

How the International Community Screws Up

An examination of institutional statebuilding's effects on the
nation

Abstract

Since the beginning of statebuilding interventions following the end of the Cold War, they have been strictly focused on rebuilding state institutions, wherever they have taken place. As a growing percentage of states that had experienced civil war relapsed into new intrastate conflicts, it started to dawn on researchers that this approach was inadequate. Focus amongst researchers started to turn to explaining why traditional statebuilding did not do the job. Many have attributed it to a neglecting to address the root causes of the conflict. In recent years, the neglect of the nation in statebuilding has started generating attention. Particularly, a theory has emerged that the institutional approach to statebuilding in fact can have damaging effects on the nation. The testing of this theory on empirical cases has been limited as of yet. Hence, this thesis aims to contribute to this theory by applying it to the two cases of Burundi and Sierra Leone. In a comparative study, this thesis discusses the historical backgrounds, the statebuilding and its effect on the nation in each of the two cases. By comparing the results, the thesis reaches the conclusion that statebuilding, in its current form, indeed has damaging effects to the nation.

Key word: Sierra Leone, Burundi, institutional, statebuilding, nation

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Table of Content

1	Introduction.....	1
2	Theory	4
2.1	Theoretical Background	4
2.2	Theoretical Framework	5
2.2.1	International Statebuilding	5
2.2.2	Mid-range operations	5
2.2.3	Nation Process.....	6
3	Research Design	7
3.1	Method and Cases	7
3.2	Variables.....	8
3.3	Material	8
3.4	Limitations	8
4	Background	10
4.1	Sierra Leone	10
4.1.1	Historical Background.....	10
4.1.2	Statebuilding.....	12
4.1.3	Nation Process.....	14
4.2	Burundi.....	17
4.2.1	Historical Background.....	17
4.2.2	Statebuilding.....	19
4.2.3	Nation	22
5	Comparison	25
6	Conclusion	27
	References.....	29

1 Introduction

During the Cold War the UN had been unable to conduct any significant number of peace operations, and those that it had been able to perform had primarily been focused on peacekeeping, not peacebuilding. The Cold War UN was dominated by the division between the two superpowers and their respective blocks. This led to vetoes being cast in many of the cases where international intervention might have been needed, since these might interfere with the superpowers' respective spheres of influence. This also held true in cases where there was disagreement regarding the modus operandi of peacebuilding (Hardwick, 2011).

What followed the end of the Cold War and the fall of the USSR was a UN where liberal values reigned supreme, and a more united leadership enabled it to act more decisively. Over the course of the century, another significant shift had taken place, which saw the changing of the nature of many of the world's conflicts away from the traditional interstate conflict to where intrastate conflicts were dominating. Intrastate conflicts had new potential risks, such as causing spill-over effects into neighbouring countries and subsequent international ramifications, as well as substantial humanitarian tragedies (Sisk & Chandler, 2013, p. XIX). It was no longer a matter of brokering a ceasefire or peace between two or more warring countries. Now a great number of factors had to be considered such as poverty, social injustice, elite corruption, and many others, in order to tackle the root causes of conflict.

Statebuilding is a central part to the arguably new phenomenon of peacebuilding. To ensure that peace is sustainable in the long term, a declaration of peace alone rarely suffices nowadays. As mentioned above, the root causes need to be resolved, or else a country might risk relapse into armed conflict. Indeed, most new cases of civil war have occurred in countries that had previous experience of it (Sisk & Chandler, 2013, p. XX).

Contemporary statebuilding attempts to address these root causes by strictly focusing on the rebuilding of state institutions. In doing so, statebuilding theorists claim that the international actors focus on strictly technical matters, thus avoiding

the issue of entering into the contested realm of politics (Lemay-Hébert, 2013, p. 8). However, Lemay-Hébert (2009, p. 41) argues that any kind of statebuilding will have repercussions for socio-political cohesion – i.e. the realm of politics – as the institutions created by statebuilding, unsurprisingly, will have implications for society as a whole. He continues by arguing that in scenarios where external actors face state collapse, statebuilding without nationbuilding is unlikely to succeed (Lemay-Hébert, 2009, pp. 22-23). Hence, it seems that what he claims is that the repercussions for socio-political cohesion indeed constitute repercussions for the nation, or, as I refer to it, to the nation process. This claim is supported by Barry Buzan (1991, p. 64), who notes that, “without a widespread and quite deeply rooted idea of the state among the population, the state institutions themselves have difficulty functioning and surviving.” This sentiment is also seconded by Kalevi Holsti (1996, p. 84) who states that “it is in the realm of ideas and sentiment that the fate of states is primarily determined.”

Lemay-Hébert (2013) hinges his theoretical claim primarily on the empirical support of two cases of statebuilding, where he briefly outlines the effects that statebuilding has had on the nation. These are the cases of Kosovo and Iraq (Lemay-Hébert, 2013). In both of these operations, intrusion by external actors was arguably at its peak as compared to other cases of statebuilding. There are many statebuilding operations where external actors did not seize total control over the government institutions, including cases where external actors primarily provide donor support, and those – which I refer to as ‘mid-range operations’ – where some political engineering takes place. It therefore appears as if Lemay-Hébert omits the majority of statebuilding cases in reaching the conclusion that international statebuilding has repercussion for the nation, and that without support for the nation, operations are unlikely to succeed.

The purpose of this thesis is to test the wider applicability of Lemay-Hébert’s theory. As he already has tested his theory on empirical cases that I refer to as high-range interventions, I have chosen to instead examine the validity of his theory on mid-range operations. Hence, my research question reads:

How has international statebuilding affected the nation processes in the post-conflict contexts of Burundi and Sierra Leone?

