a government, an enterprise which is inherently difficult at the best of times. The Liberian peace settlement of September 1995, which collapsed the following April, is the nearest

to my knowledge that such a scheme has come to success. The projected Rwandan settlement was of this kind.

These rules, at any rate as they were perceived from the perspective of Western civil societies in the post-Cold War era, seemed so obviously valid that they may well in many cases have been taken for granted.⁴ In some degree, and notably in their insistence on the need for inclusive political settlements to which all major actors in the conflict would be parties, they drew on principles familiar from the conflict resolution literature. In many cases, they helped to recreate a political process, marked by a recognition of the need for negotiation and compromise among groups with different attitudes and interests, in place of evidently bankrupt attempts to impose autocratic rule. They did not, however, provide for any fundamental resolution of the often deep-seated differences which had led to conflict in the first place, except insofar as this might follow almost automatically from the installation of an elected government, and the timescale within which a settlement had to be negotiated and implemented was generally short: major states and international institutions were impatient for results, and funding problems generally did not allow for any extended deployment of large peacekeeping forces. Most fundamentally of all, this essentially mechanistic approach to peace-making readily overlooked the need for any successful settlement to rest on a basic political formula (or 'transition bargain', as Lemarchand (1994) termed it) which enjoyed the active support of the key parties which were needed to implement it, and which could

³ There is a substantial recent literature on mediation and peace-making in Africa, including Chan & Jabri (1993), Cilliers & Mills (1995), Deng & Zartman (1991), and Smock (1993). For Angola and Mozambique, see Anstee (1993) and Hume (1994).

⁴ The issue of the cultural bias of Western attempts at conflict resolution has aroused understandable concern; see for example Augsburg (1992), Cohen (1991), Salem (1993). In the Rwandan case, nonetheless, I am unconvinced that 'cultural' issues were actually critical: as is argued later in this article, the problems lay not with 'culture' in a general sense, but with specific assumptions underlying the post-Cold War conflict resolution mechanism, which have arisen from relatively recent Western experience.

where necessary be imposed on recalcitrants who might be tempted to disrupt it. In particular, the relative bargaining strength of the parties at the negotiation stage might well bear little relationship to their capacity to implement or obstruct the settlement once it had been reached, while commitment to the ideological norms that underlay the peacemaking process was often completely lacking. These problems were revealed with particular poignancy in the case of Rwanda.

Rwanda: A Brief Background

There is neither space nor need for any detailed examination of the Rwandan situation, which has been well described elsewhere.⁵ Some critical structural features of the conflict must nonetheless be noted. The first is that Rwanda was no 'artificial' colonial creation, but a political society which long predated colonial rule. The two main ethnic communities, Hutu and Tutsi, into which the Rwandan population was divided (with the addition of a small number of pygmies, or *twa*), were both integral parts of that society. The origins of these two communities, and especially of the Tutsi who occupied a position of dominance in the pre-colonial state, are (like most things in Rwanda) disputed, but there is some modern support for the hypothesis that the Tutsi may have originated from what is now southern Ethiopia (Prunier, 1995: 16).⁶ The two communities were not territorially separable, but lived intermingled with one

another, and as is normal with African ethnic communities, the distinction between them was by no means hard and fast. They spoke the same language, *kinyarwanda* or Rwandan. In cases of intermarriage, since both groups were patrilineal, children normally assumed the identity of their father. In some marginal cases, people were ascribed to one group or the other by the colonizers on the basis of economic occupation, with cattle-owners designated as Tutsi and agriculturalists as Hutu. There are some physiological differences between the two groups, but the crude stereotype of Tutsi as tall and aquiline nosed, Hutu as short and flat-nosed, is grossly misleading, and a great many Rwandans cannot be ascribed on the basis of their appearance to one rather than the other. Although the pre-colonial government was dominated by Tutsis, with Hutus appearing only in relatively minor positions of authority, there is no pre-colonial record of conflict between Tutsis and Hutus; rather, Rwanda followed the normal pattern of conflict in inegalitarian agrarian societies structured on patron-client lines, by which particular Tutsi patrons, with their Hutu and Tutsi followings, confronted other similar cross-group alliances.

Colonialism hardened the distinction between the two ethnicities, not least through the ascription of stereotyped characteristics to each of them, and aroused the possibility of communal action, *as* Hutu or *as* Tutsi, which had barely been conceivable in the pre-colonial situation. Because the monarchy and its associated ruling group, which had been incorporated into the structure of colonial rule by German and then Belgian colonizers, was Tutsi, whereas a very substantial majority of the population was Hutu, this instantly created the makings of eventual political crisis. It was no more than logical for aspirant Hutu politicians to promote an idea of Hutuness which would enable them to challenge established Tutsi

⁵ We are fortunate to possess an admirable account in Prunier (1995), which so far as I can judge achieves the near impossible combination of scholarly detachment with humane concern; for an appraisal of the international role, see JEEAR (1996).

