

# *Unveiling Post-Liberal Peace: Examining Rwanda's Successful Peacebuilding Approach*

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**Abstract:** This paper critically assesses the peacebuilding paradigm and explores the success of post-liberal peacebuilding in Rwanda as a transformative model. It tries to discover effective peacebuilding means by examining the theoretical debate between liberal and post-liberal peace. Amidst the limitations of traditional liberal peace theories, post-liberal peace emphasizes the need for non-Western perspectives in peacebuilding efforts. Rwanda's successful peacebuilding case highlights the significance of ethnic integration and gender equality, showcasing the country's commitment to fostering inclusive and sustainable peace.

## 1. Introduction

In the post-Cold War era, achieving the goal of peacebuilding became the focal point for international policymakers when considering individual countries' post-conflict or post-war states. Deciding the priority of peacebuilding activities, finding the best time to implement them, and figuring out the most effective leadership or governance approaches are urgent questions for policymakers to address. From Iraq to Afghanistan, Cote d'Ivoire to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, military interventions, negotiated solutions, and peacekeeping operations have failed to offer a clear trajectory toward peace<sup>[1]</sup>. The widely recognized theory of "liberal peace" appears inadequate in resolving tensions and differences within post-conflict states during the peacebuilding process.

However, effective peacebuilding emerged in Rwanda after the genocide, providing valuable insights for peacebuilders worldwide. Despite having suffered from enduring exclusive politics, authoritarian rule, and recurring ethnic violence, Rwanda fueled academic interest because of the genocide triggered by 1994. After the horrific massacre, how to resolve the ethnic conflicts left by history and achieve the ethnic groups' reconciliation and peaceful coexistence can be described as a vision of the world. Thirty years have passed, and Rwanda has transcended its traumatic past and become a country with the most potential for development in Africa. By downplaying ethnic consciousness, adopting an integrationist policy centered on national identity, and actively promoting gender equality, Rwanda exemplifies the success of post-liberal peacebuilding as a governance model.

## 2. The Debate of Peacebuilding theories: Liberal peace and Post-liberal Peace

Liberal Peace Theory has some influence in Western countries and international organizations. The term "peacebuilding" was first coined by the Norwegian scholar Johan Galton<sup>[2]</sup>, who described

three methods to achieve peace: peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding. From the statistical data of post-Cold War conflicts, multilateral intervention in intra-state and inter-state conflicts has increased, including by international institutions or organizations. In the post-conflict management era, the logic behind peacebuilding theory is “liberal peacebuilding”<sup>[3]</sup>. Western governments and international organizations presumed that quickly democratizing and commercializing fragile states was necessary for stabilizing these countries. Liberal peace is characterized by a "problem-solving approach" that attempts to solve the effects of conflict, war, and underdevelopment by re-establishing a warring society foundation<sup>[4]</sup>. The peace-promotion efforts include different activities, such as peacekeeping operations, military intervention, and peacebuilding.

However, according to Oliver P. Richmond<sup>[5]</sup>, liberal peace may have significant drawbacks. Peacebuilding in the post-Cold War period did not work as well as expected, and examples of failure abound. Richmond implies that current liberal peacebuilding should be a practice that involves introducing certain political policies and values into society and everyday life. These values and policies are based on the idea of liberalism, a political philosophy that emphasizes individual rights and freedoms. While the Critical Peace Study remains focused on Johan Galtung, Richmond has contributed to the body of thought on a daily and local level<sup>[6]</sup>.

Post-liberal peace study, or critical peace study, has become increasingly impressive. Richmond suggests that emancipatory or everyday peace, referred to as post-liberal peace, is a more pluralistic approach to peacebuilding. Focusing on daily life and community care, it is not only the form of the broader social contract in liberal peace but also goes beyond Western biases of liberal and neoliberal. It targets every day, emancipatory, and empathetic politics in post-conflict situations rather than security, markets, and institutions. Besides, post-liberal theory believes that peacebuilding should also be accomplished to respect local culture, traditions, and ontology during local decision-making processes. International society should support local operations but not impose their ideas of peace on domestic people. Peacebuilding, in essence, should involve a "local ethic of peace" based on a social contract between society and the polity. Moreover, the practical of post-liberal peace theory exists regarding Rwanda's successful post-liberal peacebuilding case.

While critical peace theory has made significant strides based on prior peace studies, it still has critiques. Post-liberal peace theory faces scrutiny from Paris<sup>[7]</sup>, who identifies five mistakes in post-liberal peace arguments. These errors include conflating post-conquest peacebuilding with post-settlement efforts, mistakenly associating peacebuilding with imperialism, defining "liberal peace" too broadly, distorting the peacebuilding record, and oversimplifying moral complexities. However, it is essential to recognize that post-liberal theory offers unique perspectives for peacebuilding.

