**University of Bath**

**Alternative formats**
If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact:
openaccess@bath.ac.uk

# "Barahunga Amahoro- They are Fleeing Peace!" The Politics of Re-displacement and Entrenchment in Post-War Burundi

Andrea Purdeková
African Studies Centre, Oxford University

**Abstract.** Ahead of the 2015 contested elections, Burundi got embroiled in a vast refugee crisis only a decade after the end of the civil war. Against the official government efforts to depoliticize the crisis, the paper draws on interviews with Burundians across space and time to underscore the fundamentally political character of migration decisions after the war, and argues for the applicability of the social contract theory for a bottom-up conception of political incorporation and citizenship. The evidence suggests that the current wave is no 'repeat' but rather that people are entrenching in displacement against the negative trust capital incurred by the state. People's narratives complicate the very terms of displacement by offering an alternative conception of belonging—through transtemporal and transnational comparisons, they see their movements as amongst a set of 'partial citizenship regimes.' More broadly, the paper hopes to contribute to our understanding of anticipatory movement, re-displacement and entrenchment (as the refusal to move) and, more broadly, people's politico-spatial orientations in post-war space as well as the subversions of this order from below through strategies both physical and discursive.

## Introduction: Beyond the Crisis Frame

In 2015, within the space of mere months, Burundi has seen a fast and massive wave of more than 200,000 people leaving for exile.[1] A country not long ago hailed as a success story of mass repatriation[2] has again entered the headlights as a refugee-producing country. Often the same people, returning less than a decade ago with different degrees of willingness,[3] have set off again, some claiming never to return. In our analysis of this precipitous wave, how do we move beyond a crisis-centric humanitarian perspective to understand the longer-term political dimensions underpinning people's decisions to move or stay in a post-war context?

The quick and certainly dominant explanation for the current exodus narrates it as a response to the 2015 electoral crisis and the insecurity surrounding it. The incumbent President Pierre Nkurunziza has prepared the ground and later successfully run for a third term in office, the legality of which has been bitterly contested, first verbally and later through protest that has gradually turned violent. The government's repressive management of the succession has divided the electorate as well as the political elite and has embroiled Burundi in a state of anxiety, uncertainty and intimidation long before Nkurunziza officially announced his intention to run in April 2015.

---

[1] Most Burundians left before the elections took place in July 2015, amidst intimidation and uncertainty about the future. The main countries of destination include Tanzania, Rwanda and the DRC.

[2] The UNHCR has proclaimed the 2002 mass repatriation of close to a half-million refugees as 'one of the most successful operations on the African continent' (see UNHCR 2008).

[3] See IRRI reports on the different types of pressure faced by the 1990s refugees (IRRI 2009, 2011, 2013).

The crisis perspective is certainly correct at one level but its narrow frame tends to limit our full grasp of post-war mobility. The humanitarian paradigm not only focuses narrowly on the actual wave of displacement, obscuring longer-term trends, but by dissecting and reducing drivers of movement to economic or security 'issues,' it fundamentally depoliticizes displacement, indirectly suggesting a technical set of solutions as resolution. In order to build a more robust explanatory frame, we need to take into account three axes that expand and challenge the dominant narrative: the longer-term structural causes of displacement, the political dimension to grievances underlying movement, and the cross-ethnic nature of the same. By adopting a methodology grounded in perspectives of those actually moving (or refusing to do so), the paper challenges the view of Burundians as simply 'victims' of circumstances and rather shows them as attuned political actors and commentators manouvering a set of challenging circumstances.

First, the dominant crisis frame obscures longer-term structural dynamics underpinning people's (dis)placement choices. Much before 2015, patterns of entrenchment – the refusal to move out of former IDP sites, and the narratives and practices of re-displacement[4] – the returnees' move back to exile, have been carefully questioning the stability of return, the nature of post-war transition and the transformative potential of the new political dispensation. The cyclicality of displacement in Burundi requires us to establish a theoretical framework that bridges distinct migration waves, looking closely at what happens in the space in-between. The overt focus on crises obscures the critical importance of the post-war[5] status quo that preceded it.

After the war, the government has promoted an integrationist agenda, asking for peaceful inter-ethnic coexistence on the hills, actively encouraging people to return both from refugee camps and IDP settlements. What explains that Burundians, much before the current crisis, were refusing to move or aspiring to leave? Why have they been resisting and undermining government's push for 'integration' during a 'post-war' era? What explains the upending of the return paradigm? And how does post-war turn to pre-war? The unique case of Burundi has much to tell us about the understudied topics of anticipatory movement, re-displacement dynamics, and people's spatial orientations in new (altered) political dispensations.

Second, and importantly, against the official government efforts to depoliticize the crisis, people's narratives show that political reasons lie at the core of their decisions to move. Specifically, people point to the nature of state-citizen relations and the form of the new social contract. This is not to suggest that

---

[4] The term is different from 'recycling.' The latter has been used to refer to returnees' or refugees' strategic initiatives to maximize access to humanitarian aid, often through temporary exit, re-entry and repeated registration.

[5] The paper purposefully uses the term 'post-war' instead of 'post-conflict.' The latter term is often carelessly applied by outside actors or strategically used by national ones. It tends to conflate negative and positive peace, the end of hostilities and war with resolution of grievances and long-term stability. The paper prefers to use the more neutral term 'post-war' to reflect the surface-level nature of peace and people's own perceptions of continued insecurity after war.

'objective' conditions, principally security -- both physical and livelihoods security— do not play a part in their decisions. There is now a well-established economic literature questioning the sustainability of return for both refugees and IDPs in Burundi (see especially Fransen 2015; Verwimp and Munoz Mora 2012; Verwimp and Bundervoet 2009) as these groups face lower welfare levels than non-displacees (due to food insecurity, access to land and asset ownership) and hence are more likely to re-displace. The recent trends indeed suggest these factors determine who is more likely to move.[6]

Nonetheless, and crucially, interviewees rarely stay with 'objective' explanations but fundamentally politicize these—they narrate them as political at their core. Staying with economic or security explanations is thus limiting – it entrenches the humanitarian paradigm, prescribing technical solutions such as more robust economic reintegration or re-establishment of surface-level physical security to problems that cut deeper to the nature of the pot-war political dispensation and state-society relations. In this respect, the narratives collected as a part of this study offer a unique glance from below at how people narrate the new 'political covenant' and the importance of the political reading of their situation. What sort of state-citizen bond has been re-established in post-war Burundi? The picture that emerges is one of citizenship defined by broken political promises, unclear state motives, the lack of vertical accountability,[7] and resulting in feelings of distrust and deception.

Third, and finally, the study shows that the core grievances cut across ethnicity and hence diverse migration histories. The study uniquely integrates 'return' on the inside of the state (from IDP settlements, Tutsi-dominated) with return from exile (from Hutu-dominated refugee camps) to show that, at their core, they represent the same political phenomenon. The populations in these two spaces differ as they were on the opposite sides of the conflict and represent different ethnic groups, and hence the findings of similar grievances with regards to the new political dispensation are that much more revealing.

Ethnicity has been a 'central organizing principle' of the Burundi state (Daley 2006), but as Daley has already warned in her analysis of the civil war, the frame can fundamentally limit our understanding of the grievances and dynamics that drive violence and peace in the country. Though ethnicity remains an important lens through which to read Burundi's post-colonial past of political exclusion and violence, the evidence here shows that to understand the politics of post-war transition, the key fissures in the post-war political dispensation, and by extension the recent crisis and mass outflow of people (now cross-ethnic, unlike

---

[6] In Tanzanian refugee camps, 60-80% of the 2015 refugees have been displaced in the country before.

[7] In a different post-war setting of Sierra Leone, Pui-hang Wong (2014) found that the way to rebuild low political trust is through 'improved public services, clean administration, and responsive governance.' While these certainly coincide with my findings in Burundi, the author does not theorize the relational aspects of citizenship and does not delve deep enough into meanings and anatomy of distrust itself that cannot be reduced to technocratic aspects of governance. Large-scale studies often reduce political trust to 'government capability' and 'poor institutional performance' (Hutchison and Johnson 2011). As I will argue, this is a narrow view.

in the past), we have to move beyond the dominant ethnic frame and focus on people's own experience of power and the state.