⁶ The ostensibly empirical question of the origin of the Tutsi, in a continent where population movement has been extensive, became deeply associated with ideas of racial superiority. During the genocide, Tutsi bodies dumped in tributaries of the Nile were described as being 'sent back to Ethiopia'.

elites, whereas Tutsi politicians happily adopted colonial ideologies which ascribed them an inherently superior status. The crunch came late in 1959 when a Hutu uprising swept the monarchy from power, aided by the Belgians who, in the lead-up to independence, switched sides to support the majority. The Tutsi who were then driven into exile retained a powerful sense of Rwandan identity, which eventually induced them and their descendants to form the Rwandan Patriotic Front, and demand the right to return (Reed, 1996a). Periodic massacres under successive Hutu regimes over the next thirty-five years, which alternated with periods of relative tolerance, led to further Tutsi exodus, mostly to neighbouring Uganda and Burundi.

The Habyarimana regime which took power in 1973 was initially relatively moderate. Tutsi were systematically discriminated against in public life, but were otherwise for the most part left undisturbed. It was nonetheless totalitarian: all Rwandans had their ethnic group and place of residence inscribed on their identity cards, and could not even move house without permission; uniquely in tropical Africa, Rwanda's dense population and hierarchical social structure meant that such regulations could be (and were) enforced. Inevitably, over time, the regime came under threat: in part, from the normal processes of political decay in any single-party dictatorship; in part from factionalism among groups surrounding the President; in part from economic crisis, caused especially by fluctuations in the price of coffee; and most of all, eventually, from the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) which, organizing in Uganda, invaded Rwanda in October 1990. In the face of these threats, the regime sought to entrench itself. Internally, it articulated an increasingly overt ideology of Hutu supremacy that had never been far beneath the surface, and which was readily mobilized to confront the largely

(though not exclusively) Tutsi RPF; the extreme version of this ideology, which was to culminate in genocide, was associated with particular factions in the government, and especially that of the president's wife and her family. Externally, Habyarimana sought aid from France which, under the presidencies first of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and then of François Mitterrand, had incorporated the former Belgian colonies in Africa (and notably Zaire, as by far the most important of them) into the French sphere of influence. In the process, Rwandan politics became divided between three main groups. First, the Habyarimana regime, itself divided between a number of factions; second, the internal opposition to Habyarimana, which (given the numerical preponderance of Hutu, and the systematic exclusion of Tutsi from political life) was very largely provided by Hutu, and could draw both on general dissatisfaction with the regime, and on regional and other divisions within Hutu society; and third, the external armed opposition formed by the RPF.

Rwanda and International Conflict Resolution

The settlement of protracted ethnic conflicts, of which that in Rwanda is a classic and perhaps extreme case, has until recently been a neglected area for theorists of conflict resolution (Rupesinghe, 1987). The international management of the Rwandan conflict, which assumed a military dimension only after the end of the Cold War, raised exceptional problems that certainly affected the appropriateness of the post-Cold War conflict resolution mechanism. For one thing, it was – unlike, for example, the conflicts in Cambodia, Angola or the Horn of Africa – entirely unconnected to Cold War alliances, so that the transformation of the global system would have no direct effect on external backing for either side. On the

Rwandan government side, as already noted, support came principally from France, which sent not only weapons but a small contingent of troops to help Habyarimana repel the RPF (Prunier, 1995; Vershave & Vidal, 1994). Connections between the two regimes were strengthened by the personal relationship between Mitterrand's son Jean-Christophe, who was in charge of the unit for Franco-African relations in the Elysée, and Habyarimana's son Jean-Pierre. The RPF was very closely linked to the Museveni regime in Uganda, all of its senior military leadership having fought with Museveni's National Resistance Army during the guerilla war which had brought it to power in 1986. There is some question as to whether the RPF invasion, which was launched from Ugandan territory, occurred with Museveni's prior knowledge and approval, and RPF sources are understandably anxious to emphasize their independence from Ugandan tutelage; but there is no doubt at all as to Museveni's general sympathy. In the eyes of the Mitterrand regime, this Ugandan support assumed the dimensions of an anglophone conspiracy to take over part of francophone Africa, and the defence of Habyarimana (and hence, in turn, of the Hutu supremacist ideology with which important elements in his regime were already closely associated) became part of a more general defence of *francophonie* and the French role of Africa, to an extent that to an anglophone observer seems quite bizarre.⁷ Mobutu's need for French support in neighbouring Zaire, and Kenyan president Daniel arap Moi's intense suspicion of Museveni, extended the Rwandan conflict into regional relationships. The internal opposition, squeezed between the regime on the one hand and the RPF on the other, lacked the access to external support enjoyed by each of

its rivals. In short, the structure of international rivalries helped to exacerbate rather than moderate the conflict within Rwanda.

