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Exclusion, Marginalization and Political Mobilization: The Road to Hell in the Great Lakes

by

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INTRODUCTION

If the fate of the African continent evokes hopelessness, nowhere is this sense of despair more evident than in former Belgian Africa. No other region has experienced a more deadly combination of external aggression, foreign-linked factionalism, interstate violence, factional strife, and ethnic rivalries. Nowhere else in Africa has genocide exacted a more horrendous price in human lives lost, economic and financial resources squandered, developmental opportunities wasted. The scale of the disaster is in sharp contrast with the polite indifference of the international community in the face this unprecedented human tragedy. What has been called Africa's first world war has yet to attract the world's attention.

The marginal ranking of Africa in the scale of international priorities is one obvious explanation for this generalized lack of interest in the Great Lakes crisis. Another is the sheer complexity of the forces involved. When one considers the multiplicity of political actors, domestic and foreign, the fluidity of factional alliances, the spillover of ethnic violence across boundaries, the extreme fragmentation of political arenas, it is easy to see why the international community should have second thoughts about the wisdom of a concerted peace initiative. No other crisis in the continent seems more resistant to conflict resolution.

Adding to the confusion is the plethora of competing explanatory models that come to mind. How much credence should one give to Paul Collier's recent thesis that "it is the feasibility of predation which determines the risk of conflict"? (Collier 2000) Is the crisis in the Great Lakes an extreme example of the "criminalization of the state"? (Bayart, Ellis and Hibou 1997) Or should one turn instead to Jeffrey Herbst's demographic argument, and look for evidence of low population density, combined with the weakness of state boundaries, as an explanation for Kabila's inability to effectively broadcast the power of the Congo state? (Herbst 2000) If Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" model hardly applies, what of his contention that the "kin country syndrome" is the key to an understanding of regional instability? (Huntington 1996) To these questions we shall return.

This paper offers a different prism to view the roots of the crisis. The key concept around which much of this discussion revolves is that of exclusion. Political, economic and social exclusion are seen as the principal dimensions that need to be explored if we are to grasp the dynamics of domestic and inter-state violence in the Great Lakes. This is not meant to minimize the significance of external aggression. The capacity of Rwanda and Uganda to effective project their military force into eastern Congo, albeit with mixed results for both, is unquestionably a major contributory factor to regional instability. External intervention, however, must be seen in the broader historical context of the forces that have shaped the tragic destinies of former Belgian Africa. Briefly stated, the central pattern that recurs time and again is one in which ethnic polarization paves the way for political exclusion, exclusion eventually leading to insurrection, insurrection to repression, and repression to massive flows of refugees and internally displaced persons, which in turn become the vectors of further instability. The involvement of external actors, as we shall see, is inseparable from the perceived threats posed by mobilized refugee diasporas to their countries of origin as well as to specific communities within the host country.

HISTORICAL BACKDROP

Let us begin with a brief reminder of basic historical facts.

Ranked societies, exclusion and insurrection

In the context of ranked societies like Rwanda and Burundi, where a two-tier structure of ethnic domination tended to vest power and privilege in the hands of the Tutsi minority, political exclusion was the rule for roughly 80 per cent of the population, consisting essentially of Hutu peasants. In Rwanda the Hutu revolution of 1959-62 -- powerfully assisted if not engineered by the Belgian authorities -- brought to a close the era of Tutsi hegemony. (Lemarchand 1970) While opening the way for the enthronement of the representatives of the Hutu, an estimated 200,000 Tutsi were forced into exile in neighboring and other countries between 1959 and 1963 -- approximately 70,000 to Uganda, 25,000 to the Congo and 50,000 to Burundi. (Guichaoua 1992, 17)

In Burundi, by contrast, where the "premise of inequality" was far less institutionalized and social relations more complex, ethnic polarization proceeded at a slower pace, allowing the Tutsi elites to consolidate their grip on the government and the army long before they faced the challenge of a servile insurrection. Every attempt made by Hutu leaders to overthrow the government – in 1965, 1969 and 1972 – ended up in dismal failure, each time resulting in extremely brutal repression, culminating in 1972 with the genocidal massacre of anywhere from 100,000 to 200,000 Hutu. (Lemarchand 1995) Not until 1993, with the election of a Hutu to the presidency, Melchior Ndadaye, were the Hutu given to believe that they would soon control their political destinies, only to be robbed of this opportunity on October 21st, when a radical faction within the all-Tutsi army killed the newly elected president, the speaker and deputy-speaker of the National Assembly and overthrew the government. Six months later, after three and a half years of bitter civil war, opposing the predominantly Tutsi troops of the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) against the Forces Armées Rwandaises (FAR), Rwanda became the scene of one of the biggest genocides of the last century: between 600,000 and 800,000 people, mostly Tutsi, were sent to their graves by Hutu militias (*interahamwe*) and army men. (Prunier 1997)

The "Banyarwanda" of eastern Congo

Until then the principal victims of political exclusion were the Tutsi of Rwanda and the Hutu of Burundi. Their closest analogs in eastern Congo were the "Banyarwanda", a label that belies the diversity of their ethnic and regional origins. (Willame 1997) Included under that rubric were three distinctive communities (a) Hutu and Tutsi who had settled in the Kivu region long before the advent of colonial rule, including a group of ethnic Tutsi indigenous to south Kivu (located in the Mulenge region) known as Banyamulenge; (b) descendants of migrant workers, mostly Hutu, brought in from Rwanda in the 1930s and 1940s under the auspices of the colonial state, (c) tens of thousands of Tutsi refugees who fled Rwanda in the wake of the 1959 Hutu revolution, and hence referred to as "fifty niners". By 1981, following the promulgation of a retroactive nationality law, the Banyarwanda were for all intents and purposes denied citizenship since none could possibly meet the legal requirement of proof of ancestral residence before October 18, 1908, when the Congo Free State formally became a Belgian colony. By 1990, at the time of the RPF invasion of

