During the early part of the 1990s the world witnessed a ‘third wave’ of democracy. Some of these countries seemed to easily and peacefully transition into successful democratic nations, while others attempted the process and failed erupting into chaos, civil war, and even genocide. What is the key to creating a successful, stable democratic transition?

When discussing preconditions that allow for a democratic transition to occur, some political scientists have focused on the role of civil society, others look at the economy.¹ Here I will argue that while both of these aspects are important to a democracy, the integral part of a successful transition is the way in which political elites function. It is important to understand that it is not the value of other preconditions we are questioning, but rather which factor plays the most vital role in a successful democratic transition.

Who exactly are political elites? For the purpose of my argument, they are defined as people who have a direct influence on government policies and politics. Within this definition there are two major categories: internal and external elites. The internal elites come from within the state itself and can include presidents, interest group organizers, and key political figures. On the other hand, external elites are persons that may have influence on state politics and policies, but come from outside the state. These elites can be composed of key figures in development organizations and international political negotiators.

What about groups whose elites are shut out of the process? These leaders are not included in the political elite category unless they play a substantial role influencing state politics. Use of militant tactics or coercion of the population, which silenced or alienated groups often resort to, allow these elites to then become part of the political elite; their tactics have a direct effect on state policies and politics. The definition can therefore incorporate a variety of elite that play an important role in the process of democratization.

Through the following case studies of South Africa and Rwanda I come to the conclusion that there are five principles that political elites must follow in order to ensure a successful democratic transition. They must communicate throughout the process openly and honestly; come to the negotiating table willing to negotiate, as opposed to just demanding policies; negotiations must have been initiated by internal elites, not completely coerced by outside forces; be all inclusive to ensure no extremist group feels alienated causing backlash; and the political elites must maintain their power throughout the process to ensure negotiated settlements can be implemented and abided by within their own parties. These five principles will be further discussed throughout the case studies and analysis.

Before exploring these principles and the vital role of political elites in successful transitions, we must discuss some of the literature on democratic theory and whether or not African states are conducive to a democratic government in the first place. Then we need to examine why political elites are the most significant contributing factor to a successful democratic transition, as opposed to the economy or civil society.
Chapter 1: Democratic Theory and Pre-conditions for Democracy

The book *The Fate of Africa’s Democratic Experiments* opens with the very important question, can democracy actually be implemented on a continent filled with countries that were created with no acknowledgment of the various ethnic groups all being forced together under one government? Many countries in Africa have deeply divided histories, at least throughout the colonial periods, which contain feuding relations and inter-ethnic competition. These countries often do not have the basic institutions that many deem necessary for a democracy to thrive. These pre-conditions are often defined as strong economies, and thriving civil society. While some questions remain about how democracy will be implemented in countries with such violent and deeply divided pasts, democracy can flourish in Africa as we are slowly seeing today.

There is no reason why African citizens should not demand and obtain the opportunity to participate in their own government, the opportunity to hold their leaders accountable, and the opportunity for everyone living in a state to vote in free and fair elections. As Bratton and Van de Walle argue, “the efforts of the African citizens to hold their leaders accountable for providing for the common good are, at heart, a quest for democracy.”² This type of democratic regime can be created as long as the process of transplacement through elite negotiation is utilized in the proper form, and that power is eventually passed on to the people.

“A consolidated democracy requires not only an institutional minimum—e.g. the legal code of democratic principles, institutions of representation and accountability— but

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also legitimization of the democratic regime, in the sense that political and social
stakeholders accept the new ‘rules of conduct’.”3 This implies that the citizens
themselves must embrace democratic institutions and tendencies, which will only happen
through understanding and knowledge of democracy. Even as development efforts have
become stronger and more prominent, Africa has still seen a steady decline in the
standard of living, causing many Africans to distrust development organizations and lose
faith in their own governments. “As a result most Africans tend to view the state and its
development agents as hostile forces to be evaded, cheated, or thwarted, as opportunities
present.”4

In order for the African citizenry to put their faith into the state, the democracy
being established must ensure that it is creating basic democratic institutions. The three
major features, as put forth by Diamond-Lintz-Lipset definition includes “1. Factions that
can compete fairly for all elected positions of authority; 2. The factions can compete
fairly to initiate, shape, and influence the official policy of the government; and 3. There
are sufficient civil liberties to protect the effectiveness of the factions as they compete for
authoritarian positions and policy.”5

Why would elites institute a democracy in the first place? The answer to this
question lies in the basic interests of these elites. The implementation of a democracy
would bring about two positive outcomes directly effecting elite rule. The first would be

3 Sandra Dusing, *Traditional Leadership and Democratization in Southern Africa: A
Comparative Study of Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa* (Hamburg: LIT, 2002), 32.
32-44, 36.
5 Hugh O’Doherty, ‘Leadership and Developing Democracy Where There is None’ in
Adrian Guelke, *Democracy and Ethnic Conflict* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004),
118.
to define regulations for the political process, which would allow for a variety of elites to have access to, and negotiate, power. The second outcome, which stems from the first, is political stability. While intuitively it may not seem like sharing access to power would be in the best interest of elites. Under authoritarian regimes, political elites are never guaranteed complete safety and stability as opposition groups continually attempt to fight for power. In conceeding some control, these elites are ensuring their own safety and are given the potential to gain power at any given time.

Once the groundwork for democracy has been laid by elites, the power must then be handed over to the people of the country. Maintenance of a democracy does not stem entirely from good leadership but rather from political participation and an acknowledgment of the power the people hold. The government must be able to work effectively to strive for the goals of their society in order to truly represent the citizens’ needs.6

The role political elites play in the process of transition to democracy occurs during the attempted transition itself. Samuel Huntington and Ian Shapiro both discuss the notion of transplacement as a means for instituting democracy in a government.7 Transplacement is the use of negotiations between the current regime and opposing forces in an attempt to create a power-share (multi-party system) so that all citizens have equal political rights and access to the government. Transplacement is not a forcible removal of the current regime from power, nor is it an inherent breakdown from within

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the regime, but rather it is the extrication of a regime through agreed upon settlements and discussion about the future type of government instituted. In this thesis I argue that during their transitions Rwanda and South Africa both used transplacement as a way to achieve a democratic state.