The demands for democratization then sweeping Africa also had a peculiar impact on the Rwandan situation. It was readily assumed, often quite legitimately, that the evident problems of bad government in Africa were very closely associated with the fact that very few indeed of the continent's rulers had been selected or confirmed in office through any mechanism remotely resembling a fair election. Multi-party democratic elections, as well as being desirable in themselves, could also be regarded as an important means for achieving the accountability and 'good governance' which Africa badly needed. This author broadly supports these propositions. Claims that inappropriate Western-style democracy was 'forced' on Africa ignore the demands for just such a system that were made, often at great personal cost, by very large numbers of Africans, and owe much to the special pleading of those who benefitted from its absence.⁸ The claim that multi-party elections in Africa necessarily intensify ethnic conflict is likewise some way wide of the mark. Though ethnicity is an in-built feature of multi-party politics in most African states, as in many other political systems, multi-party elections have generally provided a more effective mechanism for mediating and, hence, diffusing the expectations of different groups than its alternatives: the major cases of ethnic breakdown in Africa have invariably occurred under authoritarian rule.

In Rwanda, with its two ethnic groups of very uneven size, the logic of ethnic mobilization was nonetheless compelling. That a Hutu was virtually bound to win any election which pitted Hutu against Tutsi candidates was confirmed by the June 1993 election in neighbouring Burundi, where an

⁷ Only a French writer could adequately express the mental attitudes which underlay this idea: see Prunier (1995), 102–107.

⁸ For a discussion of the democratization process in Africa, see Wiseman (1996).

incumbent Tutsi leader who had made genuine attempts to seek support across the ethnic divide (and who indeed received an appreciable number of Hutu votes) was nonetheless defeated by a Hutu. In Rwanda, the complex political process unleashed by Habyarimana's conversion to multi-partyism in 1991 took place almost entirely within the Hutu political elite. Four opposition parties were formed, in addition to the ruling MRNDD,⁹ and were incorporated into a coalition government. These parties were however caught in a bind. They were not only subject to manipulation by a long-established president whose patronage networks reached deep into the state structure, but were also open to accusations of collaboration with the RPF in a way that was treasonable in two senses: both as association with armed opposition to the state, and as betrayal of Hutu solidarity to a Tutsi-dominated insurgency. They were thus increasingly polarized between 'Hutu power' factions (generally known in Rwanda just by the English word Power) dedicated to a stridently ethnic agenda, and 'moderate Hutus' prepared to work with the RPF.

The RPF on its side faced equivalent dilemmas. Fully aware that the ethnic arithmetic was stacked against any movement which could be identified as Tutsi, the RPF desperately tried to project itself as a truly national movement. Drawing comfort from a doubtfully valid analogy with the NRA in Uganda, with which most of its leaders had been closely associated, it hoped gradually to establish its national credentials through internal discipline and good government as it took over an increasing area of the country. It deliberately sought to avoid any outright 'conquest' which might be interpreted as the reimposition of Tutsi hegemony, and was always vulnerable to

external pressure to concede military advantages in exchange for political gains. At the same time, it could not agree to any political solution based on multi-party electoral competition, in which it was always liable to be defeated because of the narrowness of its demographic base. Caught between the dangers implicit in a military solution on the one hand or an electoral one on the other, it was forced to opt for some sort of 'power-sharing' formula (corresponding to the second variant of the conflict resolution mechanism outlined above), which, in turn, pushed it into negotiations with rivals whose agendas were often violently at odds with its own. This in turn provided the background to the attempt to negotiate a settlement.

The Attempt to Negotiate a Settlement

It has commonly been asserted that the international community has been negligent in seeking to resolve conflicts in 'unimportant' parts of the world such as Africa, by contrast for example with the resources lavished on the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. This claim can scarcely be made in the case of the Rwandan conflict, where the international community, led by regional states and the Organisation of African Unity, took an active role in attempting to negotiate a solution from a very early stage. Initially, it appeared that the RPF challenge could be snuffed out quickly, using the traditional 'government versus rebels' formula. The RPF invasion of north-east Rwanda from across the Ugandan border on 1 October 1990 was a complete disaster. The movement's charismatic leader, Fred Rwigyema, was killed on the second day, and within a month the remnants of the RPF had been forced into hiding or back into Uganda. Within a few days of the invasion, France and Belgium, along with Zaire, provided troops to protect the regime. However, even

⁹ Previously known as the Mouvement Révolutionnaire Nationale pour le Développement (MRND), it added a further D (for Démocratie) in April 1991.

though the main international response at this stage fitted the established 'government versus rebels' formula, the Belgian Prime Minister Willy Martens visited Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya within 3 weeks of the invasion, and made an ineffectual appeal for the formation of an inter-African peacekeeping force (Prunier, 1995: 108).

