

# **Beyond ethnicity: Changing conflict lines in Burundi's democratic transition**

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Comments very welcome!*

## **Abstract**

Post-war literature often assumes that negotiated settlements based on power-sharing formulas freeze conflict lines from ethnic civil wars. Yet some countries display a surprising fragmentation of political conflicts after such wars. This paper argues that proponents and critics of power-sharing approaches often base their analysis on a rather static comprehension of conflict lines, centered on the origin of the war rather than its development over time. It follows the constructivist argument that conflict lines are actually changed by the civil war itself, not only in their intensity, but in their nature. Newly emerging divisions remain largely covered by the ethnic divide during the civil war, but become apparent at the time of negotiations and continue to be important as the basis for conflicts during the transition. The paper focuses exclusively on conflict lines among national political elites since negotiated processes are especially driven by this group of actors. The Burundian democratic transition from 2000 to 2005 following an intense ethnic war and protracted peace negotiations has been chosen for a case study. Beyond the development of the theoretical argument, the paper presents the operationalization and coding scheme of a content analysis of news sources. This analysis will identify changes in political conflict lines in Burundi over a ten year period (1997-2006). The aim is to demonstrate that political conflict lines have changed, and fragmentation can best be explained by the civil war as a source of change.

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## 1. Introduction

A growing branch of literature addresses the issue of peace and democratization in divided societies. These societies are commonly associated with civil wars, often along ethnic lines. Since the end of the Cold War some form of democratic transition has normally accompanied negotiated peace processes in civil wars (Jarstad/Sisk 2008). In order to guarantee the inclusion of formerly excluded groups, power-sharing arrangements are often part of these transitions. Yet power sharing arrangements have been frequently criticized for freezing the underlying division of the conflict in political rules and regulations (Rothchild/Roeder 2005, p. 36ff). Thus, no new lines of affiliation can emerge and politics will continue to mainly follow ethnic lines. Supporters of this approach do not really deny this shortcoming, but argue that no better solution has yet been proposed (Lijphart 2008, Hartzell/Hoddie 2007).

However, this institutional focus has one shortcoming: it fails to explain processes of fragmentation in post-war countries like Burundi. Fragmentation here means fragmentation of political conflicts reflected in the creation of new political parties or strong fractionalization within existing parties. Such a process has occurred in Burundi's most recent transition despite strong power-sharing formulas and despite the fact that the democratic transition before the civil war – which also included power-sharing elements – did not produce such a fragmentation. Furthermore, the fragmentation seems not to follow ethnic lines. This observation is the empirical puzzle underlying this paper.

In search for an explanation, two points stand out as being underrepresented in the relevant literature: 1) a deeper analysis of the political conflicts in post-war situations and their development over time, and 2) the transnational nature of civil wars and its consequences for transitions. In order to clarify why fragmentation occurs under the mentioned conditions, it is necessary to start with tackling the first point. Thus, the aim of the content analysis presented in this paper is to trace changes in political conflicts in Burundi over time, meaning from the beginning of civil war to the end of the post-war transition. In addition, it contributes to the identification of the features of change, especially underlying conflict lines. And finally, it can set changes in relation to parallel processes, mainly changes in institutional settings.

In illuminating change in political conflicts and its potential sources, this study confines itself to the level of national political elites. The outstanding importance of political elites for democratic transitions and their consolidation has often been underlined

(Bunce 2000, p. 715). When the conflict settlement and thus, the design of the political institutions is a direct outcome of an elite settlement, their role in transitions is even more significant. From a more practical standpoint, conflict lines among political elites are also easier to trace as primary and secondary sources are more likely to report on them.

Generally, the content analysis starts from the assumption that it is necessary to look beyond ethnicity to understand fragmentation after civil war. The second point mentioned above – the transnational nature of civil wars and its consequences for the political transition – exceeds the scope of this paper. However, the general expectation concerning the influence of this factor will shortly be outlined. One strand of the literature surely pays strong attention to international activities and actors in post-war transitions (e.g. De Zeeuw / Kumar 2006). But these and other works largely neglect the fluidity of actor constellations on the ground, especially that „...at the start of many transitions to democracy it can be artificial and misleading to classify all the new strategic actors as ready-made strictly domestic political entities“ (Whitehead, p. 20). What Whitehead refers to are “exile clusters” as a substantial external component of emerging opposition forces. Empirical research has started to pay attention to diaspora and exile groups and their potential influence on war and peace in quantitative (Collier et al. 2008, p. 427) as well as qualitative studies (Muggah 2006; Lischer 2005; Radtke 2005). But such studies still only look at these groups during civil war without taking into account that they might actually return to their home country. If consequences of the reintegration of external components are addressed, these are almost exclusively located in the socio-economic domain.