During the time of the transition elites must grapple with an important dichotomy; the democratic government they are installing in power could be the same government that removes them from power. “Ultimately it is elites who shape whether these new regimes will survive and how they will develop.” Through negotiation elites must come to an agreement on the rules and implementation of the political process. The elites who participated in the creation of this government must then hand over their power to the citizens. In a free vote there is no guarantee that the people will then place these elites into power. Many political theorists point out that the value of the democracy put in place can truly be seen in the way that it eventually constrains the elites who originally placed the system into power. To understand how to achieve a successful democratic transition, we need to recognize the way the elite role changes.

Theorists have cited two important other factors that contribute to the implementation of a stable democracy. These institutions include the economy, and vibrant civil society with growing social capital. Both of these so called pre-conditions

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9 Leonardo A. Villalon and Peter Von Doepp eds., The Fate of Africa’s Democratic Experiments: Elites and Institutions (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), Chapter 1.
for democracy must be examined in order to understand why we emphasize the role of elites, in a successful democratic transition, as opposed to these other pieces of the democratic puzzle.

Economy

When discussing vital pre-conditions for democracy to thrive in a nation-state, many theorists have drawn connections between the economy and a liberalized democratic government. As Seymour Lipset argued, “economic development was the main driving force for democracy.” Economic crisis can lead to civic unrest eventually forcing a change in state politics in order to meet citizen demands. While it is true that an unstable economy can aid in mass mobilization, without leaders acting as political elites to organize and utilize the mobilization to effect change, nothing will occur. “Protests in many countries originated with economic grievances, but they became increasingly political as important segments of society turned against incumbent regimes and embraced demands for fundamental change.” However, political elites are the vital actors who ensure demands get heard, and represent the societal segments in negotiating settlement. Economies in crisis do not play the most influential role in creating the desire and creating space for a democratic transition to occur; it is the elite impact within the crisis that bring about political change.

The other side of the economic argument states that in order for a stable democratic transition to occur, the economy must already be established. Many believe

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that “democracy was the expected outcome of concomitant of other ‘modernizing’ processes of capitalist economic development,”\textsuperscript{13} meaning that democracy stemmed from stable economies. However this theory does not seem to be entirely true. While it is beneficial to a democratic transition to have a stable economy to distract and aid citizens confronted with political crisis, it is not necessary in order for democratic institutions to be established. As was discussed in the previous section, economic development can appear due to a democratic transition, and therefore does not need to be initially in place for democratic state to occur.

It is also hard to substantiate the claim that a stable capitalist economy is necessary in order for democracy to thrive when many authoritarian regimes have implemented capitalist economic tendencies. These regimes have utilized development as a means of enhancing their own political gains. Through display of economic success, authoritarian regimes can actually bolster their power and as many authors cite, “citizens tend to identify economic performance with particular leaders rather than with whole political systems.”\textsuperscript{14} If capitalist economies can be used to enhance authoritarian regimes, then it loses value as a pre-requisite to a democratic state.

While stable economies can be important in maintaining secure governments, they are not the most important determining factor in a successful democratic transition. Whether the economy is developed through democratization or existed before the democratic state, it is the way the elite control and manipulate the economy, which

\textsuperscript{13} Gerald J. Schmitz and David Gillies, \textit{The Challenge of Democratic Development: Susaining democratization is Developing Societies} (Ottowa: The North-South Institute, 1992), 19.

determines its effect on the new democratic institution. As was previously stated, people remember the leaders not faceless institutions.

On Civil Society and Social Capital:

Civil Society plays a large role in the development of democratic practices in a country attempting the transition to democracy. Many theorists believe it must exist in a state in order for democracy to thrive. Stephen Ndegwa describes the notion, “of civil society as directly engaged in actions to force political change in African countries.” This means that citizens, through involvement in associations and organizations, play an important role in the political climate of a country. These associations must have central characteristics in order to be effective in creating political change; they cannot be ‘implanted’ in a country through NGOs and they must be cross-cultural in their nature, or they will reinforce divisive cleavages.

Robert D. Putnam describes social capital and civic association in his book Making Democracy Work. Civil society is an infrastructure that works in the space between the state and the family. It is a place in which discussion can occur and organizations created to deal with both the problems of everyday life, and influence the policies and politics of a country. “Such a community is bound together by horizontal relations of reciprocity and cooperation, not by vertical relations of authority and dependency.” These networks can be devised both formally in organizations, and informally in everyday events but are distinctly horizontal as opposed to hierarchical

networks. Social capital is the vital capacity for people to participate in civic life. It is created out of these associations that many view as reinforcement of a more effective and stable government.

Why do the associations that make up civil society help create more stable democratic governments? “The argument goes something like this: well connected citizens are well informed citizens who constructively debate issues, and who take the trouble to express their views so that the government is directed to do what the well-informed citizenry want.”17 In order for democracy to work citizens must be willing to be involved in the first place. Civil society gives them an opportunity and space to do so, and allows citizens the freedom to formulate their own ideas. Without a vibrant civil society, people are unable to understand or relate to the political process and instead will continue to form negative types of civic associations, which reinforce divisive societal cleavages.

While the IMF and World Bank constantly pointed to Rwanda as an African success because of the perceived booming civic life, Peter Uvin points out that these civic associations while plentiful formed negative types of civic association. Instead of building cultural bridges between the Hutu and Tutsi many actually reinforced the cultural divide.

Hence the multitude of NGO’s is not so much the reflection of the presence of a civil space conquered by people going beyond the boundaries of family, ethnic group, and location as the reflection of externally defined policies by government and foreign aid agencies, backed up by significant resources and political pressure.18

Civic associations and organizations cannot be ‘implanted’ as Putnam described it. In order for citizens to be effective in creating civil society, the desire must stem from the society itself. “The must successful local organizations represent indigenous, participatory initiatives in relatively cohesive local communities.”19

South Africa, during the democratic transition, maintained a vibrant civil society. Grassroots organizing and mass mobilization brought together different socio-economic classes, different workers, and even different races in an effort to fight the apartheid regime. Apartheid itself aided in the creation of civil society in that it “compelled the creation of alternative means of interest articulation within communities.”20 As civil society thrived, citizens were able to work together, many of these associations assisted in the fight to end apartheid. By having such strong civic life in which everyone represents themselves, South Africans were already being prepared for the institution of a democratic government.

