

Africa: Rwanda and Burundi in comparative perspective

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Module description

Rwanda and Burundi. In contrast to their larger neighbours, these two small countries in the Great Lakes region of Africa do not always receive much attention from outsiders. When they do, they are often viewed through the lens of genocide and mass atrocities. Studying Rwanda and Burundi certainly provides us with insights about the use of violence in politics, but the two countries also elucidate a number of other themes in comparative politics, including state formation, identity politics, governance and economic development. In some ways the experiences of Burundi and Rwanda challenge dominant theories of comparative politics and open up new theoretical angles and concepts.

These two countries constitute rich cases for comparative analysis given their many shared characteristics and key differences in their trajectories. Often referred to as “false twins” in the literature, the neighbouring countries are of comparable size and have similar ethnic make-up. Ruling over a densely populated territory, their pre and post-colonial states have had significant infrastructural power reaching deep down into society through densely stratified administrative structures. Rwanda and Burundi were part of the same administrative unit during Belgian colonial rule. Since independence, they both have experienced recurrent violence, often expressed ethnically, that resulted in the civil war in Burundi (1993-2005) and the civil war and genocide in Rwanda (1990-1994). Both countries are currently headed by former rebel parties.

At the same time, Rwanda and Burundi bear significant differences. The salience of pre-colonial, and colonial ethnic identities in the two countries differed significantly. These identities produced different paths to independence that had lasting implications in the post-colonial era. Both states were ethnically dominated by a particular group, yet in an opposite manner. Until the 1990s, the Tutsi minority dominated the state apparatus in Burundi while it was the Hutu majority that dominated in Rwanda. After the war, a symmetrical shift occurred: Rwanda became ruled by a Tutsi-led party and Burundi by a Hutu-led one. Yet, while ethnicity has been a significant factor underpinning political processes, it has not been the only one. Class and regional identities have also played an important role in the history of both countries.

Since the end of conflict, Rwanda and Burundi have also followed markedly different political, social, and economic trajectories. Rwanda has embraced an ambitious developmental agenda underpinned by a high modernist social engineering project while the government in Burundi has not engaged in such a transformative path. In terms of identity politics, the regimes have adopted approaches as well: Burundi has recognised ethnic identities as an integral part of formal powersharing institutions, while the

government of Rwanda has promoted the disappearance of ethnic categories from the public sphere.

This module will provide students with a firm empirical grasp of these countries' trajectory and contemporary politics. It will engage with challenging and timely political questions: How did different understandings of ethnicity influence political competition over-time, and vice versa? How can we explain the resemblance and divergence of state formation process in Rwanda and Burundi? How can we understand the differences between each country's developmental project after the war? To what extent are current governance practices in the two countries related to the ideologies of the former rebels who are now the rulers? What are the lasting effects of political memory?

Supervisions and Seminar

There will be two supervisions for this module. The first question corresponds to the first three lectures, and the second with the last two lectures.

The **two supervision questions** are:

1. What was the role of ethnicity in state formation in Burundi and Rwanda?
2. What explains the differences in Rwanda and Burundi's post-war political and economic governance?

Seminar discussion (see readings at the end of the guide)

How do political memories shape contemporary politics in Burundi and Rwanda?

Readings:

Readings are divided into core and additional readings. Core readings provide the necessary context to the lectures and basic information for the supervision questions. The additional readings provide further information, which you can select depending on your interests.

General background reading (core readings- these are very detailed, but you can skim through them):

René Lemarchand (1996). *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide*. Cambridge University Press (covers Burundi's history from independence until the civil war).

Gérard Prunier (1997). *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide*. London: Hurst & Co. Publishers (mostly about the lead up to the Rwandan genocide).