Despite its initial failure, the RPF proved able to reorganize itself for a guerrilla campaign, and infiltrated back across the border into north-western Rwanda in early November 1990; after lying low for 2 months, it attacked the regional prefecture of Ruhengeri in January 1991. Again, the international response was prompt. At a meeting between presidents Habyarimana and Museveni in Zanzibar on 17 February, hosted by president Mwinyi of Tanzania, the Rwandan government offered a ceasefire, in exchange for a promise by the Ugandans to persuade the RPF to reciprocate; this would be followed by an amnesty (*Keesings Record of World Events*, 1991: 37993). The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) (whose secretary-general, Salim Ahmed Salim, was the former Tanzanian foreign minister) was associated with the peace process through an undertaking to help with measures to aid refugees. In March, president Mobutu of Zaire hosted a meeting at which the Rwandan government repeated its offer of an amnesty. At this stage, even though the conflict remained diplomatically at the level of 'government versus rebels', the involvement of the international community had shifted from one of simple support for the regime, to one of mediation between the regime and its opponents, with the Ugandan government serving in effect as a proxy for the RPF.

The annual OAU summit in Abuja, Nigeria, in June 1991 moved the conflict a further stage by authorizing a regional mini-summit under OAU auspices, designed to achieve a settlement, which was held at

Gbadolite, Zaire, in September, and was shortly followed by the first official and direct talks between the Rwandan government and the RPF (*Keesings Record of World Events*, 1991: 38423). Whatever the diplomatic status of the conflict, however, neither side at this stage had any interest in reaching a settlement: the government, secure in its military backing from France, was confident of victory, while the RPF had no interest in admitting defeat. As the conflict ground on, despite various disregarded ceasefires, the RPF became increasingly confident of its ability to maintain the insurgency. By 1992, despite French support for the government forces that included not only credits for weapons purchases but effective French operational control of the counter-insurgency campaign (Prunier, 1995: 110; JEEAR, 1996: 22), the military initiative had passed to the RPF.¹⁰

The next stage in the process was triggered by political developments in Kigali. On 14 March 1992, the Habyarimana government, under pressure both from its domestic opposition and from international demands for democratization, agreed to the establishment of a multi-party transitional government, as a condition for which the internal opposition insisted on peace negotiations with the RPF. In effect, the internal opposition was using the leverage provided by the RPF in order to increase its bargaining power vis-a-vis the MRNDD, and this, in turn, enabled the RPF to complete the shift from rebel group to legitimate participant in the domestic political process. This shift was recognized internationally by RPF involvement in talks with the US Assistant Secretary of State Herman Cohen and with Salim Salim in Kampala in May, and

¹⁰ Jones (1995: 242) claims that French military intelligence concluded after the February 1993 RPF offensive that the RPF could defeat the government forces, and stopped short of Kigali only because of the French military presence.

preparatory talks with the government in Paris in June. Thus, the stage was set for the official negotiations which opened in Arusha, Tanzania, in July 1992.

The Arusha Peace Process

The formal peacemaking process went on for just over a year, from 12 July 1992 until the signing of the eventual peace agreement on 4 August 1993. It was internationalized to a very high degree. As host nation, Tanzania acted as 'facilitator' of the peace process, and there were also delegations from Rwanda's other neighbours, Burundi, Zaire and Uganda, along with observers from Senegal, France, Germany, Belgium and the United States. The Organisation of African Unity maintained a high profile because Salim Salim was anxious to achieve a peace agreement in order to help establish his projected African Conflict Resolution Mechanism, and the United Nations was represented at the invitation of the OAU. Britain, Canada, the Netherlands and the European Union monitored the process through their local diplomatic missions (JEEAR, 1996: 24). Although the negotiations took place within a strongly 'African' context, which embodied the call for a regional involvement in peace-making, and served to disarm any suggestion that the resulting settlement had been imposed on the conflicting parties by Western states, they nonetheless exemplified the post-Cold War conflict resolution mechanism already discussed. As Lemarchand (1994: 592) notes, 'Many indeed wondered whether the Arusha accords would have been signed in the absence of repeated nudging from the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), Tanzania, France, the United States, and Belgium'. In part, this may have been because of the recognition that Western diplomatic support and financial commitment would be needed for any effective settle-

ment; in part, too, because the mechanism gave a standing to every interested party, it was extremely difficult to exclude any competing faction that claimed the right to participate. Most fundamentally of all, however, the norms espoused by the most powerful actors in the international system set the standard for the system as a whole, and unless less powerful actors can profit from rifts between the major powers, these norms gain almost automatic acceptance.

The negotiations consequently followed a fairly standard format, leading to a settlement of the second type outlined above, which involved the creation of a power-sharing administration in which all of the parties would be represented. It started with a ceasefire agreement, under which each of the warring parties would continue to occupy the territory which it then controlled, a formula which in turn left the RPF with a relatively narrow strip of northern Rwanda, while the government retained control over by far the greater part of the national territory. The substantive issues for negotiation notably included the repatriation and resettlement of refugees (which the Rwandan government had previously refused to accept on the ground that the country was already overpopulated), the allocation of posts in a 'broad-based transitional government', and the composition of the integrated armed forces which were to replace the warring armies of the government and the RPF.