Attention must also be paid to the types of civil society being created in these developing countries. “There is evidence that communities that bond together strongly and organize themselves well internally sometimes then neglect the people and spaces beyond their own community patch.”21 NGO’s and organizations must be directed in order to ensure that types of civil society detrimental to democratic transition are not being created. As Peter Uvin said, “civil society organizations’ positive effects do not

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follow automatically from their existence but must be targeted.”

Social capital and civic growth only be harnessed through exposure and participation in associations formed throughout the country. This allows for

People of all walks of life gain confidence in their capacity to undertake initiatives in the public sphere; networks or contacts and collaboration are built, both within communities and between them; boundaries and divisions of region, ethnicity, sex, and clan are transcended or crosscut; and attitudes and knowledge about politics, policies, management, negotiation, and compromise are found.

All of these aspects of civil society aid citizens and the government in building a foundation of trust that in turn allows for democracy to flourish.

While we can see how important civil society can be to a democracy, political elites are the ones who actually create the space for civil society to exist. By clearly defining the role of the government, they create room in which civil society can grow. More importantly by creating an institutional framework not based on patrimonial ideals but one within which each citizen has a right to participation cross-cultural divides can flourish. This is why the elite play the most important role in the transition to democracy; they create the initial space for civil society to thrive.

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23 Ibid., 171.
Chapter 2: Why Compare Rwanda and South Africa?

It would seem to the average observer that no comparison could really be made between South Africa and Rwanda, besides the fact that they both attempted democratic transition. South Africa is one of the leading countries of Africa competing in world markets using its vast amount of resources, international sporting events, and in the forefront of Africa’s more developed countries. Rwanda, on the other hand, is a tiny country situated in the Great Lakes region of Africa and for a time was one of the most densely populated African countries. Development Funds applauded Rwanda’s development efforts and often used the small country as an example of what Africa could become. Rwanda’s main export was coffee since the hilly but rather lush country does not offer much in the way of natural resources besides fertile soil. However, there is much more than meets the eye in these two cases.

One important factor when examining the two countries more closely is the way their societies were ordered. As Rene Lemarchand pointed out these “states could be described as ranked societies, in that they shared a vertical pattern of stratification in which the politically dominant group also controlled access to the wealth, education, and status.”24 Because their societies were rooted in hierarchies, political elites easily and quickly took control over the democratizing process.

The way in which each country attempted to create a multi-party state was also very similar. Both countries utilized negotiation between regimes and dissidents as a method of transplacement. This allowed for the extrication of the old regime through

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“negotiation with the principle opposition group.” As Lemarchand explained, both countries believed that power sharing was the easiest form of government because it was the best way to confront inter-cultural conflict in these states.

The final interesting connection, that few theorists have pointed out, existing between the two countries lies in the rapid declines of their markets during this period, and the surmounting pressure coming from the international community to become all-inclusive political states. During the 1980s both countries experienced massive economic downturns, Rwanda’s economic depression resulted from the coffee crash on the market, South Africa’s from trade embargos in an effort to force an end to apartheid. Each attempted to turn to development funds as their economies lay in ruins, and both were told by the IMF that they had to conform to their political liberalization policies in order to receive any aid. While both Rwanda and South Africa were denied aid, they also came under fire in the international community for issues of political exclusion and human rights violations. Since both of these countries were at one time looked favorably down upon by many in the international community, they were eager to earn back the prestige they once held. This played an interesting and important role in the push for negotiations and settlement.

To further clarify and understand the importance of elites in democratic transitions let us now take a look a closer look at two case studies. Rwanda allows us insight into the precarious balancing act political elites must utilize in order for a

successful transition to occur. It also provides clear examples of the detrimental impact elites can have on the process of democratization.
Chapter 3: The Case Study of Rwanda

Rwanda, a tiny country closely connected to neighboring Burundi lies in the Great Lakes region of Western Africa. Its history has been marred by bloodshed and turmoil created by colonial rule, which instituted a cultural divide that continues to promotes ethnic tension to this day. Germans initially colonized Rwanda but left Rwandans to govern themselves, but at the end of World War I, under the League of Nations mandate, Rwanda became a Belgian colony. During their rule the Belgians decided that there were actually two types of Rwandans, the minority Tutsi a Hamitic elite class, and the majority Hutu who were meant to play a subservient role. Belgians swept through Rwanda dividing the population by appearance into their respective categories. Tutsi leaders were placed in power in an attempt to ensure Belgian control. Questions remain to this day as to whether or not the Hutu/ Tutsi divide was significantly present prior to Belgian colonization.

In 1959 the last Tutsi monarch fled Rwanda as the Hutu majority under Gregoire Kayibanda, revolted against Tutsi dominance of power. The UN then set up a referendum and Rwanda became a Republic in 1960, the first president being Kayibanda, the leader of the Mouvement Democratique Republicain (MDR). During his presidency Kayibanda began to implement severe restrictions on the Tutsi in effort to maintain political and economic control. Many Hutu saw these restrictions as necessary in order to take back their country from ‘outsiders’ and Tutsi, fearing their loss of power and the growing ethnic divide, began to flee to neighboring countries.

Kayibanda would remain as president for 13 years until his Defense Minister, Major General Juvenal Habyarimana, overthrew him in 1973 creating a single party state.
He immediately dissolved the National Assembly and set up a cabinet of his closest confidants to rule the country. He formed the Mouvement Republicain National pour la Democratie et le Development (MRND). This party was carefully organized across Rwanda from the lowest positions or ‘hillsides’ to his own cabinet, in his vigilant effort to maintain power. As he was the only candidate running, Habyarimana was re-elected in 1983 and again in 1988.