Additional general readings:

Patricia Daley, *Gender and Genocide in Burundi*. Oxford: James Currey, 2008. (provides a history of gendered violence in Burundi, focusing especially on 1993-2005)

Peter Uvin (2009). *Life After Violence: A People's Story of Burundi*. London: Zed Books

Scott Straus and Lars Waldorf (eds) (2011), *Remaking Rwanda: Statebuilding and Human Rights after Mass Violence*, University of Wisconsin Press (edited collection with a wide variety of views about the politics of post-conflict Rwanda- read the intro pp. 3-21).

Kimonyo, Jean-Paul. 2019 *Transforming Rwanda: Challenges on the Road to Reconstruction*. Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner. (centred on the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)'s efforts to rebuild the state)

Lecture 1: Pre-colonial and colonial structures of political authority

Core readings:

René Lemarchand (1970). *Rwanda and Burundi*. New York: Pall Mall, pp. 13-46

René Lemarchand (1996). *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide*. Cambridge University Press. Chap. 4, pp. 58-75

Mahmood Mamdani (2002). *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press. Chap. 2 and 3

Additional readings:

Newbury, David. 2001. 'Precolonial Burundi and Rwanda: Local Loyalties, Regional Royalties'. *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 34(2): 255-314.

Newbury, Catharine. 1988. *The cohesion of oppression: clientship and ethnicity in Rwanda, 1860-1960*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Newbury, David, et Catharine Newbury. 2000. « Bringing the Peasants Back In: Agrarian Themes in the Construction and Corrosion of Statist Historiography in Rwanda ». *The American Historical Review* 105(3): 832-77.

Reyntjens, Filip. 1987. « Chiefs and Burgomasters in Rwanda ». *The Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law* 19(25-26): 71-97.

Frank Rusagara. (2009) *A History of the Military in Rwanda*. Fountain Publishers.

Chrétien, Jean-Pierre. 2006. *The Great Lakes of Africa: Two Thousand Years of History*. New York, NY: Zone Books.

Des Forges, Alison. 2011. *Defeat Is the Only Bad News: Rwanda under Musinga, 1896–1931*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Jan Vansina (2004). *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda: The Nyiginya Kingdom*. Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press.

Lecture 2: State and nation formation after independence

Core readings:

René Lemarchand (1996). *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide*. Cambridge University Press. Chapters 5 & 6.

Aidan Russell (2015) 'Obedience and Selective Genocide in Burundi', *Africa*, 85(3), 437-456.

Marie-Eve Desrosiers (2014). 'Rethinking Political Rhetoric and Authority during Rwanda's First and Second Republics'. *Africa* 84(2): 199-225.

Prunier, Gérard. (1997). *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide*. London: C. Hurst & Co. Publishers. Chapter 2

Additional readings:

Mamdani, Mahmood. (2002). *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press. Chapter 5 & 6

Mayersen, Deborah. 2015. 'Fraternity in diversity' or 'feudal fanatics'? Representations of ethnicity in Rwandan presidential rhetoric'. *Patterns of Prejudice* 49(3): 249-70.

Newbury, Catharine (1992). 'Rwanda: recent debates over governance and rural development', in G. Hyden & M. Bratton (eds). *Governance and Politics in Africa*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 193-219

Prunier, Gérard. 1998. « The Rwandan Patriotic Front ». In *African Guerrillas*, Christopher S. Clapham (ed.). Oxford: James Currey Publishers, 119-33.

Aidan Russell (2019), *Politics and Violence in Burundi*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (focuses on the 1960s in Burundi)

Aidan Russell (2015) 'Rebel and Rule in Burundi 1972', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 48(1), 73-97.

Lecture 3: Democratisation, identities and mass violence

Core readings:

Straus, Scott. 2008. *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power, and War in Rwanda*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. Chapter 7 & 8.

Helen Hintjens (2001). "When identity becomes a knife: reflecting on the genocide in Rwanda", *Ethnicities*, 1(1), pp. 25-55.

Liisa Malkki (1995). *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory and National Cosmology Among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania*, University of Chicago Press (read ch. 2 on mythico-histories)

Patricia Daley (2006), 'Ethnicity and Political Violence in Africa: The Challenge to the Burundian State', *Political Geography* 25(6), 657-679.

