A Case Study on the Arusha Peace Agreement

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Professor: Taylor

David Wage and Lois Haigh

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ABSTRACT

In August 1993 President Habyarimana of Rwanda and officials from the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) signed the Arusha Peace Accords. The peace agreement was the culmination of fourteen months of negotiation and mediation by the Tanzanian government, in conjunction with the Organization of African Unity and the governments of France, Belgium and the United States. The agreement was supposed to end a three-year civil war in which approximately 10,000 people had been killed. In addition, the accords sought to end Hutu political hegemony over the Tutsi, integrate thousands of Tutsi exiles into Rwandan society and democratize the Rwandan government, which had been dominated for over 20 years by an elite group of Hutus.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Case Study data was gathered from three sources; newspapers, articles from planning journals and published literature. It was important to collect information from a variety of sources to understand the history of the case and effectively analyze the dispute. Each source provided a unique perspective or interest involved in the conflict. The use of multiple sources helped to ensure all perspectives and parties were represented.

Data Collection

Newspapers:

New publications from Lexus-Nexis provided information from various publishers. Research from editorials and articles were used to identify important parties,
their issues and interests, and a timeline of significant events. Editorial articles often took
a strong position by representing the interests of a particular actor

Planning Journals:

Planning Journal articles were valuable sources of information regarding the historical background of the conflict. It was necessary to study the conflict over time, since the conflict had colonial origins. Many of the journal articles address specific elements of the peace process

Published Literature:

Books on loan from the Florida State Library gave a detailed account of the events which led up to the Arusha Peace Process and the resulting genocide to follow. These sources were particularly helpful in understanding outside effects on the peace process.

NATURE OF THE DISPUTE

Ethnic tension in Rwanda reaches far back in the history of the country. The Tutsi minority and the Hutu majority have likely always had disagreements. Yet, these two groups are more like each other than they are different. They each come from Rwanda, speak the same language, and share a lot of cultural similarities.

Tribal differences between the Hutu’s and Tutsi’s became more apparent following the arrival of Belgian colonists in 1916. They saw the Hutus and the Tutsis as two distinct cultures. The Belgians treated the Tutsis far better than the Hutus, and considered them superior. Not surprisingly, “the Tutsis welcomed this idea, and for the next 20 years they enjoyed better jobs and educational opportunities than their neighbors
To divide and conquer was a common colonial device that worked in Rwanda. By 1930 “Belgium's Rwandan auxiliaries were almost entirely Tutsi, a status that earned them the durable hatred of the Hutu (Case Study: Genocide in Rwanda, 1994).”

Many African Countries moved towards colonial independence following World War 2. The Rwandan struggle for independence from Belgian rule was lead by the more educated and prosperous Tutsis. The Belgian’s were angered by this rebellion and switched sides, favoring the Hutus. The Hutus seized the opportunity to exact their revenge by murdering “about 15,000 Tutsis between 1959 and 1962. More than 100,000 Tutsis fled to neighboring countries, notably Uganda and Burundi (Case Study: Genocide in Rwanda, 1994).” Tutsis who did not flee paid a high price; they lost their wealth and were placed in a low social status.

The Habyarimana regime came to power in 1973. The regime discriminated against the Tutsis systematically, but left them undisturbed most of the time. In 1986, in the country of Uganda, Tutsis formed an organization called the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). This organization was supported by moderate Hutus, and aimed to overthrow the Habyarimana regime and “secure their right to return to their homeland” (Rwanda: How the Genocide Happened).

The Habyarimana regime already had its hands full with problems other than the RPF insurgents. As a single party dictatorship the regime was naturally disposed to political problems. The fluctuations of the price of coffee lead to an economic crisis in Rwanda, and further eroded the popularity of the Habyarimana regime. The economic crises left many to live in extreme poverty while wondering when their government was
going to help their situation. In October of 1990, the RPF launched an invasion of Rwanda in an attempt to collapse the regime (Cousens and Rothchild 469).