Since I do not expect the effects of international statebuilding to vary greatly between high- and mid-range operations, my hypothesis is:

The neglect of the nation process that is symptomatic of international statebuilding leads to it remaining weak, or even weakening further, even in the case of mid-range operations.

2 Theory

2.1 Theoretical Background

The aim of statebuilding consists both of – as stated above – a wish to create a long-term, sustainable peace by helping recreate locally owned governmental institutions (Sisk & Chandler, 2013, p. XX), but also to incorporate norms regarding the functioning of those institutions. The theory of ‘liberal peace’ – which claims that liberal, democratic states are the least likely to succumb to armed conflict – has had a strong influence over international statebuilding efforts over the past decades, and arguably still does today. Hence, most states that have been rebuilt by aid of international actors have, to some extent, become democratic, liberal countries (Sisk & Chandler, 2013, p. XXII), at least on the surface.

This idea of the superiority of the liberal, democratic state is arguably one of the two major components of contemporary statebuilding. The other is the currently prevailing notion of what the state is: while some adopt a definition that encompasses an interconnection between nation and state, state and society, the by far most prevalent definition within statebuilding circles is one where the state in practice is equated with the governmental institutions. Hence, statebuilding in practice is first and foremost focused on rebuilding governmental institutions, meanwhile ignoring other aspects of the state and society (Lemay-Hébert, 2013, pp. 3-4, 7). This has led Lemay-Hébert (2009) to refer to contemporary statebuilding as ‘institutional statebuilding.’

This notion of what constitutes the ‘state’ is also essentially the *raison d’être* for the concept of nationbuilding in the context of peacebuilding (Lemay-Hébert, 2013, p. 3). By this I mean that nationbuilding in this context refers to what theoretically is a component of statebuilding. It is disregarded as a result of the strictly technical focus of the dominant institutional approach, hence it can be discussed as a phenomenon separate from statebuilding. While statebuilding in practice focuses on governmental institutions, nationbuilding fills the gap by instead focusing on

matters, such as legitimacy and identity, that affect the nation process (Lemay-Hébert, 2009, p. 22).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 International Statebuilding

The independent variable of this study is what I refer to as ‘international statebuilding.’ I conceptualize international statebuilding in line with the above definition of institutional statebuilding. That is, statebuilding is an endeavour to rebuild the institutions of a state, particularly along Western, liberal norms, while largely disregarding social and political aspects of the context. It is conducted by international actors, be they countries, governmental organizations, regional or international organizations or non-governmental organizations. The background of the international actors conducting the statebuilding is of no relevance to its outcome, as it is assumed that the institutionalist presence in the statebuilding paradigm is so prevalent that it always is adopted.

2.2.2 Mid-range operations

What I refer to as ‘mid-range operations’ are, at the concepts essence, international statebuilding operations. What separates these from other statebuilding operations is the level of intrusion into the sovereign state: Some statebuilding operations, like the ones in Kosovo and Iraq mentioned above, completely takes over control of government institutions for a time. Other cases see little physical presence of international actors, and mostly constitutes financial aid and/or consultations when asked for. Mid-range operations places in the space between these two categories of statebuilding operations. In these cases, the international presence is notable, perhaps legal and institutional engineering has taken place, and substantial financial aid is often provided.

2.2.3 Nation Process

The ‘nation process’ is at its essence the same as the ‘nation,’ which I at its foundation conceptualize in the same way as Lemay-Hébert (2009, p. 34): “A nation is a political project that has worked... It is a successful mobilization of homeland myths and identity (not only ethnical) by a political entity.” However, instead of perceiving the nation as a static entity once it has been successfully mobilized, I conceive of it as a continuous process. Since the ‘mobilizing actors’ studied in this thesis are states – i.e. the object of international statebuilding – the nation process at focus here is the nation state.

As I examine how statebuilding affects the nation process, I will particularly focus on identity (do citizens identify with the nation state?), state legitimacy (is the state considered legitimate by its citizens?), and loyalty (are citizens loyal to the nation state?). The nation process is presumed to be at its peak when all citizens of the state identify with it, see it as legitimate and are loyal to the it.

3 Research Design

3.1 Method and Cases

For this thesis I have chosen to conduct a small-N comparative study as, as mentioned above, I will examine the two cases of Burundi and Sierra Leone. This study is in essence aimed at testing a theory, which, according to Halperin & Heath (2017, p. 214), generally is better suited to large-N studies. However, due to the unquantifiable nature of the relevant variables for this study, a large-N study – which Halperin & Heath claim normally consists of a dozen or more cases (2017, p. 217) – would simply not be feasible within the pre-set confines of this thesis.

I have chosen the two cases of Burundi and Sierra Leone based on the Most Different Systems Design. I want to begin by mentioning that, since what is being examined here is dependent on a post-conflict setting, poverty, corruption, clientelism, widespread criminality, among other aspects, will almost always be present. That being said, there are several significant differences between the two countries. First of all, the Burundian civil war was fought largely because of ethnic enmities and along ethnic lines (Hutu vs. Tutsi), while the Sierra Leonean civil war was fought mainly by rural and poor people who were fed up by state corruption, patrimonialism and social exclusion, thus trying to overthrow the government. Secondly, where Burundi has local officials appointed by the government who could easily be removed if need be, in Sierra Leone a strong chiefdom system contributes to decentralize the power in the country. Thirdly, the regional contexts of the two cases vary greatly. Finally, the main statebuilding actors in Burundi were primarily regional, while in the case of Sierra Leone, Western actors, particularly Britain, took the leading role.

The similarities that caused the decision to study these two cases are, 1. The mid-range nature of the international statebuilding operations that have taken place in both cases, and 2. The seemingly weak nation processes that the states are grappling with.

