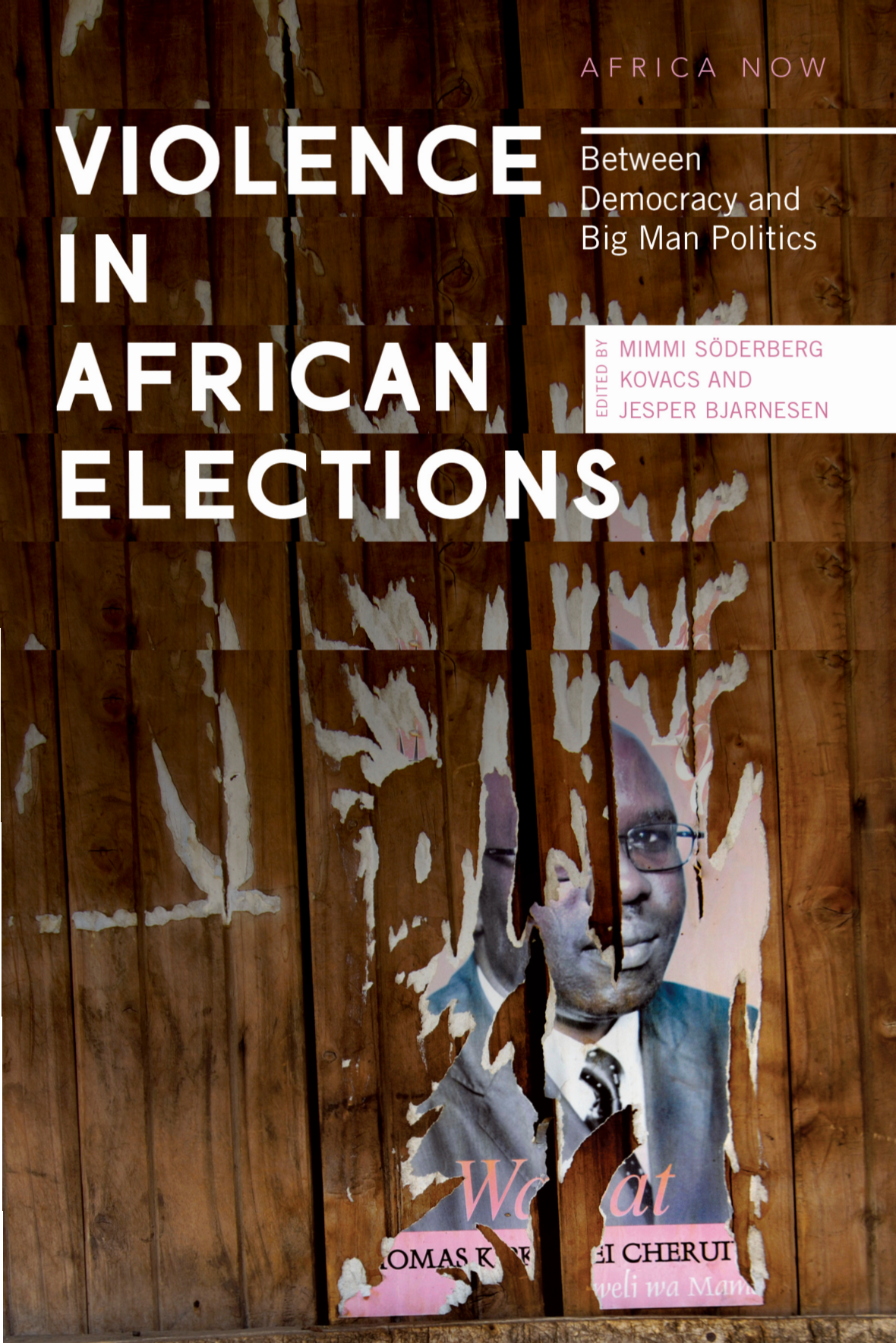
AFRICA NOW

VIOLENCE IN AFRICAN ELECTIONS

Between Democracy and Big Man Politics

EDITED BY MIMMI SÖDERBERG KOVACS AND JESPER BJARNESEN



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Violence in African Elections

Between Democracy and Big Man Politics

edited by Mimmi Söderberg Kovacs and Jesper Bjarnesen

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4 | The geography of violence in Burundi's 2015 elections

Willy Nindorera and Jesper Bjarnesen

Introduction

In the span of less than a year, Burundi's strides towards a sustainable peace following its civil war were marred by an escalation of electoral violence and a rapid descent into outright authoritarianism. At the end of April 2015, the proclamation of incumbent president Pierre Nkurunziza's candidacy for a third term led to a major crisis against a backdrop of violent clashes, mainly in the capital of Bujumbura, between civilian protestors opposed to this candidature and the security forces, supported by the ruling party youth wing, the Imbonerakure.[1] Violence was limited, however, to specific neighbourhoods in the capital and to certain districts in the provinces. The aim of this chapter is to decipher the geography of this violence: what factors explain the concentration of electoral violence in the city of Bujumbura? Why were particular neighbourhoods in the capital the locus of electoral violence, while others were left relatively untouched? What explains the delimitation of electoral violence in rural areas to specific municipalities?

In line with what seems to be a general tendency across African states and in other parts of the world (Goldsmith 2015; Reilly 2011; Taylor, Pevehouse and Straus 2013), electoral violence relating to Burundi's 2015 elections seems to have been driven primarily by the quest for government survival. In a context of intense frustration, especially among urban youths, over high unemployment rates, poverty, lack of prospects and civic rights, the Nkurunziza regime resorted to a strategy of intimidation and repression in order to discourage opposition, both armed and peaceful. This chapter suggests that the specific geography of these forms of electoral violence is central for understanding the social divisions and post-conflict political stratifications that have shaped Burundi's current conflict landscape.

This chapter contributes to the micro-level exploration of the dynamics of electoral violence, as called for in the introduction to this volume, and more specifically to an understanding of how these subnational dynamics came to be unequally distributed geographically, within the capital as well as across the Burundian territory, during the turbulent months following the April 2015 protests. This analysis of Burundi's geography of violence

thus explores empirically the interplay between electoral politics and public protests (McAdam and Tarrow 2010), providing some explanations for the recent observation that 'protests across Africa seem unable to effect substantive reforms in national politics despite their success in bringing tens of thousands of people into the streets' (Branch and Mampilly 2015: 6). Given the current interest in public protests among scholars and policy makers, as well as political activists across the African continent and beyond (cf. Arnould, Tor and Vervaeke 2016), the chapter presents a sobering account of how popular mobilisation may play out in an increasingly authoritarian state (Schedler 2013: 389).

Given the concentration of electoral violence in the city of Bujumbura, the Burundian capital will be the main geographical area under scrutiny, and our analysis will largely be limited to the period from the end of April 2015 until April 2016. This period covers the bulk of violence in Bujumbura, while the following months were marked by a de-escalation of violence. The chapter is based on literature research (press articles, studies and reports by NGOs and United Nations organisations, academic research, etc.); statistical surveys that explain the geographical distribution of violence; and the maps, graphs and statistical data produced by various NGOs that provide a clear visualisation of the geography of violence during the period. It is also based on interviews with people who witnessed the violence first-hand. A focus group was also organised with young academics living in two of the neighbourhoods affected by the violence, who thus observed the dynamics that motivated the violence and its repercussions on the lives of the inhabitants. These methodological choices were made in light of a security situation in which more systematic empirical data collection was deemed too dangerous for both the researchers and the informants. The chapter's analysis should be read with an awareness of the limitations that this selection of material has implied.

