

**HUMANITARIAN
AND DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMME**

**CRISIS IN BURUNDI:
A Three-Year Outlook for the Region
2016-2019**

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HUMANITARIAN FORESIGHT THINK TANK



INTRODUCTION

The small state of Burundi has since April 2015 been rocked by political violence, targeted killings, and allegations of torture. Massive numbers of refugees have fled a crisis¹ that many worry could return the country to civil war after nearly a decade of peace. Attempts at political dialogue have failed to chart a way forward for a country once hailed as one of the few successes of a robust regional and international peacebuilding agenda. Nearly all opposition leaders, independent journalists, human rights advocates, and leading civil society members have fled the country due to state-sanctioned threats, surveillance and repression². The state, meanwhile, has grown increasingly hardline in the face of regional and international opposition to Nkurunziza's third mandate and a string of assassinations targeting ruling party officials and members of the security forces³.

The African Union and the United Nations together have made little headway responding to abuses or to furthering a negotiated solution. An attempt to send 5000 troops for an initial six months' renewable African Prevention and Protection Mission in Burundi (Maprobu) fell flat and has been replaced by a decision to send 228 policemen to rein in violence, but the Burundian government has categorically rejected that as well⁴. Meanwhile, opposition groups are arming

¹ UNHCR (2016) [Data: Refugees from Burundi](#)

² Amnesty International. [Burundi report 2015 - 2016](#)

³ Ibid

⁴ The Global Observatory. [The AU's Less Coercive Diplomacy on Burundi](#), February 2016

amidst reports that men are being recruited in Rwanda's refugee camps⁵. The time for negotiation may soon pass.

The following is a three-year scenario analysis focusing on possible evolutions for Burundi's political crisis and presents three scenarios to inform strategic planning and risk reduction going forward.

KEY ASSUMPTIONS, HEAVY TRENDS

The Great Lakes region has displayed a high degree of volatility for several decades. However, Burundi itself contains several underlying, foundational issues that help to bound the system the architecture and establish baseline trends. The following key assumptions and heavy trends are expected to remain constant throughout the chosen time horizon.

Heavy Trends

- **Demographic Pressures** make Burundi one of the most population dense states in Africa, with the world's third highest growth rate, and 65% of the population under the age of 25⁶
- **Endemic Poverty** has Burundi ranked as 184 of 188 in the 2015 UNDP Human Development Index with 81.8% of people considered multidimensionally poor⁷
- **Climate Change** will continue to severely affect the agricultural sector, which occupies over 90% of the labor force and provides a majority of Burundi's exports

Key Assumptions

- **Land Conflict** accounts for a significant amount of violence even outside of the national political crisis as a result of decades of civil war and displacement. Although several national and international actors have spent years addressing the issue, it will continue to affect communal relations across the country.
- **Corruption** continues to stall Burundi's growth and transformation potential and fuels conflict by allowing the political elite to capture economic rents to bolster its power. With attention focused on brokering peace, corruption will continue to play a part in the strength and control of whatever group or individuals are in power.
- **International Engagement** had seen Burundi emerge as one of the shining examples of post-conflict peacebuilding. Regional and international actors are loath to see the country return to war.

⁵ Reuters. [Burundi rebels trained by Rwandan military](#), February 2016

⁶ CIA Library. [The World Factbook - Burundi](#)

⁷ UNDP. ["Briefing Note for Countries on the 2015 Human Development Report: Burundi"](#)

- **Severely Fragmented Opposition** will find it difficult to mount a meaningful political challenge to the government from exile. Until the opposition unites, there is little hope for peaceful resolution to crisis.

Political Outlook

The roots of Burundi's current political crisis rest in President Pierre Nkurunziza's successful bid for a third term, which many Burundians believe to be in contravention to both the constitution and the spirit of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreements, which ended Burundi's civil war and engaged a strong peacebuilding architecture to prevent future conflict. The concerted effort to undermine the Arusha Agreements has generated significant political violence, which has forced over 270,000 refugees to flee the country, and pushed Burundi to the precipice of renewed civil war.

