

In the first two articles Irene Bugingo and Charles Gasarasi provide comprehensive overviews of the Rwandan experience of trying to accommodate political pluralism in the aftermath of the genocide. The Rwandan experience is followed by S.S. Mushi's examination of the *ujamaa* and the single party state legacy for Tanzania's emerging multi-party system. In concluding this volume Yasin Olum and Paul Omach carefully trace Uganda's post-colonial political experience, raising the question as to whether the 'movement' is still capable of playing a constructive role in Uganda's democratization process.

The Challenges of Multipartyism in Rwanda

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Abstract

This article examines how Rwanda has tried to construct a multiparty democratic political system while at the same time building a new national unity and containing violent ethno-political competition. Attention is paid to strategies embodied in the electoral system to contain and manage the protracted conflicts that afflicted Rwandan political history, especially since the independence era. The cornerstones of the electoral system are power sharing, consensus, and national unity, which have been consciously utilized to reduce the downsides of pluralist politics. Additionally, elections are examined, with special emphasis on what they mean for Rwandans, and how they contribute to building democracy.

Introduction: Context

The people of Rwanda, through the Preamble of the Constitution, underline their determination to build a rule of law based on principles such as respect of fundamental human rights and liberties, pluralist democracy, fair power sharing, tolerance, and settlement of conflicts through dialogue. In article 52, the Constitution recognizes multipartyism in Rwanda; and nine political parties are registered.

Multipartyism is not a Rwandan value. It was introduced in the late 1950s as the wind of decolonization was reaching Rwanda. Political parties were introduced at a time of considerable tensions between political actors, the colonial power included. It is during this same period that some political actors deliberately chose to confuse ethnic belonging with political belonging. In some parties' names, ethnicities could be read, as was the case for *Parmehutu*¹ and *Aredetwa*.² This unfortunate ethno-political partition contributed highly to the killings that occurred in 1959 during the so called 'social revolution' that ended up forcing much of the Tutsi population to flee

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¹ Party for Emancipation of Hutu people (*Parti pour l'émancipation du peuple Hutu*).

² The Twa are one of the three "ethnic groups" that compose Rwanda's demography.

to neighbouring countries. It also ended up shifting the government system from a monarchy to a republic. Currently, efforts are being done to distance the political family from ethnic belonging, but much work is still to be done in order to see significant change.

Political parties have been either been created, abolished, inhibited, or resurrected depending on whether they support or undermine the interests of ruling powers. They were introduced in Rwanda with the support of the colonial power because, first, it was like a fashion, and secondly because they were to help emergent politicians to capture power. Right after capturing power, President Kayibanda Gregoire started inhibiting other parties until his Parmehutu party remained, *de facto*, the only party. President Habyarimana Juvenal, who took over power thanks to a military coup in 1973, ended up creating his party, the MRND, in 1975. He decreed monopolyism, effectively installing a dictatorship in Rwanda.

After almost 15 years of indoctrinating Rwandans by the MRND, multipartyism was resurrected in 1991 thanks to two main factors. One, was the wind of democratization blowing from western countries with its threat of withholding aid from non-democratic governments. Second, was the government's war against the RPF (Rwandese Patriotic Front), which claimed to be fighting to democratize the country. When the RPF won the war, putting an end to the genocide against the Tutsi in July 1994, it decided to maintain only political parties "...that were not involved in genocide," and banned those that were blamed for preparing and fuelling the genocide—mainly MRND and CDR. The 2003 Constitution ended a transition period of nine years, which also recognized multipartyism. Although many ordinary Rwandans were not in favour of putting multipartyism in the 2003 Constitution, enlightened citizens found that Rwanda could not stand as an island with a single party 'democracy' in a region and world where pluralist democracy was strongly seen as a key value of civilization. Taking into consideration this background, the current regime suggested that all registered parties be united in a 'Consultation Forum' where parties meet on a regular basis to discuss major national issues, and decide how to handle them. This 'forum' was later incorporated in the 2003 Constitution. Strong and constant opinions have decried this as a disguised strategy to establish a *de facto* monopolyism, but at the same time a favourable opinion finds this 'forum' as an ingenious way of protecting ordinary Rwandans from being disconcerted by politicians.

