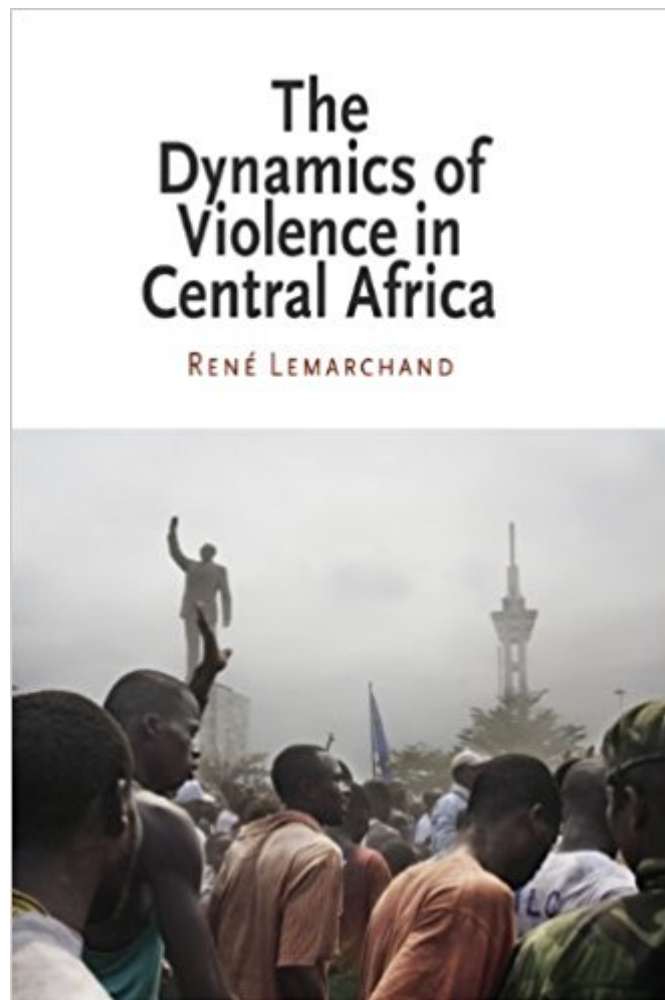


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The Dynamics Of Violence In Central Africa (National And Ethnic Conflict In The 21st Century)



Synopsis

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, Renée 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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Renée 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, Madison

Rene Lemarchand is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of Florida.

This 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

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 of 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.

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.

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