

Princeton University International Relations Council
Princeton Interactive Crisis Simulation 2005

Republic of Burundi
Background Guide

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Hello, and welcome to PicSIM 2005!

My name is Charm Tang, and I am excited to be chairing the Republic of Burundi committee. My director, David Bargueno, and I, as well as the rest of the PicSIM staff, have worked hard to make sure you enjoy your experience here at Princeton. Last year's conference was quite successful, and hopefully this year's will be just as enjoyable.

I am currently a sophomore at Princeton, and I am planning on majoring in molecular biology with a certificate in East Asian studies. I was involved in Model UN for four years in high school, and I'm the current social chair of International Relations Council (the parent organization here that runs PicSIM). Originally born in Chicago, I am from Salt Lake City, Utah, so I love to ski and snowboard, go hiking, and all that sort of outdoorsy stuff. David is a freshman from San Clemente, California, and he loves the Beatles.

The head staff of PicSIM chose this region as the focus of this year's conference because it is an important yet often ignored part of the international community. Few people are aware of what is happening in central Africa, let alone understand the many human rights atrocities being committed on daily basis in the region. The Republic of Burundi is a country that is greatly afflicted by the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic conflict, but any mention of the conflict usually brings to mind Burundi's neighbor, Rwanda, instead. Burundi has one of the most severe refugee and internally displaced persons problems in Africa, and with its poor infrastructure and economic development, this problem is not likely to be remedied without great efforts by both the international community and the other African nations. Most Burundian refugees have fled to neighboring Tanzania, but Tanzania has warned the Burundian government several times that, due to their own limited resources and Burundi's slow efforts to follow through on all the steps of the Arusha Peace Accords, it may be unable to continue taking in refugees at the rate it has historically.

Hopefully, through the efforts of the all the committees and countries working together at PicSIM, we will be able to better understand the troubles that face this region. Good luck with research, and I look forward to seeing you for a great conference! If you should have any questions, please feel free to email me.

See you in February!

Charm Tang

THE REPUBLIC OF BURUNDI

Chair: Charm Tang

Director: David Bargueno

GEOGRAPHY AND PEOPLE

Located in the center of Africa, the Republic of Burundi is bordered by Rwanda to the north, Tanzania to the east and south, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the west. Lake Tanganyika runs along the southwest border. While Burundi is a part of the Great African Plateau, it, in fact, falls into three main geographic regions. The narrow area in the west, which includes the Ruzizi River and Lake Tanganyika, is part of the western branch of the Great Rift Valley (also known as the Imbo) and includes some lowland. The center region consists of a mountain range that runs from north to south, and elevations can reach up to about 8,800 ft (2,680 m). The eastern region (known as the Kmoso) is one of several plateaus and savannas with lower elevations (c.4,500–6,000 ft/1,370–1,830 m), and it is where most of the population lives (atlapedia.com). Burundi sits on the divide between the Congo and the Nile River basins.

The original inhabitants of Burundi were the Twa, a Pygmy people who now only consist of about 1% of the population. The Twa are largely hunters and gatherers. The Burundian population is primarily divided between two ethnic groups: the Hutus, approximately 85%, and the Tutsis, approximately 14%. While the Hutu and Tutsi are considered to be two separate ethnic groups, scholars point out that they speak the same language, have a history of intermarriage, and share many cultural characteristics. Supposedly the Tutsis are taller and thinner, but it is often nearly impossible to tell one from the other. Traditionally, the differences between the two groups are occupational, not ethnic. The Hutus are mostly agriculturalists, whereas the Tutsis, despite their relatively small numbers, have historically been politically dominant and are largely cattle raisers. These roles have led the Tutsis and Hutus have a lord-

serf relationship in the past. The 1933 requirement by the Belgians that everyone carry an identity card indicating tribal ethnicity as Tutsi or Hutu increased the distinction. Since independence, the land-owning Tutsi aristocracy has dominated the army, the civil service and the higher reaches of the economy, while the Hutu have suffered systematic discrimination under the Tutsi efforts to exclude them. This ethnic rift has been the cause of Burundi's instability in the last several decades, occasionally causing mass violence and the massacre of tens of thousands, especially in 1972 and 1988 (although it has never reached the scale of neighboring Rwanda, where the same ethnic split prevails).

French and Kirundi are the official languages, but Swahili is also commonly spoken. Approximately two-thirds of Burundians are Christian, mostly Roman Catholic, with the remainder following traditional beliefs (infoplease.com).