The Arusha Agreements built the last decade of peace in Burundi through significant socio-political engineering in an attempt to ward off future conflict. It did so by mandating split ethnic representation at the highest levels of political power, over-representing minority Tutsi and Twa in parliament, mandating coalition building between ethnic groups within political parties, and integrating former combatants into a broad-based, representative military. This last was one of the most successful DDR campaigns on the continent, reforming Burundi's military into a professional and ethnically balanced fighting force that has played a significant role in AU interventions in Somalia, Darfur, and CAR.

The Arusha Agreements enjoyed widespread support in Burundi and the region. Nkurunziza and his inner circle initially understood that and knew they had to tread lightly. In 2014, the government attempted to change the constitution and failed by only one vote in parliament⁸, demonstrating how much importance Burundians gave to rule of law and how much this move threatened the unity of the ruling party. After this setback, hardliners within the party and the president's inner circle chose to willfully misinterpret both the letter and the intent of Arusha by pushing Nkurunziza's candidacy for a third term, arguing that his election by parliament in 2006 did not count towards his two-term limit because he had not been elected through universal suffrage.

Although the Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie–Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (CNDD-FDD) came to power through the Arusha Agreements and had built a broad-based, multiethnic coalition to govern the country, at heart, the party never truly sidelined the more hardline elements of its former armed wing. Former rebels believed they owned the peace, when in reality, there were no winners in the civil war. Many of these former rebels never liked the agreements and their mandated power-sharing and had worked incrementally behind the

⁸ Reuters. [Burundi's ruling party fails in first bid to change constitution](#), March 2014

scenes to hold onto the real strings of power.⁹ This culminated in Nkurunziza standing for a third term, leading to massive country-wide protests and the birth of the popular Mouvement Citoyen Halte au Troisième Mandat in early 2015¹⁰

In the face of initial, mostly nonviolent protest, regional and international pressure may have been able to force the government into a compromise. However, on 13 May, 2015, officers of Burundi's army, led by former intelligence chief Godefroid Niyombare, attempted a coup d'état. They failed to capture the presidential palace or the national broadcaster, and the attempt quickly fell apart, leading to several arrests and hastily organized prosecutions of rebellious army commanders¹¹. Twenty-eight officers were put on trial – four received life sentences, nine others were sentenced to thirty years in prison, seven were acquitted, and eight received lesser sentences.

The coup attempt initiated a downward spiral of political violence, repression, and tit-for-tat killings that has continued into 2016. Within months, opposition politicians, their supporters, and many in the country's rich and diverse civil society had fled Burundi, nearly all independent media had been shuttered, and a wave of politically-motivated killings left bodies lying in the streets¹² on an almost daily basis¹³. Harsh ethnic rhetoric, reminiscent of Rwanda's genocide, alarmed international observers, and some aspects of the open repression waned by the end of 2015, only to be replaced by a shadowy network of enforced disappearances and torture, mostly carried out by the police, intelligence service and the CNDD-FDD youth league, the *Imbonerakure*.

Burundi's opposition cannot claim innocence in this web of violence¹⁴. Several high level assassinations have targeted government or security officials including army Chief of Staff Prime Niyongabo, who escaped, and head of the intelligence services General Adolphe Nshimirimana¹⁵, who did not. Nshimirimana's killing was a significant blow to Nkurunziza, as the general was widely considered to be the real power behind the president and effectively his right hand. Targeted and reprisal killings have made the government increasingly insular and hardline and ratcheted up aggressive pro-government rhetoric that often overlapped with ethnic identity, leading to a severely destabilized political system at threat of worsening violence.

This top-down ethnic rhetoric is particularly disturbing in light of the fact that conflicts in Burundi in previous decades were characterized by large-scale ethnic killings. Although the current divisions in Burundi are political rather than ethnic, as the crisis has continued, an increasingly hardline and embattled CNDD-FDD has utilized this rhetoric in an attempt to shore up its political support. The increase has found little purchase among the average Burundian,

⁹ Nantulya, Paul. "Burundi: Why the Arusha Accords are Central." African Center for Strategic Studies, 5 August 2015.