The RPF’s invasion and domestic discontent were perceived as a significant threat to Habyarimana’s regimes ability to maintain its political position in the country. Habyarimana sought to deflect the growing dissatisfaction with his government and bring the Hutus back into his camp by espousing nationalistic Hutu ideology. The idea of Hutu supremacy was “readily mobilized to confront the largely Tutsi RPF; the extreme version of this ideology, which was to culminate in genocide, was associated with particular factions within the government” and especially “that of the president’s wife and her family” (Christopher Clapham, 198).

The RPF continued to attack the Habyarimana regime and force its way into the country. The Habyarimana regime felt increasing pressure as the RPF as the guerilla campaign gained more ground. The conflict became increasingly complex as France began to arm the Habyarimana’s forces and Uganda armed the RPF. Habyarimana embarked on a regional offensive were their campaign against the RPF crossed over the border into Uganda. The fighting produced pressure from the international community to end the conflict. By June 1992 the Habyarimana regime and RPF had reached a political and military stalemate. With no military solution in sight, demands for negotiations became irresistible (Cousens and Rothchild 470).

**CASE HISTORY**

The Arusha Peace talks began in June 1992. The peace agreement was mediated by the Tanzanian government, in conjunction with the Organization of African Unity and the governments of France, Belgium and the United States. The multilateral nature of the
Arusha talks provided a wider international context of power and reassured the disputants who were distrustful of each other.

The mediators first concentrated on reaching a durable cease-fire agreement as a means to build confidence. There was a creation of a power sharing administration where all parties would be represented. It started with a cease fire agreement, “under which each of the warring parties would continue to occupy the territory which it then controlled” which “left the RPF with a relatively narrow strip of northern Rwanda, while the government retained control over by far the greater part of the national territory” (Christopher Clapham, 202) In addition, representatives from Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Zimbabwe were charged with the task of creating a buffer zone between the RPF-held areas and the government-held areas in Northern Rwanda. Following the ceasefire agreement each party began parallel steps to ease tensions.

A second round of negotiations took place on August 10, 1992. The Tanzanian mediators’ next goal was the hastening power-sharing talks to avoid the resurgence of animosities in the future. The mediators wanted to establish a rule of law based on national unity, democracy, and respect for human rights. It was believed that an agreement on these core principles would commit each party to an “ideological set of values” that allow the parties to advance negotiations towards a legitimate power sharing basis (Cousens and Rothchild 474). The signing of a protocol on the rule of law on August 18, allowed the parties to proceed to a third round of negotiations concerning the issue of power sharing.

The negotiations for substantive power-sharing protocols exposed the internal conflicts among the Hutu’s coalition government in Kigali. Habyarimana’s internal
reforms designed to nullify the RPF’s demands had altered the domestic balance of power by gradually limiting his options in negotiations. The Rwanda government delegation included Habyarimana’s regime and the internal opposition, that is, two partners with two agendas. As the negotiations were essentially about power sharing, the internal opposition attempted to forge an objective alliance with the RPF in order to weaken the Habyarimana regime as much as possible (Stedman 34).

Dissent among the Hutu coalition affected negotiations since they had to reach decisions on their official positions before submitting them to Arusha. These governmental limitations created paralysis at the peace talks. The mediators were finding that it was significantly easier to control events at the negotiating table than in Kigali.

The Hutu delegation was eventually forced to reach an internal compromise regarding the power sharing procedures only to face resistance from the RPF. The major issue of contention between the RPF and the government’s proposals for power sharing was the structure for managing a transitional period before elections, particularly the powers of president. While the government was determined to keep intact the coalition government along the lines of the June constitution of 1991, the RPF proposed a transitional government based on new institutions (Walter 366).

The talks began to slow during the months of September and October as virulent conflicts over power emerged between Habyarimana and prime minister, Nsengiyaremye, surfaced. Their dissention “became the barometer of the government’s overall commitment to a negotiated settlement (Cousens and Rothchild 473).” Moderate civilian parties accused Habyarimana and extremist political forces of obstructing peace talks. The RPF naturally agreed and complained the delays were a result of an inadequate
mandate given to negotiators. On the other hand, Habyarimana’s supporters accused the prime minister of entering into an alliance with the RPF to undermine the state.