The chapter first summarises Burundi's history of electoral violence from its independence in 1962 until the most recent crisis, and continues with a more detailed consideration of the run-up to and aftermath of the 2015 elections. The bulk of the chapter then analyses the specific geography of electoral violence during the period under consideration, emphasising three patterns and suggesting some explanations for their occurrence. Firstly, we explore the reasons for the centrality of the city of Bujumbura in the confrontation between protestors and security forces, emphasising the demographic particularities of the capital in relation to the rest of the country. Secondly, we consider the uneven distribution of violence within the capital, drawing links to the roles of specific neighbourhoods during the country's recent civil war. Finally, we discuss the occurrence and distribution of violence outside the capital, documenting aspects of the electoral crisis that have been largely overlooked in news reporting and subsequent debates outside Burundi.

Figure 1: Map of Burundi, designed by Henrik Alfredsson

Electoral violence in Burundi

Burundi has a troubled contemporary history marked by cycles of violence, most often of an ethno-political nature. Burundi's first postcolonial crisis in 1965 was the result of an attempted coup, accompanied by ethnic massacres led by Hutus (the ethnic majority) in the armed forces frustrated by the defeat of the Hutu candidates of the Union for National Progress (UPRONA) in the parliamentary elections of that year. The coup failed and about sixty Hutu who were presumed to be behind the coup were executed following a controversial trial (Ngayimpenda 1998).

In 1966, the army overthrew the monarchy. Power was now in the hands of the Tutsi minority, mainly from the Bururi Province in the south of the country (see Figure 1). The takeover of the various levers of power, including the historically influential army, by an ethnic minority and the subsequent exclusion of the Hutu majority were the main causes of the violent crises in 1972 and 1988. In the aftermath of the latter, President Pierre Buyoya initiated political reforms to resolve the issue of ethnicity by opening state institutions to the majority. This process led to a return to multiparty politics and democratic openness in the early 1990s. Expecting the broad support of its policy of national unity and political reforms to lead to success at the ballot box, the government held the first democratic elections based on universal direct suffrage in 1993, after nearly thirty years of single-party rule. Given their demographic disadvantage, the Tutsi minority – particularly those within the army and the senior civil service – feared that this electoral process would be detrimental to its security and interests (Ben Hammouda 1995). In June 1993, the presidential elections were decided with a landslide victory for Melchior Ndadaye of the Front for Democracy in Burundi (FRODEBU), a Hutu-dominated party advocating change and deeper reforms. FRODEBU reinforced its victory in the legislative elections, causing further concern among a large number of Tutsi. In October 1993, an army faction opposed to the transfer of power assassinated president-elect Ndadaye and several senior officials. This event triggered the deadliest armed conflict in Burundi's history. In the early 2000s, a number of peace agreements between the transitional government and the various Hutu insurrections put an end to the civil war and initiated institutional reforms. These reforms included a restructuring of the defence and police forces, with the integration of Hutu rebels; the establishment of ethnic and gender quotas in most state institutions; and the periodic organisation of pluralistic elections based on universal suffrage. The most influential agreement was the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi, brokered by Nelson Mandela and Julius Nyerere, which was signed on 28 August 2000.[2] The Arusha Accords contain numerous provisions including a number of institutional reforms that would later be incorporated into the 2005 constitution, which is still in force at the time of writing.[3]

The 1993 crisis and subsequent civil war caused socio-political trauma in Burundian society (Nimubona 2004). When elections were held in 2005, many Burundians were afraid that their country would relapse into armed conflict, as a large part of the population now perceived the electoral process as a source of tension and potential violence, as one rebel group – the National Forces of Liberation (FNL) – still refused to disarm and remained underground (ICG 2005). Moreover, the political scene saw the arrival of several formations originating in former rebel groups, including the National Council for the Defence of Democracy and the Forces for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD-FDD). The CNDD-FDD gained popularity in rural areas, relying on their image as a movement consisting primarily of young rural Hutu, which was already articulated in populist rhetoric during the civil war. Its political platform emphasised the reform of the defence and police forces, one of the main issues of the peace negotiations and the main demand of the Hutu majority. But its underground discourse and propaganda aimed at the Hutu electorate, which the party perceived as its potential electoral base, also played strongly on fear and intimidation (ibid.). For an electorate primarily concerned with peace and security, and wary of the risks of a return to war in the event of a CNDD-FDD defeat, the choice was clear – or, indeed, was not much of a choice at all. Thus, the 2005 elections resulted in a large victory for the CNDD-FDD,[4] and although the electoral process was tense and subject to some violence, it did not lead to a new crisis. A more enduring outcome of these elections, furthermore, was a shift in the principal political dividing lines from the interethnic divisions that characterised the postcolonial period to increasing intra-ethnic tensions, primarily between the main Hutu-dominated political parties.

The CNDD-FDD's first term, owing to popular social reforms, was welcomed by large parts of the population. At the same time, however, the ruling party displayed a propensity for authoritarianism, which led to a series of political crises during its first five years in power, as well as serious human rights violations and an increase in corruption. Not surprisingly, popular perceptions of the party's performance in government varied significantly from the outset, the city being less appreciative than the countryside, where people were more concerned about their basic needs, as discussed below. Preparations for the 2010 elections took place in a tense climate characterised, among other things, by the restriction of civil liberties and the instrumentalisation of the judiciary, the defence and the police, attesting to the ruling party's increasingly authoritarian governing practices (ICG 2010). The CNDD-FDD thereby controlled the direction of the electoral process and mobilised all means and resources at its disposal to remain in power. Tensions were also exacerbated by new circumstances. The Hutu rebels of the FNL, led by Agathon Rwasa, who had not participated in the previous elections, had by now demobilised

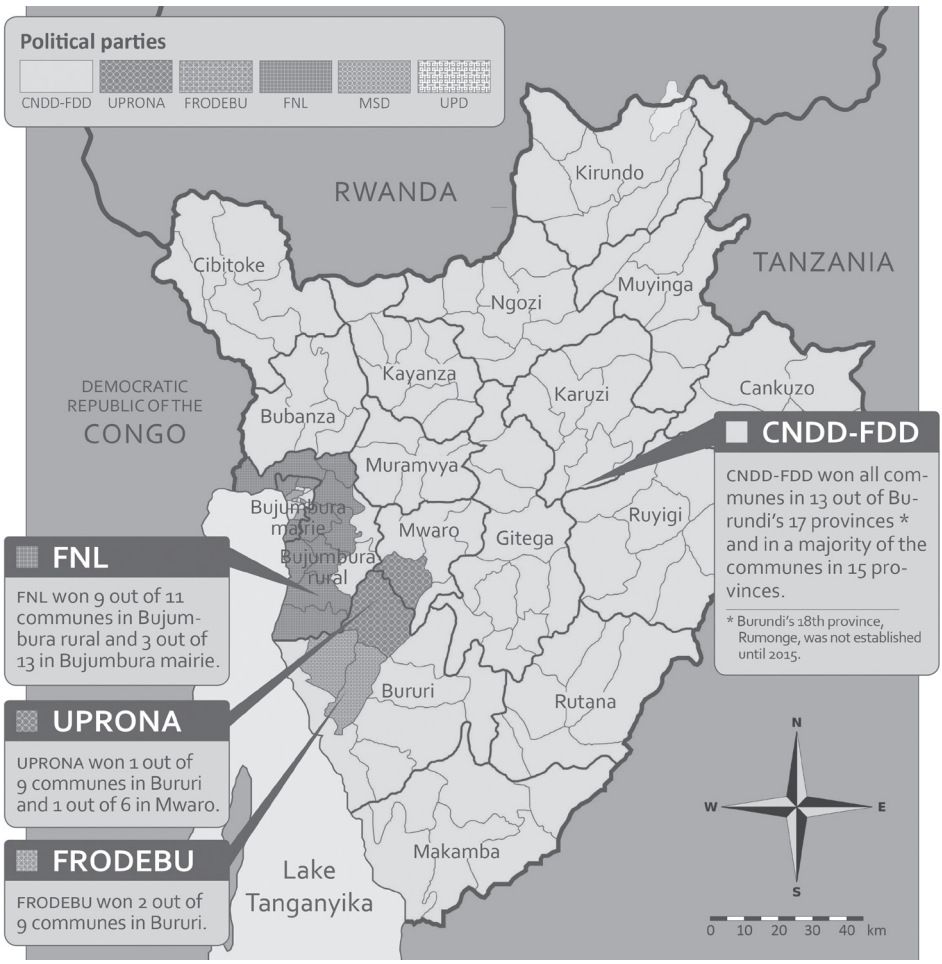

Figure 2: National distribution of votes in 2010 municipal elections. Map by Henrik Alfredsson, based on results announced by the National Independet Electoral Commmission (CENI).

and transformed into a political party, running for the first time in the 2010 elections. This was perceived as a serious threat by the CNDD-FDD. Secondly, in keeping with the Arusha Accords, the president had been elected by indirect vote in 2005, but was now to be elected by universal direct suffrage. Finally, the ruling party had been mobilising its youth wing, the Imbonerakure, for a campaign of intimidation for some time (Human Rights Watch 2010). This intimidation, in turn, incited the formation of youth movements connected to the main opposition parties and led to violent confrontations between these groups (ICG 2010). The first municipal elections were, once again, won by the CNDD-FDD, with a considerable margin in all parts of the country, except for Bujumbura and some parts of Bururi and Mwaro (see Figure 2). While this first ballot was deemed legitimate by election observers, however, it was rejected by the opposition, who denounced the climate of fear and intimidation that had marred the electoral process. For the same reasons, the opposition decided to boycott the following elections. Faced with threats to their safety, the main opposition leaders went into exile. The 2010 elections therefore initiated a new political crisis that was marked by numerous extrajudicial executions, among other things (UN Security Council 2011). Between the 2010 and 2015 electoral cycles, the authoritarian tendencies of the CNDD-FDD regime became increasingly evident. This period was characterised by the deliberate obstruction of the activities of opposition parties outside the capital; the instrumental transformation of the justice system and the national security forces to serve regime interests; the arrest of some opposition figureheads as a show of force; and the appointment of regime loyalists to central positions within the institutions safeguarding democracy and the rule of law, such as the national electoral and human rights commissions. These worrying changes, however, should still be understood against the backdrop of the Arusha Agreement, which remained in effect, despite being increasingly challenged by the CNDD-FDD hardliners.

Burundi's history of electoral violence prior to the 2015 elections, therefore, is not a straightforward example of 'electoral authoritarianisms', which Schedler characterises as 'institutional façades of democracy, including regular multiparty elections for the chief executive, in order to conceal (and reproduce) harsh realities of authoritarian governance' (Schedler 2006: 1), since genuinely democratic reforms have been introduced since the end of the civil war. However, the CNDD-FDD government's record consistently points in an authoritarian direction, perhaps a testimony to the complicated transition of a former rebel movement into a political party (cf. Söderberg Kovacs and Hatz 2016), and its chair, Pierre Nkurunziza, from a military to a civilian leader (Burihabwa 2017). As has been well documented elsewhere, these transitions often entail the persistence of a military ethos and operationality, rendering elected leaders into military-civilian hybrids, or what Themnér describes as 'warlord democrats' (2017).

The build-up to the 2015 elections

The 2015 electoral process generated tensions early on. As early as 2014, there were unmistakable indications of CNDD-FDD's desire to win by any means necessary. The tightening of laws on civil liberties, irregularities in the early stages of the electoral process, increased pressure on and harassment of the media and civil society, inopportune interference in the functioning of opposition parties, the reinforcement of the Imbonerakure and their massive deployment across the country, and their formation as militia units[5] – these were all indicators of the CNDD-FDD's intentions. As such, the record of its ten years in power was largely poor, and many expectations were dashed, particularly from a socio-economic perspective. A 2014 Afrobarometer survey of the general perceptions of the population in the social, political and economic spheres reveals high levels of dissatisfaction in rural communities, and even higher levels in urban areas, especially regarding living conditions and government performance on development issues. For example, 57 per cent of respondents across urban and rural populations gave a negative assessment of their overall living conditions, and 72 per cent of urban respondents estimated that overall economic conditions had declined during the last year, while 51 per cent of rural respondents provided similar answers. Finally, 78 per cent of urban respondents provided a negative assessment of the overall economic situation, as did 51 per cent of rural respondents. In short, frustration had risen by the end of the government's second term, especially among urban populations. The lack of prospects for young people, who were increasingly faced with unemployment, underemployment and poverty, and the determination of certain opposition parties not to accept authoritarian rule heightened the risk of renewed violence and instability (UNDP and MFPDE 2014).

The CNDD-FDD was the manifestation of a rebel movement whose transformation into a political party proved to be flawed. The party's propensity to resort to force and confrontation, to the detriment of dialogue and compromise, had been a constant since its arrival on the scene largely due to the vestiges of its wartime past and the strong influence of its former military wing. Indeed, as already implied, the former rebel movement never truly departed from the violent culture it had developed during its underground years (see also Rufyikiri 2016). Moreover, despite having more contact and forming alliances with the outside world, it tended to inflate certain potential threats and even to fabricate them, such as the frequently raised danger of a Tutsi resurgence to its colonial and postcolonial dominance, especially when the party was confronted with internal difficulties and in need of scapegoats. This inflammatory political rhetoric by the authorities framed those who opposed Nkurunziza's candidacy for a third term as the same people responsible for the assassination of Melchior Ndadaye in the aftermath of the 1993 elections

(Madirisha 2015), or, more bluntly, it associated them with a Tutsi menace that needed to be eliminated (Bensimon 2015).

The CNDD-FDD deployed this rhetoric as a response to virtually any line of criticism, in an attempt to garner the support of an electorate that it knew was growing increasingly disillusioned and frustrated (ICG 2016). At the same time, the ruling party was gradually being destabilised by internal tensions linked in part to its neopatrimonial administration and the dominance of a quartet of corrupt generals (Impunity Watch 2015). Against this backdrop of an already tense political climate, the question of the third term was the spark that ignited the violence of 2015, and exacerbated tensions within the ruling party.

The controversy over Pierre Nkurunziza's candidacy The Arusha Agreement clearly states that the president of the republic may hold no more than two terms in office. The Burundian constitution is more ambiguous on this subject. It states in one of its articles that the head of state is elected by universal direct suffrage for a five-year term renewable only once, while another provision stipulates that, as an exception, the first president of the post-transition republic can be elected by the National Assembly and the Senate meeting in congress, by a two-thirds majority of their members. Conscious of the forthcoming challenges in the event of a third term, Pierre Nkurunziza, in office since 2005, wanted to circumvent this obstacle by proposing a constitutional amendment at the beginning of 2014. This amendment would have effectively offset the two-term limit, but the proposal failed to pass by a single vote.[6] If Nkurunziza's ambitions in this regard were still somewhat hidden, the public speeches of the leaders of the ruling party, in contrast, were unequivocal. Faced with the increasing likelihood of Nkurunziza's candidacy in the 2015 presidential elections, hundreds of civil society organisations formed a coalition in early 2015 called 'Stop the Third Term' and vowed to call upon the people to take to the streets. The opposition actively prepared to mobilise against the third term and threatened to do the same. Conversely, the CNDD-FDD was already organising demonstrations across the country to support Nkurunziza's candidacy, in which the mobilised Imbonerakure would shout menacing slogans at opponents of the candidacy. For its part, the international community, wary of the risk of a violent crisis caused by the prospect of a third term, dispatched several high-level missions to Bujumbura to dissuade Nkurunziza from running for office out of respect for the Arusha Agreement and the constitution (Reyntjens, Vandeginste and Verpoorten 2016).

The first months of 2015 were extremely tense. In March 2015, several senior CNDD-FDD officials signed a letter opposing the third term. This movement, however, was quickly supressed. When a CNDD-FDD party congress was

announced for the end of April, the capital was already in turmoil (Reyntjens, Vandeginste and Verpoorten 2016).

Understanding Burundi's geography of violence

On 25 April 2015, the CNDD-FDD party congress proclaimed the president's candidacy for the presidency at the general elections scheduled for May to August 2015. The following day, residents from several neighbourhoods of the capital initiated peaceful demonstrations to protest against Nkurunziza's candidacy. The first casualty occurred on the very first day of the protests. Despite the initially peaceful nature of the demonstrations, the police forces responded brutally, blocking the protestors' path towards Place de l'Indépendence in the city centre (see Figure 3) and employing tear gas, batons and rubber bullets to keep them back. In some neighbourhoods, the police were already using live bullets at this early stage of the protests. The regime thus used disproportionate repression to discourage further demonstrations. When protests persisted, the authorities turned to unrestrained violence with the aim of spreading fear before resorting to a campaign of terror in the districts involved in early May, mobilising mainly the Imbonerakure and special units of the police and the national intelligence service. This repression was organised through a parallel chain of command within the police forces and, to a lesser extent, in the army, based on past allegiances, the infiltration of several police units by the Imbonerakure and the use of ethnic loyalty as a political strategy. In this regard, the ethnic discourse of some authorities, who called for the annihilation of the protesting neighbourhoods in exchange for material gains, was deeply worrying to the international community (Ba and Muhorakeye 2015).

In the space of a few months, peaceful protests had turned into an armed insurrection, and, to stifle any further opposition, the authorities deployed every means possible. These methods included mass arrests, public beatings, live ammunition aimed at unarmed demonstrators or fired blindly into protesting neighbourhoods, torture, kidnappings, often followed by extrajudicial executions with the bodies subsequently found in the main opposition strongholds, and rape committed in households in these same neighbourhoods (UNCAT 2016). This diverse toolbox of brutality, in other words, amounted to a deliberate strategy to create fear and submission, the main targets of which were protestors in the neighbourhoods of Musaga, Nyakabiga, Jabe, Mutakura, Cibitoke and Ngagara, and, to a lesser extent, Kanyosha and Bwiza (see Figure 3). Furthermore, the ruling party also used the unfolding violence to settle scores within its own ranks, blaming the opposition parties for the killings. For example, after a police commissioner in Kamenge was killed in early May, the police spokesperson – once he had deserted and gone into exile – revealed that the assassination had been carried out on

the orders of his superiors. Such targeted assassinations may account for the more sporadic instances of violence in the neighbourhoods of Kamenge, Kinama and Buterere together with the occasional shifting of front lines to the periphery or to the interior of these areas. The violence reached its peak on 11 December 2015, when the police and the army effectively locked down the entire metropolitan area. All the protesting districts were surrounded and some of them were besieged by elements of the various armed forces assisted by the Imbonerakure, who engaged in mass killings and mass arrests (Malagardis 2015). The international community now feared the worst (*Le Monde* 2016). In a communiqué published in mid-January 2016, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed concern that '[a]ll the alarm signals, including the increasing ethnic dimension of the crisis, are flashing red' (OHCHR 2016).

Overall, the excessive use of force by police and the Imbonerakure, most often against unarmed demonstrators, was a clear indication that the regime would try to keep the outgoing president in power at all costs. In response, a gradual militarisation of factions within the major opposition parties, facilitated by the presence of former rebel fighters and deserters from within the armed forces, led the protests to take a violent turn. The youth of the neighbourhoods in which confrontations were most intense justified the use of arms by claiming self-defence and the need to protect their local areas from the murderous incursions of the police and the Imbonerakure. Among the protestors who came to support certain neighbourhoods during the demonstrations were FNL ex-combatants, who played an active role in the nocturnal clashes in several of the neighbourhoods involved and assisted in training other youths in the same areas in the use of weapons.[7] Ex-combatants would help in the nightly defence of these neighbourhoods, setting up rotas for patrols and even ambushing the police. The armed groups in these neighbourhoods often consisted of people from outside the area, who came to organise an armed struggle. Some actors from the political opposition also played an active role in the organisation of the armed insurrection, supplying logistics, weapons and ammunition to the protestors. In early 2016, the armed insurrection seemed to have been considerably weakened by the overwhelming force of the regime, and essentially packed up and left for an unknown destination.

Why the capital was the primary site of violence The initial violence was thus mainly enacted by the police forces and the Imbonerakure youth militias. It was only later that this one-sided aggression escalated into an armed confrontation between protestors and security forces in several neighbourhoods of the capital. In general, the violence observed in the months that followed this escalation was mainly limited to the neighbourhoods in which demonstrations against the president's third term had taken place. The violent confrontations

affected certain areas adjacent to these neighbourhoods, including Rohero and Bwiza, mainly because of the mobility of some protestors. During this time, the interior of the country was less affected. The rural districts of Mukike, Mugongomanga (both in Bujumbura Rural province), Rusaka (Mwaro province) and Mugamba (Bururi province) were the main areas affected by violence (see Figure 1), although not with the same intensity as in the capital. This section analyses the particular geography of violence in the months following the initial protests against Nkurunziza's third term.

Despite the presence of some pockets of protest in certain parts of the Bujumbura Rural province, the capital was the undisputed centre of the demonstrations and, consequently, of the violence that accompanied them. In fact, like most other African capitals, Bujumbura is the main location in which protest against those in power emerges (Raleigh 2015). All available studies on the demands and concerns of the population as reflected in opinion surveys reflect a marked discrepancy in general perceptions between rural and urban areas (Ministry of the Presidency 2008; Afrobarometer 2012; 2014; CENAP 2014). Bujumbura shows greater dissatisfaction on issues related to governance, justice, security and the performance of government authorities and services. As early as May 2008, the diagnostic survey on governance in Burundi (Ministry of the Presidency 2008) revealed very different expectations among the respondent groups. When asked what they perceived to be their main concerns, the surveyed households, predominantly located in rural areas, cited in ascending order of priority increasing unemployment, poverty and access to land, whereas civil servants, entrepreneurs and NGOs, mainly based in the capital, identified insecurity/crime, impunity and corruption. At the end of 2012, an Afrobarometer survey, particularly on attitudes towards democracy, highlighted a marked contrast between the city and the countryside regarding trust in institutions, with urban communities expressing a 20 per cent lower level of satisfaction than people in the countryside. A survey conducted by the same organisation in 2014 (Afrobarometer 2014) showed the same contrasts, notably on the question of the limitation of presidential terms, in answer to which city residents expressed a markedly more pronounced opposition to a third term (82 per cent against in the urban areas compared with 59 per cent in the rural areas). The same survey highlighted city dwellers' much more critical opinions on the level of corruption and the will to combat it. In the same year, an opinion poll conducted by the Conflict Alert and Prevention Centre (CENAP) on perceptions of security needs led to contrasting results on the question of the performance of the Burundi police and of the national intelligence service depending on the respondents' location, the city being once again much less lenient than the countryside (CENAP 2014).

Clearly, the view of city dwellers is generally much more unfavourable towards issues relating to governance. This is due to different factors. First, the

level of education of the urban population is significantly higher than in rural areas. Indeed, a large amount of educational and academic infrastructure is concentrated in the capital, whereas access to education outside Bujumbura has always been problematic despite improvements in recent decades. For example, Bujumbura is host to more than 75 per cent of the thirty-three accredited universities and higher institutes in Burundi (Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research 2015). Secondly, the greater part of the civil service, state-owned enterprises, the private sector, services and businesses, NGOs, the UN system and all the embassies are concentrated in the capital. As a result, the vast majority of highly educated people are based in Bujumbura. Put simply, the capital concentrates access to knowledge, and these demographics are more likely to be critical of a government that is condemned for its corrupt practices, its authoritarianism and its poor economic performance. In addition, as the centre of all major opinion makers, including political parties as well as civil society, the capital is also the centre of activity for these actors in terms of public involvement and outreach. The urban population is thus more immediately able to access the discourses of political leaders and other critical voices, who in turn tend to adapt their messages to appeal to this particular segment of the population. The relative success of the political opposition party Movement for Solidarity and Development (MSD) is a case in point.[8]

Moreover, independent media – radios in particular – are popular in Bujumbura and have contributed to an increased awareness of civic rights and have encouraged urban populations to take a more critical look at the public authorities in view of the numerous human rights abuses and economic embezzlement reported by the press. Increased access to the internet and the availability of international television channels in the capital and the consequent access to images of developments elsewhere in the world have also contributed to the outlook of many urbanites. In particular, news of popular revolts against autocracies elsewhere on the continent inspired a belief among urban youths that the mobilisation in the streets of Burundi could lead to similar changes (RFI 2015). For example, it is clear that civil society movements such as the *Balai Citoyen* (literally 'Citizen Broom') movement in Burkina Faso had some influence on the winds of protest that blew over Bujumbura. Similarly, the strong presence of civil society organisations in the capital – namely, those working in the fields of governance and human rights – also encouraged this civic awareness and culture, particularly through campaigns for the protection and promotion of rights and liberties.[9] These factors were emphasised by a young protestor interviewed by Radio France Internationale (RFI):

> In fact, young people have woken up because democracy has started to be practised a little, because there are civil societies, there is the media, there

is all this that raises young people's awareness. They try to show them how they can defend their rights peacefully. That's what is happening right here. (RFI 2015)

For all these reasons, Bujumbura had been the main stronghold of the opposition for several years prior to the 2015 elections, as evidenced by the results obtained by the opposition in the capital during the 2010 municipal elections (see Figure 4). Although the CNDD-FDD won the elections with 28 per cent of the votes, this victory was primarily the result of a divided opposition, with six opposition parties (if UPRONA is included, as its electoral base is opposed to the ruling party) sharing more than 69 per cent of the vote. Compared with the national results, in which the CNDD-FDD carried 64 per cent of the vote (see Figure 2), Bujumbura was clearly far less favourable to the ruling party.

Following the 2010 elections, the attitude of the authorities towards the population of the capital became markedly apprehensive. Many young people in Bujumbura were increasingly appalled by the personalisation of power and the cases of embezzlement and misappropriation by a small group at the head of government, as reported by the media, in an environment characterised by widespread corruption, clientelism and nepotism.[10] Moreover, favouritism shown towards members of the CNDD-FDD for access to employment and even certain basic services, together with discrimination against members and alleged supporters of the opposition, created a sense of exclusion felt by the majority of young people in the capital. In this regard, the measures taken in Bujumbura by the National Commission on Land and Other Assets (CNTB), an institution perceived as being controlled by the ruling party, to systematically dispossess owners of houses whose ownership was claimed by former refugees, regardless of how that ownership was acquired, also contributed to turning a large part of the youth in the neighbourhoods affected by these measures against the government.[11] Notably, the case of Justin Nyakabeto and his family, who were evicted from their house in Ngagara, lead to the arrest and conviction of ten youths who were part of the group of protestors who rallied to oppose these measures (Reyntjens, Vandeginste and Verpoorten 2015). The government's neopatrimonial practices and the feelings of exclusion and marginalisation among the young people from the protesting neighbourhoods coupled with their increased civic awareness and, in many cases, their politicisation were decisive factors in the capital's strong mobilisation against the president's third term, which was seen as tantamount to keeping the CNDD-FDD in power.

By comparing Figures 3 and 4, one can see that the neighbourhoods in which demonstrations were mobilised during the 2015 protests – most importantly Cibitoke (which included Mutakura), Musaga, Ngagara and Nyakabiga – voted for the opposition by a very large majority in 2010. The MSD opposition party,

in fact, was the leading party in all these neighbourhoods (*Le Visionnaire* 2010). The dominance of the opposition parties, and particularly the MSD, in these areas greatly influenced the mapping of the 2015 protests and hence their geography of violence.

The identity factor also played a role in the protests. The decisions of the CNTB essentially favoured former Hutu refugees at the expense of Tutsi families. This policy resulted in a sense of victimisation among many Tutsi, in a context where the minority ethnic group already felt that they were discriminated against (Afrobarometer 2012). Indeed, despite the easing of the ethnic divide in Burundian society, the concerns of the Tutsi community increased during Nkurunziza's second term for the reasons mentioned above. In addition, another important element in the mobilisation of Tutsi youth was the often expressed willingness of some CNDD-FDD officials to challenge some of the achievements of the Arusha Agreement, including ethnic quotas, which had been perceived as a guarantee of the collective security of the Tutsi, at the very least with regard to the equal representation in the defence and police forces. Finally, the increasingly radical discourse of certain leaders in the ruling party on the ethnic issue and the Imbonerakure's threatening (albeit indirect) slogans against the Tutsi minority during demonstrations were also factors that contributed to a rising awareness among Tutsi urbanites of the dangers that they could face if President Nkurunziza remained in power.

The main centres of protest and violence in Bujumbura were neighbourhoods with a large population of young people with low incomes. Musaga, Nyakabiga, Cibitoke, Mutakura, Ngagara and Jabe were all home to civil servants and workers from the private and informal sectors.[12] Poverty was undoubtedly another factor behind the mobilisation, since the living conditions of people in these neighbourhoods had not improved during the CNDD-FDD's decade in power; in fact, conditions deteriorated for most of the inhabitants in these neighbourhoods.[13] Not only were these populations poor, but the young people in these neighbourhoods often lacked employment opportunities.

Unemployment, underemployment and, above all, the lack of prospects for young people were major sources of frustration for the people of the protesting neighbourhoods. When they were employed, they tended to have precarious jobs that did not correspond to their level of qualification and for which they received inadequate wages that hardly covered their basic needs. A survey conducted on households' living conditions in 2013–14 put the unemployment rate in urban areas at 14.7 per cent (ISTEEBU 2015). The same survey highlighted that, in the city, 30.1 per cent of respondents who were declared active were in fact underemployed. Young people from the northern neighbourhoods of Bujumbura interviewed during a focus group, mostly students and youths in search of employment, said that most young people in their respective neighbourhoods were unemployed. Poverty and unemployment,

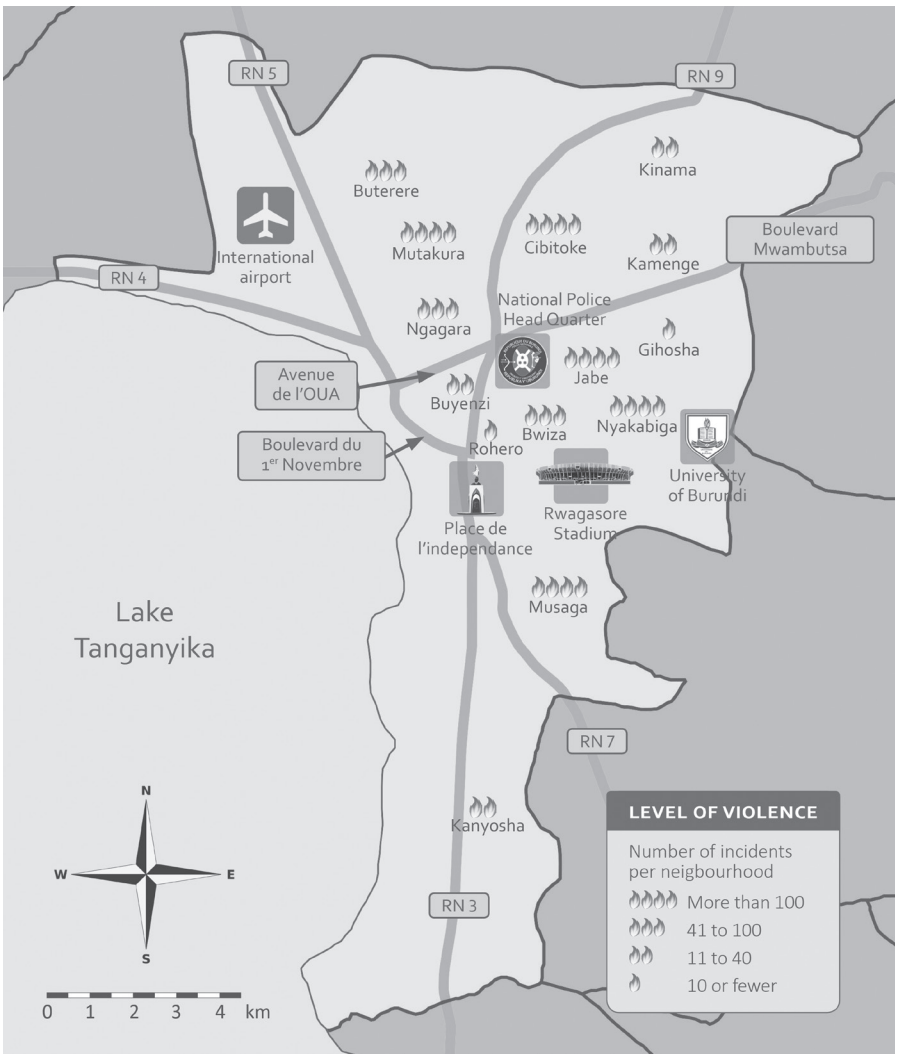

Figure 3: Distribution of violent incidents within Bujumbura city, April–November 2015
Map by Henrik Alfredsson, based on data provided by ACLED.

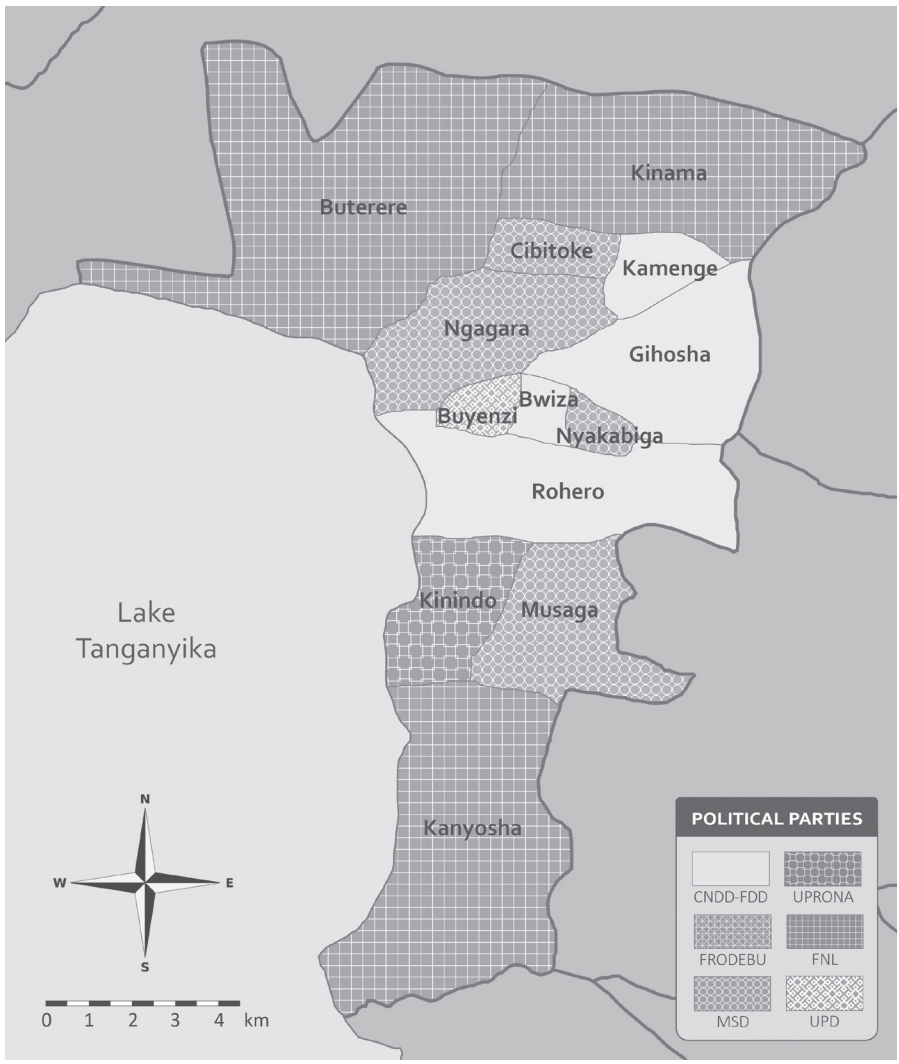

Figure 4: Distribution of votes in 2010 municipal elections, Bujumbura city. Map by Henrik Alfredsson, based on results announced by the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI).

therefore, were decisive factors in the protests (see also Donovan-Smith and Ndayisaba 2015; Morice 2015).

To all the aforementioned motivating factors must be added the gains obtained or sought by a segment of the protestors. The mobilisation against Nkurunziza's third term was financially supported by many Burundians from the interior and the diaspora. Funds collected were allocated at the discretion of the donors to civil society organisations involved in the protests or to officials of opposition parties who themselves distributed these funds to the organisers of the demonstrations in the neighbourhoods concerned.[14] Obviously, these funds and the various items that were bought and collected (drinks, food, mobile charge cards, etc.) were a motivation for some, but their unfair distribution or mismanagement led to tensions among protestors in certain neighbourhoods.[15]

Why some neighbourhoods of Bujumbura were left untouched by violence As already stated, not all neighbourhoods of Bujumbura were involved in or affected by the protests. For example, Kamenge and Kinama, two very poor, predominantly Hutu, neighbourhoods in the northern part of the city, were spared major incidents during the protests. The same was true of the neighbourhoods of Rohero and Gihosha, and, to a lesser extent, Kanyosha. This particular geography of violence may be understood in relation to a series of demographic observations. Firstly, the mapping of the results of the 2010 elections provides a partial explanation for this distribution (see Figure 4). As can be seen, the neighbourhoods of Kamenge and Gihosha, and, to a lesser extent, Bwiza, voted in high numbers for the CNDD-FDD in the 2010 elections; this may be a primary reason for the relative calm in these areas during the protests in 2015. Secondly, the menacing Imbonerakure presence in Kamenge, Kinama, Kanyosha and Buterere – which are all neighbourhoods with the same social and ethnic configuration, and predominantly supporters of Agathon Rwasa's FNL – dissuaded potential dissidents from mobilising, or at least from organising protests within those particular areas. Thirdly, Gihosha and Rohero are both principally upper-middle-class neighbourhoods, and, as already stated, those involved in direct confrontations with the security forces tended to be from a less privileged socio-economic background. Fourthly, the Rohero neighbourhood has a generally ageing population, and relatively few young adult residents, which may account for the lack of mobilisation in that area. Finally, Kamenge is the neighbourhood where the armed conflict began in 1993–94 and is therefore considered to be the historical stronghold of the CNDD-FDD insurrection. Also, many members of the defence and police forces from the former insurrection live there. These historical ties may explain the reluctance of Kamenge residents to mobilise against the regime.

In addition to these dissuasive factors, the central location of the neighbourhood of Rohero, which includes most of the city centre, may have provided a major incentive for protests to be focused there. The protestors seem to have been acutely aware of the importance of achieving visibility, in part to emulate the successful mobilisations in Burkina Faso and Senegal in recent years. Furthermore, protestors were obviously not limited to mobilising in their own neighbourhoods. For example, it appears that Kinama residents were also active in Mutakura and Cibitoke, while people from Kanyosha went to support the neighbouring area of Musaga. Buterere joined the protest movement late or supported other protesting neighbourhoods such as Ngagara. This mobility of protestors across neighbourhoods essentially served to reinforce Bujumbura's geography of violence. Security forces focused their operations on neighbourhoods known to be critical of the regime, and, in response, protestors from other areas rallied to these zones of confrontation.

These micro-dynamics of popular mobilisation may account for a neighbourhood such as Buyenzi, which displayed voting patterns similar to those in the centres of confrontation in the city, being spared the large-scale violence of other areas. Its activist residents may have mobilised initially in other parts of the city, postponing the area's more direct involvement in the protests to a later stage when the conflict was already transitioning into a more militarised confrontation. In addition, Buyenzi's population is predominantly from the Muslim minority, which historically has taken a less confrontational role in relation to state authority. This is evident in the fact that Buyenzi was one of the few neighbourhoods spared interethnic violence in the 1990s.

Why violence in the provinces was limited to specific districts

From the beginning of the crisis, the situation in Burundi's interior regions was much more difficult to assess than in the capital. To observers in the capital as well as to those following the unfolding of events from outside the country, this was primarily due to the restricted media access outside Bujumbura, including the shutting down of the country's main radio stations, and the limited access to the interior for NGOs and international human rights organisations. These measures seem to have been reinforced deliberately by the authorities to hinder communications between actors in the capital and the interior, in order to limit the expansion of the protest movement to other parts of the country. In this regard, Human Rights Watch's press release of 27 July 2016 on the systematic sexual abuse of relatives of alleged opponents in the interior, committed by the Imbonerakure, revealed a reality that had previously been unknown to external observers (Human Rights Watch 2016).

Despite the official rhetoric insisting that protests and violence were confined to a few Tutsi neighbourhoods in Bujumbura, there were opposition mobilisations in most of the provinces, but these were quickly suppressed.

Ultimately, only a few rural municipalities, mainly located in the provinces of Bujumbura Rural, Bururi and Mwaro, could maintain the demonstrations and expose themselves to the violence of the police and the Imbonerakure. Apart from Bujumbura City, protests were observed in the following provinces: Bujumbura Rural, Bururi, Cankuzo, Cibitoke, Gitega, Kirundo, Makamba, Muramvya, Muyinga, Mwaro, Ngozi, Rumonge and Rutana. Only the provinces of Bubanza, Karuzi, Kayanza[16] and Ruyigi were left untouched. In the provinces listed, reports mainly located protests in the provincial centres, although rural municipalities were affected in several provinces (most notably Bujumbura Rural, Bururi, Gitega, Muramvya, Mwaro, Ngozi and Rumonge).

The protests in the provinces primarily occurred in rural municipalities where the opposition had achieved significant results in the 2010 municipal elections. In these districts, the MSD tended to be the largest party, with UPRONA and the FNL recording significant results as well. The CNDD-FDD generally performed poorly in these particular districts. Furthermore, the districts where protests were mobilised often had a relatively low presence of Imbonerakure militia. The violence outside the capital was therefore mainly limited to the provinces of Bururi, Bujumbura Rural and Mwaro, and political allegiance seems to have been one of the determining factors in this geography of violence.

In its attempts to deliberately ethnicise the crisis, the government has often argued that, even in rural areas, only the municipalities with a Tutsi majority were affected by the protests. This argument is partially true in that several of the protesting rural municipalities do have a large Tutsi population. The protesters in Bururi, Bujumbura Rural and Mwaro, often young people with a relatively high level of education, were undoubtedly sympathetic to the more targeted calls for action from civil society organisations: for instance, for the liberation of imprisoned human rights activists, against high prices, and against corruption. One would expect that this tendency may have been nourished by the fears aroused by the ethnic rhetoric of a government caught up in the same radical ethnic ideology that had characterised the CNDD-FDD as a military movement (Nindorera 2012). To this must be added the frustration felt in some provinces marginalised by the government because of their presumed association with the Tutsi elites of the past, among these primarily the province of Bururi, which had been the heart of power under the Tutsi military regimes. Moreover, several of the most active personalities in the 'Stop the Third Term' campaign came from some of these municipalities and wielded greater influence there because of their social networks (family, neighbourhood, etc.). Finally, it appears that one or more of the armed groups that mobilised when the opposition became more militarised retreated to these particular provinces, or at least used them as a support base. This was undoubtedly in line with the dual strategy of choosing a field of operation, primarily in certain rural municipalities of Bururi and Bujumbura Rural, that

the police had difficulty accessing because of its steep terrain combined with the presence of a politically favourable environment.

The protests also extended to rural municipalities with a large Hutu majority loyal to the FNL, such as Kanyosha Rural and Nyabiraba, south of the capital where the presence of armed men had been reported for some time. Finally, the local branches of various civil society organisations involved in the campaign against the third term were active in mobilising protests in the provinces.[17]

A final factor related to the protests in the provinces was the closure of the University of Burundi. Most of the university's faculties and campuses are located near the Nyakabiga area in the capital. The university has more than 13,000 students,[18] although it can accommodate less than a third of this number on its campuses; the great majority of students have to find their own accommodation, and they often reside in modest neighbourhoods such as Nyakabiga, which has the advantage of being close by. During the first days of the demonstrations, many students went to show their support for the protestors in areas including Nyakabiga. To put an end to the student protests, the authorities immediately closed the university and expelled the students from the campus, thus forcing them to return to their homes in the provinces. In several localities in the interior of the country, demonstrations were subsequently fuelled in part by the students who had been expelled from their university and who, as a result, became idle and frustrated with the government.[19]

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the historical and socio-political dynamics that informed the uneven distribution of violence in Burundi's 2015 elections. Through this prism, the chapter has explored the incentives of the main actors involved in the popular mobilisation against Pierre Nkurunziza's candidacy for a third term, as well as the motivations behind the brutal reprisals against these public protests. We have considered the links between the Imbonerakure youth movement, the national police forces, and the ruling CNDD-FDD, which were central to the state response to what were initially peaceful protests. The chapter thereby suggests that state violence was deployed by the Nkurunziza regime as part of a deliberate strategy to consolidate power and silence its opponents.

The violence linked to the elections in 2015 did not have a major impact on the living conditions of the people in the localities in the interior of the country who joined the wave of protest from time to time, as their repression was not as vigorous or as constant as in Bujumbura City. It was mainly the Musaga, Jabe, Nyakabiga, Cibitoke, Mutakura and Ngagara neighbourhoods that paid a price for the crisis and that recorded the greatest number of victims. The thousands of people who have been incarcerated in the prisons of Burundi since then are mostly young people from these locations. These areas saw

the departure into exile of many young people and were virtually emptied of families, who preferred to settle in districts that were less exposed to police repression or to flee to the interior of the country, or to either Rwanda or Tanzania, which have received up to 85,000 and 250,000 Burundian refugees respectively (UNHCR 2017). The crisis also had an impact on the economic activity of these neighbourhoods, as many businesses had to close.

Residents of the protesting neighbourhoods first experienced police violence coupled with deprivation and harassment inflicted upon them by young demonstrators, as, for example, people were prohibited from going to work or pressured to take part in compulsory nocturnal security rounds. They subsequently experienced arbitrary arrests, kidnappings and ill-treatment by the police and the Imbonerakure before being subjected to killings and summary executions, which sometimes targeted entire families (Deutsche Welle 2015); the obvious aim of this was to create a climate of terror in these particular neighbourhoods. Beyond the visible effects of the crisis on these localities, other equally serious consequences have been less perceptible. These areas have lived – and, for some, continue to live – in a climate of fear and terror, with the police still making regular arrests. Therefore, it is difficult to assess the psychological consequences of the suffering endured by these populations.

The protests and the violent response from the Burundian security forces were mainly fuelled by a combination of political, identity, socio-economic and socio-demographic factors. Bujumbura is the main stronghold of the opposition because it concentrates the country's intellectual elite, reluctant to adapt to an authoritarian power characterised by poor governance and poor economic performance. It is also a locus for political opposition because of its large population of young people, most of whom are unemployed or underemployed and hence have uncertain prospects for the future. Living under precarious living conditions with many frustrations, these young people were more sympathetic to the mobilisation speeches of the campaign against the president's third term. To some extent, these urban youths were exploited by some of the political formations of the opposition and by part of civil society involved in the 'Stop the Third Term' campaign in their efforts to prevent President Nkurunziza's candidacy. These protests, perceived by the authorities as being essentially a Tutsi uprising with ulterior motives, resulted in the violent retaliation of the defence and police forces, which subsequently led to the emergence of an armed insurrection.

The causes of the election-related violence in Burundi in 2015 are characteristic of the crises affecting other African countries confronted with electoral processes and where the demands of a large part of the population contrast with the policies of governments obsessed with their own political survival and that resort to force and manipulation to maintain their positions (Höglund 2009). Unfortunately, the impotence and inability of African and international

organisations to manage these conflicts tend to perpetuate and multiply these crises. The consolidation of democracy in Africa will be severely tested for a long time to come in the absence of a more sustained will and determination to prevent and/or stem crises and electoral violence, and without better coordination and coherence in the actions and initiatives of African regional organisations and the various international actors.

Inspired by the overall theme of this volume, it will be important to analyse further the micro-politics of electoral violence in Burundi; this could lead, for example, to better understandings of the impacts of local grievances (cf. Kalyvas 2003) on the geography of violence, and of the inner workings of the networks and hierarchies of power and patronage within the Nkurunziza regime. This call for further research seems particularly urgent as the prospects for sustainable peace and political stability in Burundi continue to deteriorate at the time of writing. In the transition from post-electoral violence to outright authoritarianism, the factors underlying Burundi's geography of violence considered here may prove to be a central component in the 'joint production' of continued political violence (Kalyvas 2003: 476; cf. Söderberg Kovacs, Introduction in this volume). Tragically, in the Burundian case, elections have indeed become the new battlegrounds, as Bøås and Utas (2014) have phrased it, and in a most acute sense.

Notes

1 '*Imbonerakure*' (literally 'those who see far' in Kirundi) is the official name of the ruling CNDD-FDD party's youth wing. Segments of this broad civilian organisation have been given military training and mobilised as militias. In this text, we primarily use the term 'Imbonerakure' to signify the youth militias active prior to and during the protests in April 2015 and during their aftermath.

2 The agreement is available at https://peaceaccords.nd.edu/accord/arusha-peace-and-reconciliation-agreement-burundi.

3 The 2005 constitution is available at www.assemblee.bi/Constitution-de-la-Republique-du.

4 They received 57 per cent of the votes in the municipal elections that determine the composition of the Senate and 58 per cent of the votes in the legislative elections.

5 'Militia units' is the categorisation accorded to the armed Imbonerakure groups by the United Nations (OHCHR 2015).

6 A majority of four-fifths of the votes is required to approve an amendment to the constitution.

7 Focus group with youths from neighbourhoods in the north of Bujumbura, June 2015.

8 Interview with the political scientist Jean-Salathiel Muntunutwiwe, professor at the University of Burundi, November 2015.

9 Focus group with youths from neighbourhoods in the north of Bujumbura, May 2015.

10 Focus group with youths from neighbourhoods in the north of Bujumbura, May 2015.

11 Ibid.

12 The 2014 Afrobarometer survey reveals that in the urban populations

surveyed, 76 per cent of respondents saw the economic situation of the country as 'bad' and 47 per cent as 'very bad'; 57 per cent of respondents described their living conditions as 'bad' compared with 11 per cent 'good', while 29 per cent did not want to express their opinion on this issue (Afrobarometer 2014).

13 Of the urban population questioned in the 2014 Afrobarometer survey, 72 per cent were of the opinion that their living conditions were worse than in the previous year (Afrobarometer 2014).

14 Interviews with civil society leaders in Bujumbura, May–November 2015.

15 Focus group with youths from neighbourhoods in the north of Bujumbura, May 2015.

16 At the beginning of July 2015, Kayanza experienced brief clashes between an armed group, which was quickly neutralised, and the police.

17 Interviews with civil society leaders in Bujumbura, May–November 2015.

18 The total of 13,000 students is stated on the University of Burundi website (www.ub.edu.bi/).

19 Focus group with youths from neighbourhoods in the north of Bujumbura, May 2015.

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