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RESEARCH ARTICLE

EXHUMED CONFLICT IN EAST AFRICA: CAUSES AND IMPLICATIONS OF ETHNIC CONFLICT IN BURUNDI.

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Abstract

The world-wide conflicts around ethnic identities remind that communal identities can be a potent force in contemporary societies. Ethnicity is more central to the political process of many African countries including Burundi as the oppressed population struggle for their share of the national cake. As a result, ethnic conflict gives rise to unstable domestic system as it takes place within national borders. This research employed qualitative research method so data collection was dependent on primary sources in addition to the researcher's know-how. The complementary secondary data was through the internet and library materials to help the understanding of the matter at hand. The paper examined the causes and implications of ethnic conflict in Burundi. It is done with the hope that trends that lead to conflict and those that lead to cooperation can be identified. The study found lack of equity and justice, high illiteracy levels and an external threat as factors which fuel ethnic conflict in the country. Besides, the education system by ethnic and regional entities has created a gap between state institutions and the population resulting in vicious cycle of frustration in which ethnic conflict triumph. Ethnic conflicts can thus be interpreted as struggles for the collective goods of the country.

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Introduction:-

Burundi is densely populated, with over four-fifths of the population involved in subsistence agriculture. As such the most important natural resources are land and agricultural produce which are the basis of material wealth for the state. The most important source of income for the state is its foreign currency earnings through the sale of coffee, tea and cotton. The lack of natural resources such as gems, minerals, oil or timber has a great bearing on the economy which affects the way the state is shaped. The state benefits through the sale of resources to the external market and through controls and regulations earn some income. Conflict and peace practitioners show that a larger diversity of natural resources have powerful influences on security and social unrest globally (1 2 3 4). The actual production or extraction of resources itself is not a major concern. In Burundi rebel activity on coffee plantations was not so much concerned about capturing the coffee harvest per se but rather as a means to weaken the government's income. To this end, there was occasional looting of the agricultural produce. The development policy

and conflict literatures highlight the influence of high value natural resources on conflict and security at multiple scales (5 2).

In Burundi, the importance of ethnicity in the recruitment, deployment and political role of military forces has been well-recognized for several decades. Military service, sometimes thought to be a homogenizing, even an integrative, process has proven in many cases to be ethnically divisive and a source of major conflicts (6 7). Violence is the systematic use of a particular marker like ethnicity for appropriating economic surplus, either directly through resource grabbing or looting or indirectly through exclusion from jobs, businesses, or property (8). Ethnic plurality and competition predict intervention whereas ethnic dominance lowers the likelihood of coup activity. Ethnic factors have this impact primarily in elite struggles rather than in mass turmoil. The primary conditions include ethnic distinctiveness, geographic concentration, interethnic inequality, "alien" state penetration (and fear of exclusion), ethnic organisation, and external support. Burundi has witnessed conflicts with ethnic connotations involving fight between the majority Hutus and the minority Tutsis which has been a key national concern. Historically, the Tutsis have held power, controlled the military forces and dominated the educated society. There has been ethnic discrimination in the country which has affected, for example, higher education and certain branches of the government like the armed services and the judicial system. In such situations the less measurable consequences of conflict like displacement, insecurity, segregation, loss of livelihood, widespread fear, and the sapping of the morale of an entire society are ignored (6 9 8).

Furthermore, Bujumbura and its surroundings as well as Bururi Province have been privileged with infrastructural investments capable of generating revenues. As a result, manufacturing was based almost entirely in Bujumbura. Those in the southern provinces were mostly involved in rent-seeking activities including gaining access to the state, financial institutions, import and export firms and the construction sector. Empirical studies strongly support this explanation that the conflict dampening effect of high income levels is probably the most robust result in the literature investigating the causes of conflict (10 11; 12). This reinforces the argument that control of the state as a foundation of privileges, the army as a means to enforce and protect the control and the education sector as a means of accessing it, are vital for the southern elite. It is argued that economic, political and social inequalities are likely to provoke relative deprivation that would contribute to the willingness of people to instigate conflict (13 14 12). The southern province thus acts as a core area in Burundi, despite the fact that it remains a structurally poor region. Studies unveil the causes of conflict to be poverty which stands out as the most robust driver (10 12). The southern region was associated with other privileges like good jobs, positions and recognition. Thus, the southern province as a core area in Burundi was an area essential for a group to expand a group's physical, social or psychic area to identify with it, increase it and expand it; to focus on it strongly and energize that focus with all love, power and skill.