Rwanda, Banyarwanda resentment of Mobutu's exclusionary policies were matched by their growing sympathy for the cause of the RPF. Many did in fact join the ranks of the RPF and fought alongside their Ugandan kinsmen. By then both groups shared the deepest anxieties about their future in their respective countries of asylum. They would soon become critically important actors in the regional political equation. (Reyntjens 1999)

The devastating ripple-effects of the Rwanda cataclysm were felt immediately in eastern Congo. The sudden influx of over a million Hutu refugees across the border, accompanied by the fleeing remnants of the FAR and *interahamwe*, brought a major environmental and human disaster to the region, while at the same time triggering a drastic reordering of ethnic loyalties. Almost overnight the "Banyarwanda" community split into warring factions, pitting Hutu against Tutsi. (Lemarchand 1997; Reyntjens 1999) Meanwhile, in the interstices of the Hutu-Tutsi tug-of-war, emerged a shadowy constellation of armed factions, the Mai-Mai. Drawn from ethnic groups indigenous to the region – Hunde, Nande, Nyanga, Bashi, etc. – to this day the Mai-Mai are notorious for the fickleness of their political options, the fluidity of their political alignments, and their addiction to violence. Swiftly responding to changing circumstances, they first turned against Hutu elements, then against local Tutsi, and ultimately against the Rwandan invaders and their Congolese allies.

1996: The turning of the tide

The destruction of the refugee camps by units of the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA), in October 1996, marks a turning point in the tortured history of the region. It signals the meteoric rise to power of Laurent-Desiré Kabila as the deus ex machina imposed by Museveni upon Kagame to lead the anti-Mobutist crusade under the banner of the Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo (AFDL). While the AFDL and its Rwandan allies fought their way to Kinshasa, forcing Mobutu to throw in the sponge in May 1997, the shooting up of the camps released a huge flow of refugees across the Congo, fleeing the RPA's search-and-destroy operations. The attack on the camps also marks the entry of new international actors in the Congolese arena, most notably Rwanda and Uganda. For a brief moment the surge of popular enthusiasm caused by the overthrow of the Mobutist dictatorship seemed to submerge factional and ethnic divisions -- but only for a while. With a substantial presence of Rwandans on the ground acting in military and administrative capacities, anti-Tutsi feelings rapidly spread among a broad spectrum of the Congolese population in the Kivu, in the Katanga as well as in the capital city. Unable or unwilling to discriminate between Rwandan Tutsi, on the one hand, and Banyamulenge and "fifty niners" on the other, for the self-syled "Congolais authentiques" anyone with the looks of a Tutsi would be fair game when push came to shove in July 1998.

1998: The turning of the tables

The next and most critical stage in the Great Lakes saga came in August 1998 when, sensing the liabilities involved in his dependency on Tutsi "advisors", the new king of the Congo took the fateful step of turning against the king-makers, thus paving the way for a replay of 1996. Yet the state of the play on the ground was now very different from the quasi-unanimous crusade of 1996. As 1998 drew to a close no fewer than six African armies were involved, albeit to a greater or lesser extent, on the side of Kabila (Angola,

Namibia, Zimbabwe, Chad, Congo Brazzaville and the Sudan); against this formidable coalition stood the fragile alliance of Rwanda and Uganda and their Congolese client faction, the Congolese Rally for Democracy (CRD), soon to break up into two rival groups, while a third rebel faction emerged in northern Congo, Jean-Pierre Bemba's Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (MLC).

The 1998 crisis brought to light an immediate hardening of anti-Tutsi sentiment throughout the Congo, and particularly in North and South Kivu, where it was now the turn of the Congolese "autochtons" (i.e. non-Banyarwanda) to pay the price of exclusion. Denied all possibility of political participation, economically exploited by Rwandan interlopers, trampled under foot by foreign occupying forces, their most salient common characteristic is their visceral hatred of all Tutsi, whether of Rwandan or Congolese origins. Little wonder if today the Mai-Mai are increasingly training their gun sights on RPA units operating in the Kivu – and in the process unleashing a terrible retribution upon civilian populations -- as well as on the Banyamulenge, even though the latter fully qualify as "autochtons". Evidently, their deep historic roots in South Kivu do not exonerate them of the suspicion of being in league with the Kagame government. The truth is that the Banyamulenge and ethnic Tutsi in general are anything but united in their attitude towards Kigali. Many Banyamulenge resent the fact that they have been instrumentalized by Kagame, that they have become mere pawns in the regional poker-game. Most of them, however, privately admit that Rwanda's military presence in eastern Congo is their sole protection against another genocidal carnage.

To sum up: exclusion does not just suddenly materialize out of the primeval fissures of the plural society; its roots are traceable to the rapid of mobilization of ethnic identities unleashed by the democratization of societies built on the "premise of inequality", and to the profoundly discriminatory implications of public policies directed against specific ethnic communities. In all three states, however, refugee flows were the crucial factor behind the rapid polarization of ethnic feelings in the host countries. Everywhere refugee-generating violence has produced violence-generating refugee flows.

DIMENSIONS OF EXCLUSION

In the context of this discussion political exclusion means the denial of political rights to specific ethnic or ethno-regional communities, most notably the right to vote, organize political parties, freely contest elections and thus become full participants in the political life of their country. Obvious cases are the Tutsi in post-revolutionary Rwanda and the Hutu in Burundi until the 1993 aborted transition to multi-party democracy (some might argue that relatively little changed since then), to which must be added the Banyarwanda of eastern Congo, after being disenfranchised by the 1981 nationality law, as well as the Banyarwanda of Uganda, for whom naturalization was never envisaged. Admittedly, political exclusion is a relative concept both in terms of the range of disabilities suffered by the excluded communities, and the context in which it occurs. It is easy to see why, for example, in the context of Mobutu's dictatorship, the withdrawal of citizenship rights from the Banyarwanda did not produce the same violent reaction as the refusal of the Burundi authority to recognize the victory of the Hutu at the polls in 1965. Again, it is one thing for a minority to be politically excluded and quite another for a group representing 80 percent of

the population to be reduced to a silent majority, as is clearly the case today for the Hutu of Rwanda and, to a lesser extent, in Burundi.