During the early 1980s Rwanda was used as an example of the prosperity that Africa could one day achieve through work with development funds. The GDP had skyrocketed, roads, electricity, and clean water initiatives had been implemented, and civil society seemed to be booming. When the price of Rwanda’s main export coffee dropped, the economy crashed. Habyarimana turned to the IMF for help, but the IMF demanded the country follow its liberalization guidelines, including a transition into a multi-party state, before giving aid. At the same time the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a predominantly Tutsi party made up of Tutsi in exile in neighboring Uganda, began to attack Rwanda from the North, in order to gain entry back into their country. Under pressure Habyarimana quickly conceded to IMF demands and began the Arusha Peace Talks with the RPF to create a multi-party state. These negotiations lead to the Arusha Peace Accords. Dialogue continued between the two parties for almost two years, until the two parties reached an agreement, which called for free elections and invited the RPF back into the country. Rwanda seemed poised to smoothly transition into a democratic state. On the 6<sup>th</sup> April 1994, after announcing the signing of the Arusha Peace Accords, President Habyarimana’s plane was shot down as it landed in Kigali. The attack put into motion three months of genocide that left almost a million Tutsi and Tutsi supporting
Hutu dead. Questions remain as to who shot Habyarimana’s plane down. Some argued that the RPF had done it, which Hutu extremists used a reasoning to kill Tutsi, while others today think that Hutu Power, which stemmed from Habyarimana’s cabinet may have shot the plane down to put into motion genocide, which had been intricately planned for months.

Through the Arusha Peace negotiations with the RPF many International actors believed that Rwanda would settle into democracy easily and peacefully. As previously discussed, the pre-conditions for democracy seemed to be there, development aid assisted the fledgling economy, civil society seemed to be booming, and Rwanda as a nation was more developed than most other nation-states in Africa. Even with a predominantly rural economy, crops were thriving, paved roads connected the majority of the country, and people had access to a variety of amenities not often seen in Africa. Why did the implementation of the Arusha agreement fail so miserably? How did the seemingly successful transition turn so quickly into chaos and bloodshed? The answer lies in the political elites of Rwanda and the way they handled the media, the negotiating process, and the lack of control Habyarimana had on his party members.

Habyarimana and the Akazu

While Habyarimana was the President of Rwanda, it was no secret to the world that much of the real power actually came from his wife Agathe Habyarimana, born Agathe Kaziga.26 Her ancestors were a prominent Northern Hutu family that are said to have loathed all things Tutsi. She was the ringleader of *akazu* meaning ‘little house’

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which was made up of many of Habyarimana’s cabinet members and included Madame Agathe’s own brothers. “State enterprise, army command, regional prefectures, and church leadership were dominated by Habyarimana’s clan family.”

The Akazu had infiltrated all forms of life in Rwanda. Their control over the media was one of the many tactics they used to retain power both in the country and over Habyarimana. It was noted in one book “when the president crossed the akazu, he was quickly set straight. For instance, Habyarimana once cultivated a protégé outside the akazu, Colonel Stanislas Mayuya; he liked Mayuya so much that one of the chiefs of the akazu had Mayuya shot dead. The gunmen was arrested; then he and the prosecutor on the case were also killed.”

It is important to understand how much control the akazu really had in Rwanda, and is also something that has not been discussed in depth by many examining Rwanda’s case.

When the RPF began its attack on Rwanda in 1990, the akazu saw this as an immediate threat to their strong hold on power, at the same time the threat put into place an opportunity to launch their Hutu power ideals against a common threat to Rwanda. The akazu utilized coercive tactics such as control over the media, the Forces Armees Rwandaises (FAR), and the interhamwe, to mobilize the masses into an offensive attack on the Tutsi. A decisive power struggle was taking place to win over moderate Hutu against the Tutsi, and ensure the akazu oligarchy was able to retain power.

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28 Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform you that Tomorrow We Will be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda* (New York: Picador USA, 1998), 81.
The *akazu* easily won over many moderates using two very effective types of media. The first was through the infamous Rwandan hate radio, Radio et Television Libre Mille Colines (RTLMC). This station was listened to throughout Rwanda and used hate propaganda to bolster Hutu nationalism in the name of protecting Rwanda, when really protecting the *akazu*. Leon Mugesera a member of the *akazu* is often depicted as one of architects of the genocide. In November 1992 he delivered a speech, which was often cited as the launching of the intensive anti-Tutsi campaign and came to be reiterated constantly on the hate radio.

What about those accomplices here who are sending their children to the RPF … we have to take responsibility into our own hands … the fatal mistake we made in 1959 was to them [the Tutsi] get out … they belong in Ethiopia and we are going to find them a shortcut to get there by throwing them into the Nyabarongo River. We have to act. Wipe them all out.30

The *akazu* utilized Rwanda’s past ethnic conflict in maintaining their power and hurled propaganda against what they labeled the *inyezi* ‘cockroaches’ or Tutsi.

The newspaper was the second form of propaganda the *akazu* utilized in their effort to create Hutu Power. *Kangura* was the Hutu Power newspaper that was distributed throughout Rwanda during the early 1990s. Agathe Habyarimana chose Hassan Ngeze to head the newspaper and edited all the content. “Hassan Ngeze, the Hutu supremacist with the populist touch, plucked from obscurity by the President’s wife to play the court jester, was writing the script for the coming Hutu crusade.”31 In *Kangura* he published the ten Hutu commandments, which were recited repeatedly throughout the genocide. One of the

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31 Phillip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform you that Tomorrow We Will be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda* (New York: Picador USA, 1998), 87.
most notable was the eighth commandment, which stated “Hutus must stop having mercy on the Tutsis.”32

It is important to understand that this examination of the resources used by the 
akazu
helps explain the way the elite utilized the media to gain or maintain control, and force political mobilization. The use of media by the 
akazu
was clearly an important way that Hutu power was spread throughout Rwanda and even more importantly contributed to the persuasion of moderate Hutu to ensure that there would be mass mobilization of the Hutu population during the genocide and to halt the process of becoming a multi-party state. The 
akazu
used these media resources to generate fear of the RPF and declared that under the guise of a democracy, Rwanda would revert back to a Tutsi dominated government.33

Control of the military was also an integral piece of maintaining power for 
akazu.
There were two main bodies of military and a secret group that ensured the smooth workings of the other two. The FAR, Rwanda’s army, was dominated by officials who worked for the 
akazu.
This army was first and foremost installed to protect president Habyarimana and the country, but interhamwe were created in order guarantee 
akazu
control over the military. Initially they were described as the youth wing of the MRND, Habyarimana’s political party. But in the long run the interhamwe became one of the most effective militia killing forces. They were “comprised [of] the uneducated and unemployed of the country’s youth, taken from the streets and from local football teams and given rudimentary training in the use of weapons. The militia contained delinquents