Again, bearing in mind how, historically, political parties as well as ethno-political strategies were used to either access or maintain power and political positions, the 2003 Constitution adopted two major principles for managing diversity based conflicts: (i) power should be fairly shared among all political actors and, (ii) decisions should be by consensus.

To avoid problems with elected positions, especially in the Parliament, legal and other measures were taken, for example direct and indirect votes were combined. Some seats were allocated based on universal suffrage, while others were decided by an electoral college composed of peers and other members.

Multipartyism and the electoral system contain genuine strategies to manage protracted conflicts that characterized Rwandan history, and allow for smooth societal change and development. Potential political conflicts are primarily managed via power sharing, consensus, and national unity. Therefore, this article analyzes the functioning of political organizations through the three mentioned principles. The following pages show how 'power sharing' and 'consensus' are utilized to reduce the downsides of pluralist politics and promote national unity. Additionally, we examine elections, with special emphasis on what they mean for Rwandans, and how they contribute to building democracy.

Managing Pluralist Politics and Building Unity among Demographic Groups
The genocide against Tutsi and other killings that took place in 1994 were ethnically and politically motivated. The determining factors that deepened the destruction of Rwandan society were lust for power and ethnic based hatred. Therefore, the Constitution of Rwanda decided to involve all parties in government positions, ensured all stakeholders were consulted and a consensus reached before any major decision is taken so as to address the tricky question of how to rebuild interpersonal and intercommunal relationships without breaking democratic values.

Power Sharing

In order to give less weight to the fight for power, and to avoid the tendency of some groups monopolizing power, all stakeholders are invited to be part of the government. Article 58 of the Constitution says: "The President of the Republic and the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies shall belong to different political organizations." However, no similar provision forbids the head of

state, the president of senate and the prime minister from belonging to the same political organization. If today they do not belong to a single party, it may be due to an unwritten rule. In the parliament, most of the seats (53 out of 80) are allocated following universal suffrage results, 24 others are reserved for women who are chosen in an indirect election, 2 seats are devoted to youth, and 1 seat is for disabled persons. Representation, inclusiveness and gender balance are core words as far as sharing power is concerned in Rwanda. When sharing ministerial portfolios, the Constitution states that whatever the percentage of votes obtained, the political party that won elections cannot hold more than 50% of seats in the Cabinet. In other words, the winner takes half and the other half is distributed among losing parties and technocrats.

Although exceptional criteria may be invoked when sharing political and other higher positions, the most commonly used are political organizations, national unity, and positive discrimination. The latter principle benefits special groups such as women, youth, and disabled persons. These groups are allocated special seats as both a balancing mechanism and also as a way of sharing power.

Political Organizations

Usually, political parties play three key roles: (i) they choose politicians, (ii) they structure their political orientation, and (iii) they ensure social integration. As far as power sharing is concerned, the structuring of the political orientation is done through various political programmes proposed to the electorate during elections. The legitimacy and importance of political parties depend on people's evaluation and acceptance of their political programmes. Elections are organized in order to place the right people in the highest government positions. It is obvious that a political party that has not obtained sufficient votes cannot claim to exercise power because its political programme has not been widely endorsed. Power sharing, which is not based on political programmes and votes, is against democracy because it does not take people's opinions into account.

Power sharing among political parties is a good practice. Nonetheless, from a practical point of view, debates with some Rwandans raise a number of weaknesses, which draw attention and require strategies to address them. For example, it is provided that a political organization that has won the election may not have more than 50% of all the members of cabinet.

Nevertheless, no legal provision specifies the practical details of this power sharing deal. It is not appropriate to talk of power sharing based on the single fact that the cabinet counts ministers from other political organizations. In the long run this situation is likely to weaken the political organizations in as far as the appointed minister is not necessarily the right person elected by his party organs. This would suggest that in sharing power, the determining criteria should be the number of votes obtained during elections. Unfortunately, this suggested criteria appears not to be fair according to the Rwandan government's philosophy in the sense that weak political organizations may find themselves completely excluded from power. However, it is recommendable—and practically possible—that party organs are consulted about any of their members to be appointed to the cabinet. This may increase, on the side of adhering parties, the feeling of real participation in government.