The predatory system has led to a highly skewed distribution of resources according to sectors and regional dimensions. This illustrates the maximization of the rent-seeking potential for the existing elite within the centralized state to create and maintain structures to reflect regional and ethnic characteristics of the elite. Studies on inequality and ethnic groups indicate that in highly unequal societies, both affluent and poor groups relative to the national average are more likely to engage in conflict (13 12). Ngaruko and Nkurunziza suggest that sharing of rent in Burundi has become a political tool to calm down opposition, to buy out potential trouble makers and warmongers or to pay for the loyalty of fellow politicians (15). While the army, the state and the tiny private sector in Burundi received the vast majority of resources, the agricultural sector as the main source of exports as well as the occupation for the vast majority of the population has suffered in comparison. It is argued that domestic conflict might be observed at high levels of national wealth if some groups are likely to be dissatisfied with their share of the national economic prosperity (12 10). In terms of investments, Bujumbura and Bururi Provinces received a much better share with an extreme rural/urban divide in development. For instance, investment in agriculture and industry between 1972 and 1992 was about 20–30% and 70–80%. In relation to the Growth Domestic Product (GDP), 46% on agriculture, 37.7% on services and 16.7% on industry in percentage terms. As Hammouda points out that the state economic policy changed in relation to the levels of investment in agriculture compared to the industry and service sectors (16). These investment decisions by the government clearly placed agriculture, though the country's economic backbone, at a disadvantage. In this situation, there is the likelihood for people to employed violence systematically for economic gain, for the appropriation or systematic exclusion from access to property, occupations, business activity and resources (8 17 18 19).

Method:-

This research is based on qualitative research method. Data collection is dependent on both primary and secondary sources in addition to the researcher's know-how. The secondary data was through the internet and library materials include magazines, articles, book chapters and books to aid the understanding of the matter at hand. The journals and reports accessed from the Internet by the researcher include other relevant material with regard to conflict in Burundi and the Great Lakes Region. The research is analytical in nature for the fact that it attempts to review the root causes of the genocidal violence in Burundi and the extent to which ethnicity has been at the centre of political games and conflicts in the area. Scholarly and empirical studies explaining social, political and historical factors leading to conflict in Burundi were accessed. The resources used are designed to investigate the historical account of the social system in Burundi, the dynamics and causes of the 1993 Burundi conflict. Documents and agreements used include those that feature efforts at transforming and ending conflicts in Burundi such as the Arusha Declaration, the United Nation's resolutions and other bilateral and multilateral territorial agreements.

Result:-

The study analyzed the degree to which certain factors can lead to conflict. The results discussed in the subsequent sections focus on the sufficient conditions for escalation of violent in Burundi. The factors perceived to be the causes of conflict in the country are discussed.

Economic causes:-

The type of economic policies that governments choose plays a significant role in determining the likelihood of conflict. Studies suggest that the causes of rebellions include income inequality, economic decline, state repression, international economic and political dependency, wars, invasions and interventions. (20 21). In a study of 63 countries, Boswell and Dixon revealed three clusters of factors inducing violent conflict; (i) relative deprivation (inequality and/or economic decline), (ii) resource mobilization (economic development, (iii) dependency (indirect influence through inequality, repression and slow economic growth¹). This suggests that conflicts could actually be caused by some economic factors. It is not only the absolute level of wealth per se that matters for conflict, but rather how this wealth may be distributed within a society. The argument is that individual's incentive to rebel is high if the income and economic opportunities are low, especially in the presence of valuable natural resources rents (12 22 20). According to Garfinkel and Skaperdas, how vast the resources are also determines the greater efforts that will be devoted by individuals to engage in conflict (23). Violent conflicts around scarce resources are most likely to occur in the rural and peripheral areas in poor countries where the state's capacity is limited (24 25 26).