The overall expectation of this paper is that the reintegration of such external components after civil war can have an effect on the political landscape, most notably on the structure of political conflicts. However, the main subject of this paper is the systematic analysis of political conflicts, their changes over time and possible sources of such changes. It will generally be argued that changes in political conflict lines are possible even under power-sharing arrangements due to changes brought about by the civil war itself.

## 2. Theoretical Argument and Hypotheses

When the issue of political conflicts after ethnic civil wars is addressed, the first important specification is that such conflicts can include violent as well as non-violent incidences. The exact definition and operationalization of this central concept will be presented in section 4. A political conflict line refers to the underlying line of affiliation of political conflicts, meaning a social division consistently transferred to the political sphere (Schmidt 2000, p. 238f.).<sup>1</sup>

There are several different expectations on the development of such lines of political conflicts after civil war. One point of view assumes that there are no real changes, mainly because the civil war has deepened the ethnic division. This expectation is often rather implicit than explicit in empirical studies of post-war transitions. The transition basically displays the continuation of the civil war with other means.

Fragmentation is not always ignored, but is not seen as an expression of a change in conflict lines, but rather as a more or less chaotic breakup of the political sphere. This development is interpreted as a simple increase in highly personalized maneuvers by greedy politicians competing for political positions. This means that no change has occurred except an intensification of leadership struggles that does not really have to be explained. From this perspective party splits, for example, are only an expression of opportunism in the search for state resources. This explanation of fragmentation is also provided by local Burundian experts and political elites in order to discredit opponents.<sup>2</sup>

From a theoretical standpoint the problem with this argument is that even proponents of an economic approach to democracy assume that there are certain conditions for fragmentation, here meaning the creation of new parties. Downs for example names changes in election laws, a sudden change in preferences of the electorate (normally due to important events such as wars or revolutions) or a party split between moderates and extremists within one party in a two party system as conditions (Schmidt 2000, p. 216f). From this point of view, increasing competition between greedy politi-

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<sup>1</sup> This is very close to the meaning of “cleavages”. However, this expression has most commonly been used in studies of Western democratic systems and refers to almost permanent social divisions. Therefore, the more neutral expression “conflict line” has been chosen for this paper.

<sup>2</sup> For example: interview with local expert, Bujumbura, 15/11/07; interview with researcher, Bujumbura, 20/11/07; interview with political party leader, Bujumbura, 27/03/09; all interviews conducted by the author.

cians alone cannot explain fragmentation, but there needs to be a change in underlying lines of affiliation whether due to institutional or other factors.

*H1: Fragmentation is likely to be based on changes in underlying political conflict lines.*

Downs reference to electoral law leads over to one possible source of changes in political conflict lines, namely institutions. Probably the most important part of the literature on divided societies has dealt with the question which institutions are most adequate for a country emerging from (ethnic) civil war. The general line of debate is between those who prefer power-sharing arrangements in negotiated settings and those who promote other institutional formulas like preferential voting systems (Reilly 2001, Horowitz 1985).<sup>3</sup> Both sides generally assume that institutions can lead to a change in conflict lines. But in contrast to the second group of authors who prefer incentives for trans-ethnic coalition-building by institutional change, the first group of authors prefers to institutionalize and, therefore, freeze the main cleavage from civil war. From their point of view, this is necessary in order to stabilize the system, or in the case of power-division simply in order to separate groups from one another (Hartzell/Hoddie 2007, p. 40). Under such arrangements, change in conflict lines cannot be expected since competing sources of loyalty are unlikely to become salient.

*H2: Fragmentation under power-sharing arrangements after civil war is unlikely to be caused by institutional change.*

In the search for other sources of fragmentation, it makes sense to look at constructivist approaches which have gained in importance in explaining changes in identity. Concerning the study of violent conflict, identities have increasingly been seen as a consequence as much as a cause of civil war. Kalyvas as an exponent of this research agenda stresses that civil war

“...destroys existing structures, networks, and loyalties; it creates new opportunities for political losers, alters the size of optimal coalitions, gives rise to new entrepreneurs, and generally reshuffles politics. Therefore, it has the potential to alter the structure of cleavages and generate realignment in identity affiliations...” (Kalyvas 2008, p. 6).