There is no doubt that existing constitutional provisions reveal significant progress in line with the social and economic development of the country. However, this progress may become artificial if the following obstacles are not addressed:

1. 'Adhering parties'³ should agree with the government's programme since power sharing is effective when it takes into consideration the political programmes of other political parties in the cabinet. It is expected that the political programme of the party that won the election is the one to be implemented. However, if other parties are called to participate in the government, it is also important to accommodate some elements from their programmes. Otherwise, power sharing may simply mean sharing government positions. A political party is not only an association or a group of individuals; it also embodies an ideology, a set of principles, a political programme and vision.
2. In Rwanda, there is one complete and well-organized political organization, the RPF. It is likely to win more than one successive term and keep including other parties in high political positions. The latter will not have an opportunity to see their programmes implemented because they are primarily passive implementers, while it is the political programmes of the ruling party that are being implemented. Voters hardly know whether or not there is any contribution from an

³ Adhering parties refer to those that join the winning party because the latter cannot take more than 50% of cabinet seats.

adhering party. People do not have the opportunity to understand the difference between parties' programmes or ideologies and, in the same vein, only one party is perceived to be driving all achievements. In this context – with no achievements on record, and with only two weeks of campaign time – it may be difficult for other parties to convince the electorate and win elections unless demagogic channels such as ethnicity or regionalism, are used to attract voters. This destroys any hope for an objective and democratic succession.

3. It is important to distinguish parties' executive leadership from governmental organs to ensure political parties' autonomy vis-à-vis any regime in place, especially for adhering parties. Indeed, people are used to seeing chairpersons of these parties nominated to the highest governmental positions. While this practice is quite common in Rwanda, it is also abnormal because you cannot be both a player and an observer. This is harmful to the autonomy and credibility of the political parties concerned. It also gives reason to those who create parties, or adhere to parties, to market themselves for appointments.

A recent study by the IRDP (2005) interviewed Rwandans from various segments of the community to obtain their thoughts about political parties. The results show interesting answers. For instance, in answering the question: "What is the main obstacle to the development of political parties in Rwanda?", 32.3% of the respondents were of the opinion that "internal problems within each party" endangers the future of the whole concept of multipartyism. According to the respondents, most political parties have neither a political programme nor a specific ideology to propose to the electorate, and that some had been created only for the sake of getting high government positions. A second opinion, held by 26% of the respondents, asserts that the main obstacle to the development of political parties is their "historical background and recent experience that require a certain level of control." This implies that the respondents thought that in order to avoid rallies or other practices that may turn into preaching hatred and ethnic division, the activities of political organizations should be controlled and limited. Otherwise, multipartyism may lead to violence and other forms of conflict.

"Lack of financial resources, which does not allow parties to carry out their main activities" came third as an obstacle to the development of political parties in Rwanda. Around 11% of the respondents found that parties do not open up because of the "...legal framework, especially the Consultative

Forum where the political parties are not free to express their opinions." Only 9.4% of the respondents did not see any obstacle for political parties to open up because "All the prerequisites are in place."

In Rwanda, there is a need to ensure minimum control over the activities of political parties to avoid possible conflicts or violence. There is also a need to have political parties with strong political programmes that can contribute to political stability and respect democratic values. This is a strategic and tricky issue that requires careful measures. However, the fragility of the Rwandan society should not become an excuse to maintain the *status quo*; as time passes and Rwanda keeps gaining socio-economic stability, multipartyism should also be progressively liberalised. Such a situation requires each political party to clarify its ideology and political programme before the electorate. The concept of national unity should be clearly defined, and it should not be restricted to that of an ethnic group so as to avoid opportunism and political manipulation that shield ethnic agendas.