The Burundian economy is largely agricultural based as the country does not have many mineral resources. The main export product is coffee which accounts for about 80% of the country's foreign exchange earnings. This puts the country's economy in a very difficult situation with regard to changes in the world market. Since, the majority of the population depends on subsistence agriculture, the security to plant, tend and harvest crops is therefore very important. The economic troubles of Burundi should be seen in a broader context than that of civil war and sparse resources. Even without these upsetting problems, the country would still be disadvantaged by the iniquities and inequalities of the world economic system (28).

The underdevelopment the country is a result of the negative combination of fragile economies at the time of independence and an unfavorable international system suggesting that drought, a poor natural resource base and dependence on primary exports interacted with an unreceptive international environment. In recent years however, the more compelling explanation for lack of development has been weak states, which also explains the onset of violent conflict (29). This evidence suggests that its violent struggles come from several sources. In addition, the conflicts may also persist as a result of a poor environmental base that is being rapidly depleted leading to drought, poor soils, inhospitable climates and disease causing famine. The resource extraction hypothesis as the debate surrounding violence suggests that while wars may start for some reasons, the motivation factors may change during the process is evident in Burundi. For instance, the Tutsi-dominated army is accustomed to great wealth and political power which is a threat to the Hutu. The rebels in Burundi were not largely financed through natural resources while the army, largely from the minority Tutsi, financed through primary commodity exploitation and gain of control over these resources. The army was the favourite beneficiary of the state income with its capacity to serve and protect the system from the majority of the population. In the government spending, military salaries consisted of

¹ See Boswell & Dixon 1997)

8% of total expenditure in 1992, which came up to 15% after Buyoya took power in 1996 and goods and services in military spending rose from about 9% in 1996 to about 15% in 1999 (30 31 32). High-ranking military officials also received economic opportunities and huge powers of patronage. Thus, the warring factions fought for economic gains with the minority group (Tutsi) seeking to deprive the majority (Hutu) from the economic benefits. State income was also used to buy political opponents with offers of worthwhile positions in public enterprises or powerful civil service jobs. Such political appointments to positions of economic extraction could therefore link control over natural resources to conflicts (33).

The over reliance on the exportation of primary commodities strongly prevalent in Burundi is a risk factor for outbreak of conflict. It is argued that why rebel groups start a violent rebellion does not really matter, rather how they finance themselves and then suggests that a high level of primary commodity exports is likely to lead to conflict because primary commodities are easy to loot. However, the rebel movements in the country are not largely financed through looting coffee or other products of Burundian production, rather they are financed by external interests groups in the diaspora. For instance, the government planned to come up with policy changes that would have undermined well-established elite interests. These included enabling small businessmen, mainly Hutu, to benefit from privatisation by reducing bid bonds by 80%; probing the conditions under which the right to refine and export gold had been granted to a Belgian firm before the elections (implying corrupt dealings); the return of Hutu refugees, some of whom had been living in exile since 1972 and their attempts to regain their land and property; and the replacement of many Tutsi civil servants with Hutus. Tutsis reacted to this perceived threat to their power and interests by assassinating President Ndadaye only a few months after his inauguration (34).²

There was a highly skewed distribution of resources by the state. The army, the state and the tiny private sector in Burundi have access to a lot of resources, leaving the agricultural sector, though the main source of exports and occupation of the population, under-resourced. The conflict reflected the Tutsi elite's fear of losing control over the state through democratic reforms, and Hutu anger at having their chance at legitimate access denied (35). The processing and exporting of agricultural produce is controlled by the state and this is where wealth creation occurs. This is associated with the politics of the state in dealing with the agricultural produce. For instance, the pastoral area of Imbo region was a strong battlefield between the rebels' majority Hutu and the government army's majority Tutsi. The main roads leading to neighbouring countries like Tanzania, Congo and Rwanda were subjected to heavy fighting between the two groups in order to curtail the supply of the agricultural produce from each other. Cars on the road were burnt in an attempt to discourage drivers as well as suppliers. In fact each group was fighting to control the single economic asset.