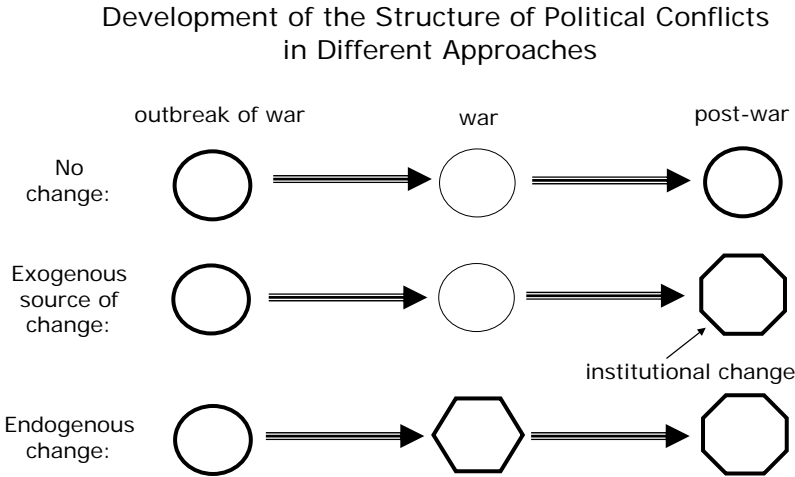
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<sup>3</sup> Basically this is a more detailed version of the majoritarian versus consensus democracy debate (Lijphart 1999).

Kalyvas deals with such changes during ongoing war. In an extension of his central argument, this paper argues that changes taking place during civil war can finally become manifest in the integration process during post-war transitions. Thus, the civil war itself can become the source of changes in the political conflict structure during the following democratic transition. One consequence of this assumption is that political conflict lines after a civil war will differ from those before the war, not only in their intensity, but in their nature.<sup>4</sup>

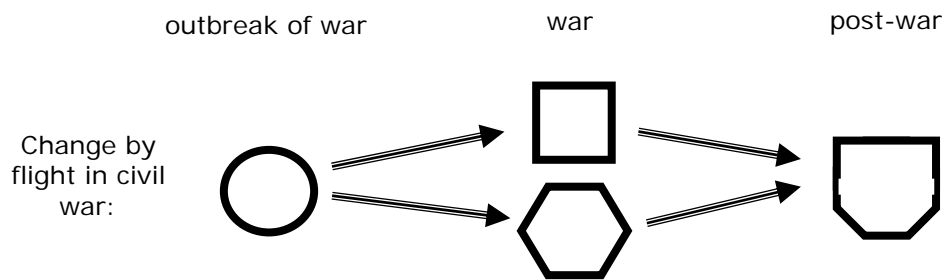
*H3: Fragmentation of conflict lines in post-war transitions is most likely based on new divisions created by the ethnic civil war.*

The following diagram summarizes the three different views on the fragmentation of political conflicts in post-war transitions that relate to the three hypotheses above.



Beyond merely assuming that the endogenous change leads to an identity shift on the level of the ethnic divide, this paper hypothesizes that flight as a consequence of the civil war actually creates new affiliations which become visible with the reintegration of exile elites into the internal political process. This argument can be visualized as follows:

<sup>4</sup> Within the scope of this paper, it will only be possible to try to exclude other explanations than this one (congruence method). But in order to make sure that new conflict lines have really developed over the course of a civil war, future research will have to make sure that changes are not simply due to the re-occurrence of older lines of conflict like the commonly known intra-ethnic struggle between moderates and radicals or conflicts along regional, clan and other lines of affiliation.



As already mentioned, this additional hypothesis cannot be empirically investigated in this paper, but will be tested at a later stage. However, potential mechanisms of this relationship are an identity shift and specific grievances created by the refugee experience, militarization in exile because of different incentives and opportunities, and a diversification of organizational structures due to competing power centers in exile.

Before linking exile, return and fragmentation of political conflicts, however, it is important to assess the actual change of conflicts, its features and demonstrate that changes by the civil war itself are most likely responsible for fragmentation.

Generally, changes in conflict lines can be expected to show most at the time when elites have to position themselves in relation to others, in this case at the time of peace negotiations and in connection with the first elections after war. Thus, there are two main points of observation in the case study of Burundi: the period of peace negotiations and the phase of the political transition which overlap due to the gradual peace process in the country. First of all, the content analysis has to demonstrate that there is a change in conflict lines towards less inter-ethnic conflicts after civil war. Secondly, the coding of political conflicts over time can be compared with the parallel sequence of institutional change. This way an endogenous process of the fragmentation of political conflicts in Burundi's recent democratic transition can be identified as the most likely source of change.

The following section gives a short overview on the outbreak and development of Burundi's civil war as well as peace negotiations and political fragmentation over time.