National Unity

A political regime is differently qualified according to whether one is talking about Western or African countries. In Western countries political regimes are socialist, liberal, democrats, republican, communist, or conservative. But in Africa, a ruling power is seen through tribal, ethnic or regional lenses. This implies that it is neither the ideology nor the political project which guides African parties and their leaders, but rather the communities to which leaders belong to. Rwanda has not escaped this kind of perception. The political regime is known as Hutu or Tutsi according to the ethnic group where the head of the state belongs. Although this connotation is mainly conveyed by foreigners, some Rwandans identify themselves more with one regime rather than another based on 'ethnic' identity. Very often, this own-identification is not justified by any specified or perceptible individual interest. It is not unusual to hear or read things such as 'you took our power', or 'our/your government' coming from people who do not exercise any public power. In the same vein, there are politicians who think their ethnic belonging is sufficient enough to win elections and access power, deliberately equating an ethnic majority with a political majority just to mislead the population. In order to reduce or avoid such kinds of resentments, Rwandan laws, especially the Constitution, make sure that the principle of national unity is observed in all public organs.

A quick look through the Constitution shows how precious the concept of 'national unity' is to Rwanda in the aftermath of the genocide. From the preamble to the deep part of the supreme law, there are provisions recalling the 'unity of Rwandans'. Unity is taken into account in all actions regarding the formation and management of each political party.

Political organizations are told what they should or should not do in order to observe national unity in their daily business. They are prohibited from basing political parties on any discriminatory criteria. For instance, the Christian Democratic Party/*Parti Démocrate Chrétien* (PDC) went on to change its name to *Parti Démocrate Centriste*, keeping the PDC initials. This was the same for the Islamic Democratic Party/*Parti Démocrate Islamique* (PDI) that changed into the *Parti Démocrate Idéal*. Political organizations are requested to constantly reflect the unity of the Rwandan people and gender equality in recruiting members, putting in place their leadership, and carrying out their operations and activities (Art. 54, §2). The Constitution obliges political organizations to draw up candidates' lists taking into account the principle of national unity. In the same way, the Constitution stipulates that the head of state should take into account national unity when appointing members of the senate. This principle also applies in the selection of cabinet members.

However, this procedure – as well as the concept itself – remains general and vague. Indeed, there is no law which specifies the contents of the concept of national unity, making it subject to various interpretations. Actually, bearing in mind the negative consequences of sharing power based on ethnicity as was the case before the 1994 genocide, the government of Rwanda chose not to refer (even in speeches) to ethnicities. For some people, national unity refers to an ethnic group criterion. One should not forget that in addition to existing ethnic based diversity, post-genocide Rwanda counts other new groups based on their diaspora background and educational languages. It may not be wrong to assert that national unity goes beyond ethnicities and involves these new groups as well.

Positive Discrimination

For the sake of the precious values of representation and inclusiveness in power sharing, the Constitution secured a given number of seats and positions for social groups such as women, youth, and disabled persons. Although they constitute a large majority of the population, youth and women had not always been sufficiently involved in decision making organs.

Throughout Rwandan history, women's roles in politics have not been important. Women were minimally involved in decision-making in Rwandan traditional society. This marginalization continued up into the early 1990s. The current regime has acknowledged this weakness to the extent that the Constitution states that women should hold at least 30% of all seats in decision-making organs. Like in all other cases of positive discrimination, sometimes quality may be sacrificed for the sake of promoting a given group. Although people appreciate women's involvement in decision-making organs and consider it as a revolution, some believe that key political parties play a considerable role in influencing the choice of those women.

It is important to acknowledge the country's commitment and obligation to involve marginalized groups in decision making organs. This commitment has been adopted in the constitution. Marginalized groups are represented in the Rwandan parliament. Despite this representation, the Batwa community is still economically marginalized. Targeted mechanisms should be put in place in order to integrate this group in the development process.

A Consensus Model

Reaching a consensus is not easy, especially when it is about political principles or choices and issues regarding political power management. In its Article 9, no. 6, the Constitution provides that the state of Rwanda commits itself to conform to, among other fundamental principles, the "... quest for solutions through dialogue and consensus." This consensus model is reported to be guiding the cabinet. It is encouraged in other levels of decision making, and it is mandatory in the organ that groups together all political organizations in Rwanda: the Consultative Forum. It is provided that the forum's decisions shall always be taken by the consensus of the constituent 'political' organizations. To be effective, this requires all parties to have clear interests and positions, and to have the capability and freedom to articulate their thoughts and needs.