¹⁰ [Mouvement Citoyen Halte au Troisième Mandat - Presentation](#)

¹¹ Le Monde, AFP and Reuters. [Coup d'Etat raté, le Président reprend la main](#), May 2015

¹² GRIP. [Conséquences d'un coup d'Etat manqué](#), May 2015

¹³ Human Right Watch. [Riposte meurtrière par la police aux manifestations](#), May 2015

¹⁴ Human Right Watch. [Burundi - Events of 2015](#)

¹⁵ The Guardian. [Burundi's Internal Security Chief Killed](#) – August 2015

with 70% of people reporting a positive view of ethnic relationships according to a report from February 2016.¹⁶ Without a resolution to the crisis, however, local and regional actors will need to make a concerted effort to keep ethnic rhetoric from overlapping with political issues.

One of the great questions moving forward is how unified the army is and can remain in the future. The Arusha Agreements were designed, in part, to remove the army from politics by creating a multi-ethnic force of former fighters integrated from the various rebel movements active at the end of the civil war. It largely succeeded in this, and the army has mostly remained on the sidelines since the coup, though it has been implicated in some severe abuses¹⁷. However, because the various rebel movements were combined into a national army, there is worry among international analysts that the Burundian military is not unified through vertical integration but that former fighters may have more loyalty to their former rebel movements or commanders. Of particular concern are the generals who fled into exile and formed an armed opposition group, but retain significant support within the armed forces. If the army fractures, the flood of guns and potential fighters will likely tip the country back into civil war.

Ultimately, Burundi's recent culture of power sharing, its strong civil society, and diverse media landscape may save the country and pull it back from the brink. Two radio stations were allowed to reopen in February 2016 under the caveat that their reporting remain 'balanced and objective' and that it not threaten the country's 'security'¹⁸ (one of them was the pro-ruling party radio station Radio Rema FM). National NGOs not affiliated with human rights monitoring have been allowed to resume activities, though the government has shut down several others and frozen their assets¹⁹, and those that remain know that they operate by the government's leave rather than through a right to exist.

Burundi's political system has been captured by a cadre of hardline CNDD-FDD officials supported by the party's youth wing, the police, and the intelligence services. Despite significant international and regional pressure, and a grave political, economic and human rights crisis, it has so far managed to cling onto power. It is therefore unlikely to negotiate with a fragmented opposition unless regional partners exert pressure. Absent this regional pressure, Burundi's political space will continue to devolve with potentially dangerous implications to the stability and security of the country's neighbors.

Economic Foresight

Due in part to over a decade of civil war, Burundi has some of the lowest levels of human development in the world. The country sits at 184 of 188 on UNDP's Human Development Index, with over 80% of people considered multidimensionally poor. Agriculture sustains much of the

¹⁶ "Burundi: Conflict Scan Report 3" Search for Common Ground. February 2016.

¹⁷ Human Right Watch. [Burundi - Events of 2015](#)

¹⁸ Reporters without Borders. [Two five closed radio stations allowed reopen](#), February 2016

¹⁹ FIDH. [Temporary suspension of 10 NGOs defending human rights](#), November 2015

economy and engages the vast majority of the workforce. Despite this, Burundi has some of the highest levels of malnutrition and stunting in the world²⁰. Other sectors are dominated by parastatals, which operate inefficiently and hamper growth. The current crisis has stalled the Burundian economy and the threat of further recession or even economic collapse could push the country into further fractured, unrestrained violence.

Despite peace through the Arusha Agreements in 2006, Burundi never experienced the post-conflict 'bump' to GDP that typically helps establish a 'peace dividend.' This is largely due to corruption. Historically, this corruption stems from the capture of economic resources by a politically connected bourgeoisie through state-run enterprises. From independence until 2006, this bourgeoisie was typically Tutsi. However, as the CNDD-FDD took power and began to exert influence over the parastatals, many of the Tutsi bourgeoisie gravitated towards less easily captured rents within the hospitality sector and other service sectors. The party grew stronger over time as it funneled economic rents to its patronage system.