Economic exclusion, on the other hand, refers first and foremost to the denial of traditional rights to land. Given that land is the principal economic resource of peasant communities denial of access to land use inevitably implies economic impoverishment, or worse. Here again contextual factors are important. Although rising population densities and environmental degradation are everywhere a fundamental aspect of the land problem, nowhere is the problem more acute than where land has been redistributed to meet the needs of machine politics (as in pre-genocide Rwanda), or reallocated to new claimants (as happened in North Kivu in the 1970s when tens of thousands of acres of land were bought off by Tutsi fifty-niners), or where rural insecurity becomes a pretext for massive population transfers in regroupment camps (as in Burundi and northern Rwanda).

Social exclusion goes hand in hand with the erosion of traditional social networks and the collapse of the safety nets that once supported the traditional social order of peasant communities. The result is a growing marginalization of rural youth. Deprived of the minimal economic security and coping mechanisms built into the customary social nets, yet denied the opportunity to make their mark in life through alternative channels, their life chances are almost nil.

To be sure, political exclusion does not always imply economic exclusion. If there is little doubt that the 1959 Hutu revolution in Rwanda received its impetus from the political exclusion of Western-educated Hutu elites, it is equally clear that economic exclusion had relatively little to do with the Hutu-Tutsi conflict. One might even argue that in some instances withdrawal of political rights translates into rising levels of economic achievement for the excluded community, as shown by the large number of relatively well-to-do Tutsi entrepreneurs in pre-genocide Rwanda. Nonetheless, processes of political, economic and social exclusion are closely interconnected: just as refugee diasporas have exacerbated the problem of natural resource scarcities in the host countries, most conspicuously in eastern Congo and to a lesser extent in Uganda, the resultant shrinkage of cultivable land, along with the dislocation of traditional social networks, must be seen as major contributory factors to the marginalization of youth and the rise of armed militias. The cumulative effect of these phenomena is nowhere more potentially disruptive than where specific ethnic communities bear the full brunt of economic and social exclusion.

Refugee flows provide the conceptual link among all three forms of exclusion. Not that refugees are always on the losing side, economically, although in most cases they are. The more important point is that the side effects of large numbers of refugees moving into any given country of asylum translates into severe economic and social hardships for the host society. Rising commodity prices, the rapid depletion of environmental resources, the frequency of petty crimes within and outside the camps, not to mention the systematic raiding of cattle, crops and vehicles (as happened in eastern Congo in 1994), these are all part of the catalogue of deprivations inflicted on the host communities. In such circumstances refugees become an easy target for politicians eager to translate diffuse grievances into political capital. In different circumstances, however, they can also be mobilized by opposition groups to strengthen their hand against domestic foes, as indeed happened in Uganda in the 1980s and in Burundi in the 1960s. Refugee populations, in short, have served as a major political resource, either as foil or as a source of support.

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THE POLITICS OF MOBILIZED DIASPORAS

Since 1959 the multiplicity of crises experienced by Rwanda and Burundi have generated four major refugee flows: (a) between 1959 and 1963 an estimated 200,000 Tutsis fled Rwanda in the wake of the Hutu revolution, the majority seeking asylum in Uganda, Burundi and eastern Congo; (b) the second major exodus involved approximately 300,000 Hutu from Burundi fleeing the 1972 genocidal massacres of Hutu by the Tutsi-dominated army, most of them headed for Tanzania and Rwanda; (c) the next wave of Hutu refugees from Burundi, numbering perhaps as many as 400,000, of whom more than half ended up in Rwanda, followed the reciprocal massacres of Tutsi and Hutu triggered by the assassination of President elect Melchior Ndadaye on October 21st, 1993, adding tens of thousands to the refugee camps in Tanzania, Rwanda and South Kivu; (d) the fourth and largest outpouring of refugees, in 1994, involved approximately 2 million Hutu from Rwanda fleeing the avenging arm of the FPR. Over a million settled in eastern Congo, the rest in Tanzania.

All of the above qualify as mobilized diasporas, in that they shared specific political objectives, were politically organized and made a sustained effort to consolidate their grip on the refugee population. This is still the case for the Hutu diaspora from Burundi, and what little is left of its counterpart from Rwanda. Ultimately their over-riding goal was to return to their homeland as citizens, by force if necessary. So far only the Tutsi refugees, under the banner of the FPR, after 35 years of exile, were able to do so.

But if the saga of the Tutsi diaspora is a success story of sorts – but at what price! – its early history is a tale of consistent failure, political and military, causing enormous bloodshed inside Rwanda, a situation for which there are tragic recent parallels among the Hutu diasporas from Burundi and Rwanda.

Refugees are first and foremost an object of humanitarian concern; only at a later stage, after metamorphosing into a mobilized diaspora, do they emerge as a source of political concern for domestic, regional and international actors. The obstacles in the way of effective political mobilization cover a wide gamut: the material and emotional costs of uprootedness, the geographical dispersal of the camps, the inadequacy of communication facilities, factional rivalries, the constraints on political activities imposed by the host country, such are the usual handicaps faced by refugee diasporas. These disabilities vary enormously over time, however, and from one setting to another. The single most important conditioning factor, however, lies in the receptivity of the host country to the political goals and organizational efforts of refugee communities.

The "fifty niners" in eastern Congo: inyenzi and mulelistes

A brief comparative glance at the record of the first Tutsi diaspora, in the early sixties (the "fifty-niners"), with that the second generation of refugee warriors, in the 1990s, is instructive in this regard. (Reyntjens 1992) Even more revealing is the comparison with the Hutu diasporas.