32 Ibid., 88.
33 Bruce D. Jones, Peacemaking in Rwanda: The Dynamics of Failure (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc., 2001), 32.
and petty criminals, experts in thuggery who disrupted political meetings and terrorized anyone who criticized the government.”34 Often it was said that when the allegiance of the FAR was questioned by the akazu they would deploy the interhamwe to ensure the compliance of the FAR.35

As the Arusha Accords became more and more of a threat to akazu power mid-1993 they created their own political party of Hutu Extremists known as the Coalition for the Defense of the Republic (CDR). This party would play a major role in the downfall of the Arusha Accords. Initially during the Arusha process the extremist CDR faction was left out during political negotiations creating a multi-party system, and only at the last minute was one parliamentary seat added for the political party.36 Questions remain today about the effect leaving an extremist group out of the negotiating process in an attempted democratic transition. Some argued that by alienating a portion of the population in the peace talks would ultimately lead to the demise of the peace process. I argue however that it was not the absence of a specific party from the negotiating table that caused these problems, but the party’s willingness to negotiate in the first place. “There is no evidence of their having been any willingness to consider a negotiated settlement with the RPF”37 and this is what caused the demise of the peace process.

By exploring the role of the akazu in the breakdown of Rwanda’s attempted democratic transition, we are able to compare and thus gain greater understanding of the akazu’s and Habyarimana’s differing roles as political elites. In order for these elites to

36 Ibid., 93.
37 Ibid., 46.
come to the negotiating table and come to an agreement on a multi-party state the person
coming to that table, i.e. President Habyarimana must also be able to control the people
he is representing. There is the assumption “of the existence of a ‘system’ within which
the elite exercises supremacy.”  

38 Basically if a political elite wants to successfully implement negotiated policies, he must first ensure that they have the power to do so.

Habyarimana, the RPF, International Actors, and the Arusha Accords

The Arusha Peace process was put into motion days after the initial RPF invasion of Rwanda in October 1990. This process included Habyarimana and his regime, the RPF, Belgium, France, the United States, the UN and President Mobutu Sese Seko at the time president of Zaire. Initial meetings to end the violence involved the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the UN did little to curb the ongoing war. However, they did persuade Habyarimana to sign the Dar es Salaam Declaration on the Rwandese Refugees Problem and the Zanzibar Communique in 1991.39 These two treaties laid the groundwork for a cease-fire and attempted to solve the Rwandan refugee problem, fleeing Tutsi, fueling the RPF and creating ethnic tension throughout the Great Lakes region.

The first cease-fire was signed on March 29, 1991, the N’Sele Cease-fire Agreement. A neutral military observance group was to be sent out to ensure that the conditions of the cease fire were maintained by both the FAR and the RPF, but before they could even be deployed the FAR, under the direction of the akazu, broke the agreement and fighting between the two groups broke out once again.

After the first cease fire was ignored it became harder for these meetings to continue, and the process began to more heavily involve international actors such as the US and France who held talks with the two sides in tandem in order to reach an agreement. While neither side had victorious breakthroughs in the process both laid important groundwork by acknowledging the need for a new political system in order to promote a multi-party state and power sharing techniques.

For the first time the two sides, MRND along with Habyarimana, and the RPF lead by General Paul Kagame, met to begin discussion about the future of Rwanda. The negotiations included implementing a cease-fire and the start of the peace process. “The agenda covered the issue of a cease fire, the principles of law, power sharing, the integration of armies, and the repatriation of refugees.”40 There are three important aspects of the Arusha Accord process and particularly the people that controlled the process that distinctly affected the outcome of a peaceful democratic transition. The first was the decision to not include the CDR in the newly agreed upon government, the second was the demand by the RPF for equal sharing of seats, and the third was the enormous amount of external pressure under which the Arusha Accords were agreed upon.

When the question of inclusion of the CDR extremist faction in the new Rwandan government was debated, Paul Kagame refused to consider participation of the CDR in the government. This alienated a large fraction of the people initially opposed to the Arusha talks, and in doing so threatened to remove all power from the akazu oligarchy. Andelman and Suhrke did recognize that France and Tanzania backed the Habyarimana’s

40 Ibid., 137.
government demand that the CDR be included saying that “it was better to have the CDR in the government, where they could be controlled, than on the outside where they could wreak havoc.” And wreak havoc they did.

When the Arusha Accords were completed, Paul Kagame and the RPF had succeeded in acquiring 33% of the seats in the new Rwandan parliament. This meant however that Habyarimana’s ruling party, the MRND, was now a minority (even though the population was again overwhelmingly Hutu). This left the party in a very vulnerable position as the RPF could quickly build coalitions with other parties to take the majority. This marginalized the former regime from other potentially moderate groups forced to ally with the RPF due to their moderate position. This was very problematic in terms of implementing the accords because it immediately left the outgoing powers with little space to maintain any kind of control. They ostensibly were forcing the regime to turn over the majority of power to the people who were once deemed to be their oppressors, the Tutsi. Thus the negotiating parties overlooked the reaction that hardliners and extremists groups would have to their lack of opportunity to participate in the government and their loss of control, particularly the akazu. The oversight forced these groups to take defensive action against the impending new government in order to maintain any kind of power.

41 Ibid., 139.
The Arusha Accords were also agreed upon under, as Lemarchand put it, “tremendous external pressures.” There were two types of problems this pressure created during the peace and negotiating processes. The first was that under external pressure agreements reached by the two sides were often seen by the hardliners as externally imposed, much like many Hutu had perceived Tutsi regime. This again led to an immediate backlash from political elite alienated in the process. The second problem and possibly more important one, is whether or not Habyarimana was actually committed to the process in the first place. While it was understandable that he initiated the talks in order to put on the façade of a move towards a multi-party system, there is no guarantee that in signing the accords he would actually implement them, effectively removing himself from power. Important in this as well is whether or not he actually had enough control in the first place to remove his wife and the akazu from power. Adelman and Suhrke argue that the pressure did not stem from external sources, but rather from the significance of reaching an agreement like the Arusha Accords in the first place. I would agree with Lemarchand and emphasize the external factors that were forcing Habyarimana’s participation in the discussion. Not only the states involved have key interest in ending the violence, but also as Adelman and Surhke leave out, there was the importance of the development money, which would only be granted by conceding to the demands of the IMF and World Bank for a more liberalized government.