Two core finding emerge from a more longer-term, structural, and political analysis outlined above. First, what we are facing now is not simply another 'wave' but instead that people are 'entrenching' in displacement. Trust in the status quo has been undermined and political promises are less likely to be heeded than before. A temporary return to stability in the country will hence not be sufficient to entice people to return. People's narratives and practices demonstrate unequivocally that acceptable terms of 'political integration' matter first and foremost, and before physical and social integration can work.

Second, Burundians who re-displace across borders or stubbornly entrench themselves in unofficial settlements are not orientating and moving among home and exile but rather a set of partial citizenships. The study hence urges us to conceptualize social trust and viable social contracts transnationally and transtemporally. As shown, this is precisely how diverse Burundians construct their political indictments of the state and strategize ex-/in-corporation in different socio-political spaces.

**Methodology: Sources and Sites**

The method underlying this paper is qualitative and ethnographic,[8] and combines a number of data-gathering techniques. In addition to 110 semi-structured interviews,[9] the paper draws on two focus groups and observation of sites and settlements including peace villages (also known as Rural Integrated Villages or VRIs),[10] former IDP sites and dispersed settlements in rural Burundi, mainly the areas in Southern Burundi (Rumonge, Makamba and Nyanza Lac) and Central Burundi (Gitega), and to a lesser extent Bujumbura-rural and Northern Burundi (Bubanza).

The study purposefully focused on a variety of settlement types to capture a potential variation in attitudes, preferences and key issues vis-à-vis the post-war political dispensation that structure decisions to go or, conversely, stay. Most of the remaining IDP sites are located in the central and northern regions and it is here where interviews took place. Specifically, data was gathered in three IDP sites of Bugendana, Mwaro Ngundu and Ryanonyi. Together with my research assistant, we have also traced returned IDPs from the Tankoma IDP site in

---

[8] This should be a useful addition to recent cross-country and quantitative studies on political trust in Africa and in conflict-affected countries (e.g. Hutchison and Johnson 2011; DeJuan and Pierskalla 2014)

[9] The participants for the research were chosen in two ways: random selection and snowball sampling.

[10] The nomenclature here has been complex and changing (see Fransen and Kuschminder 2014; Falisse and Nyionkuru 2015). At least four phases of 'peace villages' can be identified in Burundi after the war (see Falisse and Nyionkuru 2015; and author 2016). The first two waves targeted returnees specifically, the latter two became more expansive villagisation projects targeting all rural 'dispersed population' with the aim of triggering development through 'integrated' settlement (hence the term VRIs). All of these villages are nonetheless known as 'peace villages' because they promote inter-ethnic mixing.

Gitega, both those resettled at the outskirts of the city and those who returned back to their hills of origin. Specifically, we have visited hill Murirwe, about an hour drive outside the city of Gitega.

Most returning refugees, on the other hand, have settled in the southern provinces of Bururi and Makamba and it is here where we have conducted most of our interviews. We have visited three peace villages around Rumonge including Mutambara, Busebwa and Buzimba. In Makamba, we have visited two hills to interview Burundians from both sides of the land-sharing arrangement (returnees and occupants or 'residents'). In addition to these sites, we have also visited and interviewed people in two peace villages in the northern region of Bubanza. Finally, we have done extensive interviews in a rural dispersed setting of commune Gishuvi in Bujumbura rural, interviewing people across ethnicities and with different histories of displacement.

The interviews were collected in July-August 2013 and again in April 2015,[11] hence both well before the current crisis and also just at its inception, allowing for a much longer-term perspective, tracing the roots of problems much before they swelled into a wave drawing international attention.  Most interviews in rural areas have been conducted in the local language Kirundi and translated by a Burundian research assistant.[12] The longer-term scope of the project allowed repeated visits to a number of sites and follow-up interviews with some of the key participants. The data was analyzed using qualitative content analysis, combining inductive identification and formulation of core themes with their deductive application.

The advantage of the design is also, paradoxically, the accidental (i.e. fundamentally inductive) way in which the core themes of the paper assumed their key importance. Originally, the intention was to elicit returnees' versus stayees' perspectives and preferences with regards to transitional justice. But soon it became apparent that what people most wanted to discuss were the spaces they found themselves in, their viability or unviability. They were constantly staking out claims vis-à-vis these spaces, narrating their unwillingness to move or conversely their aspirations to leave, all the while tying these 'spatial orientations' to important concepts of promise, trust and accountability. This twinning was fortuitous and proved extremely useful for the task of 'bottom-up' theorizing of both displacement and its cessation as a fundamentally political phenomenon.

---

[11] April 2015 was a sensitive period, but there are two factors that helped us prevent bias in responses: the fact that we have visited a number of sites and people previously, and that we have not asked questions about elections or any explicit questions on partisan politics.
[12] The RA was a lecturer at the University of Burundi and their gender and ethnic background did not seem to affect the willingness of people (Hutu or Tutsi) to participate in the study, and/or to open up on the subject under study. This was most likely due to the fact that the topics and key issues studied now reach beyond ethnicity. However, ethnicity can at times play an important role. In one site in Makamba, where conflicts over land map onto the ethnic divide, we had initial difficulties in interviewing one side to the land conflict. We had to carefully and persistently work to address and dispel suspicions about our motives. After dialogue with community members, we have succeeded in drawing participants from both sides of the conflict.

**Displacement Frames: From Separation to Integration in Burundi?**

Burundi's post-independence history has been one of cycles of displacement, return, and re-displacement, whether the result of targeted violence during the 1972 genocide, generalized insecurity compounded by targeted killings during the 1993-2003 civil war or direct state action wielding displacement as a 'protective measure' doubling as counter-insurgency. Since the first refugee waves in the 1960s, displacement took on an ethnic character. Most of those targeted in repressive violence prior to the civil war were Hutu and these formed the vast majority of the 574,000[13] refugees streaming across the borders. The Hutu were fleeing an 'ethnocracy' (Lemarchand 1996; 1998; 2002), a rule by a minority that was ready to brutally repress their attempts at political inclusion.

In the early 1990s, the mass killing of the minority Tutsi and the ensuing repression of the Hutu resulted in a civil war. This further complicated displacement dynamics as now both Hutu and Tutsi fled their homes, but the ethnic profiling of settlement persisted. Hutu continued to stream across the border, mainly to Tanzania. There was now the new and vast phenomenon of internal displacement (about 800,000 Burundians became IDPs). But even here ethnic separation was visible and was directly instituted by the state. The Tutsi tended to stay within the country in displacement camps close to military positions and urban centers; the main aim was protection. In contrast, the state-enforced movement of Hutu into regroupment camps acted as a form of counter-insurgency (Vorrath 2009, Ndikumana 2000, Stamnes and Jones 2000). Between 1996 and 2000, over 600,000 Hutu were regrouped in this manner. Importantly, it was only the Tutsi who were labeled as IDPs by the Tutsi-dominated regime prior to the institution of the 2003 interim government. The label created a politics of distribution—as 'IDPs', the Tutsi were entitled to relief from the international humanitarian organizations while the Hutu were denied such aid. After the war, when the dominant ethnic position of the state shifted, aid 'tapered off' (IDMC 2011:5) and the Tutsi IDPs became vulnerable.

The organizing frames of displacement have changed over time in a significant way. Whereas prior to the end of the war in 2003,[14] displacement generated ethnic separation, after the war the government has explicitly promoted ethnic integration, willing to deploy various inducements, pressures, and outright force to enact it. The government has encouraged returns from exile and IDPs camps, created 'peace village' (*ibigwati vy'amahoro*) projects revolving around the idea of 'interethnic mixing' and encouraged 'land sharing' (*isaranganywa ry'amasambu*) among occupants and returnees.[15] The comprehensive repatriation of Burundian refugees started in 2001 under Protocol IV of the

---

[13] This is a figure at the height of the crisis in 2002 (see UNHCR 2004).

[14] The 'end' of the war in Burundi has fuzzy borders. Even after the 2005 elections and adoption of a new power-sharing constitution, a low-intensity violence continued until 2009 when the remaining group FNL agreed to lay down arms and officially became a political party.