The state has thus always been one of the most dominant economic actors in Burundi, not only through its control of public companies but through the civil service, the other pillar of the Burundian middle class. Hutus were not allowed to hold public office until 1988, denying them an important path away from smallholder peasant agriculture. The end of the civil war changed little about the political economy of state power tied to economic advancement, and after a decade in power, the CNDD-FDD has grown stronger with each passing year due to its control of public companies and the civil service. Without reform, state access to economic institutions will remain one of the most contested aspects of Burundian politics.

The political economy of Burundi lends itself to corruption, and grievances related to corruption have been instrumental in garnering support for protests against the third term. The country currently ranks 150 of 168 in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, while the Heritage Foundation charts a steady decline in freedom from corruption since 2006. Despite the government publicly prioritizing anti-corruption measures, it has underfunded its own policies, exerted political pressure on courts and anti-corruption brigades, and manipulated state institutions for the benefit of party elite²¹. Tax collection, for example, nearly doubled state revenue from 2010 to 2013; however, increasing numbers of corrupt politicians and business elites have pressured the revenue authority for personal exemptions, stalling progress.²²

This corruption only exacerbates several other problems with Burundi's development. The country is landlocked, with poor infrastructure and an underdeveloped electrical grid. The current conflict has caused the exchange rate to collapse against the dollar and generated a black

²⁰ World Bank. [Nutrition at a glance - Burundi](#)

²¹ International Crisis Group. "[Burundi: A Deepening Corruption Crisis](#)." 21 May 2012.

²² Africa Confidential. "[Taxing Troubles](#)." 4 April 2014.

market exchange rate at odds with the bank rate.²³ Developing a manufacturing sector under these conditions is nearly impossible, and despite the country sitting on some of the most valuable nickel reserves in the world, it has not been able to leverage its mineral wealth. Tea and coffee generate most of Burundi's exports and foreign exchange and are vulnerable to highly volatile markets for agricultural commodities.

The conflict has only exacerbated Burundi's structural economic problems. The economy shrank 4.1 % in 2015²⁴. The banking system is short on foreign exchange²⁵ and some report that the banks are on the verge of collapse. Political violence has caused hundreds of thousands to flee, putting further strain on labor markets in the agricultural sector, and continued instability and political violence has caused many donors to suspend their aid flows.

The suspension of aid has hurt the country, forcing Burundi to revise budgets and borrow against a deficit. International donors provided 50% of the government's budget, with the EU being the largest backer of budget support. The EU suspended a large part of its assistance in 2015²⁶ when the Burundian government refused to enact political and human rights reforms, among other things. French and Dutch support to the police and military has been suspended, and Belgium has suspended €2m of aid meant to support elections²⁷. The aid suspensions hurt not just the government's bottom line, but the country's foreign exchange. Burundi continually runs a trade deficit, and the currency injection from donor funds is important to balance of payments.

Going forward, the economic situation in Burundi will put severe pressure on the government and will likely worsen before it improves. The conflict has already made the population poorer. As it continues, humanitarian need will grow as markets collapse and civilians lose purchasing power. Early attempts have been made to block exports to Rwanda²⁸, which could further damage markets as small businesses are forced to close. A weakened economy and the loss of bilateral aid and support to the security sector will also make paying salaries difficult and may increase crime and the fracturing of armed groups.

Humanitarian Outlook

Burundi has suffered from underdevelopment and poverty even before the current conflict, though violence in the country has exacerbated both since. 58% of Burundian children under the age of 5 are chronically malnourished. One-third of under-five deaths is caused by complications related to malnutrition²⁹. According to WFP, only 28% of the population is food secure, with per

²³ Key Informant Interview. August 2016

²⁴ IMF. [Data mapper - Burundi](#)

²⁵ Trading Economics. [Burundi indicators](#)

²⁶ RFI. [Quelles conséquences après la suspension de l'aide de l'UE ?](#), March 2016

²⁷ Development initiatives. [Burundi at a crossroads](#), June 2015

²⁸ The East African. [Prices soar in Rwanda as Burundi ban on food exports bites](#), August 2016

²⁹ World Bank. [Nutrition at a glance - Burundi](#)

capita agricultural output falling 24% since 1993. The country produces only 1472 kcal per person per day, which is two-thirds the recommended minimum requirements.