On all of these issues, the RPF achieved a remarkably high level of success. The right of repatriation was conceded unconditionally. The composition of the twenty-one member transitional Council of Ministers provided equal representation for the RPF and the formerly ruling MRNDD, at five members each, with the balance of eleven members going to five of the smaller parties established since 1991. The prime minister and minister of foreign affairs were to be

drawn from minor parties, with defence going to the MRNDD and interior to the RPF. Most strikingly of all, military command positions were to be divided 50:50 between the government forces and RPF, with only a 60:40 advantage to the government in total troop numbers (JEEAR, 1996: 25–26). Given the demonstrably greater military effectiveness of the RPF, this would at the very least enable them to see off any challenge to the peace settlement from the government army.

This success, which in the words of one observer amounted to ‘a veritable *coup d’état*’ for the RPF and the internal opposition,¹¹ was largely caused by two factors. The first was that the RPF, with a disciplined organization and an extremely able negotiating team, backed by confidence in its military strength, was able to negotiate far more effectively than the divided representatives of the government; the high quality of the RPF leadership was one of its most important assets. Second, however, the ‘government’ negotiators scarcely represented the effective power holders in government-controlled areas of Rwanda at all. They were drawn disproportionately from members of former opposition parties, who had been brought into the new multi-party transitional government in April 1992, together with some Habyarimana supporters from the more ‘liberal’ wing of the MRNDD. These had, through earlier power-sharing arrangements, gained formal control over the ministries which were responsible for the negotiations, in which they were negotiating every bit as much against the established power structure in Kigali as they were against the RPF. They were, in effect, using the framework of internationally mediated negotiations, in order to bring about a shift in power within Rwanda, which they could not achieve through their control on the ground.

The broad-based transitional government established through the Arusha process required a two-thirds majority, or fourteen votes out of the twenty-one in the council of ministers, in order to reach decisions. This in itself required an exceptional level of co-operation and good will from bitterly conflicting adversaries among whom these qualities had been evidently lacking. In effect, because agreement between the MRNDD and the RPF could for practical purposes be ruled out, the settlement would have handed power to a group of minor parties with undetermined popular support, who would have needed to gain three votes from one or other of the major parties in order to achieve the requisite majority.

The ‘Hutu power’ factions which controlled the existing Rwandan government effectively excluded themselves from the negotiations, from which they had nothing to gain. As the settlement eventually emerged, indeed, they had everything to lose. Not only were they reduced to less than a quarter of the seats in a government over which they had hitherto exercised unchallenged control; the Arusha accords also sought to separate the judiciary from the executive, and gave the courts the power to bring to book individuals in high positions who had misused their influence or state resources. In a state which – like virtually all African states – was characterized by patronage, those who had dominated the state were most likely to be guilty of misuse, and hence to have the wrath of a newly independent judiciary turned against them. Many of them, too, were guilty of the murders of political opponents which already disfigured the political scene.¹² The introduction of ‘liberal’ political forms, based on openness and competition, into a setting in which the control of scarce resources is monopolized by the state, and in which the state itself is

¹¹ The noted Belgian specialist, Filip Reyntjens, cited in JEEAR (1996: 25).

¹² See Prunier (1995), ch 6: ‘Chronicle of a Massacre Foretold’.

monopolized by a small elite, creates inherent conflicts, because it is only to be expected that the elite will seek to defend its interests, either by manipulation or by force. In Rwanda, where that elite was deeply threatened and prone to resort to violence, the prospects for a peaceful transfer of power through a negotiated constitutional framework were, at best, slight.

That any settlement ultimately emerged was a tribute to the demands on international mediators to achieve an 'agreement' – a piece of paper to which all of the parties involved could be persuaded to put their signatures – entirely regardless of whether this agreement provided the basis for any workable political settlement. This compulsion to reach an 'agreement' has likewise characterized international attempts at conflict mediation in Liberia and Somalia. In the Rwandan case, even the formal implementation of the Arusha accords proved impossible, despite the deployment from November 1993 not only of a UN peace-keeping force, UNAMIR, but of a 600 man RPF battalion in Kigali that was intended to assure the safety of the RPF participants in the broad-based government. Members of the Hutu factions associated with the extremist wing of Habyarimana's party created endless reasons, accompanied by assassinations and other murders, to delay the hand-over of power. It was on his way back from a meeting at Dar-es-Salaam on 6 April 1994, at which he had been obliged by intense diplomatic pressure to promise to implement the accords, that Habyarimana's aircraft was shot down, almost certainly by extremists associated with his own party. This was the signal for the immediate start of the genocide.

Negotiation as a Cover for Genocide

The international peacemaking process did not merely, however, produce an attempted

settlement that proved to be unworkable. It must also – regardless of the unquestionable good faith of the vast majority of its participants – carry a substantial measure of responsibility for making possible the genocide that followed. The process of international mediation is not merely an attempt to resolve a conflict at some point in the future: it is also a political intervention which carries important implications for the balance of advantage in that conflict in the present. Understandably, too, while mediators tend to look at the peacemaking process in teleological terms, as a set of steps designed to bring about the constitutional outcome predetermined by the conflict resolution mechanism, participants tend to look at it in terms of its impact on the current and immediate future conduct of the struggle. At Arusha, the Rwandan participants recognized this, even if the mediators did not. The two main ways in which the mediation process affected the relative power of the participants were, first, through the ceasefire, which froze the distribution of territorial control at a particular point and, second, through the weightings that it ascribed to the participants within the negotiations.