[15] It is important to note that land sharing occurred not only among Tutsi and Hutu families, but also between Hutu and Hutu.

Arusha Peace Agreement, and in the coming years half a million Burundians returned home.

The undisputable significance of this change from separation to integration should however be tempered by two considerations. First, the 'ethnic frame' that has dominated population resettlements in both eras obscures other sources of tension. Second, both separation and integration have involved a variety of direct and indirect pressures. Finally, despite the turn to integration as an organizing principle post-war, we have been witnessing both explicit and implicit subversions to the agenda, evidenced both in retrenchment in former IDP sites and repeated re-displacement to exile.

There is very little academic literature available exploring re-displacement and entrenchment. The hard data is similarly patchy. Re-displacement as a topic does not lend itself to an easy quantification due to the often clandestine and smaller-scale nature of post-war outmigration that has only recently turned into a visible wave. But we do know that most of those leaving to Tanzania in 2015 and before have been refugees there before. The WFP estimates that out of all Burundians that fled to Tanzania in 2015, 60-80% have been re-displaced. But even prior to the current crisis, my interviews suggest that many returnees, especially in so-called 'peace villages' had family members who went back to Tanzania, or were planning or merely aspiring to leave. This is widely corroborated by evidence gathered by Rema Ministries (2012), Fallisse and Nyionkuru (2015), Fransen and Kuschminder (2012), among others.

The lack of *academic* analysis[16] on entrenchment of people in former IDP sites is more puzzling. The sites are multiple, visible, and easily reachable. The numbers are also more readily available, and are quite telling. As expected, immediately after the war, we see a sharp reduction in the number of IDPs in Burundi. This has to do with two dynamics— the dismantling of the Hutu regroupment camps in 2000, which brought the figure down substantially, and the improvements in the security situation in 2003 coupled with the decrease in international aid to the Tutsi settlements.[17] After this time, most remaining IDPs were Tutsi and returns leveled off. For almost a decade now, the overall number of IDPs has remained almost unchanged, despite the various levels of pressure expended by the government to disperse and integrate the IDPs. As of 2015, there were still 120 sites dispersed across Burundi, mostly mono-ethnic, and housing approximately 80,000 people.

---

[16] The available sources of information are limited almost exclusively to the periodic IDMC reports and some brief government documents. Even IDMC (2008) admitted there is 'little information on their [IDP] situation, their needs and aspirations.' The most informative and recent briefing (still standing at no more than 7 pages) is the IDMC report from 2011 (August 18), which outlines some of the key reasons for IDPs' refusal to return. Overall, while the reports discuss various aspects of life in the settlements, there is no in-depth analysis of fears or aspirations, the pressures to clear the sites, and no integrative and political analysis of the IDP situation.

[17] The latter was also coupled with inducements from the government such as reintegration assistance. This came out from my 2013 interviews with former inhabitants of the Tankoma IDP site in Gitega.

Why do we witness re-displacement and entrenchment of the sorts just described? And how do we best conceptualize this sort of mobility (or its refusal against the pressure to do so) after war's end? What can it reveal about integration, stability and viability of the post-war space more broadly? These entrenchments and re-displacements certainly put a dent in the story of 'one of the most successful [resettlement] operations on the African continent' (RRI:2). A different framework for measuring success is clearly needed, and one that delves into political dynamics. In their narratives, people do not simply stay with 'objective' conditions (land pressure, hunger, insecurity) but directly politicize these as well as their resulting mobility decisions. The section that follows will briefly outline the 'social contract' approach taken here and will argue for its interpretive relevance beyond the Burundi case.

## Conceptual Framework

The current section builds the case for a micro-political approach to the study of post-war movement, specifically elaborating its social contract 'from below' framework. In the migration literature, the post-war space is typically read through the trope of return. Though criticized and increasingly imbued with a political dimension[18] (see Long 2008 and 2013; Daley 2013b; Vorrath 2008; Bradley 2014a & 2014b), the lens of return nonetheless still remains limiting for the purposes of the current analysis. First, the analytical frame of return still tends to revolve around distinct migration waves, limiting its ability to predict and explain over time. More broadly, it does not seek to *theorize* stability of return and the phenomenon of re-displacement. Second, the return trope foregrounds refugee experiences and does not integrate these with internal displacements and relocations. In countries such as Burundi, this bears the risk of focusing on one side of the conflict, a single ethnic group, obscuring the fact that the observed experiences and grievances might be more broadly shared. Finally, despite existing critiques, return's kinetic construction underlies restoration and equilibration, rather than restructuring and incorporation into a new set of relations.

To begin with, the attempt here is to construct a more expansive notion of post-war mobility that return allows for, and one derived from the perspective of the social actor herself. The approach highlights orientations in space, mobility aspirations, decisions and behavior and how these interlace with the reading of political incorporation after the war. The attempt at expansion is in part inspired by the anthropological work of Stephen Lubkeman who (2008) urged us to extend our notion of wartime displacement to 'involuntary immobility.' My aim in turn is to expand our understanding of *post-war* mobility to active entrenchment. While Lubkeman has studied two 'counter-intuitive' phenomena related to war – i) that rather than 'forcing people out', war might immobilize people otherwise engaging in migration, and ii) that war might result in 'socially-

---

[18] The notion of the refugee 'cycle' (and return as an end to that cycle, a restoration of a status quo ante) has now been extensively criticized. The one-way kinetics implied in the term has been questioned. Return has been also read ever more expansively as reaching beyond humanitarian and socio-economic needs, encompassing political issues of restitution, transitional justice and reconstruction of a more inclusive polity.

fortuitous migration,' the present paper turns the lens to the post-war context and its own counter-intuitions—to active staying put despite pressure to disperse, and to actively planned or practiced re-displacement. Both forms significantly blurry the lines between power and powerlessness and urge us to question whether what we witness is 'entrenchment in displacement' or rather active placement amongst 'fragments of citizenship,' a set of partial regimes.

In line with this more expansive reading, we need conceptual tools that unpick the transformational dynamics of a post-war polity. Rather than through the trope of return, the post-war space is more productively re-imagined as a space of encounter, highlighting the process of 'coming together' not only physically and socially but also as a political community. The 2000 Arusha Peace Accord represented a new political settlement and called for the adoption of a new form of government. The ethnic power-sharing formula aimed to re-distribute power more equally, seeking explicitly to redress past exclusions and to assure greater political incorporation of all segments of the society. How do then people narrate the new political dispensation? Has 'political incorporation' succeeded and has the social contract been transformed as a result? The ostentatious socio-spatial rearrangements pursued by the Burundian government in the name of integration and coexistence will be put side by side (and will shown to be in tension) with the silenced dynamics of political incorporation when seen beyond the ethnic lens.

This conceptual approach extends some of the nascent debates surrounding the politics of return. The existing literature (see Daley 2013a, Bradley 2014a and Long 2008) focuses on the issues of refugee agency in return and returnees as political actors.[19] The current paper moves these key debates a step further. Rather than studying the act of return, it focuses on the 'new citizens' and their experiences with incorporation into the post-war political dispensation. The paper thus tries to theorize another directionality altogether – the factors that underlie i) the switch from staying to going and ii) the power and politics defining the unwillingness to return (as two sides of the same phenomenon). The key question then becomes: How can we theorize the stability or continued attractiveness of return?

The narratives I gathered suggest that we can do this by returning to social contract theory. Not the grand and abstract theories of the Lockean or Hobbesian kind, but rather a more grounded, ethnographic, micro-political approach. This way of approaching reconstructions of citizenship diverts from the dominant discussions in the African context on politics of belonging or 'diversity politics' (Daley 2013) and the associated issues of exclusion and autochtony (see Geschiere 2009; Geschiere and Nyamjoh 2000; Manby 2009; Dorman, Hammett and Nugent 2007). The focus instead lies on the challenges and politics of

---

[19] Daley (2013a) has called for 'greater emphasis on political agency within refugee and IDP communities' in repatriation. Long (2008) has similarly focused on the actual dynamic of return, negotiations over its terms, and what she calls the contours of 'emplacement.' Bradley (2014a) invited us to reconsider Arendtian frames of refugee powerlessness by focusing squarely on refugee as a 'political actor bearing claims for the renegotiation of her relationship with her state' (103).

entitlements – the promises on key provisions that bind society and state together. Hence when I speak of gradated or partial citizenship regimes, it is not with reference to a priori social exclusions, but rather partial or abrogated social contracts. In other words, the issue is not with delineations of 'non-citizens' but rather with the terms and nature of socio-political inclusion. Though the two aspects are interconnected, a key argument here is that while politics of belonging was a salient theme before the end of the war and drove the conflict in Burundi, today the social contract theory better captures the new state-society dynamics.