According to IRDP,

Considering the general opinion on multi-party system perceived in the past as a source of major conflicts and divisions, the Consultative Forum was created so as to put in place a suitable environment for dialogue and consensus. This principle was included in the constitution of June 2003. However, this principle has some weaknesses: dialogue takes place 'in camera' among political leaders and gives limited chance to public debate (IRDP, 2006).

Actually, the rest of the population is not informed of discussions inside the Forum or the position of parties regarding a given issue on the table. It is the speaker of the Forum who announces to the public which consensus was reached. As it is formulated, article 56 of the Constitution seems to deny any political party the space to operate outside the Forum. The provision states, "Without prejudice to the independence of each political organization and their collaboration, political organizations officially recognized in Rwanda shall organize themselves in a consultative forum." This provision does not seem to allow any possibility to form more than one Consultative Forum. Its interpretation so far is that only one Consultative Forum is recognized.

The Consultative Forum may appear to harm the freedom of political parties and democracy, but it played -- and keeps playing -- an important role by restraining parties from falling into the divisionism that has historically characterized political pluralism in Rwanda. Although various analysts have raised tough criticisms against the Consultative Forum, most party leaders, when interviewed publically, say they are comfortable with how business is conducted. They find that all the Forum's decisions are made after internal conflicting but transparent debates between all of them.

Inclusiveness to power, grouping all parties into a single forum and, on top of that, deciding to have a single voice over critical issue is not a bad thing in the aftermath of the deep genocide tragedy. However, the risk of having all decisions influenced by stronger actors is huge and prejudicial to core aspects of multipartyism and democracy. This is to say that over time, changes should be made to the system as social relationships and the political context evolves.

The September 2008 Elections in Rwanda

With the September 2008 parliamentary elections, Rwanda achieved something no other country had ever done before: the elections produced a legislature in which women outnumbered men. The results of those parliamentary elections gave women 45 out of the 80 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, which was 56% of the seats. In the preceding elections, women held 48% of the 80 seats. To promote the role of women in politics, the Constitution reserves 30% of the seats for women in all decision-making organs, including the parliament. For the purpose of observing this provision, numerous women have been appointed to senior government posts. By March 2008, women held 8 of the 20 cabinet positions, including the most important ones such as foreign affairs.

Many factors have contributed to these achievements but the most important seem to be the obligation to observe the constitutional provisions on gender equality, and the procedure of indirect suffrage that is used to vote for women.

The principle of power sharing, as described above, impelled the legislature to decide on how the 80 seats of the Chamber of Deputies should be distributed between all political actors. It provided that the general public (parties, independent candidates) contend for 53 seats. The other 24 seats were secured for women; 2 seats for the youth, while the remaining seat was set for people with disabilities. For the 53 seats, each party establishes a list of 53 candidates that are proposed to the public to be elected through universal suffrage. Electoral delegates are designated to elect the 24 women, while youth and disabled persons meet to choose representatives from their groups.

Most international and national observers proclaimed that the 2008 Elections were characterized by security, professionalism and transparency. The government put lots of energy into organizing and conducting these elections. Strategies to prevent violence and divisionism were also put in place. It is, however, important to understand the context under which these elections were held, how people see elections, how candidates communicate their political programmes, and how finances impact the outcome of the elections. First of all, what should we understand by 'elections'?

Understanding Elections

When ordinary citizens are asked what they think the term election means, their immediate answer is "the right to choose their leaders through the vote." However, one does not immediately get the feeling that there is a deep analysis of the voting process. For ordinary citizens, voting and elections mean the same thing. This simplistic understanding of the election concept hides its complexity. It implies a relationship between the representatives and the voters, or the people who give power. An elected representative is expected to fulfil the pledges s/he made during election campaigns.

Election implies making an accurate choice. Etymologically, the word election derives from the verb 'to elect'. In French, as well as in Latin, the word means 'to choose'. The Latin word '*eligere*' derives from *legere* (read), which shows how important knowledge and information are in order to make a deliberate choice. The fact that one is well-informed is as important as

voting. It is obvious that an educated person, someone who knows how to read, is better prepared to choose the right leaders who will meet his/her expectations. On the other hand, citizens' lack of information, or being unable to analyze if a candidate's pledges are reliable, constitute a real handicap in judging the effectiveness of the electoral process.