The two groups fought several times to control the area where those products are cultivated. The leading elites mostly from the minority failed to influence the farmers who mostly came from the majority not to provide food and shelter to rebels or hide them. Thus, although the Tutsi controlled about 90 percent of the country's economy, the rebels still managed to get hold of the Tutsi's cows and other nutritional stuffs on several times for their survivals in their 10 years forest war. Thus, the nature of politics could actually lead to economic crises and violent competitions. As long as leaders are preoccupied with their individual survival and as long as that survival is unfavourable to development due to the dynamics of politics, development cannot occur and violent conflicts are likely to persist (36; 37).

The researcher feels that economic causes of conflicts in Burundi are therefore linked to political causes. For instance, greed is a highly political attitude, more especially when it is expressed by a state machinery and elite class, since it undermines the equitable and sustainable distribution and use of natural, social and political resources, thereby exploiting the livelihood of millions of citizens. As such, we now turn our attention to the discussion of political causes of conflicts in Burundi.

Political causes:-

In Burundi, there has been a tendency of an elite-led mobilization where incumbent political leaders from one group appealed to images portraying another group as an enemy. This could cause hostile feelings toward the other group that are capable of inciting violence and stirring up ethnic fears. This leads to predatory policies such as the case

² Reyntjens, L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en Crise: Rwanda, Burundi 1988–1994, op cit; Reyntjens, Burundi: Breaking the cycle of violence, op cit; Lemarchand, Burundi: Ethnic conflict and genocide, op cit; International Crisis Group, Burundi: Neither war nor peace, Arusha/Nairobi/Brussels, 2000.

when the ruling political elites (the Tutsi in power) use state machinery to deprive the rebels or majority Hutu from state privileges and seek domination over the rival group (the Hutu). The result of such a process is a spiral of antagonism and ethnic war. Thus, conflict in Burundi is also primarily about elite struggles for control of the state. Studies on Burundi have noted the central importance of competition for control over the state (37 38 39 40). The state and the predatory activities of those in power have much to do with the onset of conflict in Burundi, as the state is almost the sole provider of employment and sole agent of economic redistribution. Control of the state is therefore a powerful political asset which brings with it the power to decide over the allocation of all the country's resources (41 42).

Harold Laswell's adage that politics is a question of 'who gets what, where and when' applies in a very literal way in Burundi.³ The misuses of power, exploitation, and control over the state have had a say concerning conflicts in Burundi. For instance, the state income went to private hands for the consumption of small elite. Additionally, it was often channeled into financing repressive state mechanisms such as the army protecting this system from the majority of the population. As Beatrice Hibou remarked, "In Burundi ... the struggle for control of the most important purchasing offices has been a factor in the development of the civil war."⁴ Control over the state and political power is associated with the control over an economic opportunity. It is this blending of politics, economics and oppressive power that has been the recipe for violence in Burundi.

[In Burundi] There were two categories of school—one for the children of the Tutsi chiefs, another for the Hutu children. The Hutu were taught—are prepared for agriculture, and the Tutsi are prepared to govern. It is like this today in Burundi. The Tanzanians also have schools for themselves where they learn—how is it called?—the social rights—for example, the politics of the country. For the Hutu it is the métiers like mechanics, construction, and carpentry. These are their chosen schools for us, the technical schools....⁵

In terms of appointments to senior governmental positions, before 1987, most of the ministers, ambassadors and governors were Tutsi. These kinds of segregation policies were rigidified in post-colonial Burundi during the 1960s as some Tutsi clans came to dominate provincial leadership, pushing aside both Ganwa and the few Hutu who held authority.⁶ After independence, there was a shift to Tutsi domination concerning power offered by the new post-colonial state and many Hutu were excluded from the government. When the Tutsi-dominated military faction from the southern province of Bururi seized control of the cabinet, the Hutu were generally eliminated from the military.

High-ranking members of the military also shared in other economic opportunities and had vast powers of patronage.⁷ Thus, the monetary value of the few positions in the bureaucracy which were available could motivate "individuals ... to fight in order to control the state and hence the sources of rent it gives access to".⁸ The fact that the south remained structurally poor and dependent on remittance from the 'productive' parts of the country seems to support instances of corruption in the system. If, for instance, a region privileged over others in terms of infrastructure was not been able to build a sustainable local economic base, it could be said that this infrastructural investment must have been mostly inappropriately, unsustainably or not actually carried out. Thus, the regional privilege did not extend to all the inhabitants of that region, but rather to those who managed to gain access to the state via their connections to the region. To show their dissatisfactions, the Hutu demonstrated and asked for the implementation of their constitutional rights.

