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Ren Lemarchand

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Ren Lemarchand : The Dynamics of Violence in Central Africa (National and Ethnic Conflict in the 21st Century) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Dynamics of Violence in Central Africa (National and Ethnic Conflict in the 21st Century):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Integrative and Masterful AnalysisBy Theodore M. HoreshThis is an

integrative and masterful analysis of conflicts in Central Africa, covering mostly the last 40 or so years. It is more a series of essays than a narrative history, more insight than explanation. Lemarchand is the deepest Central African social thinker I have come across, but in jumping to insights, he assumes a familiarity with the subject that few non-academics will possess. If you are to read this work, you will need a reasonable familiarity with the various ethnic groups of Central Africa: Hutus, Tutsis, Twa, Banyamulenge, and their histories. You will need to be familiar with the timeline of history in Rwanda, the Congo, and to some extent Burundi. In short, to experience this work as an integrative and masterful synthesis, and not a frustrating and confusing mess, the genocide in Rwanda and the recent war in the Congo will have to be for you old and familiar news. If you are not familiar with the history, you can begin with Stephen Kinzer "A Thousand Hills: Rwanda's Rebirth and the Man Who Dreamed It." This is a good history focused on Rwanda's current leader, Paul Kagame. While it paints a very rosy picture of a leader many would accuse of genocidal acts in the Congo, it is nevertheless a solid work. For an account up through the genocide, which borders on academic seriousness, and is like Lemarchand, chock full of insight, consider Gerard Prunier's "Rwanda's Crisis." Prunier's work on "Africa's First World War" in the Congo is also much acclaimed. For a more journalistic account of that crisis, try "Dancing on the Heads of Monsters," by Jason Stearns. And for more personal accounts of the genocide, and how life goes on in the villages, my favorites are from the Jean Hatzfeld trilogy. This 17 of 18 people found the following review helpful. a first class Africanist's disorganized view By Banyan This book is a series of essays written by Lemarchand, one of the most respected historians of the Great Lakes region of Africa. Ranging from the nature of the Burundi genocide of 1972 to the parallels and differences between the Rwandan and German genocides, the essays show off Lemarchand's breadth and depth of knowledge about the subject. For someone with a more than passing familiarity with the subject, Lemarchand's insights cast some light on a subject that still remains in the dark. However, the structure of the book, lends itself to both episodic and repetitive accounts, where Lemarchand, having found a metaphor or turn or phrase that he likes, will repeat it in three different essays. It thus also fails to give a sense of structure to the vast interconnected series of events in the Great Lakes over the past several decades. Readers who don't have a sense of Rwandan-Burundian-Congolese history already will be better off seeking a more superficial account that offers the flow of one event into another. I also have to gripe about Lemarchand's practice on several occasions of phrasing the concluding idea to an argument in French, a language in which I remain lamentably ignorant. Lemarchand at several points concludes a point as, paraphrased, "Perhaps this is best described as [French phrase]." The irritation this causes for a reader who is interested in the subject but doesn't speak French is hard to overemphasize. Lemarchand has written a book for people who already have a decent knowledge of Great Lakes history and speak French. Those people may find the essays of a pre-eminent Great Lakes scholar thought-provoking, though not groundbreaking. Others may find the work either confusing or irritating. 1 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Racist Propaganda.... By Jonathan R. Beloff I currently live and work in Rwanda and I thought this would be an interesting book. I was unaware of the history of the author of this book. (I would later discovered he has written many racist books and articles.) I honestly, did not expect that it would be that favorable to the Government of Rwanda. But damn, was this book racist against Tutsis. I just love how the author keeps on changing the amount of people who died in the 1994 Rwandan Tutsi Genocide and then continues his revisionism that more Hutus were killed than Tutsis. Guess what, that is an inaccurate belief and it is only stated to describe his 'Tutsi conspiracy'. A lot of this book reminds me of the book, 'Protocols of Zionism'. The Jews are trying to take over the world and etc. That anti-Semitic book is very much like this one. Just change the word Jew to Tutsi and you might not even tell the difference. Don't purchase this book unless you want to confirm your racist beliefs.