### **3. Case Selection and Background**

The hypotheses on the occurrence of new conflict lines will be tested by a case study of political conflicts among elites in Burundi. This country has been selected for several reasons: firstly it fits the most basic criteria as it has undergone a negotiated transition based on power-sharing after an ethnic civil war. Secondly, Burundi underwent a democratization process with power-sharing arrangements at the moment of conflict outbreak. Thus, the structure of political conflicts among elites before the war provides a basis for the measurement of change by the content analysis. Thirdly, Burundi has only two politically relevant ethnic groups. This makes the identification of political conflict lines over time much easier since changing inter-ethnic alliances are basically impossible. Finally, the Burundian civil war has led to a huge outflow of refugees – on the elite and on the mass level – making it a most-likely case for the development of a new division as outlined in the last section.

#### **3.1 General background**

Burundi is a small, landlocked country with a population of about 8,980,000. (CIA World Factbook 2009). Among these 85% are categorized as Hutu, 14% as Tutsi and 1% as Twa (Sullivan 2005, p. 76). While these percentages cannot be taken as exact numbers due to missing updated census data, they clearly show the relative weight of groups. Not very surprisingly, the Twa have been almost constantly marginalized while the Hutu and Tutsi have been involved in power struggles over most of the post-independence period. Since 1966, Burundi has been governed by military Tutsi rulers coming exclusively from the Southern province of Bururi. This fact already hints at the two prevalent conflict lines in Burundi: firstly, the ethnic divide between Hutu and Tutsi with the overall exclusion of the former and the dominance by the latter mainly based on their strong position in the national army. Secondly, the regional divide reflected in the preferential access to education and privileges in terms of infrastructure and public spending for those from the South, mainly from Bururi. While the divide could be termed “the South versus the rest”, it normally refers to conflicts between Southern elites and those from the Centre and North of the country. Within the Tutsi group the conflicts were especially pronounced between those from Bururi and those from Muramvya, the historical centre of the old kingdom of Burundi (Ndikumana 2005, p. 415). But even within the Hutu leadership, antagonism towards



Southern elites has played a role as they have been perceived as less marginalized than Hutu from other regions of the country. This combination of two main divisions has led some authors to conclude that in fact fractionalization in Burundi is ethno-regional, not merely ethnic (Ndikumana 2005, p. 418).

The competition over power has led to several violent outbreaks in Burundi before the actual civil war – often evolving around revolts, (alleged) coups and military repression. The worst ethnic massacres took place in 1972 when reprisals of the army in response to an alleged Hutu coup attempt led to the death of about 200,000 and the flight of about 300,000 people (Ndikumana 2005, p. 421). This has been called a “partial genocide” since Hutu elites had been targeted in a systematic way to cleanse the army and the civil service and leave no educated male Hutu alive (Lemarchand 1995, p. 103). The unequal distribution of power in ethnic terms reached its peak under the regimes of Jean-Baptiste Bagaza (1976-1987) and Pierre Buyoya (1987-1993) with 80% and 74% of government positions filled with Tutsi respectively (Ndikumana 2005, p. 416). Despite their mainly military power these regimes were also based on the party “L’Union pour le Progrès National” (UPRONA). While having a nationalist agenda at the time of independence, this party increasingly developed into a party for promoting Tutsi interests and became the single party during the first military regime (1966-76).

### **3.2 The road to civil war**

The new formation of a Hutu elite took mainly place outside Burundi after 1972. The increased mobilization and activities by armed and unarmed opposition to the Burundian regime in the course of the 1980s as well as the changing international climate<sup>5</sup> finally led to an opening by the military ruler, Pierre Buyoya. The starting point was a government of unity in 1989 and the introduction of multi-partyism culminating in free legislative and presidential elections in 1993 (Ndikumana 2005, p. 422, Curtis 2002, p. 9). Both elections were overwhelmingly won by the “Front pour la Démocratie au Burundi” (Frodebu), a political party mainly associated with the Hutu ethnic group. Frodebu originated in exile and was founded as a clandestine movement before it was finally registered as a political party in 1992. The newly elected first Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye, won 65% of votes compared to 32% for the previous officeholder Buyoya. The result of the legislative elections was even clearer, ending up in

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<sup>5</sup> This mainly refers to the “wind of change” after the end of the Cold War and increasing international pressure like the threat of withdrawal of U.S. aid.

80% of seats for Frodebu in the National Assembly and only 20% for Uprona (Sullivan 2005, p. 77). Frodebu and Uprona were the only significant parties and the only ones to pass the necessary threshold for being represented in the parliament (Curtis 2002, p. 10). Election results basically mirrored the ethnic composition of the country. Especially Tutsi saw this as a proof that voting had been more of an ethnic census. However, the new Ndadaye government was based on an inclusive strategy with a representation of both ethnic groups at the highest level of government, a cooperation of elites and certain measures to compensate the Tutsi minority. It was basically a consociational arrangement (Sullivan 2005, p. 76).