Organizational strength, internal cohesion, leadership skills, the ability to draw maximum tactical advantage from the domestic politics of the host country, these are the key ingredients that spell the difference between success and failure. On each count the record of the Tutsi "fifty niners" can only be described as dismal. Though formally affiliated

to the monarchist Union Nationale Rwandaise (Unar), the party virtually disintegrated after its leadership was forced into exile. While some Unaristes joined hands with the Muleliste rebellion in eastern Congo in 1964-5, a small group went to Communist China for military training; others, labeled *inyenzi* ("cockroaches") by the new Rwanda government, opted for a "direct action" strategy and proceeded to launch armed raids from Burundi, the Congo and Uganda, only to be repulsed -- at great cost to themselves and Tutsi civilians inside Rwanda -- by the Rwandan National Guard and their Belgian advisers. (Reyntjens 1992) Despite substantial support from a group of radical Tutsi politicians in Bujumbura (but not from the Crown) they never were able to translate this informal alliance into an effective military posture. In eastern Congo, their tactical alliance with the Banyamulenge of South Kivu proved short-lived; the Banyamulenge rapidly switched sides after the setbacks inflicted to the Mulelistes by the ANC. Even more damaging to their ultimate goals was their international image as crypto-communists in league with Communist China.

The second generation Tutsi diaspora: Uganda

The second generation of Tutsi exiles drew important lessons from their elders' inability to get their act together. None were more aware of the necessity to clean up their act than the Ugandan exiles who provided the spearhead of the military crusade that ultimately led to the capture of power in Kigali, in July 1994. Though space limitations do not permit a full discussion of their troubled history, most observers would agree that the key to their success lies as much in their organizational skills as in their ability to make the most of the opportunities offered by the rise in 1981 of the anti-Obote guerilla movement headed by Yoweri Museveni, the National Resistance Army (NRA). Already in the 1970s the Rwandan Alliance for National Unity (RANU) provided a coherent organizational frame for mobilizing support within and outside Uganda, collecting funds, coordinating cultural activities, reaching out to the international community, and lobbying for their right to return to Rwanda. Between 1981 and 1986, when the NRA seized power in Kampala, a solid phalanx of second generation fifty niners joined Museveni's movement, fought pitched battles in the Luwero triangle, at a cost of 60,000 killed in action, and ultimately gained strategic access to Museveni's security apparatus when two of their officers, Fred Rwigema and Paul Kagame, rose respectively to the positions of Deputy Minister of Defense and Deputy Chief of Military Intelligence. Meanwhile a series of initiatives from Tutsi exiles in Uganda and the US led birth, in 1987, of the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF), and the tacit endorsement by many of its leaders of the military option of a return by force. On the eve of the October 1st, 1990 attack on Rwanda the RPF had grown into a powerful politico-military organization, combining political mobilization and military training with wide-ranging lobbying activities in the US and Europe. By then its recruitment net extended to Tutsi exile communities in Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania and eastern Congo, infusing further strength into its ranks. Only after its capture of power on July 4, 1994, did the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) develop into a formidable military machine, capable effectively to project its muscle into eastern Congo and beyond.

The Hutu diasporas

If the destinies of the RPF were served by an exceptionally good fortune, the same cannot be said of the Burundi Hutu diasporas. Although the 1972 diaspora gave birth to the Parti de la Libération du Peuple Hutu (Palipehutu) in the Mishamo refugee camp in Tanzania, at no time was the party able to aggregate a range of political and military resources comparable to the RPF; its leadership never was able to match the organizational and strategic talent of a Rwigema or a Paul Kagame, let alone the latter's diplomatic skill in reaching out to external actors. At no time was the party able to capitalize on anything like the extraordinary good luck of the FPR in Uganda in the early 1980s. Burundi exiles are notorious for their lack of internal cohesion. (Turner 1998) Their history is one of incessant splits, whether in Europe, in Rwanda or in Tanzania. Their fissiparous characteristics became even more evident after the 1993 exodus and the emergence of several military wings of rival parties, the Front de Libération National (Frolina), the Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (FDD), and the division of the Palipehutu into three separate factions. Though some are said to draw benefits from the smuggling networks in Kigoma, and more recently from the shipment of arms from Zimbabwe and Kinshasa (International Crisis Group, 1999, 20) their resource base is hopefully inadequate for the task at hand: "All of the rebel groups (in Tanzania) complain of the lack of funding, arms and other resources necessary to carry out a sustained military campaign in Burundi". (Ibid.) Again, compared to the RPF's ability to draw international support (most notably from the US Committee for Refugees in Washington) and visibility, the performance of the refugee factions on that score is less than impressive. "The main complaint of the rebels", notes a recent International Crisis Group report, "is the lack of international support. As one rebel leader said: 'we don't have anyone to support us the way the Banyamulenge are supported by Rwanda and Uganda'". (Ibid.)

The case of the 1994 refugees from Rwanda is unlike any other in terms of the magnitude of the human flow, the volume of weaponry transferred, the tightness of the political and military encadrement, the extensive support it received from the Mobutist state, its devastating impact on the natural environment, its catalytic effect on ethnic loyalties, the questions its raises about the political implications of humanitarian aid, and, last but not least, the ultimate tragedy of its "final solution". To review each of these dimensions would take us too far afield. Suffice to note that the seriousness of the threats posed to the new Rwandan state was without parallel in the history of mobilized diasporas. Exceptional circumstances called for exceptional measures. The destruction of the camps in October 1996 by the RPA was part of a wider underlying design, however, i.e. not just to "secure" Rwanda's western border, but (a) to extend the search and destroy operations to the campsites in South Kivu and in so doing deal a crippling blow to the Burundi refugees mobilized under the banner of the FDD, (b) to deny Uganda's armed opposition movements (notably Tabliq and the West Nile Liberation Front) access to safe havens in the Congo, and (c) pave the way for Kabila's "second coming". (Lemarchand 1997) On each count the Kagame strategy succeeded beyond all expectations, at least in the short run. From a wider perspective, and with the benefit of hindsight, it is clear that the ultimate goal of the operation – making the Congo safe for Rwanda – has fallen somewhat short of the master planners' expectations.

The tools of political mobilization

As this discussion makes clear, contextual variables are of critical importance in explaining the success or failure of mobilized diasporas. Nonetheless, agency also matters. Context alone is not enough to explain the different tools and techniques that enter into processes of mobilization, ranging from coercion to ideological manipulation, from rumor mongering to arms smuggling, from practices and attitudes borrowed from the world of the invisible to the use and misuse of information designed to raise the political awareness of the rank-and-file. Not all of these are productive of success. Coercive mobilization by some factions of the Hutu diaspora has often had the opposite effect of what was intended, causing tremendous disaffection among civilians, and bitter rivalries among exile factions. What some factions view as legitimate means of ideological mobilization – such as the diffusion of historical narratives designed to demonize the Tutsi enemy, a favorite Palipehutiste technique (Lemarchand 1995) – others tend to reject. Recourse to magic looms large in the arsenal of Congolese factions, notably among the Mai-Mai and the Congolese Rally for Democracy (CRD), sometimes with disastrous consequences for the families and communities to whom, wrongly or rightly, magic powers have been attributed. Next to the availability of funding and weapons, information (or misinformation) is of critical importance. On that score the performance of the Tutsi diaspora in Uganda ranks far above its Hutu counterparts. Quite aside from its efficiency in collecting funds from exile Tutsi communities, and gaining a privileged access to NRA equipment, compared to Hutu refugee movements, the Uganda exiles have been remarkably adept at mobilizing support through its skilful manipulation of information, a fact which goes far in explaining its capacity to sway international public opinion long after the diaspora had become a nation.

ECONOMIC EXCLUSION: THE LAND PROBLEM

To properly grasp how economic exclusion ties in with political exclusion it will be useful to move back in time and look first at the situation in eastern Congo in the years following the exodus of Tutsi fifty-niners, then in Uganda in the eighties and Rwanda on the eve of the genocide.

Eastern Congo: The costs of settler-sponsored rural capitalism

Land hunger is at the heart of ethnic violence in eastern Congo. The roots of the problem are traceable to the emergence of a settler-sponsored rural capitalism nurtured and encouraged by the colonial state. Beginning in the 1930s every effort was made to meet the demands of European planters for a cheap labor force through policies designed to encourage immigration from Rwanda. With the influx of tens of thousands of Banyarwanda (mostly Hutu) land became in increasingly short supply among the indigenous "tribes" of North Kivu as each migrant family was given five hectares to provide for their sustenance. The crunch came in the years following independence. Among those Tutsi refugees who fled the Rwanda revolution, some took full advantage of Mobutu's Zairianisation to acquire huge land holdings for cattle ranching, varying in size from 2,000 to 10,000 hectares. Such massive transfers of property could not but adversely affect the livelihood of "native" communities. Unequal access to land led to a steep rise in land conflicts between "indigenous" and "immigrant" communities. (Lemarchand 1998) The issue came to a boil

in 1993, when violence suddenly erupted in Masisi causing an estimated 10,000 deaths and the displacement of some 250,000. Instigated by "indigenous" groups (Nande, Hunde and Nyanga) violence was directed against all Banyarwanda, irrespective of ethnic identities. Incitements to turn against "immigrants" came from Congolese citizens who, despite their citizenship rights, felt economically deprived, whereas the victims were Banyarwanda who, because of their recent political exclusion, were seen as foreign land grabbers bent upon depriving the indigenous peasants of their land.

The key to the conflict lies in the changing parameters of machine politics under Mobutu. With the appointment of Bisengimana, a leading fifty niner, to the post of directeur de cabinet in 1970, a number of Tutsi entrepreneurs became the privileged recipients of huge tracts of land, resulting in the expulsion of hundreds of peasant families. Bisengimana also used his influence to insure their rights to citizenship. Their legal status as bona fide property owners was guaranteed by the adoption in 1971 of an ordonnance-loi stipulating that all Banyarwanda and Barundi living in the Congo on June 30, 1960 could claim citizenship rights. Bisengimana's fall from grace, in 1977, signaled an abrupt shift of policy on the nationality issue. Yielding to the pressure of the "native" Congolese, and with little regard to the fact that many Banyarwanda qualified as "natives" (including the Banyamulenge), by a stroke of the pen the Legislative Council repealed the previous legislation and in 1981 pushed through a nationality law which for all intents and purposes deprived all Banyarwanda of citizenship rights, thus calling into question both their title to property and their right of residence in the Congo.

The double exclusion faced by the Tutsi community, economic and political, is a major factor in the background of their growing receptivity to the cause of the FPR; because of their status as a threatened minority they provided the RPA with a critical mass of potential allies when the time came for Kagame to project his military force into the Congo, in 1996 and 1998, and ultimately with a convenient pretext to justify the long-term military presence of Rwandan troops in North and South Kivu. Ironically, in trying to make eastern Congo safe for both Rwanda and ethnic Tutsi Kagame has unwittingly contributed to increase the latter's sense of insecurity, and turned the indigenous communities into bitter enemies of both.

Uganda: The "push" factor

In a sense, the fate of Tutsi exiles in Uganda was far worse than that of their counterparts in eastern Congo: at no time were they given as much as a glimmer of hope to become full-fledged citizens. On the other hand, there is no equivalent among the refugee community of eastern Congo for the rise of a Rwigema or a Kagame to the commanding heights of Museveni's NRA. Nonetheless, in both instances the vagaries of patronage politics gives us an important clue to their shared sense of anxiety about their economic and political future in the host country.

The threat posed to the refugees by the shifting sands of Ugandan politics emerged with tragic clarity after the seizure of power by Obote in 1980, when an estimated 80,000 Banyarwanda were expelled from southwest Uganda, of whom approximately 40,000 fled to Rwanda. Behind this massive displacement lies a patronage operation designed to reallocate the land occupied by the refugees so as to reinforce the grip of Obote's Uganda People's Congress (UPC) in Mbarara district. As one observer noted, "while violence was

directed at groups whose loyalty to Obote and the UPC was somewhat suspect, its ultimate aim appears to have been the creation of spoils which could be used by one UPC faction to increase its base of support at the expense of another faction". (Clay 1984, 7) Whatever short-term benefits Obote may have derived from this move proved singularly misguided in view of the long-term costs. It brought Museveni the solid support of the Tutsi refugee community, along with the critical contribution of a number of second generation refugees to his guerilla movement.

Their contribution was richly rewarded, as shown by the rapid rise of Fred Rwigema and Paul Kagame to the top ranks of the NRA military and security apparatus. What is not always realized is that in spite or because of their growing influence in the army high command they became object of considerable distrust among the lower ranks of the military. The suspicion went far beyond the realm of the military, however; it also reached important segments of the rural society, most notably the relatively well-to-do commercial ranchers. As Mahmood Mamdani has shown in considerable detail, the 1990 parliamentary debate on ranches, most of them owned by a mixed group of Ugandan businessmen, politicians, and army men, "placed the question of indignity center stage in the politics of Uganda". (Mamdani 2000, 289) What brought the issue to a head was the recommendation of a government appointed commission to reallocate over a quarter of the ranchers to squatters, many of them Banyarwanda, causing the pro-rancher lobby in parliament and others "to concentrate their fire on Banyarwanda refugees as the core beneficiaries of ranch restructuring". (Ibid. 294) As Mamdani concludes, the result was "to swing the balance of opinion, among both refugee commoners and refugee leaders, decisively against naturalization in the countries of their residence and tilt it in favor of an armed return to Rwanda" (Ibid. 299)

"When Victims Turn Killers": The title of Mamdani's forthcoming opus on the Rwanda genocide is doubly appropriate: not only does it capture the strange and tragic destiny of a good many Tutsi exiles who fought their way back into Rwanda; it is equally apposite to describe the murderous behavior of a large number of Hutu in Rwanda who felt acutely the pains of political and economic exclusion

Rwanda's "pembenization": Inequality in a new key

As the foregoing makes plain, in opting for an armed return to their homeland, the Tutsi were responding at least as much to the "push" factors operating in Uganda as to the "pull" forces inherent in the Rwandan arena. Of these by far the most significant was the growing disaffection suffered by the Habyalimana regime in the face of the widening gap between rich and poor. On the eve of the invasion the depth of socio-economic inequalities between the privileged clients of the *akazu* (the "little hut" in Kinyarwanda), most of them northerners, and those who were left out, i.e. principally peasant families from the south and southwest, had reached crisis proportions. Hundreds were dying of starvation. That the situation seemed ripe for the "liberation" of the peasant masses was certainly a key motive behind the invasion on October 1st, 1990.

In his path-breaking analysis of "natural resource scarcity and violence in Rwanda", James Gasana uses the term "pembenization" (from *gushyira I pembeni*, "pushing aside") to describe how "inequality in access to land resources caused severe structural scarcity for the rural population" (Gasana 2000, 3). As he goes on to note, by 1984 43% of the poorer

peasant families owned 15% of the cultivated areas, with the average size of family land holdings varying from 0.25 to 0.75 hectare (Ibid. 4); on the other hand, 16% of the land-rich families owned approximately the same acreage as the land-starved (43%). The "pushing aside" process was most acute where soil fertility was lowest, in the south and southwest. The exigencies of structural adjustment and declining coffee prices made things even worse. But there was more to the crisis than plummeting coffee prices, environmental constraints and demographic pressure. Here again the central factor has to do with patronage politics.

The systematic allocation of land resources to supporters of the ruling Mouvement pour la Révolution Nationale et le Développement (MRND) must be seen as a major contributory factor to the growing land hunger among the southern peasantry. As the prospect of multi-party democracy finally came into view, but with no immediate economic benefits in sight, violence suddenly erupted against local MRND politicians in the south and southwest. Significantly, there was a strong correlation between the depth of socio-economic inequality and the intensity of intra-Hutu violence. What became known as *ukobohoza* ("liberation") can best be seen, in Gasana's words, as a calculated attempt "to force the restructuring of political resources between the northwestern ruling elites and the south-based opposition… It consisted of acts of civil disobedience, such as invading the offices of local administrators for the destitution of the pro-Habyalimana municipal authorities, and in seizing the lands owned by influential authorities, or those used by cooperatives and development projects". (Gasana 2000, 10) In the process hundreds of Hutu suspected of MRND sympathies were massacred; in return, possibly as many MRND opponents were killed in retribution by *interahamwe* youth gangs.

The significance of the "liberation" campaign can hardly be exaggerated. For not only did it bring to light the ferocity of intra-Hutu violence, it also signaled the emergence of the *interahamwe* as killers in the pay of the MRND. Again, to quote from Gasana: "To halt this destabilization the *interahamwe* youth wing was organized by men close to Habyalimana as a response; in certain areas the *interahamwe* defended the influential politicians, protected their lands from squatters or 'liberated back' the lands that were already taken over". (Ibid., 11)

To properly grasp the dynamics of intra-Hutu violence as a prelude to the 1994 bloodbath, something must be said of another "liberation", the one conducted by the FPR in the north. Between October 1990 and February 1993, when the FPR launched a major offensive in the Byumba region, approximately one million people were forced out of their rural homelands and regrouped in some 40 IDP camps. Everywhere IDPs were confronted with extremely difficult conditions: "families were separated and scattered… health centers were overwhelmed and mortality increased; suspension of schooling and lack of occupation for the young led to increased delinquency and crime". (Ibid. 12) The utter hopelessness facing the tens of thousands of young Hutu IDPs made them ideal candidates for integration into just about any movement offering redemption. It is easy to see in these circumstances why the IDP camps, most notably those closest Kigali, became major recruiting grounds for *interahamwe.* Ironically, by liberating the Hutu masses of the north from the oppressiveness of the MNRD regime, the FPR created the very conditions that led to the emergence of Habyalimana's "willing executioners".