Endowed with natural resources, majestic bodies of fresh water, and a relatively mild climate, the Great Lakes region of Central Africa has also been the site of some of the world's bloodiest atrocities. In Rwanda, Burundi, and the Congo-Kinshasa, decades of colonial subjugation most infamously under Belgium's Leopold II were followed by decades of civil warfare that spilled into neighboring countries. When these conflicts lead to horrors such as the 1994 Rwandan genocide, ethnic difference and postcolonial legacies are commonly blamed, but, with so much at stake, such simple explanations cannot take the place of detailed, dispassionate analysis. *The Dynamics of Violence in Central Africa* provides a thorough exploration of the contemporary crises in the region. By focusing on the historical and social forces behind the cycles of bloodshed in Rwanda, Burundi, and the Congo-Kinshasa, Ren Lemarchand challenges much of the conventional wisdom about the roots of civil strife in former Belgian Africa. He offers telling insights into the appalling cycle of genocidal violence, ethnic strife, and civil war that has made the Great Lakes region of Central Africa the most violent on the continent, and he sheds new light on the dynamics of conflict in the region. Building on a full career of scholarship and fieldwork, Lemarchand's analysis breaks new ground in our understanding of the complex historical forces that continue to shape the destinies of one of Africa's most important regions.

"Ren Lemarchand ranks among the top Africanist political scientists of his generation, unmatched in his depth of knowledge about the African Great Lakes. He brings to *The Dynamics of Violence in Central Africa* a broad comparative perspective as well as decades of close observation of the political evolution of the Great Lakes

region."M. Crawford Young, University of Wisconsin, MadisonAbout the AuthorRene Lemarchand is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of Florida.Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.Preface"The one duty we owe to history is to rewrite it."Oscar WildeMy immediate purpose in putting together this reader is to make readily accessible to interested scholars a selection of my recent (and not so recent) writings on former Belgian Africa; though most of these appeared in professional journals and edited volumes, none were sources of high visibility. Whatever their merits, their subliminal message is that the Great Lakes region matters. It matters because of its vast territorial expanse and the many borders it shares with neighboring states, and the ever-present danger of violence spilling across boundaries. It matters because the Congo's huge mineral wealth translates into a uniquely favorable potential for economic development. While claiming the largest deposits of copper, cobalt, diamonds and gold anywhere in the continent it is not for nothing that the Belgians called it a "geological scandal"more than 60 percent of its population lives below the poverty line. More importantly, it matters because of the appalling bloodshed it continues to experience. Public revulsion over the Rwanda genocide has all but overshadowed the far greater scale of the human losses suffered in eastern Congo. The death toll between 1998 and 2004 was estimated to be nearly four million. If one adds the killings in Rwanda and Burundi since 1994 one reaches the staggering figure of approximately 5.5 million. To this day as many as 38,000 die every month of war-related causes. In many parts of the country rape has become the weapon of choice of militias. The unspeakable has become commonplace. This in itself is a sufficient reason to devote serious attention to an area which is all too often dismissed as a latter-day version of the Heart of Darkness, entirely beyond redemption. There is also an intellectual rationale behind this exercise. At the root of the misconceptions and prejudices that figure so prominently in the media coverage of Central Africa lies an abysmal ignorance of its past and recent history. Our aim here is not only to challenge many such received ideas, but, by the same token, to deepen our understanding of the region by offering comparative insights into the dynamics of violence in each of the three states around which these essays are constructed (Rwanda, Burundi and the DRC). Viewing their agonies in isolation from each other only reveals a fraction of the regional forces at work behind the surge of ethnic strife. Just as the shock waves of the Rwanda blood bath has sent violent tremors in neighboring states, its seemingly ineluctable advent is inseparable from the long-term processes of change that have taken place in the region. Only through regional lens can one bring into focus the violent patterns of