In the first respect, even though the RPF emerged as a major potential beneficiary of the Arusha accords, it did so at the cost of the gains that it could have made through direct military action. These potential gains were clearly illustrated in February 1993, when the RPF abandoned the peace talks, and within two days was able to double the territory under its control. Whether it took this action, as it claimed, in response to riots and killings instigated by the MRNDD and its allies, or whether this was simply a tactical move to strengthen its bargaining position, the point was made. It withdrew to its original positions in the following month, and resumed participation in the negotiations, in response to international press-

ure. There were good reasons, both domestic and international, for the RPF to seek power within the framework of a domestically agreed and externally mediated settlement, rather than by simple conquest, but in practice the exchange of territorial control for negotiating strength proved to be exceptionally disadvantageous. The considerable benefits ostensibly conferred on the RPF through the Arusha accords were never realised, because the accords themselves were never put into effect. The loss of control over territory, on the other hand – encompassing not only the areas seized in February 1993 but all of the territory which the RPF could have occupied in consequence of its military superiority – enabled extremist factions associated with the regime first to organize themselves for the genocide during the long period for which the Arusha negotiations were taking place, and subsequently to implement it in the aftermath of the April 1994 killing of Habyarimana. Had the RPF advanced, the territory under the control of the central government, and hence the scale of the killings, would have been greatly reduced.

In the second respect, the mediation process gave a status to its participants that only very inadequately reflected their popular support or military strength. In its origins, as already noted, the international mediation of civil conflicts served to displace the highly preferential status accorded to incumbent governments, and to replace it by a more even-handed representation of the different interests involved. This even-handedness, however, accompanied by the perception on the part of mediators that ‘success’ is to be equated with the achievement of an agreement that is at least formally accepted by all of the parties involved, tends to give a disproportionate weighting in the negotiations to minor parties whose bargaining strength is to a large extent created by the very act of their admission to the negotiating process itself. On some occasions, as in

the attempts to resolve the conflicts in Liberia and Somalia, this led to a proliferation of competing factions, which in turn complicated and impeded the achievement of a workable settlement (Clapham, 1995). In the Rwandan case, where the extremist groups which were ultimately responsible for the genocide were sidelined in the negotiations, and the Rwandan government case was largely presented by representatives of minor parties, it gave an extraordinary weighting in the proposed transitional government to parties with no military strength, no control of territory, and an as yet undetermined level of popular support. Confident in their ability to capitalize both on their Hutu ethnic identity (which would enable them to sideline the RPF), and on the unpopularity of the Habyarimana regime, the minor parties then hoped to establish themselves more firmly in power through early elections. This, in turn, encouraged the extremist factions to regard the Arusha negotiations as no more than a facade, and to devote their attention to building up the organizations – notably the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs), and the paramilitary groups known as *interahamwe* – which destroyed the basis for the reform process embodied in the Arusha accords, and subsequently orchestrated the genocide.

It has sometimes been suggested that these problems could have been resolved if the extremist groups had been brought into the negotiating process, rather than marginalized from it.¹³ This suggestion seems to the present author to be well wide of the mark, and at the same time to illustrate a further weakness in the application to major civil conflicts elsewhere in the world of the values implicit in Western civil society. These groups were fundamentally irreconcilable to any resolution of the conflict through a

¹³ For a brief discussion of the issue, see *JEEAR* (1996: 26).

negotiated settlement.¹⁴ There is ample evidence both of their articulation of an exclusivist ideology of Hutu identity, and of their willingness to resort to deliberate and systematic murder on a large scale, in order to maintain their own power.¹⁵ The period from the initial RPF invasion of October 1990, up until the outbreak of the genocide in April 1994, is marked by incidents of this kind, which can not only be seen in retrospect as precursors to genocide, but were correctly identified at the time.¹⁶ The incorporation of such groups into the Arusha process could only have aborted the process itself. It could certainly be argued that this would have revealed the futility of the negotiations, and compelled a resort to war which would in the event have produced a less damaging outcome than eventually resulted from the divorce between a public but meaningless mediation and a covert but all too real preparation for mass murder; but there is no plausible basis for the belief that it could have led to a viable settlement.