The Mediator’s attempted to reconcile the differences over power sharing. The result was a compromise on the protocol for a power sharing within the transitional government. The power-sharing framework became the heart of the Arusha agreement. Habyarimana would remain president during the transition; however most of his powers would be transferred to a cabinet led by a prime minister. The goals of the transitional government included: the implementation of democracy, the consolidation of national security, reconciliation, the repatriation of refugees and the establishment of mechanisms for post war construction. These broad objectives could be agreed upon, but implementation proved to be difficult without an effective framework for action (Walter 378).

The signing of the power sharing protocol effectively shifted the political balance of power towards Committee for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR) extremists who were wary of consequences associated with stripping Habyarimana of his power. At the same time RPF exposed plans of Habyarimana’s supporters to murder his political opponents, while Habyarimana “stoked the flames of extremism by denouncing the Arusha protocols as ‘scraps of papers (Cousens and Rothchild 473).”

When talks resumed in late November 1992, the bone of contention became the government’s insistence on the inclusion of the CDR in transitional institutions. However, the RPF insisted the CDR was not an official political party and did not deserve representation. The RPF’s position prevailed, thereby paving way for signing of the power sharing protocols. The CDR immediately repudiated the power-sharing
protocols, charging that they had granted enormous power to the RPF and its civilian supporters (Power 379). Habyarimana echoed these sentiments by proclaiming the negotiations were unlikely to implemented since they “did not take into account the proposals of the majority of Rwandans…the agreements did not come out of a consensus from the government side …Instead of its directives being taken into account by the Rwandan delegation, the delegation gets its directives from institutions that sometimes have no authority (Cousens and Rothchild 473).”

Habyarimana’s denunciation of the power-sharing agreement gave the CDR an excuse to revert to violence against proponents of negotiations. In January 1993; government death squads attacked Tutsi and moderate Hutu’s, while demanding the revision of protocols that had already been agreed upon. The RPF responded by launching a military offensive against the Hutu. The end of the cease fire was a turning point in the negotiations, ethnic polarizations were widened, the alliance between the moderate Hutu’s and the RPF was effectively dead and extremism flourished (Stedman 49).

Tanzania was faced with the difficult task of bringing the parties back to the negotiating table. The mediators organized a high level summit and obtained the parties commitment to conclude a peace agreement. Peace talks from March till June addressed the integration and formation of a new national army, the resettlement of refugees and the details of the transitional arrangements. By June 24 negotiators had completed all outstanding issues and the parties were ready to sign the agreement. The Rwandanese delegates suddenly reversed course and asked for a postponement to allow time to study all protocols. Habyarimana attempted to delay the treaty by objecting to the provisions
that provided for equitable distribution of military command posts; however Habyarimana quickly found that his options were narrowing due to mounting internal, regional and international pressure (Cousens and Rothchild 473). The international community was able to strong hand the parties into resolve their differences by threatening to halt the flow of outside aid. The Arusha Peace Agreement was signed on August 4, 1993.

CASE OUTCOMES

A successful negotiation process should include all stakeholders. The RPF were well represented which enabled them to produce a satisfactory result. Their success can be attributed to their negotiation skills, unity, and effective leadership. Before the negotiations the RPF was considered a rebel group against the Rwandan government. After negotiations the RPF were legitimate members of the government with the same status the former Rwandan government had. At the time of the agreement, they were quite happy with their newfound positions in Rwanda and the ability to repatriate Tutsis who wanted to come back to Rwanda. The RPF was never able to enjoy the fruits of their negotiations since the implementation of the Arusha peace was a failure and the CDR engaged in a clandestine genocide.

The signing on the Arusha Peace Agreement required that all sides pledge to “eradicate the deep-seated causes, which gave rise to war,” but Habyarimana was a reluctant signatory (Cousens and Rothchild 480). He was not satisfied with the RPF’s prominent role in the transitional government, which came at the expense of his executive powers. Habyarimana constantly attempted to derail the peace process and fuel the
flames of fanaticism. Since the results of negotiations did not produce a resolution in his favor, he declared the government delegation and negotiation process as illegitimate (Stedman 43).