Scholars in the political philosophy tradition such as Andrew Shacknove (1985) have tried to introduce the social contract lens in their conceptualization refugeeness as such. For Shacknove, it is the state's inability to secure and protect citizens' basic needs (whether due to ferocity or frailty)— the effective severance of the state-citizen bond— that lies at the root of refugeehood (or IDP-hood). By extension, only an effective reconstruction of such a bond would spell the cessation of refugeehood (or IDP-hood). In a post-war setting then, we must inquire whether and how has this bond been re-established. This is a useful framework, albeit still very abstract framework. Our questions need to be more pointed: What has been the nature of the post-war political transformation in Burundi and how do people themselves narrate it? And is their conception of the social contract exclusively about goods, givens, deliverables or also 'the immaterial' (DeJuan and Pierskalla 2014) – the intangible political goods that tie the political community together or apart such as trust and validity of promises? How do we concretize?

First, we can ground our analysis of the experience of 'new citizenship' in the post-war political order by taking a very specific political covenant as our point of departure, a covenant meant to represent political rupture and transformation in a condensed form— the 2000 Arusha Peace Accord— and consider the ways in which people on the ground deploy it and relate to it. The peace accord can be seen as a complex political promise.[20] While peace accords and political trust are almost exclusively glanced from the perspectives of the parties invited to (or excluded from) the table, here we bring into consideration the perspectives of the vast majority of population directly affected by the new dispensation. Without any prompting, people across Burundi return to promises made under Arusha directly or indirectly. The written coverage of the current crisis refers to 'breaking the spirit of Arusha' but revolves almost exclusively around the issue of (il)legality of the third Presidential term. Burundians however see the covenant more holistically, and suggest it has been broken on a number of levels.

Second, taking cue from people's narratives, fears, anxieties and aspirations tied to staying and going, the paper approaches citizenship as a relation. Macklin (2007) usefully urges us to see citizenship in a less rigid form, suggesting that it might be 'better though if in term of a container that is seldom empty [statelessness] or full' (337). The gradated approach is indeed key to

---

[20] It addresses past political exclusion by instituting a detailed power-sharing model along ethnic lines (Reyntjens 2015, Vandeginste 2014, Daley 2013a). It also promises restitution of lands, a transitional justice mechanism to deal with past injustice, and more.

understanding people's mobility choices but fundamentally, citizenship is most productively understood as a relation. The Burundians I spoke with contest much beyond rites of succession, institutions (or lack thereof), even specific articles or specific issues such as land or security. They are consumed with relations of power that underlie and explain why these issues were not delivered on in the first place. Hence, it is argued, the 'new' citizenship is best explored as a relation belabored and imagined by people using political notions of trust, promise and accountability.

Finally, the paper introduces agency under the frame of 'ontopolitics' – the contested politics of placement and displacement after the war. Ontopolitics is the politics of space and re-ordering, the struggles over the power to posit order, name its constituent parts, their nature and relations. The paper will demonstrate how people –through the spatial orientations, the emotions, decisions and resistances related to staying and going – question official discourses of transition, coexistence and 'settling,' and more profoundly, how they invert official narratives of citizenship, statelessness, exile and home to provide a critical reading of the political status quo.


**States of Deception: The Politics of Promise**

The paradoxes of both re-displacement and entrenchment in Burundi tie in profundity to political trust, to uncertainty about state motives, unclear intentions, intimations that care can double as neglect or even direct harm and that inability merely covers up unwillingness. For the returnees, the relation of (dis)trust to the post-war state was formed already in exile. High-level government functionaries were touring the refugee camps, persuading refugees to return by outlining the terms of the new political dispensation encapsulated in the Arusha Peace Agreement. Returnees revisit this moment in their narratives when the new social contract was outlined to them in the camps. They evoke its emotional power, and the detail of their accounts suggests its singular importance. The head of the Buzimba peace village gave a particularly vivid account:

> 'In sum, there was a campaign for us to come back, the first person to come [from Burundi in 2007] was the Burundian Minister [Immacule Nahayo], it was the first time we saw an official from Burundi, we couldn't wait to see her, and then this day arrived…everybody was there, even small children were there, you could not find a place to stand…
>
> *Tugiramahoro*! [peace be with us!]- we greeted each other…She said, my gift to you, I will be speaking, the mouth is mine, but the message comes from the Burundian government. It is time you go back to your home…the fire you heard, it is gone…you were told Burundi is burning, now the fire is over….You should be assured what I am saying is true.

> There were many questions, some would cry while asking
> questions, it was a mix of joy and anger...It is first time we heard
> such words, but we were skeptical...

The refugees proceeded to question the 'honorable' about guarantees of security, land restitution, access to education among others, and in each case the *nyakubahwa* made promises on behalf of the government. Many return to this moment because they feel the new relation thence established was grounded on deception. If the experience was a powerful one, so was the disappointment. The promises made in exile were not kept –the contract as outlined was not honored.

Returnees repeatedly highlight broken promises, deception and distrust that grew out of this experience. They often invoke the failure to keep true to the letter of Arusha promising to recover their ancestral lands. Instead of restitution, most of the half million returnees had to strike land-sharing agreements with the occupants. Those who could not trace their lands, found themselves in 'unviable' spaces – so called 'peace villages' – artificial, concentrated settlements constructed with the help of humanitarian actors and purposefully mixing all three ethnicities (hence the label 'peace' village).

The villages have been criticized for their inability to sustain livelihoods on the meager plots, for their 'reverse' development logic, and their fostering of tension and conflict rather than peace (see Fallisse and Nyonkuru 2015, Kuschminder 2012). But importantly, these challenges are explained by people in starkly political terms, their narratives repeatedly revolving around trust and deception: 'When we came, we realized they were not *sincere*', suggests an elderly returnee in Mutambara peace village. 'We were *cheated*, *lied to* and really if we knew for sure [what was going to happen] we would not have repatriated' (Rema 2012: 43). 'We believed the government and now we are *disappointed*' suggested another young returnee. Another explained that the trust has been lost and 'we no longer *believe*.'

Returnees in peace villages and in land-sharing agreements highlight squarely that the roots of their problems do not lie in lack of state resources but rather 'lack of political will.' The attitude of *birashoboka bidashoboka* (saying it is possible when it is not possible), political corruption, the intractability of conflicts and tensions in the 'new' post-war spaces such as the struggles over double occupancy in peace villages, the lack of progress in land restitution and the stalling and compromised transitional justice program are not symptoms of political apathy and state absence but rather active non-performance and political implication.

Mutambara peace village was constructed on a previously inhabited land, causing a tense situation where donor-sponsored houses and plots for returnees were 'occupied' by previous residents squatting there in resistance. Commenting on the situation, a woman explained that the blame ultimately lies with the government, which is 'not addressing the problem it caused itself.'

If the returnees claim they were 'deceived', the IDPs explain they actively refuse to be deceived[21] by refusing to accept invitations or succumb to pressures to return to their hills of origin. Narratives of trust are key in the IDP sites as well. In the past years, populations at sites including Bugendana, Mwaro-Ngundu, Ryanyoni, Mutaho, Kibimba or Ruhororo have faced different levels of pressure to disperse. Since most inhabitants strongly believe their security on the hills cannot be guaranteed,[22] they question the sincerity of government's motives. The uncertainty regarding both government motives and IDPs' own futures gives rise to palpable anxiety and a variety of strategies of entrenchment, from physical (blockage of roads to prevent eviction orders being implemented, such as in Ryanyoni) to discursive (narrating the sites as forms of acceptable settlement, such as in Mwaro-Ngundu and most other IDP sites I visited).