interaction that form the essential backdrop to the spread of bloodshed within and across boundaries. Part One of the book (Regional Context) is an attempt to set the political trajectories of each state in a wider perspective. After looking at the geopolitical setting (chapter 1) so as to make more legible the region's complex social configurations, recasting of identities and spatial fall-out we turn to more specific dimensions of analysis (chapter 2). Here the emphasis is on processes of exclusion, marginalization and political mobilization as vectors of conflict. In the light of the empirical evidence we suggest a critical reconsideration of the more fashionable explanatory models that have gained currency among contemporary social scientists, from Samuel Huntington to Paul Collier. This broad sketch is meant as a backdrop for a more sustained examination of the politics of mass violence in Rwanda, Burundi and the DRC. Part Two (Rwanda and Burundi: The Genocidal Twins) is an attempt to set the historical roots and circumstances of genocidal killings in Rwanda and Burundi in a comparative perspective. Ultimately the aim is to analyze the reciprocal impact of one upon the other. Sometimes referred to as the "false twins", the phrase also applies to their experience of genocide. Although the 1972 carnage in Burundi never reached the magnitude of its 1994 counterpart in Rwanda, and the bulk of the victims were Hutu, this should not obscure the similarities in the dynamics of the killings in each state, and how the Burundi carnage has reverberated upon Rwanda. Behind these horror stories lies a sociological puzzle, which, for the sake of clarity, requires a brief historical digression. Although Rwanda and Burundi have more in common than any other two states in the continent in terms of size, ethnic maps, language and culture, they crossed the threshold of independence under radically different circumstances, one (Rwanda) ending up as a republic under Hutu hegemony, the other (Burundi) as a constitutional monarchy under the rule of the Tutsi minority. Not until 1965 did the army abolish the monarchy. And while both experienced genocide, Rwanda today has emerged as a thinly disguised Tutsi dictatorship, with Burundi on the other hand painstakingly charting a new course towards a multiparty and multiethnic democracy. Seldom anywhere have Sigmund Freud's reflections on "the narcissism of minor differences" received a more dramatic confirmation: nowhere in Africa has fratricidal strife torn apart communities as nearly identical as between Hutu and Tutsi. The key to the puzzle lies in history. For all their similarities, traditional Burundi was far from being a carbon copy of Rwanda. In neither state is ethnic conflict reducible to age-old enmities, yet the Hutu-Tutsi split was far more pronounced, and therefore more potentially menacing in Rwanda, where the "premise of inequality" greatly reinforced by the legacy of colonial rule emerged the central axis around which Hutu-Tutsi relations revolved. Burundi society, by contrast, was significantly more complicated, and therefore more flexible. Typically, at first the focus of conflict had little to do with Hutu and Tutsi, involving instead political rivalries between the representatives of dynastic factions, known as the Bezi and Batware. The years following independence saw a drastic transformation of the parameters of conflict, where the Rwanda model took on the quality of a self-fulfilling prophecy. As many Hutu elites increasingly came to look to Rwanda as the exemplary polity, growing fears spread among the Tutsi population of an impending Rwanda-like revolution. Unless Hutu claims to power were resisted they would

share the fate of their Rwandan kinsmen. This meant a more or less systematic exclusion of Hutu elements from positions of authority. Exclusion led to insurrection, and insurrection to repression, culminating in 1972 with what must be described as the first recorded genocide in independent Africa. The centrality of myth-making as a key element behind conflicting identities is the subject of Chapter 3, with particular emphasis on the case of Rwanda. Here the discussion finds a convenient point of entry in John Lonsdale's concept of "moral ethnicity" (evolving into a singularly immoral definition of the Tutsi "other") as well as in Terence Ranger's seminal insights into the different "imaginings" involved in the historical process of redefining social entities. The parallel agonies of the two states are the subject of Chapter 4, which also tries to bring out the relevance of the killings in Burundi to an understanding of the Rwanda tragedy. Chapters 5 to 8 explore the multiple dimensions of the Rwanda genocide. Chapter 5 looks at the perverse "rationality" of mass