Additional readings:

Peter Uvin (1999) 'Ethnicity and Power in Burundi and Rwanda: Different Paths to Mass Violence'. *Comparative Politics* 31(3): 253-71.

Lemarchand, René. 2009. *The dynamics of violence in central Africa*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. Chapter 9.

Lemarchand, René. 1998. 'Genocide in the Great Lakes: Which Genocide? Whose Genocide?' *African Studies Review* 41(1): 3-16.

Ngaruko, F., et J. D. Nkurunziza. 2000. 'An Economic Interpretation of Conflict in Burundi'. *Journal of African Economies* 9(3): 370-409.

L Ndikumana, (1998) 'Institutional Failure and Ethnic Conflicts in Burundi', *African Studies Review*, 41(1), 29-47.

Patricia Daley, *Gender and Genocide in Burundi*. Oxford: James Currey, 2008.

Prunier, Gérard. 1997. *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide*. London: C. Hurst & Co. Publishers.

Uvin, Peter. 2001. 'Reading the Rwandan Genocide'. *International Studies Review* 3(3): 75-99.

Storey, Andy. "Structural adjustment, state power and genocide: the World Bank and Rwanda." *Review of African Political Economy*, Sept. 2001, Vol. 28, No. 89.

Lee Ann Fujii, "The Power of Local Ties: Popular Participation in the Rwandan Genocide" *Security Studies*, Vol. 17, 2008.

Helen Hintjens and Jos van Oijen, 'Elementary Forms of Collective Denial: The 1994 Rwanda Genocide', *Genocide Studies International*, 13(2), 2019, pp. 146-167.

Lecture 4: Post-conflict governance, political parties, identity

Core readings

Stef Vandeginste, (2014). 'Governing Ethnicity after Genocide: Ethnic Amnesia in Rwanda versus Ethnic Power-Sharing in Burundi'. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 8(2), 263-277.

Yolande Bouka, (2017) 'Burundi: Between War and Negative Peace', in Gilbert Khadiagala (ed.), *War and Peace in Africa's Great Lakes Region* (London: Palgrave Macmillan): 17–31.

Bert Ingelaere, (2014). « What's on a Peasant's Mind? Experiencing RPF State Reach and Overreach in Post-Genocide Rwanda (2000–10) ». *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 8(2): 214-30.

Ntagahoraho Burihabwa and Devon E. A. Curtis (2021). 'Postwar statebuilding in Burundi: Ruling party elites and illiberal peace', *International Affairs*, Vol 97, No. 4, July, pp. 1221-1238.

Additional readings:

René Lemarchand (2007), Consociationalism and Power-Sharing in Africa: Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, *African Affairs*, 106(422), pp. 1-20.

Cheeseman, Nic, Collord, Michaela and Reyntjens, Filip. 2018, 'War and Democracy: The Legacy of Conflict in East Africa', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 56(1): 31–61.

Valeria Alfieri (2016). 'Political parties and citizen political involvement in post-conflict Burundi: between democratic claims and authoritarian tendencies', *Civil Wars* 18(2): 234-53.

Sidney Leclercq (2018). 'Between the Letter and the Spirit: International Statebuilding Subversion Tactics in Burundi'. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 12(2): 159-84.

Van Acker, T., Muhangaje, J. and Magerano, O.-A. (2018), 'Partisan Identity Politics in Post War Burundi', in A. Nyenyezi Bisoka, A. Ansoms and S. Vandeginste (eds), *Conjonctures de l'Afrique centrale 2017* (Paris: L'Harmattan).

Stef Vandeginste (2009), 'Power-sharing, conflict and transition in Burundi: twenty years of trial and error' *Africa Spectrum* 44(3), 63-86.

Wilén, Nina, Birantamije, Gérard. and Ambrosetti, David (2017), 'The Burundian Army's Trajectory to Professionalization and Depoliticization and Back Again', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 12(1): 120–35.