Equally open to question is the belief that the Arusha accords could have been made to 'work', had they been expeditiously implemented by the international community, especially by the prompt despatch of an international peace-keeping force. The Rwandan settlement was certainly affected by an unfortunate accident of timing, coming as it did shortly after the ignominious withdrawal of the United States and its allies from Somalia had gravely weakened Western confidence in 'humanitarian intervention' (Rotberg, 1997). The precipitate withdrawal of UN forces, under orders from New York, unquestionably condemned to death many Rwandans who could otherwise

have been saved. But this is a very different matter from the claim that a stronger UNAMIR could have overseen the implementation of the Arusha settlement. The key weakness of that settlement lay not in the failure to implement a 'transition bargain', but in the fact that there was no such bargain to implement. Given the irreconcilable contradictions between the demands and expectations of the 'Hutu power' groups on the one hand and the RPF on the other, and the powerful forces which each controlled, any peace-keeping force could have affected the outcome only by intervening decisively on behalf of one side and against the other. The French force that intervened under 'Operation Turquoise' was able to secure a degree of control, but only because it was rightly regarded by the former government army as being on their side, and it is misleading to suggest that a UN force could have operated in the same way.¹⁷ To remain 'neutral', in the way that a UN force was bound to do, was to be condemned, as eventually happened, to impotence.

Underlying the belief in the viability of negotiated solutions to conflicts such as that in Rwanda is the assumption that participants in the political process share a common value framework, within which differences are ultimately negotiable. This assumption does not form part of Western 'culture', in any deep-seated sense, and was never taken for granted in the development of Western societies themselves. When conflicts arose in which the basic values underlying the political order were contested, as for example in the religious wars of the 16th and 17th centuries, the American civil war of 1861–65, or indeed the Second World War of 1939–45, these were characteristically fought through to the victory of one side over the other, or at least to an acceptance born of mutual exhaustion that some

¹⁴ The danger of 'spoilers' in peace negotiations has been noted by Stedman & Rothchild (1996).

¹⁵ See, for example, Des Forges (1995).

¹⁶ Professor Filip Reyntjens, notably, organised a press conference at the Belgian Senate on 2 October 1992, at which he revealed the existence of regime death squads; see Prunier (1995: 168).

¹⁷ As suggested, for example, by Jones (1995: 232).

compromise solution was required. The long period of domestic political stability enjoyed especially by the United States, and the success of the liberal democratic formula developed in the 20th century by the capitalist welfare states, led however to the ready acceptance of the assumption that a constitutional formula which actually rested on a specific social and economic base, was almost universally applicable. The rapid and effective incorporation of the defeated Axis powers (and later of Spain and Portugal) into the community of Western liberal democracies after 1945, and the readiness with which liberal values were at least apparently adopted by most of the societies of formerly communist central and eastern Europe after 1989, only encouraged this assumption. It is certainly possible for Western liberalism to provide at least a tactical formula for improving the quality of governance in societies with socio-economic structures and historical trajectories very different from those which have underpinned the emergence of effective civil societies in the Western capitalist states. In the case of Rwanda, however, it proved to be fundamentally misconceived.

Western Civil Society in Post-Genocide Rwanda

While the main thrust of this article is concerned with the dissonance between the Western civic values underlying attempts at international mediation and the actual workings of conflict in Rwanda, it is also worth noting the way in which these values carried through into the aftermath of genocide. Once the scale of killings, and the failure or inability of the UNAMIR force to prevent them, became all too clear, the RPF resumed its offensive, capturing Kigali in July 1994 and pushing on into the rest of the country. A conflict which three and a half years of international mediation had failed

to settle was resolved instead by military force in an equivalent number of months. At the same time, the RPF advanced into a country which had been denuded of most of its Tutsi population by genocide, and much of its Hutu population by flight, many of them into refugee camps in Zaire and Tanzania, where they remained under the control of the remnants of the old regime and the organizers of the genocide.

The first response of a horrified Western world, decidedly ambivalent in intentions and effects, was the French military intervention in south-west Rwanda, Operation Turquoise; presented as a humanitarian operation designed to prevent further killing, this could also be regarded – given the very close relations between the Habyarimana and Mitterrand regimes, and visceral French hostility to the RPF – as a device for defending an area of Rwandan territory against the RPF, and protecting French clients in the old regime, killers included, who were flooding into the region before the RPF advance.¹⁸ Whatever its actual effects, it raised unsettling questions about the relationship between the humanitarian agenda ostensibly underlying external involvement, and the interests of the states and regimes concerned, arousing the suspicions especially of the new RPF-dominated government. Subsequently, huge numbers of non-governmental organizations (over 150 by February 1995) flooded into the country, taking over quasi-governmental functions and disposing of resources vastly greater than those at the disposal of the embryonic Rwandan government.¹⁹

This influx of the instruments of Western civil society into an African society in the aftermath of severe trauma produced some

¹⁸ For two accounts of *Operation Turquoise* by French or francophone authors, see Prunier (1995, ch 8); and Verschave & Vidal (1994, ch 3: 7); see also Reed (1998).

¹⁹ From personal observations and briefings in Rwanda, February 1995.

very peculiar effects.²⁰ One of these was that attempts by the new RPF regime to establish what it regarded as normal governmental control over its own territory rapidly ran up against the interests and attitudes of Western NGOs. These organizations had to be seen to be involved in Rwanda, not least because many of them had run advertising campaigns in the Western media, to raise money for themselves on the back of the Rwandan genocide. They were thus ultimately accountable, in a political if not a legal sense, to the Western publics from which their funds derived. This combined with their own sincerely held sense of humanitarian mission to endow them with the belief that they were acting on behalf of universal principles of 'humanity', separate from (and indeed potentially opposed to) the interests of particular parties to the conflict. Even though the RPF was generally regarded as the 'better' of these parties, given the record of its opponents, its attempts to exercise sovereign control over Western NGOs aroused strident cries of protest.