The Tutsis on the other hand were not in a position to prohibit constitutional changes because UPRONA as a party as well as the Tutsi members of the Assembly could not command the blocking minority of 20%. It thus can be said

³ H Laswell, "Politics: Who gets what, when and how..." 1936.

⁴ B Hibou, The social capital of the state as an agent of deception; or the ruses of economic intelligence, J-F Bayart, S Ellis & B Hibou, *The criminalisation of the state in Africa* (James Currey, Oxford, 1999): 86.

⁵ Liisa Malkki, *Purity and exile: Violence, memory, and national cosmology among Hutu refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 133.

⁶ See for example Rene Lemarchand, *Burundi: Ethnic conflict and genocide* (Cambridge University Press, 1995) on how Tutsi clans came to dominate administrative posts across a period of about 40 years from the 1920s through the 1960s.

⁷ International Monetary Fund, op cit; International Monetary Fund, *Burundi – recent economic developments*, Washington DC, 1997.

⁸ Ngaruko & Nkurunziza, op cit, p 389.

that politics is among the causes of conflicts in Burundi. This can be observed in the post independent leadership where only one province and only one family ruled the country. For instance, President Michele Micombero who ruled the country from 1966 to 1976 and President Jean Batiste Bagaza who overthrew Micombero and ruled from 1976 to 1986 as well as President Pierre Buyoya who also overthrew Bagaza and ruled from 1986 to 1993 were all from the historically low-status Hima subgroup of the Tutsi and one province, Bururi, which is located in the southern part of the country. During their rule, the country was in peace and the only unofficial complaint was that the country had become a family ownership, since the three leaders held power for a long period amounting to nearly three decades. This resulted into the political feeling that only that specific family was and could lead the country,

Meanwhile President Melchior Ndadaye who won 1993 democratic elections was not from that family. His tremendous victory surprised many since his opponent Buyoya was from the family, which ruled for more than three decades. This was like a paradigm shift and it is even said that those who assassinated Ndadaye were mostly from the elite of power who ruled the country from independence until the democratic elections in 1993. Besides that, during campaigns, the public feeling was that Buyoya will be the winner of the elections as he was previously on the throne for nearly eight years and also came from a politically strong background of the Hima subgroup in the Bururi Province. It was therefore not regarded as a tough political struggle between the two as Ndadaye was merely a bank staff with little political experience.

The responsibility of authority should not be taken lightly and the importance of proper government and the need for balance can hardly be overlooked. Consider the family structure for example, husband and wife may not always agree on the way things are run despite that they share common goals. This, however, gives them the opportunity to exercise character and patience and work together to find a workable solution. This process brings out the best in them. If a husband were to rule his home with an "iron fist" and suppress his wife and stifle all her ideas, his family would suffer. As such in order for man to run a straight line, checks and balances are needed. The type of a political system in Burundi affected the incidence and intensity of protest behavior with more intense protests in elitist and autocratic than democratic states (21; 43). The regularities in such situations indicate the significance of ethnic groups as actors in militarizing and escalating the struggle, strengthening ethnic boundaries, and reducing the chances of negotiations (44 36). Violence occurs when hostility toward an out-group is justified that is made stronger by existential fear, the groups should have the opportunity to mobilize, and hostile attitudes should grow stronger (43).

Ethnic causes:-

In the pre-colonial Burundi, ethnic divisions existed but were not inherently conflictual. Ethnic identity then was linked to competition for control over the state. Ethnicity was and still is the most important factor in determining an individual's life chances, in education, profession, and too often in life or death itself (44). The effect has been a deep and existential fear and mistrust of the other group, reaching the level of continual fear of genocide on both the Tutsi and the Hutu sides. An action of one group against individuals of the other could be regarded as an attack against the whole group, triggering 'preventative' killing of the perceived aggressors. The reason that the violence resulting from exploitation does not manifest itself in the form of a class war of elite versus oppressed is the ethnic element. Actual conflicts over scarce resources, which would pit poor, rural Tutsi together with their poor, rural Hutu neighbours against the urban elite, are superseded by a perceived mortal conflict between ethnic groups. This perception is used by those in power in times of instability in order to mobilise support and justify their privileged position (45).⁹ In addition to this instrumental use of ethnicity, however, ethnically based fear and hatred has developed into a potent independent source of conflict during the course of the cycles of violence.