Bugendana is a *site* close to the central city of Gitega and dates back to the time of the civil war. The vast majority of its inhabitants are Tutsi who fled the 1993 massacres, with some Hutu later settling on the site to do business or as a result of marriage. Similar to other IDP sites that I visited, the inhabitants insisted on staying put— they felt comfortable visiting their fields and hills during the day, but did not contemplate ever moving back to live where they came from. Bugendana nonetheless was unique because a massacre happened on the site itself in 1996 perpetrated by the then-rebels CNDD-FDD and today's ruling party. The memorial and cemetery for the 670 victims solidified the 'presence' of a very traumatic past and intensified the anxiety about leaving.

The past of atrocity also gave a very political character to people's reading of their situation. In 2013 when I first visited, the inhabitants of Bugendana were consumed with the news that their site was to be cleared to give way to a new airport. Few believed the official reasons given to them revolving around development and social integration. They suspected and shuffled pieces of evidence for more sinister political plans, from political constituency building and economic profit, to clearing an unwelcome site of memory, to much more extreme fears of being purposefully pushed out to face death in their hills of origin. 'It is just a political project, to take us out of here' a young girl, a supervisor at the local secondary school told me. 'They should stop threatening us' another man proposed, 'it is *politike*, just a political plan. They are invoking it [the airport] as a pretext. Their aim is to kill us one by one.'

The stories of double motives, insincerity, even harm under the pretext of care were repeated again and again. The final truth about motive was almost

---

[21] In popular imagination, the link between power and deception (or secrecy and 'hiding' one's true intentions) has a long pedigree (see Turner 2004, 2005). It also connects to historic ethnic stereotypes of Tutsi (historically the rulers) as duplicitous and cunning, and Hutu as gullible, innocent and obedient (for recent critiques of 'innocence' see Turner 2010 and for critique of the 'obedience' trope see e.g. Russell 2015). The analysis of distrust in this paper- the Hutu as deceived and Tutsi as refusing to be deceived – could be seen as indirectly rendering support to the above stereotypes. But this is not quite the case—in both settings, Tutsi and Hutu are not only judging 'Hutu power', they are claiming to 'see' the political dynamics for what they really are, and are using these narratives to act, dispelling notions of passivity.

[22] This came out powerfully and repeatedly from my interviews.

secondary to the powerful transcript that emerged of anxiety, suspicion, even fear, the categorical refusal to leave the site, the lack of belief in and even resistance to the official integration narrative underpinning dispersal and return. With lack of security guarantees, no prosecution and justice for victims, 'reintegration' was not an option to them. In 2015 when I returned to Bugendana, the site and its inhabitants were still there, though the rumors persisted and the status of the site was no less precarious.

Importantly, though Bugendana's story was unique, the fears and anxieties surrounding return and the pressures to disperse were not, they were the norm. The narratives were repeated at Mwaro-Ngundu and again at Ryanyoni—two other sites that I visited. Ryanyoni in fact mounted resistance in 2012, with people physically blocking roads to prevent the entry of police and administration ready to enact eviction. Security was key in explaining entrenchment, but was not the sole dynamic at play. After almost two decades, the sites have also become 'homes' to their inhabitants, places that fostered families and new businesses and became communities of comfort to the victims. In some cases, such as Ruhororo in the North, one of the largest sites with an estimated population between 8 and 10 thousand people, lying right in the midst of the ruling party's political stronghold, entrenchment was further consolidated through deep politicization of the site, its representation as a compact voting block for the Tutsi opposition, the incrimination of the inhabitants (often collectively labeled as 'collabos', collaborators of the former regime), and through a set of violent clashes between the IDPs and surrounding communities in 2012 and 2013.

It is clear that a complex tangle of dynamics has produced the stand-off witnessed across these sites. But at the root of the complex stories was always a clearly perceived and narrated break in the social contract— the insecurity resulting from a complete eschewal of any official mechanism to deal with the long past of atrocity on both sides of the ethnic spectrum.

Finally, we need to note that if Tutsi IDPs were entrenching and Hutu returnees leaving or aspiring to leave, what we witness here is not quite an oppositional dynamic. Instead, the same type of political phenomenon informs the two sets of choices: Political trust has been undermined on both sides, either because of promises broken, or because of the reluctance to be 'deceived,' speaking of a profound distrust, sense of duplicity, and a state unwilling to protect its population. The fundamental need for provision of basic security has not been met. Burundians' own narratives paint a picture of a patchy and partial reconstruction of the social contract after the war.

**Comparing Sovereigns: Transnational and Transtemporal Accounting**

Through narratives of broken political promises and resulting insecurities, the returnees and IDPs *indirectly* paint the 'post-war space' as less viable than spaces of 'displacement' (actual or planned), which results in the paradoxical consolidation of separation, physical, social, or both. But many Burundians also engaged in much more direct evaluations of 'viability' of the new status quo by

drawing explicit comparisons across borders and time. They engaged in an exercise of 'comparing sovereigns,' in a truly transnational and transtemporal political accounting. In people's narratives, the notion of 'viability' of the post-war space again bore direct connection to the social contract, and the issue of 'deceptiveness' re-emerged in mediating mobility decisions and aspirations.

Many returnees, especially those living in peace villages, claimed that the quasi-sovereignty of the Tanzanian refugee camps provided a more secure livelihood than the unviable post-war space they found themselves in, both before the crisis and at its inception. '*Twabaho neza*—we lived well,' people would reminisce. 'We were living a Western lifestyle.' The 1970s refugees especially received a 'lot of hectars' of land to cultivate on in Tanzania, they had enough food, access to healthcare and material aid. In contrast, the small plots in the Burundian peace villages could not sustain the families there. As a result, there was a steady stream of re-emigrants crossing back to Tanzania. 'All the youth, they are going back,' a man in Busebwa told me in 2013. 'Beeenshi- so many are returning!,' a widow in Mutambara exclaimed to put emphasis on her statement, 'Men are selling these houses to go back, you cannot just live by looking at the house, you cannot eat the house.' The stories of actual or planned, or wished-for but unlikely, out-migration were frequent across peace villages and beyond.

But again, it was not only returnees who engaged in this sort of accountancy. The IDPs deployed their own forms of comparison, pointing to the past to entrench themselves in displacement. But to them the very term 'displacement' was contentious. Part of the struggle was the manner in which these settlements should be characterized in the first place. If returnees in peace villages argued their spaces were unviable, in their bid to stay put the IDPs on the contrary struggled to redefine their sites as acceptable and viable settlements, in contrast to the officially promoted spaces of 'return' – hills of origin (insecure) or new villagisation sites[23] (prohibitively expensive). The sites' inhabitants often played with governments own official ideals of inter-ethnic habitation ('All Burundians should live together'), its push to create integrated and concentrated settlement through widespread villagization. They likened their sites to peace villages (*bigwati y'amahoro*) by claiming they were already mixing or welcomed people of all backgrounds to move to the site.

The IDPs were thus politically manouvering in reflexive space. Within this discursive play, they often resorted to a tactic of 'comparing sovereigns,' but this time across history rather than space. They were comparing across political regimes, strategically reaching to the past to assert a rightful claim and proper character of the site. The inhabitants in Bugendana or Ryanyoni often emphasized the land was 'given' to them by the former President Buyoya. 'You will be in this site forever,' a woman in Ryanyoni claims he had promised them. '"I give you this peace village," ' another woman claims she remembers him

---

[23] The government of Burundi has recently launched a new phase of villagisation targeting all rural dwellers (not just returnees and vulnerable populations). The project is remarkably ambitious; the aim is to have a villagisation site in every commune (120 villages by 2015). The VRI villages (Villages Ruraux Integres, also referred to as peace villages) are constructed in the name of integration, concentration and 'freeing up of arable lands.'

saying, ' "your descendants, the children of your children can stay here"...But after, when the regime changed, we have been ill-treated, we were told to leave this area.'