3.2 Variables

Statebuilding is operationalized by examining the efforts that, combined, makes it out. Since statebuilding is conceptualized as only consisting of efforts at (re)building institutions, particularly state institutions, it is only these that will be taken into consideration and presented. Its effects are conceived of as the unintended effects of institutional statebuilding.

As mentioned above, the nation process is operationalized by applying three questions to the material: 1. do citizens identify with the nation state? 2. Is the state considered legitimate by its citizens? 3. Are citizens loyal to the nation state? Based on the conceptual definition of the nation process, these three questions should provide adequate answers for me to answer the question of how the nation process has been affected.

3.3 Material

The material examined consists of secondary sources. As statebuilding constitutes an engagement of multiple actors, including local state elites, I have been unable to find sources that could be of substantial use. Secondary sources, on the other hand, have provided both in depth understandings of statebuilding measures, as well as a broader context of the statebuilding processes as a whole.

Many of these also include field observations and interviews made by the authors. On the ground observations like these have been fundamental in gaining a deeper understanding of the state of the national process.

3.4 Limitations

This study will examine a period starting at the beginning of the statebuilding processes for the two countries, respectively. Statebuilding processes do not have a clear stop, but rather becomes smaller in scope over time. The end point of the period under examination is instead based on the claim that, "At wars end, there is

a narrow window of opportunity to rebuild the authority of the state” (Sisk & Chandler, 2013, p. XX). Hence, the end point of the period examined is determined as the point in time when the window of opportunity is conceived as closed. In the case of Sierra Leone, this is seen as having been reached following its second post-conflict election, and in the case Burundi, just before its third post-conflict election.

4 Background

4.1 Sierra Leone

4.1.1 Historical Background

When Sierra Leone first was colonized by the British in the early 19th century, the intention was for it to become a new homeland to freed slaves from Britain and its overseas dominions. It was built to resemble the Western model of the state, but this was not properly achieved, and a hybrid, authoritarian state took shape in its place. The colonial government in the capital of Freetown had difficulties establishing control over the hinterland (the remote areas of the country) and instead turned to the pre-existing chieftaincy to act as the state's agent in these areas. This contributed to the early creation of a separation between the Creoles (freed slaves in Freetown) and the peoples of the hinterland, as well as the increase of the chiefs' power vis-à-vis, their followers (Tom, 2011, pp. 154-156).

At Sierra Leone's independence it inherited a functioning parliamentary system, an independent judiciary system and liberal political and economic systems. The economic system might, however, have been too liberal, as the state accepted any foreign investors, which dug it deeper and deeper into economic dependency on industrialized states. Meanwhile, elites of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds from the hinterland had organized themselves, thus enabling them to defeat the Creoles in the first election and seize control of the country (Tom, 2011, p. 162).

However, this was not long lived as the elites of the two major ethnic groups, the Temne and the Mende, were unable to cooperate. Instead they each formed their own parties: the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) that represented the predominantly Mende southeast, and the All People's Congress (APC) which represented the Temne, as well as several smaller ethnic groups, including the Creoles, from the north, east and west (Abdullah & Rashid, 2004, p. 173).

In 1967 a coup took place following APC's defeat in the elections, which shortly after was followed by another two coups. The APC was the final victor of the series

of coups, with Siaka Stevens as Prime Minister. Under his rule, Sierra Leone saw itself being transformed into a one-party state. The APC remained in power until 1992, when a group of disgruntled soldiers seized power and established the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) (Tom, 2011, pp. 163-164).

Over the course of the post-colonial period leading up to the outbreak of the conflict in 1991, successive government elites built up informal networks to consolidate the political and economic power. Patrimonial distribution of resources was often prioritized over the needs of the formal state institutions, making the state institutions increasingly inefficient and irrelevant. Meanwhile most of the population was suffering and especially so in the hinterland (Tom, 2011, pp. 165-167).

The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) is said to have been formed by members of the growing number of marginalized and unemployable youths, who previously on several occasions had been employed in political violence, together with radical students. When an opportunity arose for them to receive military training in Libya and subsequently got support from Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia, which vehemently pursued an anti-Western agenda in West Africa, the timing seemed right for action (Tom, 2011, pp. 170-174).

The conflict began in 1991 when the RUF invaded the eastern region of the country from Liberia, with the ultimate objective of ending the APC's grip on power. The poorly equipped government forces were unsuccessful at fighting off the rebels. Dissatisfaction mounted in the military, which culminated in the 1992 coup and the formation of the NPRC mentioned above. The new government pledged to bring about a swift end to the war but were unable to do so when the RUF shifted to guerrilla tactics (Tom, 2011, pp. 176-178).

As a result of mounting pressure on the NPRC, elections were held in the midst of the conflict. Even while civilians were targeted by the RUF to dissuade them from voting, the election went through and the SLPP won the election. However, the victory was short lived. The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) staged a coup, ousted the SLPP leadership and invited RUF to join their government in Freetown. In exile, the SLPP was quick to rally international support, and in 1998 forces from the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), together with local Civil Defence Forces (CDF), forced the AFRC-RUF regime from power (Tom, 2011, pp. 178-179).

The conflict was still not over, and RUF and AFRC forces once more tried to take control over Freetown. By this time, the conflict was drawing a lot of attention globally, and by the help of intense international pressure the conflicting parties entered into the Lomé Peace Agreement in 1999. Even so, the conflict continued when it dawned that the parties had not signed the agreement in good faith. In 2000 the RUF took 500 peacekeepers hostage in an effort to topple the UN mission, bringing the conflict to increased international attention. Britain took a central role in bringing back order to the situation, both by military intervention and diplomatic means, which finally culminated in peace in 2002 (Tom, 2011, pp. 179-182).