Despite these efforts, the government was short-lived as an attempted military coup by the still Tutsi-dominated army killed the president in October 1993 after only three months in office. Besides Ndadaye himself several high-ranking Hutu politicians were killed including the president and vice-president of the National Assembly and several ministers. Many other high-ranking Hutu politicians escaped assassination and fled to embassies or other safe places. The attempted overthrow of the government can be seen as the trigger of the ethnic civil war since it led to massive killings of Tutsi in the countryside by (Hutu) Frodebu militants and peasants and another round of retaliation by the army. About 50,000 people were killed in this first phase of violence while the civil war as a whole led to the death of at least 300,000 people. About 500,000 people, mainly Hutu, fled to neighbor countries over the years (Sullivan 2005, p. 76; Curtis 2002, p. 10).

### **3.3 Negotiations and political transition**

Partly due to strong international pressure, the attempted overthrow in 1993 failed leading to a long period of unclear power relations and a “creeping coup”. At first, efforts to negotiate a new power-sharing deal were undertaken with the Convention of Government in 1994. The arrangement was drafted by the UN Special Representative at the time and guaranteed 55% of government positions to Frodebu and 45% to the opposition parties. With Sylvestre Ntibantunganya, a Hutu from Frodebu, was elected as new president. But the real power still lay in the hands of the Tutsi-dominated military since the convention did not take the elections results from 1993 into account, and the question of military reform had been excluded from negotiations (Curtis 2002, p. 11; Falch/Becker 2008, p. iii). When the Convention of Government was still underway, a high-ranking Frodebu politician called Léonard Nyangoma

broke away from the political party and created the “Conceil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie” (CNDD). The founding of this movement with its military wing, the “Force pour la Defense de Democratie” (FDD) already took place in exile, more specifically in September 1994 in Bukavu (Democratic Republic of Congo, at that time Zaire). Violence generally continued despite the Convention and in July 1996 former military ruler Pierre Buyoya took power again in another coup with the official aim of ending instability and unclear political power relations.

One specific feature of the Burundian civil war was that the Hutu rebels never seized a larger territory inside the country, but followed a guerrilla strategy of moving in and out of certain areas. This was partly facilitated by the fact that the Hutu rebel groups had bases abroad, namely in Tanzania and the Congo. Generally, political and military activities were strongly connected with the Burundian exile and refugee communities in Africa, Europe and North America. This case is, therefore, normally considered as an example of militarization of refugee flows (Mogire 2006). Yet, also political parties like Frodebu had a significant exile presence and sections abroad. When negotiations had become almost inevitable the Buyoya government and the internal Frodebu negotiated the so called “political partnership” between September 1997 and June 1998; larger peace negotiations took place in Arusha/Tanzania starting the same month in 1998. These led to the signature of the Arusha agreement on 28 August 2000 and the installation of a transitional government in November 2001. The two larger rebel groups, CNDD-FDD and Palipehutu-FNL, however, only ended the armed struggle with agreements in 2003 and 2006 respectively.

At the end of this process, one factor stands out as especially important: While Burundi only had two relevant political parties representing the two ethnic groups before the civil war, the period of negotiations and transition saw a significant fragmentation. The following table merely shows the increase in political parties over time.

	<b>T<sub>0</sub></b> elections 1993	<b>T<sub>1</sub></b> negotiations 1998	<b>T<sub>2</sub></b> elections 2005
<b>No. of parties participating</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>No. of parties in National Assembly</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>No. of movements outside of process</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>

**Political party fragmentation in Burundi from 1993 to 2005**

At the same time there was a strong rise in political conflicts that seemed to shift constantly and to follow no particular scheme.<sup>6</sup> There is a general impression among many actors of the transition process in Burundi that political conflicts took on an unclear or even random character. The content analysis illustrated in the following is designed to shed light on the development of political conflicts among Burundian elites and the reasons for increasing fragmentation.

#### **4. Content Analysis: Political Conflict Lines in Burundi from 1997 to 2006“**

The content analysis serves the purpose of identifying changes in political conflict lines in Burundi during the period of peace negotiations and the political transition. If change can be identified, the central question is what kind of change has taken place; especially the relation to the dominant conflict line (here ethnic) is important. As already mentioned above, the study will be confined to the level of national political elites.

The first expected finding is that the number of political conflicts that are not inter-ethnic will increase with the start of peace negotiations and again over the process of the political transition. If this is the case, the second step is to identify those other

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with international expert, 11 December 2008.

conflict lines. The coding will indicate whether a conflict is inter-ethnic, intra-ethnic (-Hutu or -Tutsi) or runs along other affiliations.<sup>7</sup>

This content analysis mainly follows a deductive approach with a categorical scheme suggested by theoretical perspective, but the scheme has also been tested and adapted after a pilot coding of one year of news sources. The following sections will outline the concepts and their operationalization as well as the coding scheme, time frame and the selection of news sources. The section will end with a short overview on how the analysis following the coding process will be pursued.