The current conflict has pushed tens of thousands to flee the country. The majority have gone to Tanzania, which was forced to reopen previously closed camps and scale up the humanitarian response. Within the country, nearly 10% of Burundians are in need of humanitarian assistance, though the number could realistically be much higher considering the levels of pre-conflict poverty and food insecurity. Not only have the displaced lost planting and harvest seasons, but the instability has rocked local markets, disrupting trade and pushing inflation to 6.7% in February 2016. This inflation hides the true cost of food price rises, as the inflation rate for food was 10.9% year on year at the same time.³⁰

Beyond food security, Burundi is also vulnerable to natural disasters including El Nino-related floods and drought that have in the past led to displacement and food insecurity. A cholera outbreak in March 2016 was quickly contained by fast acting humanitarian action³¹, though malaria cases have nearly doubled in the year since the crisis began. 4.5m cases were reported in 2016³² with 2,228 deaths compared with 2.5m and 1,137 in 2015.

What has driven refugees first and foremost, however, is the political violence, with incidents peaking in November 2015. Many other refugees had fled earlier in 2015, before protests even broke out, in anticipation of violence. Refugee numbers have since marginally leveled off; however, there are reports that the Burundian government has been making it harder and harder for people to leave³³, indicating that not only does repression and political violence continue outside the eyes of the international community, but that the humanitarian situation may be worsening. Without a political solution, these numbers will grow worse and Burundi's humanitarian need will grow.

Regional Impact

Burundi's crisis has resulted in concerted diplomatic efforts towards its peaceful resolution from both regional blocs and the international community. However, the country does not exist in isolation and the regional response has been plagued by realpolitik as regional leaders vie for influence.

Tellingly, none of the presidents in the region can convincingly argue against Nkurunziza's third term. The region's hybrid regimes³⁴ all have upcoming elections or have recently completed suspicious campaigns. Uganda's Museveni extended his thirty-year rule, and attempts are

³⁰ Reuters. [Burundi's Inflation Rises to 6.7 pct in February](#). 18 March 2016.

³¹ OCHA and UNICEF. [Burundi/Tanzania: Cholera Outbreak](#)

³² OCHA. [Burundi: Humanitarian snapshot](#), August 2016

³³ The Washington Post. [Amid tensions, Burundi blocks vehicles from entering Rwanda](#), August 2016

³⁴ A governing system that combines elements of democracy (e.g. frequent, direct elections) with those of autocracy (e.g. significant political repression). See: Gagne, Jean-Francois (2015). [Hybrid Regimes](#). Oxford Bibliographies.

already being made to extend his presidency until 2035.³⁵ Kagame has been president of Rwanda since 2000 and constitutional changes have allowed him to vie for a third term in 2017 and two further terms thereafter. Kabila has ruled since his father's death in 2001 and is manipulating elections in DRC to stay on, and outside of the region, a number of African presidents across the continent have used similar methods to extend their terms. The African Union has yet to find a satisfactory response to the spate of 'constitutional coups' that have occurred over the last five years.

Regional peace negotiations are ongoing, with neither the government nor the heavily fragmented opposition making many honest overtures towards resolution³⁶. It is unlikely that negotiations will produce a breakthrough in the near future. This will have deleterious effects on the region as the opposition becomes more militant and hundreds of thousands remain displaced.

- **Rwanda**

Rwanda has become Burundi's main antagonist during the current crisis. The country has taken in many Burundian opposition politicians, journalists, and civil society members, as well as tens of thousands of refugees, and given them space and freedom to continue their activities. However, alongside peaceful organization, there have been reports from 2015 of Burundians being recruited within the refugee camps and given military training. Initial reports indicated that Burundian opposition recruited men from the refugee camps and conducted training in tandem with elements of the Rwandan military³⁷. While there is no evidence to implicate the highest level of Rwandan leadership, it is unlikely in a state as organized as Rwanda that these activities could occur without the knowledge of the government. Reports of recruitment have stopped in recent months; however, it is unclear whether this is because the activities have stopped or whether they are being conducted more covertly.