Elections do not simply mean casting the ballot. Voters should be able to request their elected representatives to fulfil their pledges through a protest vote during the following elections. This requires sufficient skills to monitor and analyze what the elected leaders have achieved during their mandate. In Rwandan elections, the turnout is always very high. However, this does not mean that people are eager to come and use that right to reward candidates who fulfilled their pledges or the other way round. People come to vote mainly because they think they have to.

The Better Way to Vote: Direct or Indirect Suffrage?

The electoral system determines the way people are elected: either as a single candidate by majority vote or from a list of candidates through proportional representation. Elections can have a single or several rounds of voting. In addition to the voting system, suffrage is an important concept. Suffrage is direct or indirect depending on citizens' rights to take part in elections. In Rwanda, both direct and indirect suffrages exist. The president of the republic is elected through direct suffrage. All citizens cast their secret ballots for the president. The legitimacy of this suffrage is reinforced by the fact that the president gets her/his power from the people s/he represents as head of state. The president is chosen by all the citizens who vote for him/her.

On the other hand, district mayors are elected through indirect suffrage via an electoral college. At the district level, political parties do not present any candidates. Also, candidates do not mention which party they belong to. The reason behind this system is, among others, fear of party-based violence that may occur between partisans.

As far as electoral representation and philosophy is concerned, mayors are accountable to the people in their respective districts through the electoral college. The election of mayors by an electoral college through indirect suffrage is a political choice based on the needs of the Rwandan context because elsewhere, such as in France and England, mayors are elected through secret ballots using direct suffrage.

It is now clear that the concept of elections cannot be separated from democracy which is perceived as a government by the people and for the people. However, elections are meaningful only when citizens have the right to choose the best opinion out of many that have been discussed during a debate session before the voting process takes place. The need for information is vital to ensure a reliable electoral process. In pre-genocide Rwanda, election campaigns were characterized by speeches that spread hatred and divisive messages, which prevented true democracy from taking place. How can one campaign without using a speech that divides people? This is a topical issue.

Today, Rwanda should be ready to deal with the significant challenges in launching a democratic process in which the opposition and a multiparty system are no longer synonymous with treason. This requires a process of reinventing citizenship, living together, and educating people about true democracy. Although there is a legitimate need for reconciliation, there is also an urgent need for constructive debate before any election.

Election Campaigns

Campaigns derive from the need to inform. Campaigns allow the voter to think and to judge. The person who is about to vote must be able to choose one candidate, among many, with an attractive political programme. Therefore, campaigns should precede any election to allow candidates and their party members to take their message to voters. In many countries, important election campaigns are strictly regulated by budgetary matters and duration. Campaigning political parties may also receive funds from the government. This occurs, for instance, in France, and in the US (federal level) where candidates can choose between being funded by the government or raising money directly from the public.⁴

Political Programmes

The formulation of a political programme requires experience and an analytical capacity that allows candidates to understand in depth the needs of society from various angles. Various skills are, therefore, required from the political, economic and social domains. Improvisation is not recommended because voters may underestimate the electoral pledges and the means to achieve the programme. Popularity seekers have the tendency of taking other people's

⁴ In the 2008 presidential campaign, Obama refused public government funding while his opponent McCain accepted it.

ideas without taking into account people's problems or concerns. This is pure demagoguery. Politics, like any job, requires skills, knowledge and experience. Special skills are required to communicate and to convince. But it is also a domain where politicians learn to fulfil electoral pledges or promises. This is what makes the whole electoral process more credible.

To get involved in politics is as important as getting involved in any job. While a job contract binds the employer and the employee, a political programme also creates a strong link between the elected representatives and the citizens from that particular constituency. The political programme is the candidate's benchmarks that will be used to evaluate him/her during the following election campaign, which will result in removal from office by a protest vote or the renewal of a term in office. Therefore, every politician must fulfil the pledges s/he made during the election campaign to avoid voters' sanctions. Commitment to politics requires fulfilment of someone's election pledges.