#### **4.1 Framework and concepts**

The core research question of this content analysis is:

*Have political conflict lines on the elite level in Burundi changed over the specified period, and if yes, in what way?*

The natural starting point for the content analysis is to define what qualifies as a “political conflict” and how the concept can be operationalized. Though much of the academic work on contentious politics and political conflict focuses on collective action, and thus on mass phenomena like social movements, revolutions or wars, it is worthwhile starting from this general literature. Firstly, elites play a more or less prominent role in the different explanations. Contention on the mass level normally displays on the elite level whether this is seen as a cause or a consequence. Secondly, even though much of the relevant literature focuses on rather extreme events, mostly associated with violence of some kind, it also acknowledges that much less intense incidences like sit-ins, protests or demonstrations qualify as being contentious if they are not routine actions that are regularly scheduled (Bond et al. 1997, p. 556f). In addition, most intense conflicts normally start with much less visible episodes of contention.

Starting of from the Bond et al. article political conflict could be operationalized by the two central dimensions of contentiousness and coerciveness. But Bond et al. do not systematically treat coerciveness as a necessary condition for political conflict. Furthermore, the authors finally code coerciveness by the same indicators that define

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<sup>7</sup> The concrete underlying division has to be substantiated based on additional sources, such as reports of the International Crisis Group, the FAST data of swisspeace etc. Possible sub-categories of intra-ethnic and other conflicts include regional, extremist-moderate, political-military and internal-external conflicts.

violence (material damage and destruction, physical injuries and death) though conceptually they treat violence as a byproduct or outcome of conflict and explicitly state that coercion may or may not include violence (1997, p. 565 + p. 557). And other authors have shown that contentiousness alone is adequate to understand and investigate phenomena like revolutions (McAdam et al. 2001). Thus, this content analysis defines contentiousness as a necessary AND sufficient condition for political conflict.

The definition of McAdam et al. for contentious politics can well serve as the starting point for the definition of political conflict. According to it, contentious politics “is episodic rather than continuous, occurs in public, involves interaction between makers of claims and others, is recognized by those others as bearing on their interests, and brings in government as mediator, target, or claimant” (McAdam et al. 2001, p. 5). Overall, contentiousness is disruptive and creates uncertainty in the sense that it diverges from routine actions. Again in correspondence with McAdam et al. this analysis does not differentiate between institutional and noninstitutional actions since it does not assume that interaction has to be noninstitutional to be contentious. It makes even less sense to define routine actions by institutions and procedures in the context of a system in transition as in the case of Burundi.

What qualifies as routine action is obviously defined by the context, but generally speaking it signifies regular events and claim making within the channels of well-bounded organizations. It goes without saying that the threshold for contentiousness will be much lower in a post-conflict democratic transition than in established democracies where much interaction has become routine.

## **4.2 Operationalization and coding scheme**

Generally, for an event to qualify as a political conflict, the following criteria must be fulfilled:

The incidence:

- a) involves claim-making by political elites
- b) involves interaction between claim-makers and others whose interests are concerned
- c) is episodic
- d) is public

e) is not routine action.

The criterion of the involvement of the government has been dropped since it is not a necessary condition in a setting where only conflicts among political elites are considered. All remaining five features are necessary conditions. Accordingly, contentious action cannot a priori be linked to certain forms or goals of action. Furthermore, it is neither necessarily linked to violence nor do violent events automatically qualify as contentious. Thus, these criteria will not be applied in the decision whether an event qualifies as a political conflict.

The first step of identifying a conflict will be followed by coding different aspects of this conflict, especially with respect to conflict lines. To identify political conflicts from the news sources, indicators for the above outlined criteria need to be applied. The following list shows how the criteria can be traced in the texts:

**claim making by political elites:** statement or indirect quotation of an elite member or group making a political claim. This claim making might already be accompanied by further action.

**interaction between claim-makers and others** whose interests are concerned: reaction of those targeted by the claim indicated by statements, indirect quotation or by reported action in reference to the claim. These actors also have to be national political elites according to the general framework of this study.

**episodic incidence:** the incident is not a permanent situation, but only occurs temporarily within the period of interest (1997-2006).

**public occurrence:** the interaction is reported in the media. This condition is always fulfilled if an event occurs in the news services used.

**no routine action:** the incidence creates uncertainty. The kinds of qualifications – adjectives or hedges – used in reported statements are taken to indicate the uncertainty associated with the interaction.

