

**Burundi**

# *Ethnicity in Burundi*

## *Group selection*

There are three groups in Burundi, the **Hutu**, the **Tutsi**, and the Twa (Pygmy). Yet, only the first two are politically relevant in Burundi. Indeed, the power relations between Hutu and Tutsi have crucially shaped the political trajectory of the country since independence.

## *Power relations*

*1962-1965.* A kind of inter-ethnic power-sharing with more or less equal proportions of Hutu and Tutsi; parallel, the Ganwa King ruled until 1966 before he was deposed and exiled in a coup led by Tutsi officers; however, the unsuccessful coup of Hutu officials in 1965 was the major turning point.

*1966-1988.* In 1966, Burundi became a republic; one should note the significant split among the Tutsi => Tutsi-Hima elites from Bururi province dominated politics for decades, also excluding Tutsi factions from northern Muramvya; But Hutu continued to be the main victims of discrimination and prosecution until the reform programme of Buyoya.

*1989-1993.* Through the reform programme, Hutu became equally represented in all major state bodies of political nature and were increasingly recruited into higher civil service positions; but since Tutsi domination in the army and the security services prevailed and Buyoya as a Tutsi and his UPRONA party were still in power, Hutu are coded only as “junior partner”. One might even argue that Hutu were still “powerless”. This might be a matter for further discussion. Power shifted in presidential and parliamentary elections in 1993 followed by the installation of a government of national unity under Ndadaye and a strong FRODEBU/Hutu majority in the National Assembly. This shift of power was only temporary because of a coup in October 1993, therefore the short period of “Hutu rule” is not coded separately.

*1994-2001.* This period was especially difficult to code because of recurrent institutional vacuums and changing arrangements at the

centre; the coding here mainly starts with the “Government Convention” of September 1994 which granted the (Tutsi) opposition 45% of government positions. Though this is close to a 50-50 powersharing, institutions were increasingly paralyzed, president and parliament impotent and de facto the Tutsi dominated army ruled; thus this is not coded as a power-sharing arrangement, but a domination of Tutsi that was continued after the military coup in 1996 until the Arusha agreement in 2001.

*2002-2005.* In November 2001, the transitional government was installed, led first by Buyoya (as the UPRONA/Tutsi representative) with the FRODEBU/Hutu representative as his deputy; the FRODEBU led Hutu faction received few more government posts (14 compared to 10 “Tutsi” posts), but taking other compensating mechanisms into account and continuing Tutsi domination over the army, this basically was a 50-50 power-sharing - even after the presidential changeover on 30 April 2003. The transition period ended with the newly elected president, Pierre Nkurunziza, taking power in August 2005. There are no reliable population data over all time periods, therefore the group’s shares are partly estimations.

*2006-2021.* Elections were held in 2005 after the transitional period. Power-sharing provided by constitution: 40% of the cabinet seats are reserved for Tutsi. The ruling party can still be considered a Hutu party being the former Hutu rebel group, and president Nkurunziza is a Hutu as well. Thus, Hutu coded as “senior partner”, Tutsi as “junior partner”.

Elections were held in 2010. After the boycott of the elections by most parties, Nkurunziza was the only presidential candidate to run and won the election with over 90% of the vote. There are reports of harassment of opposition parties conducted by Nkurunziza’s party CNDD-FDD and violent actions including executions taken by its youth wing Imbonerakure. It seems that the violence was rather a matter of political than ethnic competition, as the Hutu-led (and more extremist) FNL was also targeted by the CNDD. Aside from the Hutu-dominated CNDD-FDD (representing mainly rural Hutus), the Tutsi-led UPRONA participated in the election. The government was formed based on the constitutional power-sharing formula. Given the weight of the CNDD-FDD in the coalition, Hutus are continued to be coded as “senior partners” and Tutsi as “junior partners”.

In 2014, tensions rose when a Tutsi minister was dismissed and, as a response, three other Tutsi cabinet members from UPRONA resigned. However, despite the alarms, the ethnic balance in the executive power remained in place. The most important event during these years was the deep political crisis experienced in Burundi, sparked by the authoritarian turn of President Pierre Nkurunziza.

In April 2015, Nkurunziza announced he would run for a third term in the July 2015 elections, immediately sparking protests in the

country, concentrated in the capital Bujumbura. Political tensions increased during the coming months, and violence escalated to sizeable levels throughout 2015, increasing fears of an imminent civil war outbreak. Although violence intensity decreased in 2016, political tensions remained (<sup>747</sup>). These events were linked to an increase in ethnic antagonism and ethnicity has determined some of the purges in the army by President Nkurunziza. However, as Human Rights Watch declared, “the current tensions in Burundi are primarily political, with the government targeting anyone suspected of opposing it. Victims of abuses include members of the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups. [...] The government seeks to portray the opposition as predominantly Tutsi, even though it includes many Hutu” (<sup>748</sup>; also see <sup>749</sup>; <sup>750</sup>). Although there are many reasons to worry that the government will soon tear down the ethnic power-sharing system, the formation of the government still follows the ethnic quotas specified in the 2000 Arusha Agreement (<sup>751</sup>). Thus, the situation with the Hutu as “senior partners” and the Tutsi as “junior partners” is continued.