4.1.2 Statebuilding

The statebuilding process in Sierra Leone arguably began already with the Lomé Peace Agreement, which included matters regarding governance, security sector reform, education, health, and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) (Tom, 2011, p. 181). However, it was not until the end of the conflict that the internationals truly got an opportunity to transform the state according with the liberal peace agenda. They aspired to build a Western liberal democracy, effective state institutions and a liberal economic order, all the while neglecting issues like social justice, custom and local power dynamics (Tom, 2011, p. 183). At first glance it seems as if the Sierra Leonean statebuilding process entirely followed the institutional approach. In an interview a World Bank official appears to second this observation, as he claimed that at the end of the conflict, Sierra Leone had two challenges: 1) statebuilding (the rebuilding of state institutions) and 2) state transformation (making the state look better) (Tom, 2011, p. 187).

Efforts to promote the growth of democracy in Sierra Leone include support of national and local electoral institutions, the multi-party political system, capacity-building of institutions for democratic governance, and the respect for civil and political liberties. Internationals have likewise committed much support for good governance, such as the country's Anti-corruption Commission, and the rule of law (Tom, 2011, p. 187). For instance, the establishment and operations of the Special Court of Sierra Leone, which was an international-national hybrid, ended up costing as much as USD 300 million (Gberie, 2014). The magnitude of this sum truly comes to view when compared to the costs of two years of operation of the, arguably

nationbuilding, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which reached USD 4.5 million (Langer, 2018, p. 140).

A widespread assumption among the internationals who intervened was that the locals lacked capacity to rebuild the state on their own, and that it was only the interveners who possessed the necessary capacity. Based on this flawed assumption, the international actors worked primarily with the state elite, and all but neglected both the needs and the agency of most of the population (Tom, 2011, p. 183). It seems as if it was genuinely believed that this approach was the most suitable for sustainable peace to emerge in Sierra Leone (Tom, 2011, p. 188). In the realm of democracy, this approach was seemingly working as intended, as the first two presidential elections (2002 and 2007) saw growing peacefulness and credibility in the respective electoral processes (Tom, 2011, p. 188).

The rapid improvements that were seen in the early year of the post-conflict period swiftly led the World Bank to alter its view of Sierra Leone into being in a “post” post-conflict phase, or, what some refer to as a ‘development state.’ Seen as more stable, the focus of the statebuilding increasingly shifted towards liberal peace and economics (Tom, 2011, p. 190). This has meant that the state tries to accommodate foreign investors, almost at any cost, especially in the country’s natural resources sector (Tom, 2011, p. 197). However, this may not have been what Sierra Leone needed, but rather something it simply had to put up with. The acceptance of the state elites may well have been a strategic one, as they recognized that the costs of resisting the will of the World Bank and other international actors outweighed the benefits of accepting it (Tom, 2011, p. 195). In an attempt to maintain legitimacy as this took place, the state elites had to rationalize the shift in focus for their constituents by claiming that the benefits of the new economic system not only would come to the state, but also the poor Sierra Leoneans in all parts of the country (Tom, 2011, p. 190). Sadly, some state and economic elites by and large abandoned the poor, instead using the new system to enrich themselves. Most of the population, dissatisfied with corruption and the lack of state sponsored development, have turned to informal economies and are resisting to pay taxes, further widening the gap between the state and the rural communities (Tom, 2011, p. 195).

The Sierra Leonean state seems to have accommodated the international community at every point so far. As the state has largely been unsuccessful at

generating much legitimacy from its own people, the state desperately needs the legitimacy of the internationals. There is, however, one area in particular where the state resisted the terms of the internationals. The liberal peace agenda considers itself incompatible with the patrimonial institution of the Chieftaincy. Internationals view the institution as an impediment to the creation of a modern state, that is, with the state as the single sovereign. However, the Sierra Leonean state recognized dependency on the Chieftaincy and refused to surrender it. The chiefdoms have remained one of the most important institutions in the country, and without it, the state would lose what little legitimacy it has in the hinterland (Tom, 2011, pp. 199-200). The resulting state is a hybrid one, with elements of both traditional and liberal institutions and norms (Tom, 2011, p. 202). Hence, even while Sierra Leone traditionally is portrayed as a “success story” of international statebuilding, the fact remains that the liberal democratic state that the internationals had envisaged did not come into being (Tom, 2011, p. 205).

Going back to the to the effects on democracy of statebuilding, as mentioned above, two successive successful elections had taken place. However, due to the creation of a winner-takes-all political system, the opposition and its supporters often finds themselves excluded. The two major parties, the APC and the SLPP, each represents its own ethnic group(s) and region(s). This still holds true in the post-conflict setting. Hence, an increase in inter-ethnic and inter-regional violence has been witnessed, and the government has been accused of ignoring the issue of national cohesion (Tom, 2011, p. 203).

4.1.3 Nation Process

The international actors in Sierra Leone largely disregarded the capacity of local actors to contribute to the statebuilding, as has been mentioned above (see, Statebuilding). As such, it missed an opportunity to engage the development of a social contract between the state and the citizens (Tom, 2011, pp. 183-184), instead leaving its outcome up to chance. In the context of a post-conflict society, where socio-political cohesion arguably almost always is weak, this is seen is a missed opportunity, but at the same time in line with what we expect of the institutional approach to statebuilding.