If an incidence qualifies as a political conflict based on these criteria a number will be assigned to it. Each time the conflict issue and/or the actors involved change a new political conflict is coded. This way the number of conflicts becomes relatively high.<sup>8</sup> Each time the same conflict reappears the number assigned earlier will be coded. In a memo, the content of the conflict will be recorded in a more detailed manner to have an easy overview later and potentially merge conflicts at a later stage.

If an event qualifies as a political conflict, several features will be coded. The main purpose is to grasp the intensity and line of the conflict and thus, potential changes of them over time.

<b>Feature</b>	<b>Code</b>
the actor making a claim	actorA
the target(s) of the claim	actorB
other actors directly involved	actorC
the labeling of actors by themselves and by others:	labelA_s (self-labeling of A), labelA_oa (labeling of A by other actor), labelA_om (labeling of A by media) labelB_s (self-labeling of B), labelB_oa (labeling of B by other actor) labelB_om (labeling of B by media)
the conflict issue	con_[issue]
the conflict setting	set_in (inside the political system) set_out (partly or fully outside the political system)
the form of action	non-violent: non-violent_sp (speech), non-violent_a (action), violent: violent_mat (material damage and destruction), violent_phys (physical injuries and death).
the conflict line	inter-ethnic, intra-ethnic_H (intra-Hutu conflict), intra-ethnic_T (intra-Tutsi conflict) others

While violence is not used as a criterion to identify a political conflict, it will still be coded if a conflict is violent or non-violent, because it is obviously of interest which political conflicts tend to become violent and which do not. The general assumption behind the sub-categories is that speech is a less intense form of non-violent conflicts than direct action and material destruction is less intense than physical harm within the category of violent conflicts. The duration of conflicts will become visible after the

<sup>8</sup> In the test coding, one year (2000) had about 50 different political conflicts among political elites.



coding since the results will show at what points in time a conflict occurred and when it ceased to occur (which does not automatically mean that it has been finally settled).

The first three points include the coding of information on the kind of actor, e.g. state / non-state, organized / unorganized and concrete sub-categories potentially going down to individual persons. This information in combination with the labeling and the conflict issue can indicate which line a conflict is based on. However, as mentioned above it will normally not be sufficient to extract the exact affiliation. Therefore, only the parameter “inter-ethnic”, “intra-ethnic (-Hutu /-Tutsi)” and “trans-/non-ethnic” will be coded based on the information provided by these points.<sup>9</sup>

The period under investigation starts with the year 1997, one year before official peace negotiations started in Burundi. This year basically serves as the baseline measure of change. Since changes in conflict lines are expected to occur with peace negotiations and become manifest during the political transition, the following years should show a gradual shift – away from inter-ethnic conflicts towards other lines. The period of political transition starts in 2000 and ends with the first democratic post-war elections in 2005. One problematic aspect of the Burundian transition is that rebel movements have signed agreements with governments one after another, not all at once. Thus, these movements also enter the transition process at different points in time. It is therefore necessary to code political conflicts within the political system as well as between groups that are still outside the system and others that are part of the process. It goes without saying that those conflicts outside the system will overwhelmingly be violent while those inside will tend to be non-violent. The period ends in 2006, one year after the end of the transition, to check if the elections had any effect on political conflicts and underlying lines of affiliation.

Beyond the exact time frame the question is what sources are adequate and available for a content analysis of this kind. As Krippendorff has emphasized, “the inability to use direct observation is an invitation to apply content analysis” (2004, p. 26); but this does not automatically mean that any kind of source is useful to compensate for direct observation. The exclusive use of interviews to reconstruct events that date back several years, for example, is not a reliable method. In addition, there are basi-

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<sup>9</sup> The actual coding of news sources is conducted by using the program Atlas.ti.

cally no archives or other systematic collections of documents on the ground in Burundi. Thus, a content analysis of news sources seems to be a viable way to identify changing patterns in elite conflict lines. Such a content analysis focuses on manifest content (surface structure in the message) as opposed to the deep structural meaning expressed by the message (latent symbolic meaning) (Berg 2007, p. 308). Especially in communication science, the examination of texts is often applied “to understand what they mean to people, what they enable or prevent, and what the information conveyed by them does” (Krippendorff 2004, p. xviii). But this content analysis of news sources aims at reconstructing events (political conflicts) and the change of the underlying affiliations over time. The use of news sources to reconstruct past events can be criticized, because news are not a proper reflection of reality, but rather the view of reality through the lenses and logics of mass media. In extreme cases, an identified change could be rather due to a change in media preferences or organization than to actual change in real events. However, there is not only a lack of alternative options in this case, but there are also possibilities of, at least, limiting the problem of source bias.