### 3. Post-liberal Peace's Non-Western Concerns

The post-liberal peace theory has significantly influenced non-Western international relations, redirecting global attention towards the Global South. This theory offers a critical perspective on the inherent biases of Western nations towards others, emphasizing the significance of non-Western political dynamics. The foundation of international relations theory rests on the Westphalia Treaty, negotiated predominantly by Western countries. Samuel Huntington's classification of the world into eight major civilizations further underscores this Western-centric perspective<sup>[8]</sup>. However, as Acharya and Buzan ask, “Why is there no non-western international relations theory?<sup>[9]</sup>” This neglect of voices from non-Western nations perpetuates a Eurocentric view, compelling these nations to interpret the world, and even their own realities, through Western concepts.

Post-liberal theory also places a strong emphasis on non-Western international relations. As exemplified by exploring two "non-Western" civilizations, Islam and Sikhism, Giorgio Shani's<sup>[10]</sup> advocates for a more inclusive post-western international theory. The escalating clash of civilizations

in the age of globalization, such as the 9/11 attacks event, highlights the urgent need for a non-Western international relations theory to address global challenges. Richmond consistently underscores the importance of integrating non-Western voices in peacebuilding efforts, proposing everyday peace practices rooted in specific domestic contexts.

Furthermore, post-liberal peace acknowledges the shortcomings of post-Cold War peacebuilding and advocates for practical measures. Ware et al.<sup>[11]</sup> provide concrete examples, demonstrating how everyday peace practices, even in extreme cases like post-ethnic cleansing in Myanmar, can contribute to broader peace initiatives. Colombia, Haiti, Nepal, and other case studies were also analyzed to explore the peace-building process. The concern of liberal peacebuilding transfers to the domestic situation involving culture, ethics, and people. It suggests that post-liberal peace will turn from a top-down hierarchy led by social elites and politicians to bottom-up social practice. The shift from top-down hierarchical approaches to bottom-up social practices is seen as a key transformation that aligns with post-liberal peace ideals, enhancing local satisfaction and fostering effective peacebuilding.

#### **4. The successful practice of Post-liberal Peace: Rwanda's case**

Peacebuilding in Rwanda is a compelling success story, marked by significant progress in ethnic integration and the advancement of gender equality. The brutal genocide between the Hutu and Tutsi communities gained international attention for its unprecedented cruelty and killed an estimated 500,000 to 800,000 people. It also is gender-based violence, the rape of women used as a tool to separate the conscious alien population and completely exhaust each other. As vulnerable groups, women are the biggest victims. The genocide concluded when the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), led by the Tutsi, took control of the country. Rwanda's situation improved significantly following the RPF's declaration of total military victory. Under the leadership of Paul Kagame, the RPF administration played a pivotal role in the peacebuilding process. It underwent substantial efforts in ethnic integration, gender equality, and the realms of democracy, security, justice, and the economy. Kagame's leadership and inclusive approach to post-conflict governance contributed to Rwanda's transformation from a devastated state to one with remarkable potential for development in Africa.

##### **4.1 Ethnic integration**

Ethnic integration after the Rwandan genocide can be seen as an exercise in post-liberal peace. If the values promoted by the Hutu regime in Rwanda before the 1994 genocide reflected “ethnic division” and “ethnic hatred,” then the core values of the RPF government's reconstruction are “ethnic unity” and “ethnic reconciliation.” Ethnic integration refers to the process of fostering harmonious and inclusive relationships among different ethnic or cultural groups within a society<sup>[12]</sup>. It involves promoting interaction, understanding, and collaboration between members of diverse ethnic backgrounds to create a cohesive and unified social fabric. Ethnic integration aims to mitigate tensions, prejudices, and conflicts arising from cultural differences, fostering a sense of belonging and shared identity among individuals from various ethnic communities. The Rwanda government has endeavored to implement ethnic integration, aiming to cultivate a shared sense of belonging among Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa communities, contributing to a unified nation.

Ethnic reconciliation was systematized and theorized with the programmatic document “National Unity and Reconciliation Policy,” which was issued in 2007. These objectives include eliminating division and discrimination, eradicating genocidal ideology, raising awareness and valuing unity, promoting a culture of peace and reconciliation, nurturing values in indigenous cultures, contributing to social cohesion, etc. To operationalize these goals, the government has implemented strategies such as ensuring state institutions' action plans reflect solidarity and reconciliation, facilitating regular

information-sharing and consultative dialogues, strengthening civic education, treating psychological trauma, eradicating poverty, and monitoring the unity and reconciliation process.

The “I am Rwandan” program is also an important part of the ethnic integration process in everyday peacebuilding. In order to facilitate national identity transition, the Rwandan government launched “Ndi Umunyarwanda” (I Am Rwandan) in 2013, a major initiative to further reshape Rwandan identity and their interactions in an effort to build a Rwandan community based on trust and solidarity. The key to the “I am Rwandan” program is to develop the self-esteem and pride of the people as “Rwandans,” putting national and national interests first rather than clinging to divisive ethnic and regional identities. Through cultural integration and the reconstruction of identity, the Rwandan government has promoted ethnic integration in the country.