The result has been a cementation of the pre-existing rift between the capital of Freetown and the predominantly rural population of the hinterland. The rural population has remained loyal to the informal networks and institutions, such as the chieftaincy, secret societies, kinship, ex-combatant networks, and religious networks. As such, multiple systems of social ordering exist that prevent the state from providing a single dominant form of social ordering (Tom, 2011, pp. 186-187). As mentioned above, the state seems to have come somewhat to terms with the reality of this and try to operate within this framework. However, the international actors have shown themselves dissatisfied with the inability to establish Sierra Leone as a nation state with a single sovereign (Tom, 2011, p. 187).

The international statebuilding has generated little improvement for the vast majority of the population, and, at times, especially through its liberal economic systems, has even caused them harm (Tom, 2011, p. 188). For one, the state has failed to meet even the basic needs and welfare of the people. A group of Tribal Authorities interviewed pointed out that, “We are not happy. We cannot live as third class citizens” (Tom, 2011, p. 189). Through the state’s insistence on prioritizing foreign investors, it has allowed international corporations to establish themselves on the lands of rural communities, while these see little compensation for their loss. One such example is when a mining company was granted land belonging to a rural town. When people protested the presence of the company, which polluted parts of the land, and the lack of regulations from the state, they were met with state coercion rather than understanding. The state reportedly views such actions as attempts to sabotage the state and as threats to the national security (Tom, 2011, pp. 191-194). Tendencies like these have further alienated most of the population from the state, with many in the hinterland viewing the state as being located in the capital and not, as one might presume, the entire width of its territorial borders (Tom, 2011, p. 189).

This does not mean that the state does not attempt to legitimize itself outside of the capital. As mentioned above, the state resisted the efforts of the internationals to remove the institution of the chieftaincy. In Sierra Leone, the chiefs constitute the existence of multiple non-state sovereignties and authorities, who command substantial legitimacy at the local level. Since, as mentioned before, the state is desperately lacking legitimacy, particularly in the hinterland, the state depends on such non-state actors for legitimacy and, ultimately, its survival (Tom, 2011, p.

198). One state official pointed out that the state's approach to chiefs and other non-state institutions has been to "befriend them, recognize them and give them their own space," and goes on to saying that "if you abolish [them] you will be voted out of power [...] leave them where they are and do not disturb" (Tom, 2011, p. 199). In a way, this constitutes an effort on the part of the state to build the nation, albeit a terribly slow and passive process.

If the state were to push the issue of nationbuilding harder, it would most likely immediately meet resistance, as it would constitute an attempt to interfere with the local spheres of authority and sovereignty of the chiefs. However, by not engaging in nationbuilding, it risks garnering the disapproval of its urban population. As a number of respondents in the capital pointed out, they want the state to engage in nationbuilding as a means to promote national cohesion and peace (Tom, 2011, p. 196).

In the realm of politics, the integrity of the already weak, if not non-existent, nation has suffered yet another setback. As mentioned above, the two biggest parties, the APC and the SLPP, represent their own respective ethnic groups and regions. The APC primarily represents the Temne from the northern region, and the SLPP represents the Mende in the southern and eastern regions. During the electoral processes, the parties mainly appeals to the local interests of their respective ethnic/regional platforms of support. In the context of a multi-ethnic bi-polar political system, with a winner-takes-all system created by international statebuilding, the electoral process has seen mounting inter-ethnic and regional contestation, as well as violence between supporters of the two parties. This, in turn, has produced increased fragmentation and, for the losing side, exclusion from politics and the benefits of the state. The APC-led government, which won the 2007 election by a slim margin, is increasingly seen as synonymous with Temne and northern interests by those in the southern and eastern areas. They have also been criticized of not promoting national cohesion (Tom, 2011, p. 203). Rather on the contrary, the actions of the APC can be seen as damaging to the integrity of the nation. People are increasingly identifying themselves along ethnic lines, and as separate from the "opposing" ethnic group. Particularly, following the 2007 election, the Mende increasingly felt that they had no stake in the state, with one Tribal Authority pointing out that, "Whatever they do is their business. We will take care of our own problems" (Tom, 2011, p. 204).

4.2 Burundi

4.2.1 Historical Background

Burundi gained its independence from Belgium in 1962 after Belgium had worked to help reform the country into a democracy. This dream was shaken already before the independence was achieved, when, following the first elections in 1961, the candidate from the victorious of the Union Pour le Progrès National (UPRONA) party, was assassinated by agents of the opposition party. During this time Burundi was a constitutional monarchy, and the mwami (king) desperately sought to balance the two ethnic groups, Hutus (who make up the vast majority) and Tutsis, in order to maintain stability. Unfortunately, he was unable to do so. After the second election in one year, Hutu candidates emerged victorious in 1965. But instead of appointing one of the Hutu as Prime Minister, the mwami appointed a Tutsi. Hutu military and police officers attempted a coup to restore Hutu power, which was suppressed by loyal troops. In revenge, Tutsi officers cleansed the army and police of Hutus, thus cementing Tutsi control of military power. The monarchy was officially revoked in 1966 when Burundi was declared a Republic after the mwami and his son attempted to appoint a new Prime Minister on their own (boshoff, et al., 2010, pp. 4-5).

After yet another attempted coup, this time by Hutu officers, the strong grip of the Tutsi on political power became apparent. The Hutu, finding themselves marginalized in their own country, became desperate and launched an insurrection in 1972 which resulted in the death of between 2,000 and 3,000 Tutsis. This was met with a strong backlash in the form of a massacre of between 100,000 and 200,000 Hutus, as well as the displacement of a further 150,000 (boshoff, et al., 2010, p. 5).

In the following years violence and political unrest continued. After a coup in 1982, the Tutsi Major Pierre Buyoya of the UPRONA seized power, and tried to change the course of the country and to build national unity. He formed a new government with himself as President, but with a Hutu Prime Minister and an equal

number of ministerial seats for Tutsi and Hutu representatives. Under international pressure from Belgium and France he also signed a new constitution, which would help see the country back on track to democracy through elections that took place in 1993 (boshoff, et al., 2010, p. 5).

The results of the election came to a shock, not least to the dominant UPRONA party that had enjoyed almost constant control of the government since the country's independence. A new progressive party, called the Front pour la Démocratie au Burundi (FRODEBU), had managed to rally the support of a majority of the countries Hutus, which saw them winning the election. Even while the transition of power took place peacefully, the newfound sense of stability and democracy was short lived. A small group of Tutsi officers assassinated the Hutu President along with several high-ranking members of FRODEBU. In a series of revenge attacks by Hutus, Tutsis across the country were massacred (boshoff, et al., 2010, pp. 5-6). Probably as many Hutus were killed by the army in their attempt to reinstate Tutsi rule. The international community responded with an outcry, pressuring the FRODEBU and UPRONA into a loose power-sharing compromise (Lemarchand, 2006, p. 7). What followed was what Reyntjens describes as, "a creeping coup... which aimed at destroying the legitimacy, and indeed the very existence of Frodebu ... This strategy increasingly radicalized political life and handicapped the search for a peaceful solution" (Reyntjens, 2005, p. 117).

As the fighting began, both Tutsis and Hutus turned against the government. The Tutsis because they saw the government as responsible for the massacres, which they considered a genocide, and the Hutus because they considered the Hutu moderates in government to be "stooges" (Prunier, 2009, p. 59). An increasingly radicalized society saw the formation or mobilization of radical political movements into warring parties, including the Forces Nationales pour la Libération (FNL) and the Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie (CNDD), with its armed wing, Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (FDD). This trend continued, and by the signing of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement in 2000, 17 conflict parties had come into being (Lemarchand, 2006, p. 7).

Over the course of the conflict, civilians often were the ones who suffered the worst casualties. Rebel groups either targeted them for supporting the opposing side, or because they were moderates who would not support rebels of their own ethnicity. Government forces also targeted civilians for allegedly supporting rebel

groups, even in situations when they had just been attacked by rebels. Even so, civilians were often forced to simply accept their situation, as a combination of poverty and reliance on the state-centred patronage system held them in place (Prunier, 2009, pp. 63-64).

The conflict neared its end when the Arusha Peace Agreement was signed through the persistent mediation efforts of Nelson Mandela and his predecessor Julius Nyerere (Lemarchand, 2006, p. 11). However, due to the refusal to sign the agreement by two of the major parties, the CNDD-FDD and the FNL, peace did not reach the country (Human Rights Watch, 2001). It would have to wait until 2003 before the conflict was officially over.

4.2.2 Statebuilding

The statebuilding process in Burundi arguably started with the signing of the Arusha Peace Agreement. Amongst other things, the agreement contained a provisional constitution that stipulated a political solution for ethnic insecurities, how the rights of the Tutsi minority could be reconciled with the demands of the Hutu majority (Lemarchand, 2006, p. 4). While this arguably was its most important contribution, security sector reforms, democracy and good governance were also central aspects of the agreement (Lemarchand, 2006, p. 11).

International actors were highly involved in the peace- and statebuilding processes already from the start. It even happened that international actors de facto put Burundi under a temporary trusteeship and imposed solutions. (Reyntjens, 2005, p. 121). In particular the regional countries of Uganda and Tanzania, together with South Africa, took the leading role (Lemarchand, 2006, p. 12). Aside from these, the African Union, European Union, United Nations, Belgium and the United States all contributed to the Statebuilding (Asige Liaga & Wielenga, 2020, p. 411).

Following a transitional period, a new agreement, in the form of the Pretoria Power-sharing Agreement, was signed in 2004. Its most substantial contribution, which built upon parts of the Arusha Agreement, was the interim constitution of the country, which was voted through by 90 per cent of voters the following year to become the permanent constitution (Reyntjens, 2005, p. 119). To protect the interests of the Tutsi minority, the new constitution stipulates that 40 per cent of the seats in the government and the National Assembly shall go to the Tutsi, against 60

per cent for the Hutu. In the Senate, the distribution of seats is even more generous, at 50 per cent per group. There shall also be two vice-presidents, one Hutu and one Tutsi. The constitution also contains liberal, progressive tendencies, as at least 30 per cent of the seats in the National Assembly and the government shall be held by women, and three representatives of the minor Twa ethnic group shall be co-opted into the National Assembly (Lemarchand, 2006, p. 13). Since defence and public order are historically sensitive issues, the minister responsible for the national defence force cannot be of the same ethnicity as the minister responsible for the national police (Reyntjens, 2005, p. 119). The local institutions of government were not left out. No more than 67 per cent of mayorships can be held by any ethnic group. The Mayors also form the provincial electoral colleges responsible for electing two senators each, thereby bridging the gap between the local province and the capital-centred state. Lastly, the contested matter of ethnicity versus party affiliation had to be resolved. Could any Tutsi candidate represent its ethnic group, as according to the constitution, irrespective of party affiliations, or only those who belonged to all-Tutsi parties? The decision was reached, after much wrangling, that Tutsi members of predominantly Hutu parties could qualify as representatives of the Tutsi community (Lemarchand, 2006, pp. 13-14).

Through the adoption of the constitution, Burundi has institutionalized the ethnic factor, one of the root drivers behind the conflict. At first glance, this could easily be seen as if it would rigidify the ethnic divide. However, the opposite appears to have been the case in Burundi (Reyntjens, 2005, p. 132). The 2005 elections saw multiple parties fronting candidates of both ethnic groups, seemingly irrespective of which group the party was most strongly affiliated with. Due to the framework established in the constitution, a diverse ballot had the potential of yielding the best results.