Conspicuously absent from the power distribution was the CDR. Although they were a participant in the coalition government, they had refused to sign the code of conduct generated from the peace protocol. The RPF vetoed provisions which would have given the CDR a new role in the Rwandan government, arguing that it was not an independent political party and that its extreme belief in ethnic superiority was contrary to the spirit of settlement (Christopher 64). There were mechanisms for their participation; however they made a point of excluding themselves. In response to the perception that the RPF had obtained a larger share of the seats in the cabinet, the signatories held an olive branch to the CDR and other extremist parties by offering them participation in the transitional government after they had demonstrated their commitment to abide by the principles of the Protocol Agreement on the Rule of Law, indicated their support for the peace process, and agreed to discontinue their violence (Cousens and Rothchild 480).

While the CDR may have felt that it did not want to give up any of its power by even entertaining the idea of an agreement with the RPF, they ended up paying for their inability to compromise. Not only were they “reduced to less than a quarter of the seats in a government over which they had hitherto exercised unchallenged control,” they also became upset because the Arusha Peace separated the judiciary from the executive and it meant that they would have to pay for any crimes that they committed (Christopher 64).
Ultimately, the CDR and other Hutu extremists were not well represented at the peace agreements and didn’t feel their interests were addressed.

The substantive solution was not effective, in that it did was not an agreement that could be kept. The solution did not take into account the popularity of the RFP and other parties in the country. These parties status did not match what they received in the agreement. The solution did not factor in faction groups that were violent as well as volatile. These groups would prove to be the undoing of the agreement. The solution itself, had it been implemented, would have likely been good for the country.

Efforts to implement the agreement faltered from the start and finally collapsed on April 6, 1994 when the death of President Habyarimana was followed by the murder of 1 million Tutsi and moderate Hutu during a 3-month rampage (Power 340). The genocide marked the end of four years of international intervention in the mediation and implementation of the Arusha Agreement.

Conclusions

There were several critical challenges which may have doomed the Arusha Agreement. First, the agreement challenged the dominant ethnic basis of power without creating a viable alternative in the short term, and this caused an extremist reaction. Second, the agreement was internally fragile, which was compounded by an unstable regional environment that had a debilitating effect on the implementation process. Third, both the mediators and the parties to the Arusha agreement staked its implementation almost exclusively on international actors who were unwilling and unprepared to expend resources required to meet its provisions. Saddled with a precarious power-sharing
agreement with uncertain outcomes, the parties unrealistically sought deliverance from a less the benign external environment.

If third parties (such as the UN in this case) become a part of a part of an agreement their responsibilities are just as important as those of the conflicting parties. The participation of the western countries and the United Nations helped shape expectations regarding the extent of international commitment. Unfortunately, multiple actors at the negotiating table exaggerated the mediators and the parties’ perceptions of the international community’s ability to remain engaged and mobilize resources beyond the negotiations. Negotiations regarding the resources for implementation, post war economic reconstruction and refugee settlement were based on unrealistic expectations about role of international actors, particularly the UN who was to oversee the accords implementation. Establishing the necessary institutional oversight and peacekeeping force was not a popular proposal due to a lack of funding and the murder of 10 Belgian UN peacekeepers; however these arrangements were essential for the Arusha agreement to have a chance of success. Without the international monitoring mechanism, Habyarimana and the CDR had little incentive to honor the peace agreement.

The Arusha agreement ended in genocide rather than peace because it was constructed on a moderate political center that could not withstand the countervailing pressures of ethic mobilization and militarization beyond the negotiation table. It is true that the mediators did not have an effective strategy for dealing with the extremists, but the mediation process hinged on cultivating a moderate coalition. The agreement was an outcome of political moderation but it had implacable foes.
Negotiators must account for “spoilers” or leaders and parties who believe that the peace produced from negotiations threaten their power, world view and interests and use violence to undermine attempt to achieve it (Stedman 5). Negotiators were unable to account for the deception and stealth of Habyarimana, who was an inside spoiler or the acts of violence used by the CDR as an outside spoiler. Even ideal negotiations must be prepared for violence from leaders and organization who decide that the kind of peace in question is not in their interest.
Works Cited


Mpungwe Ami (1999), *Crises and Response in Rwanda: Reflections on the Arusha Peace Process, Whither Peacekeeping in Africa?* No 36:


