AFRICA POLICY BRIEF

Understanding Burundi's predicament

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On Sunday 25 April 2015, one day after the ruling Conseil National Pour la Défense de la Démocratie – Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (CNDD-FDD) party designated incumbent president Nkurunziza as its candidate for the presidential elections, people started taking to the streets in several neighbourhoods in Bujumbura to protest against the president's ambition to pursue a third mandate.

INTRODUCTION

After more than two weeks of demonstrations met by fierce repression by the police, on 13 May a dissident group within the armed forces under the command of general Godefroid Niyombare attempted a coup. At the time, President Nkurunziza was in Dar es Salaam attending a regional summit about the Burundi crisis. Less than 48 hours later, it became clear that the plotters had failed to overthrow the government. These events, and earlier intimidation in the northern countryside, sparked massive refugee streams into neighbouring countries. While President Nkurunziza managed to re-establish control over the security forces, the demonstrations and their violent repression, in which the privately owned media were also specifically targeted,

continued. The security situation worsened, with regular grenade attacks in Bujumbura and the assassination of opposition politician Zedi Ferudi. In the meantime, the international community, especially regional players, failed to come to a harmonised position on the third term issue. However, by mid-May there was a large international consensus that the prevailing conditions were not conducive to holding elections. Several key donors withdrew their financial support for the electoral process and the elections were postponed.

Neither Nkurunziza's candidacy, nor the protests or the coup came as a surprise. As the first section of this brief will show, the issues at the heart of the current crisis are the culmination of several dynamics of contestation and conflict that have emerged in particular since the 2010 elections. But they are also rooted in broader frustrations related to the kind of politics embodied by the CNDD-FDD system since it came to power. This contribution will also situate the crisis within a broader analysis of the post-war peace and state-building project in Burundi, focusing on a number of key unresolved problems. To conclude, it will present a brief analysis of the protest movement and look into the specific questions the pre-electoral crisis raises for future Burundian leaders and the international community.

ANATOMY OF A CRISIS LONG IN THE MAKING

1. The fallout of the 2010 elections

Burundi's 2010 elections were considered an important test in several aspects. For the international community, which has accompanied Burundi's transition since the signing of the Arusha Agreement in 2000, these second post-war elections constituted a crucial step in consolidating the considerable progress achieved so far in peacebuilding and democratisation. For the incumbent President Nkurunziza and his CNDD-FDD party, the elections meant exposure to the electorate after five years in power marred by institutional instability, both at the level of government and parliament and within the party itself. The party's behaviour towards the opposition became increasingly authoritarian, and opposition parties, including the freshly demobilised former Forces Nationales de Libération (FNL) rebellion, hoped that the unconvincing performance by the CNDD-FDD would reinforce their own position in the political landscape.

But even though they were deemed sufficiently free and fair by various electoral observation missions, the 2010 elections turned out to be less than successful in terms of democratic gains.[1] Nor did they contribute to consolidating progress in the field of peace and security since the end of the war. As soon as the results of the communal elections hinted at a major victory for the CNDD-FDD, most opposition parties decided to withdraw their participation in the parliamentary and presidential elections.[2] These parties, united under the Alliance for Democratic Change (ADC-Ikibiri) umbrella, were however unable to convince the international community that the elections had been rigged. As a result, their boycott heralded not just the beginning of an electoral crisis, with violence that would last well into 2011, but in the longer run paved the way for CNDD-FDD and President Nkurunziza to further a quasi-monopolistic hold on the country's institutions.[3] As a concise overview of major events and dynamics in the Burundian political landscape shows, the 2010 post-electoral crisis almost seamlessly crossed over into the 2015 pre-electoral unrest.

In the weeks and months following the 2010 elections, opposition militants, blamed for the violence, faced severe repression by the state's security and intelligence services and clashed with militants of the CNDD-FDD. In a climate marked by reports of extrajudicial executions, harassment and persecution of opposition militants, several opposition leaders, including FNL's Agathon Rwasa and Alexis Sinduhije left the country.[4] At the same time, until well into 2012, a number of relatively minor armed movements emerged, often clashing with police and army across the border from neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo and Tanzania.

When the intensity of post electoral violence and opposition repression had somewhat

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[1] Palmans, Eva, Burundi's 2010 elections: democracy and peace at risk?, ECES paper, 2012, http://www.eces.eu/images/documents/Burundi_Elections_Eva_Palmans.pdf

[2] The communal elections were the first in a series that covered all levels of government, from presidency to hill chiefs, spread over several months. The campaign for the communal elections didn't focus on local issues but was centered on parties and their presidential candidates.

[3] CNDD-FDD won over 80% of seats in parliament. President Nkurunziza faced no competition after the boycott, and won by over 90% of the votes cast, in a turnout that was significantly lower than in the local elections.

[4] International Crisis Group: Burundi: From Electoral Boycott To Political Impasse. Africa Report N°169, 2011, http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/africa/central-africa/burundi/169%20Burundi%20-%20From%20Electoral%20Boycott%20to%20Political%20Impasse%20ENGLISH.pdf

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diminished, administrative repression increased. It has been near impossible for opposition parties to get permission to organise public meetings, and ignoring this ban resulted in clashes with security forces, and even life sentences for a number of Mouvement pour la solidarité et le développement (MSD) militants in March 2014.[5] The ministry of the interior also adopted a tactic of profound meddling in opposition parties' internal matters. The most notable targets were FNL's Agathon Rwasa, who returned to Burundi in August 2013, and Union pour le Progrès National's (UPRONA) Charles Nditije, who as legitimate leaders were disconnected from the legally recognised wings of their parties.

In another effort by CNDD-FDD to dominate and control the public sphere, new legislation on media and on public gatherings was introduced. Even if these laws didn't dramatically affect the role that activists and privately owned media continued to play, these measures were indicative of the further deterioration of the CNDD-FDD government's relationship with media and civil society watchdogs, who increasingly took on a role as de facto political counter powers in the absence of a functional parliamentary opposition.

Opposition parties, themselves divided, have not been able to respond to the shared challenges they faced after the boycott, let alone transform the ADC-Ikibri into a performing vehicle with a common programme and a single candidate, as was initially proposed. By early 2015, it seemed to have been eclipsed by a new 'historical' coalition between Rwasa's FNL and Nditije's UPRONA, leaders of two parties that were arch-enemies during the war.

The preparations for the electoral process itself were also fraught with difficulty and contestation, in particular over the composition of the Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante (CENI), and later over the way the voter registration process had been handled. Neither the opposition nor international partners were reassured about the independent character of the commission.

The international community, well aware of the risks this build-up of tension held for the 2015 elections, struggled to find a harmonised and adequate response to these early warning signals. Finding itself caught between, on the one hand, its endorsement of the 2010 election outcome, respect for Burundi's sovereignty and the prioritisation of stability over democratic deepening, and on the other, its dissatisfaction and concern over the government's increasingly illiberal and authoritarian tendencies, the international community has resorted to a largely tongue-tied diplomatic approach.

One notable intervention was the series of roundtables initiated in 2013 under the auspices of the United Nations Office in Burundi (BNUB). This initiative resulted in an electoral roadmap for 2015, agreed upon by all political actors including the government and CENI, with propositions for a fair and favourable electoral climate. However, the government either did not implement crucial measures, or only implemented them superficially, and the follow-up by the international community remained casual at best.

By mid-2014, the temperature in Burundi's political landscape was constantly on the rise. Ongoing reports by local activists and privately owned media of armament and military training by CNDD-FDD militants, as well as other scandals involving the CNDD-FDD elite, [6]

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[5] http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/08/201381172611527791.html;
http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-26681586 ;

[6] Most notable was the case of the murder of three Italian nuns in Kamenge in September 2014. The

resulted in the detention of iconic human rights activist Pierre Claver Mbonimpa and journalist Bob Rugurika of the equally iconic RPA radio station. Both were eventually released after considerable international pressure. Upon the release of Rugurika, an unprecedented number of people took to the streets in Bujumbura and beyond in support of the journalist – an important precursor to the anti-third-term protests. A number of sometimes spectacular events and dynamics unfolded, including the brutally suppressed incursion of an unidentified rebel group in the northern Cibitoke province,[7] and the escape of Hussein Radjabu, former powerful president of the CNDD-FDD, ousted by Nkurunziza in 2007 and serving a sentence for plotting against the security of the state. These events contributed to an accelerated build-up in tension and were also indicative of both the increasing rifts within the CNDD-FDD and of the increased willingness to publicly express dissatisfaction. Importantly, the powerful Catholic Church had also very explicitly embarked on a campaign against a third mandate for Nkurunziza. One of the most remarkable developments in this period was the mounting internal dissatisfaction within the CNDD-FDD.[8] While there have always been considerable cleavages between former rebels and civilian members joining after the war, this time the rift affected the movement's military elite itself. In November 2014, Adolphe Nshimirimana (head of the national intelligence services or SNR) and Alain Guillaume Bunyoni (chief of cabinet under the Nkurunziza presidency), both kingpin generals in the

CNDD-FDD system and associated with various scandals, were dismissed. [9] Nshimirimana's successor at the SNR, Godefroid Niyombare, also a former commander in the FDD rebellion, underwent the same fate when a document he had drafted warning against the dangers of an unconstitutional third term for President Nkurunziza went public. Unsurprisingly, later on Niyombare was one of the leaders of the 13 May coup. Moreover, in March, dozens of often senior CNDD-FDD members who had remained on the periphery of the real power centre in the party but nevertheless had a lot to lose signed a petition against an additional term for Nkurunziza. The latter managed to close the ranks, secure his candidacy and prepare the party for elections, but the fragility of the CNDD-FDD system had been widely exposed to the public, and this strengthened the resolve of the president's opponents.

2. Arusha's unresolved problems

It is clear that the 2010 electoral crisis deeply polarised the political landscape in Burundi. But as the following section will show, more structural factors also underlie the dynamics of conflict we are seeing today. While Burundi's post-war trajectory, based on the Arusha Agreement's power-sharing principles, has been lauded as one of the good examples of post-war peace and state building, the shadow sides of this success story quickly emerged. Several areas of intervention in the peace building project, such as democratisation, support to civil society, and also the question of returning refugees and land reform, have themselves become important arenas of contestation and conflict. Moreover, a number of important problems have remained

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popular RPA radio station's investigations pointed towards the involvement of General Adolphe Nshimirimana, one of the strongmen of the Nkurunziza regime.

[7] http://www.hrw.org/news/2015/02/12/burundi-summary-executions-army-police

[8] http://www.issafrica.org/iss-today/a-house-divided-in-burundi-rifts-at-the-heart-of-the-ruling-party.

[9] http://www.iwacu-burundi.org/cinq-clefs-pour-comprendre-le-depart-de-guillaume-bunyoni-et-adolphe-nshimirimana/

unresolved by Arusha.[10] A closer examination of power distribution and governance practices after the war in Burundi shows that the peace building enterprise, while nonetheless transformative in many important aspects, has not been able to bring about a fundamentally new way of doing politics. Not only have the re-appropriation of peace building objectives and interventions by elites contributed to the entrenchment of a neo-patrimonial political economy,[11] but the prioritisation by donors of relative stability has also contributed to the persistence of violence and militarism.[12] In many ways, the CNDD-FDD repertoire, with its reliance on authoritarian methods, the persistence of militarism and obsessive control of the public sphere, echoes the practices of the old UPRONA regime it once fought. The following paragraphs will deal with some of the structural continuities that have crossed into the post-war era.

Partisan identities and patronage

The Arusha Agreement's famous article that deals with the analysis of the nature of the conflict in Burundi.states that 'the conflict is fundamentally political, with extremely important ethnic dimensions and that it stems from a struggle of the political class to accede to and/or remain in power.'[13] To resolve these

problems, the Arusha Agreement and the constitution based on it combine ethnic power-sharing provisions – essentially quota-based guarantees that prevent the Tutsi minority being overpowered by Hutu majority rule – with electoral democratisation.

Much of the applause Burundi has initially received for its post-war reconciliation efforts can be credited to the remarkable progress that has been made in reducing ethnic tensions. The power-sharing principles of Arusha have undoubtedly played an important role in this.[14] On the other hand, as the previous section has shown, and the determination of Nkurunziza to pursue another presidential term continues to demonstrate, the core political problem of elite capture of the state has not been resolved by Arusha. And the diminished importance of ethnicity also does not mean that identity politics are no longer part of the repertoire of those political elites.

In the process of democratisation that started after the agreement, there has been a proliferation of political parties. In the 2010 elections there were over 40 parties in competition. Only a minority of these parties are viable. However, partisan identities have become one of the most prominent fault lines in Burundi today, along which political and economic inclusion and exclusion is organised. A number of parties have obviously been better equipped to construct these identities and develop a viable, sound, grassroots base. Parties with a long pedigree in Burundi like UPRONA and Front pour la Démocratie au Burundi (FRODEBU) have loyal militants who, for various reasons, strongly identify with the party.

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[10] For an excellent discussion of power sharing and the legacy of the Arusha Agreement, see Vandeginste, S: Arusha at 15: reflections on power-sharing, peace and transition in Burundi, IOB Working Paper, 2015, https://www.uantwerpen.be/images/uantwerpen/container2143/files/Publications/DP/2015/01-vandeginste.pdf

[11] Uvin & Bayer (2013). 'The Political Economy of Statebuilding in Burundi'. In Berdal and Zaum (eds), Political Economy of Statebuilding: Power after Peace. Abingdon: Routledge

[12] Curtis D. (2013), 'The international peace-building paradox: power sharing and post-conflict governance in Burundi', African Affairs, 112, 446: 72-91

[13] Arusha Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Burundi, Protocol I, Chapter I, Article 4,

http://www.issafrica.org/cdburundipeaceagreements/No%201%20arusha.pdf

[14] Interestingly, much of the demystification of ethnicity in recent years in Burundi is also connected to the way political competition and violence are now mainly being played out among parties with a predominantly Hutu profile.

Newcomer MSD has managed to establish itself in the political marketplace with an assertive, and to many in Burundi, aggressive style, speaking to the lifestyles and aspirations of urban and educated youth. The most outspoken and deep-rooted construction of party identities can be found with CNDD-FDD and FNL, who both rely on their rebellious past.

Where ethnic and regional fault lines determined the inequalities in distribution of state resources that led to conflict in the single-party state era,[15] patronage is now increasingly structured along partisan lines. Since its electoral victory in 2005, and even more so since the opposition boycott of the 2010 elections, the CNDD-FDD party has exercised a quasi-monopoly over the state and its resources. As such, it has been able to build, from top to bottom, a system of patronage around its own party structures. On all scales and levels, affiliation to these structures has become the main factor for acquiring access to state resources. Being part – or not – of what is commonly called 'le système' considerably determines livelihoods and opportunities for Burundians today, for example, whether they are able to benefit from subsidised agricultural inputs at the hill level, have a chance at employment at any level of public administration, are granted scholarships to study abroad or wish to set up a private enterprise or keep it in business.

This has become an important source of frustration for many people who do not want to adhere to the CNDD-FDD and more so for known sympathisers of other parties. But it is also an increasing problem for CNDD-FDD itself, as not all members have been able to benefit in the same way from their association with the party.[16] Again, this internal dissatisfaction occurs on all levels, as became clear in the 'frondeur' dissident movement that emerged in March 2015.

Militarised politics

Partisan identities are not only important for understanding processes of inclusion and exclusion, but are also mobilised into various forms of violent political agency, as has become clear in recent years. Thus they also play a role in another major issue that Arusha has not been able to resolve: the militarisation of politics and the use of coercion and violence by political actors competing for power.

The phenomenon most associated with post-war identity politics and political violence are the Imbonerakure[17] – the CNDD-FDD's vanguard youth league. Many of the thousands of members of the league don't fit in to the general representation of this group as an armed and dangerous militia, and are more involved in participation in public work campaigns and propaganda activities than in violence. But there is undeniably a hardcore of former combatants, especially in the countryside, who have increasingly played a central role in policing public space, extortion and intimidation of opposition militants in recent years. There is little doubt that several of the Imbonerakure groups operating locally have access to arms, and there are several credible reports that some contingents have been specifically formed, armed and trained for combat, both in South Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in Burundi.

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[15] Ndikumana, L: Distributional conflict, the state, and peace building in Burundi, working paper,2005 http://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi ?article=1055&context=econ_workingpaper

[16] Author interviews with CNDD-FDD militants in 2011–2014
[17] Kirundi for 'those who see ahead'. During the war, Imbonerakure youth carried out logistical support and reconnaissance operations for the FDD rebellion.

However seriously their capacity for violence should be taken, it makes little sense to regard the Imbonerakure phenomenon in an isolated way. Rather than being linked to the army itself, the militarisation of the CNDD-FDD regime is determined by institutions, networks and individuals rooted in its former existence as a rebel movement. These 'old-boys' networks cross the boundaries between executive institutions, the army, security and intelligence services and party structures, and stretch from the level of high ranking elites close to President Nkurunziza, to the former combatants of the FDD rebellion at the grassroots level. At the nexus of this entanglement between official and informal networks is a small group of former FDD rebel commanders, commonly referred to as 'the generals'.[18] These individuals around Nkurunziza also play an important role in Burundi's post-war political economy, as they are at the top of the food chain in the patronage networks linked to CNDD-FDD.

While Burundian and international activists have mostly focused on the Imbonerakure as the main source for recent violence, the post-war militarisation of politics cannot be attributed solely to the CNDD-FDD and its rebel legacy. Other political actors have also maintained a capacity for violence. Since the 2010 elections, a number of armed insurgent groups have surfaced. Some have been associated with parties and politicians that took part in the electoral boycott, such as the FNL's Agathon Rwasa and MSD's Alexis Sinduhije.[19] Most of these groups operated across the borders with neighbouring Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo, sometimes venturing in the Rukoko reserve or the Kibira forest. By 2012, almost all these groups had dissolved or been neutralised by the Burundian armed forces. However, the FNL-Nzabampema faction in South Kivu, which before MONUSCO-led operations against them in early 2015 was reported to consist of over 300 combatants, continues to operate under the command of FDN defectors with a historic background in FNL.[20] Their presence has caused insecurity on both sides of the border in the Ruzizi plain.

CONTESTATION AND COUP

By the end of April, it became clear that Burundi would be the next African country to experience large-scale popular protest. Demonstrations had been called for by civil society organisations and opposition parties, but were clearly driven by urban youth, and tacitly supported by larger parts of society. While it is still early to draw conclusions, some observations of these protests raise a number of pertinent questions about 'what comes next'.

Firstly, the demonstrations in several neighbourhoods of Bujumbura were sparked by the announcement of the president's candidacy. But there is little doubt that the protests are fuelled by a much broader set of grievances and frustrations, most notably the lack of economic and social perspectives, and the increased sense of insecurity caused by the system described above. Thus the protests should not only be regarded as a way to rescue the Arusha

[18] The most notorious members of this group are the previously mentioned Adolphe Nshimirimana and Alain Guillaume Bunyoni. Both have been dismissed from their official posts but continue to play a crucial role.
[19] United Nations Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo (GoE), 2010, Final Report:
http://www.scribd.com/doc/44463706/UN-Group-of-Experts-Report-November-2010 and 2011, final report:

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2011/738
[20] For a more in-depth discussion on the background of this group and operations against this group, see Verweijen, J: 'Understanding the recent operation against the FNL/Nzabampema',2015, http://congosiasa.blogspot.be/2015/01/guest-blog-understanding-recent.html

Agreement and its clear rulings on presidential term limits, but also as a response to the problems Arusha did not manage to resolve: elite capture of the state, corruption, militarism, patronage and exclusion.

Secondly, while popular uprisings are not a new phenomenon in Africa, and the series of street protests in several African countries in recent years can be seen as part of a third wave of African protest,[21] it should be noted that, some exceptions aside, Burundi has no significant tradition of mass demonstrations. Especially in the post-war era, the protests, which so far have been largely devoid of partisan displays, might well mark a generational shift and constitute 'a new way of doing politics', an alternative to armed struggle as the only means of resistance.[22] In the words of one participant: 'From now on, leaders will realise that the street will always be a way to contest their power.'[23] However, in the face of brutal police repression, the nonviolent character of the protests has come under pressure. Especially since the coup attempt, some protestors have claimed and procured arms to defend themselves. If the stand-off continues, it is not unlikely that new rebellions could be formed, this time with a larger potential for recruitment than in the aftermath of the 2010 elections.

Thirdly, the government has been quick to depict the protests as a marginal phenomenon, concentrated in a few urban areas but not affecting the rest of the country, and CNDD-FDD propagandists branded the protests as a phenomenon of Tutsi neighbourhoods. These claims don't do justice to reality. In several of these neighbourhoods, Hutu youth from the hills and plains surrounding the capital have joined the protest. Unsurprisingly, in one of the world's least urbanised countries, protests have been largely a phenomenon of the capital. However, there have also been, on a more modest scale, but nevertheless persistently, several demonstrations in rural areas, from Bururi to Ngozi, suggesting that the narrative of the Nkurunziza's rural popularity should be somewhat readjusted.

Finally, the failed, and according to some, fake coup attempt,[24] was also a clear reminder of the potential for a militarisation of the contestation dynamic. Not only was it detrimental to the momentum of the demonstrations, and caused more violent repression of the protestors, it also laid bare significant divisions within the armed forces. Even when the FDN's recent track record became somewhat flawed,[25] there was a consensus that the reform of the army in Burundi, based on integrating the former armed forces with the fighters forming the rebel movements, had been a success story, further illustrated by its role in African peacekeeping missions like AMISOM in Somalia.[26] During and after the 2010 electoral contestation, when the army was deployed in several hotspots like the FNL-stronghold Bujumbura Rural, it was lauded for its neutral role, and at least until the coup attempt, this also seemed to be the case for the

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[21] In relation to the anti-colonial struggle and the early 1990s democratisation movements, see Branch, A. & Mampilly, Z. (2015): Africa Uprising. Popular Protest and political change, African Arguments. London: Zed Books.
[22] Mamdani, M. 'An African reflection on Tahrir Square', http://www.pambazuka.net/en/category.php/features/73187
[23] Author's correspondence with participants in the protest.

[24] http://www.jeuneafrique.com/Article/JA2838p020.xml0/
[25] Most notably the Burundian army's shady presence in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, and its implication in the extrajudicial executions of captured and disarmed rebels in Cibitoke (Human Rights Watch, http://www.hrw.org/news/2015/02/12/burundi-summary-executions-army-police)
[26] Ndayiziga, C. Enjeux autour de l'intervention du Burundi en Somalie, Egmont Africa Policy Brief, http://www.egmontinstitute.be/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/APB7.pdf

way the army had handled the anti-Nkurunziza demonstrations. Since the coup, this neutrality has come under pressure. Moreover, the cleavages and dissatisfaction manifest in the army could lead to a new coup attempt, or feed into other forms of armed resistance in the absence of a solution to the third term question.

CONCLUSION

Fifteen years after the Arusha Agreement, and ten years into Burundi's post-war democratisation process, there are serious concerns that Burundi's once much-applauded progress in reconciliation and state building could be reversed. As expected, after the 2010 crisis, the 2015 elections have also proven to be a serious test for Burundi's post-war transformation.

On the one hand, while many warned about a return to ethnic tensions and large scale violence, and the CNDD-FDD increasingly played the ethnic card, events so far have rather confirmed the diminished importance of ethnic divisions after Arusha. This is clearly shown by the coalition between former enemies FNL and UPRONA, and even more so by the multi-ethnic nature of the protests. Moreover, the largely non-partisan, non-violent and citizen nature of the protest movement hints at the desire for a more emancipatory form of democracy, which breaks with the political patterns that have reproduced exclusion and violence in the wake of the war.

However, the crisis also raises important questions and challenges, both for Burundian leaders and in terms of international response. In the short term, there is a considerable risk of a militarisation of the contestation movement, which could take on many forms and manifest itself on various scales, ranging from urban guerrilla attacks to regional conflict. Apart from a negotiated solution to the third mandate problem, the risk of further violent escalation

could be defused by restoring faith in the electoral process as a means to achieve political change. In order to do so, even taking the minimum number of measures will require much more time than the modest postponements that have so far been on the table. These measures would include the creation of a new, truly independent national electoral commission, restoring the infrastructures of privately owned media and ensuring they can operate freely, guaranteeing equal access to the public sphere all over the country for all political parties and politicians, ensuring the security of opposition leaders and facilitating the return of refugees. This means that if these measures are to be implemented, a solution will have to be found to bridge the period between the constitutional deadline of 26 August for a president to be sworn in, and new elections. This will be a very tough sell for Nkurunziza and his supporters. Moreover, for such confidence-building measures to be credible in the eyes of opposition and protestors, serious engagement from the international community, including active implication in oversight and monitoring mechanisms, would be required.

In the longer term, there are other, more fundamental questions that need the attention of future Burundian leaders and their international partners. Fifteen years of peace building and a decade of formal multiparty democracy have not been able to transform the nature of state power and its relationship with society. At the time of writing, it is unclear how and when the electoral process will proceed. However, it is clear that whatever settlement or order results from the current stand-off will not only need to reply to the immediate grievances of the street but also address some of the structural unresolved problems of peace building that underlie the current dynamics of contestation and conflict. Donors and regional actors should be more

sensitive to the long-term problems that result from their prioritisation of stability.

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