The gratifying result of Rwanda's ethnic integration process can be seen in the release of the “Reconciliation Barometer.” In 2020, Rwanda released the “Reconciliation Barometer,” an authoritative summary of the country's ethnic integration process of over 20 years. It results from a large national survey conducted in Rwanda, which collected quantitative data from 9,720 private households and 2,880 institutional households across the country using probabilistic sampling techniques. Therefore, it is comprehensive and authoritative in its theme of post-genocide national reconstruction. In 2020, Rwanda unveiled the “Reconciliation Barometer,” a comprehensive evaluation of the nation's 20-year ethnic integration journey. Based on a rigorous national survey involving 9,720 private households and 2,880 institutional households, the barometer provides authoritative insights into post-genocide reconstruction. It employs six key indicators, revealing the success of ethnic integration: 94.6% approval for knowledge of past, present, and future; 98.6% acceptance of national identity; 90.6% satisfaction with political culture and governance; 94.3% endorsement of security and well-being; 93.1% support for justice, equity, and rights; and 97.1% for social cohesion. Rwanda's ethnic integration stands out, achieving a remarkable 94.7% approval and satisfaction. Statistically speaking, ethnic integration in Rwanda has been relatively successful and achieved remarkable results.

## 4.2 Gender equality

Gender equality is also an essential aim of the peacebuilding process in Rwanda. It refers to the equal rights, opportunities, and treatment of all individuals, regardless of gender. This is reflected in the importance and improvement of the status of women who are usually disadvantaged. Peacebuilding actors became increasingly aware of the impact of war on women and positive relationships between women and peace worldwide. Because the essence of war lies in violence, serving as a demonstration of power and representing a form of hegemonic masculinity. Meanwhile, women are generally tender and gentle; increasing the role of women in the community can mitigate conflicts in the community. Then, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 requested that member states consider gender issues in peacebuilding. Gender equality has become an important indicator in the peacebuilding process.

In the Rwandan genocide, women were tragically victimized. Karen<sup>[13]</sup> estimates that 250,000–500,000 women experienced sexual violence during this horrific event. Rape inflicted both individual suffering, causing terror and humiliation, and broader consequences, leading to the degradation of women's rights and those of the Tutsi ethnic community. Disturbingly, rape served as a tool of genocide aimed at contaminating the Tutsi lineage by forcing women to bear Hutu children. This brutal tactic targeted the essential element of civilization—children—to exert dominance. The act of rape not only inflicted immediate harm but also symbolized the broader violence against women, perpetuating gender inequality amid the conflicts.

After the genocide, Rwanda’s government has made an arduous effort—slow but methodical—to

empower women. Rwanda's transitional government changed the structure to allow women to participate and implemented gender-sensitive policies in 1994. The commitment to gender equality is enshrined in the Constitution, which pledges to reserve at least 30 percent of decision-making positions for women<sup>[14]</sup>. Notably, Rwanda achieved a historic milestone in 2003, boasting the world's highest representation of women in parliament at 48.8%, with nine out of twenty-eight ministerial posts allocated to women. At the national level, the Ministry of Gender and Women in Development has coordinated gender focal points and gender budgeting.

In the realm of law and justice, Rwanda introduced the Gacaca courts system to address gender issues<sup>[15]</sup>, a significant initiative within the country's judicial framework. Lady Justice Marie Thérèse Mukamulisa's inclusion in the system marks a notable stride for gender equality. This governance structure is crucial from a feminist perspective, emphasizing the significance of gender balance in ensuring peace and sustainability. The government's commitment to promoting women's rights accelerates the peacebuilding process.

Rwanda's success in achieving gender equality serves as a valuable reference for countries grappling with gendered laws. In contrast, numerous states still have a long way to go. In Iran, there was a protest against the innocent death of Muslim girl Mahsa Amini, who was not wearing her hijab "correctly" and then died after being detained. Even in Japan, a developed country, women still cannot remarry until one hundred days after divorce, whereas men can remarry immediately. Most legal codes and regulations are always biased against women. However, the Constitution guarantees women's rights in Rwanda, which promotes gender equality dramatically. The legal framework goes beyond guarantees, establishing minimum quotas for women's participation and catalyzing women's empowerment. This proactive legal stance contributes significantly to the ongoing success of gender equality initiatives in Rwanda.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the case of Rwanda stands as a testament to the transformative power of post-liberal peacebuilding in addressing the aftermath of one of the most devastating genocides in modern history. Through a meticulous process of ethnic integration and gender empowerment, Rwanda has rebuilt itself and emerged as a beacon of hope for other post-conflict societies. Adopting post-liberal peace principles has allowed Rwanda to move beyond the constraints of traditional liberal peacebuilding, emphasizing local context, cultural sensitivity, and a commitment to fostering inclusive and sustainable peace.

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