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When looking at the process of the Arusha Accords and the actors involved, it is important to understand that the emphasis in discussing the accords is not on the process itself, in fact many political scientists have argued that the process was one of the best pieces of peace and power-sharing negotiations ever seen, but rather the distinct roles and demands of the elites participating in the process. While the process of negotiation was well implemented, the political elites involved did not fulfill their necessary roles in order to ensure a successful transition. Habyarimana did not adequately communicate the process with the citizens; neither party came to the negotiations willing to negotiate; the negotiations began and were carried out under external pressure; access to power was not equally granted to all leading to the alienation and backlash by extremist groups; and finally Habyarimana did not have the power to implement the negotiated settlements in the first place. The outcome of the negotiated transition lay with the political elites involved in the process.

During this same period of time Rwanda was experiencing crisis and eventual breakdown, on the bottom of the African continent, South Africa was embroiled in a similar situation. In order to really understand why the emphasis should be on elites in attempts at and failures in becoming a democratic state we need to have a comparison. By 1991 South Africa was on the brink of civil war as apartheid quickly unraveled under White minority rule, and black and colored South Africans had begun to fight back. Martial law was in order and a state of emergency had been in place since 1985. Let us now examine the political elites who played vital roles in the transformation of a country with minority rule, into a democratic state with free elections to this day. What did South African elites have that Rwandan elites did not? How were these political elites able to
transform a country teetering on the edge of a civil war into a thriving democracy? After brief discussion of South African history and its political elites we will critically compare the two.
Chapter 4: The Case Study of South Africa

In the early 1800’s Dutch shipping companies set up port at the tip of Africa, later to become Cape Town, as a center for trading and a stop over during the long journey between India and Europe. Eventually these settlers pushed further into the country, meeting with some unrest from British settlers colonizing at the same time. The British formally recognized South Africa as an independent republic in 1852.

At the time White Dutch settlers dominated all aspects of economic and political life and by the early 1900s had begun to impose limits to African freedom. These limits included the Native Land Act of 1913, which limited African ownership of land to 7 percent of the country.45 1948 was a decisive year in South Africa’s history. The National Party (NP) under the direction of Malan defeated the united party on a platform calling for Apartheid, literally meaning separateness. This was the first time that the government so openly instituted segregation between the white and black/colored people of South Africa, but was not the first time these laws had been seen. Even before Apartheid officially began Gandhi had fought a passive resistance campaign against the pass laws already in existence.

Under this new type of institutionalized racism and segregation hundreds of laws were passed by the all white minority controlling the government; a minority that never made up more than twenty percent of the country. These laws reached in to every aspect of life including who you could marry, where you could sit, the type of education you got, basic rights under the law, and to the vote, which was eventually taken from the

black population all together. This type of apartheid was known as ‘petty apartheid’
dealing with small laws in everyday life, but something more was in store.

By 1958 under Prime Minister Henderik Verwoerd a new type of apartheid was
causing a stir across the country, ‘grand apartheid’. This was the creation of separate lives
all together. Africans were forced to live in specific areas, had separate ‘governments’ set
up for them, and even the location of jobs were completely segregated. Homelands or
Bantustans were set up where black and colored people of South Africa were required to
live. These Bantustans often included supposed separate governments that were overseen
by the apartheid regime. Pass laws and the Bantu education act were vigorously enforced
to ensure that the black and colored populations remained in their respective places. The
attempt was to completely separate the races in effort to cleanse white South Africa.

Just as soon as Apartheid had begun to implement itself in everyday life, so to did
organizations against Apartheid quickly arise. As early as 1912 Africans were mobilizing
support against white minority rule. The South African Native National Congress, under
the leadership of John L. Dube, was founded in an attempt to find black elites a place to
work within the Apartheid regime. It attempted to fight the laws of apartheid, through the
institution of apartheid and failed miserably, constantly being denied request for
meetings, explanations for laws, and attempts a dialogue with the oppressive white
regime. In 1923 it changed its name to the African National Congress (ANC) that to this
day holds power and clout in South Africa. It was out of the ANC youth league formed in
1944 that future leaders such as Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo would form their
basic principles and begin their life long struggles against apartheid.
Initially the ANC took to passive resistance following the guide of Gandhi in India, in an attempt to rid South Africa of the apartheid regime but to no avail. As the international community began to question South Africa’s political structure, political unrest by the majority population began to boil throughout. It seemed as though Apartheid was losing its grip in 1960 after the Sharpeville Massacre, which killed seven African students protesting the pass laws, but instead of conceding defeat they staunchly upheld Apartheid’s principles. The government attempted to silence unrest banning the ANC and the opposition group the Pan-African Congress (PAC) as well as many Black leaders at the time. Thousands of Africans were arrested, hundreds killed, and the government continued to utilize brutal military tactics for another 40 years.

The apartheid government of the 1980s seemed to be spiraling out of control. The government had declared a state emergency in 1985 under P.W. Botha effectively turning the country into a military state. Umkhonto we Sizwe, the military wing of the ANC, had now been waging guerilla warfare for more than 10 years, and was beginning to wear down the South African army. At the same time the UN had officially declared an international trade embargo on arms against South Africa. A war seemed imminent.

In 1989 P.W. Botha suffered a massive stroke while in office. That same year, under the international eye and continued civic unrest, Botha began to secretly negotiate with Mandela who had been in prison on Robbin Island since 1964. These meetings were kept secret but later that year it was believed that Botha would release Mandela from prison signaling the end of the apartheid regime. This however did not happen, instead Botha stepped down as leader of the National Party replaced by F.W. de Klerk who would later become the President.
De Klerk did continue secret negotiations with Mandela, and in 1990 released Mandela, Oliver Tambo, and many other political prisoners. The ANC and PAC were officially unbanned along with over 30 other political organizations. The ANC publicly declared the end of the militant struggle in 1991 and formal negotiations began through the Convention for a Democratic South Africa to establish a multiracial government and equal rights for all. An interim constitution agreement was reached in 1993, and the first free elections were held in 1994, as South Africa elected its first black president Nelson Mandela.