Particularly resented by the RPF was a 'victim' complex on the part of NGOs, which identified the refugees in Tanzania and Zaire as the victims of the conflict, and concentrated aid efforts on their relief, even though many of the camps, especially in Zaire, were controlled by the organizations responsible for the genocide, which used relief aid to bolster their own power. This, in turn, related to a profound reluctance of relief agencies to recognize that they were engaged in 'political' activity, or that actions which they conceptualized as the relief of suffering could be (and very often were) regarded as a source of political resources at the point of application. It equally illustrated the application of Western humanitarian assumptions that were implicitly hostile to in-

cumbent regimes, in a way which disadvantaged the incumbent RPF-dominated government, to the advantage of its genocidal predecessor. Another such assumption was a 'juridical' complex, which insisted on respect for Western jurisprudential norms in the trial and punishment of those accused of responsibility for genocide, including notably respect for Western rules of evidence and a prohibition on capital punishment, even though these norms were impossible to implement under Rwandan conditions, and led to the massive overcrowding of jails by people awaiting trial. A third was a 'reconciliation' complex, which involved at least some NGOs in attempting to reintegrate individuals responsible for the genocide, in accordance with Western conceptions of rehabilitation – and more basically of human nature – which were at best of only limited applicability to the Rwandan situation. While this is not the place to examine these issues, they are symptomatic of the application to African conflicts of the values of Western civil societies, and indicate that the Western conflict resolution model, and the problems that this gives rise to, form part of a much broader phenomenon that calls for more extensive investigation.²¹

Conclusion

This article is not intended, and would not presume, to offer any 'guidelines' for the resolution of the Rwandan conflict, which on the one hand remains as intractable as ever, and on the other – especially with the defeat in 1996–97 of the forces of the former Rwandan government in exile, and the victory of Kabila's Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo/Zaire – has moved well beyond the specific issues assessed here (Reed,). Nor does it aim to

²⁰ For an interesting discussion of Western humanitarianism in the context of 'complex emergencies' like that in Rwanda, see *African Rights* (1994).

²¹ See Reed (1996b), for a general discussion of the need to incorporate international civil society into the analysis of international relations in Africa.

promote any general critique of external mediation in civil wars, in Africa or elsewhere, which can on occasion provide conducive conditions for the resolution of conflicts which the contending parties would have been unlikely to resolve on their own. Its conclusion is altogether more limited, and is likely to be familiar to any student of conflict resolution: that the articulation and implementation of a formula for resolving conflict is unlikely to achieve success, unless this formula puts in place a *political* settlement which provides on-going support for the solution that has been reached. Such a settlement is unlikely, save in the most exceptional cases, to bring with it the definitive resolution of the underlying sources of conflict. It must however at least encompass a 'pact' which is accepted by the major power-holders, and which can if necessary be imposed on those who might disrupt it. The South African settlement of 1990–94 provides a case in point. While scarcely starting to address the basic inequalities in South African society, this established the ground rules for a system in which both the majority represented by the African National Congress and the powerful and entrenched minority represented by the National Party had a place, and which each had an interest in upholding (Lemarchand, 1994).

In Rwanda, this was not the case. The negotiations pursued at Arusha and elsewhere were supported by no pact between the major participants which could uphold the settlement once this had been reached. Given the ideology of ethnic exclusion promoted by the Hutu power factions in the MRNDD and other internal parties, and the genocidal lengths to which these were prepared to go in order to uphold it, no pact involving these groups was possible, and any settlement would have had to rest either on their supremacy or on their defeat; the readiness of the equivalent group in South Africa, the white (and especially Afrikaner) com-

munity, to accept a negotiated settlement was not replicated in Rwanda. The only scope for a negotiated resolution thus lay in a coalition between the RPF and the 'moderate' factions in the internal opposition, and its imposition through the military superiority of the RPF on the *interahamwe* and the CDRs.

While the need for an underlying political pact is central to any process of conflict mediation, what then gave the Rwandan situation its peculiar horror was the ability of groups who sought a genocidal solution to use the time provided by peace negotiations in order to prepare it. This again, however, emphasizes a point that is common to any attempt at external conflict mediation: that the mediators are not merely bystanders to the conflict which they are attempting to resolve, but participants whose involvement weakens or strengthens the position of different internal parties, and may indeed even strengthen the position of those domestic factions which are most adamantly opposed to the negotiated settlement which the mediators are attempting to bring about. Mediators readily assume an obligation to attempt to resolve conflicts, in the belief that mediation can only have a positive or neutral impact on the conflict: if mediation succeeds, it does good; but even if it fails, it does no harm. The Rwandan case demonstrates that this assumption may be tragically mistaken.

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