Ethnicity has also shaped the regional dynamics of the conflict. Alliances between Burundi rebels and other fighting groups have also revolved around ethnic categories. Conflict is favored when there is interethnic rivalry and at the same time the groups have low positive interdependence, are unequal in socioeconomic status, and when the subordinated group perceives the superior as violating norms of fairness.¹⁰ Anything that greatly increases ethnic salience is likely to produce increased attention to collective goods and – given ethnic inequality – to increased apprehension of discrimination. What then generates perceptions of unfairness is rivalry when a group is

⁹ Hammouda, op cit, p 14.

¹⁰ Bélanger, Sarah, and Maurice Pinard, "Ethnic movements and the competition model: Some missing links," *American Sociological Review* 56 (August 1991): 446-57.

subordinated or disadvantaged in economic opportunity, social status, political voice and fights, or cultural expression. These conditions stimulate grievances that arouse moral outrage.¹¹ Ethnicity could be the strongest cause of conflicts in Burundi. There are many reasons as to why this is the case, one of which is that since independence the country has been ruled by the minority Tutsi who are only about 14 percent. All the three presidents mentioned earlier (President Michele Micombero, President Jean Batiste Bagaza and President Pierre Buyoya) as well as Louis Rwagasore who ruled before the three, were all from the minority Tutsi. The other point explaining that ethnicity played a major part concerning the conflicts in Burundi is the killing of Mr. Ndadaye who was the first Hutu to be elected the President of the Republic of Burundi. Unfortunately, he was assassinated only after three months in office. Mr. Ndadaye was assassinated along with those closer to him - the ministers, governors and parliamentarians – as long as they were Hutu. It is said that Mr. Ndadaye was assassinated by factions of the Tutsi-dominated armed forces, which led the country into civil war.¹²

Geographical causes:-

The geographical location matters in the context of Burundi. By geography, we mean the context in which “we live and move and have our being”.¹³ McDougall pointed out that “geography is the way things are, not the way we imagine or wish them to be, and studying it is just as basic to a child’s maturation as arithmetic, which teaches $2 + 2 = 4$, not 3 or 22.”¹⁴ Geography is defined in terms of the location, size, and resources of places. It has some amount of influence on politics with Tutsis at the forefront. The struggle for territorial expansion and henceforth commercial and colonial competition among states continues unabated and possibly grow more violent. Thus, whether for reasons of security and prosperity, or for reasons of morality and duty, geography played a significant role in the Burundian conflict. Human perceptions of geographical realities and possibilities were as important as objective realities. In this regard, Mackinder asserted that it was not only knowledge or ignorance of the world beyond one’s ken that rewarded or punished a given state or civilization, but how that knowledge was perceived and interpreted.¹⁵ In Burundi, it is also believed that the conflict erupted because the Hutus felt marginalized by the Tutsis who had to resist in protecting their control over some core area of the state. Ted Robert Gurr has analyzed this point in *Minorities at Risk*. He showed that whenever a group (Tutsi) dominates the entire political scene, another (Hutu) in certain way, forms a force as a reaction to the dominant group.¹⁶

The geographical factor is, therefore, associated with the conflicts in Burundi. As indicated earlier, a number of leaders of Burundi (including Michele Micombero, Jean Batiste Bagaza, and Pierre Buyoya) were all from the southern part of Burundi (Bururi Province). However, the winner of the 1993 elections, Ndadaye, was from the central part (Muramvya Province). His assassination could also be regarded as an attempt to return power and leadership to Bururi in the southern part of Burundi. It should also be noted that most of the power elites were originating from Bururi. These people did not concede at all to the failure of their Bururi candidate in election, because of their high level of confidence. The assassination of Ndadaye, the speaker and deputy-speaker of the National Assembly, led the country was in turmoil, with many civilians killed and hundreds of thousands displaced or forced into exile in the aftermath of the coup which make organization of parties difficult (46 47).