The history of South Africa is an important one in understanding the relationships between the political elites, and the immense amount of pressure, from the inside and out, that they were under in creating a multi-racial society and complete democratic transition. The political elite initiated apartheid as a principle, and the negotiating of a peaceful transition had to occur through political elite as well. Some might argue that South Africa’s transition to democracy could not be considered a peaceful one, but in light of the civil war that could have ensued if de Klerk had not accepted Mandela’s proposition for peaceful negotiations, the transition itself was relatively bloodless.

F.W. De Klerk and Nelson Mandela were the link that stopped the South African state from completely imploding for a number of reasons. They both came to the meetings open to discussion and negotiation in order to end South Africa’s chaos. Both elites also maintained enough control over their respective parties to ensure that the policies agreed upon could be implemented. Finally they were conscious to include even extremist factions in the new coalition government so that alienation could be avoided. Let us explore these three major aspects of their elite roles in the democratic transition
process and why they were so vital in ending apartheid and implementing a new government.

Before negotiations between Mandela representing the ANC and the Apartheid government began, Mandela had actually been offered conditional release by president P.W. Botha. From a statement he made in response to the conditions of release in February 1985 he stated:

What freedom am I being offered while the organization of the people remains banned? What freedom am I being offered when I may be arrested on a pass offense? What freedom am I being offered to live my life as a family with my dear wife who remains in banishment in Brandfort? What freedom am I being offered when I must ask for permission to live in an urban area? What freedom am I being offered when I need a stamp in my pass to seek work? What freedom am I being offered when my very South African citizenship is not respected? Only free men can negotiate.46

This statement by Mandela showed his important and resolute stance against Apartheid and negotiations until truly free, meaning that he could truly negotiate a settlement for the people of South Africa. His defiance of the hand the government was attempting to give him was also important to the morale of the black and colored African people fighting for their freedom across South Africa. As Geraint Parry put it, “No person starts off with a blank sheet when making a political decision.”47 Mandela knew that he needed to act as a leader and in accordance with ANC policies in order to maintain the trust and respect he would need to lead the ANC to the negotiating table with the apartheid regime and implement agreed upon institutions.

While Mandela made certain he had the trust and support of his party, de Klerk ensured that measures agreed upon in the negotiating process would also be implemented in the white minority. De Klerk was very conscious of the role of the Broederbond in his decision making process. The Broederbond was originally a secret organization that promoted the interests of the Afrikan people. De Klerk was aware of their mobilizing potential in the Afrikaner community, and carefully and effectively shared some of the negotiating process with the group, while maintaining some levels of secrecy to ensure National Party compliance with the agreements.48

Both Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk were smart to ensure that clear lines of trust remained between the elite political actors and their respective political groups in entering the negotiating table. They constantly met with their respective groups to relay information, establish trust in the new government, and discuss policies that needed to be addressed. Without these clear and personal lines of communication, the process could have been in jeopardy due to fears of mistrust, and more importantly the inability to implement effectively in their respective political organizations any of the agreed upon negotiations necessary for democracy to take hold. By instilling a sense of trust in the process, they were able to curb any fear citizens may have had toward the new government.

Another important factor in the negotiation process between Mandela and de Klerk is that they came to the negotiating table ready and willing to actually negotiate. Many theorists have discussed the willingness that many leaders had to continue discussion even when peace seemed nearly impossible. One theory suggested that

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President de Klerk and the Minister of Constitutional Development and of Communications Roelf Meyer knew that the demise of apartheid was near and so continued negotiations less for their party, rather to ensure jobs for themselves in the inevitable new government.\(^4\) This is an interesting theory, which will be examined further in conjunction with Rwanda when we compare the way elites worked in the process of a transition. While it is true that de Klerk and Meyer may have been negotiating to protect their own positions, they also worked to ensure the safety of their people and the maintenance of their party. It was vital to the transition that Mandela and de Klerk negotiated a restorative justice, system through the truth and reconciliation committee, which restored faith in society and curbed minority fear of the new government.\(^5\) By allowing for less stringent penalties against the departing Apartheid regime, they were able to eliminate some of the alienation the Afrikaner people felt and in doing so bolstered their support of a new and free democracy.

Mandela also came to the meetings willing to negotiate terms openly and fairly. While strict with policies regarding the abolishment of apartheid, he understood that he could not focus solely on this goal. He ensured that the new government would give all South Africans equal rights under the law and equal political access. Some concessions were made to de Klerk, which included maintaining part of the military and allowing some Afrikaners to remain in their governmental positions. Mandela was careful in his negotiating strategies to ensure that the needs of the ANC were met through equal rights measures, while attempting not to alienate extreme factions in the political process so that

\(^5\) James Barber, \textit{Mandela’s World} (Oxford: James Curry Ltd., 2004)
they would work within the confines of the new government to confront problems, instead of rebelling against it.
Chapter 5: Comparing Political Elites

Since both countries utilized the same form of negotiation and same type of transplacement process described by Huntington, it is all the more interesting that under similar circumstances South Africa was able to succeed while Rwanda failed in its attempt. If negotiations in the two countries were similar, the one determinate outlying factor were the political elites involved. Let us compare closer the elites identified in the previous two sections in order to better understand the strengths and weaknesses that can lead to a breakdown in democratic transition.

First, during the time of transition, political elites must be cognizant of the need for communication between the elites, their parties, and other interest groups involved. Hutu Power’s control over the media was one of the most detrimental factors in Habyarimana’s attempt at democratization. By allowing propaganda, which rather than informing caused people to fear democracy for lack of better understanding, Habyarimana barred the effective implementation of the Arusha Accords. The media implied that the new democracy would quickly come under Tutsi control, and Habyarimana did nothing counter otherwise. Mandela and de Klerk were open about the process of negotiation in order to ensure the populations understanding of democracy, and the type of government they were trying to implement. Their first public discussion of negotiations came in the 1992 Record of Understanding. This work helped eliminate fear, especially in the Afrikaner population, through information. So effective were their informative tactics that in 1992 two thirds of white population voted in support of the
South Africa’s elites were effective in keeping the population informed of the negotiation process and building trust in the new government while in Rwanda the negotiating parties, particularly Habyarimana, did nothing to stem the increasing fear of democracy being propagated by the media controlled by the extremist Hutu party. In order for the transition to work, the elite must perpetuate strong, positive visions of the new democracy, and provide information on negotiations as the democratic transition proceeds.