murder, and shows the fallacy behind the all-too-prevalent notion of a spontaneous, uncontrollable outburst of collective ethnic hatred; chapter 6 is about the danger of reducing the horrors of mass crimes to a story of good and evil; chapter 7 probes the politics of memory in contemporary Rwanda and leans heavily on Paul Ricoeur's analytic categories to describe the ways in which ethnic memory is manipulated by the Kagame government; chapter 8 is an attempt to bring out the singularity of the Rwandan bloodbath and in so doing warns against the all-too-frequent tendency to draw an uncritical parallel between the Holocaust and Rwanda. The analogy with the Holocaust is not only misleading on historical grounds (Jews never invaded Germany with the assistance of a neighboring state for the purpose of bringing down the government); it suggests a way of apportioning responsibility that can only lead to the gravest of misunderstandings. Drawing the line between the good guys and the bad guys is easy enough in the case of Nazi Germany; in Rwanda the distinction is far more problematic if only because it defies the simplistic equation between Hutu murderers and Tutsi victims. This inherently complex dimension is one that is systematically shoved under the rug in official Rwandan historiography. The watchword in Rwanda today, symbolized by the moving memorial to Tutsi victims, is "Never forget!" but there is an unspoken subtext: "Never remember!" Never remember the 1972 genocide of Hutu in Burundi, the massacre of Hutu refugees in eastern Congo, the systematic elimination of Hutu civilians during and after the 1990 invasion of Rwanda by Kagame's soldiers. Above all, never remember Kagame's onus of responsibility in the shooting down of the plane carrying the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi to Kigali, the detonator that ignited the genocide. His involvement in the crash is convincingly demonstrated in Lieutenant Abdul Joshua Ruzibiza's autobiographical narrative while serving in Kagame's Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) as well as in the judicial investigation of French magistrate Jean-Louis Bruguire. I have no hesitation to concede that the analysis in chapters 5 to 8 would have been significantly enriched had I had access to these vitally important sources. The Burundi genocide, a largely forgotten drama, yet still poignantly relevant to an understanding of the contemporary political scene is dealt with in Chapter 9. While chapter 10 turns the spotlight on the state of the play on the eve of the transition to democracy, chapter 11 looks at Burundi's "endangered transition" in the wake of the 2005 elections. Part Three (The Democratic Republic of the Congo [DRC]) is a somewhat impressionistic, and largely retrospective portrayal of the forces that have made the former Belgian colony one of the most violent areas in the continent. It looks at the multiple crises that have engulfed the Congo in a time-space perspective. Chapter 12 is excerpted from my 1993 USAID report, at a time when Mobutu stood as the arch-villain in blocking the country's transition to democracy. Though obviously dated, it nevertheless captures some of the problems which continue to beset the country after its first multiparty elections in thirty years. Looking back to my 1993 diagnosis of Zairian ailments—a weak civil society, the omnipresent threat of insecurity, the appalling lack of cohesion and professionalism of the army, an economy in shambles—the continuing threats they pose to the resurrection of the Congolese body politic are hard to escape. Chapter 13, first presented at a 1999 conference on the theme of social capital at the University of Antwerp, uses Robert Putnam's civil society lens to delve into the complex interconnections between ethnic violence, public policies and social capital in the Kivu region, one of the most potentially unstable arenas anywhere in the DRC, along with Ituri. Chapter 14, written in 2001, is a broad-gauged analysis of the Congo as a failed state, and of the persistent hurdles that stand in the way of a reconstructed state system. The title of chapter 15 captures the gist of the argument I tried to set forth: the "tunnel at the end of the light" metaphor is enough to disabuse the reader of the notion that elections can serve as a panacea to resolve the country's enduring ills, ranging from residual pockets of insurgency to rampant corruption, widespread poverty, and persistent indiscipline and chronic defections within the armed forces, not to mention the ever-present threat of armed intervention from Rwanda. The concluding chapter ("From Kabila to Kabila: What Else is New?") is a reflection on the lessons to be drawn from the Congo's first multiparty poll in 40 years (held at a cost of over