

Rwanda

Ethnicity in Rwanda

Power relations

1962-1994

Kayibanda (1962-73) and Habyarimana (1973-94) both legitimized their regimes by Hutu majority rule and had an institutionalized structure of discrimination against Tutsi; Hutu majority rule ended with the RPF taking power in July 1994 after the genocide.

1995- 2000

RPF introduced power-sharing arrangements of the Arusha accord, but made major changes such as the installation of a strong executive presidency, imposing the dominance of the RPF in the government, and redrawing the composition of parliament. What Reyntjens calls the “illusion of inclusiveness” is also reflected in the fact that since early 1995, Hutu elites became the victims of harassment, imprisonment and physical elimination, conducted mostly by the RPF. Atrocities committed by the Rwandan army and/or allies during the two Congo wars against Hutu refugees (not only militias) are another case in point. By mid-2000, out of a total of 169 of the most important office-holders, 135 (or about 80 percent) were RPF/RPA and 119 (or roughly 70 percent) were Tutsi ⁽³⁷⁶⁹⁾. Tutsi are, therefore, coded “dominant” and Hutu “discriminated”.

³⁷⁶⁹ [Reyntjens, 2004]

2001-2017

In a second wave of migration from Rwanda, an intra-Tutsi division became increasingly obvious between returnees and genocide survivors - similar to the split of Hutu under the late Habyarimana regime (North-South division). What further complicates the period from about 2001 to 2005 is that ethnic rhetoric was condemned by Kagame and his party and official posts were increasingly given to Hutu. Since the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2003, Hutu hold 15 out of 29 positions in the government, and even 13 out of 18 ministerial portfolios. With Bernard Makuza a Hutu is prime minister since 1999. However, since access to power is regulated by the RPF, it seems appropriate to code Hutu still “powerless” and not “junior partner” for the period 2001-2005. But this decision might be disputable.

Additional Information on the power configuration in the national executive, contained in a US diplomatic cable does support the notion that the many Hutu included in the national executive can be regarded as being “token” members of government. “An analysis of the ethnic breakdown of the current Rwandan government shows Tutsis hold a preponderant percentage of senior positions. Hutus in very senior positions often hold relatively little real authority, and are commonly “twinned” with senior Tutsis who exercise real power. The military and security agencies are controlled by Tutsis, generally English speakers who grew up as refugees with President Kagame in Uganda. The 28-member cabinet is evenly split among Tutsis and Hutus, but most key ministries are in the hands of Tutsis (Hutu ministers do head Health and Agriculture, ministries which affect the lives of most Rwandans)” (3770). Furthermore, the exclusion of the persecution of war crimes committed by the RPA before, during and after the genocides by community-based Gacaca Courts is a further indication of the powerlessness of the Hutu.

3770 [Wikileaks, 2014]

Paul Kagame was reelected president with over 90% in 2011. He further strengthened his grip on executive power. “The (political) system is in fact a skillfully designed institutional façade that conceals the real distribution of power. All major political and power-related matters are decided by the president, together with his key advisers” (3771). This assessment is shared by a report of Newsweek, which notes that Kagame concentrates power in a small RPF/Tutsi elite (mostly English-speaking) by harassing, jailing or executing rival opponents. The RPF is reported to build local institutions paralleling and rivaling the state throughout the country. Furthermore, the government continues to regard the Hutus as the sole and collective carrier of guilt for the crimes committed against humanity in the 1990s.

3771 [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

Paul Kagame has recently won the 2017 elections with almost 99% of the vote, being re-elected for a third term. His election was made possible by the 2015 referendum that approved an amendment to the Constitution, allowing Kagame to run for a third term followed by two additional five-year terms. In theory, this would make it possible for him to stay in power until 2034.

Therefore, the ethno-political situation in Rwanda, in which the Tutsi have been the dominant political actor since 1995, remains the same. Political repression against the opposition continues. “At home, [...Kagame] maintains a suffocating grip over his people, fretting that if he lets go, they will rise up and wipe out the ruling Tutsi elite” (3772).

3772 [The Economist, 2017]

Bibliography

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Political status of ethnic groups in Rwanda

From 1962 until 1994

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Hutu	0.84	MONOPOLY
Tutsi	0.15	DISCRIMINATED

From 1995 until 2000

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Hutu	0.84	DISCRIMINATED
Tutsi	0.15	DOMINANT

From 2001 until 2017

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Hutu	0.84	POWERLESS
Tutsi	0.15	DOMINANT



Figure 760: Political status of ethnic groups in Rwanda during 1962-1994.



Figure 761: Political status of ethnic groups in Rwanda during 1995-2000.



Figure 762: Political status of ethnic groups in Rwanda during 2001-2017.

Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Rwanda

From 1962 until 2017



Figure 763: Map of ethnic groups in Rwanda during 1962-2017.

	Group name	Area in km ²	Type
■	Tutsi	25 247	Statewide
■	Hutu	25 247	Statewide

Table 258: List of ethnic groups in Rwanda during 1962-2017.

Conflicts in Rwanda

Starting on 1990-09-30

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Rwanda	FPR	Tutsi	1990-09-30	Explicit	Yes	Yes
Government of Rwanda	ALiR	Tutsi	1996-06-11	Explicit		
Government of Rwanda	ALiR	Hutu	1996-06-11	Explicit	Yes	Yes
Government of Rwanda	FDLR	Hutu	2001-05-19	Explicit	Yes	Yes