In order for the transition to occur, elites must discuss and negotiate, and not solely demand, new government protocols. They also must come to the negotiations of their own free will, not just through the coercion of external factors. In the case of Rwanda, while both the MRND and the RPF were willing to meet to agree upon the transplacement of power, the RPF under the direction of Paul Kagame were unwilling to really discuss the modus operandi, and came to the meetings with decisions already made. Habyarimana on the other hand, had also not come to these meetings willing to negotiate; he had been forced into negotiations by international pressures and a slow resource draining war. Habyarimana was willing to concede to most demands so long as the MRND was still represented in the government. Kagame demanded far more representation for the RPF than they should have held given the size of the Tutsi population at the time, but he insisted on thirty-three percent of the possible representative seats in the new government. In order for a true transplacement to occur, political elites must be willing to collaborate on decisions and discuss divisive issues.

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South Africa now stands as a shining example of this kind of negotiation. Instead of each party coming with set demands, both sides were willing to discuss the positive and negative repercussions of their decisions, both on their party and the country as a whole, and were able to reach relatively ‘fair’ compromises in order to ensure the happiness, participation, and most important safety of the people of South Africa. Political elites must come to the negotiation table willing to actually discuss as opposed to demand in order to ensure fair and thoughtful decisions about their parties and their country are made.

Another vital factor to creating a peaceful democratic is that the political elites must be conscious of potential hostility that can stem from political alienation. For example, Mandela and de Klerk both understood the need to ensure that all political groups, even pro-black or white extremists needed to feel as though they had an opportunity to participate in the newly created government. “How to develop incentives to reward moderation and sanction extremism is the key question raised by transitions to democracy everywhere.”52 What Lemarchand does not acknowledge in this statement is that these incentives and rewards must be thought of and implemented by the political elites around the negotiating table. In South Africa Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk were conscious of the decisions they were making. They understood the need to control the extremist demands and influence of organizations such as the Inkatha Freedom Party. Instead of alienating these groups by leaving them out of the negotiating process, taking away the opportunity to have interest in seeing the democracy succeed, they were invited

to take part in the negotiation process to ensure some of their needs were met. More
importantly these groups were made to feel included. Rwanda seemed to turn a blind eye
to extreme groups. General Kagame refused to include the CDR in the new democratic
government for fear of their extremist practices, and by doing so erased what little hope
there was in having the CDR have vested interest in upholding the Arusha Accords. Even
at the urging of other governments such as Tanzania and France, Rwanda’s overlook lead
to a disastrous attempt at a peaceful transition.

Finally in order for the transition to occur political elites must maintain enough
power to ensure implementation of the democratic decisions negotiated.

“Transplacements occur only when reformers are stronger than standpatters in
government and moderates are stronger than extremist opposition.”53 This allows
political elites to come to the negotiating party as representatives of their respective
groups, and negotiate with the confidence that decisions will be enforced. This also
serves as a means of containing the extremist factions in a society in order for democracy
to grow without intense opposition. One of the major problems seen in the Arusha
Accords was not the process of creating the peace accords themselves, but rather the faith
and genuine authority the government had to implement the negotiated settlements.
While Habyarimana was there as the leader of the ruling MRND, it now seems to many
as though he was merely a puppet to the akazu power and therefore could not really
negotiate for them, because he had no authority to impose the decisions. While Kagame
was able to control the RPF long enough for a cease-fire agreement to be reached,

53 Ian Shapiro, ‘Democratic Innovation: South Africa in Comparative Context’, in World
Politics, 46, 1, October 1993, pp.138-9 cited in Rene Lemarchand, ‘Managing Transition
Anarchies: Rwanda, Burundi, and South Africa in Comparative Perspective’ in The
Habyarimana was not free to make decisions and therefore could not negotiate on for the MRND and could not claim to be more powerful than ‘the standpatters in the government.’

Overall the two countries, while starting in similar situations, ended up with very different political outcomes, one became a democratic state and the other erupted into genocide. South Africa was able to transition into democracy because the political elites involved in the negotiated settlements communicated effectively, made the decision to meet on their own terms and were willing to negotiate, avoided extremist backlash by including all parties, and were powerful enough to implement the new government. Rwanda, which initially seemed poised to transition smoothly, erupted into genocide because the political elites did not employ necessary principles that would have allowed democracy to take shape.

Many theorists argue that the economy, or civil society play important determinate roles in a states’ attempted transition to democracy. This thesis, however, argues that the role of the political elites is the most decisive and critical factor to a democratic transition. While both the economy and civil society play principal roles in aiding the institution of democracy, it is the political elites that control and organize these two segments of society, which determine the outcome of attempt democratization.

As elites endeavor to implement a democratic institution, they must ensure that five basic principles are met during the transplacement process. These include communication of the process; active participation in negotiations; decision-making by internal elites to participate in negotiations; creation of an all-inclusive government to ensure no alienation; and finally negotiating elites must retain the power to enforce
negotiated settlements. These principles define the way in which elites must behave in order to achieve a successful transition. Through the case studies of Rwanda and South Africa, we can see how imperative implementation of these principles is to the democratization process.

Today Rwanda is still struggling to implement democratic institutions after holding their first local free elections in 1999. The country has made great strides in a attempt at justice after the genocide of 1994, which has aided the newly democratic government by attempting to create faith in the system. South Africa has also continued to function as a democratic nation. It too attempted to restore faith in the state government through a restorative justice program in the Truth and Reconciliation Committee. Elites in these countries must continue to educate the citizens on the appropriate use of their new government systems and show them the resources that can be provided by democratic government. Through continued enforcement of democratic tendencies and institutions, political elites will teach citizens how to function within a democratic government, which will allow for democracy to flourish.
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