Guðrún Sif Friðriksdóttir (2018) Ex-combatants as social activists: war, peace and ideology in Burundi, *Conflict, Security & Development*, 18:1, 1-16

Katrin Wittig (2016), 'Politics in the Shadow of the Gun: Revisiting the Literature on "Rebel-to Party Transformations" through the Case of Burundi', *Civil Wars*, 18(2): 137–59.

Noel Twagiramungu, Burundi: The Anatomy of Mass Violence Endgames, in Bridget Conley-Zilkic (ed) *How Mass Atrocities End*, Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Willy Nindorera (2012), 'The CNDD-FDD in Burundi: The Path from Armed to Political Struggle', Berghof Transitions Series No. 10 (Berlin: Berghof Foundation).

Rufyikiri, Gervais. 2017. « The Post-wartime Trajectory of CNDD-FDD Party in Burundi: A Facade Transformation of Rebel Movement to Political Party ». *Civil Wars* 19(2): 220-48.

Burihabwa, Ntagahoraho Z., and Devon E. A. Curtis. (2019). "The Limits of Resistance Ideologies? The CNDD-FDD and the Legacies of Governance in Burundi". *Government and Opposition* 54(3): 559-83.

Antoine Kaburahe, *Hutsi: In the Name of us all*, Editions Iwacu 2019. (a personal account)

Chemouni, Benjamin. 2014. 'Explaining the Design of the Rwandan Decentralization: Elite Vulnerability and the Territorial Repartition of Power'. *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 8(2): 246-62.

Reyntjens, Filip. 2013. *Political governance in post-genocide Rwanda*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press., chapter 3

Jowell, Marco. 2014. « Cohesion through Socialization: Liberation, Tradition and Modernity in the Forging of the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) ». *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 8(2): 278-93.

Kimonyo, Jean-Paul. 2019 *Transforming Rwanda: Challenges on the Road to Reconstruction*. Boulder, Co: Lynne Rienner.

Reyntjens, F. 2004. « Rwanda, Ten Years on: From Genocide to Dictatorship ». *African Affairs* 103(411): 177-210.

Thomson, Susan M. 2013. *Whispering truth to power: everyday resistance to reconciliation in postgenocide Rwanda*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Chemouni, Benjamin, et Assumpta Mugiraneza (2019) 'Ideology and interests in the Rwandan Patriotic Front: Singing the struggle in pregenocide Rwanda'. *African Affairs*.

Reyntjens, Filip (2018). 'Understanding Rwandan politics through the longue durée: from the precolonial to the post-genocide era'. *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 12(3), pp. 514-32.

Desrosiers, Marie-Eve, et Susan Thomson. 2011. « Rhetorical Legacies of Leadership: Projections of 'Benevolent Leadership' in Pre- and Post-Genocide Rwanda ». *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 49(3): 429-53.

Purdeková, A., Reyntjens, F. and Wilén, N. (2018), 'Militarisation of Governance after Conflict: Beyond the Rebel-to-Ruler Frame – the Case of Rwanda', *Third World Quarterly*, 39(1): 158–74.

Lecture 5: Post-conflict economic trajectories and international involvement

Core readings

Aymar Bisoka Nyenyezi and Ansoms An (2014) Land grabbing and power relations in Burundi. In: An A and Hilhorst T (eds) *Losing Your Land: Dispossession in the Great Lakes*. Woodbridge: James Currey, pp. 125–140

Theodore Mbazumutima (2021), 'Land Restitution in Postconflict Burundi', *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, 15, pp. 66-85.

Marie Saiget '(De-)Politicising women's collective action: international actors and land inheritance in post-war Burundi.' *Review of African Political Economy* 43(149): 365–381, 2016.

An Ansoms, (2009). 'Re-Engineering Rural Society: The Visions and Ambitions of the Rwandan Elite', *African Affairs* 108(431): 289-309.