Financing Campaigns

Election campaigns require sufficient human, material and financial resources. Candidates must meet voters countrywide if elections are being held at the national level, in their provinces if elections are taking place at the provincial level, and in the constituencies if elections are taking place at the local level. Posters are put in public places, leaflets are distributed, and in some cases people campaign from door to door. Qualified human resources are needed to prepare various election campaign documents. All these require sufficient means. Where do candidates get the means to organize their campaigns? Usually, when a candidate is a member of a political party, the party funds his/her campaign with money donated by party members, and in certain cases the government contributes.

In Rwanda, the laws governing political parties stipulate that political parties can receive government contributions if they won more than 5% of the votes during the previous election. This system weakens small parties and independent candidates since these are not eligible for government funding during election campaigns. Note that the laws governing political parties prohibit political parties from receiving external donations (Art. 22). There are disagreements surrounding this article. Why should political parties be prevented from receiving donations when they lack enough resources? What is the reason behind this decision? Perhaps the idea is to

prevent political parties from being manipulated by donors for purposes other than national interest? Unfortunately, it is hard to think of the financial independence of political organizations while this independence does not exist for most public institutions.

Democracy depends essentially on the capacity to inform the voters. Citizens have a lot to gain from democracy, but there is a cost and the price must be paid. Financing political parties and election campaigns is a problem in every democracy. In Rwanda, financing political parties is a major topic of contention.

Code of Conduct

During election campaigns, it is necessary to follow a given set of rules. The code of conduct during election campaigns is determined by the laws and rules that provide for equal opportunities to all candidates in such aspects as access to the media, public meetings, or any other means helpful to a candidate during the election campaign. Particularly, in a post-genocide context with strong ethnic divisions, candidates' speeches must be prepared with care. A candidate who uses ethnic or divisive language is punished by the law. Candidates must struggle to maintain national unity.

Election campaigns are a regulated activity in Rwanda in the sense that even in the countryside district mayors have to authorize campaign venues. Election campaigns are convened by the district mayor who invites the local population to attend. All candidates can address the local population only once. The law does not authorize candidates to organize meetings in the same sector more than once (Article 11).

Although it is reasonable to supervise election campaigns, it is also important to mention the fact that too much control and too many rules infringes on a candidates' freedom. Moreover, the limits to what a candidate can or cannot say to avoid breaches to national unity are so abstract and broad that it can be subject to misinterpretation or prevent open debate

Electoral systems in most African countries have been accused of having weaknesses such as the risk of ethnic clashes, the absence of a true nation-state where citizens share the same key ideals and collectively work for the prosperity of their own society, elected representatives are not accountable because citizens are not educated and are not used to demanding

explanations from their leaders, citizens and many political leaders are not sufficiently politically mature, and political opportunism. Rwanda is not exempted from these weaknesses. The fear of the consequences of an immature democracy pushed Rwanda to opt for a political system that reduces or prevents eventual political-based conflicts. It is in this context that members of parliament are elected based on a 'blocked list' that each party or group of parties propose to the electorate. In spite of the obvious advantages of the blocked lists, major concerns are raised about the system because democratic rules are not followed within political parties. Worse still is the lack of transparency in the selection of candidates, and the lack of an accountability mechanism. Indeed, quite often the elected representative feels more accountable to the political party officials who have put him/her in their position than the citizens s/he represents. Moreover, the violence that characterized elections at the end of the colonial period has drawn the attention of political leaders and government authorities to the need to control the process. As the level of literacy grows in Rwanda, and as inter-communal relationships develop and the genocide ideology is diluted, conditions for more open and uncontrolled political competition will settle.

Conclusion

Balance is the key to building any vibrant, durable, and stable democracy. Basic political freedoms of speech, to organize, and to conduct periodic free and fair elections must be guaranteed, while at the same time those seeking to use these basic freedoms to abuse the rights of others and attack the legitimate political system must be controlled. A state that makes the mistake of providing freedom without basic protections risks political and societal breakdown. However, a too controlling state chokes off the freedoms that are the lifeblood of democracy. Against the historical background of violent ethno-political mobilization that culminated in the 1994 genocide, Rwanda is striving to reconcile the nation by building an inclusive political community that allows for essential political freedoms to be exercised in a responsible manner. Discerning the proper balance of freedom and government guidance is emerging as a fundamental dilemma in Rwanda's political order.

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