HISTORY

Burundi was once part of German East Africa. Belgium won a League of Nations mandate in 1923, so after World War II, this former German colony of Ruanda-Urundi was made a trust territory under Belgian administration by the UN. The region was split into Rwanda and Urundi in 1958, and in September of 1961, Prince Louis Rwagasore became Prime Minister, but was assassinated two months later. In the same year, Urundi voted to become the independent Kingdom of Burundi, and on July 1, 1962 it gained independence under Mwami Mwambutsa IV, a Tutsi.

A Hutu rebellion took place in 1965, leading to brutal Tutsi retaliations. Between 1962 and 1965, two more Prime Ministers were assassinated, and in 1966, Premier Michel Micombero (a Tutsi) led a military coup that overthrew the monarchy and established a republic. In 1970–71, a civil war erupted, leaving more than 100,000 Hutu dead.

On Nov. 1, 1976, Lt. Col. Jean-Baptiste Bagaza led a coup and assumed the presidency. He suspended the constitution and announced that a 30-member Supreme Revolutionary Council would be the governing body. In 1981, voters approved a new constitution which provided for a National Assembly. However, under President Bagaza, relations between Burundi's government and its influential Roman Catholic church deteriorated. Discontent within the army also increased, and in 1987, Bagaza was overthrown by Major Pierre Buyoya, who became president.

Buyoya worked toward greater religious freedom, but ethnic hatred flared up again in Aug. 1988 and led to more deaths. Buyoya continued to try and reform Burundi's ethnic conflict. In 1991, Buyoya signed a decree establishing the Charter of National Unity; he also reshuffled the Council of Ministers in an attempt to introduce an ethnic balance. Despite this attempt to increase the Hutus' political participation, about 270 people were killed in several rebel attacks while Buyoya was on a visit to France. Due to the intensity of the ethnic conflict, the Presidents of Burundi, Rwanda and the former Zaire agreed to reactivate permanent security commissions.

On Mar. 9, 1992, a referendum on a draft constitution resulted in overwhelming support for changes that included multiparty politics, and on Apr. 17, 1993, Buyoya signed a decree setting June 2 as the date for Burundi's first democratic multiparty elections. Against widespread expectation, the incumbent Buyoya, representing the main Tutsi party UPRONA, was peacefully displaced by Melchior Ndadaye, a Hutu banker who headed the Front for Democracy in Burundi (FRODEBU). Ndadaye was the first Hutu to assume power in Burundi, but demonstrations by disgruntled Tutsis soon followed, despite the appointment of a Tutsi Prime Minister in efforts for a carefully balanced government. Within months, Ndadaye was killed in a coup. Waves of ethnic violence followed the attempted coup with thousands of Hutu and Tutsi being killed while

some 800,000 refugees had fled. The second Hutu president, Cyprien Ntaryamira, was killed on April 6, 1994, when a plane carrying him and the Rwandan president was shot down.

This was the incident that set off the genocide in Rwanda. Burundi narrowly avoided the same fate, but tensions between Tutsis and Hutus sharply increased. As a result of Ntaryamira's death, Hutu youth gangs began massacring Tutsis; the Tutsi-controlled army retaliated by killing Hutus. The ethnic classes developed into a low-intensity civil war. The Tutsi-dominated army became extremely disillusioned with the civilian government and led a coup, deposing the Hutu president. Major Buyoya was reinstalled as the dominant political figure. More than 300,000 people have been killed in the civil war since 1993, with the Tutsi-dominated army and the Hutu rebel forces responsible for the slaughter.

THE 2000 ARUSHA PEACE AND RECONCILIATION AGREEMENT

In 1993, at the request of the Security Council, the United Nations Office in Burundi (UNOB) was established in order to promote peace in the country. Between 1993 and 1999, however, despite efforts by the international community, the peace process continued to deteriorate, and the humanitarian situation grew alarmingly worse. In December 1999, former South African President Nelson Mandela was designated as Facilitator of the Burundi Peace Process. He succeeded former Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere (who had died in October 1999).

With Mandela's aid, two and a half years of negotiations in Arusha, Tanzania, resulted in 19 Burundian political parties signing a peace agreement on 28 August 2000. The Agreement did not include a cease-fire agreement. However, several sections outline a clear program, including the creation of a transitional government, National Assembly and Senate entrusted with advancing reconciliation, democracy and reconstruction, as well as the reform of the Defence and Security Forces. The Agreement is divided into five specific protocols: Nature of

the Burundian Conflict, Problems of Genocide, Exclusion and Solutions; Democracy and Good Governance; Peace and Security for All; Reconstruction and Development; and Guarantees for Implementation of the Accord. Among other stipulations, the Agreement addresses the sharing of power and joint administration of the country through a political and ethnic balance involving the Hutus and Tutsis.

The Agreement reached a final settlement in November 2001. The largest Hutu rebel groups, the National Council for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD) and the Forces for the Defence of Democracy (FDD), signed the accord, although dissident FDD elements, along with the other main rebel group, the National Liberation Front (which has not signed) continued their guerrilla war against the government.

Several actions outlined in the Arusha Agreement have been implemented since its signing. The transitional government and its institutions (National Assembly and Senate) have been established, and the National Assembly has adopted the Arusha Agreement as Burundi's supreme law. The political parties, political armed movements, and signatories to the Agreement and Cease-fire Agreements have been integrated into the transitional government and its institutions. In November 2003, a ceasefire accord between the CNDD-FDD and the Burundian government was signed. The Joint Ceasefire Commission established by the Agreement has commenced its work as of March 2003, and the National Commission for the Rehabilitation of Displaced and Dispersed Persons (CNRS) has been established to facilitate the repatriation, resettlement, and reintegration of Burundian internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. Furthermore, a South African-led African Union peacekeeping force has been brought in to try and help control the violence throughout the country.

THE TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT

Burundi's transitional government was established by the Arusha Agreement. It is supposed to last for three years with two 18-month phases. This government provides for shared power between the G-10 (Tutsi) and the G-7 (Hutu). Buyoya was President and Domitien Ndayizeye (a Hutu) was Vice President for the first phase, which ended on April 30, 2003. The transition into the second phase was successful with Ndayizeye ascending to the presidency as a Tutsi, Alphonse Marie Kadege, became the new Vice President.

The second phase ended in November 2004, when new elections took place. Frederic Ngenzebuhororo is the current Vice President; Ndayizeye still serves as the President. The President appoints a Council of Ministers (his cabinet). The legislative branch consists of the National Assembly and the Senate, and the judicial branch consists of the Supreme Court, the Constitutional Court, the Courts of Appeal, and the Tribunals of First Instance.

The government must not only continue and finalize ceasefire negotiations while seeking to provide adequate protection for Burundians, but they must also strengthen programs vital to demobilizing combatants, repatriating refugees and IDPs, and improving the socio-economic situation of Burundians. Furthermore, the government must guarantee the maintenance of a balance between the two political ethnic groups. In order to attain these goals, the government must immediately resolve the problem of residual violence throughout the nation. The Palipehutu-National Liberation Front (FNL) still has not signed the Peace Accord, and tension continues to exist between the Burundi government and the CNDD. The Burundi government has limited financial resources to work with, another major barrier to attaining peace. In September 2004, the National Assembly passed legislation establishing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as provided for by the Arusha Peace Accord, a major step in healing the ethnic rift; however, this is a small move compared to what is still needs to be accomplished.

THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

Burundians make up the largest refugee population in Africa. Some 570,000 civilians are officially recognized refugees, most of whom live in Tanzania. There are also several hundred thousand others who have lived abroad for several decades and are not officially counted. The UN estimates that as many as ten percent of Burundians are internally displaced and dispersed persons (IDPs). Access to the internally displaced remains difficult due to insecurity throughout the country.

Because negotiations and fighting are taking place simultaneously, an estimated 40,000 Burundians returned to peaceful parts of the country while a similar number fled the ongoing fighting elsewhere. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has begun to help many refugees return to home. UNHCR has twice-weekly convoys taking refugees from camps back into Burundi, and due to fairly high demand for returns, UNHCR has increased the number of convoys from some refugee camps.

Part of the desire of many refugees to return home is due to the fact that the camps are not entirely the safe refuge they are supposed to be. In Tanzania, the refugee camps that host about 350,000 Burundians are too close to the Burundian border, prompting rebel groups to use them as bases for rest and relaxation, a significant problem for both the Burundi government and the civilian population in the camps. In addition, the refugee camps suffer from serious food shortages, health issues, and safety problems. International support to aid the refugees consistently comes up short, and Tanzania has been restricting its refugee policy, inhibiting refugees from employment and tilling arable land. Due to the exacerbated poverty of the camp inhabitants, serious problems of violence against women and children have arisen, including rapes and domestic violence.

Internally displaced persons are joining refugees in returning to their original homes and villages. As the repatriation of refugees accelerates, at least half of the 280,000 IDPs living in camps in Burundi have also returned to their areas of origin. Fighting in most of Burundi has stopped as a consequence of the 2003 ceasefire agreement between the Burundian transitional government and the CNDD-FDD, and this has motivated many Burundians to return home. Another motivating factor is an urgency to regain access to land as the displaced will be competing with returning refugees. In some provinces, returning IDPs have experienced physical harassment, theft of crops and in same cases, conflicts associated with land disputes. When land is accessible and unoccupied, finding housing is a problem. Furthermore, unlike returning refugees who benefit from supplies from UNHCR, returning IDPs do not receive any individual assistance to facilitate their return.

The governmental institutions responsible for the assistance and protection of the returning citizens are the Ministry for Reinsertion and Resettlement of Displaced and Repatriated Persons (MRRDR) and the National Commission for the Rehabilitation of Disaster-affected People (CNRS). Both the Hutus and Tutsis have been battling to gain control over these institutions and over the allocation of funds and contracts for reintegration programs. This strife has created administrative stalling and delays in the response to humanitarian needs. The government estimates that 1.2 million refugees, IDPs and demobilized soldiers will need help between 2004 and 2006. The CNRS, composed of only 21 members who are charged with covering all of Burundi, lacks personnel and sufficient funding to perform its tasks. Much of the focus so far has been on returning refugees, to the detriment of IDPs. Responsibility for IDP protection is also unclear. UNHCR is reluctant to assume any leading role since it is focused on the Burundians repatriated from Tanzania and still struggling to provide them with adequate

protection. Pledges of international aid are not enough and dwindling. These issues coupled with the increased rate of repatriation have the UN and many NGOs concerned that the security of the returning Burundians will be compromised because Burundi lacks the capacity to protect them against the country's still unstable conditions.

HIV/AIDS IN BURUNDI

Burundi, similar to other African nations, has a severe HIV/AIDS problem. The Burundi government states that although the HIV infection prevalence in urban areas has stabilized at 18.6 percent, it is concerned by a significant increase in the level of infection in rural areas. At 1 percent in 1989, HIV prevalence in rural areas was 7.5 percent by 2001. The Burundi minister for HIV/AIDS issues attributed the stabilization in urban areas to a higher literacy rate, better means of communication, and increased acceptance and availability of condoms.

In order to avoid further deterioration of the situation in rural areas, a national action plan targets vulnerable groups by way of an information campaign carried out through peer educators, the promotion of condom use, counseling people living with HIV/AIDS, the reduction of the epidemic's socioeconomic impact on people by promoting various revenue-generating activities, and the social integration and education of orphans.

The government estimates that if HIV transmission continues at its current rate, the average life expectancy will drop to below 40 years in 2010. The difficulty of remedying this epidemic is increased by Burundi's limited medical infrastructure as well as the lack of funding and trained personnel.

ECONOMIC SITUATION

The economy of Burundi is marked by much rigidity that does little to promote faster growth or reduce poverty. The economy is dominated by low-yield subsistence agriculture. The excessive subdivision of farms, the use of low-productivity techniques, and the lack of

diversified production sources have meant inadequate employment creation, in both the structured and the informal sectors. Industry is still in an embryonic stage, and there has been little development of the services sector.

Burundi has been pursuing wide-ranging economic reform programs for nearly two decades. A structural adjustment program was in place from July 1986 until the outbreak of violence and unrest in 1993. The objectives of that program were to stabilize the macroeconomic situation, to restructure the country's productive system in order to enhance economic growth, and to improve living conditions for its people. Over this structural adjustment period (1986-1992), economic growth was positive. Inflation also fell considerably and stabilized at 4.5 percent in 1992.

Unfortunately, as a result of Burundi's civil conflict, the steady deterioration of living conditions has exacerbated the poverty situation in Burundi. The effects of war and the three-year embargo that was imposed on the country from July 1996 to January 1999 have drained the Burundian economy and have weakened its institutional capacity while destroying its basic economic infrastructure.

The Arusha Peace Accord provided an outline for economic improvement, and the government of Burundi has been taking steps accordingly to progress. The government's new approach to poverty reduction reflects its determination to make public policies more effective and to improve the situation of the most disadvantaged groups. It recognizes that its efforts will be more successful if it listens more closely to the various players and beneficiaries of economic life, and involves them in preparing and carrying out policies. Unfortunately, the very lack of infrastructure and progress is hindering the government's efforts to remedy the economic issues.

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