The elections went remarkably smoothly, and although there had been some scattered political violence between opposing supporters during the electoral process, it by and large was considered peaceful. Domestic and international observers both noted that the process and the results were generally “free and fair” (Lemarchand, 2006, p. 15).

Contextual differences between the 1993 election, which was the spark that ignited the conflict, and the 2005 election were substantial. While both were intended to herald in a new era of democracy, the 2005 election was far less

confrontative. The electoral process was no longer bi-polar, either in the sense of political parties (FRODEBU against UPRONA), nor in the ethnic sense (Hutu against Tutsi). Parties adopted language conducive to keeping communication channels open and avoided taking positions that were likely to result in violent deadlocks. The media also greatly contributed, by not taking partisan positions and providing more nuanced perspectives. This was at least partly the result of foreign funds, which saw radio stations developed into peace media (Reyntjens, 2005, p. 120).

The CNDD-FDD, which had disarmed shortly after the signing of the Arusha Peace Agreement, emerged as the undisputed victor of the election, claiming a majority of the seats. Traditionally, it had been a predominantly Hutu party, but it had adapted to the new constitution and came out of the election as the most inter-ethnic party with 30 per cent of its elected members of parliament being Tutsis (Reyntjens, 2005, p. 125). Initially, the CNDD-FDD showed itself willing to cooperate with other parties and to be representing all Burundians, as well as promoting peace (Reyntjens, 2005, p. 129). However, shortly after its victory in the election, the CNDD-FDD began to rapidly consolidate its hold on power, and did so by violating principles of good governance. The CNDD-FDD government committed financial abuses, engaged in corruption, and suppressed its political opponents, the press and civil society. On a political level, the country was becoming increasingly fragmented and partisan, although seemingly no longer along ethnic lines. However, the government retained its most of its support from its rural constituents, as they were largely disconnected from the state politics of the capital, and were content with the social services, such as free education and healthcare, that the government provided (Reyntjens, 2016, pp. 71-72).

Over the course of its first term in government, the CNDD-FDD gradually reinforced its stranglehold on the political landscape, as it transformed Burundi into a de facto one-party state. In the process, it essentially re-established the system of patronage that its pre-war predecessors had employed. By the time it had won its second election in 2010, the process was all but complete, and its patronage system all but covered the entire country (Reyntjens, 2016, p. 74).

Tensions reached its peak by the 2015 elections, when the party announced that Nkurunziza would stand as its presidential candidate for an unconstitutional third term. This news, along with the rampant militarization, political violence and

corruption that plagued the country, led hundreds of thousands to flee into exile (Reyntjens, 2016, pp. 74-75), presumably because the reality of what their state had become finally dawned on them and they were no longer safe.

The framework established through the constitution engineered by the statebuilding efforts of international actors had successfully diminished ethnicity as an electoral issue, which, considering Burundi's history, was no small feat. Unfortunately, it was unsuccessful at producing better governance (Reyntjens, 2016, p. 72).

Parallel to the disheartening developments in the political sphere, more positive developments were seen within the security sector. Essential to the peaceful transition of power following the 2005 elections was the fact that the new Forces de Défense Nationale have taken a position of non-interference in politics. Most soldiers reject a return to war and instability (Reyntjens, 2005, p. 120). Stability has also been aided by the successful demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) of rebel forces, and by the integration of CNDD-FDD fighters into the military institution (Lemarchand, 2006, p. 23, Reyntjens, 2005, p. 120). Lastly, the institutionalizing of ethnic parity and the subsequent transition from an all-Tutsi military into a mixed one has been a remarkable achievement (Lemarchand, 2006, p. 14). For decades the control over the military had been what many Tutsis saw as their only insurance for survival. To convince the Tutsis to peacefully abandon this security shows how brilliantly this aspect of statebuilding was handled.

On the macro-economic scale, the international community, and especially the World Bank, has been enjoyed early success in its endeavour to pull Burundi out of the poverty trap. However, thus far the issue of rural poverty, especially in those provinces that were most directly hit by the war, has been neglected (Lemarchand, 2006, p. 29).

4.2.3 Nation

The initial effects of the Arusha Peace Agreement and the subsequent Pretoria Agreement were at first very promising for the integrity of the nation. Having succeeded in breaking the dominant role of ethnicity in politics and, later, its role in social and military conflict (after the disarmament of the FNL), showed that the nation process was healing.

This optimistic trend was sadly halted when, shortly after the 2005 election, the victorious and immensely popular CNDD-FDD party started displaying worrying signs. As mentioned above, it rapidly solidified its grip on the government and the state institutions, effectively beginning the process of transforming Burundi into a one-party state. Within a year of the election, the state and the party were seen as two faces of the same coin (Lemarchand, 2006, p. 27). It did so by means of corruption, political violence and silencing of opposing voices through coercion (Lemarchand, 2006, pp. 16, 19). In the face of the widespread poverty in the country, with two-thirds of the population living below poverty levels at the time, many were disillusioned by the government's actions (Lemarchand, 2006, p. 19). One person claims that "When Nkurunziza [the CNDD-FDD president] and his men fought in the bush, their fight was legitimate, their promises reassuring. Today we've lost our illusions" (Lemarchand, 2006, p. 4).