Some comparative accounts were more extreme. An old man in Bugendana drew a more severe comparison and spoke of a more fundamental distrust. 'The previous government created these sites for our protection.' Now, paradoxically, he and his family felt exposed, targeted under the very pretext of state 'care'— of development and coexistence:

> This current government is trying to disturb our life whereas Buyoya had protected us. Now, the current President, it is he who wants to kick us out from here, pretending he is bringing development, but he is not looking for an airport, he is looking for us!...The idea of the airport is a pretext, it's a kind of malignity, it's a trick.

A number of important conclusions flow from the examples above. By highlighting virtues of past and exile 'regimes'— the biopolitical regime of the camps versus the 'ethnocracy' at home, both certainly very partial due to their respective political exclusions— people offer a subtle but powerful critique of the present political dispensation, questioning its character as truly transformatory. People question the viability of post-war spaces, whether these be peace villages, land-sharing agreements or lingering IDP sites. Their central concern is security and here physical security and livelihoods often interlace (such as in Mutambara peace village), at times it is physical security that predominates (such as in the IDP sites or in tense land-sharing arrangements), and in some cases livelihoods are key (such as in Buzimba peace village). More often than not however, the two aspects are tightly interconnected.

Crucially, both livelihoods security and physical security are perceived as political at their core. Political distrust (related to the inability or government's unwillingness to resolve problems) or even direct political implication (the active fostering of insecurity) are what is seen to lie at the core of 'objective' conditions such as hunger and inability to access sufficient land. In other words, people rarely judge 'insecurity' but rather the state's role in providing or undermining basic security for its citizens. They not only point to concrete promises broken and a covenant undermined, as we saw in the previous section, they also engage in critical comparisons, initiating provocative discussions around transformation and change, arguing that very partial and exclusionary regimes might have been superior to the present one. Through such transnational and transtemporal orientations in space, both returnees and IDPs question the viability and very definition of the post-war dispensation as a 'return' to coexistence, stability and security.

Yet again, the complex accountancies paint a picture of state-citizen relations defined by distrust, and a weak and 'patchy' social contract fundamentally undermined by the perceived inability of the state to provide basic security to all

of its citizens.[24] The 'narrative accountancies' nonetheless need to be seen both as condemnations and tactics. People are strategic agents, pitting past and outside socio-political regimes against each other in order to promote their own position, asserting the need to stay or leave. This tension between powerlessness and action will be further developed in the coming section.

## 'They pass us by' and 'the poor have no voice': Vertical Accountability and Partial Citizenship

The two previous sections focused on the 'states of deception' that underlie people's choices to entrench or re-displace– the fractious state-citizen relations as glanced through the lens of political promises and the viability of the new post-war spaces. They offered a reading of social contracts from below, citizenship as a form of relation anchored not only in provision and state ability but, more broadly, in its willingness and disposition to protective care and to honoring of a new political covenant. The current section considers these themes from yet another angle, looking at people's perceived ability to effect change via political actors (vertical accountability) and their direct discourses on belonging and citizenship in post-war Burundi. As will be shown, the two sets of narratives emphasize the blurry lines between powerlessness and agency in people's positions and dispositions to mobility after the war. People use narratives of partial citizenship to at once to claim disempowerment and to act on the powers that be.

On the one hand, Burundians in rural areas whether in peace villages, on IDP sites or in dispersed settlements paint a picture of their own disempowerment as the inability to effect and affect political change. The higher authorities are those perceived to be ultimately responsible for peace, stability or its dissolution, and yet they are not reachable. People often complain of state absences: 'They pass us by', they would say, meaning this both symbolically and literally, referring to the motorcades that whizz by. If the politicians came back with messages to the refugee camps, now they all but 'bypass' the people on whose back, the perception goes, they built up the new political kingdom.

But similar themes arise on the IDP sites and even in mixed communities at the hills, the ultimate spaces of return. 'They pass by [in their cars],' a woman at Ryanyoni site tells me, 'and they say nothing on our behalf.' Others use the trope not of 'bypassing' but 'passing on top.' At her house at the top of Isare hill, an old woman explained: 'These things [war, insecurity] are coming from the top leaders in Bujumbura. They have a big belly – they have cars, they want airplanes, and we, we are like their bridge, everything passes on us, they use us. And if anything happens, it is us who flee.'

---

[24] We need to note that not everyone has been entrenching or re-displacing. It is rather to highlight that the latter two cross ethnic boundaries and show problems of a sufficient magnitude.

People suggest that there is no space to raise questions with a person in power. They insist that '*umukene ntajambo'* – the poor have no voice. 'We have no one to address our challenges to,' suggests an old woman at the Mwaro-Ngundu site close to Gitega. At Nkuri, deep into the valley in the hills surrounding Bujumbura a young boy tells us: 'People give their views, but these views would change nothing. The *abarimbere* [lit. those at the top, the leaders] don't come to people's houses, just stay on the main road.' Though political elites powerfully shape people's lives – as in the spectre of removal in Bugendana or actual attempts at it in Ryanyoni, or the fostering of land conflict in 'peace' villages— people themselves say they feel disconnected and unable to exert impact in the other direction.

The narratives above need to be taken seriously. But it equally needs to be noted that even through narratives of disconnect and unaccountability, people try to act or are simultaneously highlighting ways to do so. At the most minimal level, they are of course providing a critical and political reading of the core roots of insecurity and displacement. But their emphasis on disconnect was also a way to impart the importance of my own role in 'advocating on their behalf.' The tropes of 'bypassing' was no doubt connected to their oft-expressed wonder that a *muzungu* has travelled down rural paths to discuss politics in their backyards. But sometimes a talk on 'bypassing' and disconnect would end with a note on how accountability could and would be established: 'The authorities pass by, they say nothing on our behalf...but wait, the electoral campaign is coming [this was in 2013] and it is us who vote them into power,' a woman at the Ryanyoni site admonished.

As has been already shown in previous sections, people also use a variety of strategies of subversion of the political status quo and the dominant narrative on post-war order and its constituent parts, utilizing strategies ranging from physical blockage of infrastructure to prevent removal to more discursive ontopolitics— the attempts to use and subvert the very terms of discussion, to define and redefine what sorts of places they find themselves in, in order to defend or promote their aspirations with regards to coming and going.

Subversive narratives of belonging are part of this ontopolitical play. The people I spoke with often used tropes of 'refugeeness' and 'forced displacement' to emphasize a sense of paradoxical dispossession, abandonment 'at home.' Importantly, both returnees and residents used these phrases to assert their status as 'partial' citizens. The narratives purposefully inverted the meanings of 'return,' 'home' and 'refugeehood' to underline their precarious situation and to undermine the legitimacy of the current political order. To express their discontent, home was likened to refugeehood and a lasting return could be to exile.

As mentioned, both returnees and 'residents' used similar tropes of 'non-belonging.' Let me give an example of two Muslim widows. Both women lived mere yards from each other but were nonetheless situated within very different sorts of post-war space and possessed different migration histories. Just outside the Mutambara peace village constructed for returnees, a Muslim widowed

woman who has never left Burundi, tried to interpret why the area where she lived was recently burned down:[25]

> Nobody could tell us why...maybe because we are not Burundians who fled and came back [intimating a preference/bias for returnees and referring to the peace village]. Are we not Burundians like other Burundians? Maybe we could flee, return and be welcomed...because we realize we are not citizens like other Burundians.

Inside Mutambara village, a Muslim widow, this time returnee, spoke in very similar terms of her travails. Her house was one of those 'affected' – the previous occupants of the land were refusing to leave, squatting on her property, only few feet from her house:

> Our biggest request is that these residents should give us peace...[and to get] titles. This would prove we are citizens like other citizens. [Now] we are like *abanyamahanga* – foreigners.

In land-sharing arrangements, both residents and returnees also repeatedly used the tropes of 'forced displacement' to entrench their position –returnees pressing for full restitution, residents/occupants trying to preserve their claim and hence maintain the sharing arrangement. In February 2015, a controversial decision was taken by the head of the land commission (CNTB) to undermine the status quo of sharing, award the land in full to returnees, with the inevitable result of pushing the occupants out. This polarized an already tense situation, and led to open resistance in some areas, whereby residents refused to obey the orders, collectively blocking roads and menacing the authorities trying to enact the order. 'We cannot accept that some will be returning whereas others will be *obliged to flee*' said a resident in Mugogoma. A returnee in Buzimba described the inability to recover lands deploying the same trope: 'It is as if you were introducing a nail to a wound...that is how we are feeling now...we should not be *refugees in our own country*.'