half a billion dollars to the international community). While reiterating the well-worn cliché about elections not being a guarantee for future stability, or a substitute for a functioning state, it tries to assess the historic legacies of the Mobutist state, and that of his successor, the despotic buffoon whose son is now in charge of charting a new course towards peace and democracy. While there can be no question about the significance of the changes that have occurred since the death of Kabila pre, today the Congo remains dangerously vulnerable to the ills inherited from Mobutu's 30-year dictatorship. Attempts to sketch out future trends are not without risks: the newly emergent institutions are conspicuously weak, the concatenation of forces on the ground in a state of flux, and leadership patterns at the

provincial levels all but impossible to pin down. Nonetheless, some plausible scenarios come to mind. The most obvious relates to the continuing impact of outside forces on the salience and direction of domestic conflict. In the past the sheltering of opposition movements from Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda have raised major security concerns among their respective governments, and served as a pretext for armed incursions. While in recent times the stakes have become more complicated, with access to mineral wealth looming increasingly large in the agenda of Rwanda and Uganda, the many connecting links between eastern Congo and its neighbors portend continuing conflict. The likelihood of what Samuel Huntington calls "within-state fault line conflicts" acting as a catalyst for interstate confrontations is not to be discounted. The mutual distrust between the self-styled indigenes or "native sons" in North and South Kivu, and the Kinyarwanda-speaking allogenes, will not go away any time soon, any more than the bitter enmities between remnants of the Hutu genocidaires and the Tutsi communities indigenous to eastern DRC. The conflict lies at the heart of the tensions that brought Rwanda and the DRC to the brink of war in late 2004. It could resurface at any time in the future. How such conflicts may play themselves out on the ground is an open question. The gravest danger would arise from the simultaneity of violent insurrections in both east and west, as happened in the wake of the transition to multiparty democracy, thus confronting the fledgling Congolese armed forces with an unmanageable challenge. But by far the worse-case scenario is one where the army might dissolve in the midst of factional rivalries, leaving the government in a state of utter impotence in the face of widespread outbreaks of violence. Granted that the main guarantee of future stability lies in the presence of the MONUC peacekeepers, when one considers the costs of its operation and the less than cooperative attitude of the Congolese government one wonders how much longer the MONUC can be relied on to help maintain a modicum of peace and stability. Even in the best of circumstances, its past performance raises serious doubts as to whether it will be equal to the task. Just as debatable is whether the long-awaited transition to democracy can do more than provide a constitutional fig-leaf to conceal the nakedness of a party-dominated, clientelist polity. Even at this early stage there are ample signs that Kabila is unlikely to distance himself from the authoritarian style of his predecessor. The legitimate political opposition has been either forced into submission, bought off or reduced to a marginal position. The army, meanwhile, will remain the Achilles' heel of the regime. Its restructuring is still at an incipient stage. Its nuisance capacity is not the least of the problems inherited from the Mobutist past. In this as in many other ways the DRC bears testimony to the many wounds inflicted upon its people by its rulers with the help of its neighbors. The Congo's supreme anomaly, a country of immense wealth, home to one of the continent's poorest populations will continue to shock, intrigue or infuriate observers and political actors alike for many years to come. Yoked together by an accident of history, the three states of former Belgian Africa are each engaged in a process of self-reinvention, each trying to shape its future in defiance of their past. Whether the legacy of their recent agonies can be set aside for the sake of a more promising destiny impossible to tell. That they will continue to influence each other, for better or for worse, in their seemingly endless quest for a political rebirth, is beyond doubt. My hope is that this book will provide the reader with a better sense of the complex historical ties that will continue to impinge on their tortured trajectories, and of the continuities and ruptures beneath.