The dynamics of "liberation", whether at the hands of FPR or through *ukobohoza*, bring into focus the significance of exclusion as a source of marginalization, and of

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marginalization as a source of violence. The phenomenon is by no means limited to Rwanda; its long-run consequences for the stability of the region are nowhere more cruelly evident than in eastern Congo.

SOCIAL MARGINALIZATION AND WARLORDISM IN EASTERN CONGO

The recent history of eastern Congo is a tale of horror, punctuated by ethnic confrontations, warlord-instigated violence and incessant cycles of revenge killings; it resonates with Scottian echoes of a moral economy shot to bits by the cumulative effect of three major crises: the refugee crisis of 1994, the 1996 anti-Mobutist, Rwanda-sponsored insurrection and the 1998 Rwandan invasion. (Scott 1976) Rather than a detailed discussion of these convulsive events, the aim here is to sketch out their relationship to the collapse of the regional economy, the persistence of ethnicity as a tool of mobilization and the emergence of warlords in the interstices of ethnic and regional fissures.

A dominant theme in the burgeoning literature on warlordism draws attention to its underlying logic, rooted in the crippled economies of the continent. Paul Richards' commentary on the genesis of Sierra Leone's agonies hits the nail on the head: "The new political violence in Africa has some straightforward practical rationalities that transcend its original context… Africa faces a growing problem of youth unemployment, and war is a surprisingly viable employment option for youth with weak social support and poor educational backgrounds in regions where… clandestine trading opportunities supports war-lord activity". (Richards 1998, quoted in Vlassenroot 2000, 281) The phenomenon is not limited to Sierra Leone, Liberia or Congo-Brazzaville; it lies at the heart of the factional violence sweeping across North and South Kivu. As Koen Vlassenroot has shown in considerable detail, (Vlassenroot, 1999, 2000) the social marginalization of youth is the single most important underlying factor behind the proliferation of armed militias, collectively referred to as Mai-Mai.

The downward spiral

The near collapse of the regional economy must be viewed as part of a long-term trend, traceable to the steady shrinkage of land resources under colonial rule, reaching its peak with the massive land sales to Tutsi fifty niners during the Mobutist era. With the disintegration of the traditional land tenure systems, the safety nets that once formed the basis of the moral economy collapsed; conditions of extreme stress in the rural sectors caused thousands of young men to seek employment in the towns, only to realize that their quest was in vain. The only safety nets available were through the *mutuelles*, i.e. the numerous ethnically based mutual aid associations that came into existence during the early years of Mobutu's dictatorship. (Lemarchand 1998) In the absence of any other institutional vehicle through which to press their demands, the *mutuelles* were their only hope of salvation. As a long-term solution to rural poverty and marginalisation, however, they proved utterly inadequate. By funneling social energies into an ethnic frame they were certainly instrumental in furthering the processes of ethnic fragmentation, but did very little to lessen the sense of entrapment felt by the younger generations.

With the 1994 refugee crisis the regional economy took another plunge as the price of basic commodities rose sharply in response to the demand of humanitarian agencies,

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while marauding bands of *interahamwe* plundered local resources. By then the stage was set for a drastic reshuffling of ethnic cards. As noted earlier, the "Banyarwanda" frame of reference simply evaporated, giving way to a straight Hutu-Tutsi split; nonetheless, the growing Hutu-Tutsi polarization went hand in hand with a proliferation of armed militias, some joining hands with the *interahamwe*, only to turn against them when threatened by their raiding activities.

The Mai-Mai phenomenon

From a somewhat marginal phenomenon in 1993, warlordism has now become a dominant force in the regional political equation. Generally identified with the rise of the Mai-Mai militias in 1993, Koen Vlassenroot traces its roots to the emergence in North Kivu of "marginalized youngsters and school drop-outs (who) formed groups of under-age combatants acting against every representative of modern political authority" (Vlassenroot, 2000, 282); whether named Kasindiens, Bangilima, Katuku, Batiri, Simba, and Mai-Mai, he writes, these "are nothing more than different names for the same phenomenon". (Ibid.) They are, in short, the political expression of a diffuse sense of hopelessness in the face of economic and political circumstances that are totally beyond their control. For many, recourse to magic is the only source of psychic reassurance. Belief in their own invulnerability through the intercession of witch doctors provides the clearest symbolic link to their 1964-5 Mai-Mai predecessors. Like the Mai-Mai of the 1960s, during the Muleliste rebellion, their strategies are dictated by short-term interests, and so also their tactical alliances; they are indeed notoriously fickle in their choice of coalition partners, as shown by their temporary support of Kabila and his AFDL in 1996, and their immediate switch after realizing that their strategy only served to strengthen Tutsi influence in the Kivu. The evidence, at any rate, is fully consistent will Paul Richards' contention that war, for the up and coming generations of young *declassés*, is a surprisingly viable employment option. In a region so ravaged by civil strife, the Mai-Mai has given a new and frightening dimension to ethno-regional violence.

The systematic looting of the Kivu economy – in the best tradition of a colonial *raubwirtschaft* – that followed the 1998 invasion by Rwanda, and the sponsoring of anti-Kabila factions by Rwanda and Uganda, has transformed eastern Congo into an even more propitious terrain for the proliferation of armed militias. The universal hatred of the Rwandan occupying forces and their RDC allies has given the Mai-Mai a new lease on life, as they try to turn anti-Rwandan sentiment to their advantage and seek to expand their bases of support to almost every sector of the civil society. Whether they can turn the tables on the RPA in the foreseeable future seems doubtful, however, considering the balance of military forces, the continuing indirect funding of the war by international donors and the multiple fissures discernible among warlords. The most likely scenario is one in which the widespread repulsion inspired by Rwandan forces will continue to generate chronic anti-Tutsi violence by Mai-Mai militias, retaliatory killings by the RPA, and further despair and insecurity for the Congolese people. It could be that their descent into hell is only beginning.