What emerges from these narratives, as well as those introduced in previous sections, is not simply that people are 'entrenching in displacement' as displacement in itself is a contested and subverted category but that they are orienting themselves across a set of partial citizenship regimes. They maneuver spatially and conceptually among them. A good example here is the group of about 2,000 Hutu refugees forcibly repatriated from Mtabila camp in Tanzania in 2012. They came back to Burundi only to leave again in 2013, this time moving to Nakivale settlement in Uganda (RRI 2013). Those (likely more numerous) leaving Burundi before 2015 as undocumented migrants speak of the same sort of orientation among a set of less-than-full citizenship regimes (leaving official but unviable membership for unofficial but economically more viable one).

---

[25] The attack happened at night, allegedly the work of local politicians. The people on the plots were said to have settled there 'illegally;' and there area was marked to be re-developed.

Finally, the same dynamics of calculation and subversion are at play in the current wave of displacement. A re-displacee in the recently opened Nyarugusu camp in Tanzania told a journalist about his decision to never return again: 'The UNHCR calls me a Burundian but I don't feel like I am Burundian. This is my life. I am a refugee.'[26]

**Conclusions: The Politics of the Latest Displacement**

Having closely considered people's politico-spatial orientations prior and just at the inception of the current crisis – the ways in which they connect the political status quo with coming, going or staying – it is clear that any simple notion of 'return,' 'post-conflict' or 'home' is hard to apply, and that the current crisis is a culmination of a fraught post-war relation between the state and its citizens.

Since the inception of the crisis, the government's attempt has been to depoliticize the displacement crisis. The political elite has tried to use the lack of overt physical violence in their portrayal of the outpour, first, in April, claiming that people were 'fleeing peace'.[27] Later, when the mass proportions baffled, the official explanation turned to economic opportunism. From '*barahunga amahoro*,' the explanation became '*barahunga inzara*' – they are fleeing hunger.[28] Finally in July, the Presidential adviser Willy Nyamitwe suggested that refugees were fleeing out of 'unfounded fear' and 'rumours' rather than 'direct threats.'

In each case of official rhetorical (mis)representation, a careful abnegation was at play, first that Burundi was in a political crisis, and later that an alarming number of citizens profoundly questioned the state and its ability to protect, that they were passing a political judgment. Rhetorical strategies were met with strategies on the ground. Ahead of the elections, the Burundian government closed official border crossings, blocked roads, forced people off buses, confiscated belongings, and even made arrests. People persevered, finding informal crossings and making more arduous journeys.

But of course it is precisely the readings of what it means to be 'at peace' that pit the government interpretations against the reading of those who flee. We have seen how people's anxieties, aspirations, and resistances connected to coming and staying powerfully question the notion of Burundi at peace much before the 2015 crisis. The concerns and lack of trust surrounding the new agenda of 'integration' and what unfolds in its name speak of state's lack of ability and willingness to provide, protect and include its citizens. This points to a powerful 'instability' and fragility of post-war mass return.

---

[26] Lee, Nicole. 'A life of escaping conflict: "I don't feel like a Burundian – I am a refugee."' *The Guardian*, October 15, 2015.

[27] The Kirundi version 'barahunga amahoro' was transmitted on the radio. Here is a French translation of the same government phrase in an article by Elyse Ngabire published on 24 April 2015 by the *Iwacu* newspaper (since then forcibly closed by the government). The article can be found here: http://www.iwacu-burundi.org/kirundo-le-bureau-du-hcr-au-rwanda-mis-en-doute/.

[28] Golooba-Mutebi, Frederick. 'Rich or poor, people in Burundi are hungry for change,' *The East African*, May 9, 2015.

The anatomy of the 2015 outflow clearly shows that people read the future against the past, and so must we. The mass movement was the result of 'real' (whether effected or believable) threats and harassment (principally by the *Imbonerakure* party militia), rumor, reminders of past violence, and structural anxiety and insecurity that has embroiled Burundi much before the President announced his intention to run on April 25, 2015.. Their move was a powerful vote of *mefiance* (distrust) in the state's ability to protect.

Importantly, just as we have seen with the returnees and IDPs, the recent refugees politicize their predicament in their narratives. Whether direct harassment of opposition is involved, or more likely a mix of motives related to precarity and unviability, their perspectives point to a broader reading of insecurity than just a physical one. Importantly, these diverse causes are joined at their root – it is the state's inability mixed with unwillingness that is seen to produce them. Furthermore, the image of mass movement is a political indictment in itself. It is not only a mass vote *not* cast in election, it is also a mass vote of distrust and an implied narrative on the state, a 'voice in exit' (combining Hirschman 's two classic 'responses' to failing political institutions; see Hirschman 1970).

What then of political transformation after the war and a remodeled social contract? The 2000 Arusha Accords indeed signaled a political rupture— it brought the previously excluded majority into power, ushering in a complex power-sharing government and diffusing the salience of ethnicity in politics (Reyntjens 2015). But an ethnic reading of political transformation obscures the crosscutting tensions, and the overly macro and institutional reading of change obscures powerful continuities over time in the bottom-up experience of power. Beyond economic crisis and *Imbonerakure* militias, there is a deeper, integrative political current to people's judgments on the post-war social contract. It revolves around the political will and promises that underpinned the post-war integrationist agenda, the political, not simply social 'coming together' in a new community.

There are also important points to be made about agency, erosion of trust and partial citizenship regimes. Power does not only reside in negotiating return, but in entrenching in (re)displacement as a form of 'exit as voice.' 'Moving around the region' (IRRI 2013:9) has been for Burundians a shuffle among partial citizenships. Such act is meant to signal the problematic renegotiation and incorporation post-war and calls for a very different sort of citizenship transformation, one that reaches beyond ethnic power-sharing, and institutions, to vertical accountability and trust in state's political promises.

Importantly then, the re-displacement we witness is not just a replay, people are entrenching in displacement against the negative credit incurred by the Burundian state, against trust squandered and promises broken. 'A tree branch does not hit the eye twice,'[32] Burundians say, one does not commit the same

---

[32] Transl. of 'Igiti ntikigukora mi jisho kabiri,' interview in Buzimba, August 2013.

mistake more than once. 'Wherever they might end up, the Burundians who have returned to Tanzania once more say they do not plan to ever willingly return home.'[33] A woman in the Nyarugusu camp in Tanzania was quite open about her decision: 'Although she returned to Burundi in 2004, she spent most of her time wishing she could go back to the refugee camp...Now she has no intention of ever returning to Burundi.'[34] It will be much harder to make yet another promise that sticks to entice return, unless a more profound political rupture occurs.

In conlusion, Burundians in rural areas, whether dispersed on the hills or entrenching in IDP sites, must be listened to and engaged if the current crisis is to be understood and effectively addressed. They are likely to provide an alternative critique of the political dispensation that reaches beyond macro-level democratization concerns, which have dominated the press and academic discussions of the crisis thus far. The evidence gathered here directly from those contemplating to leave or refusing to move shows powerfully that a broadly 'representative' government is not enough. This can still result in a broad-based alliance of impunity and a 'distant state.' One needs a responsive government with political will. Neither is the notion of a 'capable' government, which lies at the heart of political trust debates, sufficient. Or perhaps more correctly, it is unattainable without a government that shows genuine will and care. Only clear signs that the new political class is willing to deal with past and new grievances, and prioritizes the needs of its citizens rather its own survival, will restructure the social contract sufficiently so as to provide for political and personal stability in Burundi.

---

[33] 'For Burundians, Tanzania's refugee camps offer a better life.' Al Jazeera, October 8, 2015.
[34] Ibid

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

**ARUSHA PEACE AND RECONCILIATION AGREEMENT FOR BURUNDI**.
Available at:
https://www.issafrica.org/cdburundipeaceagreements/No%201%20arusha.pdf

**BRADLEY, M.** (2014a) 'Rethinking Refugeehood: Statelessness, Repatriation, and
Refugee Agency', *Review of International Studies* **40**(1): 101-123.