As the state lost much of its legitimacy, the governing party still somehow managed to retain much of its political support. In part this could be due to the fact that much of CNDD-FDD's constituents come from the rural parts of the country, and the party's long history as a guerrilla organization has attuned it to the needs of the people. However, the more prominent factor likely is that there is a disconnect between the state, which, is primarily focused in the capital, and the remainder of the country (Asige Liaga & Wielenga, 2020, p. 413). Since the state is able to provide basic welfare to the rural population, it enjoys much of the population's support. It seems as if, as long as the rural population has its basic needs tended, and for the rest is left to its own, the state maintain its legitimacy with them. Most of the rural population in Burundi likely has other sources of authority at a local level that also enjoy legitimacy, but is still willing to support the state as long as it does not interfere.

However, as mentioned above, the CNDD-FDD increasingly became one with the state over time, and it further extended its reach through a combination of violence and a growing system of patronage. It also heavily targeted civil society organizations financed by international donors, amongst which many promoted unity in the country. As the government tore down such organizations, it often replaced the with new, government friendly, ones. These new organizations promoted national unity in their own sense but centring the unity around loyalty to the state. They claimed that the ones funded by international aid were part of a

‘mafia’ that spread fear among the population. Other such organizations tried to validate the 2015 elections, contrary to the claims of opposing parties as well as the international community (Leclercq, 2018, pp. 176-177).

Many did not buy in to what, what was essentially an informal propaganda platform, claimed regarding the government. Although many supporters likely identified with the state, claiming part in the Burundian nation process, many others likely operated in fear. As Nkurunziza was announced as CNDD-FDD’s presidential candidate for a third term, violence and unrest broke out. In addition, some 200,000 people fled into exile (Leclercq, 2018, p. 166).

5 Comparison

Despite the fact that the statebuilding processes in both countries started off similarly, and both according to the liberal institutionalist approach, substantial differences both in the statebuilding and its effects have been observed. However, there have also been some similarities that arguably were unexpected, considering the contextual differences.

In both Sierra Leone and Burundi, the statebuilding started off with peace agreements that would later serve as the foundation of new constitutions. The international actors were highly involved in these processes, and in each case primarily state elites or the elites of combatant groups were consulted. This is symptomatic of contemporary statebuilding and comes as little surprise. Generally, these processes tend to produce constitutions that lack connection to the local populations. However, in the case of Burundi, the international actors managed to produce a framework that addressed one of the most prominent root causes of the conflict. While political parties diversified themselves in Burundi, in Sierra Leone the ethnic alignment of the two major parties remained the same.

Even though the constitution in Sierra Leone was arguably less impressive and the ethnic element remained unaddressed, the statebuilding in both cases yielded early post-transition elections that were predominantly free and peaceful. Hence, it should come as little surprise that the early stages of statebuilding in each case were seen as a success. Particularly in Burundi, international statebuilding seemingly managed to produce the foundations of a modern and liberal state, with its success strengthening the nation process, at least for a short period of time.

In this context, it comes as a surprise that both cases saw governments that excluded its opponent(s) from influence and effectively marginalized its supporters. As political fragmentation deepened in both, an even more surprising development took place. Sierra Leone now saw a political landscape increasingly marred by ethnic tension, while Burundi saw the formation of a patrimonial system. In some sense, it seems as if Burundi's pre-war setting has become the modern reality in Sierra Leone, and vice versa.

Both cases show the increasing decline of the state of the nation process throughout the post-conflict years. However, it seems as if the cause for the decline in Sierra Leone in large part had to do with the context of local informal institutions. The state seemingly had no options for improving the nation process, particularly in the hinterland. In Burundi, On the other hand, it seems as if the state had more options for nationbuilding. However, perhaps due to its historical background, it proved unwilling to do so, at least within the liberal democracy context that had been imposed on it.

6 Conclusion

By examining the empirical cases of the statebuilding processes in Burundi and Sierra Leone, this thesis has reached the conclusion that the hypothesis is largely confirmed. The negative effects of international statebuilding on the nation process holds true in cases of mid-range operations as well.

As has been noted, there have been some differences in the effects of statebuilding between the two cases. For one, the fact that the Burundian state generated much of its legitimacy from the rural countryside, while the hinterland Sierra Leone provided little to the nation process. This is likely a result of the contextual differences, such as history and culture, between the two countries. The fact that Burundi saw a turn towards a patrimonial system and Sierra Leone a turn to increased prominence of ethnicity in the political system is another stark contrast. It is likely that the frameworks that the new constitutions contributed holds a role in this development. The similarities between the two cases are still far more prominent. Both statebuilding processes clearly negatively affected their respective nation processes.

That being said, the case of Burundi did show some potential for deviating from this trend in the future. Nearing the end of the period examined, as the state increasingly consolidated its hold on society, it appears as if it was able to conduct some nationbuilding, albeit in the face of much international criticism. Nationbuilding, even by morally deplorable means, such as propaganda and coercion, can produce positive results for the nation process. The consequence is, of course the loss of international legitimacy, but also that the people who do not identify the state distance themselves even more. Hence, the nation process can become very strong amongst those who identify with it, are loyal to it, and ascribe legitimacy to it, while at the same time becoming weaker amongst those who become increasingly more distanced from it.

The use of morally deplorable means to strengthen the nation process is nothing new in and of itself. In fact, historically, the use of force has been one of the most common means by which to promote the nation process. By the conquest of other

nations, both internally and externally of state borders, nation processes have been promoted over centuries, if not millennia. However, in most of these cases, the short-term negative effects of the deplorable means employed has had the chance to dissipate over time. In the case of Burundi, the negative effects are still fresh and so, still negatively impact the nation process.

The risk that more countries will emerge from statebuilding as authoritarian is highly worrisome and needs addressing. One solution might be to supplement the institutional approach with local approaches that consider the root causes of conflict and grants local agency, this risk might be abated. However, as always, more research needs to be done by more knowledgeable people than myself before we are able to find a satisfying solution.

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