Firstly, it is essential to use more than one source; secondly, sources with different biases should be used – here for example Hutu- and Tutsi-friendly services. And thirdly, sources with different distance to the events should be selected, because there is the tendency that the “further away” a news service is from the conflict theatre, the more intense a conflict will have to be in order to be covered. Thus, international, regional and local services should be included.

Though news sources can never be seen as a reproduction of real events, the bias in how media selects news and reports should be stable over time and thus, not distort results of the coding. In order to have a consistent sample of media sources as well as a mixture of local and international sources, the use of data from the “factiva” database seemed most appropriate. The reports over the ten-year period have been indexed according to coherent rules and include diverse sources ranging from the Burundian news agency (ABP) to big international agencies like Reuters. Texts also include transcribed reports from Burundian radio stations like Burundi Radio or Radio Publique Africaine.<sup>10</sup> Reports are either in English or French.

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<sup>10</sup> It goes without saying that local news sources are often biased, for example along the ethnic division. But this mostly shows in how certain events are reported. Single facts like numbers of casualties on government and/or rebel side can be biased or simply be false. The invention of whole events,

All reports between 1997 and 2006 that had any relation to domestic politics in Burundi had originally been selected. This is important since issues of newspapers or other units are not strictly independent of each other because many news events unfold in time and over several issues. The solution in quantitative content analysis commonly is to define sampling units, firstly, so that connections across sampling units, if they exist, do not bias the analysis and, secondly, to take care that all relevant information is contained in individual sampling units, or omissions do not impoverish the analysis (Krippendorff 2004, p. 99). For a content analysis that does not engage in quantitative measuring (e.g. word counting), but that uses news sources to trace actual events, the interconnectedness of streams of messages creates similar problems. The first precautionary measure here is to include all potentially relevant reports without any pre-selection. Only in a next step and by actually reading all these reports, those texts that have absolutely nothing to do with political conflict in Burundi have been excluded. The rest has been included for a more thorough check during the actual coding.

The connectedness of different news reports leads to additional problems that became especially visible during the pilot coding. The question arises how coding should proceed if the same conflict event has been reported by several news sources at the time. Since conflict events will be counted later, reports on the same single event would blur numbers. The solution here is to actually code the conflict event in all reports, but in the final analysis only count events with the same number occurring on the same date as one political conflict event. Alternatively, it would be possible to look into the coded passages in greater detail to check if really the same event has been reported. To code all reports can be helpful later because the density of reporting on a conflict can give insights into how important or intense the conflict has been. Another potential problem is that many conflicts are frequently mentioned in the news sources, though no (new) conflict event has actually taken place. Thus, there need to be certain standards on how long after a certain event reports can still be included in the coding. The decision here is that the event must have taken place within the last month before the date of the report. The reason for this time frame is that “factiva” also includes sources that only appear weekly or monthly. However, one month is still a very large time-frame. Therefore, it has to be checked in each single case if the

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however, has normally not taken place. The omission of certain events in some local sources can be compensated by the inclusion of other (regional and international) sources.

source really reports on a monthly basis only. Otherwise the threshold will be one week.

A more technical problem lies in the fact that claim-making by political elites can be reported without any information on a reaction. Thus, it is not clear from one news item if this is a political conflict according to the definition used. In these cases, the coding of a conflict is marked as preliminary, so that later on those events where no later interaction took place can be sorted out.

### **4.3 Analysis**

Once the coding of all political conflicts during the period of 1997-2006 has been finished, the number of political conflicts has to be counted. The different conflicts will be listed by including information on conflict line and conflict form. In order to support H1 it will have to be demonstrated that inter-ethnic conflicts have become significantly less important over time involving a visible increase in intra-ethnic and trans-/non-ethnic political conflicts among elites. Here it will also be necessary to take into account if certain conflicts are more violent and intense than others.

In this case fragmentation could be linked to a change in underlying conflict lines. However, the source of this change would still be unclear. To support H2 the development of conflicts over time has to be set in relation to the parallel institutional changes. Under a power-sharing arrangement no changes in conflict lines should occur. But most systems are not exclusively based on power-sharing or power-dividing provisions and therefore, could still provide incentives for changes. This part of the analysis also has to pay attention to whether conflicts have taken place within the internal or the external sphere. Since the peace settlements have taken place in a gradual manner in Burundi, changes could appear as being caused by institutional shifts while they are in fact simply the result of the integration of a rebel group into the political system, meaning a shift of conflicts from the external to the internal sphere. H3 can only be supported by excluding the other possible explanations. But based on this analysis, the underlying conflict lines will be traced more specifically to exclude the possibility that pre-existing lines of affiliation have simply re-emerged during the post-war democratic transition. This way it can be guaranteed that new conflict lines from civil war and their integration into the internal political sphere are responsible for the fragmentation.

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