The aftermath of the unrest brought about political instability that further threatened the power-sharing arrangement between the Hutu and the Tutsi. In particular, Nkurunziza’s new constitution, which seems explicitly designed to expand his power, changed the legal framework of the Arusha Agreement. “The CNDD/FDD spent the better part of Nkurunziza’s third term revising the checks and balances installed by the Arusha Accords, which had limited the party’s room to maneuver and undermined its ideology of majoritarian (i.e., Hutu) dominance” (<sup>752</sup>). Reports by the Bertelsmann Stiftung and the International Crisis Group also highlight that ethnic power-sharing is in danger after the new constitution was accepted in 2018 (<sup>753</sup>, <sup>754</sup>).

After the unexpected death of President Nkurunziza and following the May 2020 presidential elections, Évariste Ndayishimiye took power in Burundi. In his cabinet, Tutsi still have (limited) representation (<sup>755</sup>) and, at least at this level, the power-sharing agreement still holds. In particular, both the current and former vice-president are Tutsi and belong to UPRONA: Gaston Sindimwo (2015–2020) and Prosper Bazombanza (from 2020). It is true that if the new provisions included in the 2018 constitution are to be implemented, the Tutsi could become powerless or even discriminated, but that does not seem the case yet in the beginning of 2021. While state repression along ethnic lines (namely against the Tutsi, see <sup>756</sup>) exists to some extent, it seems this had more to do with party allegiances than with ethnic identities (<sup>757</sup>). Thus, the previous coding is extended to 2021.

<sup>747</sup> [Human Rights Watch, 2016]

<sup>748</sup> [Human Rights Watch, 2016]

<sup>749</sup> [Deutsche Welle, 2015]

<sup>750</sup> [Deutsche Welle, 2016]

<sup>751</sup> [Jones & Wittig, 2016]

<sup>752</sup> [Nantulya, 2020]

<sup>753</sup> [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020]

<sup>754</sup> [International Crisis Group, 2019]

<sup>755</sup> [International Crisis Group, 2021]

<sup>756</sup> [International Crisis Group, 2021]

<sup>757</sup> [Nantulya, 2019]

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## Political status of ethnic groups in Burundi

*From 1962 until 1965*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Hutu	0.85	SENIOR PARTNER
Tutsi	0.14	SENIOR PARTNER

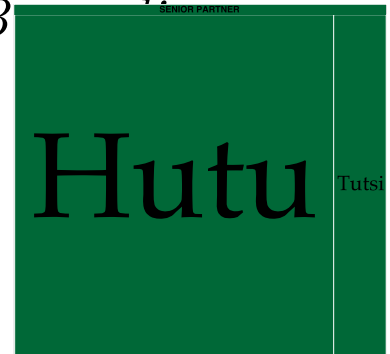


Figure 126: Political status of ethnic groups in Burundi during 1962-1965.

*From 1966 until 1988*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Hutu	0.85	DISCRIMINATED
Tutsi	0.14	DOMINANT



Figure 127: Political status of ethnic groups in Burundi during 1966-1988.

*From 1989 until 1993*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Hutu	0.85	JUNIOR PARTNER
Tutsi	0.14	SENIOR PARTNER



Figure 128: Political status of ethnic groups in Burundi during 1989-1993.

*From 1994 until 2001*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Hutu	0.85	POWERLESS
Tutsi	0.14	DOMINANT



Figure 129: Political status of ethnic groups in Burundi during 1994-2001.

*From 2002 until 2005*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Hutu	0.85	SENIOR PARTNER
Tutsi	0.14	SENIOR PARTNER



*From 2006 until 2021*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Hutu	0.85	SENIOR PARTNER
Tutsi	0.14	JUNIOR PARTNER



Figure 131: Political status of ethnic groups in Burundi during 2006-2021.



*Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Burundi*

*From 1962 until 2021*



Figure 132: Map of ethnic groups in Burundi during 1962-2021.

	Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
■	Hutu	27 177	Statewide
■	Tutsi	27 177	Statewide

Table 45: List of ethnic groups in Burundi during 1962-2021.

# *Conflicts in Burundi*

*Starting on 1965-10-17*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Burundi	Military faction (forces loyal to Gervais Nyan-goma)	Hutu	1965-10-17	Explicit	Yes	No
Government of Burundi	Frolina	Hutu	1990-08-12	Explicit	Yes	No
Government of Burundi	Palipehutu	Hutu	1991-11-22	Explicit	Yes	No
Government of Burundi	CNDD	Hutu	1994-09-12	Explicit	Yes	Yes
Government of Burundi	Palipehutu-FNL	Hutu	1997-03-13	Explicit	Yes	No
Government of Burundi	CNDD-FDD	Hutu	1998-06-06	Explicit	Yes	Yes
Government of Burundi	RED-TABARA		2012-10-03			
Government of Burundi	Military faction (forces of Godefroid Niyombare)		2015-05-13			
Government of Burundi	FPB		2015-12-10			