**BRADLEY, M.** (2014b) *Refugee Repatriation: Justice, Responsibility and Redress*.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**DALEY, P.** (2006) 'Ethnicity and Political Violence in Africa: The Challenge to the
Burundi State', *Political Geography* **25**: 657–679.

**DALEY, P.** (2013a) 'Refugees, IDPs and Citizenship Rights: The Perils of
Humanitarianism in the African Great Lakes Region,' *Third World Quarterly* **34**(5):
893-912.

**DALEY, P.** (2013b) 'The Burundi peace negotiations: An African experience of
peace-making in the era of neo-liberalism,' In, Abrahamsen, R. (ed.) *Conflict and
Security in Africa.* Woodbridge: James Currey. pp. 108-126.

**DORMAN, S., D. HAMMET and P. NUGENT.** (2007) *Making Nations, Creating
Strangers: State and Citizenship in Africa.* Leiden: Brill.

**FALISSE, J-B AND R. C. NIYONKURU** (2015) 'Social Engineering for
Reintegration: Peace Villages for the 'Uprooted' Returnees in Burundi', *Journal of
Refugee Studies*, first published online April 15, 2015: 1-24.

**FRANSEN, S.** (2015) 'The Socio-Economic Sustainability of Refugee Return:
Insights from Burundi,' *Population Space and Place* (Early View- Published online
22 September 2015)

**FRANSEN, S. AND KUSCHMINDER, K.** (2014) 'Lessons Learned from Refugee Return Settlement Policies: A Case Study on Burundi's Rural Integrated Villages,' *Refugee Studies Quarterly* 33(1): 59-76.

**FRANSEN, S. AND KUSCHMINDER, K.** (2012) 'Back to the Land: The Long-term Challenges of Refugee Return and Reintegration in Burundi,' *New Issues in Refugee Research*, UNHCR, August 2012

**GESCHIERE, P.** (2009) *The Perils of Belonging: Autochtony, Citizenship and Exclusion in Africa and Europe*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

**GESCHIERE, P. and F. NYAMJOH.** (2000) 'Capitalism and Autochtony: The Seesaw of Mobility and Belonging,' *Public Culture* 12(2): 423-452.

**IDMC** (2011) 'BURUNDI: Secure Tenure and Land Access Still Challenges for Long-Term IDPs,' IDMC, 18 August 2011

**IDMC** (2008) 'BURUNDI: Internally displaced Burundians should not be forgotten during the peacebuilding process,' IDMC, May 2008

Ingelaere, Bert (2009) 'Living Together Again. The Expectations of Transitional Justice in Burundi- A View From Below', IOB Working Paper, June 2009.

**INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE RIGHTS INITIATIVE (IRRI)** (2013) 'From refugee to returnee to asylum seeker: Burundian refugees struggle to find protection in the Great Lakes region. A Briefing Note.' Available online at http://www.refugee-rights.org/Assets/PDFs/2013/From%20refugee%20to%20returnee%20FINAL.pdf

**INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE RIGHTS INITIATIVE (IRRI)** (2011) 'Resisting Repatriation: Burundian Refugees Struggle to Stay in Tanzania,'Available online at http://www.refugee-rights.org/Assets/PDFs/2011/ResistingRepatriation-FINAL2.pdf

**INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE RIGHTS INITIATIVE (IRRI) (2009)** '' "I don't know where to go:" Burundian Refugees in Tanzania under the Pressure to Leave,'

Available online at http://www.refugee-rights.org/Publications/Papers/2009/I%20Dont%20Know%20Where%20to%20Go.091709.pdf

**INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE RIGHTS INITIATIVE (IRRI), REMA MINISTRIES AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL (SSRC) (2009)** ' "Two People Can't Share the Same Pair of Shoes": Citizenship, Land and the Return of Refugees to Burundi', Working Paper No.2, Citizenship and Forced Migration in the Great Lakes Region, November 2009

**LEMARCHAND, R.** (1996) Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide. New ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**LEMARCHAND, R.** (1998) 'Genocide in the Great Lakes: Which Genocide? Whose Genocide?' African Studies Review **41**(1)

**LEMARCHAND, R.** (2002) 'Le génocide de 1972 au Burundi: les silences de l'histoire,' Cahiers d'études africaines 42 (167): 551-67

**LONG, K.** (2008) 'State, Nation, Citizen: Rethinking Repatriation', Working paper series, no. 48. Oxford Department of International Development, Refugee Studies Centre, Oxford, UK.

**LONG, K.** (2013) *The Point of No Return. Refugees, Rights and Repatriation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**LUBKEMANN, S.** (2008) 'Involuntary Immobility: On a Theoretical Invisibility in Forced Migration Studies', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 21(4): 454-475.

**MACKLIN, A.** (2007) "Who Is the Citizen's Other? Considering the Heft of Citizenship," *Theoretical Inquiries in Law* 8(2), Article 1.

**MANBY, B.** (2009) *Struggles for Citizenship in Africa*. London: Zed Books.

**MANIRAGUHA, J-P.** (2011) 'Challenges of Reintegrating Returning Refugees: A

Case Study of Returnee Access to Land and to Basic Services in Burundi', Masters Thesis, University of Tromso.

**NDIKUMANA, L.** (2000) 'Towards a Solution to Violence in Burundi: A Case for Political and Economic Liberalisation', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 38(3): 431-459.

**REMA MINISTRIES** (2012) 'Umenga Ntituri Abarundi: Rethinking Reintegration in Burundi', *Rema Ministries*, May 2012.

**REYNTJENS, F.** (2015) 'Burundi: Institutionalizing Ethnicity to Bridge the Ethnic Divide,' Chapter two in A. Kuperman (Ed), *Constitutions and Conflict Management in Africa. Preventing Civil War Through Institutional Design*, 2015, University of Pennsylvania Press

**RUSSELL, A.** (2015) 'Obedience and Selective Genocide in Burundi,' *Africa* 85(3): 437-456

**STAMNES, E. AND R. W. JONES** (2000) 'Burundi: A Critical Security Perspective', *Peace and Conflict Studies* **3**(2), Article 3.

**TURNER, S.** (2004) 'The Tutsi are Afraid we will Discover their Secrets: On Secrecy and Sovereign Power in Burundi.' *Social Identities* **11** (2005): 41□61.

**TURNER, S.** (2007) 'The Precarious Position of Politics in Popular Imagination: The Burundian Case,' *Journal of Eastern African Studies* **1**(1): 93-106.

**TURNER, S.** (2010) *The Politics of Innocence. Hutu Identity, Conflict and Camp Life*. Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books

**UNHCR** (2008) 'Tanzania: Nduta Burundian refugees relocated as camp closes,' Briefing Note, December 19, 2008.

**UVIN, P. AND A. NEE** (2009) 'Justice, Silence and Social Capital', in *Life After Violence: A People's Story of Burundi*, ed. By P. Uvin, London: Zed Books.

**VANDEGINSTE, S.** (2009) 'Power-Sharing, Conflict and Transition in Burundi: Twenty Years of Trial and Error,' *Africa Spectrum* 44(3): 63-86.

**VANDEGINSTE, S.** (2011) 'Power-sharing as a Fragile Safety Valve in Times of Electoral Turmoil: The Costs and Benefits of Burundi's 2010 Elections', *Journal of Modern African Studies* 49(2): 315-335.

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

**VERWIMP, P. and J-C MUNOZ MORA.** (2012) 'Return Home After Civil War: Food Security, Nutrition and Poverty Among Burundian Households,' *ECORE Discussion Paper* 75

**VERWIMP, P. and BUNDERVOET, T.** (2009) 'Civil War and the Welfare of Extended Households: Evidence from Longitudinal Data from Burundi,' *Households in Conflict Network* (HiCN) Working Paper 70 (December 2009)

**VORRATH, J.** (2008) 'From Refugee Crisis to Reintegration Crisis? The Consequences of Repatriation to (post-transition) Burundi,' *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs* (Paris), 12, 2007/2008