The escalating ethnic rhetoric by Nkurunziza's hardline inner circle is obviously concerning to Rwanda's government in light of the history of genocide in both countries. As relations have worsened, Kagame and Nkurunziza have taken to publicly airing their grievances with one another. As their rhetoric deteriorates, some wonder if Rwanda may not take active steps to destabilize Burundi and undercut Nkurunziza. The Rwandans' history in eastern DRC shows that they are not above using proxy forces such as M23, and many others before it, to project power when it suits their needs. Their important role within the East African Community will hamstring regional attempts to enforce peace as long as enmities continue.

³⁵ "Age Cannot Weary Him", *Africa Confidential*, 23 September 2016.

³⁶ The East African. *Burundi: Peace Talks collapse in Arusha*, July 2016

³⁷ Reuters. *Burundi rebels trained by Rwandan military*, February 2016

- **Democratic Republic of Congo**

Congo's position as the battlefield for two brutal wars in the last two decades made it a source of insecurity to its neighbors and itself. Burundi participated in the Second Congo War as a Kabila ally, and though some have indicated that Congo participates in some kind of regional realpolitik – supporting Nkurunziza to counteract Rwanda – others find this level of state command and control outside the capability of Kinshasa.

What is known is that Eastern DRC has played host to numerous rebel movements in the past, including several of Burundi's active armed groups. Although FNL head Agathon Rwaswa has taken a seat in parliament, an armed faction of the FNL has always remained in DRC. North and South Kivu provinces especially are an evolving tapestry of armed actors who form and break tactical alliances without much overarching strategy. Reports that the *Imbonerakure* trained in eastern DRC led some to suspect Congolese state support³⁸. The Congolese army has sometimes assisted the Burundian army or allowed it into its territory to try to hunt down FNL fighters. However, again, it is unclear how much command and control Kinshasa actually has in the region bordering Rwanda and Burundi.

DRC remains an important transit site for armed groups who may wish to contest power in the Great Lakes³⁹. Earlier reports of the training and recruitment of Burundians within Rwanda indicated that armed groups left Rwanda for DRC to better launch attacks into Burundi.⁴⁰ Any support that elements of the Congolese military may give to various rebel groups or the *Imbonerakure* is likely strictly opportunistic, rather than political.

Finally, the elections in Congo, while not fully confirmed, could have a destabilizing effect on the east, though it is unlikely to affect Burundi unless someone radically different from Kabila comes to power. Election-related violence will be important to watch in the areas bordering Burundi and in the composition of Kabila's inner circle.

- **Tanzania**

Tanzania at the moment supports over 175,000 refugees who have fled Burundi's current political crisis. At the peak of the civil war, the country gave refuge to over 300,000 Burundians. Many were given the option of Tanzanian citizenship in 2009⁴¹ and remained on in the country. Therefore, thousands of Burundians have social, familial, and economic ties to Tanzania as a safe space that has sheltered them in times of need.

³⁸ ACLED. [Repression and the Imbonerakure in Burundi](#), August 2014

³⁹ UNS. [Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), January 2015

⁴⁰ Key Informant Interview. August 2016.

⁴¹ BBC News. [Tanzania gives citizenship to 162,000 Burundi refugees](#), April 2010

Tanzania's former president Jakaya Kikwete was very close to Nkurunziza, while his relationship with Rwanda's Paul Kagame was often strained. The new president, John Magufuli, does not come to the table with the same baggage; however, after campaigning on a ticket that emphasized cleaning up corruption and reforming the Tanzanian state, Magufuli has often been more concerned with domestic issues than the crisis on a border far from the capital. He has left negotiations to former president Benjamin Mkapa, who is co-facilitator beside Uganda's Yoweri Museveni. The Ugandan president has been heavily criticized within the region for his absence during many of the negotiations,⁴² concerned more with his political campaign at home and with the South Sudan crisis on his northern border. Mediation has fallen mostly to Mkapa, who is seen by many as a good faith negotiator who has been hampered by his position as co-facilitator without strong support from Magufuli.

The weakness of the negotiations is working against Tanzania as many exiled Burundians, including the opposition, have begun to lose faith in the peace process. The African Union has left much of the negotiations to the East African region, and many of Burundi's neighbors have too many political and economic interests in the country to be able to play a neutral role. Both government and opposition have stymied much of the negotiations, and the longer the negotiations go on without a resolution the more likely that the fractured opposition will take up arms.

- **East African Community**

After failed attempts to raise an intervention force for Burundi, the African Union has mostly absented itself and turned negotiations over to the East African Community⁴³. The EAC is originally a trade bloc comprising Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. It is only in the past few years that it has added Rwanda, Burundi, and South Sudan, but it does not have the same unity as other regional blocks such as ECOWAS or SADC either in terms of economic integration or political coherence.

The EAC membership nearly all have political or economic interests in Burundi, and with the possible exception of Kenya, are distrusted by government and opposition both. Burundi is a marginal player in the EAC in terms of political or economic might and has often felt marginalized as a small francophone country in a predominantly Anglophone group. The level of corruption is a black spot in a bloc that includes notoriously corrupt Kenya. Though there is a strong push in recent years for 'African solutions to African problems,' the EAC's negotiating position is hampered by its own disorganization and this lack of trust⁴⁴, much like IGAD's

⁴² The East African. [Burundi Officials Blame Museveni for Stalled Peace Talks with Opposition](#). 5 September 2015.

⁴³ Egmont Institute. [Missing the Target: The African Union's Mediating Efforts in Burundi](#), June 2016

⁴⁴ The East African. [Mediation in the spotlight as Burundi peace talks fail to take off in Tanzania](#), January 2016

position regarding South Sudan. Greater international pressure and support is needed to build legitimacy in the peace process, but unity remains elusive.

SCENARIOS FOR JUNE 2019

The following are potential scenarios for Burundi's three-year outlook in July 2019. None of these scenarios should be considered definitive but are rather presented as plausible possibilities given the system's key uncertainties and the impact of those uncertainties. Elements of the three scenarios are linked into narratively cohesive pieces, but the volatility in the system presents challenges for foresight even on a limited time scale.

- **Scenario One – “The Failure of Arusha”**

By 2019, Burundi is again in full-fledged civil war. The government, growing increasingly hardline over 2016 and 2017, increased repression in spite of regional and international condemnation. Elements of the army grew increasingly concerned with the growing power of the intelligence services and the *Imbonerakure*, and fractures began to emerge tied to elements of the opposition in Rwanda. Defections increased through 2017, and by the end of the year, whole units have deserted, taking their weapons with them into the DRC.

In the midst of this growing chaos, Rwanda looked to secure its borders and began offering tacit support to anti-Nkurunziza elements in the country. The Burundian intelligence services in turn looked to support anti-Rwandan elements including the FDLR in DRC. More and more people fled the country for the relative safety of Tanzania, leaving swathes of the country without agricultural labor and severely impacting exports. Burundi's trade deficit grew worse, putting severe strain on the banking sector and government budgets.

Western donors suspended all aid by the end of 2017, and although the economy looked on the verge of complete collapse, the government managed to stave off a budgetary crisis through shadowy trade deals with Chinese and Middle Eastern investors, trading access to the large nickel reserves for political and economic support. By the end of 2018, the country was in full-fledged civil war, but with the government in a strong position compared to a still relatively fractured opposition, international and regional pressure could do little to force peace on the country.

The biggest impact on the region is not only increased refugee flows, but the regionalization of the conflict as armed groups operate out of both DRC and Tanzania. Refugees flee primarily to Tanzania, and armed groups grow stronger with an increased humanitarian presence disrupting

markets and creating opportunities for taxation and resource capture. Within Burundi, many areas become inaccessible to humanitarians as insecurity spreads. The greatest danger is that civil war could spill over and ignite lingering resentments in eastern Congo, threatening a greater conflagration that could unfold over the next several years.