David Booth, and F. Golooba-Mutebi (2012). 'Developmental Patrimonialism? The Case of Rwanda'. *African Affairs* 111(444): 379-403.

Additional readings:

Roel Dom and Lionel Roger, 'Debt or Alive: Burundi's Fiscal Response to Economic Sanctions', *International Studies Quarterly*, 64(2), June 2020, 369-379.

Nicaise, Guillaume. 2019. 'Local power dynamics and petty corruption in Burundi'. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 13(4), pp. 698-717.

Rufyikiri, Gervais. 2016. *Grand Corruption in Burundi: a collective action problem which poses major challenges for governance reforms*. Antwerp: University of Antwerp. Working Paper.

Nkurunziza, Janvier (2018). *The origin and persistence of state fragility in Burundi*. London: LSE-Oxford Commission on State Fragility, Growth and Development.
<https://www.theigc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Burundi-report-v2.pdf>

Andrea Purdekova 'Respacing for peace? Resistance to integration and the ontopolitics of rural planning in post-war Burundi.' *Development and Change* 48(3): 534–566, 2017.

L Berckmoes and L White (2014), 'Youth, farming and precarity in rural Burundi' *European Journal of Development Research* 26(2), pp. 190-203.

Nicaise, Guillaume (2020), 'The evolution of petty corruption on Kigali's streets', *Politique Africaine*, 160, 4, October 2020.

Ansoms, An, Esther Marijnen, Giuseppe Cioffo, et Jude Murison. 2017. « Statistics versus livelihoods: questioning Rwanda's pathway out of poverty ». *Review of African Political Economy* 44(151): 47-65.

Ansoms, An. 2018. « The Rwandan Agrarian and Land Sector Modernisation: Confronting Macro Performance with Lived Experiences on the Ground ». *Review of African Political Economy* 45(157): 408-31.

Behuria, Pritish. 2016. « Centralising rents and dispersing power while pursuing development? Exploring the strategic uses of military firms in Rwanda ». *Review of African Political Economy* 43(150): 630-47.

Chemouni, Benjamin. 2018. « The Political Path to Universal Health Coverage: Power, Ideas and Community-Based Health Insurance in Rwanda ». *World Development* 106: 87-98.

Dawson, Neil M. 2018. « Leaving no-one behind? Social inequalities and contrasting development impacts in rural Rwanda ». *Development Studies Research* 5(1): 1-14.

Mann, Laura and Marie Berry. 2016. 'Understanding the Political Motivations That Shape Rwanda's Emergent Developmental State' *New Political Economy* 21(1): 119-44.

Gretchen Baldwin (2019), 'Constructing Identity through Commemoration: Kwibuka and the rise of survivor nationalism in post-conflict Rwanda', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 57(3), 355-375.

Marysse, S, A. Ansoms and D. Cassimon (2007), 'The aid darlings and orphans of the Great Lakes Region of Africa.' *European Journal of Development Research* 19, no. 3. 433-458.

Seminar: How do political memories shape contemporary politics in Burundi and Rwanda?

Please read the following items before the seminar. After you have done the readings, please write two questions or observations that have been sparked by one or more of the readings. Please email these to me (dc403@cam.ac.uk) at least 24 hours before your seminar.

David Mwambari (2019), 'Music and the Politics of the Past: Kizito Mihigo and Music in the Commemoration of the Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda', *Memory Studies*.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698018823233>

Olivia Rutazibwa (2014), 'Studying Agaciro: Moving Beyond Wilsonian Interventionist Knowledge Production on Rwanda', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 8(4), 291-302.

Devon E. A. Curtis (2019), 'What is our Research For? Responsibility, Humility and the Production of Knowledge about Burundi' *Africa Spectrum*, 54(1), pp. 4-21.

Andrea Purdeková (2019), '#StopThisMovie and the Pitfalls of Mass Atrocity Prevention: Framing of Violence and Anticipation of Escalation in Burundi's Crisis (2015-2017)' *Genocide Studies and Prevention*, 13(2), 22-37.