ANOTHER LOOK AT THEORY

What new light do the theories mentioned earlier shed on the dynamics of ethno-regional conflict in the Great Lakes? The answer, in part, depends on how they "fit" into any particular aspect of the crisis.

Let us begin with Huntington. The whole drift of our argument, centered on the concept of exclusion, can be read as a refutation of the "clash of civilization" thesis; by the same token, his discussion of the "kin-country syndrome" is of direct relevance to an understanding of the patterns of ethnic mobilization unleashed by refugee diasporas. As our previous discussion makes clear, where ethnic fault lines cut across national boundaries conflict tends to spill-over from one national arena to the next, transforming kin-solidarities into a powerful vector of trans-national violence. An action-reaction pattern sets in whereby victims in one setting become instigators of violence in the other. Largely missing from Huntington's discussion, however, is a sustained attention to mobilization strategies, including the kinds of resources employed to mobilize support.

This is where Collier's paper offers some challenging insights. I refer specifically to his analysis of the role of diasporas and access to financial resources as crucial factors in explaining the risk of civil war. On the other hand, serious questions arise as to whether the financial viability of rebel factions, including refugee diasporas, is entirely reducible to the opportunities offered by commodity export economies. If this were the case the whole of the continent would be tottering on the brink of insurrection. Not just any export commodity but gold and diamonds are the rebels' best friends.

Whether through gem trading or any other source of profits financial viability matters. There is no denying the cardinal importance of the looting of gold and diamond resources in eastern Congo in the funding of war effort by Kigali and Kampala, and of the deadly rivalries over the loot in pitting Rwanda against Uganda in Kisangani. Nonetheless, "financial viability" only tells part of the story. Crucial as they are in explaining the failure of success of mobilized diasporas, contextual opportunities are not limited to financial viability; equally important is the political viability of rebel and refugee movements, most notably their ability to negotiate political and military support. This is true not only of the CRD factions today, but was certainly the case for the second-generation Tutsi refugees in Uganda in the 1980s.

Where the Collier thesis seems most vulnerable is in the rejection of objective socio-economic indicators as a source of civil violence: "Objective measures of social grievance, such as inequality, a lack of democracy, and ethnic and religious divisions, have no systematic effect on risk… because civil wars occur when rebel organizations are financially viable". (Collier 2000, 1) Quite aside from the fact that the argument simply doesn't hold up in the face of the overwhelming evidence to the contrary -- a fact which Collier might conceivably explain away by relegating Rwanda, Burundi and eastern Congo to deviant cases -- one wonders why one set of independent variables (objective measures of social grievance) should exclude the other (financial viability).

Categorically dismissing rebellion as "protest motivated by genuine and extreme grievance" Collier offers a striking analogy: "For a few moments suspend disbelief", he writes, "and suppose that most rebel movements are pretty close to being large-scale variants of organized crime. The discourse would be exactly the same as if they were protest movements." (Ibid. 3) Nowhere, however, does he consider the alternative

proposition that the state might qualify as the criminal and the rebels as victims of state crimes. This is of course the central argument set forth by Bayart, Ellis and Hibou in their recent work on the criminalization of the state (Bayart, Ellis, Hibou 1997). This is not meant to deny the propensity of rebel and refugees, and refugees turned rebels, to engage in criminal activities, yet it is important to note that the phrase covers a wide spectrum of illegal activities, and that such criminal activities often pale in comparison with those carried out by the state. Rwanda under Habyalimana, Zaire under Mobutu, and the Burundi armed forces under Buyoya all exhibit, to some degree or another, at one point or another, what can only be described as a criminal behavior of the worst kind, including political assassination, theft and corruption on a grand scale. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the result has been to promote huge social and economic inequalities, along with corresponding "genuine and extreme grievances", and thus pave the way for the exclusionary policies that lie at the heart of ethnic violence in the Great Lakes.

The Herbst thesis has the merit of looking at a range of variables seldom taken into account by political scientists: the combined effect on state failure of low population densities, weak and artificial boundaries, and the resultant inability of the state to control its hinterland; this, he adds, is in striking contrast with the historical record of European states, all of which have experienced "the brutality of interstate war" as a major ingredient of state consolidation. (Herbst 2000, 272) On each of these counts, however, the recent history of the Great Lakes offers massive counter-factual evidence. The region claims the highest population density in the continent; the pre-colonial boundaries of the interlacustrine kingdoms of Rwanda and Burundi were fairly well delineated, at least by comparison with the rest of Africa; control of these states over the hinterland was relatively well established; and the "brutality of interstate war" was a major feature of their pre-colonial histories, though by no means comparable to the devastation caused by the internal and interstate wars currently ravaging the region. What Herbst leaves out of the picture is the impact of colonial and post-colonial history. It leaves out what Crawford Young has so ably brought into view – the enduring disabilities arising from the impact of the colonial state on African societies. Predictably, it makes no reference to the multi-faceted crises of exclusion and social marginalization around which much of this discussion revolves, and for which there are many parallels in the continent. Only by confusing optimism with fantasy, and reality with illusion, can one take comfort in the view, implicit in the Herbst thesis, that the violent confrontations in former Belgian Africa will ultimately bring to the region the benefits of state consolidation along a blood stained path similar to the one historically taken by European states. Seen from the vantage point of their probable duration, convulsive complexities and wide-ranging social consequences, the analogy that comes to mind is not that of World War I, but, perhaps more ominously, of the Thirty Years War. Lusaka is a still a long way away from Westphalia.

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