From independence to the 1993 event, coming from the southern part of Burundi meant an added advantage including getting good jobs and high positions. Being born in the southern part of Burundi meant status and pride. The geographical location of a candidate was an important element in elections in Burundi. Most of higher government posts were held by the southern people. Promotions, scholarships, privileges and advantages were all in great percentage accorded to those southerners of Burundi. The southern was a core area and this of course resulted in conflicts, and the easy win of Mr. Ndadaye in 1993 indicated that people were tied with ‘one system’, ‘one family’ and ‘one region’.

¹¹ Belanger & Pinard, 1991:449

¹² U.S. Department of State, Background note: Burundi (March 2007). Available: <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2821.htm>> (accessed March 15, 2007)

¹³ And geography “does not argue: it simply is.” Hans W. Weigert, et al., *Principles of Political Geography* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1957), p. 5.

¹⁴ McDougall, W.A. (Spring 2003). Why geography matters... But is so little learned. *Foreign Policy Research Institute*

¹⁵ McDougall, W.A. (Spring 2003). Why Geography matters . . . But is so little learned. *Foreign Policy Research Institute*

¹⁶ Gurr, Ted R., *Minorities at risk* (Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace Press, 1993): 4

Discussion:-

The objects of ethnic contention such as power, jobs, armaments and collective goods such as access to education, civil rights, collective respect and prestige, and political rights are prevalent in Burundi. The other causal variables explaining conflicts include rational choice, economic competition, cultural content, political mobilization and modernization among other things (37 48 49). Some or all of these objects have been the focus of confrontations between Tutsis and Hutus in Burundi. Consider the access to the state and the civil service for instance. In Burundi, this was restricted to the minority Tutsi. Competition was curtailed by excluding the educated Hutu and those with leadership potential and through the use of threat. Some Hutu families even opted not to send their children to school in fear of this exclusion, which in certain instances, was very extreme. However, it should be noted that although the extreme mechanism of exclusion was primarily targeted at Hutus, there were other groups that were equally denied access to the state and its prospects for economic advancement (37 50). These groups included most Tutsis who did not come from Bururi, the rural youth without the opportunities to improve their life, the Twa and most women.

Violent conflict is very much a part of the development dilemma in Burundi. Traditionally, the development community has lacked integrated perspectives on warfare, and characterized assistance in complex emergencies as “humanitarian” rather than developmental. As such any discussion on conflicts in Burundi may be incomplete without a look at the country’s development dilemmas, which include lack of economic progress, environmental degradation, poor soils and climates, poor health and education indicators, massive levels of population movements, exploding urban growth, and disintegration of state services among other things (51 52 37). It is now generally recognized that complex emergencies and sustainable development lie at opposite ends of a continuum and that both “development” and “relief” professionals must have a clear understanding of this connection.

Burundi does not have significant amounts of such resources, thus the main source wealth is coffee. The process of extracting, processing and selling coffee is not conducive to the same patterns of violent control and smuggling of diamonds or timber. While the exploitation of the coffee industry and agricultural production in general has indeed been central in funding the state's capacity to carry out violence, the rebel groups have not financed themselves in this way (53 54). Finally, the control over Burundi's natural resources has not suddenly become an end in itself (in theoretical contrast to a political aim) through the dynamics of the conflict, but is rather an integral part of the political constitution of the state, before, during and after outbreaks of violence.

Conflict in Burundi occurred as a result of political opportunity where there is enough political space to mobilize without facing effective repression and territorial base. It is revealed that ethnic rebels cannot mobilize unless they are territorially concentrated in some region and/or have a territorial base in a neighboring country. This means that there is a greater likelihood of conflict between conflicting groups if there is a greater opportunity for those groups in an ethnic conflict to mobilize for violence. Genocide may require an opportunity only on the side of the perpetrating group. According to Kaufman (2010), ethnic conflict for that matter genocide could be caused by a process described as mass hostility, chauvinist political mobilization and a security dilemma that interact to create a spiral of escalation (54). Unequal opportunity concerning education was seen as one of the main means of controlling access to the bureaucracy in Burundi. It was revealed that the state investment in educational infrastructure was regionally skewed to privilege the southern provincial origins of the ruling elite and the capital city (56). Bujumbura and the southern province of Bururi had the lowest students per classroom and per teacher ratios. Southern provinces were generally better off than the neglected Northern provinces. This implies that not only were the Hutu students excluded but so were the northern Tutsi. Describing such differences, Malkii quotes her informants and says.