- **Scenario Two – “A Strong Hand”**

By mid-2019, the Burundian government has strengthened its position against a fractured, impotent opposition that Nkurunziza has driven into permanent exile. In many ways, Burundi now looks like Rwanda, but with more overt displays of ethnic power and control. The press is only nominally free. In reality, most of the media critical of the government is now based outside of the country. Civil society and national non-governmental organizations are allowed to operate within the country only so long as they do nothing to threaten the ‘security’ of the country. Human rights defenders are under constant threat and very few operate within Burundi by 2018.

The CNDD-FDD consolidated its power by the end of 2017, installing party cadres into the leadership boards of the major parastatals and reshuffling cabinet and military posts to favor. Corruption has worsened and Burundi is once again among the most corrupt in the world, though with ‘peace’ on the table, the party commits to a reform agenda that unfreezes European aid money. The economy has stalled its descent, but growth rates cannot keep up with a population that strains the states resources.

Much of Nkurunziza’s consolidation of power was enabled by waning regional and national attention to the political crisis as Kabila and Kagame turned towards shoring up their political support for their individual presidential campaigns and donors reacted to potential election-related violence. Tanzania’s negotiation team continued to be hampered by weak engagement from President Magufuli, whose primary concern was continuing to reform Tanzania’s corrupt public sector. Valuing stability over real peace, the European Union frees up its aid and ignores the troubling turn Burundi has taken and the implications for future violence.

Despite internal peace, refugee numbers continue to increase though they represent a trickle rather than a flood. Tanzania would pressure refugees to return, but many would refuse, relying on socio-economic links previously established during the last civil war. A humanitarian response becomes a chronic Band-Aid for need rather than any solution as it struggles to compete for international resources amidst other ongoing crises in Syria, South Sudan, or Yemen.

- **Scenario Three – “Peace Brigades”**

An uptick in violence at the end of 2016 and into early 2017 redoubled the international community’s efforts to rebuild the Arusha model and engage peace. At the same time, government hardliners grew increasingly afraid of a return to full-fledged civil war as the opposition came together and threatened armed action. The assassination of several more hardline leaders and the killing of an opposition politician in exile threatens genocide, bringing out moderate political and civil society leaders to beg for increased international attention.

By late 2017, negotiations were in place to form a transitional government to take power by mid-2018. The peace agreements are heavily modeled on the Arusha Agreements but negotiations are held-up by the degree of ethnic representation in parliament and the armed forces. Western donors make their aid disbursements contingent on several benchmarks related to the peace, keeping the economy on shaky ground and preventing an easy recovery.

The region welcomed a peaceful resolution, especially Tanzania, which hosted 200,000 refugees by early 2017. As peace takes hold, these refugees begin moving back to the country, and Burundi again struggles with one of its perennial conflicts – land. By mid-2019, the peace is imperfect, but it is holding, and Burundi looks much like it did in 2006.

CONCLUSION

Burundi’s crisis has unfolded over a year and a half of escalating violence and political repression. The country, in August 2016, is characterized by an increasingly hardline government that has driven moderates out of its own party and out of the country alongside opposition politicians, journalists, and independent civil society. The political violence has pushed the economy into recession, a slow collapse that will not be stemmed while conflict remains a significant factor. While reports of overt violence have reduced, international human rights groups have highlighted an increase in torture, enforced disappearances, and killings that has mostly occurred behind the scenes. The country is far from stable.

As violence continues, there is real fear that it could devolve into civil war. The international community initially responded admirably, with the African Union pushing for a 5000-strong peacekeeping force to contain the violence. However, after Burundi rejected this and a compromise police force consisting of 228 officers, peace mediators have struggled to find a solution to the impasse. As negotiations have failed to progress, some are losing trust in the mediation process. Without a peaceful solution in sight, the threat of further conflict devolving into outright war is high. Time is running out on a peaceful resolution to the political impasse. ■

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