Through some of its policies, the government deprived the majority Hutu their basic rights as citizens but provided privileged considerations to the minority Tutsi. There were a number of instances of segregation policies where the majority had been prevented by the minority to have access to state institutions. Though not necessarily spelled out clearly in the constitution for instance, such instances could be seen in land acquisitions and appointments to senior governmental positions. In considering the areas surrounding Bujumbura for instance, it is common knowledge that the population in Mutanga, Kiriri and Musanga is predominantly minority Tutsi. Land tenure is another concern that continues to be an unsettled issue. The Tutsis occupy most of the lands and beautiful houses in these areas (36 49). The second coming back to power of Buyoya in 1996 after he failed in 1993 election could also be taken as an example of ethnicity as a factor of conflict in Burundi. Buyoya overthrew Mr. Ntibantunganya Sylvestre who was a Hutu. In addition, the succession of Hutu-Tutsi leadership and the formation of rebels were all based on ethnic

grounds. This brings about the discussion of Burundi's geographical location as an important element in the conflict (49).

Conclusion:-

The study explores the causes of conflicts and to assess the extent to which economic, political, ethnic and geographical factors are sources of conflicts in Burundi. This is a task so challenging in view of the various conflicts in Burundi, as well as the extraordinarily fractured political landscape existing at the time of conflicts. The power of ethnicity in causing conflicts in various parts of Africa, and Burundi in particular is revealed to be significant. Among other things, conflicts evolve from emotional reactions to events that are both extraordinary and salient to the nature of the polity. These same emotional reactions lay at the root of the destabilizations that are consequences of violent conflicts. Anger, powerlessness, urgency and surprise are some of the components of the emotional syndrome found at the root of both the onset of the violent conflict and its aftermath. As a response, state security becomes the goal of both the perpetrators of genocide and victim survivors. The Tutsis who are basically pastoralists are said to have occupied a rather superior social position compared to Hutu elements in the traditional class structure. It is worth noting that each group explains the roots of ethnic conflict in its own way. Some Hutu politicians point a finger to some irreconcilable differences in the past. Others claim that the Belgians had manipulated the Hutu ethnicity by indicating that the Tutsis control the state, the army and the economy. Undoubtedly, much of the country's wealth, thus, a considerable amount of the country's economy is concentrated in Tutsi hands. This then raises the issue of the distribution of power and wealth, which cannot go without notice for the continued existence of the country, depends on it.

The collective portrait of the Hutu is, therefore, that of a wronged group of people that see vengeance instead of appeasement as the only way out. And to safeguard their position, it becomes rather imperative for the Tutsis to use force in the face of threats for survival as a minority group. However, one is bound to wonder over the Tutsi's political dominion considering the fact that they stand for only 14 per cent of the population and have a shaky sense of unity with regional and sub-ethnic divisions in addition to the fact that they have lived side-by-side with the Hutus in the pre-colonial era, both committed to monarchical legitimacy. It, therefore, can be argued that the Hutu-Tutsi conflict is a new observable fact, with roots in the colonial state and in the enlistment of ethnic identities to garner support. Politics has dominated discourses about the conflict in Burundi without sufficiently appreciating the essence of politics. Underlying this appreciation is the equally valid saying that politics arises from, among other things, scarcity. Burundi has been ruled by a political-military oligarchy that tightly controls the state and appropriates all decision making without recourse to citizens' demands and desires. Where the majority of the citizens' lives are intertwined with their land and its resources, it need not be emphasized that their demands will invariably be economically, politically, ethnically and geographically linked. There has been a tendency by Burundi governments to resort to coercion, repression and violence in addressing citizens' grievances. At the centre of the conflict in Burundi are unjust structures, among which are the management policies instituted by the country's various administrations.

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